

(RE)APPROXIMATING FOOD PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS IN METRO VANCOUVER, CANADA¹

(RE)APROXIMANDO PRODUCTORES Y CONSUMIDORES DE ALIMENTOS EN LA REGIÓN METROPOLITANA DE VANCOUVER, CANADÁ

REAPROXIMANDO PRODUTORES E CONSUMIDORES DE ALIMENTOS NA REGIÃO METROPOLITANA DE VANCOUVER, CANADÁ

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ABSTRACT

This paper interprets the Metro Vancouver food localization movement, through the lens of the second generation of food sovereignty, with the objective of exploring its economic dimensions. First we promote a theoretical discussion of food sovereignty explaining that it started in a rural setting of the global south as a means to contest the international neoliberal trade system, and how it has adapted in the global north to incorporate consumers. We then discuss the contradictions between British Columbia's and Metro Vancouver's food systems. In sequence, we present the results from interviews of the movement's stakeholders, offering a qualitative analysis. Our findings demonstrate that there are several economic consequences, identifying: i) farmer markets as currently the most significant channel for the commerce of local foods and how they have been responsible for (re)approximating food producers and consumers; also, ii) institutional markets as a next step that can represent a true democratization of good food.

Key-words: local food; food systems; food sovereignty; institutional markets; Metro Vancouver.

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo se interpreta el movimiento de localización de alimentos en la Región Metropolitana de Vancouver, a través de la lente de la segunda generación de la soberanía alimentaria, con el objetivo de explorar sus dimensiones económicas. En primer lugar se promueve una discusión teórica de la soberanía alimentaria y explicamos que empezó en un entorno rural del sur global como medio para impugnar el sistema de comercio neoliberal internacional, y cómo se ha adaptado en el norte global para incorporar los consumidores. A continuación, discutimos las contradicciones entre los sistemas alimentarios de la Región Metropolitana de Vancouver y de la Columbia Británica. En la secuencia, se presentan los resultados de las entrevistas de los stakeholders del movimiento, ofreciendo un análisis cualitativo. Nuestros hallazgos demuestran que existen varias consecuencias económicas, identificando que: i) los mercados de agricultores, en la actualidad, es el canal más importante para el comercio de alimentos locales y la forma en que han sido responsables de la (re)aproximación de los productores y consumidores de alimentos; también que, ii) los mercados institucionales son el siguiente paso que puede representar una verdadera democratización de la buena comida.

Palabras clave: comida local; sistemas alimentarios; la soberanía alimentaria; mercados institucionales; Metro Vancouver.

RESUMO

Este artigo interpreta o movimento de localização de alimentos em Metro Vancouver, através da lente da segunda geração da soberania alimentar, com o objetivo de explorar as suas dimensões econômicas. Em primeiro lugar, é promovida uma discussão teórica da soberania alimentar explicando que essa começou num cenário rural do sul global como um meio de contestar o sistema de comércio internacional neoliberal e também como ela se adaptou no norte global, incorporando os consumidores. Nós, então, discutimos as contradições entre os sistemas alimentares da região Metropolitana de Vancouver e da Columbia Britânica. Na sequência, são apresentados os resultados de entrevistas com os stakeholders do movimento, oferecendo uma análise qualitativa. Nossos resultados demonstram que existem várias consequências econômicas, identificando: i) os mercados de agricultores como o canal mais importante para o comércio de alimentos locais atualmente, sendo que demonstramos como eles têm sido responsáveis pela reaproximação de produtores e consumidores de alimentos; e, ii) os mercados institucionais num próximo passo podem representar uma verdadeira democratização da boa comida.

Palavras-chave: comida local; sistemas alimentares; soberania alimentar; mercados institucionais; Metro Vancouver

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

In this paper we explore the economic dimension of the Metro Vancouver food movement, where we identify the emergence of new market channels for local producers. These have been a significant means of (re)approximating local food producers and urban consumers.

The hegemonic food system has been characterized by the distancing of food producers and consumers (Korthals, 2015; Pollan, 2007; Schlosser, 2001; Sonnino, 2010). This is because food has become understood, and therefore treated as, merchandise and not a right (De Schutter, 2015a; Nestle, 2002; Patel, 2012). In doing so the large producers focus mainly in the

economic dimension of food and not in its social aspects.

However, many actions have emerged that aim to prioritize the consumption of local products (Feagan, 2007; Kirwan & Maye, 2013; Weiss, 2012). There are too principle reasons for this: i) the contribution towards sustainability, due to reduced environmental impacts caused by the transportation of food (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Weber & Scott, 2008); ii) and the support of local economies (Vogt & Kaiser, 2008; Wittman, Beckie, & Hergesheimer, 2012).

This paper presents a synthesis of the results of a research conducted that identifies a process of (re)approximation

1. Vancouver is the most populous city of the province of British Columbia (BC), Canada, its metropolitan region is considered to be one of the most compact of North America (Condon et al., 2010).

between food producers and consumers in Metro Vancouver¹, where we interviewed stakeholders within the civil society lead food localization initiatives that have been resulting in change by molding public policy.

Favouring the consumption of local foods has constituted a new market opportunity for the small producers. We explore how this process has been taking place by understanding the phenomenon through the lens of the second generation of food sovereignty. After conveying the objectives, we consider the possible effects of this process in the way people think about and consume food in Metro Vancouver, and the significance of this for other parts of the world.

Food localization initiative as part of food sovereignty

Food sovereignty has become a discourse and practice of change, resisting directly a neoliberal model of free trade (Alkon, 2013; Andrée, 2014; Barbosa Júnior & Coca, 2015). The literature dedicated to understand how this has resulted in impact in the rural contexts of the developing world is extensive (Borras, Franco, & Suárez, 2015; Desmarais, 2015; Wittman & Blesh, 2015), food sovereignty is not exclusively a need of the poor countries, as it is locally adaptable (Schiavoni, 2009). The second generation of Food sovereignty has, however, provided a place for thinking about the consumers while analysing food politically (Coca & Barbosa Júnior, n.d.). This innovative approach has been widening the scope of the debate by incorporating a larger demographic, the consumers, with what is already present, as a concept in academics and as a practice of those situated in the countryside, reinforcing it as a theme of the public debate. This new posture has demonstrated to be very promising, instituting a democratization of knowledge, by widening the understanding of local food systems, within civil society lead initiatives that are morally, concerned with what they eat.

It is possible to see that there are active consumers who are political taking the place of those whom were merely passive, by exercising their right to choose, they seek to reclaim control over their food systems.

While global food markets have expanded, local markets have been neglected, resulting in devastating environmental and social consequences (Stédile & Carvalho, 2011). The instabilities of the international market also translate into food insecurity for the local populations that no longer have the same autonomy in their food system (De Schutter, 2015a).

Initially food sovereignty was attacked for putting the concerns of food producers above food consumers – rural above urban –, as these last where supposedly exclusively concerned with a larger abundance of cheap food (De Schutter, 2015b). With its advocates accused of denying the benefits of trade, however these allegations are not accurate with there being space for trade in food sovereignty (Burnett & Murphy, 2014). While speaking out against distant based profit driven international trade, food sovereignty promotes the consumption of culturally appropriate, seasonal and local foods (Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007).

It is a bottom up approach to rethink and reclaim the autonomy over food systems that have become perverse, directed by the neoliberal internationalization of food trade. In this sense, it promotes not only reducing the physical distance of food but has been responsible for bringing people together around food, renewing lost social relations (Alkon, 2013; Wittman, 2009, 2011).

The second generation of food sovereignty, as understood by De Schutter (2015b), has the following characteristics: i) the bridging of food producers and consumers by rebuilding local food systems; ii) the transition from passive consumer to active citizens whom participate socially; iii) the strengthening of social links in the face of the weakened relationships brought about by the presence of market relationships in life; iv) the favoring of resilience over efficiency; and v) an alignment with agroecology as a model of farming while maintain a relationship with environment.

This process is resulting in new ethics (Korthals, 2015) but also has novel economic consequences, an aspect less frequently

explored. We do this, however, not as a means of depoliticizing the discussion, but as an attempt to draw attention to it as a market opportunity, as a means of contributing to the debate in a new light and to demonstrate to economically interested parties such as distributors and small business that this transition situates a context that can be fruitful for them too. Therefore while our economic analysis is done highlighting the market scenario, we first offer a well-rounded analysis, at the end pondering some of the social and political implications.

To describe the food localization movement, it is important to demonstrate how the principles of food sovereignty can be used to subsidized its meaning, this is essential to understand that it is not only about the niche consumer who wishes to acquire better quality of food that they can also feel better about because of a more conscious use of their purchasing power. While most of the population that are still putting a large percentage of their income into the acquisition of food for sustenance are still directed towards the consumption of cheaper industrial food for those who cannot pay (Nestle, 2002; Stuckler & Nestle, 2012). We are describing the new forms of market that are being molded by a social concept that emerged from a movement that can be understood as a pragmatic directive for things to come in the true democratization of good food.

In this sense, we argue that food sovereignty is one the most influential forms of resistance against the international capitalist model of production in the world today. During these initial moments, it has provoked market changes by inciting transitions from global to local and by inducing consumers towards acquiring critically (Robbins, 2015). We analyse the “buy local” and “eat good” initiatives by situating them as a consequence of a political process that is of market relevance and having the possibility of resulting in significant economic change.

This aspect is substantial because there are many critics, sometimes-even supporters, who understand food sovereignty as advocating for a transition to a pre-capitalist society, when that is not the objective as is argued by La Via Campesina. While

there are some pre-capitalist aspects present in the project, the discourse is very much of innovative thinking towards something more, and towards a future that recognizes the past and offers conditions of livelihoods that are based on more than elevated profit margins (Wittman, 2011).

Therefore, while contesting the neoliberal model of international free trade food sovereignty is shaping the market. In Brazil, for example, there are institutional purchasing programs like Food Acquisition Program (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos - PAA) (Coca, 2015; Van der Ploeg, Jingzhong, & Schneider, 2012) and the National School Meals Program (Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar - PNAE) (IPC-IG, 2013; Triches & Schneider, 2010) that offer a stable market for producers to repurpose and diversify their production buy promoting initiatives that tackle simultaneously both urban food insecurity and the need for rural development. In North America, however it takes place around consumer markets initiatives, by means of activities being consumer driven (Cassol & Schneider, 2010; Schiavoni, 2009).

With alliances created at local levels between farmers, citizens, and municipalities, some of the most dynamic changes that are taking place through the process of food sovereignty is occurring in urban centers, due to the coming together of those who grow and eat food (Anderson, 2013; Higgins, 2015).

In the current reality it is important to better understand market relations and there consequences so that we can reflect upon the type of model society we want, and have the means to work towards it. In our perception even while not explicitly aligning with food sovereignty project, the civil society based movements in Metro Vancouver works within its logic, where by forming consumer mindset they affect how they themselves, suppliers and restaurants interact with food producers (Gibb & Wittman, 2012). More objectively, this has materialized into a demand for local products in British Columbia.

BC's international food trade and the local food system in Metro Vancouver

One of the most important components of British Columbia's

food system is the contradictions between their production for export and actions implemented by civil society organizations to promote local food (Wittman & Barbolet, 2011; Wittman et al., 2012).

The priority of the provincial government has been to give incentive to the export of food, being that BC is considered the gateway of the Pacific (BC Ministry of Agriculture, 2012). In 2013, for example, B.C. exported \$2.7 billion worth of agrifood products to more than 140 markets (BC Ministry of Agriculture, 2014). At the same time there is a great dependency on products that come in from the outside (Mansfield, 2014).

To preserve the local agriculture, the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR)² was created in 1970s, however, currently many of the proprietaries here situated are not dedicated towards the production of food (Condon, Mullinix, Fallick, & Harcourt, 2010; Newman, Powell, & Wittman, 2015). This is problematic because even while having just 1.5% of the agricultural land in British Columbia it is responsible for 27% of gross profit from countryside (Metro Vancouver, 2014). As Metro Vancouver has the most productive agriculture in British Columbia (Metro Vancouver, 2011).

Annually, the Metro Vancouver population spends almost 5 billion on food. However, just 48% of the non-processed foods are from British Columbia (Metro Vancouver, 2011). In regards to a provincial scale, in 2010, 67% of the vegetables consumed by the population came from the United States, over half of which were produced in California. On top of that, between 1991 and 2011 British Columbia's vegetable production decrease 20.4% (Mansfield, 2014).

As can be seen Metro Vancouver has a contradictory food system, which is characterized at the same time by increasing the consumption of food from outside British Columbia and

the alternatives implemented by civil society to increase the consumption of local food. With this in mind in the following we explore some of the market opportunities that have emerged from the struggles to change this situation.

Channels for the commerce of local products in Metro Vancouver

In recent years, Metro Vancouver has experienced the emergence of several actions performed by civil society to support local producers and the consumption of healthy food by the population.

As we have discussed, even in rich countries the negative impacts generated by a market economy are felt by part of the population. In this sense, the proposal of food sovereignty can be utilized in a many experiences where the domain of large corporations on the world food system is challenged. Currently, food sovereignty incorporates both the struggles of the social movements in what are considered poor countries for land reform and better conditions to access the market and the civil society struggles in what are considered rich countries to access healthy and local foods (Desmarais, 2015; McMichael, 2014).

This is to say that, civil society is a relevant element for the consolidation of the second generation of food sovereignty (De Schutter, 2015b). Organized in groups of consumers, NGOs and others it is creating alternatives that contribute to public health and local economy (Sadler, Arkua, & Gillilanda, 2014). One of the facts that justify the need for the creation of new relations of consumerism is that hegemonic capitalism recognises food more as commodity than as a social good. Due to this currently there are many environmental impacts related to food systems (Sage, 2012; Seufert, Ramankutty, & Foley, 2012; Sonnino, 2010).

It is therefore, essential to reflect upon the role of consumers

² It established that 5% of the British Columbia's lands should be zoned for food production (Campbell, 2006; Provincial Agricultural Land Commission of BC, 2015; Wittman & Barbolet, 2011). In Metro Vancouver 60,940 ha are protected by ALR. Most of them are in the Fraser River's delta (Richmond, Delta, Surrey, Burnaby and Pitt Meadows) and in the highlands of Langley and Maple Ridge (Metro Vancouver, 2011).

in order to provoke debates around in the production and sales of food through alternative networks (Cassol & Schneider, 2010). Consumers now have at their disposal much more information about the food they purchase. But this does not translate necessarily into a better understanding of what they are eating (Marinova, 2015). Food literacy³, is therefore, an important effort that sets the stage for a revolution of thought, which conditions new consumer relations (Vidgen & Gallegos, 2014).

People have a right to know what is in their food where and how it's grown, and are becoming more and more aware of these factors demanding transparency (Coelho, 2015). Therefore food systems have started to become reshaped as a result of these conditions. As Herring (2015) explains, the political economy of food is especially dependent on the politics of ideas.

It has been revealed that market provided labeling does not currently play a major role in consumers' food choices (Grunert, Hieke, & Wills, 2014), this differs from what takes place within the local food movement, because rather than take the word of a company, consumers are put in contact with those who grow the food they eat.

In the present work, the changes in the consumer relations are understood as a fundamental tool for the interpretation of the food sovereignty proposal. Of course, just a change in the consumer relations is not enough to solve all problems of the world food system, after all millions of people in the world do not have economic conditions to buy food in quantity and quality necessary to meet their nutritional needs. Therefore, the consumer relations are recognized as a significant, but secondary step - the first is linked to relations of production - for the implementation of food sovereignty (McMichael, 2014). This does not however make it a less important research agenda that still needs to be explored.

In the last years the incorporation of the food sovereignty vocabulary in spaces such food banks, urban gardens, farmer markets, food policy councils and others has increased (Akram-Lodhi, 2015; Anderson, 2013; Andree, 2014; Higgins, 2015; Schiavoni, 2009). While all of these have economic implications, this dimension can be more or less expressive in its transformation of local economies and the creation of market opportunities.

In Canada, around 841,191 people visited food banks monthly in 2014 (Food Banks Canada, 2014) and food banks also characterise the participation of civil society in Metro Vancouver's food system. They are a concrete expression of the fact that even in rich countries hunger affects a portion of the population. Only in 2014, an monthly average of 97.000 people looked for help in food banks located in British Columbia (Food Banks Canada, 2014). "The Great Vancouver Food Bank Society" is a reference to the delivery of this kind of service. Weekly it helps almost 28,000 people through posts installed in Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminister e North Vancouver (The Greater Vancouver Food Bank, 2015). There are two parts to this segment, those who become engage and offer assistance, and those who are in need, to whom food reflects a biological necessity, not mere preference. These initiatives are supported by the donation of money and food as well as voluntary work.

The urban gardens and orchards are part of another action performed by civil society that aim to be an incentive to the consumption of local food in Metro Vancouver as part of Community Support Agriculture (Fodor, 2011). These spaces may contribute to the combat of hunger because they facilitate the access of low-income people to food (City of Vancouver, 2013). They are varied in relation to methods of labour and the conditions to acquisition of food but all of them bring as a contribution the transformation the urban spaces, not just promoted by those who receive food, but also producers (Fodor, 2011)⁴. In the city of Vancouver, for example, there are

4 According to Kjaerås (2012), urban agriculture in the city of Vancouver composed by these urban gardens and orchards are organized on public, commercial, residential or vacant land. The main sales channels of products generated in them are: i) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) which is characterized by an agreement between producers and consumers wherein the first offer a package of products generally in weekly terms; ii) specific sales; iii) local markets; and iv) restaurants. Sometimes there is a part of the products that is donated to low-income people or charities.

97 community gardens and 18 community orchards (City of Vancouver, 2013).

Currently farmer markets are the most expressive in its economic implications, having been raising their sales considerably in the recent years (BC Association of Farmer's Markets & University of Northern British Columbia, 2012). By becoming more and more popular, these create new networks of interaction between consumers and producers (Beckie, Kennedy, & Wittman, 2012).

They are in constant expansion in British Columbia. Between 2006 and 2012 their annual sales rose from C\$ 46 million to C\$ 113 million, in other words, they increase 147% (BC Association of Farmer's Markets & University of Northern British Columbia, 2012). Neighbors are responsible for most of these initiatives and some of them are operational just during the summer⁵. These farmer markets have the common goal of reconnecting producers and consumers (Wittman et al., 2012).

Civil society also participates in the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC). It is fashioned by 21 members who represents different segments of Vancouver's food system such as producers, processors, distributors, deliverers and consumers. Its meetings happen weekly and they are open to the public. Rules for the establishment of food trading companies; purchases and use of food by government agencies; support for decision-making on school food; spotting the nutritional needs of children served by day care centers and others are amongst the discussions performed in it (Vancouver Food Policy Council, 2010). The VFPC is a means that civil society has of actively advising municipal government in questions related to food (Kjærås, 2012).

As we have shown the food policy council can directly impact the planning of the local food system by influencing directives on what practices should be execute, for example determining on weather public institutions should be prioritizing local food

(Koc, MacRae, Desjardins, & Roberts, 2008; Welsh & MacRae, 1998).

If we understand farmers market as the current most significant market opportunity in the Metro Vancouver's food localisation movement, the possibility of an institutional market is the most noteworthy for the future (Hinrichs, 2013). There are sectors of the movement that advocates to the importance of public institutions commitment to local food, understanding that as these are public they are held to higher standers of promoting general public goods and services with values. This belief has translated into a series of Farm to Institution initiatives, that segment into Farm to School, Farm to Cafeteria, Farm to Hospital, and other public institutions (Dwyer, 2010; Joshi, Azuma, & Feenstra, 2008; Kloppenburg & Hassanein, 2006).

To promote these actions in Metro Vancouver some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have promoted Learning Labs that consist in building of joint strategies, between a number of community representatives, through which they create a plan of action to achieve a specific objective, that is to say that, it is a policy-making space.

For example, the NGO Farm Folk City Folk, in partnership with the Farm to School BC (F2S BC) network, has developed a Learning Lab along with the Vancouver School Board, which has as approximate numbers: 29,000 students in elementary schools, 26,000 students in secondary schools, 9,300 in continuing education programs, 1,410 students in learning programs and 14,000 students in summer courses (Vancouver School Board, 2015). Moreover, about C\$ 4,400 million are destined for feeding programs developed in this school district (Bramham, 2015). Under these conditions, through that Learning Lab, Farm Folk City Folk aims to contribute to Vancouver School Board's food policies. "It is a partnership where we help the School Board determine ways in which they can buy more healthy local and

⁵ To know more about the diversity of these farmer markets access the Web Page of BC Association of Farmers Market: <<http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/>>.

sustainable food coming into their schools” (A. C. - Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Development of the Farm Folk City Folk - 2015-06-16).

Motivated by the City of Vancouver’s proposal of the to be considered the greenest in the world by 2020 (City of Vancouver, 2012) the Vancouver School Board aims to be respectively considered the greenest school district in North America (Vancouver School Board, 2010). For this to happen it is essential that school feeding be handled with an emphasis on fresh, local and healthy food. Thus, the Learning Lab has had four main objectives:

So our goals are: increasing the procurement of local sustainable food – that’s goal number one. Number two is meeting the healthy school food guidelines. Number three is to increase the markets within the schools so that students are actually willing and able to buy this food and number four is to train staff and get them involved in the idea of local food. So those goals serve as our work plan, essentially, and then we build pieces underneath them to make sure that we are meeting all of them, and sometimes we try to do them all at the same time, sometimes we focus on one of them (A. C. - Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Development of the Farm Folk City Folk - 2015-06-16).

A key challenge for the Learning Lab that is being developed by the Vancouver School Board is to reduce the influence of large companies engaged in providing food to schools in Metro Vancouver and then to create mechanisms so that these schools acquire a larger amount of local produce. This is because the major suppliers of food have a great potential to contribute to the institutionalization of Farm to School projects (Izumi, Alaimo, & Hamm, 2010).

Similarly, also in Vancouver a Farm to Campus strategy has been implemented at the University of British Columbia (UBC). In this case, since the new millennium’s first decade UBC Farm, which is linked to the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, has sold part of its production to restaurants and cafeterias managed by the UBC Food Services (UBC, 2014a; UBC, 2014b). More recently UBC Farm also has worked in a Farm to Hospital Project

through which it will be one of the distributors of food to UBC’s Hospital (Sine et al., 2014) . These actions are incentivized by a UBC’s mandate to achieve sustainability (UBC, 2013a; UBC, 2013b).

According to one of the individuals responsible for the Farm to Institutions project at the UBC Farm:

[...] we are an agricultural and sustainable food system research center, and we have a farmer training program, and we see Farm to Institution, as kind of a missing link in the food system because institutions are publicly funded and so that’s local money, and local taxpayer money, and it should also be supporting local economies. [...] So, U.B.C Farm would like to see institutional food become more socially just. For example people who are in schools or hospitals, or even prisons, deserve to eat high quality local food. The same as any. Not just people who can afford it at farmers market. We would like to see everyone have access and we’d also like to see new markets open up for new farmers. So that’s our interest (S. L. UBC Farm Communications Coordinator - 2015-16-06).

While identifying farmers market’s significance in bringing together food producers and consumers, these still have limited reach. The institutional markets however offers a larger potential in democratizing access to local food and can still maintain the same values promoted by the local food movement. While speaking about this, A. C. explains the significance of the institutional market and offers an expressive example:

So I always feel like when we have entities like schools and local governments or universities that are, to some extent publicly funded, and to a large extent publicly accountable, these organizations should really model the society or the social changes that we would like to have in our city and in our province and our country. If they did that, we’d not only see an increased bottom line for a lot of our farmers and food producers, we would also see a trickledown effect where students and staff were immersed in a culture of change. In a culture of food. Which would have huge ramifications, for these are huge employers. Like for example [...] the School Board in Surrey is the largest employer within in that city. You know, if they were to really take this on and say “this is an important part of our work”. That is a large number of people that will directly or indirectly be affected by those changes. So I think that, that’s really

why I constantly push to have institutions to be part of the picture. They don't have a lot of money so it is not always easy to make that happen, and they don't necessarily have a lot of dynamic people – a lot of people who are attracted to these jobs are fairly... stable people – they don't like change. But what they do have, are massive communities, and massive potential to affect change just by making simple operating decision themselves. (A. C. - Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Development of the Farm Folk City Folk - 2015-06-16).

The Surrey School District is the largest in BC, we can identify its potential by analyzing the following numbers it has: 101 elementary schools, 19 secondary schools, 5 learning centres, and 4 adult education centres. The total number of students as of October 17, 2014 was 68,677, including; 38,878 elementary students (Surrey School District, 2015).

Practices, such as the one we illustrated, are a means of articulating a values based alternative to capitalism while still working within a capitalist context (Mcmurtry, 2014). Therefore when considering how Farm to School can affect consumer relations. It is important to first express how local farmers would still be incorporated, with local food having pedagogical implications within a larger context of food literacy. Not only are the students impacted, but by becoming consumers within a different value chain they influence their parents purchasing decisions, and consequently communities as a whole. In this sense, people become more aware of those who produce food and the implications of their consumer habits, overcoming an aspect that is frequently left out of food consumption.

The food localisation movement is marked by civil society taking up a role that is of the State, but also, particularly with the push for institutional purchasing, the demand is that the State offers assistance and policy directives. It is clear here how private initiatives aim to direct the public sphere, but it is also important to note that, this is not necessarily a relation of conflict. For the provincial government does have channels for communicating with the movement, and food related questions are being discussed and incorporated as practice.

While farmer markets are a great opportunity for local farmers to retail their products at a more just price, selling in bulk to institutions offers an interesting prospect of its own. Wholesales would implicate a fixed expanded market and generally more stable relations, with the possibility of crop planning and a guaranteed steady stream of income. During our interviews when speaking about their motivations, there was recurrent mention of contributing to food literacy and providing healthy food for students. However, the long term implications are generally understood with the belief that this will impact consumer habits by creating a future generation of new food savvy consumers.

It is essential to note that while we have explored the economic aspects here, the food localization movement is multidimensional, not applying only to the commercial side but more importantly showing concerns with the environmental, public health, food literacy and community engagement aspects.

It is possible to interpret, based on what we presented here, that the future of the food industry will be more directly influenced by smaller companies that are more flexible and can adapt to a rapidly changing consumer market. Those who can work with institutions, providing local foods in a way that remains true to the values people are beginning to associate to the consumption of good food. This could ultimately lead to a further fragmentation of the food industry, which holds true to its ideals of the food sovereignty movement.

Final Considerations

Within the contradictory context of having provincial practices that play into the international reality of food trade, Metro Vancouver's food movement has given incentive to the creation to new channels for the commerce of local products. These have been central in the promotion of a short-circuit supply chain, even in an unfavorable context, demonstrating the potential for this as a practice to change food consumption reality elsewhere in the world.

Therefore, more than just a new consumer trend we understand this as an innovative organizational structure that promotes a return to a more traditional form a social proximity between food producers and consumers.

While we explored one of the local food movements in Canada this protagonism of the locality is occurring all over the global north, in urban contexts of countries such as the United States (Sadler et al., 2014), United Kingdom (Kirwan & Maye, 2013) Holland (Goverde-Lips, Bruil, & Renting, 2015) and others.

Even though food struggles in the global south are of a different nature, it is important to note that they are together under the same concept of food sovereignty. While some may consider these food localisation movements as a product of “first world problems” – by attempting to demerit the struggle, defending that food struggles elsewhere in the world are inherently more important for they are about the absence of food and not the type of food – the changes here proposed can have many positive impacts in “de-colonizing” the international trade based agricultural practices that take place in these countries of the global south. Not to mention, that if not solved, difficulties such as these will be those of the global south in the future.

The global significance of these results lay in demonstrating the economic viability, and more so, the opportunities that can be a consequence of food localization. As we discussed, altering consumer relations has impacts not only in public health but also environmentally, at the same time having social consequences for community engagement, bringing once again together segments that have that have been distanced by a market economy.

While the food localization initiatives don't necessarily identify as a food sovereignty movement, we understand that this is an appropriate explanatory lens. As elements of food sovereignty are clearly identifiable: i) valuing the local market; ii) offering an alternative to the control that large corporations have over the food systems; and iii) valuing food as a social good, by understanding it as a right.

In this paper we described how local food can impact markets, but it is important to have more research done that explores the place of local food in free trade, not as a means of consent but to enable a better grasp of the structural changes it can provoke. This could be a venue for understand the future implications of this new discourse, that is catching on as a vocabulary and practice in of itself.

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