

A War of Words: The Construction of Food Sovereignty in the US & UK

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Summary

This paper explores the construction of the food sovereignty movements in the United States and United Kingdom by examining non-governmental, political, and industry discourses through a Foucauldian informed discourse-analytic approach. Foucault's construal of Knowledge/Power was used to examine how the discursive structure within both countries influences the application of food sovereignty and who this application empowered or disempowered. The sampled documents were examined in an iterative process to reveal transient and durable meanings that related to food sovereignty. These were then linked to the construction of the movement in the US and UK, and the process of how the movement was being promoted or restricted by certain organizations. The analysis revealed that the food sovereignty movements within the US and UK are still 'embryonic' and do not have any official recognition by either countries' governments. The term was not explicitly mentioned outside of NGOs and advocacy groups and, where references were made, they offered a co-opted version that undermined food sovereignty's original vision. The dominance of the current neoliberal food regime was identified in all of the examined discourses, even those directly related to food sovereignty. Despite this dominance, principles of food sovereignty were also seen in all of the chosen documents. The presence of these concepts illustrates that even though food sovereignty is being constrained, the counter-discourse of the movement is growing within both countries.

Introduction

Food sovereignty is a concept that has grown out of a growing dissatisfaction among groups and individuals with the current food regime, which asserts individual and community autonomy over food systems instead of the authority exerted by corporations and market interests (Via Campesina, 2007; Jarosz, 2014). Food sovereignty is often called an 'oppositional' discourse to that of food security and the discourses of developmental economics (Mann, 2014). Unlike the concept of food security, which claims the state as the responsible party for providing access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, food sovereignty is meant to empower food producers and people within a nation to govern their food systems. This makes it "both a concept and a movement" (Hopma and Woods, 2014) with "an expansive set of principles, policies, and practices" (Field and Bell, 2013) that challenge neoliberal ideology with real-world application.

While this duality is meant to strengthen individual food sovereignty movements through the ability to shape policies and practices to their specific needs, it can also cause ambiguity, contradictions, and potential sectional disputes (Hopma and Woods, 2014). For food sovereignty to become a preferred alternative to the neoliberal food regime, more empirical and theoretical research needs to be carried out in order to inform and persuade not only policy makers, but citizens themselves. The analysis of the discourse surrounding the movement also allows academics and food sovereignty proponents to examine and critique how it is being constructed, in an effort to bring the movement from marginal discussions to a more mainstream position.

This discussion paper compares the food sovereignty movements in the United States and the United Kingdom through examining nongovernmental organization, industry, and political speeches and statements using a discourse analytic approach informed by Foucault's thesis on power relations. This paper serves to illustrate the construction of the food sovereignty movements in both countries in relation to how the examined discourses have promoted or restricted the movement's growth, along with who has been empowered or disempowered within each application. Food regime theory is used to contextualize food sovereignty and its historical development, with Foucault's work on the concept of Knowledge/Power providing the conceptual lens through which the discourses are examined using a discourse-analytic approach.

The findings within this paper illustrate how the various discourses within the US and UK construct the food sovereignty movement, and provide evidence that the neoliberal food regime can be still seen within all of the examined discourses and identifies those groups and individuals who become

empowered or disempowered within the discourses. The paper argues that despite all of the examined discourses linking to food sovereignty, the underlying neoliberal ideologies that echo the current food regime restricts the growth and practice of the movement in the US and UK. The discursive power of the neoliberal food regime needs to be better challenged in order for the food sovereignty movement to take root in both countries.

Food Regime Theory and the Historical Development of Food Sovereignty

The food sovereignty movement developed from a growing dissatisfaction, among groups and individuals around the world with the current global food regime and perceived deficiencies of food security initiatives. A food regime is denoted by specific "*institutional structures, norms and unwritten rules in international food production and consumption that are geographically and historically specific*" (Pechlaner and Otero, 2008, p. 352). Food regime theory deals with capital accumulation in food and farming systems, focusing on transitions in defined regimes throughout historical time (Burch and Lawrence, 2009). There is broad agreement that the world is currently in its third such 'regime', though the definition of the current one is contested. The first, or Settler-Colonial, food regime existed between 1870 to the 1930s and is defined by the establishment of national agriculture sectors with transporting tropical and basic grain and livestock imports between Europe and colonies (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). The second, or Post-World War II, regime occurred from the 1950s to 1970s and is characterized by the re-routing of surplus food in the attempt to secure loyalty to imperial markets (McMichael, 2009; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). The third regime has been called 'corporate-environmental', 'corporate', and 'neoliberal' and follows the collapse of the 'surplus' regime of Post-World War II along with the 'economic shocks' of the 1970s and 1980s (Holt- Giménez and Shattuck , 2011). It is regarded as incorporating transnational agrifood and national policies, which include global sourcing of food as the norm (Pechlaner and Otero, 2010; 2008), and characterized by the market influence and profits of monopolistic agrifood organizations and links between the food and fuel economies (Holt- Giménez and Shattuck, 2011).

Despite disagreement among academics on what to name the third food regime, most agree that neoliberal and productionist influences primarily shape it (see: Pechlaner and Otero, 2010; Pechlaner and Otero, 2008; McMichael, 1992). Productivism refers to "a commitment to an intensive, industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity" (Lowe et. al. 1993, p. 221). Moreover, a 'productionist regime' is one that consists of organizations that intend to 'boost' domestic sources of food production including state and financial institutions, suppliers, and research and development centers. It has been argued that this ideology has been prevalent in agriculture and food policy since World War II, and despite reform of the

European Union's Common Agricultural Policy that includes incentives to slow intensification, it is identified as continuing today (Walford, 2003; Evans, Morris and Winter, 2002).

Neoliberalism is an ideology that suggests that human well-being is best advanced through the liberation of individual freedoms within an institutional context in which free markets, free trade, strong private property rights, and privatization of services prevail (Harvey, 2005). Advocates of neoliberalism believe that globalizing markets will 'reduce' inequalities, support better economic allocation, and protect individual property rights (see: Robinson, 2006; Lee and McBride, 2007; Plehwe, Walpen and Neunhoffer, 2005; Phillips and Ilcan, 2011). Critics of the ideology argue that neoliberalism is wielded with the intent to 'restore class dominance' through the dismantling of egalitarian distributive measures and has harmful social consequences and 'perverse externalities' (Harvey, 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2002). According to Lee and McBride (2007) and Ayers (2008), neoliberalism has come to 'dominate' the relationship between the market and the state in both developed and developing countries and was able to flourish due to the loss of assurance in the social democratic welfare state. The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) - which was a treaty negotiated in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) by the WTO - is said to exemplify these neoliberal tendencies. Dibden, Potter and Cocklin (2009) argue that the three pillars of the AoA establish a measurement for assessing trade-distorting properties and 'codify' the neoliberal plan for liberalizing agriculture. Food sovereignty has been posed as an alternative to the neoliberal approach by social movements in the hope of protecting livelihoods, the environment, and community health, by placing food production in the hands of small-scale farmers (Altieri, 2009).

Within the GATT regime, the notion of food security is an 'essential goal,' with the Uruguay Round resulting in agro-food restructuring dominating manipulations for competitive positioning within the world economy (McMichael, 1992). While the concept of food security has been used in different ways, the most commonly cited definition is that from the World Health Organization, which states food security is "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life" (WHO, 2013). Brunori and Guarino (2010) have pointed out that the global interest in food security has been reintroduced into mainstream discourses through the 'crises' surrounding the political, financial, food, and environment spheres. The current food security discourse places emphasis on 'global' food security and international trade with the goals of increased production (such as 'sustainable intensification')- and market-based solutions (see: Allen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2013; Maye and Kirwan, 2013; Kirwan and Maye, 2013; Fish and Winter, 2013).

With its origins in the 1996 Rome Food Summit, the concept of food sovereignty evolved through the debate and work of numerous advocacy groups and academics discussing the topic. Food sovereignty calls for people to have the right to determine "*their own food producing systems and*

policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food" (Via Campesina, 2007, p. 2). Food sovereignty is often referred to as a political concept, as opposed to a technical concept which encompasses food security or a legal concept conveyed by the right to food (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005). The discourse surrounding the food sovereignty movement "demands the removal of agriculture from the international trade system and rejects agricultural biotechnology and energy-intensive (or 'industrial') agriculture in favour of localized food production and the protection of rural livelihoods across all nation-states" (Lee, 2013, p. 218). The movement asserts the rights of those seen as marginalized by the current food system and the corrections of these injustices (see: Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005; Patel, 2009; Perfecto, Vandermeer & Wright, 2009; Anderson, 2008). The emphasis of autonomy over one's own food system is a central thread throughout all food sovereignty campaigns and places food producers, distributors, and consumers at the center of the decision making process to accomplish this. The movement is meant to 'enhance' the importance of actors, knowledge, and practical experience in order to deconstruct the current food system and create a space for food in the global scope of social life (Arce, 2013). The name of the movement – food sovereignty – is meant to convey a transformation of the current neoliberal food regime to one including political, economic, gender, environmental, and societal constructs (Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, 2010) in which community autonomy countermands corporate influence and dominance.

The International Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, Mali in February 2007, brought together representatives from over 80 countries to develop an operational definition and support for a common global understanding of the movement. The forum identified six characteristics – or 'pillars' - of food sovereignty: 1) 'Focuses on Food for People', 2) 'Values Food Providers', 3) 'Localizes Food Systems', 4) 'Puts Control Locally', 5) 'Builds Knowledge and Skills', and 6) 'Works with Nature' (Nyéléni International Steering Committee, 2007).

A global network of non-governmental/civil society organizations and social movements is at the base of the framework policy behind food sovereignty (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005). Advocacy groups and organizations across Europe, Asia, Africa as well as North and South America have been incorporating the concept into their various movements. The inclusion of multiple voices along with cultural and intellectual perspectives is crucial to the evolution and implementation of food sovereignty. Examples of such groups include FIAN International, La Via Campesina (the group most associated with the food sovereignty movement), the United States Food Sovereignty Alliance, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, the ETC Group, and the UK Food Group among many others. These groups are similar through their commitment to promoting food sovereignty in their respective regions. However, there

are differences in terms of action and policy implementation that reflect variations in local circumstances.

The spatially situated nature of food which accounts for its varying states of implementation has been more challenging in certain countries/regions than others mainly for social, political, and economic reasons. In the Global South¹ the movement has received federal attention with principles being put into place in national law in such countries as Ecuador, Venezuela, and Mali (Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, 2010; Arce, 2013). The Global North has not had the same 'success' with applying food sovereignty principles into governance structures, and this has been identified as a reason why the movement is not realizing its full potential in these areas (Higgins, 2013). The movement has engaged a wide variety of groups stakeholder groups, academia, and policy makers. Key stakeholders include: farmers, food producers and consumers, and others that the movement intends to benefit. Academics from a variety of disciplinary perspectives have made both theoretical contributions (Menenez, 2001; Patel, 2010, 2009; Pimbert, 2006) and published case study analyses (Alkon and Mares, 2012; Reardon and Perez, 2010; Pritchard, 2013; Schiavoni, 2009) of food sovereignty. This engagement across multiple sectors has caused some contention among the movement's actors. As Holt-Giménez (2009) pointed out, the differing political and institutional roots of the organizations have caused competitive and contradictory relations, though he also notes that there is a clear symmetry between peasants' agrarian demands and smallholders practicing sustainable agriculture.

Critical evaluations of food sovereignty have been made and centre around the 'inconsistent' nature of the concept and its advocates (see: Patel, 2009; Sharma, 2011; Southgate, 2011). These discrepancies have led to organisations using the term 'food sovereignty' without implementing the movement's objectives. Some academic work has criticized the movement for being protectionist and defensive, which has been argued to be as harmful as the current food regime (see: Kerr, 2011; Sharma, 2011; Fairbairn, 2011). The adequacy of the movement's characterization of 'peasants' and 'small farmers' as social categories has also been challenged (Bernstein, 2013). Questions have also been raised surrounding the regulation and inclusion of transnational and international business and trade, as well as the democratization of the food system with the movement's discourses (see: Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2010; McMichael, 2010; Burnett and Murphy, 2013). For example, food sovereignty is criticized for not exploring the interface between the urban and rural contexts (Bernstein, 2013). The literature also demonstrates a lack of international comparative research examining the movement. There has also been discussion surrounding the absence of instruments for

¹ While the definitions of the terms 'Global South' and 'Global North' have been contested, their use in this dissertation constitutes the following interpretation: The Global North are countries that are 'wealthy' and 'developed' with the Global South consisting of countries that are 'poor' and 'developing' (Therein, 1999).

knowledge sharing and the gaps between policy and reality. Sharma (2011) argues that these are caused by a lack of work on best practices and a disjuncture between the 'conversations' being had and the actions that are actually played external to the movement's practice.

Food sovereignty has had a surge of recognition and acknowledgment in the US and UK, though not to the same extent that the concept has received in the Global South. As Wittman (2011, p. 98) writes North American and UK-based literature "almost completely ignores the food sovereignty framework" when talking about food system progress and revitalization. This lack of attention is detrimental, as "Social movements focused on sovereignty can help build a more democratic and accountable political system... By talking 'sovereignty' from the start, change-makers can pursue a mutual end goal from any number of individual struggles" (Roman-Alcalá, 2013).

According to Morris (2013), the food sovereignty movement in the UK is in an 'embryonic' phase. Food security has become predominant in agri-food policy since 2006, with food sovereignty not being mentioned in any of the policies. However since 2012 a formal movement for food sovereignty within the UK has been established, building on the efforts in both the research and practical application spheres. The political engagement with food sovereignty is more advanced than that of research or academic engagement, with the political connections being deliberately phrased in opposition to that of food security (Morris, 2013). The primary organization working on food sovereignty in the UK is called Food Sovereignty Now! and is "supported by a host of NGOs and activist groups whose work reflects the principles of the movement" (Food Sovereignty Now!, 2013). However, their efforts are still burgeoning and are not as coordinated as those within the Global South.

Food sovereignty in the US is also at a more grassroots level, with advocacy groups and community organizations being the main supporters of the concept. Anderson (2008) writes that while food sovereignty is a growing movement within the US, its growth has been much slower when compared to other areas with regard to both its application in the Global North, and its rate of growth in comparison to other food movements. Block *et. al.* (2010, p. 206) write that the US could be "fertile ground" for food sovereignty via local food projects and argue that the movement might be successfully applied in Chicago. The organizations mainly focused on food sovereignty in the US have been farm labor and family/small-farming advocates. The discourse surrounding food and food systems within the US have mainly concentrated around local and sustainable consumption and have largely ignored issues such as class and inequality (Block *et. al.*, 2010; Allen and Wilson, 2008).

Despite this, the concept of food sovereignty is gaining traction in some areas. The town of Sedgwick, Maine passed an ordinance granting its citizens the right "to produce, sell, purchase, and consume local foods of their choosing" in an attempt to free themselves of federal and state food regulations

which they believe is their right under the Home Rules provisions of the Maine State Constitution (Heyes, 2013). However this application of the food sovereignty principles has been opposed by the state of Maine, with a farmer in Blue Hills, ME having three charges filed against him by the state (St. Peter, 2011).

Methodology

This study uses Michel Foucault's work on discourse and Knowledge/Power to highlight how the discourse surrounding food sovereignty in the United States and United Kingdom constrains or encourages the proliferation of the movement. This method of analysis was chosen because of the way it clarifies how social meanings and forms of knowledge are shaped by speech and text (Tonkiss, 1998). Foucault believed that power has a positive role not only in the validation of knowledge, but of its production (Gutting, 2005). Foucault questioned how human nature operates within a given society and what part it played in structuring kinds of discourses, as well as how the power of discourse restricts the 'author' and their statements (Rabinow, 1991; Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999). He believed that language arranges and naturalizes the social world in a specific way that informs social practices (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). When analyzing policy discourse "...Foucault's concept of power suggests ways of studying the detailed dialogue of policy making and its implementation in order to understand the manifest practices of resistance, collaboration or co-operation" (Hewitt, 2009, p. 6).

Foucault used discourse to analyze where power lies in relationships by examining constraints in relationships and the shape of power that subjectifies individuals (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999; Simons, 1995). He believed there are three procedures of discourse that allow for it to unpack the meanings and contextual references. Surfaces of emergence, such as families or communities, are social and cultural areas in which a discourse becomes visible. Authorities of delimitation, such as medicine or law, are institutions of knowledge and power. Grids of specification are systems in which different designations (such as that of madness) are related to each other in a particular discourse (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999). Foucault's conceptualization highlights "the continuous power struggles between competing discourses [which] create the conditions that shape the social and physical world, and construct the individual" (Sharp and Richardson, 2001, p. 196). Societies allocate different standards for ascribing responsibilities to the author of a text, which makes it important to discern what these standards are and how they differ from each other (Gutting, 2005). In recognizing these differences, the power struggles between groups can be illuminated and analyzed.

This use of discourse analysis is beneficial when a researcher wants to view something from the exterior to gain insight into presumptions and practices (Hewitt, 2009). All language use imbues some type of

meaning, with transient meanings emerging from single and distinct interactions, and durable meanings occurring to indicate something beyond the distinct interaction in cultural, individual, and cognitive occurrences (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000). These two categories of meanings can be used to analyze a single communication or a widespread phenomenon and are applied in the examination of the chosen documents.

Documents were selected from the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, the UK Food Group, the National Farmers Union of England and Wales, the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America, and the political speeches of Environmental Secretary Caroline Spelman and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The selected discourses were analyzed to elaborate how language is used in relation to the concept of food sovereignty, and how this language helps or hinders the movement's growth in both countries.

Due to time limits associated with this publication, the number of documents that could be examined was restricted, which affects the study's scope and depth. Discourse analysis usually involves analyzing a large number of documents to achieve a thorough account of the situation being studied. As a result of the time constraint, only three documents from each country were looked at. Owing to the exhaustive nature of discourse analysis in regards to time and amounts of data needed for analysis, specific actions and activities from the chosen organizations were selected to analyze in order to traverse these roadblocks.

Considering that the method of discourse analysis does not have specific guidelines, the reliability and validity of the analysis is a matter of perception and is subject to counter-interpretations. Grounded Theory was utilized so as to not influence the research design with my own beliefs about the US and UK food systems. Despite attempts at being reflexive, a researcher's bias can still permeate a study, thus making it important to continually assess the work being produced. The selected documents were chosen due to their various influences on agricultural and trade regulations. Texts were chosen in an 'actor centric' fashion (Paul, 2012), looking at what organizations influence agriculture and food policies in significant ways. Research was done by looking at numerous policies in the agriculture and food realms in both countries and choosing documents that dealt with the principle of the movement. The NGO documents were chosen by looking at the primary actors in food sovereignty in both nations and selecting appropriate publications.

Due to time limitations, longer documents were not chosen because of the iterative nature of discourse analysis. While the year of publication was not a primary stipulation, a range of 10 years was kept in mind so that the documents would not be outdated and non-relevant.

Construction of Food Sovereignty

Examination of the chosen documents makes it evident that food sovereignty is not being explicitly talked about in either country outside of the NGO sphere. Food sovereignty is “embryonic,” as Morris (2013) has termed it, with the movement in both countries only being directly discussed – and therefore constructed - by NGOs and advocacy groups. This falls in line with the movement's grass-roots origins but has led to problems with its application in the US and UK. While food sovereignty has received federal attention in other parts of the world, it has largely been ignored by the US and UK governments. In fact, the US government is opposed to mentioning food sovereignty in any official documents (Anderson, 2013). The UK government does not seem as opposed to mentioning food sovereignty, but do not use the term except in one instance in the Foresight Report, although the term was not used the same way as in the international food sovereignty movement and has been co-opted.

Taking into consideration Foucault's work on Knowledge/Power, these exclusions – deliberate or not - play a negative role in the production and validation of the food sovereignty movement.

This negative role can be seen by the co-option of the term whenever groups outside the NGO sphere directly mention it. An example of this can be seen in the reference to ‘food sovereignty’ in the FECUA document:

Require all countries to meet health, environmental, food sovereignty, working conditions and labor rights standards equal to those of producers in the United States; (p. 51)

Respecting the food sovereignty of developing countries by not undercutting the price of local staples (p. 56)

In this use, FECUA has indicated a meaning of national authority over the one of community autonomy that the food sovereignty movement constructs. This use is oppositional to the definition set out by the Declaration of Nyéléni and applied by food sovereignty advocates. While this can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the food sovereignty movement outside the grass-roots sector, this co-option has implications for the movement's application. Looking through a Foucauldian lens, the change in definition shows the power that discourses have over the proliferation of social movements. In this case, the change in meaning of “food sovereignty” does not allow the original meaning as outlined by Declaration of Nyéléni to become known to those not directly involved in the movement.

This restricts the ‘authors’ of food sovereignty (e.g. the NGO and advocacy groups involved) in using their statements to inform social practices that relate to agriculture and food policy. It also shifts power

away from those following the food sovereignty principles to those who are in charge of the current food regime. This co-option can cause the public - and possibly other organizations - to misunderstand the core meaning of food sovereignty. This misunderstanding plays into the criticisms placed against food sovereignty regarding the inconsistent nature of the movement and its advocates (Patel, 2009; Sharma, 2011; Southgate, 2011).

Explicit mentions of food sovereignty within the political or industry discourses are not prevalent for numerous reasons, but both spheres feature discussions surrounding concepts that are central to the movement. Principles such as community building, protection of the environment, autonomy and the focus on 'marginalized' people can be seen throughout the selected documents. The US documents center around the concept of food as a right, following the 'Focuses on Food for People' pillar. This emphasis can be seen in FECUA's call for ratifying UN covenants and Secretary Vilsack's mention of social safety nets:

Ratifies and enforces all pending United Nations covenants on human rights (FECUA, p. 55)

We have to improve that economy with a strong safety net, a commitment to conservation, and a focus on market development; and this bill must also continue to provide for food assistance for families that are playing by the rules, working hard to provide for their families. (Vilsack)

The specific attention paid to this concept creates a counter-discourse to that of the current neoliberal food system, in which food is just an item to be bought and sold. The formation of private property rights for resources that were previously administered as common resources creates a discursive construction which contrasts 'commodities' with 'rights' (Bakker, 2007). This construction disempowers individuals and communities in regard to food provisioning because they no longer have the right to food, only the right to access a market in which to purchase it. FECUA's call for all UN conventions on human rights to be ratified and enforced creates a counter-discourse to the current belief within the US government that food is not a right. This creates a discursive space in which the issue of food as a right can be discussed and expanded upon. Despite these documents talking about food as a right, they do not explicitly state it as a right, or mention direct policy actions to achieve it. Within the UK documents, emphasis is placed on the 'Works with Nature' pillar, with Mrs. Spellman and the NFU discussing environmental stewardship and biodiversity:

Currently we're working with Natural England and others to make all strands of Environmental Stewardship more effective and better targeted. The aim here is to ensure that the scheme is more focused on results. (Spellman)

British agriculture has a good story to tell: improving water quality, stewardship of biodiversity, resilience to drought and climate change, a temperate, maritime climate, strong consumer scrutiny of the supply chain and the rule of law. (NFU, p. 8)

The inclusion of these actions indicates another way in which the examined discourses possess elements of food sovereignty. According to Castree (2008), there has been an increasing phenomenon of the physical world becoming subject to "neoliberal thought and practice" over the past thirty years. By including actions on environmental stewardship and biodiversity, a knowledge separate from the existing condition which commercializes and privatizes nature begins to emerge. The inclusion of food sovereignty principles within the industry and political discourses allows an opportunity for systemic change in the food systems of both countries to occur. Because knowledge is 'pervasive' in the Knowledge/Power paradigm, the presence of these concepts allows the counter-discourse of food sovereignty to proliferate (Foucault, 1998).

However, the prevalence of the neoliberal thought process hinders the application of the movement in various ways. A prime example of this is the use of the 'Big Society' ideology within Mrs. Spellman's speech:

Underlying all of this is the power shift from the centre towards local organisations – putting local people back in charge – a classic example of what we mean by Big Society. This shift will change the way the department works. We want to see a greater degree of trust and collaboration when developing and delivering policy. This will allow you as an industry to shape your own destiny.

At the transient level, the implementation of the policy into the speech is meant to promote the political party's ideas as well as a message of 'autonomy' for citizens. Though it is not apparent within the speech, despite its message of local power and autonomy, the Big Society has been criticized by many for exhibiting neoliberal tendencies. This can be seen through the decline of public funding, failing to recognize the need for the role of the state over the market, and placing economic growth over moral concerns (Barker, 2012; Dawson, 2012; Kisby, 2010). Another example of underlying neoliberalism within concepts related to food sovereignty is the NFU's discussion of local production as a reaction to global factors:

Global availability of food can no longer be taken for granted. What is more, the persistent decline in food self-sufficiency within the UK since the mid-1980s means that we are more exposed to shocks in the global food system than for many years. (p. 6)

These examples highlight that the concepts of autonomy and local production are being constructed through a neoliberal dominance. This neoliberal dominance is evident throughout all the examined documents, which can be attributed to the fact that it is still the dominant framework within today's world. The continued neoliberal undercurrent highlights that authorities of delimitation (i.e. government and corporations) propagate the ideologies associated with the current food regime, while food sovereignty is still mainly discussed in surfaces of emergence (i.e. individuals and communities).

It becomes evident through examining the NGO discourse around food sovereignty that the groups in both countries echo the discourse of the international movement. Both the UKFG and USFSA utilize language concurrent with the counter-discourse that food sovereignty uses in relation to the neoliberal food regime. This is evidenced through the explicit use of language that is in line with the food sovereignty principles as outlined in the Declaration of Nyéléni:

We believe that food and water must be treated as basic human rights and we uphold the internationally recognized principles of food sovereignty. ... We support movement away from the dominant, corporate-controlled food system, which is shaped by systems of power and oppression. Our solutions must dismantle systemic food injustice rooted in race, class, and gender oppression. (USFSA, p. 1)

Industrial crop and livestock production and intensive fisheries, and associated processing, global distribution and retailing, are damaging our food systems, people and planet in a multiplicity of ways; industrial production is in the hands of unaccountable and remote corporations. (UK Food Group, p. 5)

Both organizations describe how food sovereignty is a viable alternative to those problems associated with the neoliberal food regime. The UKFG and USFSA documents present country-specific and global examples of how food sovereignty can correct the perceived injustices of the current food system. However the loss of localism and lack of focus on communities show that there is still an undercurrent of the neoliberal food regime within these discourses. This can be seen through the emphasis placed on the international context by the USFSA:

We embrace international solidarity as central to our organizing and view our struggles in the US as part of a broader global food sovereignty movement. (p.1)

and the highlighting of the monetary costs of biodiversity degradation by the UKFG, which falls in line with the privatization and commodification of nature:

Environmental degradation is also expensive: even in the 1990s, agricultural losses due to land degradation were about \$550 million annually, and the UN estimates that global income loss due to desertification is \$42 billion. (p. 6)

The loss of a local context restricts the food sovereignty discourse through constructing a meaning that is not directly in line with the one defined by the movement's advocates. This construction hinders the application of food sovereignty within both countries by depriving the movement of its original intent. With the 'true' meaning of food sovereignty from being disseminated, power is kept within the circle of actors who determine the course of the current food system.

Within the examined discourses, the issue of (dis)empowerment becomes evident when looking at the documents' intended audiences and those groups who are affected by each discourse. Placing a focus on those seen as marginalized and disenfranchised in the current food system highlights the attempt being made to connect to the counter-discourse of food sovereignty. The focus placed on previously excluded groups and those marginalized by the current food system along with the concepts of autonomy and 'food as a right' highlight how the examined discourses affect the (dis)empowerment of different groups. An example of this can be seen in the emphasis placed on ending poverty and racism within the USFSA document, the inclusion of those other than farmers in Secretary Vilsack's speech, and the NFU's discussion about a 'major shift' in the food supply chain:

We are committed to a membership and leadership that reflects the entire population of the US and the full spectrum of people impacted by the food system, particularly low income communities and communities of color in both rural and urban areas (USFSA, p. 1)

Any legislation considered by Congress involving farming in rural areas of America must also address the needs of the nearly 50 million people who live in those areas who don't necessarily farm. (Vilsack)

Above all, there will need to be a major shift in the way the food supply chain works, moving away from the current short-term approach based on quarterly profit performance towards long-term relationships that are built on trust and fairness involving all links in the chain. (NFU, p. 9)

Despite these actions being referenced in an attempt to empower the groups seen as 'marginalized' by food sovereignty, the present neoliberal connotations show that neoliberalism is still the current discursive regime. The continued emergence of the neoliberal food regime throughout all the

discourses exemplifies how it has come to 'police' agriculture and food policy, much like Foucault's 'Panopticon' did its inmates.²

While groups are attempting to utilize a counter-discourse (whether it be food sovereignty, or other movements) to fight against the current food regime, the way that neoliberalism has been diffused through all aspects of society does not allow this to happen. Due to this the groups seen as marginalized and disenfranchised continue to be so despite the efforts of advocacy groups. Examples of this disempowerment can be seen through the use of the economy and markets as drivers for policy:

The importance of farming to the UK economy is recognised by the priority we have given it in Defra's business plan, providing the kind of leadership you call for. (Spellman)

British farming is about much more than niche, value-added or local specialities. It's also about delivering production on a large, efficient scale – be it wheat for bread and biscuits, milk for processing, cereals for animal feed or beet for sugar. Producing for commodity markets certainly does not mean that standards or quality are not important – in fact the vast majority of these types of production are covered by exacting farm assurance schemes. (NFU, p. 8)

USDA has to have the tools to be able to continue to help this biobased and biofuel and renewable energy economy, and we need to make sure that it's vibrant in all regions of the -- of the country. Continuing our investment in renewable energy, biofuel, and biobased products will improve the bottom line for farmers as we find creative ways to use that which they grow (Vilsack)

Using markets and the economy as drivers for policy disempowers different groups within a food system including consumers and small and medium scale producers along with migrant workers and farm laborers. Individuals are no longer relevant, with the importance being placed on the volume of production and amount of profit that can be made. This threatens people's livelihoods through creating an "ensemble of actions that induce others" which place commodification at the center of the discussion (Foucault, 2003, p. 135).

As illustrated by the analysis of the documents, food sovereignty – whether explicitly mentioned or not – is in fact present throughout all the discourses. Despite this presence the NGO, industry, and political

² Foucault used the 'Panopticon' – a circular prison where the cells are arranged around a central watchtower, causing the inmates to never know when they were being surveyed and thus police their own behavior as if they were being watched – as a metaphor for the way modern society 'polices' the bodies and minds of individuals (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982).

discourses exemplify the current neoliberal food regime by varying degrees as demonstrated by the given quotes. This contradiction represents neoliberalism's discursive power in constructing the way in which organizations discuss agricultural and food policy. The restricted construction of the food sovereignty movement represents the disempowerment currently seen within the existing food regime, which remains despite efforts to dismantle it.

The co-option of the term along with the lack of open discussion about the movement in political and industry spheres is a direct hindrance to food sovereignty's application in the US and UK. The way in which food sovereignty is being constructed through these spheres can lead NGOs and advocacy groups to experience roadblocks in their efforts. Such complications towards implementing food sovereignty can include laws and policies that prohibit application some of the movement's principles. For instance, it may be hard for citizens to gain control over their own food system if there are regulations in place regarding land use, such as the zoning laws that prohibit raising animals in certain places within the US. Since the movement is not formally recognized in either country, there are no official grounds for organizations to apply food sovereignty's principles. These actions lead to only certain sections of the public knowing what food sovereignty is, and can create a barrier to accessing support from organizations tied to the movement. This also contributes to communities and individuals accepting and perpetuating the status quo of the current food regime, due to their ignorance of other alternatives.

As evidenced above, the food sovereignty movement is not being explicitly discussed outside NGOs and advocacy groups. While the movement is emerging in both countries, it is not being consciously constructed above the grass-roots level. Despite federal resistance to mentions of food sovereignty (Anderson, 2013) when examining the chosen discourses, the US seems to be a more suitable environment for the proliferation of a food sovereignty movement. This can be attributed to the already established work being done on local and regional food systems and the structure of the country itself, which already 'devolves' power to communities through the federal, state and municipality systems. As evidenced by the documents, the UK is more inclined to continue the focus on food security and productionism within the current neoliberal food regime.

Through the comparison of the examined discourses, several differences between each country's constructions of the movement can be seen. Within the US, food sovereignty focuses on communities and groups seen as 'disenfranchised' while in the UK the focus centers on producers. Both constructions define food sovereignty in terms consistent with the Declaration of Nyéléni, but have different emphases regarding scale and aims.

While it can be argued the US has a more apt setting for the growth of food sovereignty, the restriction placed upon the movement's discourse hinders its application. By refusing to talk about food sovereignty, the US government places discursive constructions upon the meaning of the movement. This creates an imbalance of power in favor of the actors within the current neoliberal food regime and disempowers those groups that food sovereignty focuses on. Within the UK discourse, the emphasis on international factors as grounds for self-sufficiency and autonomy also creates a construct in line with the neoliberal thought process. Yet the way in which the UK discourses are constructed around the engagement of farmers and citizens creates an environment that empowers producers and consumers.

Due to its discontent with the current food regime, the food sovereignty movement is a site of resistance within the discourses surrounding agriculture and food policy. However, food security still remains the dominant framework due to neoliberalism holding power over the counter-discourse of food sovereignty. Foucault (2003) pointed out that power is rooted in the 'social' with norms becoming so embedded that people do not realize their pervasiveness or think to question them. As evidenced above, the neoliberal thought process is still embedded in everyday practices due to being reinforced by the political and economic ideologies within both countries. For food sovereignty to gain solid footing in either nation, its counter-discursive elements need a wider audience. While the neoliberal food regime still holds discursive power, the food sovereignty movement's struggle to emerge in the US and UK will continue. However food sovereignty is gaining power through the continued debate surrounding neoliberalism, and the work of advocacy groups that continue the movement's counter-discourse in their work.

Conclusion

This paper has compared the food sovereignty movements in the US and UK by examining how the discourses from the NGO, industry and political arenas have influenced the food sovereignty movement. A discourse-analytic approach inspired by the works of Michel Foucault was used to detect how each organization's discourse constructs the food sovereignty movement in either nation. Foucault's construal of Knowledge/Power elucidates power relationships and how certain forms of understanding come to be accepted as the norm. This explanation of social phenomenon was used as an instrument to examine how the movements within both countries influence the application of food sovereignty and who this application empowered or disempowered. The chosen documents were examined in an iterative process to reveal transient and durable meanings that related to food sovereignty. These were then linked to the construction of the movement in the US and UK, along with how the movement was being promoted or restricted by certain organizations.

The study found that the food sovereignty movements within the US and UK are still 'embryonic' and do not have any official recognition by either countries' governments. The movement is not being explicitly discussed outside of NGOs and advocacy groups. Whenever the term is mentioned, it is co-opted and used in a way that undermines food sovereignty's original vision. This exemplifies that the current food regime still holds discursive power within the US and UK, which is evidenced by the prevalence of neoliberal undercurrents in all of the examined discourses, even those directly related to food sovereignty. Examples of this dominance can be seen in the continued use of markets and the economy as the main drivers for policies surrounding agriculture and food, discourses not focusing on individuals or communities, and the persistent treatment of food as a commodity instead of a human right.

With this development being within surfaces of emergence - such as individuals and communities - and not in authorities of delimitation - such as the government and corporations - the proliferation of the movement is controlled by those in power. Despite this neoliberal dominance, principles of food sovereignty can also be seen in all of the chosen documents. The presence of these concepts illustrates that even though it is being restricted, the counter-discourse of the movement is growing within the US and UK. Debates within academia and the public about the current food regime and neoliberalism allow food sovereignty's counter-discourse to challenge the embedded 'norm' of neoliberalism and grow within both countries.

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