



Nutrition, a contested arena in food sovereignty struggles.

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List of Acronyms and abbreviations

CIBVs	Centros Infantiles del Buen Vivir
COPISA	Confederacion Plurinaicional e Intercultural para Soberania Alimentaria
ENSANUT	Encuesta Nacional de Salud y Nutricion
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
FIAN	Food First Information Action Network
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDA	Guideline Daily Amounts
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GNRFN	Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition
ICN	International Conference on Nutrition
ICN2	Second International Conference on Nutrition
LNHO	League of Nations Health Organization
LVC	La Via Campesina
MAGAP	Ministry of Agriculture in Ecuador
MCP	Coordinator Ministry of Production in Ecuador
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIES	Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion in Ecuador
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFP	School Feeding Program
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

Worldwide, the double burden of malnutrition in all forms has become a centre of debates and arguments because the major states' failures to fight it in different levels. Also, governments are easily influenced by international organizations to maintain productionist lines to satisfy the newly created patterns of food demands in benefit to the large agroindustrial sector. As a response, food and agrarian movements are claiming for greater state's support to local networks and self production-consumption in nutritional frontlines and traditional diets making a strong emphasis in having different concepts of healthy food. In Ecuador, the food sovereignty constitutional context, in which this research develops, has become a terrain of debate because of the co-optation process from the government and against social movements. Therefore, this study analyses and unpacks those relations between the state actors and food movements to promote a different way of understanding regarding nutritional issues.

Relevance to Development Studies

Food analysis has its importance in providing insights of the relations between different actors regarding the social, environmental and political issues to understand swift transformations as in the case of nutrition. Moreover, it is highly relevant to unpack and organize the proposals from different approaches with malnutrition and food problems. Consequently, the analysis of conventional understanding of food policies regarding developmentalism should be analysed and de-construct to promote alternatives approaches more appropriate to local realities.

Keywords: nutrition, state-society, food sovereignty.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Defined as a political concept, food sovereignty has maintained its position and discourse from agrarian movements around the world to keep fighting against unfair and unequal structures provoked by the current agrarian food systems. Indeed, all over the world, agrarian movements along with academics and activist have been discussing the necessity to understand at a deeper level what food sovereignty can do to face the current problems that affect humanity. Thus political branches from agrarian movements have been pushing specific fights for global issues such as food and environment (Borras, 2016: 20).

The tragic negative externalities from the food hegemonic worldwide economic system are the increasing illnesses provoked by malnutrition (in all its forms such as hunger, undernourishment, overweight and obesity). Furthermore, while writing this research, shocking news was exposing how corporations are (and were) hiding adverse impacts in human health regarding components in products (i.e. high sugar contents). Also, the world is facing that, day after day, more than one billion people go to bed without eating and consuming their minimum calories needs per day (FAO 2014; Provost 2012 in Akram-Lodhi 2013: 4). Also, the double burden of the malnutrition is shown when more than “more than 1.9 billion adults, 18 years and older, were overweight. Of these over 600 million were obese” (WHO 2016). As a consequence, millions are, and will be, facing diseases provoked by an inadequate intake of healthy food. However, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2015) claims that “approximately 218 million fewer people suffer from undernourishment than 25 years ago and 169 million fewer than a decade ago” under the supposed success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As a response to this dramatic reality, food sovereignty is postulated as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni 2007 emphasis added). Also, the Nyéléni Declaration indicates that food sovereignty “promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition.” In that sense, food sovereignty puts a lot prominence in the healthy and nutritional condition of food as well as the local and cultural sense of it. However, there is little consensus about how food sovereignty could achieve in practice the provision of healthy and nutritional food.

Together, La Via Campesina (LVC), the largest transnational agrarian movement in the world, and the Food First Information Action Network (FIAN 2016) call the attention of the power dimension that is discussed under the food sovereignty context. Among other questions, FIAN proposes to analyse “who should define food and nutrition and related policies” to unpack all interests involved in the commodification of food, its governance, the role of the state, and the role social agrarian movements, and their interaction. In that sense, Patel’s analysis (2009) describes that the food sovereignty concept might show some weakness due its big umbrella. Others have argued that the sole concept of food sovereignty enhance the presence of the state, and reduces the action of social movements (Clark 2016).

If the state is in charge of finding solutions for the double burden of nutrition, why, then, the implemented policies are generating undesired results. Contrary, if the social (food) movements and civil society have the role of proposing alternatives to traditional state responses (in every political position), why, then, there is a minimum impact on their achievements to face the hegemonic food systems as the root of the nutritional problem. Therefore, this research contributes to analyse some theoretical and practical aspects regarding nutrition in the context of the food sovereignty based on the state-society approach. In that sense, it is used Fox’s arguments (1993) that explain too state, or too society (social movement) centered approaches usually reduces the scope analysis of the interaction between those actors. This approach has been developed in the context of food and rural politics in different research to understand how and to what extent social movements influence the state, and how the state influences social movements. It should be emphasised that none of the state actors and social movements are considered in a homogenous way. There are a broad range of diversity, power, capacity and autonomy from each of them to shape the other.

These relations have been configuring a complex about how nutrition is understood in a country that food sovereignty became a political flag from all actors. Each actor has a defined positionality regarding solutions to the nutritional issues. Moreover, the food sovereignty context in Ecuador complicates more about the nutritional interaction between what actors claim. For that reason, it is considered that some of the elements that are not yet covered in a clear direction in food sovereignty studies is what Edelman (2014: 972) describes as the “consumers taste in a food sovereign society.” In that sense, it is not clear yet the extent that the global hegemonic food system has shaped

Ecuadorians diets. The state positionality, regarding agricultural and food policies, can be associated with the new institutional line of corporations controlling the food systems in continues expansion of large-scale agriculture. Contrary, there are voices in the Colectivo Agroecologico of Ecuador that are claiming that there are nutritional frontlines called resistance spaces to hegemonic food systems. Those resistances are, according to the food movement, proofs of better nutrition resulted from food local networks and resilience of traditional diets.

It is important to mention that Food systems transformation and subsequent homogenization of diets is one of most radical transformations in recent human history. From food complexes (Friedmann 1992) to current meatification of diets (Weis 2007), the states have become an instrument to facilitate agricultural policies in support of large-scale agriculture. This has lead to the global nutritional transition (Popkin 2001) describe as the adaptation of societies into a homogeny food pattern of consumption that has produce illnesses typical of the western style of life. Besides, it developmentalism machinery in Latin America has relied on the export sector in detriment of small-scale farming mostly associated with peasants' family farming. Ecuador is not an exception to that trend. Also, this machinery is structured by international organizations that determine policies that should be adopted to face poverty, enhance education, and promote welfare. Therefore, the states seem to have a unique orientation to fight back to problems created by the same system. In this research, the state is not drawn as one unique homogeny type, but in the majority of cases, the responses, its actors, and food policies are highly similar.

This homogenization represents one of the main core aspects of the extreme capitalism in a post-neoliberal era. However, it has induced a lot of social resistances processes all over the world. Indeed, while the new-institutional economic programs have been enhancing the expansion of commodity production (from natural resources extractivism and large-scale agricultural products), many social (agrarian, food and environmental) movements are raising their demands with a diverse type of struggles to resist the homogenization project of capitalism. The food movements are opening a wide set of ways to resist food impositions mostly from local perspectives. They are calling to look human food relations into a different way. Those relations give more emphasis to the role of people (as individuals) with or without participation in politics. Some of these new responses are also flourishing in Ecuador.

This new way of struggle is highly critical to the traditional understanding of social movements and civil society arena about the state. This is opening discussions to understand how and why food governance should be adapted to different realities rather than establishing uniform policies. Indeed, “while a great deal of attention has been paid in literature to these changing patterns of global governance, we know remarkably little about how they play out, or their consequences and implications for ordinary citizens” (Gaventa and Tandon 2010: 3). Therefore, food governance and the role of the state have not been paying attention to the new demands to govern and rule local food systems and all population effects, including the peasants (mostly but not only rural), and urban citizens.

In Ecuador, food sovereignty was included but never exercised in policies and practices. As it has been widely studied, food sovereignty has opened the discussion about who exercise (concerning governance) food sovereignty, is it the state? Are the communities? If so, to what extent these actors can indeed implement food sovereignty principles. Ecuador’s constitutional achievement of including food sovereignty reflects in many points the capacity that social movements can influence in state policies. However, it also questions about how to built its entire demands when the majority of those principles strike directly on the institutional structure of the state. Apparently, food sovereignty reduces the state presence because it promotes a strong engagement to small-scale agriculture and the peasantry. Contrary, as in the case of Ecuador, the state seems to institutionalize food sovereignty transforming its principles in mere commands to justify the expansion of large-scale agriculture.

Food sovereignty should not be understood as an achievement point. In fact, it is a construction path for food justice, food security, social and ecological resilience, and a generator of new options inside the agricultural, food and environmental struggles worldwide. It is a flag for social environmental demands and political action. Schiavoni (2016: 13) points out that “since there is no predetermined path for food sovereignty, it must be defined and articulated as it is being constructed, through processes that are open-ended, iterative, creative, and contentious.” Based on the Colectivo Agroecologico proposal and the state response policies, the study will analyse how these two actors interact with each other and what are the possible outcomes. Therefore, the research question is: How and why nutrition becomes a contested arena in the Ecuadorian food sovereignty context?

To answer this question, the research analyses the two positions regarding nutrition in Ecuador. From one side, the food movement Colectivo Agroecologico is proposing to take the food sovereignty into practice. Distanced from the government and the state, the Colectivo is proposing the relevance of nutritional frontlines of good and healthy diets give back the joyful of food, and the relink of the urban-rural dichotomies by communitarian baskets (canastas comunitarias in Spanish) initiatives. On the other side, the state bases its response on traditional policies of nutrition. Most of these policies are the adoption of the United Nations and the World Health Organization recommendations. Those policies are supporting the mass production of highly processed and fortified food.

This research discussion is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the problem, the research question, the methodology, and methods. The second chapter is the theoretical framework mostly based on state-society relations. Also, this chapter includes local proposals regarding the nutrition question in a more Chayanovian sense. The third chapter analyses nutrition from two perspectives: state and social movements in Ecuador. The fourth chapter discusses the nutritional discussion regarding food struggles in the food sovereignty context. Finally, the fifth chapter covers deliberations and conclusions from the research.

Methodology and methods

This research paper analysis, under the lens of state-society interaction, the two visions of nutrition in the current Ecuadorian food sovereignty context. As it has been mentioned, from one side is standing the Colectivo Agroecologico as a food movement against the hegemonic food systems that is being implemented in Ecuador. Contrary, the state that is adopting general solutions of fixing highly processed food. Based on previous research, the still present highly biocultural diversity existent in Ecuador, as well as in many other countries in the south, are essential to keep finding social environmental resistances to hegemonic and homogeny programs (Jimenez 2016). In the same line, my research wants to contribute the discussion of understanding nutritional positions, debates and proposals from the state actors, and the civil society and social (food and agrarian) movements. As a result, I hope to provide the spaces of contradictions and disagreements, the spaces of overlapping, and the spaces of agreements. These spaces of the state-society interaction could give lights about how and why face nutrition in a complete way.

It is important to position my readers into my previous background that is guided by agroecology and farming mostly related to the new peasantries (Ploeg 2010). Moreover, the researcher stands in a critical line to the state. As a consequence, there might be biases regarding social movements capabilities and most recent their capacity to be more influential in food and nutrition. It is expected this analysis would become an input for further discussion regarding the problems (such as nutritional illnesses) caused by the dominant paradigm of large-scale agriculture and its hegemonic food control by corporations.

Food movements and state actors

In first place, the researcher has chosen to work with the Colectivo Agroecologico as one of the food movements in Ecuador. It is a representative and diverse movement that has been enrolled and related to the proposal and construction of food sovereignty. Also, it should be mention that there are many food, agrarian, and environmental movements in Ecuador. However, the Colectivo is one of the most visible ones because it has different a wide range of people involved. In second place, it should be mentioned that there is only one high former representative of the state involved in this research (see Appendix 1). Moreover, social networks, official websites, and public research have been used to construct and elaborate the rest of the state positions and discourse.

Also, semi-structured interviews were used as the method to gather information around the topic. The interviews were done (by Skype) to state and food movement actors who are/were involved in food sovereignty construction and nutritional issues. Furthermore, in both cases, Colectivo Agroecologico and the state, many academic and opinion articles have been used to complete my analysis and evaluation of each position regarding nutrition and the new/old forms to deal with it.

For that reason, during the summer of 2016, the interviews were carried out to chosen key actors in order to get from first hand what it has been the role of the food movements about the food sovereignty context in Ecuador. In total, there was: one representative from Canastas Comunitarias group (communitarian baskets), one academic and activist, one from the Slow Food movement in Ecuador, and one nutritional consultant and cooker chef. All of them are part of the Colectivo Agroecologico whose members were involved as advisers, among indigenous groups, in the elaboration and construction of food sovereignty proposal in the constitutional level.

Moreover, it is important to mention that one representative was leading the COPISA (Plurinational and Intercultural Conference on Food Sovereignty), the entity which function was the elaboration of the supporting laws of the law of food sovereignty in Ecuador. On the other hand, it was used a very recent recorded interview on the Facebook page of the leader's research about the 'light traffic' labelling of highly processed food in Ecuador. It is important to indicate that this researcher also led the National Survey on Health and Nutrition (ENSANUT). Besides, an interview was done to former Minister of the Ministry Coordinator of Social Development about the labelling policy.

Finally, the study of interactions among and across food movements and the state actors regarding food issues starts by understanding the autonomy and capacity levels to influence the decision-making, their synergies and tensions, and changes from both sides, and the consequences of those interactions (Fox 1993). These interactions are possible in scenarios when state actors are involved in a sort of progressist government.

Scope and Limitations

It is beyond the scope of this research to analyse diets, menus, and eating food pattern transformations. Indeed, it should be almost impossible to obtain such information considering the continue food system transformation and the highly different social responses in each community. Also, the majority of the nutritional studies are mostly oriented to discuss the effects of the use of highly processed food. Also, it is away from this research to understand pathogenic or salutogenic diet effects over the population. The author of the research is aware that nutritional transition analysis in the Ecuadorian FS context requires longer periods of research.

The scope of this research is the Ecuadorian of food sovereignty context. Therefore, much more research is necessary to understand longer processes of state-society interactions regarding agrarian, food and environmental politics and policy outcomes. Furthermore, the research data was collected through the testimony of some of the food activists in Ecuador by an interview. Therefore, it is clear that there are a lot of blind points in how/why social (food) movements construct and promote alternatives to the main and hegemonic food system. Also, it was not considered for this research the analysis of their influence on each other because it would require a longer period of analysis due to the changing nature of the Ecuadorian state and the food movements.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

State-society relations of food nutritional issues and beyond

The central question of this research is to understand state actors interaction with social movement actors about malnutrition in Ecuador. Furthermore, it is important to elaborate an adequate theoretical framework regarding state-society interactions and to what extent this approach can explain some of those interactions. Indeed, the interactive approach state-society is proposed to eliminate the biases from social movements centre perspectives as well as state ones. Fox (1993: 21) explains that the “state action is the result of a reciprocal cause and effect relationship between changes in the balance of power within the state and shifts in the balance of power within society. Through conflict, each is transformed.”

The state-society interactive approach promotes an analytical strategy to study the outcomes of the relations between state actors and civil society and social movements actors. However, those relationships and results are wide open and diverse. For that reason, it is critical to choose one particular issue of social relations to be contextualized and discuss. As it will be noticed in this research, state-society approach might be enhanced by the extension of no-relations in determined fields, as it seems in the social food relations. For instance, the food movement in Ecuador is leading a strategy to deal with individuals that work in the state but making an emphasis in the human characteristic rather than the condition of being a state actor.

In the same line, food movements are claiming that the state has become an actor and not an institution to be influenced by any pressure. Contrary, from the state analysis, it is argued that the state has adopted a position of not dealing with social movements because they might not have a political representation and legitimacy to claim for any changes. Therefore, the food governance might be oriented to a state centre action with a minimum or none food movements participation.

Also, the state-society food relations are not picturing two clear and define sides. In fact, there is progress regarding food policies of regulations to the agroindustrial sector inside the state. As it will be discussed in chapter 3, there are some contradictions in state actors over the food politics and policy

outcomes. This diversity is also expressed in the food movements' relations when there is some tension at the moment to identify themselves as social movements pursuing a political goal. This lack of self-identity, as in the case of the Colectivo Agroecologico, might be slowing the steps to adopt more concrete actions versus the dominant corporate food system.

Moreover, Fox (1993: 39) argues that the “most promising approach focus on the interaction between state and society, the institutions that mediate such interaction, and the factors that account for how those institutions are in turn transformed.” Therefore, it is highly important to pay attention also to those institutions and factors that allow or restrict the interaction. In the Ecuadorian food field, some initiatives seem to be oriented to support peasant family farming and local food networks. However, some recent research, the official support has been minimal if it is compared to the agroindustrial sector (Carrion and Herrera 2012).

There is another key aspect to be taken into account. Fox (1993: 39) situates the power balance analysis “within the state recursively interact with shifts in the correlation of forces in society.” Consequently, the state-society relations should consider how and who exercise power regarding the implementation of food policies and through what type of governance strategies are being used in the processes of those policies' construction. In that sense, Fox (1993: 39) elaborates his approach by introducing an “institutional access routes [for social movements action] and policy currents [state-society alliances].” These spaces for action and partnerships are considered an open window that facilitates some outcomes regarding the extent in which a food movement can influence over a state policy.

There are non-agrarian movements that are into food politics issues (e.g. consumers movements, public health inspired food politics initiatives), which are mainly, though not only, located in urban spaces, that have received much-needed inspiration and allies from agrarian movements. This has occurred through a variety of objective and subjective, as well as explicit and amorphous, coalitions and joint actions around the issues of food justice and food sovereignty. (Borras, 2016: 21)

Some limitations must be mentioned. Firstly, Fox argues that these state-society relations were facilitated by the arrival of a progressist or reformist government. In consequence, if there were more conservative or non-reformist governments, it would be no possible to have a land reform process, food policies change, strong peasant family farming policies, and a fulfilment of an integral rural

development. However, it was precisely in the most neoliberal governments in Latin America that the social movements raised their voices and actions (i.e. massive strikes) and got tremendous influence over some state policies. Those relations developed the studies of social movement and state actors' repertoire of contention.

Another element is the context in which the state-society relations take place. Ecuador has a history of the rise of agrarian movements claiming rights to land access (from the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s) that evolve into the food sovereignty demands at the beginning of the 2000s, to the constitutional inclusion and the distancing of President Correa government to agrarian movements in current times. Therefore, social movements are evolving their repertoire of contention to include some other elements of the state agenda. However, these relations seem more fluent when there are state actors involved and related to social movement demands regarding a type of struggle. In that sense, the Colectivo Agroecológico is putting on the table of public policy debate the rising of non-communicable diseases as a consequence of a broken and unhealthy food system.

In that sense, the question of a new type of contentious activities has to be discussed regarding the strategies to be used in the case of the food politics. If the struggles of land were provoked by an extreme marginalization and exploitation, and the support of non-governmental organizations, it would be appropriate to claim that the severe worldwide malnutrition is a political flag to urge radical transformations. Indeed, FIAN is leading a global struggle to promote the *right to adequate food and nutrition* as a response of the 'right of calories' produced by the current global food system. Also, the right to adequate food and nutrition makes an urgent call to put more attention the food governance process that is highly beneficial to the corporate food sector. In Ecuador, the Colectivo Agroecológico is looking for a new space to deal with state actors in a more individual way rather than the institutions that those might represent regarding food and nutrition outcomes.

The Ecuadorian state has maintained a traditional assistance to deal with nutritional problems. As it is analysed in this research, the state elaborates food policies to reduce undernourishment based on the productivist logic, typical in a neo-developmental state. Indeed, under that approach, the school-feeding program depends heavily on processed food. As a consequence, the state reduces dramatically the role of a still resilient peasant family farming to be revitalized,

included, and developed. Also, there are direct contradictions to the food sovereignty constitutional mandate inside the Good Living program (Buen Vivir in Spanish). Furthermore, it is imperative to mention that there are a few spaces inside the state actors that are related to the food and nutrition problem. Some of them are mentioned based on the official information.

The Good Living was institutionalized as a political and economic goal under a National Development Program. Many have argued that there is a great distance among the original principles of Good Living (such as the harmonious life between nature and humanity) and the institutional program. Also, under the vast umbrella of Good Living, food sovereignty was introduced in the constitution mostly for agrarian movements demands. However, there were many conflicts with other actors related to the agro-corporate sector. In that sense, Giunta (2014) explains that

In Ecuador, there is an ongoing conflict related to the control of resources which results in the struggle between two ideas of social production: ‘buen vivir’, as an alternative to development, versus a reinvention of ‘developmentism’, where market maintains primacy and the transformation process is based on an intensive exploitation of nature and modernization. (Giunta 2014: 1221).

On the other hand, social (agrarian and food) movements stand away from the state (and the government political party) due to the low space of capacity in achieving their demands. These social movements claim that the state lost a great opportunity to boost the agrarian transformation with a peasants approach. Instead, they point out that the state has strengthened the agro industrial sector with large budgets, subsidies, and policies for exportation. Indeed, McKay et al. (2014: 1189) point out that “rather than facilitating spaces for communities to construct and define their food systems, constitutional food sovereignty in Ecuador relies almost exclusively on the state as sovereign rather than any mutually empowering state-society synergy.”

Therefore, food movements are proposing a new way to deal with the less capacity in terms of political action and influence over policies and politics. Some of the new strategies are adopted for the Ecuadorian food movement in the promotion of a right to adequate food, the rural-urban links, and the analysis of new spaces of nutritional frontiers. However, “the contradiction for social organizations is that in the course of their efforts to shape the state, it often manages to shape them.” (Fox 1993: 26).

Food movements, as the Colectivo Agroecológico in Ecuador, are moving forward different directions to apply some pressure over the state. Some of this type of pressure has been effective in some public departments. In Chapters 3, the role of the state and its institutions' action is contextualized to deal with malnutrition in different aspects. Indeed, it is very interesting to find that there is not a homogenous way of thinking inside a neodevelopmental type of state as Clark (2016) describes the state in the Correa's presidency period. Therefore, it is precisely that diversity inside the state actor that still maintains the possibility to keep having some influence in the agricultural and food agenda.

Despite the advancements in the constitutional inclusion of food sovereignty, the state and government have not been able to reduce the rate of malnutrition in Ecuador. Official and public information indicate that one on five children is chronically undernourished that means those children are stunted and below average weight with life problems in learning and other mental functions. Also, a recent survey indicates that one on four children is overnourished that means those children are probably going to face ischemia, heart malfunction, and diabetes. Therefore, a key question to put in the discussion is: why, under the food sovereignty context, Ecuador has not been able to reduce the malnutrition rate?

Answering this question is far beyond of this research because the dimension of complexity of food sovereignty and its principles promoted by Via Campesina. This complexity gets worse when the role of the state is still more oriented to a more market economy from the neoliberal process in the Latin America. It is highly recognized that Ministry of Agriculture in Ecuador supports the expansion of the large-scale agricultural mode of production. Therefore, the food sovereignty context in Ecuador faces huge inconsistencies that Borras (2016) describes in

the scaling up of some of food sovereignty initiatives into official formal public policies and platforms involving national governments has brought such convergence of agrarian and food movements and the strategic issues they address into unprecedented political spotlights, with new opportunities amidst important contradictions, as in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua. A broader convergence around food sovereignty would provide a political boost for these fledgling disparate initiatives, groups, networks and movements worldwide (Borras, 2016: 22).

Also, it is Bernstein's (2014) observation of the role of the state that urgent needs observe and analyse its behaviour where food sovereignty is applied and promoted. Some authors have the question who exercises the sovereignty of food sovereignty. In that sense, the countries that have used its definition and principles in their legal rules have not been able to build and reinforce small-scale agriculture to transform or even slow down the rise of corporate food systems (McKay et.al. 2014, Clark 2016). Also, Patel (2009) points out that there are multiple and competing sovereignties to be considered for the application of food sovereignty in a state (Schiavoni 2015). In Ecuador, food sovereignty could be more logical to be applied on a different level of a decentralized government. In Ecuador, some initiatives in forms of food sovereignty bylaws are being promoted at the level of the provincial and municipal governments (Clark 2016).

Is there still a chance to reconnect consumers and producers in the sense of food sovereignty context by Via Campesina proposal? If so, how can a society be transformed to go back to a closer relation between producers and consumers? How can the dichotomies be broken by new schemes of food consumption? To what extent, food movements can influence the policy making the process from the state? How to measure those achievements? These questions put in the centre of the debate the role of the state-society relations to provide feasible alternatives in countries like Ecuador. In that sense, the Brazilian case is a good example to analyse some similarities of the opportunities to influence over the food systems in Ecuador.

Food politics, governance, and malnutrition

The food governance process is key to understand the state-society relations regarding achievements and failures. Furthermore, under a political economy of nutrition analysis, making the right questions helps to unpack some of the difficulties that are expressed at the moment of establishing and executing food policies. In that sense, beside state actor and social movement actors, there are other international organizations that influence over state-society bond. Borras and Franco (2010) point out that there are three ways in which the state receives different levels of pressure. They indicate that the states receive influences from above, from the sides, and from below provoking that social movements should deal with all of those who interact with the state.

In the analysis of the politics of nutrition, a few international actors emerge as very influential ones. To determine their interests, Sathyamala (2014) describes how international organizations have been historically shaping policies of

nutrition by less and less social movements and civil society participation. In the same line, Scrinis (2016) argues the strategies of corporations to fill markets with highly processed food under the brand of more nutritional food. In Ecuador, there is an increasing market for processed food as supplements for children, and elders. In contrast, Via Campesina (2015) points out that “the health crisis of malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, colon disease and cancer caused by diets heavy in industrial and junk food.”

Sathyamala’s historical analysis also points out the beginning of the concept of nutrition and ‘adequate’ diets. Her work indicates the role of international organizations¹ before and after the second war world over the implementation of recipes and recommendations of what people need to eat. Also, her research shows that “with an implicit goal of balancing mass production with mass consumption. With the outbreak of war, the work of LNHO collapsed but the post-war period saw the establishment of the WHO, building on the scientific legacy of the LNHO” (FAO n.d. and Cullather 2007 in Sathyamala 2014: 175).

The food system is dominant and hegemonic because it is facilitated by the rules established by states and governments. For instance, there is little or no control over the great campaigns to introduce a new product in the Ecuadorian market. In that sense, Lang and Heasman (2004) denote the battle of minds and mouths by a tremendous media campaigns to set up new products into a supposedly greater nutritional diets. This wide research rooted in the control of food systems by national and transnational corporations is also tied to other important current problems such as policy: “climate change, water stress, energy pressures, demographic change, the nutrition transition” (Lang 2009: 317). As a consequence, the solutions of the negative externalities of the food systems are in the hands of the same food system. In the same line, diets were rapidly changed through the imposition and consequence of what Friedmann (1992) describes as three food worldwide complexes.

The wheat complex facilitated food import dependency. The durable food complex reduced demand for traditional tropical exports, especially sugar and vegetable oils. The livestock complex (like fruits and vegetables) shifted from a national to a transnational basis; by taking hold directly of production, it differentiates the Third World in new ways, and more directly

¹ Sathaymala (2014) explains how the implementation of the League of Nations Health Organisation (LNHO) established the first recommendations of diets (highly supported by corporations) and how the World Health Organization (WHO) superseded them.

than the wheat complex, undermines local, mixed economies. (Friedmann 1992: 371)

Also, Sathyamala (2016) shows how the current meaning of nutrition has been constructed and imposed in benefit to corporations. In fact, food companies can influence over, such as the UN and the ICN that precisely promotes nutritional deficiencies and its corrections by large amounts processed food. Furthermore, Scrinis (2016: 17) explains that the new strategies that corporations are using are the redefinition of “introducing new products with ‘improved’ nutrient profiles.” Moreover, Scrinis explains that the three new food corporate strategies:

the reformulation of foods to reduce levels of harmful food components, the micronutrient fortification of products to address micronutrient deficiencies, and the functionalization of products that claim to provide optimal nutrition and health benefits (Scrinis 2016: 17).

Under those strategies, corporations gain more space to introduce their products through the recommendations of the international organizations. Lang (2009: 322) explains that since the GATT hegemony “food governance was articulated as a relationship between consumer, corporation, and markets.” However, Lang exposes that the consequences of this food governance system have rapidly affected the health of populations. Indeed, the ideology of nutritionism domination emphasises that “health benefits are based upon and draw their scientific legitimation” (Scrinis 2016: 31). Therefore, there is an urgent need for change in food politics and governance to encounter the supposed benefits that from new nutritional needs. Moreover, Valente (2014: 164-165) explains that there are still some factors that maintain the status quo of unhealthy food from corporations in the ICN2. Some of these factors are: “the lack of physical, economic and social access to productive resources [...]. Neither the lack of fulfilment of women’s human rights nor gender inequality were included as root causes of malnutrition. [...] Trade is still presented as a solution for hunger and malnutrition.”

Another essential element of food politics and governance is to whom goes the responsibility to make the regulations. According to Scrinis (2016: 30), the neoliberal market praxis left to the consumers (or the whole civil society) as the agents to choose freely what they want to eat. However, not always there is easy and understandable information to consumers. Indeed, it seems that companies let consumers choose, but using blindfolding information (that also means the lack of interest from corporations in promoting healthier and adequate diets) at

the moment to leave accountability to only people. As it will be discussed in Chapter 4, the light traffic label in highly processed food in Ecuador exemplifies the debate of who is accountable for a healthier choice of products. In advance, it is argued that it is required to have a shared liability between consumers and producers, but this responsibility must be focused on corporations' actions.

In the same line, Schiavoni elaborates the Venezuelan achievement of reducing hunger by explaining that the country has massive programs of food exportation, which means providing three meals per day to all its population. In that sense, Schiavoni (2016: 19) "raises fundamental questions with regard to "food for people" – what food and from where? And does it matter?" As an answer, it matters what kind of food people are eating. Therefore, it is highly important to promote local production with crops that are original containers of the nutrients that people need. Furthermore, Schiavoni's research in Venezuela indicates that many communities are establishing local production due to the lack of access to staples in supermarkets.

Sathyamala (2014) explains why, even after the failure recognition from the UN facing hunger and malnutrition, the institutionalization of the 'ways' of doing food policies are (and were) still largely based on increasing food production rather than understanding nutrition as a political and economic contested arena. In that sense, international organizations that currently have a tremendous influence over states promote a type of policies that are not facing hunger and malnutrition. Valente (2014, 2016) points out his concerns about the less support of the civil society organizations to participate in the construction of a UN nutrition agenda.

The states and governments should support changes in food provisioning patterns. However, it seems that there is a lack of power in many developing countries that have a reduced participation and decisions in their territories. Contrary, Valente (2014: 165) radically points out "the governance of access to natural resources, agriculture, food and nutrition firmly rests in the hands of governments and NOT in the hands of private corporations." Also, Valente proposes "the right to adequate food, must fully reincorporate the nutritional dimension and be re-conceptualized within the framework of food sovereignty and women's rights in order to be able to expose and tackle the main patterns of violations of this right." (Valente 2014: 156).

It is, then, a central role of food politics to give strong attention to women in and for nutrition. According to Valente 2014: 158), “hunger and malnutrition happen because women continue to be treated as second-class citizens in most of the world.” Indeed, recent social campaigns are promoting the right to breastfeeding babies in public. The question is how, as a society, we reach a point where the most basic feeding activity is branded as inadequate and disrespectful to others. Moreover, “what an undernourished or overnourished population requires is access to appropriate and adequate amounts of conventional, regular foods and not their allegedly superior functional products” (Sathyamala 2016: 836). In that sense, Valente indicates some strategies to support accountability in food governance process to deal with malnutrition:

(1) The life cycle approach to understanding nutrition; (2) The role of women’s and girls’ malnutrition in leading to the intergenerational transmission of malnutrition; and, (3) The double burden of malnutrition, meaning the coexistence of different forms of malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity) and their related diseases (Eide 1999 in Valente 2014: 158).

Even though there is a worldwide consensus of the food system impacts over health, there is a continuing trend to tend to enforce the food corporations. Therefore, it is essential the role of social food and agrarian movements pressure in different ways to the state to promote greater types of food governance. Valente (2016: 4) indicates that “the issue is how to do it in a way that provides the best treatment possible for the child, while simultaneously promoting the support needed by the family and the community to recover their capacity to adequately feed all their members.” In brief, Valente (2016: 7) gives a high emphasis on the role and obligations of the state that must: ensure food sovereignty and human rights interconnections as a mandate, strength the local and national food governance, advocate the cultural diversity of territories, and identify and monitor the food corporate sector interests.

Also, it is essential to analyse the strategies of food corporations to influence the governance processes. As it has been discussed, there are two ways to influence over food and nutrition. For one side, corporations claim to provide enhanced products to the markets to satisfy nutritional needs (Scrinis 2016). On the other hand, corporations are influencing over the governance processes by imposing nutritional programs as policies to be implemented by governments (Sathyamala 2014, Valente 2014). Furthermore, Valente (2016: 6) portrays the strategies of the food corporations as the new life grabbing method because they are obtaining

the right to define what and how should be eaten even previous the birth of children. As a response, “the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GNRFN) have interpreted the right to adequate food and nutrition as embedding the full realization of women’s human rights and the indivisibility of all human rights, within the framework of food sovereignty” (Valente 2016: 7).

Rethinking food governance opens and questions the matter of power. Indeed, there is much responsibility for civil society, but civil society needs to achieve more help from the state. There are alternatives. As it is presented in Chapter 4, food movements are building networks based on different logics of the capitalistic markets. They are proving to have a close connection among those who produce and those who consume. Also, thinkers in the food movement are looking forward the resistances frontlines where the nutritional transition has not been developed completely. Therefore, some people still maintain traditional diets with healthier native and local nutritive crops. In that sense, McKeon (2015: 328) explains that “now is the time to build better food governance, not only because we are getting very close to the absolute ecological, socio-economic, and political limits of today’s dominant system, but also because alternatives do exist.” Also, Patel (2009: 665) adds that “the language of food sovereignty inserts itself into international discourse by making claims on rights and democracy, the cornerstones of liberal governance.”

Chapter 3. The nutritional ‘state’ of the Ecuadorian food sovereignty context

From Good Living to the return of the state

Ecuador is an example of a country that has faced significant transformations regarding the state. As well as many other nations in the region in the called lost decade, Ecuador adopted neoliberal policies that consisted of the reduction of public sector for privatization services under the umbrella efficient markets. The agricultural sector was fundamental and played a key role in the implementation of policies and politics that ruled and changed the nature of the state. Therefore, this chapters shows the state reaction and response regarding nutritional issues under the food sovereignty context.

That story began after the second war world and the implementation of international aid programs that transformed Latin America in a raw producer's material and mere tropical fruits exportation. Much research has been done regarding the trade liberalization and the massive exportation of grains effects over the local agriculture in Ecuador. Since the agricultural establishment, the rapid transformation of agriculture was followed by a quick adaption of diets and new standards of nutrition. In the process, many local varieties and traditional diets (including typical dishes) were conceived as out-dated and highly inefficient because of the new crops and new concepts of nutritionism that were imported mostly from the North.

Over time, many local and native varieties from the Andeans have been gaining some space in the global markets because a new commoditisation process of their old nutritional value took place. For instance, Quinoa and Amaranth are being produced in large-scale to be an alternative staple in northern markets where the ideology of nutritionism is creating efficient new markets. The contradiction for those markets is precise that people are buying alternatives to highly processed food (plus many other ecological and labour impacts). Moreover, the green revolution imposed a model of production (from the FAO recommendations) and model of consumption (from the ICN and WHO recommendations). However, the green and new green revolutions are instruments of the developmentalism model that introduced new technologies disparaging local knowledge in production and consumption.

After recognizing that as a region, Latin America was reduced to a net exporter of products that could not be produced in the United States, some new economic model programs were introduced to achieve once again development. By the end of the 1960s, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) under the lead of the economist Raul Prebisch proposed the Import Substitution Industrialization program. The goal was to construct (and developed) Latin American economies based on which it was designed to avoid the dependency on raw material exports into an industrial economy exports. However, Kay (2006) argues that the failure of this development program was the fact that governments did not consider to develop the synergies between their agricultural and industrial sector. The effect was that only large-scale agroindustrial sector consolidated their hegemony over the peasant family farming.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, many representative struggles and strikes took place in Ecuador mostly led by indigenous and social movements. The agricultural demands were access to land due to previous agrarian reforms were not effective in finishing the hacienda model that was still present in rural areas. Followed by great agitation at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, Ecuador faced a huge political, social and economic stagger. In 2006, President Correa won elections without a political party. In 2008, the new National Assembly approved a new constitution that was intensively discussed and worked regarding what type of development or an alternative to itself the country would follow. Consequently, Good Living (or Buen Vivir in Spanish) was established as an alternative model of development in contrast to the voracious economic program recipes.

The institutionalization of the Good Living enforces the Ecuadorian state. However, many critiques have arisen regarding how the alternative is indeed Good Living. Indeed, because the many contradictions with the principles of the constitution, some have argued that this program is just another representation of the same developmentalism but with a sort of ancestral makeup. Moreover, food sovereignty represents another major failure in Ecuador because of the delay and lack of political will to achieve its constitutional principles.

State, food sovereignty, and malnutrition: an unsolved relation?

Ecuador is perhaps a good example of dissensions between the state and food sovereignty programmatic principles. Despite the fact that food sovereignty

principles are included in the constitution, Ecuador is far away to be sovereign in its food systems. A recent survey indicates that in the last period of the President Correa's government, the agricultural sector that most benefits have obtained (Carrion and Herrera 2012). However, Clark (2016) argues that the return of state in Ecuador has gotten greater achievements but under the brand of neo-developmental type of state. This kind of state is highly similar to the ECLAC proposal in the 1960s for Latin America.

It is undeniable the economic achievements under President Correa administration. Indeed, Clark (2016) indicates that the economic inputs strategies were the re-negotiation of oil revenues and a better taxation system. However, the main contradiction that Correa's administration, regarding food sovereignty, is the high rates of malnutrition. In fact, the Ecuadorian Constitution mandates that "Food sovereignty is a strategic objective and an obligation of the State to ensure that individuals, communities, peoples and nationalities attain self-sufficiency of healthy food, culturally appropriate permanently." (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, article 281). Consequently, according to the Constitution, the building of the Food Sovereignty Law and all subsequent support Laws (such as land, water, seeds, nutrition laws and so on) were given to COPISA for their elaboration.

The Ministry of Public Health run a survey to determine the health condition status of the population (ENSANUT 2013). The results are shocking about malnutrition, 60% of men and 65% of women of the adult population suffers from overweight and obesity. This pattern has not changed since a previous research that showed that 46% of man and 66% of women had some degree of overweight and obesity (Bernstein 2008). Also, near half million children shows a degree of chronic undernutrition between 0 and five years old. In Ecuador, the children population is closed to two million that means one of four will be facing health consequences. The public nutritional survey shows that between 2006 and 2014, chronic undernutrition dropped just one point and a half, from 25.8% to 24.1% despite huge investments in social development programs (ENSANUT 2013). Therefore, it means 1.5% reduction of chronic malnutrition. Furthermore, children populations' registers show that one of five has a degree of overweight and obesity. In consequence, Ecuador will be facing a large public health issue due to half of its entire population will be affected by the double burden of malnutrition (under and overfeed).

Based on the empirical evidence, it is highly doubtful that the state could be able to reduce malnutrition. Some researchers argue that the co-optation process of social demands, including food sovereignty, is reducing the social movements influence state policies. Indeed, Clark (2016) points out that agrarian movements are weaker and passive regarding the latest policies of the government because President Correa's administration has been able to provide some of their demands. However, Clark indicates that there are spaces in state institutions that give some opportunities to food sovereignty principles in provincial and municipal governments. It is beyond this research make a cover of all institutions recently created and related to food sovereignty. Indeed, there is a high complexity of food sovereignty inter-institutional relations among Ministries, Sub-secretaries, and, Technical offices.

The labelling policy has generated some frictions inside the state actors. In general terms, the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP), the Coordinator Ministry of Production (MCP), the Ministry of Public Health (MSP), and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) are involved at different levels to deal with malnutrition in all forms. However, there is not a clear connection among the positionality and food policy discourses from those institutions. On the one hand, the Coordinator Ministry of Production and, to a large extent, the Ministry of Agriculture are expanding the agricultural and food systems that lie over productionist logics (produce more to feed more). On the other hand, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Social Economic Inclusion are a bit coordinated to promote healthier diets and inclusion of small-scale agriculture in the food systems. However, according to Carrion and Herrera (2012), the budget for those ministries' initiatives is highly reduced. Therefore, there is not a clear inter-institutional program that engages Ministries in a single food policy that can connect peasant family farming and possible consumers to deal with malnutrition.

The food sovereignty constitutional mandate compels the state to privilege peasant agriculture and small-scale farming over the agroindustrial sector. However, a diagnosis of the rural sector in the years 2006 to 2012 shows that the state has largely privileged to large-scale agriculture. Indeed, Carrion and Herrera (2012) indicates that overall, the value of food exports far exceeds the value of imports because of the large volumes of traded goods sold abroad, mainly bananas, cocoa, coffee, and flowers. Also, those researchers mentioned that in Ecuador, the national agricultural trade balance is not enough to explain the food situation. Therefore, the unpacking trade balance shows that only the

mentioned crops have extended rapidly under Correa's administration. Also, this fast increase trade has an impact on the diets and consumption patterns of the Ecuadorian population, as well as, many other social and negative environmental consequences provoked by the expansion of monocrops.

Although the Ecuador's food self-sufficiency is proved, data call attention to the dangers of agroindustrial advance the detriment of those who make possible the food sovereignty of rural families. The increase in food imports, displacement of farmers to agribusiness productive resources are examples to justify further investigation regarding changes in the structure of supplying the domestic market. All this could have important implications for how Ecuadorians meet their food needs in the medium and long term (Carrion and Herrera 2012)².

The process of homogenization of diets is, in the first place, generating the same homogenous problems of malnutrition around the world. Second, while the modern lifestyle is being adapted as prevalent in all regions of the world, the rise of illnesses provoked by malnutrition is gaining more and more space with enormous costs for those governments. In fact, Sundaram (2014: 141 in FAO 2013) indicates that "malnutrition in all its dimension could cost as much as five percent of global income – US\$3.5 trillion or \$500 per person – in lost productivity and health care expenses." Also, state actors are highly aware of these costs in the public health service. However, how the state is responding to deal with these malnutrition patterns?

State response to malnutrition: an unhealthy state.

The Ministry of Agriculture has responded with the creation of Departments (Oficina de Redes Comerciales in Spanish) related to local food networks with the goal to support family farming, open markets, communal baskets, stores and public procurement. Also, this department is in charge to establish a public procurement system that links food market networks of family farming and to encourage the implementation of local certification systems. Those are required to provide food to CIBVs³ and public schools under the School Feeding Program, hospitals, and rehabilitation centres (MAGAP 2016). Also, Clark (2016: 198) covers briefly the new state organization in how the state understands family farming through the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the

² Translated by the author.

³ CIVBs means Centros Infantiles del Buen Vivir in Spanish (Children Centres of Good Living)

impact of those institutionalized programs is insignificant compared with the state support to the agroindustrial sector.

It is important to remark the interest of the state in establishing inter-institutional agreements regarding food policies. The Ministry of Agriculture is involved with the new created Institute of Food Supply (Instituto de Provision de Alimentos). Also, the Ministry of Education designs the requirements of the School Feeding Program. Even though the official SFP⁴ of the Ministry of Education indicates that this program promotes a direct purchase from small-scale farmers, there are not clear indicators of such provision. It is also imperative to use some other experiences in the region. For instance, the National Program of School Feeding Program (SFP) in Brazil⁵ is a key example of nutritional achievements in children's population. However, the relevant results from the Brazilian experience in reducing undernourishment are overshadowed by the increasing rate of the obesity and overweight in its people.

The state actors highly recognize that any governmental program has not been effective in the reduction of the malnutrition. Statistics show that the main concentration of poverty is precisely the areas where the undernourishment is prevalent. The Ecuadorian SFP consists in providing breakfast to children in public schools. The menu of SFP is composed of a 'fortified' flavoured soup, a processed cookie, cereal bar, granola flakes, and a package flavoured milk as a snack, which means that almost all food products are highly processed. According to official data, the SFP is designed to cover the energy and protein demands for school children population. By 2013, approximately 105 million dollars was estimated to fund 2.3 million of participants (including children and teenage population) in the SFP.

In a very recent declaration, President Correa indicated that the agroindustrial sector is the most efficient system for production and distribution to supply the

⁴ According to the Ministry of Education, the SFP serves the 200 school days with food for children from 3 to 4 years old Early Childhood Education; and children and teenagers from 5 to 14 years in public educational institutions. Available at <http://educacion.gob.ec/programa-de-alimentacion-escolar/>

⁵ The Zero Brazil Hunger is one example of linking local farmers as producers and primary schools as consumers. This federal policy binds municipalities (and local districts) to purchase the 30% of products from local farmers for the SFP (Schneider 2016)

state demand food program of children in schools⁶. Correa mentioned that the state initiatives such the public National Storage Unit is not yet well prepared to provide the large food demand. Thus it is a clear example of what is argued as a new-institutionalist state program, mainly focused on enhancing market policies into a more efficient industry. However, what is the reason for the failure of incorporating small-scale family farmers and peasant associations as food providers of the School Feeding Program? The logic on which the state demands its products be based on highly processed food. Therefore, there is a homogenous diet for all children without considering local food and traditional diets that reduce opportunities drastically for peasant food initiatives.

A recent evaluation of the Ecuadorian SFP shows that the problem is centered in public procurements. According to COPISA (2015), between 2012 and 2014, only eleven major suppliers of processed food and dairy companies were benefiting from public food procurement. Consequently, the state sold 82% of the total budget in corporations leaving the rest for small enterprises. In the same line, Schneider (2014: 29) indicates that the menus for schools are highly different on what farmers can provide. Also, this author adds that there is no consciousness of the agrarian reality of when a community can produce food because the logic of SFP is based in permanent homogenous provisioning. Therefore, it is a lack of coordination and articulation between demand and local supply.

The light traffic labelling conflict

The Light Traffic Labels in Ecuador is considered as the key achievement regarding state food policy. It has been promoting better information of choices for the majority of consumers. The regulation of the graphic establishes three levels of content (high, medium, low) of sugar, fat, and salt. The label promoters describe this labelling as a very simple but unyielding and helpful tool for people to provide greater choices to decide what to eat and what not to. Furthermore, according to a recent evaluation led by Freire (2016), the main finding of the research was that the graphics system 'light' is widely recognized and understood by consumers, who believe that provides useful and relevant information.

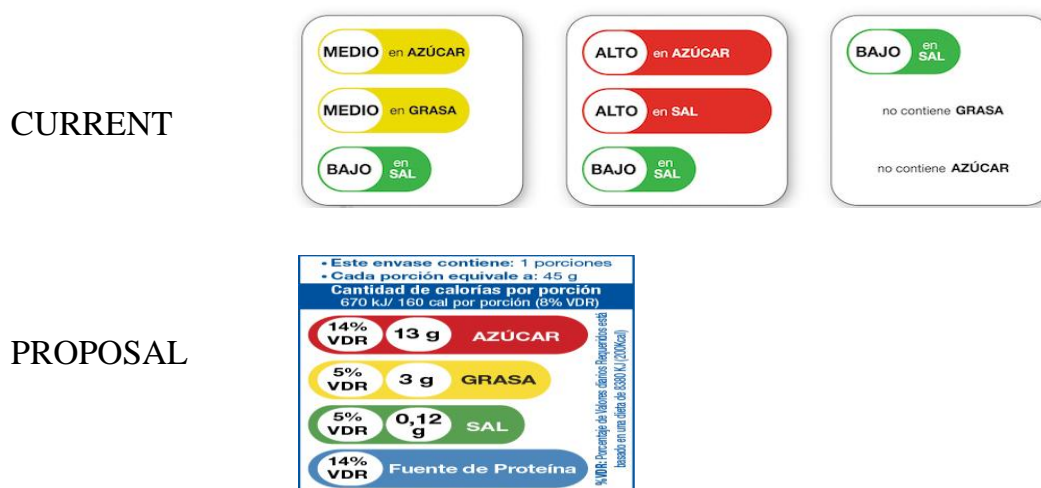
According to Roberto Gortaire, one of the leaders of the Colectivo Agroecologico, the industries have been forced to change the presentation of

⁶ By 2016, 'Correa announced the privatization of the school feeding program' (La Republica – Local News Paper 2016)

highly processed food. Indeed, this actor indicates that consumers chose different products with less sugar, fat, and salt. Consequently, this has affected approximately seven per cent of the processed food industry markets. Also, this policy has been highly supported by the food movement concerning, at least, trying to reduce the impact of the non-communicable diseases. However, this new regulation generated a lot of resistance and direct opposition from the corporate sector. As the interviewed state actor indicated it, there was tremendous pressure from transnational corporations to avoid the implementation of light traffic label. “The labelling is in constant risk of elimination due to constant pressure from various stakeholders, especially the business sector” (interview 2 September 2016).

As it was mentioned above regarding the case of the School Feeding Program and the inconsistencies in food policies among state actor, a new conflict has just brought up to a national debate. On the one hand, the Ministry of Public Health defends the policy of light traffic labelling based on the argument that consumers understand it easily. On the contrary, the Coordinating Ministry of Production, Employment and Competitiveness (mostly associated with the industrial sector) is promoting a renovation of the labelling system by eliminating the words HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW and replace by the Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA) and percentages (See graphic 1). Indeed, Vaca (n.d.: 12) points out that “When comparing the graphics system with an alternative label of the recommended daily value [...] respondents considered this last less understandable than the graphics system.”

Graphic 1. Proposal to change the Traffic Light Labelling



Source: Coordinator Ministry of Production (2016).

There are many examples of food and agrarian policies that contradict the food sovereignty original principles. Indeed, the government sees the agroindustrial food markets more efficient; therefore it plans different levels of interventions. The large agroindustrial sector has been largely economically benefited as it shows in a recent report of the incomes generated by the supermarkets and food retailers⁷. Furthermore, Carrion and Herrera (2012) describe how the trend has been oriented to give advantages to the agroindustrial sector in detriment of peasant agriculture. Those authors indicate that less than 3% goes to improve rural conditions of small family farms. Thus, the majority of the economic resources have been allocated to food industries concerning production.

Furthermore, Ecuador has signed a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union not to lose its tariffs preferences for commodity crops such as bananas, flowers, and cacao. Apparently, the government has received international pressure from the European Trade Commission of the end of tax preference to Ecuadorian bananas, and from the sides of local agro-exporters. However, it is crucial to recognise the shock of the impact of losing those preferences because it might represent a significant economic affection. In 2015, the large agricultural sector represented 8% to total GDP regarding the primary production of bananas, coffee, cocoa, and flowers. On the contrary, a free trade agreement opens the doors to enormous amounts of highly processed food.

In this scenario, the state actors that are supporting food policies related to food sovereignty principles are under tremendous pressure to soft requirements such as in the conflict of the Light Traffic Label. They have received local (from food movements) and international (from regional NGOs) support to protect this food policy control that is helping consumers choices by easy general information. Also, this policy represents a significant advance in highly processed food control. However, as it has been discussed, there is long a way to go through breaking dichotomies (consumer-producer) created by corporations. Therefore, it is essential to understand how food movements are responding to malnutrition issues and to what extent the relation with state actors can provide greater outcomes regarding food policies for adequate nutrition.

⁷El Comercio (Local News Paper) (2015) 'The five largest companies in the Ecuador generated USD 6650 million in revenue'. Accessed February 1, 2016 <<http://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/cinco-mayores-empresas-ecuador-ingresos.html>>

Chapter 4. The Colectivo Agroecológico and the response to malnutrition

*“At some point we are going to have to say, ‘No more’.
We have to stop that. We have to stop eating food that is
hurting another person or is hurting the earth.” (Guillen 2011: 313)*

Food movements and the arena for food sovereignty struggles

Following the world pattern, the 2010 population Census in Ecuador indicates that a major transformation took place in less than sixty years. The rural population went from 71.5% in 1950 to 28.5%, and the urban population went from 28.5% to 62.8% (INEC 2010). Also, despite the land reform measures implemented in 1964 and 1972, this index was only changed from 0.86 in 1954 to 0.80 in 2000, meaning that these reforms did not have a major impact on the redistribution of land (Martinez 2014: 44).

This scenario indicates that agriculture has produced a major displacement of populations from rural areas. Also, the land concentration is a phenomenon that is still present because of the expansion and hegemony of the commodity crops and agroindustrial sector. As a result, agrarian movements raised their demands and voices with different strategies to pressure governments and state institutions for integral agrarian reforms. In that sense, Breton (2015) explains that the boom and swing of the indigenous movement took place because of the fastest weakening of their representation in different governments since the beginning of the 2000s. Many of the original claims were not fully achieved. Indeed, Breton (2015) indicates that the main disruption of the indigenous movement was led by a sort of indigenous power domes about the group of leaders that got the most benefits of their political participation. Consequently, it seems that there was a disruption with their political basis that did not see any change and distribution.

Furthermore, Patel (2007) exposes that the tremendous changes in food consumption patterns and the consequent nutritional illness are the results of a highly unequal corporate food systems. Indeed, the macdonalisation of the diets represent major cultural changes that relegate and deprive local food production-consumption with significant impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems. For instance, hundreds of native varieties have disappeared by the widespread implementation of the green revolution since the 1950s. Moreover, the rise of the (third) corporate food regime has largely imposed a homogenous logic of food production that it is super power transnational companies can influence the

global trade policies and states (Patel 2007). The consequence of such homogenous productions is, also, the homogenization of diets worldwide.

In Ecuador, the agro industrial food system consolidation has provoked massive transformation in the population regarding diets and nutrition with the rise of illnesses as it was mention in Chapter 3. Therefore, food movements are reinventing their demands way beyond against a food system that seems to be versatile to every type of state. As it has been analysed above, the Ecuadorian state appears to be a typical market economy to solve current problems even when there is a food sovereignty context in an on-going development. Moreover, Edelman (2014: 974) indicates that “the policies that would strengthen food sovereignty at the national level inevitably imply strengthening the states with which the movements are typically in conflict.” If the social movements are being absorbed and disintegrated by the Ecuadorian state, that it could not mean that there are any more claims and actions to be taken regarding the most unfair system from human history, the new food empires.

Moreover, it is essential to understand that the strategy of going beyond social movements that might be limited to specific demands over a given moment, is a way to broad the struggle to whole civil society and population. In that sense, Montagut (2011: 198) indicates that “we must extend citizenship in the consumption sphere [...]. We need to make collective, democratic, political action a priority. We need to be citizens before we are consumers.” Furthermore, food sovereignty goes beyond a direct opposition of broken food systems. Food sovereignty promotes the construction of a new type of consumers that are aware of the need to “consciously working to enhance ‘food literacy’ and modify consumer tastes” Edelman et al. (2014: 917). However, the political reaction needs to be supported and promoted by food movements. These food movements “call for the protection and valuing of local and peasant food cultures as an alternative to the onslaught of cheap and imported processed foods. The movements’ support for diverse local production systems offers another path to improving food and diet quality” (Scrinis 2016: 32).

Furthermore, “this state of crisis urgently demands that citizens take control of our food system” (Montagut 2011: 187). However, the fight is not simple. Lang and Heasman (2004) describe how food corporations’ strategies have been oriented to dominate not only food choices by ‘flavours’ and an unreal diversity, but also, the food struggles in new areas like fighting for people’s mind. Therefore, the struggles should wide the relations between social movements and

states, including citizens and their capacity to be accountable for healthier diets and better nutrition. Therefore, the Colectivo Agroecologico struggles to understand and develop strategies to deal with state food policies and the continued hegemony of the food systems. Indeed, they are looking to expand their impacts of adequate diets and nutrition to the entire population. In that sense, Zibechi (2007: 253) points out that types of domination and control over the population are encountered when “what moves are no longer social sectors but whole portions of societies that are neither removable nor controllable by repression” (Zibechi 2007: 253)⁸.

Therefore, achieving consciousness about the food system and places where to enhance it is a great challenge and role of food movements. In that sense, Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011: 136) add that food movements have not changed the imposed line of hegemonic food systems, but they have been able to slow down its transition to full domination in very different levels. Thus it might represent an increasing “counter-move to return to localism, regional foods and real cooking” as a response of the fast-food system (Lang and Heasman 2004: 189). In Ecuador, the “growing awareness of the problems brought on by industrialized food and the changing food procurement environment has sparked citizen action in the form of counter-movements in Ecuador’s homes, science, government and the food industry” (Arce et al. 2015 in Sherwood 2016: 2). Sherwood (2016) explains that

Colectivo Agroecologico played an important role in influencing Ecuador’s ground breaking 2008 Constitutional mandate for food sovereignty and subsequent national policy transition from food security (understood as merely meeting people’s basic nutritional needs) to food sovereignty (utilizing food as an emancipatory force for health, sustainability and democratic change) (Sherwood 2016: 2).

The Colectivo Agroecologico is expanding its action and capacity by their participants and members involvement in different parts of the Ecuadorian food systems and state institutions. However, the interaction with the state is not easy. There is more resistance from the state actors regarding the discussion and contribution in food and agricultural policies in Ecuador. Since the dominant ideology of the government is productionist, the Colectivo is adopting strategies to impact on individuals and associations mostly based on the repercussions that the current food system is causing to them. It means that the Colectivo proposes

⁸ Translated by the author.

dealing with people, as their individual condition as persons, rather than going for the condition of being a state actor or an institution representative. As a result, the Colectivo gains more supporters from civil society, and state actors got involved in what has been called responsible consumption campaigns. Indeed, “organized around alternative production schemes, community-supported agriculture, farmer markets, restaurants that promote organic food and Andean cuisine as well as other initiatives, the members of the Colectivo have managed to influence food networks that seamlessly cross cultures and socio-economic strata” (Sherwood 2016: 5).

The food sovereignty movement is proposing to enhance the population condition of consumers into the umbrella of responsible consumption. Their strategy is the emphasis on the great capacity of people to change the hegemonic food system radically. By doing this strategy, the Colectivo establish a difficult relation with the state institutions and some actors. Indeed, Sherwood et al. (2013: 9) indicate that “it is the consumer–citizen and not the government that is organized in defence of Ecuador’s constitution and arguably the interests of the public good” about President Correa’s intention to eliminate the constitutional genetic modified organism cultivation prohibition.

Furthermore, the Colectivo Agroecologico was able to influence directly over the food sovereignty construction when one of the members, the leader of the Communitarian Baskets, won the presidency of the Plurinational and Intercultural Conference on Food Sovereignty (COPISA). It is important to mention that under the regulation of the Food Sovereignty Law (approved the National Assembly in 2010), this civil society institution was in charge to elaborate and propose different sub-laws to support the general framework of the main Law (Giunta 2014: 1217). Among others sub-laws proposals, COPISA proposed the Law of consumption, nutrition, and healthy food that it has not been approved yet and was designed to:

promote a well-informed, reasoned, ethical and solidarity by the consumer families and hereby achieve the redistribution of wealth and encouragement for a fair and solidary economic model free food choice, an agricultural and food system based on an agro-ecological family farming orientation, artisanal fishing and gathering, which in turn ensure the permanent provision of healthy and culturally appropriate food and territorially (COPISA 2013: 13, proposal of the consumer law, nutrition and health food)⁹.

⁹ Translated by the author.

The dietary colonization and nutritional frontlines

The green revolution was applied in the Andeans and other regions causing the disappearances of practices of local traditional knowledge. Not only practices and varieties were reduced into a minimal expression, but also traditional and local diets from those varieties were devalued. Currently, agroecological farms are becoming the first frontline resistance where peasants and farmers can reproduce a lifestyle in agriculture. Indeed, agroecology offers an interesting socio-ecological space where traditional knowledge is reinvented, revitalized and revalue.

According to Altieri and Toledo (2011), a lot of research in Latin America has proved that local and diversified ecosystems improve diets of peasants and farmers by the return of healthier crops and traditional practices. Also, the majority of those farmers and peasants can be included in the main concept of the new (middle) peasants (Ploeg 2010). Their potential lies over their capacity to be self-sufficient to feed themselves and also to generate some surpluses to be involved in alternative and solidary economy markets and food networks (Ploeg 2010: 18). Also, according to Heifer in Ecuador (2015), there are a growing number of agroecological farms that are distributed in the whole country.

From a local perspective, there are social relations and actions that often are rarely seen with higher attention regarding healthier diets. In that sense, Gross et al. (2015) point that many rural families are facing an interesting processes of traditional diets conservation. But also, those diets are getting some elements of modern diets (related to highly processed foods). These diets interactions are generating what is described as nutritional frontlines. Gross et al. (2015) explains that diets are still mostly based on local products with the combination of 'new' patterns of eating 'modern' foods from urban places. In Ecuador, a lot of research is focused to understand how rural families maintain whole food diverse diets even when they are surrounded by large extensions of monocrops. Furthermore, the creativity, imagination, and people's capacity for growing food are not only associated with rural areas. For instance, Schiavoni (2016) indicates that communities in cities are also developing gardens to obtain some food for them.

Furthermore, McKay et al. (2014) point out that food sovereignty should not be seen as an achieving point. Instead, food sovereignty must be analysed as a path in construction. However, food sovereignty expresses different processes of

resistances as in the case reported by Gross et al. (2015) in Ecuador. In other words, food sovereignty might be constructed and defended in the immense diversity of nutritional frontlines where traditional and healthier patterns of food consumption are still present. In consequence, these resistances are not unique to rural communities. There is an infinite of options in how and why each community and neighbourhood develops food sovereignty processes to keep feeding people by themselves. A key question to analyse is the extent traditional diets and nutrition is still present in people's daily lives.

In previous research, biocultural indicators are highly developed in agroecological farms (Jimenez 2016). The biocultural characteristics of communities are expressed by the reinforcement of local knowledge, cultural practices, preferences that combined with local biodiversity might be central in the construction of food sovereignty. Indeed, food activist and movements are playing a pivotal role in understanding the reinforcement of food agroecological networks and recovering food cultural memory of people. In Ecuador, that relation supports the creation of alternative food networks preserving diets from local recipes, redefining flavours, and restoring local biodiversity. Those food relations are central for the Colectivo Agroecologico. In that sense, Sherwood et al. (2013: 8) point out that “civic movements pursuing their courses of action have grown to become an influential democratic force, capable of redefining individual relationships involved in food production, procurement and consumption.”

Communitarian baskets and the responsible consumer strategy

The communitarian baskets (*canastas comunitarias* in Spanish) are types of alternative networks that break the conventional relation between consumers and producers and look forward to a different understanding of the process of food consumption. In Ecuador, Paredes and Guerron (2014: 11) indicate that in the new rural-urban linkages and initiatives “consumers’ and producers’ organisations can play a pivotal role in providing experiential opportunities that help to increase on-farm biodiversity, while also strengthening the knowledge inherent in such processes and systems.” Moreover, they describe that there are benefits concerning nutrition as outcomes of the direct relation consumers and producers. But those outcomes necessarily required much more research to understand the how and why those alternative links are providing better nutrition.

The literature in Communitarian Baskets research explains that the beginning to look for alternatives in food provisioning came after negative health impacts

caused by on environmental degradation of livelihoods, sedentary lifestyles, and social, economic exclusion. Therefore, many producers (peasants and farmers) are getting involved local food networks due to more stability compared to external markets and also less use of agrochemicals. According to the communitarian baskets initiative, farmers get a better income for their labour. Indeed, the Colectivo Agroecologico claims that farmers' income is 30 to 40 % higher than general markets. On the other hand, consumers associations that began with the understanding of the long-term effects of consuming food from large-scale agriculture¹⁰.

Therefore, the communitarian baskets are alternative food networks that encounter the hegemony of the food systems. However, it should be remarked that it does not mean that a family lives from only the income of the baskets. As Kay (2006) and Borras (2016) have pointed out, there are new social spaces that blur the conventional conceptualization of peasants and farmers are dependent on agriculture only, and urban settlers that are disconnected of rurality. Many food network groups are involved in many activities, such as agro-ecotourism, traditional embroidery, restaurants. Also, Martinez (2009) describes that the resilience and reconstruction of the new peasants are explained by the pluriactivity characteristic in which agriculture is not the only economic activity.

The communitarian baskets leader from and the Colectivo Agroecologico are putting consumption in the centre of the debate as a unit of analysis. They indicate that responsible consumption is based on three elements: "first one is adequate nutrition that needs to be supervised by public health. The second one is peasant family farming in an agroecological orientation. Finally, eating should be joyful social act" (Roberto Gortaire interview 19 July 2016). Also, according to the communitarian baskets leaders, the presence of the state is minimum to help to build and replicating similar initiatives. Furthermore, according to Sherwood (2016: 5), "this proposal around Responsible Consumption is salutogenic in providing descriptive and analytical attention to existing examples of where families living in similar socio-economic contexts and biophysical constraints of vulnerable populations have avoided or prevented [overweight and obesity]" (Sherwood 2016: 5 emphasis added). Also, Sherwood emphasises that "understanding the heterogeneity found in Responsible Consumption practices,

¹⁰ Currently, a lot of research has proved that the agrochemical residuals are related to the high rate of cancers and affections in both food producers and consumers.

[the Colectivo] can leverage market pathways for better access among vulnerable populations.”

The food movement is embarked in changing general concepts from the food corporation establishment. For instance, for Michelle O. Fried who is a nutritionist activist from the Colectivo indicated that is time to “appreciate the flavours, colours and textures of the food” (interview 23 July 2016) to challenge the homogenous diets and products from supermarkets. Furthermore, she explained that the homogenous diets for Ecuadorians are highly reduced to rice, bread, chicken and palm oil. However, the strategy should go into the modern patterns of Ecuadorians food consumption. In fact, Michelle indicates that the trend in Ecuador is eating less often at home that means that at least one meal of the day is not eaten at home and often is lunch, which is consuming most of the nutrients of the day.

Another important element that is highly worked and proposed in the Colectivo is a different dimension of food consumption. Claudia Garcia, a member of the food movement and activist of Slow Food in Ecuador, indicated that food should be understood from the pleasure of eating and the contact of the body to rethink the flavour, as a social construction, and this reconstruction should not be punitive (interview 18 July 2016). Consequently, she claims that there is little support from the state to promote a different way of understanding processes of food elaboration and consumption.

Regarding the state Light Traffic label food policy, the Colectivo has shown all support to maintain the regulation. Indeed, the food movement claims that there is some evidence that the industries are adapting to the labelling. Thus it indicates that if there is a political state will introduce food policies, even in highly processed food, food movements and civil society are going to embraced and empowered new information about diets and likely impacts on health. Moreover, the argument that the Ecuadorian food movement raises is basically to find those social spaces where families (in neighbourhoods for instance) and individuals are maintaining practices that preserve and reinforces traditional diets. Also, it is relevant to study how families would be able to keep a greater diet at the moment when they are not at home.

Also, the Colectivo is self-evaluating its campaigns and impacts to measure their victories and failures regarding the food systems. A recently responsible consumption strategy is the 250 thousand families campaign. The main goal is to

alter the hegemonic food system from just 5 to 10% to generate an irreversible consumption trend. Roberto Gortaire indicates that this would represent an impact on approximately in 7 to 8% of the population. Furthermore, the food activist recognises that strategy did not work in homes, but it did work in schools (interview 19 July 2016). Also, the strategy is still in an on-going process of reconfiguration to expand its achievement over the society, or part of it, and over the state agricultural and food policies.

Finally, the Colectivo Agroecologico is going through a rethinking process of itself, its capacity and autonomy regarding political influence in society and the state. All members agreed the need to expand the struggles to further places where families become a centre of analysis in their practices of cooking, eating, and learning about food, nutrition, and diets. For that reason, they are questioning themselves how to extend their struggles to citizens to make people empowered about the food systems and the nutritional issues. According to Roberto Gortaire (interview 19 July 2016), the group is in a moment of reflection with two major strategies: expansion and radicalization that have to go together.

Also, the Colectivo is worried about the agroecological soft policies that are being implemented in certain provincial and municipal governments because it reduces that radicalism and meaning that is central to agroecological transformation of the food systems. Therefore, it is key that the expansion has greater rigor in peasant training, discussion, and political debate to enforce agroecology in order to amplify it firmly on the ground.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

This research is an attempt to explain how and why nutrition becomes a contested arena between state actors and food movements in the Ecuadorian food sovereignty context. The driving idea to develop this research was the tragic rise of the double burden of malnutrition in Ecuador meaning that one of five is undernourished and one of four is overnourished. As a consequence, significant rates of illness people are expected in the near future. Thus, there is an urgent need to analyse what state-actors and food movements are doing to provide answers and feasible solutions, how they relate to them, and what are the outcomes from those relations.

At first sight, the current scenario pictures a complete disconnection between the state and food movements which show their way to deal and face the rising problem of malnutrition in Ecuador. Apparently, the state seems to be a homogenous institution looking for conventional solutions concerning food and nutrition. However, there is a subtle diversity among state actors involved in food policies. This research has unpacked some conflictive relations inside state actors regarding food policies. Indeed, the Light Traffic conflict unveils the different perspectives inside various public institutions. On the one hand, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Production guide their institutional capacity into a more economic market in benefit of the large agroindustrial sector. On the other hand, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion conduct their policies into a more regulations of the food industry.

Also, the analysis of the school feeding program indicates that diets and menus respond to conventional recommendations of nutrition from the United Nations (Sathyamala 2014). As a result, the SFP provide mostly high processed food without considering local and traditional diets (Schneider 2014). This diet program is attempting to include family farming in food provisioning. However, many problems are being reported such as a major failure in the market demands meaning that small farming industries less competitive.

Furthermore, the Colectivo Agroecologico draws itself as a food sovereignty movement distant from the current state institutions and actors regarding food policies. This social food movement was very engaged to the Constitutional inclusion of food sovereignty in 2008. However, there are substantial distances

among the productionist logic of the state and the agroecological demands of the Colectivo. Also, this food movement is highly diverse and interactive with the spaces that allow some influence inside the state. The primary insertion took place in COPISA where the food movement had a high participation in the construction of the sub-laws related to the Food Sovereignty Law. Unfortunately, the National Assembly has not approved the proposals from COPISA, and it has given them a more productionist meaning. The proposal of the law of consumption, nutrition, and healthy food has not been discussed and debated by the National Assembly. However, this law proposal represents a major inclusion of local and healthier diets by the right of adequate food and nutrition in Ecuador.

The Ecuadorian food movement strategy to pressure the state policies is very different from the typical political, social movements action. The Colectivo is working on putting people, as the whole population, in the centre of the debate. This strategy promotes the individual action over state actors but in their condition of being people who could be (or is) affected by malnutrition outcomes. In that sense, they are proposing the responsible consumption (Sherwood et al. 2013) to encounter dominant food systems in Ecuador that enhance reckless consumption. Indeed, the main difference lies in that responsible consumption depends on peoples' food networks between producers-consumers (Ploeg 2010), agroecological practices (Altieri and Toledo 2011, Scrinis 2016), and joyful of eating (Nestle 2003, Edelman 2014, Sundaram 2014). On the contrary, reckless consumption is dominated by the corporative patterns of food mass production that introduce the imaginary that fortified high processed food provides better nutrition and diets (Sathyamala 2016).

The heterogeneity inside state actors and institutions goals creates an interesting scenario where food movements can introduce their demands and support food regulation policies. Therefore, dominant food politics and governance are contested because of the influence of social movement actors. Nevertheless, it is still unclear to the extent food movements would be able to put pressure on the state actors. In that sense, it might be the Colectivo Agroecologico diversity and its engage activists in many areas (such as nutrition, agroecology, politics, food networks) that give them their high autonomy. However, at the same time, it is that diversity and reduced political action that compress their political capacity dimension to greater influences over the complex food politics in Ecuador.

Nutrition has become a contested arena because food movements are involving different meanings of nutrition and diets. Indeed, the food movement Colectivo Agroecologico is aware that diets are under constant transformation. However, they have found that there are many places where families and communities maintain and adapt traditional diets and menu in their daily lives. Therefore, there is a need of a theoretical construction of how nutrition should be deconstructed in the relation of food sovereignty proponents (with full diversity of social agrarian and environmental movements) and the state actors vision to establish appropriate food policies to Ecuador's reality.

The analysis of the politics of nutrition is helpful to understand what other elements are governments using to promote neoliberal policies of malnutrition. Some of those aspects are represented when in Ecuador there is a minimum support to enhance alternative food networks and change the food system. Widely documented, the state is necessary to construct food sovereignty, but the role of social movements is key to reinforce it. In that sense, food sovereignty should not be understood as a utopian goal; it should be understood as continues process of where is construct regarding each local reality with global influences. It is perhaps time to recall a new way of thinking and doing social movements. In that sense, rethinking social movements from food consumption must provide the spaces for struggles that should be seductive, conjugative, inclusive and constructive.

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Appendix 1 - List of interviewed actors.

Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Roberto Gortaire	Colectivo Agroecologico del Ecuador	Canastas comunitarias leader. Former COPISA president.	19 July 2016
Stephen Sherwood		Activist, farmer, academic.	8 July 2016
Michelle O. Fried		Nutritionist, chef.	23 July 2016
Claudia Garcia		Slow Food Ecuador.	18 July 2016
Cecilia Vaca	State-actor	Former Coordinator Ministry of Social Development.	2 September 2016
Wilma Freire	State researcher and consultant of Ministry of Public Health	Leader of the survey of ENSANUT 2013	25 August 2016 http://www.salud.gob.ec/conoce-mas-sobre-el-etiquetado-de-alimentos-en-ecuador-junto-a-la-doctora-wilma-freire/