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# Rural development thinking, moving from the green revolution to food sovereignty

Consideraciones de desarrollo rural: de la revolución verde a la soberanía alimentaria

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## ABSTRACT

Since the middle of the last century, several perspectives have addressed rural development from different viewpoints, and productive aspects have prevailed. Four general approaches encompass these perspectives: the Technocratic, Sociological, Socio-Technocratic, and Political approaches. This paper aims to put forward Food Sovereignty and its focus on the rights of rural inhabitants as a perspective of the political approach to rural development. Despite the fact that food sovereignty integrates important topics such as the recognition of the importance of rural inhabitants by society, it is necessary to make a clear proposal for how to incorporate consumers in its postulates.

**Key words:** agricultural policy, food policy, household income, welfare.

## RESUMEN

Desde mediados del siglo pasado varias perspectivas desde diferentes puntos de vista han tratado de abordar el desarrollo rural, y los aspectos productivos han prevalecido. Cuatro enfoques generales agrupan estas perspectivas: Tecnocrático, Sociológico, Sociotecnocrático y Político. Este artículo de reflexión busca destacar la Soberanía Alimentaria, centrada en los derechos de los habitantes rurales, como la perspectiva del Enfoque Político del desarrollo rural. A pesar de que la Soberanía Alimentaria integra aspectos importantes como el reconocimiento por parte de la sociedad de la importancia del campesinado, una propuesta más clara sobre cómo integrar a los consumidores en sus postulados es necesaria.

**Palabras clave:** política agraria, política alimentaria, ingresos de los hogares, bienestar.

## Introduction

The rural development debate has evolved from a technocentric approach into a contemporary one focused on rights. The technocentric approach focuses on production, whereas the modern approach focuses on people. The essence of the technocentric approach is to modernize agricultural production through the green revolution. The essence of the contemporary approach is a social inclusion of rural inhabitants.

Environmental issues became relevant at the end of the last century because of the evident consequences of climate change. However, the perspectives focused on productive matters and did not prioritize the alternatives to adapt to and alleviate climate change distress. On the other hand, the start of this century aroused interest for equity and inclusion, and the food sovereignty perspective leads to ongoing debate. Besides food production, which remains at the center of concerns, the discussion ignored matters narrowly related to the quality of life of rural inhabitants.

Traditionally, the rights of rural inhabitants and indigenous peoples, fishermen and shepherds, artisans and farm workers, rural women and children have been forgotten. However, food sovereignty puts rights on the top of the arguments.

The food sovereignty perspective represents the political approach to rural development, which emerges in contrast to the technocratic and socio-technocratic approaches. Instead, it could be considered as complementary to the sociological approach because it focuses on people beyond agricultural production. However, some essential questions emerge in the analysis. Why a concept such as food sovereignty can bring together so many diverse people around the world?

This paper attempts to put forward food sovereignty as the contemporary perspective to address rural development. In order to find out the reasons why food sovereignty should be considered as a new perspective to address rural development, and to establish relationships and tensions

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between previous perspectives and food sovereignty, this paper proposes four different approaches to rural development and their perspectives.

## The main approaches of rural development thinking

To best understand the main rural development approaches, this paper focuses on four different approaches. Firstly, the technocratic, which takes into consideration five main perspectives: Modernization of Agricultural Production, Structuralism – Cepalino and dependence theory –, Neoliberalism, and Neo-structuralism. Secondly, the sociological approach, which highlight at least four well-defined notions: The Agrarian Question, Sustainable Rural Livelihood, and Human Scale Development. Between them, there is the Socio-Technocratic approach with Rural Territorial Development and New Rurality perspectives. Finally, the political approach based on The Food Sovereignty perspective.

Figure 1 shows all the described perspectives, highlighting the moment they became important. These ideas appeared around a particular date. However, after some years they gained strength and influence, initially in academic deliberation and subsequently in development practices (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). The process of emergence, consolidation and decline of these perspectives corresponds to the government efforts to reach economic development. That explains the advent of a movement such as '*La Via Campesina*' as a result of the depletion of a development phase.

### Technocratic approach

#### **Modernization of Agricultural Production (MAP)**

The technocratic approach has an evident tendency for an economic worldview. The economic tendency has an economic rationalism that tends to perceive the social life in the way to maximize business (Hann, 2014; Polanyi, 1977), where everything is controlled just by a utilitarian rationality, and beyond this tendency, nothing makes sense (Polo, 2013).

MAP is a true example of the economic tendency. It aims to increase agricultural production and maximize profits, but without a real concern for the social and environmental consequences of its practices.

MAP claims that there are two types of agriculture: traditional and modern. Traditional agriculture is predominant mainly in developing countries, practised by peasants,

and conceived as economically non-viable, characterized by small pieces of land and low production. In contrast, modern agriculture is located in developed countries, practised by medium and large agricultural entrepreneurs, and conceived as economically viable, characterised by high production and the use of external inputs (Hetherington, 2009).

Modernization seeks to transform traditional agriculture into a modern one, looking for the maximization of capital accumulation and economic growth. Therefore, rural inhabitants use cutting edge technology (Oya, 2009). New technologies come from developed countries and should be spread to as many rural inhabitants as possible; initially through institutions specialized on productive matters with research centers, a Green Revolution pattern, Technology Transfer, and later through international cooperation.

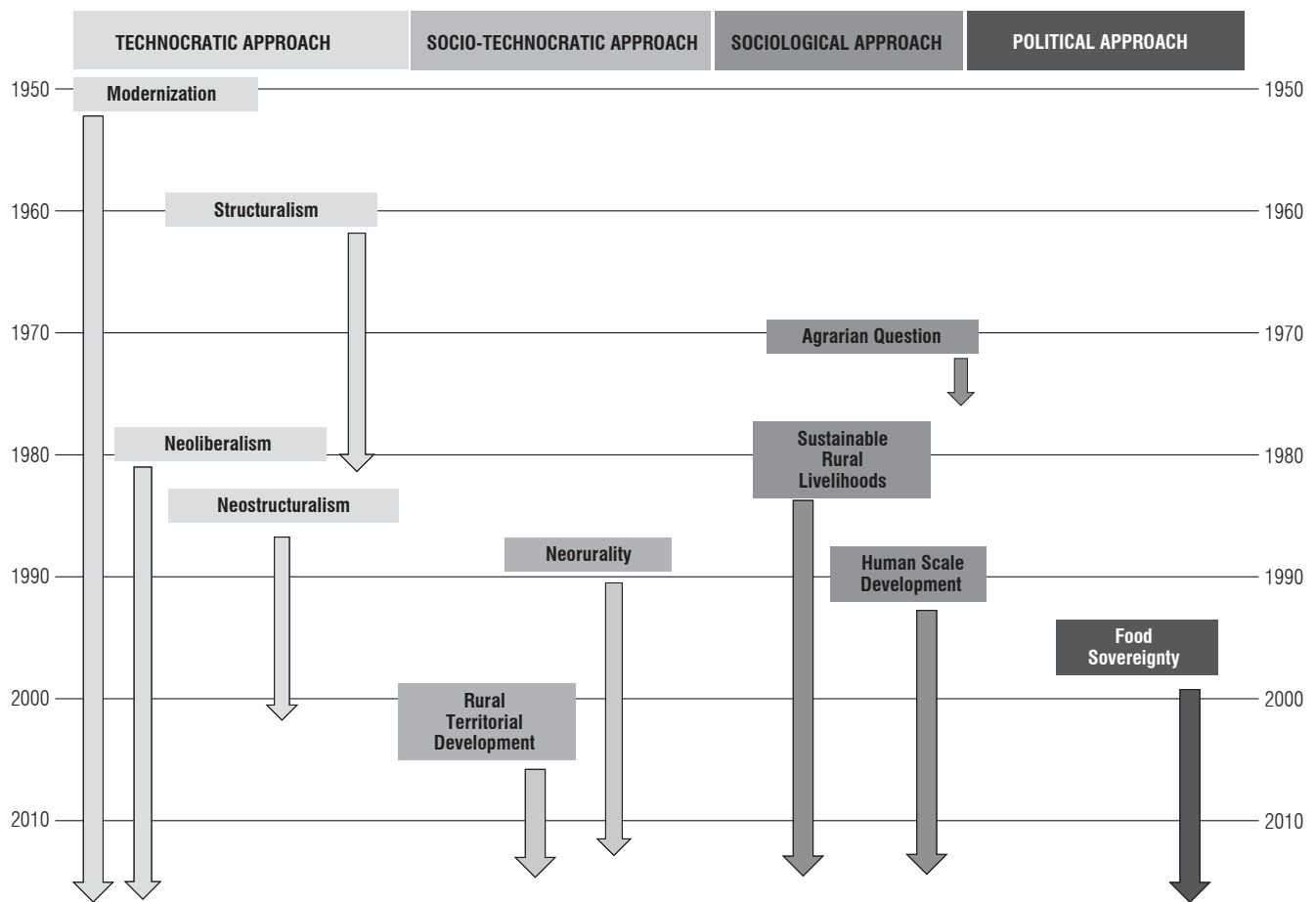
For the purpose to adapt the modernization perspective in changing times, its main thoughts were transformed. Those transformations are represented in new perspectives; however, they maintain the original idea of conversion into modern agriculture with production targeting the international market.

### **Structuralism**

Structuralism was the way in which the modernization perspective turned into public policies in developing countries. In essence, Structuralism seeks to increase the agricultural production as the base of the industrialization of urban areas in these countries.

Structuralism has two tendencies: the Centre-Periphery Model and the Dependency Theory. Both tendencies agree that technology is crucial to achieve development. The Centre-Periphery Model advocates for industrialization because the countries that hold industry and technology are in the Center of the development while those that do not hold it, remain at the Periphery. The Dependency Theory argues that developing countries maintain structural condition because they do not have access to technology. Hence, industrialization and new technologies are the secret to achieving development (Kay, 2009).

The Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) was the model of public policy proposed by the Structuralism as the way to overcome dependency. According to ISI, governments should lead the development process through strong institutions promoting industrialization and protecting domestic production (Pachón, 2011). In developing countries, increasing agricultural production in the absence



**FIGURE 1.** Timeline of the main approaches to rural development thinking.

of urban industries was the strategy to earn the revenue needed for industrialization. In this context, the rural sector provided profits through the export of commodities to international markets, agricultural commodities, and transferred through taxes to the industrial expansion. Also, the agricultural production provided raw material and cheap food that allowed the incipient industry to reduce manufacturing costs, especially wages. Besides, the rural population was a big market for these novel products, and they provided a labor force characterized by low costs and non-tradition of an organization as a working class.

The results of Structuralism were that credits, technical assistance and subsidies were a way to strengthen modern agriculture. In some countries, the prices of goods produced by the industry from Central countries grew up faster than the national ones because of the inability to create a successful vertical integration to add value to the agricultural production. As a possible consequence, developing countries increased their external debts to support the model, which consequently brought the implementation of the Neoliberal perspective (Borras, 2009).

### **Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism is a new strategy of the economic tendency to strengthen modern agriculture, especially of developed countries, via the control of the food market by international food and beverage companies through globalization.

The main difference between previous perspectives and Neoliberalism is the activism of the governments in the control of the development process. Neoliberalism was implemented through the Structured Adjustment Program. As a result, the market, instead of governments, must regulate the flow of commodities and goods in a scheme of free interchange among countries. That structure allows for the intervention of the market by international food companies to manage prices according to their convenience (Brass, 2002).

The principles of the Structured Adjustment Program that directly affected the rural sector were mainly the privatization of public companies related to rural issues. Besides other micro and macroeconomic measures, the rural sector was disturbed because of the elimination of subsidies and

border taxes, deregulation of the banking industry and uncontrolled interest rates (Kay, 2009).

According to Kay (2005), during Neoliberalism, there are no rural development policies, just some specific actions. However, some consequences such as the increase of monoculture for international market, unemployment, the decrease in agricultural production in domestic consumption, and the increase of rural poverty in developing countries, could be characterized.

### **Neostructuralism**

The Neostructuralism perspective is the proposal to adjust public policies to reduce the effects of neoliberalism and globalization. Its concerns for rural equity and reduction of poverty ignored small farmers and allowed for the strengthening of modern agriculture (Bryceson and Kay, 2000).

Neostructuralism advocates for the role of the market but with appropriate interventions by governments. Developing countries must continue opening their economies to foreign investment. Nevertheless, governments ought to formulate clear rules that must create conditions for the competitiveness of domestic agricultural production. It attempts to locate clusters in which local agriculture could be competitive in the global market and modify public policies to reinforce such clusters. Policies must guarantee topics such as training, technology, credits, subsidies, and access to markets (Kay, 2009).

Neostructuralism seeks to reduce the differences between all rural actors, but its focus on international markets, instead of strengthening the local commerce, in the end, it resulted in a rise of rural poverty and inequality. An obvious example of these kinds of policies is the Free Trade Agreements between countries with high differences such as those from Latin America and the United States or the European Union.

### **Sociological approach**

The sociological approach focuses on people instead of their economic activities. The perspectives of the sociological approach tackle social concerns. In contrast to the technocratic approach, it focuses on cultural and ecological issues. The goal of the sociological approach is to put the rural population first (Chambers, 1983), dealing with traditions, mores, and behaviors.

Initially, it is important to mention a perspective that the academic world has not got over: the 'Agrarian Question'. It argues about the role of rural inhabitants in the processes

of economic transformation (Brass, 2002). The 'Agrarian Question' discusses the survival of rural inhabitants based on work relationships such as 'family labor', and the fact that household production aims to meet the needs instead of accumulating money. This discussion is relevant because nowadays the perception about rural inhabitants has been changing, and its importance has been growing, even in some international institutions and in the academic world.

Equally, it is important to remark on the thoughts of García Nossa. His analysis established the backwards condition of rural areas such as a structural problem that affects the economic, political, and cultural environments, especially in Latin America. According to García, to overcome that condition, it was necessary to change the agrarian structure such as land tenancy, power structure, and requirements for a real participation (García, 1972).

### **Sustainable rural livelihoods**

Essentially, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods defines livelihood as a net that involves people and their ways of living (food, earnings, and assets). It discusses three main topics: capabilities, equity, and sustainability. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods states that capabilities provide a way of living and support to upgrade yield. Equity is the fair access to available livelihoods and resources to obtain ways of living. Sustainability is an adequate handling of resources to ensure the future availability and affords conditions to satisfy next generations (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Thus, the combination of capabilities, equity, and sustainability creates a virtuous circle to improve livelihoods. In a rural scenario, livelihoods include several inter alia activities: cropping and processing, hunting, fishing, artisanal works, communal work, and providing services. Bebbington (1999) also proposes an interesting analysis of the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods based on a scheme of five capitals (Natural, Financial, Human, Physical and Social), which rural inhabitants mix to improve their livelihoods.

However, Scoones (2009) remarked that Sustainable Rural Livelihoods ignores some topics such as politics and power, lack of arrangement with globalization, the likelihood to cover issues about agrarian change and related matters. Finally, he remarked on a lack of long-term vision.

### **Human scale development (HSD)**

HSD seeks to satisfy the Fundamental Human Needs through the creation of increasing levels of self-reliance and articulation of humans with the environment and technology, the globalization and local processes. Indeed, the focus is on people because the satisfaction of the fundamental



human needs is done based on people's involvement, privileging both autonomy and diversity. It aims to transform people perceived as an object, into people understood as an actor of the development. The participatory democracy constructed from the bottom up, stimulates real solutions for real problems, which will satisfy Fundamental Human Needs (Max-Neef *et al.*, 1994).

HSD perspective emphasizes three milestones. Firstly, institutions and persons, which have traditionally used a type of language that strongly links development with economic growing. Hence, people are more concerned with material goods instead of other topics such as the quality of life. Secondly, HSD differentiates 'wealth and poverties' according to how societies satisfy their Fundamental Human Needs. Finally, it clarifies the confusion between needs and satisfiers. Commonly, needs are understood as infinite and changing over time and culture. Indeed, needs are multiple and interdependent, for that reason they conform a net where they interact. Needs are finite, few and classifiable. Simultaneity, complementarity, and trade-offs characterize the process to satisfy human needs. Precisely, these are the main differences with the proposal of Abraham Maslow in his Theory of Human Motivation (Max-Neef *et al.*, 1994).

According to HSD, needs could be organized into two categories: Existential and Axiological. The matrix of Fundamental Human Needs is the result of mixing the needs of both categories. On one side of the matrix, there are Existential Needs : being, having, doing, and interacting. On the other side, Axiological Needs such as subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom are located. Satisfiers are the way in which Existential Needs meet Axiological Needs (Max-Neef *et al.*, 1994).

### **Socio-technocratic approach**

The socio-technocratic approach focuses on the economic activities of rural inhabitants, but includes some social concerns such as territory and the consequences of policies on rural families. Even though social issues are included in the discussion, the predominance of topics such as competitiveness or productive advantages to accessing the markets preserves a close relationship with the economic tendency.

### **Rural territorial development (RTD)**

The center of RTD is territory. The best understanding of territories associates them with spaces that hold identity, and development thoughts built collectively. Besides, RTD understands the rural issue in a comprehensive way. It

overcomes productive topics because its main milestones, territory and rurality, go beyond sectorial approaches that traditionally give priority to technocratic and productive tendencies.

RTD is a process of both institutional and productive transformations that seeks poverty alleviation and strengthens territorial identities. Productive transformation aims to link territories and markets in a sustainable and competitive way. Institutional transformation pursues agreements among stakeholders involved in governance arrangements. These agreements aim to create opportunities to participate in both economic and political development, and then avoid exclusions from the benefits of the productive transformation (Bebbington, 1999; Schejtman and Berdegue, 2003).

Some authors have added interesting topics to enhance RDT's principles. Some of the topics proposed are related to social issues, which will be useful to improve the proposal. For instance, Molina (2010) named five keys: Firstly, territorial planning as an option to solve land use conflicts and enhance livelihood strategies by stakeholders. Secondly, rural poverty and local capabilities understood as the linkage between stakeholders' skills to markets. Thirdly, land tenure and agrarian structure. Inequalities in tenancy and land use avoid that territories develop all their potentials. The fourth key is a connection between the local and national dimensions. It implies to overcome divergences between sectorial policies and territorial requirements. The last key is contextual and the disciplinary education. It remarks the role of the universities in training professionals with a territorial profile.

### **New Rurality**

New Rurality perspective analyzes the diversification of incomes in rural families. Many households have sought to vary to increase income, doing diverse activities simultaneously with agriculture. These activities are mainly handicrafts, services, and remittances from migrants (Kay, 2009). Mexico is the best example of this issue. In this country, most of the rural incomes are based, direct or indirectly, on remittances.

The income diversification phenomenon has demonstrated something that has always occurred: multifunctionality and pluriactivity of rural areas. Multifunctionality means that besides agricultural production, the rural area provides several goods and services to society (Silva, 2010). On the other hand, pluriactivity means coupling with non-agricultural activities (Van der Ploeg, 2012), which is an attribute of the peasantry production. (Bryceson and

Kay, 2000) added to this discussion, the issue of the 'deagrarianization' of the rural sector. It states that some rural areas are losing their agricultural and productive identity, sometimes due to the different activities held there. Despite the 'deagrarianization' argument, the result has been the reassessment of the rural area meaning.

Even though the New Rurality perspective offers interesting questions about the countryside, Kay (2005) argued that those topics are the consequences of the MAP, neoliberalism and globalization policies. Notwithstanding, they explained that the New Rurality perspective explores issues about rural sector such as participation, local development, empowerment, entrepreneurship, organic agriculture, gender topics, or fair trade; but it does not offer tangible paths to reach its goals or the role of governments in this achievement.

Besides, Ramírez (2014) explained the New Rurality perspective as the neoliberal rurality because it typifies the consequences of the implementation of neoliberal policies in rural areas. For instance, while governments were opening the national economy for globalization and were seeking to establish production for the international market, the rural sector sought diversification of activities.

### Political approach

The Political approach concentrates on rights. Essentially the political approach debates the importance for all the rural inhabitants to access to every privilege as the urban population. However, these rights go beyond the access to freedom, autonomy, and independence. They refer to an acknowledgement of the importance of the rural areas, rural inhabitants and food by all society (Patel, 2009). The rights have recently reached the center of the debate on rural development because the other approaches have been predominant in both the academic and political discussion. Nevertheless, their influence on public policies has been inconspicuous.

The current perspective is led by an international rural organization: '*La Vía Campesina*.' Initially, it is important to remark that the advent of *La Vía Campesina* has brought the discussion about the survival of rural inhabitants back. Another interesting fact is that the English word '*Peasant*' has gradually been changed in the international literature by the Spanish word '*Campesino*' (Altieri and Toledo, 2011). That is exceptional because both words have been used in an offensive way to designate somebody who is poor, unable to act appropriately in social circumstances, as well as being inadequately educated.

*La Vía Campesina*, as an international movement, includes many worldwide organizations from all the Continents. Regardless, the differences of its members, *La Vía Campesina* has become the opportunity to integrate a set of demands in a global scenario (Desmarais, 2002). Besides, the most important aspect is that the Food Sovereignty perspective has strengthened a collective identity and common places to debate refreshing ideas.

### Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty started at the beginning of the nineties based primarily on a struggle against Neoliberal policies, the unfair market, and the global corporate agrifood system (Pachón, 2013). Martínez-Alier (2011) suggests that even though it is a perspective from non-common circles, it has been relevant in the academic world, and probably soon in public policies. In 2007 through the Declaration of Nyéléni on Food Sovereignty, the organization presented its postulates:

"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. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations" (Declaration of Nyeleni, 2007).

It is a significant differentiation between Food Sovereignty and Food Security. The Food Security concept has impacted policies because an influential institution such as The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is behind it. Food Security means that from an individual to a global level, every person should always have both

physical and economic access to satisfactory, safe, and nutritious food to meet their nutritional requirements and food preferences for a dynamic and healthy life (FAO, 2003). This statement would be unquestionable but omits some fundamental issues such as where food is produced, who is in the production process, modes of production, trade practices, environmental consequences of production, or subsidy schemes in developed countries. Perhaps the most important issue is if people that produce food will consume it or must sell all the production to achieve their livelihoods.

Food Sovereignty accentuates several topics, but the most important one is its emphasis on 'rights'. That means that it is legal, fair and morally allowed that the peasantry chooses the best way to carry out their activities, especially cropping without external pressures such as market conditions, a particular type of inputs, monoculture practices, consumption behaviors, or displacement of their lands. It is true that several rural inhabitants, farmers, and indigenous people in many places are expelled from their lands because of violence and discriminatory policies, or when governments allow transnational food companies to flood emerging economies with food at unfair prices with subsidized production. Another interesting issue in that discussion is the food wasted worldwide. Sometimes market requirements pursue the creation of consumption habits, which have resulted in a significant food loss, mainly in developed countries (Martínez, 2014).

Ortega and Rivera (2010), described five Principles of Food Sovereignty. Firstly, the access to resources. From the individual to the communal level, rural inhabitants can take control of land, seeds, credits, water and infrastructure. Those resources must be used in an eco-friendly way, emphasizing gender equality. Secondly, the modes of production. It seeks to recover and propagate ancestral production models, especially avoiding external dependencies. The third is the transformation and commercialization. It motivates the producers themselves to add value to their products and commercialize them in local markets. The fourth principle is related to food consumption. That is the key issue in food sovereignty and aims the right of the producers, their families, and neighbors to consume their products. Finally, the agricultural policies. Rural inhabitants have the possibility to interfere with policies that could affect their rights.

Besides these principles the Food Sovereignty perspective aims for rural inhabitants to live with dignity, preserving natural resources, and appreciating women's role. It protects and respects traditional knowledge, culture, and

language. It defends the territories against external actions and promotes that peasants decide themselves their future.

One of the central concerns of Food Sovereignty is the right to have access to seeds, which are the basis of agriculture and represent new lives, future, and renovation. Seeds, beyond the capability to generate new plants, constitute the arsenal of culture and the reference framework for the generations to come. Seeds conserve part of history. Every moment that seeds are lost, this entire heritage is lost as well.

## **Rural development from the food sovereignty point of view**

Hitherto, the principal rural development perspectives have been highlighted, including food sovereignty as a part of the political approach. The final discussion will illustrate, consider this background, the main reasons why the current paper understands food sovereignty as the contemporary rural development perspective.

In plain words, rural development can be understood as the stage where all rural residents get a standard of living that allows them to accomplish all of their rights as human beings. The key topics of rural development are the standard of living and the rights of people. Both topics are synergic, in other words, its combination makes the process to make rural development more efficient.

On the one hand, the standard of life includes, at least, three backgrounds: support, conservation and inclusion. The support context suggests, for instance, matters such as housing, jobs and incomes; the conservationist context, for example, is concerned about water, land or air. The inclusion context comprises, among others, welfare, health and equity. The standard of life must be different in both, the individual and the collective levels including all rural inhabitants, making a particular emphasis in those who have seen their efforts to achieve their rights frustrated.

The rights can be organized in the same three backgrounds: support, conservation and inclusion. The support rights include having their property separated or in cooperation with others, keeping their belongings, having freedom to choose a job or occupation with a fair payment that ensures the coverage of basic needs such as food, clothing, housing and medical care for people and their families as well as being provided with social protection in cases of unemployment. The conservationist rights are based upon the idea of common goods. These goods must be accessible



for everyone everywhere, including the rural areas. Conservationist rights refer especially to the conventions of the human behavior to preserve an adequate environment available for all people, including the next generations and respect all the living creatures. The inclusion rights essentially are a big tent where rights such as dignity, freedom of speech, movement, security, recognition and equality, peaceful assembly and association, as well as the freedom to join a trade union, leisure, education, special care and assistance for the motherhood, and childhood are present. The inclusive rights must avoid discrimination, torture, exile or racism; and promote respect and participation in the cultural life according to their beliefs for all the rural inhabitants.

The Food sovereignty perspective takes these concerns into consideration, but is fenced off to food as the burning question. Perhaps other topics are highlighted, but they are not the core of the perspective. In other words, the subjects underlined in the definition of rural development belong to the ideas of the food sovereignty perspective, but they are described regarding the importance of food.

### **Supportive issues**

About the debate of supportive problems, food sovereignty proposes that access to markets in a fair way would improve those topics. According to food sovereignty, rural inhabitants should have the right to commercialize their products in a transparent structure. The practices that distort or deform the market must be forbidden. With an unbiased access to the market, rural inhabitants will gain their wages and hence hold enough economic resources.

It is important to remark that the food sovereignty perspective does not emphasize access to assets. Its emphasis is on the right of rural inhabitants to commercialize in fair trade. In it, the consumer pays a fair price for the food and, the reward is adequate according to the labor and risks that the rural inhabitants assume throughout all the production process. Adequate payment, beyond the incomes, is inspired by feelings such as social involvement, self-esteem, confidence and pride, besides an acknowledgment by society about the prominence of rural inhabitants. Parrado and Molina (2014) described the experience of the program '*Mercados Campesinos*' in the central region of Colombia. Regularly, rural inhabitants surrounding Bogotá gather their production and commercialize it in special places such as parks or squares. Besides the fair price that consumers are willing to pay for these products, a friendship between peasants and consumers has been created. In some cases, consumers go directly to the farm with the purpose of

visiting and identifying the production process. As a result, consumers realize that the price is correct, and rural inhabitants feel that society values their work.

An adequate payment can allow rural inhabitants to have access to material assets, which could influence the improvement of the standard of living and accomplishment of their rights. However, just the access to material assets cannot guarantee by itself the achievement of the rights and the enhancement of the standard of living. Material assets allow for the satisfaction of some particular needs, which are undoubtedly important for people. Nevertheless, the feelings created by the acknowledgment and engagements of the society are those that indeed allow improving the standard of living and the accomplishment of rights.

Some of the supportive issues described as essential by the food sovereignty perspective are land, seeds, and infrastructure. Certainly, rural inhabitants must have an adequate infrastructure available to improve the standard of living and the accomplishment of their rights. Infrastructure such as housing, schools, medical centers, roads, bridges, electricity, clean water, or places for recreation is a *sine qua non* condition, in conjunction with the social engagement, to reach rural development.

### **Conservative issues**

The conservative issues discussed by food sovereignty are fundamentally related both to access to resources and the food production modes. The food production modes go together with the protection of the environmental resources and the access to them. Food sovereignty argues that most of the ancestral ways of food production were environmentally friendly because its priority was integrated natural resource management, privileging conservation of water, land, and biodiversity. Nonetheless, some isolated practices do not have this characteristic. In many developing countries, customs such as burning tires to get the energy for post-harvest processes generate enormous environmental impacts. That is why an analysis of the real influence of some of these practices must be done to identify positive and adverse effects on the environment, but especially for the purpose to recover the traditional knowledge and share it with the other communities.

According to food sovereignty, seeds are the most important treasure that rural inhabitants have. Seeds embody the base for the new life and are the main inheritance that rural inhabitants and humanity have to establish strong bonds with their territories. All societies have built their history through food produced by seeds. The traditions of all

societies, even the most industrialized, are strongly related to food, which becomes one of the central axes. Besides the industrialization level, the economic situation, or religious beliefs, food remains inside the legacies of societies. For that reason, seeds and food become the most efficient way to keep traditions and spread culture for new generations.

### **Inclusive issues**

Inclusive matters in food sovereignty are strongly related to political issues, especially the agrarian policy. In it, the core is the accomplishment of the human rights for all rural inhabitants, in particular for the peasantry. A policy that pursues an integral reform process that overcomes the idea of just the redistribution of land, together with the previously discussed matters, belongs to the features of the rural development debate. It does not mean that the land and its adequate distribution have lost its relevance in the agrarian question, quite the opposite. Besides the land, the peasantry requires much more subjects that allow them to reach rural development. Some examples of these requirements are the availability of a technical assistance according to their interests and needs, clean water, loans, fair markets, information, insurances, schools, medical services, leisure, housing, and transportation. The idea of an integral reform that contains all the previous concerns and others will correspond to a proposal of a rural reform for the rural development. However, as it was discussed previously, the primary characteristic of this reform is social acknowledgement and overcoming the old idea that rural inhabitants are poorly educated people, resistant to the change or difficult to organize.

The implementation of this policy based on a rural reform requires a new kind of institutions. Traditional institutions based on the notion of the economistic tendency, cannot succeed in that aim. Historically, the goals of the institutions can change. However, if people keep doing their duties, in the same way, the results would persist without alteration. A novel mind, innovative performances, integrative practices and perhaps young people concerned about these matters should belong to the new institutions for rural development. That means that working in the countryside should become an attractive occupation for young enthusiasts. For that reason, the motivations, including wages for the employees, should be convenient to capture the best people.

Food sovereignty strongly remarks the role of women as the leaders of the development processes. Women, according to the food sovereignty beliefs, are the holders of traditions, which they share with children and their families through

education. For that reason, the role of women is crucial in preserving the heritages for new generations. Women must have the right to decide the best way to make things in the household, as well as the likelihood to make decisions over their bodies. In the same way, food sovereignty remarks the importance of children for the rurality. Children must remain in schools instead of working in the plots. They must receive an integral education that promotes staying in rural areas instead of migrating to urban environments. Food sovereignty understands children as the present and, at the same time, the future of rurality.

### **Conclusions**

The main finding of this discussion is in the answer to the question proposed at the beginning of the paper. How a concept such as food sovereignty can bring together so many diverse people around the world? A possible answer could be because of the consequences of the implementation of perspectives of the technocratic approach. That implementation takes shape in public policies, which handle unified criteria for much of the rural inhabitants around the world. Possibly the explanation could remain in the fact that most of the people that feel recognized by the food sovereignty perspective are suffering similar problems. That situation is independent of the location of these people. A common denominator in all these places is the implemented policies. Much of these policies follow an economistic tendency, which has evolved from protection to globalization, have determined that similar situations remain parallel worldwide, obviously with certain nuances according to the realities of the continents, countries and territories.

It is logical that when an alternative proposal that can join the needs of an enormous social group emerges, most of its members feel identified by it. It happens because the technocratic and socio-technocratic approaches are almost always trying to unify the rural diversities into just one reality. On the other hand, the sociological approach takes into consideration most of the diversities of the countryside and their inhabitants. Nevertheless, the political approach embodied in the food sovereignty perspective constructs a general framework characterized mainly by the particularities, reality, and history of each territory. Food sovereignty constructs a proposal based on the rights of rural inhabitants beyond their production. Food sovereignty puts food in a different context, not as a commodity.

The interdependence between rural inhabitants and consumers is crucial for the social acknowledgment of rural

inhabitants. The consumers, beyond a fair pay for food, must offer the place the peasantry deserves in the society. When this happens, the consumers will have the right to decide the kind of food that best suits according to their viewpoints, avoiding imposed food. That means the consumers belong to the food sovereignty perspective as well, and they play a significant role in it. However, the perspective is imprecise about how consumers can be enrolled in the achievement of the food sovereignty proposal in a more active way. That is a new step that *La Vía Campesina* and all its partners must improve.

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