Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies 2011 26 (1–2): 482-496

FEATURE REVIEW

Food Crisis and Beyond: Locating Food-Sovereign Alternatives in a Post-Neoliberal Context

EFE CAN GÜRCAN

ABSTRACT. The second half of the last decade has been profoundly marked by a major food crisis with a global reach, qualified by Holt-Giménez, Patel and Shattuck (2009) as a "silent tsunami," which has driven about 75 million people to undernourishment and another 125 million people to extreme poverty (Bello 2009b). In light of such a devastating phenomenon, the recent years have witnessed a veritable outpouring of scholarly works on the effects of the food crisis on developing countries, on the critique of the neoliberal food regime, and the emergence of food countermovements confronting neoliberalism. In this review article, I address the global food problem in today's context from the perspective of "food sovereignty," arguing that it is essential to break with mainstream perspectives that prioritize the economic aspects of the global food problem and overestimate the role of high politics and policy experts instead of exploring the ways in which genuine grassroots participation could transform the existing neoliberal food system.

KEYWORDS. ALBA · Cuba · food crisis · food sovereignty · neoliberalism · social movements

Bello, Walden. *The Food Wars*. London and New York: Verso, 2009. 176 pp.

Clapp, Jennifer, and Marc J. Cohen, eds. *The Global Food Crisis: Governance Challenges and Opportunities*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009. 267 pp.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie. *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Press, 2009. 238 pp.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie, Nettie Wiebe, and Hannah Wittman, eds. *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Press, 2010. 224 pp.

Introduction

The second half of the last decade has been profoundly marked by a major food crisis with a global reach, qualified by Holt-Giménez, Patel, and Shattuck (2009) as a "silent tsunami," which has driven about 75 million people to undernourishment and another 125 million people to extreme poverty (Bello 2009b). During the period between May 2007 and 2008, which represents the apogee of the crisis, the average world price of wheat increased by 157 percent, while those of rice and corn rose by 93 percent and 140 percent, respectively. As to milk, eggs, and meat, the price jumps were 48 percent, 26 percent, and 8 percent, respectively (Janin 2008). Generally speaking, the global crisis asserted itself with a total increase of 83 percent in the global food prices (Mittal 2009), not to mention the violent food riots in more than thirty different Third World countries in response to drastic price jumps during the period covering 2005–08 (*Nourrir les Hommes: Un Dictionnaire* 2009, 269–70). The seriousness of the situation could be better illustrated if one takes into account the fact that every increase of one percent in basic food products drives sixteen million people to food insecurity (Parmentier 2009, 270). As a result, more than 840 million people suffer from undernourishment (Seabrook 2007, 27).

Given such a devastating phenomenon, the recent years have witnessed a veritable outpouring of scholarly works on the effects of the food crisis on developing countries, on the critique of the neoliberal food regime, and the emergence of food countermovements confronting neoliberalism (McMichael 2009a; Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009; Altieri 2009; Biggs, Danaher, and Mark 2007; Borras, Edelman, and Kay 2008; Courville, Rosset, and Patel 2006; Holt-Giménez 2006; Patel 2009a, 2009b; Rosset 2006; Schanbacer 2010; Weis 2007). In light of this newly emerging research agenda, this review article attempts to address the global food problem from the perspective of "food sovereignty." Accordingly, I will first offer an analytical summary of four recent books that are particularly important in leading further research in the field. Then I will provide an in-depth analysis of the main arguments of the authors in an attempt to locate food sovereignty movements in a post-neoliberal context.

Drawing on the "food regime analysis" proposed by McMichael (2009b, 2009a, 1995), I will argue that explaining the root causes of the global food crisis and formulating viable remedies necessitate "a broader historical understanding of geopolitical and ecological conditions" (McMichael 2009a), which together define today's world

food system. I will maintain that economist perspectives on food crisis tend to ignore the central role of food in society as a "fundamental element of social reproduction" by insisting on ambiguous references to general concepts such as "economic governance" and "civil society." I will state that it is essential to break with mainstream perspectives that prioritize the economic aspects of the global food problem and overestimate the role of high politics and policy experts instead of attempting to explore ways in which genuine grassroots participation could transform the existing neoliberal food system. In this respect, I will maintain that any attempt to strengthen or reform the existing food regime would do nothing but increase the possibility of experiencing another food crisis in the near future.

Food Crisis and Beyond: Global Governance and Civil Society in Question

The Global Food Crisis: Governance Challenges and Opportunities, edited by Clapp and Cohen (2009), offers an in-depth analysis of the global food crisis, drawing on the dominant paradigm of "food security" and "economic governance." As mentioned in the foreword, the aim of the book is twofold: to provide an "analytical description of the causes of the food crisis" and to formulate an "evidence-based set of strategies and proposals for strengthening national and international governance of the global and national food systems".

Offering a recent empirical description of the food crisis, the book is a major resource that should appear in every food-curious researcher's bibliography. Most of the contributors point to the role of major social and ecological factors—such as climate change, migration, and gender questions—in aggravating the food crisis, along with short references. The book also provides a historical and comparative outlook on the global food crisis, as clearly observed in Horton's article. In his comparative study of the 1974 and 2008 food crises, Horton presses for the urgency of investing more in agricultural development to prevent the possibility of experiencing another global food crisis, based on the lessons learned from two previous price crises (29–42).

However, there is no reason to expect anything more than an "evidence-based" explanation of the ostensible causes of the crisis in most of the contributions in the book. Obviously, the book fails to address the root causes of the global food crisis stemming from the

neoliberal restructuring of the global economy.The book limits itself to overgeneralizations in revealing the ways in which the global food governance could be improved. These overgeneralizations go hand in hand with an overestimation of the role of "high politics" in "strengthening the global food governance," failing to recognize the crucial importance of grassroots participation. Hopkins's article perfectly illustrates this. In his study on how to respond to the global food crisis, Hopkins insists on focusing on "global macroeconomic and political stabilization" in order to "reform" the global food system, emphasizing high politics, which prioritizes the role of "policy makers" (91–92).

Criticizing the "fragmented and inherent nature of the global food governance" (6), most contributions in the book provide no clear answers as to why one should rely on strengthening the existing food regime instead of replacing it. Yet much of the debate in food studies of recent years is locked up in whether one should strengthen or transform the neoliberal food regime, an apple of discord between the advocates of food security and the "food sovereignists." In this context, Mittal's and Clapp's chapters maintain that the global food governance should be "strengthened" by redressing the existing trade rules in favor of poor countries and restructuring the World Trade Organization (WTO) to create a "policy space for poor countries" (13–28, 43–58). Likewise, Gustafson and Markie's chapter counts on reforming and strengthening the existing global architecture of food by "drawing the existing institutions together" (191).

Following the mainstream perspective of economism, the book also tends to privilege the purely economic aspects of the global food problem over its sociocultural implications. Most important, talking of remedies to the vulnerability of contemporary food systems, an important part of the contributions limit their analyses to vague claims on "governance," an overconsumed and very problematic concept in social sciences that readily conveys more than one meaning. Although the contributors never attempt to properly define the concept, their understanding of "governance" tends to focus extensively on the economic aspects of governance at the expense of its sociocultural aspects.

McCalla's chapter is a relevant example for the economist understanding of food governance. In his study, McCalla distinguishes between four major and interrelated governance challenges to food security: improvements in agricultural productivity, liberalized

international agricultural trade policies, the matching of national interfaces with unstable world food markets, and the installation of national and international food safety nets (249). McCalla's arguments on governance are problematic for at least two major reasons. First, the argument that the vulnerability of food security owes to lower rates of agricultural productivity is highly controversial, because there is also strong evidence that supports the fact that the current food crisis is not a crisis of availability and productivity but that of accessibility and regulation (Holt-Giménez, Patel, and Shattuck 2009, 7; Janin 2008, 9). As Lappé and Collins (1988, 7) assert, the world food supply is not scarce but rather remains abundant. Low productivity levels could be alarming only for a few countries like Cuba (which is under the US blockade) and the poor sub-Saharan countries, but not at a level that is significant enough to engender a food crisis with global reach. Unless the monopolistic structure of the neoliberal food regime is abolished, further liberalization would do nothing but further deteriorate food security, considering the fact that food production and distribution are already in the hands of powerful corporations of the developed world (Holt-Giménez, Patel, and Shattuck 2009, 18–20).

In the meantime, it is noteworthy to underline that Zerbe's chapter on the limits of marketization of food security and Ishii-Eiteman's contribution on the reorientation of food systems seem to distance themselves from the main paradigm of the book in terms of their bottom-up approach, avoiding the economist bias. Drawing on Polanyi's critique of commodification in market societies, Zerbe aptly demonstrates that the vulnerability of current food systems stems from structural adjustment and privatization, which have paved the way toward commodifying food security (172). His analysis seeks to highlight that food security should not be abandoned to market forces; rather, governments should assume a central role in technological innovation by also taking into consideration the social and historical aspects of the crisis. In turn, Ishii-Eiteman proposes a rights-based approach to food security, which requires the "rethinking of our food, agriculture, health, environment, education, and trade policies and practices" (217–19). Claiming that food sovereignty is a precondition for food security, her primary concerns include reversing structural inequities between and within countries, and increasing rural communities' access to and control over resources. Accordingly, it is essential for her to ask how and by whom food is to be produced, as well as who will benefit from the production (232). Ishii-Eiteman

suggests that the global food crisis should not be conceived separately from the climate, water, energy, and financial crises. As opposed to most contributors in the book, she insists that the global food problem has to be addressed from the lenses of a new approach advocating far-reaching structural changes in today's food system. Unlike most contributors, she draws a clear blueprint for transforming the neoliberal food regime relying on effective social policies and agro-ecological farming technologies, which promote the strengthening of farmer organizations, the development of the small-scale farm sector, grassroots participation in policy formation, and the establishment of a just trade system (233).

Like *The Global Food Crisis: Governance Challenges and Opportunities*, Bello's book, *The Food Wars* (2009), assesses the global food crisis based on convincing data. However, his "food sovereignist" approach differs substantially from Clapp and Cohen's book inasmuch as he aptly places the critique of the neoliberal food system and the agro-industrial complex at the center of his analysis of the global food crisis. It should be noted that the book itself represents a major guide for students of food sovereignty.

Unlike Clapp and Cohen's book, *The Food Wars* focuses rather on the sociocultural implications of the food problem, drawing on case studies from Mexico, the Philippines, Africa, and China. From the beginning of his study, Bello makes clear that "the production and consumption of food have always been socially organized" (19). He thus favors a bottom-up approach recognizing the transformative power of grassroots resistance, in contrast to Clapp and Cohen's economist perspective privileging high politics and the role of policy experts.

Before discussing the effects of the global food crisis in different parts of the developing world, Bello gives special attention to the historical development of food regimes under capitalism to demonstrate that the present food crisis stems mainly from a "centuries-long process of displacement of peasant agriculture by capitalist agriculture" (37). Following Friedmann's and McMichael's work, he distinguishes between three major phases in the history of the development of capitalist agriculture (22–33). The first historical phase, known as the "British-led agri-food regime," refers to the control of the British colonialism over the international food system in the nineteenth century. The second historical phase corresponds to the "Bretton Woods agri-food regime," a US-led food system based on the US-supported

developmentalism, rural reforms, and food aid programs. Finally, the most recent phase is known as the neoliberal food regime, which has witnessed the spectacular growth of corporate control and the emergence of globally integrated food chains under a particular governance structure symbolized in the rule of the WTO over the world trade.

In his case studies, Bello brilliantly explains the ways in which structural adjustment, massive indebtedness, reversal of rural reforms, government budget cuts, and elimination of subsidies have played a central role in manufacturing a global food crisis. One of his book's significant arguments is that remedies to the global food crisis should exclude any attempt to consolidate the present food regime and to rely on the power of existing institutions of "economic governance." Bello rather counts on the development of new alternatives to existing agri-food structures, which find their meaning in the transformative resistance of transnational sociopolitical movements. On these grounds, he argues that the praxis of food-sovereignty movements, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and La Via Campesina, paves the way for the radical transformation of the neoliberal food regime in the near future (128–35).

Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community, edited by Desmarais, et al. (2010), is a valuable resource on food sovereignty that gathers together the works of notable scholars in the field. The book is thus highly recommended for those who look for a comprehensive and multifaceted outlook on the study of food sovereignty. Most contributions in the book are driven by an explicit sense of the failure of the dominant paradigm of agricultural development symbolized in the global food crisis, urban food riots, and massive displacement of the rural poor. Rejecting the neoliberal arguments on the global food crisis, which emphasizes the so-called central role of shortages and market failures, this book is a call to "rethink our relationships with food, agriculture and the environment," but more important, with one another in society (Desmarais, Wiebe, and Wittman 2010, 4–5). Fairbairn's chapter deals mainly with the emergence of the "food sovereignty discourse" as a "counter-frame" to the deepening crisis of the neoliberal food regime. According to Fairbairn, this counter-frame not only helps us understand the crisis of the existing food regime but also contributes to its "delegitimization" and the exploration of potentials in which the system could be altered (26–27, 31). Masioli and Nicholson's chapter consists of an interview with two farm leaders from Brazil and the Basque region (33). These interviews are particularly

important in terms of directly reflecting the peasant view on food sovereignty along with other contributions that rely on outsider's account. Handy and Fehr's chapter is an attempt to break with capitalist and industrial agriculturist accounts, emphasizing the need to "reorganize the social relations of production within agriculture" in order to overcome the increased fragility of our food production system (45). Wittman's article on the formation of ecological citizenship in agrarian communities argues that agrarian citizenship championed by critical peasants' organizations, such as La Via Campesina and the MST, constitutes a viable human and ecological response to neoliberalism. According to her, offering an alternative agroecological rationality, food sovereignty is nothing but the reflection of a "broad vision of agrarian citizenship," which is able to enact horizontal and vertical relationships with different communities, local ecologies, and other critical sociopolitical movements (94, 103–4). Borras and Franco's study seeks to reveal the pro-elite nature of today's land policies that are considered "pro-poor." They shed light on the wealth and power relations that characterize most land policies, and brilliantly explain the ways in which pro-elite land policies contribute to the formalization of rural inequalities, the restitution of previously distributed lands, and the reconcentration of lands in the hands of the powerful through privatization and other counterreform strategies (116–18). In his chapter on agroecology, Altieri states that agroecology represents the scientific basis of food sovereignty. As put by Altieri, agroecology aims to develop more sustainable, productive, resource-conserving, and diversified agroecosystems that do not rely on high chemicals and energy inputs, but rather promote small farming (121). Without neglecting the role of sustainable agricultural technologies in enhancing productivity, Altieri asserts that agroecology highly values local knowledge and the direct involvement of farmers in research (130).

McMichael's contribution to the book is oriented toward explaining the ways in which food sovereignty evolves in relation to the basic contradictions of "agro-industrialization": namely, "food distribution inequity, monoculture, population redundancy, environmental degradation and fossil fuel dependence" (Desmarais, Wiebe, and Wittman 2010, 173). Stating that food sovereignty requires an agroecological ethic of democratization (173–74), McMichael examines the main challenges of "agro-industrialization" in three major categories: environmental adaptation, seed politics, and energy security. He further argues that the context of food sovereignty has been profoundly

shaped by these very challenges. In light of McMichael's observations, Kerr's and Kloppenburg's chapters address the challenge of seed sovereignty, suggesting that "seed sovereignty" is an essential component of "food sovereignty." In return, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's contribution proposes an in-depth analysis of energy security and concludes that "to roll back the agro-fuel transition" is a necessary step in ensuring food sovereignty. Finally, the last chapter of the book by Raj Patel thoroughly discusses the concept of food sovereignty based on philosophical and definitional predications. According to Patel, the conceptualization of food sovereignty is highly problematic, considering that there exist so many definitions of the concept due to the involvement of various social and political actors. Therefore, he counts on a rights-based approach to food sovereignty to overcome the existing inconsistencies and disparities in the definition of the concept (190).

Similar to *The Food Wars* and *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*, Desmarais's book, *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants,* is also framed by the food sovereignty perspective. The book constitutes arguably the most competent study that has appeared on La Via Campesina, considered as one of the world's most influential transnational social movements. On these grounds, it would not be an exaggeration to cite the book among the classics of food sovereignty literature.

In her book, Desmarais mainly deals with the newly emerging structures of collective action in the countryside in response to the great challenge posed by the neoliberal food regime and the global food crisis (2009, 9). Focusing on the dynamic nature, cultural diversity, and wide geographical distribution of the La Via Campesina leadership, the book aims for a "better understanding rural development in the context of the neo-liberal globalization" and explores the ways in which agrarian activism has gone transnational (18). Furthermore, Desmarais's analysis seeks to highlight farmers' own experiences, voices, and vision by privileging a bottom-up approach to rural development, neoliberalism, and the global food crisis. One of her most compelling arguments concerns the continuing central role of farmer associations in advocating change at the forefront of struggles against neoliberalism (20).

The main strength of *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* is that, in its attempt to reveal possible alternatives to the global food crisis, it does not favor heavily blurred concepts of contemporary social sciences such as "global governance" and "civil

society" (Desmarais 2009, 21), in contrast to what was mostly preferred in Clapp and Cohen's book. Desmarais stresses the "unequal distribution of power and resources" and class differences within the so-called global civil society, and draws a clear line between nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations in terms of their relationships with existing power structures under neoliberalism (21–22). She claims that many NGOs, staffed by well-educated middle-class professionals, tend to be more closely tied to or dependent on existing power structures due to external funding. On the other hand, nonreformist people's organizations are mostly led by critical social movements advocating radical social transformations based on alternative identities, new solidarities, and alternative social spaces and political cultures. As defined by Desmarais, "people's organizations" refer to "community- or sector-based, grassroots organizations of volunteers that function to further the interests of their mass membership," many of which rely on democratically elected and accountable leaderships (23). Desmarais points out that La Via Campesina, as a radical and nonconformist "people's organization," remains considerably selective in its relationships with NGOs (122–23).

Another major contribution of Desmarais' book lies in the appreciation of the social aspects of the global food problem, and its emphasis on the need to reinsert agrarian reform into the agenda in order to address the food crisis. In parallel with what La Via Campesina advocates, Desmarais emphasizes that agrarian reform should not be limited solely to the distribution of land, but should be expanded toward transforming the whole agrarian system so as to democratize the land (35–36).

Yet, it is crucial to note that despite their bottom-up approach, Desmarais's, Bello's, and Desmarais et al.'s books, taken together, are hardly exempt from contextual limitations. In discussing the ongoing global resistance for food sovereignty, they could not fully concentrate on the emergence of food-sovereign alternatives in which La Via Campesina is only another major actor among others. Their civil society–centric understanding of food sovereignty tends to neglect the fact that food sovereignty could not be achieved merely through the counterhegemonic conquest of civil society, but one should also put into the equation the role of the "international political society."

Therefore, I find that Bello's and Desmarais's works are so engaged in the critique of governments' agrarian politics and international

institutions that they tend to overlook the emergence of genuinely food-sovereign alternatives in the Third World other than La Via Campesina and the MST. Specifically, in *Food Wars*, Bello seems to be so occupied in discussing the failure stories that he could not discuss the success stories of countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, as well as the importance of critical international organizations such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) within the context of the rise of the "new left" in Latin America. Similarly, in *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*, there seems to be no clear reference to the Cuban, Venezuelan, and Bolivarian experiences. Yet, the Cuban case itself, which represents the most successful agroecological praxis in human history (Benjamin and Rosset 1994, 5), deserves to be treated separately in order to provide a better understanding of contemporary alternatives to the neoliberal agri-food regime. Moreover, it would be particularly relevant to refer to the recent Nicaraguan experience of food cooperatives; the Bolivian and Venezuelan land reforms; and the Venezuelan experience of land committees, rural communal councils, and food markets. Furthermore, the crucial role of urban agriculture in strengthening food sovereignty would be another major topic of discussion that would further deepen the scope of analysis in these books.

Likewise, Desmarais has failed to address the growing importance of La Via Campesina as a member of the ALBA Council of Social Movements. Yet, ALBA currently plays a central role in terms of advocating "alternative identities, new solidarities, alternative social spaces and political cultures" (2009, 25) against neoliberalism. This international organization not only promotes agrarian reform, small-scale farming, and food sovereignty in Latin America but also directly engages progressive farmers in the fight against the global food crisis. Based on the unique experience of the ALBA Council of Social Movements, I maintain that the praxis of ALBA is of great importance in internationalizing the farmers' struggle for food sovereignty against neoliberalism.

As known, the core structure of ALBA is composed of three councils: Council of Presidents, Council of Ministers, and Council of Social Movements (Muhr 2010). The ALBA Council of Social Movements primarily deals with socioeconomic and cultural issues such as land distribution, free healthcare, free education, and food security. Through this council, the largest social movements in Latin America, like the MST and La Via Campesina, are able to participate

in the regionalization process, embodying and overseeing the work of two other councils. The Council of Social Movements also assumes the role of elaborating collaboration programs with social organizations in non-ALBA countries. The distinctive feature of this council is that it relies on the principle of direct democracy (Muhr 2010). Therefore, following the ALBA Council of Social Movements experience, one should admit that ALBA is the only international organization that has ever embraced critical social movements, especially international farmers' movement, in its internal mechanism.

The importance of ALBA in advancing food sovereignty could be better understood if one takes into account its recent activities in favor of regional food sovereignty. In 2008, as a response to the global food crisis, the ALBA members decided to launch a regional alliance against the global food crisis and to create a food security fund of USD 100 million (Venezuela World 2008); they also signed an Agreement for the Implementation of Cooperation Programs in the area of food security and food sovereignty in order to promote agro-industrial development for the production of cereals, leguminous crops, oilseed, meat, and milk (SELA 2008). In 2009, the members decided to create a supranational food company aimed at "guaranteeing food sovereignty" in Latin America, with an initial investment of USD 49 million (Suggett 2009). The same year, the ALBA Food Program allocated USD 9 million for an agricultural project in Haiti, which is the poorest country in Latin America, and developed ten projects of USD 13 million in eight different Latin American countries (Marquez 2009). Therefore, ALBA could be considered as the first international organization that has officially adopted the "food sovereignty perspective" both in theory and practice.

In sum, newly emerging alternatives to dominant paradigms of food security in Latin America demonstrate that it is essential to break the monopoly of agribusiness over food production and distribution so as to decentralize and democratize the agro-food sector and prevent another food crisis in the near future. This requires, however, not only the mobilization of civil society but also that of state's own resources and capabilities to organize food democratization in a greater scale. Put more precisely, the Latin American experience indicates that the collectivization of land, the further development of farmer associations, the establishment of local food markets, the expansion of agro-ecological activism, and the flow of agroecological knowledge owe greatly to the support of "anti-systemic governments" as much as to the

efforts of social movements. On the other hand, the collaboration of anti-systemic governments and food sovereignty movements is to be expanded to one level further based on regional cooperation, considering that food sovereignty has become a transnational issue that could not be implemented solely based on grassroots efforts, hence the logic behind establishing an adequate environment for the synchronization of the efforts of different grassroots movements and left-leaning governments at the regional level.

The Latin American experience has proven that critical international organizations greatly contribute to the further consolidation and transnationalization of agroecological movements, as well as the expansion of the scope of their representation and influence in decision making. This explains why transnationalized *campesino a campesino* programs and other peasant grassroots organizations could not succeed in establishing food sovereignty as a ruling norm despite their strong existence in Latin America. However, this was quickly achieved thanks to the newly established mechanism of coordination between left-leaning governments and food countermovements in the context of ALBA. On the other hand, one should also emphasize that the interactions between social movements and critical international organizations can culminate in mutual outcomes. As to the benefits of international organizations, the involvement of food countermovements in critical international organizations ensures the continuity of food sovereignty projects in the context of post-neoliberalism, which adds to the presence of antisystemic governments pushing for systemic changes.

Conclusion: Locating Food-Sovereign Alternatives in a Post-Neoliberal Context

Understanding the dynamics of the present global food crisis necessitates, in the first place, a keen appreciation of the historical development of food regimes under capitalism, starting from the emergence of the British-led agri-food regime to the development of neoliberalism. In this historical, ecological, and geopolitical context, the second step should be that of properly analyzing the monopolistic structure of today's corporate food regime and its worldwide organization in the form of "global governance." Therefore, one could deduce that strengthening the existing governance structures, further liberalizing

the trade system, and focusing on global macroeconomic and political stabilization could do nothing but worsen the global food problem.

The very core of the problem does not reside in economics and high politics, but rather in admitting the fact that "the production and consumption of food have always been socially organized." The solution thus lies in "decommodifying our food" and putting into practice "far-reaching structural changes" in our food systems. In Desmarais's terms, this indeed implies creating alternative identities, new solidarities, alternative social spaces, and alternative political cultures (Desmarais 2009, 25). However, the creation of such a new political universe could not become real if one limits himself or herself to the counterhegemonic conquest of civil society at the expense of emerging alternatives beyond civil society, hence the need to develop a more comprehensive approach to food sovereignty that would explore the ways in which critical elements of civil society could expand its counterhegemony toward the conquest of "domestic and international political society." This review essay thus argues that, as opposed to civil society–centric arguments on food sovereignty, countermovements such as La Via Campesina or the MST do not represent an ultimate outcome for the forging of food-sovereign alternatives. Henceforth, research should reserve a special attention to the newly emerging food-sovereign alternatives that succeed in mobilizing both critical transnational movements and progressive international political society in a common post-neoliberal project.❁

References

Akram-Lodhi, A. Haroon, and Cristóbal Kay, eds. 2009. *Peasants and Globalization: Political Economy, Rural Transformation and the Agrarian Question*. London and New York: Blackwell.

Altieri, Miguel A. 2009. *Agroecology for Food Sovereignty*. Oakland: Food First.

Bello, Walden. 2009a. *The Food Wars*. London: Verso.

——. 2009b. Foreword to *The Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi, and Oxford: Pambazuka Press.

Benjamin, Medea, and Peter Rosset. 1994. *The Greening of the Revolution: Cuba's Experiment with Organic Agriculture*. Melbourne: Ocean Press.

Biggs, Shannon, Kevin Danaher, and Jason Mark. 2007. *Building the Green Economy: Success Stories from the Grassroots*. Sausalito: Polipoint Press.

Borras, Saturnino M. Jr., Marc Edelman, and Cristóbal Kay. 2008. *Transnational Agrarian Movements Confronting Globalization*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Clapp, Jennifer, and Marc J. Cohen, eds. 2009. *The Global Food Crisis: Governance Challenges and Opportunities*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Courville, Michael, Peter Rosset, and Raj Patel, eds. 2006. *Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform*. Oakland: Food First.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie. 2009. *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Press.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie, Nettie Wiebe, and Hannah Wittman, eds. 2010. *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Press.

Holt-Giménez, Eric. 2006. *Campesino a Campesino: Voices from Latin America's Farmer to Farmer Movement for Sustainable Agriculture*. Oakland: Food First Books.

Holt-Giménez, Eric, Raj Patel, and Annie Shattuck. 2009. *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi, and Oxford: Pambazuka Press.

Janin, Pierre. 2008. "Crise alimentaire mondiale: Désordres et dé bats" [The Global Food Crisis: Disorders and Debates]. *Hérédote*, no. 131: 6–13.

Lappé, Frances Moore, and Joseph Collins. 1988. *World Hunger: 12 Myths*. London: Earthscan.

Marquez, Humberto. 2009. "Latin America: Stemming Food Crisis Must Be Regional Priority." http://www.allbusiness.com/government/international-organizations-bodies/13028290-1.html.

McMichael, Philip, ed. 1995. *Food and Agrarian Orders in the World-Economy*. Westport: Praeger.

——. 2009a. "A Food Regime Analysis of the 'World Food Crisis'." *Agriculture and Human Values* 26 (4): 281–95.

——. 2009b. "A Food Regime Genealogy." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (1): 139–69.

Mittal, Anuradha. 2009. "The 2008 Food Price Crisis: Rethinking Food Security Policies." United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/gdsmdpg2420093_en.pdf.

Muhr, Thomas. 2010. "Participatory Democracy and Regional Governance: The Alba." http://www.allacademic.com/one/prol/prol01/.

Nourrir les Hommes: Un Dictionnaire. 2009. Paris: Atlande.

Parmentier, Bruno. 2009. *Nourrir l'humanité* [Feeding the humanity]. Paris: La Découverte.

Patel, Raj. 2009a. "Food Sovereignty." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (3): 663–706.

——. 2009b. *Stuffed and Starved*. New York: Melville House Publishing.

Rosset, Peter. 2006. *Food Is Different*. London: Zed Books.

Schanbacer, William D. 2010. *The Politics of Food: The Global Conflict between Food Security and Food Sovereignty*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Seabrook, Jeremy. 2007. *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty*. Toronto: New Internationalist.

SELA (Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe). 2008. "The Increase in Food Prices: Sela's Response." http://www.sela.org/DB/ricsela/EDOCS/SRed/2008/06/T023600002822-0-The_increase_in_food_prices-SELAs_response.pdf.

Suggett, James. 2009. "Alba Trade Bloc Forms Joint Food Company at Summit in Venezuela." http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/4165.

Venezuela World. 2008. "Venezuela and Alba Create Food Security Fund." http://venworld.wordpress.com/2008/04/23/venezuela-and-alba-create-food-security-fund.

Weis, Tony. 2007. *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Efe Can Gürcan is a graduate candidate in International Studies at the University of Montreal.