

#### 1. Introduction

Due to conflicts and protracted crises, the Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that the undernourished in the Near East and North Africa have dramatically doubled, from 16.5 million to 33 million between 1990 and 2016 (FAO 2017). The level of undernourishment in war-torn countries in the Arab region, namely in Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, is six times larger compared to the average level in non-conflict countries. At the other end of the malnutrition spectrum, one-quarter of the population in the Arab world is considered obese, twice the world average and nearly three times that of developing countries, putting it among the regions with the highest prevalence of overweight and obesity globally. Those extreme values are alarming, but without understanding and challenging the instrumental power relations in the food systems, there will be no provision of healthy diets to citizens and decent living conditions to farmers. Numerous international organizations reports published about food security in the Middle East and North Africa region (World Bank, FAO and IFAD 2009; FAO 2017; ESCWA 2017). However, food security as a concept looks at food questions from a narrow supply-sided vision with its four dimensions - availability, access, utilization, and stability - while blurring the whole social, political, economic and ecological processes in which food is produced and provided. Food security makes hunger and food insecurity functions of food scarcity, directing policies toward ways to increase food supply coming from national production or trade. However, all famine-related deaths since World War Il have occurred in areas where food was available (Patel 2012)Raj Patel examines the concept of food sovereignty, which aims to address inequalities in power that characterize the global food system and fuel hunger and malnutrition.»,»DOI»:»10.1371/ journal.pmed.1001223»,»ISSN»:»-1549 1676», »note»: »00000», »title-short»: »Food Sovereig

1676», »note»: »00000», »title-short»: »Food Sovereig nty», »journal Abbreviation»: »PLOS Medicine», »lang uage»: »en», »author»: [{«family»: »Patel», »given»: »Ra j»}], »issued»: {«date-parts»: [[«6,26,«2012]]}}], »sche ma»: »https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»} .

With a focus on supply as the leading cause for food insecurity, policymakers fail to address the deeper structural causes due to inequities in international trade, socially regressive economic reforms imposed by international financial institutions, financial speculation, policy and dominance of

transnational corporations in the food market (Gonzalez 2015)NY»,»genre»:»SSRN Scholarly Paper»,»source»:»papers.ssrn.com»,»event-

place»:»Rochester, NY», »abstract»: »Environmental justice is an important framework for understanding the North-South divide in many areas of international law and policy, including energy, climate, hazardous wastes, and food. An environmental justice analysis makes visible the ways in which the global North benefits from unsustainable economic activity while imposing the environmental consequences on the global South and on the planet's most vulnerable human beings, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and the poor. This chapter applies an environmental justice analysis to the global food system, and identifies the ways in which this system perpetuates food injustice among and within nations. It adopts a tripartite definition of food justice consisting of ecologically sustainable food production, equitable access to food and food-producing resources, and democratic local and national control over food and agricultural policy. Because the concept of food justice originates in the theory and practice of the environmental justice movement, the chapter describes the origins of this movement and explains how environmental justice as an analytical framework applies to North-South relations. The chapter then analyzes the underlying causes of food injustice, and outlines several strategies to create a more equitable and sustainable approach to global food governance.»,»URL»:»https://papers. ssrn.com/abstract=2880060», »note»; »00002», »num ber»:»ID 2880060»,»title-short»;»Food Justice»,»lan guage»:»en», »author»: [{ «family»: »Gonzalez», »given »:»Carmen G.»}],»issued»:{«date-parts»:[[«9,4,«2015 ]]},»accessed»:{«date-parts»:[[«4,22,«2019]]}}}],»sch ema»:»https://github.com/citation-style-language/ schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»}. Jarosz goes further in her critique, noting that: "Food security is embedded in dominant technocratic, neoliberal development discourses emphasizing increases in production and measurable supply and demand and is aligned with transnational agribusiness and institutions of governance at the national and international scales." (Jarosz 2014, p. 170-169).

Instead, food sovereignty is a politicized paradigm that fits better in understanding the centrality of food from a political economy perspective. Therefore, food sovereignty is more appropriate to challenge power relations in food systems at different global, regional, national, and local scales. Any transformation in food relations should first grasp the political economy of food, embedded in

Arab states formation, through their long histories of capital, power, and natural flows, which is partaking over the last decades in a hegemonic process of neoliberalizing agri-food systems and diets (see Riachi and Martiniello in this issue). There is a growing literature about food sovereignty in the Arab region that spurred since the international food crisis and the Arab uprisings (Gross and Feldman 2013; Sansour and Tartir 2014; Zurayk 2016; Bush 2016; El Nour 2017; Ajl 2018; Riachi and Martiniello 2019). It is from this tradition using a political economy lens of food systems that this paper will explore the right to food and food sovereignty in the region from a comparative perspective.

Central to the ANND's Arab Watch approach is to reach to civil society organizations in the region through participatory knowledge sharing and production. This report has collected eleven case studies from the Arab world, representing an exhaustive collection of national reports covering half of the Arab countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria). Unfortunately, national chapters did not cover Iraq, Libya, and Gulf countries, but they had an essential presence in thematic ones. From an epistemic level, the authors were solicited to analyze the right to food from a food sovereignty approach while the methodology adopted was at the choice of the researchers. An essential request was made not to overuse the quantitative nature, and technical aspect of previous international organizations published reports, avoiding to solely base the analysis on food security indexes, or agricultural and food trade metrics. Instead, researchers were invited to delve in their contexts from a food sovereignty perspective, which is more of qualitative nature due to its entitlement approach, for which macrolevel secondary quantitative data are not the most suitable. From this perspective, local depth was given priority over national macro breadth. Of course, whenever metrics and numbers were insightful, essential and useful to understand food power relations and access to means of production and consumption, such as land distributions, socioeconomic or ecological conditions, or diets, they were highly solicited.

The specific objective of this analysis is to investigate from a comparative perspective common denominators of the political economy of food in the Arab world and highlight the alternative food sovereignty paradigm and its deployment in the region to challenge the unequal neoliberal

food system. The first section stresses the need to recognize the power hegemony over food systems of the neoliberal international and national state apparatus in the current era in the Arab world. The second section discusses ways to politicize the right to food; a notion often deemed too legal. The third section discusses food sovereignty by highlighting specific considerations to account for when applying the paradigm to the region, and finally, the conclusion explores ways forward.

# 2. Identifying neoliberal food hegemons in Arab food systems

Critical food studies argue that the current world food system is ruled by the 'corporate food regime,' corresponding to the third food regime that started since the 1980s (McMichael 2009). This strand of studies reflects on the orchestrated neoliberal hegemony over food systems, through the power of transnational corporations and international financial organizations, imposing trade liberalization and conditional development loans brought with Structural Adjustment Programs, turning governments into neoliberal states. Neoliberalism has prioritized powerful transnational agribusiness acclaimed for their 'efficiency,' which along 'free trade, will enable 'global food security' (ibid). Food security and export of agri-food in the name of comparative advantages became a milestone in the dominant discourse globally and regionally. Governments in the Middle East and North African region (MENA) all subscribed to this paradigm since the 1980s. Often called infitah, neoliberal policies in the Arab world required from governments to open their economies to international capital and food trade in the aim to afford cheap food while cutting on public spending and agricultural subsidies, that remained from the previous state-led capitalism Green Revolution era (corresponding to the second food regime). Region's numerous food crises are primarily due to the failure of neoliberal strategies, enacted by donors and applied by governments in the region, be it under military, monarchy, confessional, or occupation regimes.

The underpinnings of this ideology have long emphasized industrial efficiencies and productivity, free trade, and market-led reforms, as the milestones agricultural and food policies to reach global food security. However, the current food crisis does not

1 While food prices have dropped since the 2008-2011 peaks, they remain significantly higher than pre-crisis

only deprive people of their right to food, but it benefits few transnational corporations and local elites that monopolize the entire food chains. narrowing choices for farmers and consumers. Globally, only ten corporations control one-third of the commercial seed market and 80 percent of the global pesticide market, while ten corporations, control two-thirds of the total sales of processed food (Ziegler et al., 2011). This market power also translates politically at national levels. For example, Monsanto's lobbying activities in Egypt and its links to politically influential local business groups in the country dates back to the 1950s (Mitchell 2002), rebranded nowadays under the CropLife association. This monopolized aspect of global capitalism, coupled with neoliberal state power (Harvey 2007), represents a failure to meet the obligations set out to ensure equitable distribution and ecological production of local and regional food supplies. The shock of neoliberalization hindered the living conditions of a significant segment of the farming population in the Arab world, unable to compete with cheap industrialized food: farmers often abandoned their lands. became wage laborers, engaged in the military, or integrated informal sectors, contributing to the rapid unaccompanied growth of suburbs and periurban areas. Fragmentation of farms is common to the region. Around 60 percent of farms in the Near East and North Africa is less than 1 hectare, 85 percent of all holdings are less than 5 hectares, while holdings of over 10 hectares own 50 percent of cultivated lands, and only 6 percent of holdings is between 10 and 50 hectares and constitute 40 percent of total land area (Bush 2016). This high level of inequality in land distribution depicts the polarization in the means of production and socio-economic marginalization of small farmers. However, it also highlights their large numbers in the region, making small and family farming a backbone of agriculture in the region.

From the end of the 19th century to the mid20-th, the colonial power advocated the adoption of modern farming techniques as a response to the 'backwardness' of farming methods of the Middle Eastern and North African rural areas. Followed by the Cold War independence period, Arab farming witnessed a significant shift in agricultural reforms, including land reforms, large scale

levels. The world food prices according to FAO Food Price Index averaged at 172.4 points in May 2019 which is among the highest values since 2008 (201.4 points) and 2011 (229.9 points).

irrigation infrastructure governed by centralized agencies. State-led capitalism continued to govern agriculture development in post-independence administrations in the Arab region since the 1950s, up until its dislocation under neoliberalism in the 1980s. Under the Green Revolution mantra, within a fierce competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in foreign technical assistance and aid distributed in the region, the modernization project was expected to be reached by state support and control of input supply, and output marketing. However, despite land and agricultural reforms, farmers' conditions did not improve (Batatu 1999; Beinin 2001; Bush 2016). By the late 1970s, the constant failure to improve productivity in Arab rural agriculture put into question the agriculture strategies in place. What followed was a push of Structural Adjustment Programs by international donors and foreign funding agencies as conditions for loans in order to close the deficit in public spending and assist in technical development. The interest shifted from self-sufficiency and planned food production to market and trade food security. With a high dependency on world food markets and despite state continued subsidies on some staple foods, international food price shocks have always translated quickly into price hikes in the domestic markets across the region which has systematically led to "bread riots" since the 1980s up to their contemporary Arab uprisings (Walton and Seddon 1994; Bush and Martiniello 2017).

Structural adjustment programs, imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, led to three decades of low rates of public investment in agriculture and rural areas. In parallel, trade liberalization required the removal of input and output subsidies and trade barriers as requirements to the accession to the World Trade Organization, but also bilateral agreements, notably with the European Union. Rolling-out of the state resulted in a combination of rapid urbanization and rural exodus, a national growing food dependency on the global market, and the lack of support of agriculture. The mix between authoritarian regimes, neoliberal policies, and rapid climate change has proved to be detrimental in many countries such as Syria and Yemen, both still enduring wars today (De Châtel 2014; Mundy, al-Hakimi, and Pelat 2014). Arab contemporary food policies have acted therefore within three options, all revolving around supply as a way to secure cheap foods; whether by the intensification of food production through large-scale irrigation schemes including large dams, or to rely on world food markets to supply

neighboring agricultural countries. There is a long-standing narrative in Arab agricultural and food policies stating that the failures to increase the productivity of national agriculture are mainly due to a lack of modernization technologies. This widespread narrative among officials, development and funding agencies established a clear motive in seeking investment in large-scale irrigation projects, for example, Great Man-Made River in Libya, Toshka project in Egypt, Canal 800 in Southern Lebanon, Plan Vert in Morocco, or Agropolis in Syria. In 2011, the World Bank released a report promoting land deals as potential gains and production levels on land identified as underused or marginal (Deininger et al. 2011) given commodity price volatility, growing human and environmental pressures, and worries about food security, this interest will increase, especially in the developing world. One of the highest development priorities in the world must be to improve smallholder agricultural productivity, especially in Africa. Smallholder productivity is essential for reducing poverty and hunger, and more and better investment in agricultural technology, infrastructure, and market access for poor farmers is urgently needed. When done right, larger-scale farming systems can also have a place as one of many tools to promote sustainable agricultural and rural development, and can directly support smallholder productivity, for example, throughout grower programs. However, recent press and other reports about actual or proposed large farmland acquisition by big investors have raised serious concerns about the danger of neglecting local rights and other problems. They have also raised questions about the extent to which such transactions can provide long-term benefits to local populations and contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Although these reports are worrying, the lack of reliable information has made it difficult to understand what has been actually happening.

local needs or through land-grabbing in region's

Against this backdrop, the World Bank, under the leadership of Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-lweala, along with other development partners, has highlighted the need for good empirical evidence to inform decision makers, especially in developing countries.», VIRL»:»

http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/998581468184149953/Rising-global-interest-in-farmland-can-it-yield-sustainable-and-equitable-benefits», »note»: »00000», »number»: »59463», »title-short»: »Rising global interest in farmland», »language»: »en», »author»: [{«family»: »

Deininger», »given»: »Klaus»}, {«family»: »Byerlee », »given»: »Derek»}, {«family»: »Lindsay», »given» :» Jonathan»}, {«family»: »Norton», »given»: »Andrew»}, {«family»: »Selod», »given»: »Harris»}, {«family»: »Stickler», »given»: »Mercedes»}], »issued»: {«date-parts»: [[«1,10,«2011]]}, »accessed»: {«date-parts»: [[«6,7,«2019]]}}], »schema»: »https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»}

The 'marginal land' narrative, once used to promote modernization of archaic land tenure in the region through the introduction of private property and large-scale projects during colonial times, shifted towards development and food security in contemporary days promoted by investors, donors and politically tied businesses. The application of necessary capital to 'marginal' land is marketed as a solution to resolve food shortages, but also capital accumulation crisis and the developmental crises of the rural population in the South (McMichael 2012). The land acquisition also embeds water acquisition and water is needed to secure fertile land as much as the need for water to produce food. Land grabbed for agriculture production is not considered a good investment without the guaranteed access to water, as seen see in Sudan and other countries in the region (Mehta, Veldwisch, and Franco 2012) popularly known as 'land grabbing', have attracted headline attention. Water as both a target and driver of this phenomenon has been largely ignored despite the interconnectedness of water and land. This special issue aims to fill this gap and to widen and deepen the lens beyond the confines of the literature's still limited focus on agriculture-driven resource grabbing. The articles in this collection demonstrate that the fluid nature of water and its hydrologic complexity often obscure how water grabbing takes place and what the associated impacts on the environment and diverse social groups are. The fluid properties of water interact with the 'slippery' nature of the grabbing processes: unequal power relations; fuzziness between legality and illegality and formal and informal rights; unclear administrative boundaries and jurisdictions, and fragmented negotiation processes. All these factors combined with the powerful material, discursive and symbolic characteristics of water make 'water grabbing, a site for conflict with potential drastic impacts on the current and future uses and benefits of water, rights as well as changes in tenure relati ons.», »note»: »00244», »language»: »en», »author»: [{ «f amily»:»Mehta»,»given»:»Lyla»},{«family»:»Veldwisc h»,»given»:»Gert Jan»},{«family»:»Franco»,»given»:» Jennifer»}], »issued»: { «date-parts»: [[«2012»]]}}}], »sch

ema»:»https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»} .

The colonial legacy of land and water grabs in the region is best expressed in Palestine (Gasteyer et al. 2012). The need for water to ensure food security is acting as a global war of attrition through agricultural investments in countries considered to have water potentials. A compelling example for shifting from self-sufficiency productive exhaustion to land grabbing is Saudi Arabia, which is a significant investor in Sudan and other Arab and African countries, that hiked after the collapse of its domestic wheat production that started in the early 1970s due to depletion of its non-renewable aguifers. Moreover, Arab countries supporting agriculture investments destined for export such as Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon, have dramatically disrupted their natural land and water ecological endowments to satisfy their extractivist agricultural export model. Over the last three decades, agricultural policies in all Arab countries became disarmed. Despite the food crisis and its political repercussions on the region, there has not been any regional policy or a strategic approach reviving agricultural complementarities and regional food integration. Trade agreements between Arab countries lack a strategic framework that can promote a regional food system. Food systems in the region are disconnected. Instead, it is European commercial partnerships and Arab Gulf oil countries that are governing today's food systems in the region; both are the largest importers of fresh agricultural products, from one side, and exporters of processed food to the region, from the other.

Therefore, one can identify three dynamics that shaped and are still shaping food systems in the region; private property introduced during colonial rule, technological modernization adopted since the Green Revolution in the mid20-th century, and finally, market-led policies since the 1980s under neoliberalism. Under such paradigms, united with undemocratic and authoritarian regimes in the region, small farmers in the region are devastated, marginalized and made landless, with crippling living conditions, and violations of their social and economic rights, including their right to food. Under a globalized neoliberal regime, transnational corporations, international organizations like the WTO, and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF, can yield more power than states. Thus, their actions have a direct impact on citizens, but yet there are no legal recourse and enforceable tools to hold them accountable. In sum, marginalized in the region fall into a 'glocal' double-edged violation of their rights, from hegemonic neoliberal ruling states, but also non-state international organizations and corporations. It is in this context that the following sections will discuss two essential notions, the right to food and food sovereignty.

### 3. Politicizing the right to food in the Arab region

The concepts of the right to food and food sovereignty are interlinked, but they differ in theory and practice. Therefore, it is essential to get back to the epistemic genesis of each of them separately and to contrast their definitions and explore their potential complementary. The right to food is primarily a legalistic approach recognized in international law, in binding and non-binding documents. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 recognized the right to food for the first time at the international level. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 states the right to food as "the right of everyone to have physical and economic access at all times to food in adequate quantity and quality or to means of its procurement".2 The breakthrough of the right to food in the international agenda came at the Rome Declaration on World Food Security during the World Food Summit in 1996 which sought to halve world hunger by 2015 (Rome Declaration on World Food Security, 1996). The significant

Other conventions mentioning the right to food include the Refugee Convention in 1951; Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition adopted by the World Food Conference in Rome 1974. the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979; to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003; the World Declaration on Nutrition adopted at the International Conference on Nutrition in 1992; to the International Conference on Population and Development of 1994; the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development of 1995; the World Food Summit of 1996, 2002 and 2009; The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2009; and, the Food Assistance Convention in 2012.

advancement was made in the Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, also known as the Right to Food Guidelines prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2004. As one can notice, the right to food is emphasized in the context of international institutional discourse mainly through the United Nations officials. It was translated with the appointment, for three renewable years, of a Special Rapporteur on the right to food (UNSR) since 2000 by the Commission on Human Rights and later overseen by the United Nations Human Rights Council since 2006. Governments that ratified those international treaties are expected to work on their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food. The obligation to respect which stipulates to abstain arbitrarily dispossessing people's right to food: this includes not evicting someone from agricultural land as it represents the primary source of food production and income. The obligation to protect entails that governments must enact and enforce laws aimed at preventing third parties individuals, organizations, or corporations – from violating the right to food, enabling processes such as investigation, prosecution, and provide effective remedies. The obligation to fulfill is twofold, first, facilitation, where governments must ensure access to adequate food to vulnerable groups by facilitating their ability to feed themselves, such as engaging in the employment of landless peasants. The second aspect refers to the obligation to provide direct assistance in urgent situations (Ziegler et al. 2011). Other elements complement the normative aspect of the right to food deal with a progressive realization of the right through policies, racial and gender non-discrimination, and extra-territorial obligations that recognize the different impacts a country or its corporations can have on another country (e.g., dumping food, land grabbing, or privatization of public services, such as water and waste).

In its embryonic conception, the Rome Declaration on World Food Security in 1996 states that the right to food is 'the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.' As if the root cause of hunger is only poverty, as noted by Jarosz (2014). It reminds Malthus's theory placing the fault for hunger on the poor, with the idea that their lack of labour earnings and excessive reproduction, expand the human population beyond natural resources enough to supply food, blaming them for

environmental and food issues. On an international level, neo-Malthusian thought sees hunger as the shortage in global supply due to an increasing world population growth putting additional stress on natural resources. Ever since its publication in 1972, The Club of Rome Report on "The Limits to Growth" (Meadows et al. 1972), presented the "population explosion", notably in undeveloped countries, to be harming the future of humanity, threatening to exhaust resources and food supply, raw materials and precipitating catastrophic of air, soil and water pollutions. The neoliberal answer to Malthusian concerns is straightforward; only free markets will achieve food security, bringing forward comparative advantage of Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

With capitalism and technology, the increase in food production and competition are argued to bring cheap and available food to everyone. The international community has adopted this vision over the last decades as a credo for environmental and food policies. The international community applauded the Millennial Development Goal (MDG 1.3) target of reducing by half the proportion of undernourished people in developing countries from 23.3 to 12.9 percent between 1990 and 2015 as an achievement. In 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this time with a more challenging objective, aiming for the eradication of poverty and hunger in 2030 (SDG 2). However, critics suggest that the MDGs and SDGs are inherently grounded in a neoliberal approach to development, dealing with rural poverty from a narrow productive, income and market reasoning (Spann 2017; Gabay and Ilcan 2017). Despite some new more welcomed agroecological considerations, there are constitutional principles in the SDGs coming from the Green Revolution productivist and neoliberal market-led conceptions. SDG 2.3, for example, calls to double productivity and incomes of small-scale farmers by their integration into the global market. As if integrating the global market and producing more are signs of success. Hence, critically dealing with food rights issues calls into question the dominant ideology, explicitly or implicitly neoliberal in the international agenda. Development, agriculture, and malnutrition issues have long-privileged global markets, agribusiness, and global commodity chains as successes, while small-scale and family farming supplying food short circuits are condescendingly considered archaic and under-developed. This political nature of unequal privileges, utterly absent in the SDGs, must be at the heart of the Decade of Family Farming that

was just launched by the FAO (2028-2019).

Until today, not a single regional report has been produced about the right to food in the region.<sup>3</sup> However, Special Rapporteurs visited and reported about four countries in the MENA region, Jean Ziegler in Palestine in 2003 and Lebanon in 2006, Olivier De Schutter on Syria in 2010, and Hilal Elver on Morocco in 2015.4 It is important to note that the first two were related to conflict issues while the two others, special rapporteurs made essential suggestions to the Syrian and Moroccan governments, both warning about the effects of structural adjustment policies and intensive exportoriented agriculture. Ziegler visiting Palestine reported extreme numbers of under-nourishment due to the Israeli occupation, more than half of Palestinian households eating only once a day (%61) and %85 depending on international public assistance, "a crisis which seems absurd in a land so fertile" (Ziegler 2003, p.5). Ziegler came at the request of the Lebanese Government following the July-August 2006 war and condemned Israeli attacks and their effects on food and agriculture and reported that "more than 1.2 million cluster bombs were dropped by the Israeli forces. About 90 percent were dropped in the last 72 hours of the war when the Israeli forces were already aware that a ceasefire was imminent. The destruction by the Israeli forces of infrastructure essential to the survival of the population, particularly agricultural, irrigation and water infrastructure will also have long-term impacts on livelihoods and access to food and water. [...] The long-term impacts of the war on livelihoods are the key concern today." (Ziegler 2006, p.2). In both cases, Israel has called into question the impartiality of UN Special Rapporteur Jean Ziegler and lobbied in preventing the submission of his reports.

The purpose of visiting Syria and Morocco were more related to policy adoptions; in both cases, Special Rapporteurs highlighted the detrimental effects of trade liberalization, austerity measures cutting subsidies and intensive agriculture projects. In Syria, only a few days before the beginning of the war, De Schutter (2011) warned the government about the removal of agricultural subsidies, droughts impact and adverse effects of accessing

- 3 For a compilation of regional reports, visit www. fao.org/right-to-food/resources/publications/en/
- 4 For a compilation of country visit reports of Special Rapporteur on the right to food, visit www.ohchr. org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/Visits.aspx

WTO and reports that: "The "green revolution" model of agricultural development may have proven to be unsustainable. It does not follow that the solution is for the State to withdraw from agriculture; instead, it must support agricultural production in ways that are more environmentally sustainable and that increase the income of the poorest farmers, thus contributing to the alleviation of rural poverty." (De Schutter 2011, p.17). In Morocco, Hilal Elver (2016, p.19-18), notes that: "Although the emergence of a free market economy has assisted with the impressive growth experienced by the country in recent years, this growth has not benefited all." She adds vivid criticism of the Plan Vert, calling the government to "ensure that everyone benefits, particularly smallholder farmers in rural and remote areas" but also to ensure that "large-scale farming [...] should avoid resource depletion as a result of intensive agricultural practices". The Government of Morocco (2016, p.3), unsatisfied with the comments made by the rapporteur, responds: "Plausible sources rarely support the advanced facts. [...] The comments lack nuance and reflect preconceived ideas using simplistic shortcuts". Reports made by the Special Rapporteur are very informative, critical and impartial, but remains the question into how to politicize the right to food as an alternative to the current food hegemony.

Even though the right to food has an international resonance among UN agencies essentially, it has also influenced collective mobilizations, notably through the human rights angle among civil society organizations. However, while they may be progressive and essential in terms of the delivery of rights, they are often of minimal issuance in the region, governed by undemocratic regimes, lacking the rule of law and independent judiciary system. Of course, human rights-based approach to food and agriculture should prioritize human dignity, but it should not only be a right to access enough food but as an entitlement on determining by whom, how, when, where and what food is produced and consumed. Accessing this entitlement requires to challenge the hegemony of corporations, international trading system, and financial institutions, contest the neoliberal state and hold governments accountable, for their failures in rural, agricultural, and food policymaking. Rather than having policies dictated by governments and donors, a human rights-based approach would be only reached by the democratization of food systems by allowing farmers and citizens to be involved in designing agricultural policies that work for their societies. Here is where food sovereignty stands.

## 4. Communalizing food sovereignty

The idea of food sovereignty has been the subject

of critical and radical work of collective action in various civil society organizations and transnational platforms. The founding concept was developed in the mid 1990-s to counter neoliberalism. This period was witnessing the drying agricultural subsidies and imposing trade liberalization, leading to a decline in family farming revenues, along with the decrease in world agricultural prices, thanks to the Green Revolution intensive agriculture. The concept emerged again and had a more critical outreach after the recent global food-fuel-financial crisis in 2008-2007, and 2011. «Food sovereignty» first appeared in 1996 in the final declaration of the non-governmental organizations' forum during the first World Food Summit (WFS). It is interesting to note that the same summit also saw the genesis of the most common definitions of food security and the right to food. La Via Campesina movement was the first to define food sovereignty as: "The right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security." (Via Campesina declaration in 1996). It suggests that this right, even if in breach of free trade commitments, should favor agricultural policies that are consistent with the national interests of producers and consumers. Food security and food sovereignty discourses explain world hunger and responses in contrasting ways. Now the concept became an alternative paradigm for mobilization of international coalitions, in contrast to the apolitical «food security» concept advocated by international organizations and donors.

The food sovereignty movement argues that hunger is not perpetrated only by global neoliberalism but also by the system of states themselves, represented and influential in international organizations. Even though both the right to food and food sovereignty are right-based concepts, there is a dialectic difference in the means to achieve this right. There are indeed concrete benchmarks available on the international agenda to aim for a universal right to food, but for food sovereignty proponents this is not enough. As Patel notes: "To talk of a right to shape food policy is to contrast it with a privilege. The modern food system has been architected by

a handful of privileged people. Food sovereignty insists that this is illegitimate, because the design of our social system is not the privilege of the few. but the right of all" (Patel 2009, p. 667). Hence, the concept of the right to food, limited to combat hunger, is incomplete without the concept of food sovereignty, advocating for politicizing the universality of food. With food distribution being concentrated in the hands of a few corporations. peoplemusttakecontrolovertheprocessandpolitics of food production, consumption and distribution (Patel 2012)Raj Patel examines the concept of food sovereignty, which aims to address inequalities in power that characterize the global food system and fuel hunger and malnutrition.», »DOI»: »10.1371/ iournal.pmed.1001223»,»ISSN»:»-1549 1676», »note»: »00000», »title-short»: »Food Sovereig nty»,»journalAbbreviation»:»PLOS Medicine»,»lang uage»:»en», »author»: [{«family»: »Patel», »given»: »Ra j»}],»issued»:{«date-parts»:[[«6,26,«2012]]}}]],»sche ma»:»https://github.com/citation-style-language/

schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»} .

As summarized by Pimbert (2009), the Nyéléni Declaration for Food Sovereignty of 2007 implies individuals', peoples', communities' and countries' right: i) to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food, land and water management policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. ii) to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, to food-producing resources and to the ability to sustain themselves and their societies. iii) to protect and regulate domestic production and trade and prevent the dumping of food products and unnecessary food aid in domestic market. iv) to choose their own level of self-reliance in food. v) to manage, use and control life-sustaining natural resources: land, water, seeds, livestock breeds and wider agricultural biodiversity, unrestricted by intellectual property rights and free from genetically-modified organisms. vi) to produce and harvest food in an ecologically sustainable manner, principally through low-external input production and artisanal fisheries.

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011)we apply Karl Polanyi's 'double-movement' thesis on capitalism to explain the regime's trends of neoliberalism and reform. Using the global food crisis as a point of departure, we introduce a comparative analytical framework for different political and social trends within the corporate food regime and global food movements, characterizing them as 'Neoliberal',

'Reformist', 'Progressive', and 'Radical', respectively, and describe each trend based on its discourse. model, and key actors, approach to the food crisis. and key documents. After a discussion of class, political permeability, and tensions within the food movements, we suggest that the current food crisis offers opportunities for strategic alliances between Progressive and Radical trends within the food movement. We conclude that while the food crisis has brought a retrenchment of neoliberalization and weak calls for reform, the worldwide growth of food movements directly and indirectly challenge the legitimacy and hegemony of the corporate food regime. Regime change will require sustained pressure from a strong global food movement, built on durable alliances between Progressive and Radical trends.»,»DOI»:»03066150.2/10.1080 010.538578»,»ISSN»:»6150-0306»,»note»:»00000 \nPMID: 21284237», »title-short»; »Food crises, food regimes and food movements», »author»:[{ «family»:»Holt-Giménez»,»given»:»Eric»},{«famil y»:»Shattuck»,»given»:»Annie»}],»issued»:{«dateparts»:[[«1,1,«2011]]}}],»schema»:»https://github. com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/ csl-citation.json»}

provide an interesting operationalizing definition of food sovereignty entitlements as a model that seeks to "dismantle corporate agri-foods monopoly; redistribution of land; community rights to water and seed; regionally based food systems; democratization of food system; sustainable livelihoods; protection from dumping/ overproduction; regulated markets and supply" (p. 117). The foundation of food sovereignty is the emphasis on a localized agricultural production model in opposition to a liberalized and globalized market production model. Food sovereignty is, therefore, a reaction against industrialized and export-oriented agriculture and seeks to transform the production mode to sustainable and small-scale farming. This model shifts power from multinational corporations to the peasants and thereby put them in control over their food production. Food sovereignty focus is on reverting neoliberal practices and replacing it with redistributive land reforms and enabling agroecology as a mode of production and strengthening the rights of women and marginalized communities in agricultural (Patel 2012: Jarosz 2014) Rai Patel examines the concept of food sovereignty, which aims to address inequalities in power that characterize the global food system and fuel hunger and malnutrition.»,»DOI»:»10.1371/ journal.pmed.1001223»,»ISSN»:»-1549

1676», »note»: »00000», »title-short»: »Food Soverei

gnty»,»journalAbbreviation»:»PLOS Medicine»,»la nguage»:»en»,»author»:[{«family»:»Patel»,»given»: »Rai»}], »issued»: { «date-parts»: [[«6,26, «2012]]}}}, { «id »:3296, »uris»: [«http://zotero.org/groups/2314440/ items/RJ7RZLGK»],»uri»:[«http://zotero.org/ groups/2314440/items/RJ7RZLGK»],»itemData»:{«i d»:3296,»type»:»article-journal»,»title

Comparing food security and food sovereignty discourses», » container-title»: » Dialogues in Human Geography»,»page»:»181-168»,»volume»:»4»,»iss ue»:»2»,»source»:»Crossref»,»abstract»:»This essay conceptualizes food security and food sovereignty as fluid and changing discourses that define the problem of hunger. I trace the discursive geohistories of food security and food sovereignty in order to identify oppositions and relationalities between them. I argue that the interpretations of, and relations between, food security and food sovereignty vary by geography and scale, as well as by the conceptual and theoretical differences within the discourses themselves. When and where these discourses develop and emerge is central to understanding their oppositions and convergences. How scale is constructed within particular discourses is also important to understanding how they co-exist relationally or in opposition. Food security and food sovereignty discourses are tied to distinctive political and economic histories, ecologies, and identities at the national and local levels. They are differentially deployed depending upon geographic context and the political economy of development and underdevelopment. Both discourses are dynamic and changing in relation to the wider political and cultural economies of food system dynamics across scale. Uniform definitions of each term should be resisted. The point is to understand the geographies of their relational overlap and their continual difference.», »DOI»:»1 2043820614537161/0.1177»,»ISSN»:»,8206-2043 8214-2043»,»note»:»00000»,»language»:»en»,»auth or»:[{«family»:»Jarosz»,»given»:»Lucy»}],»issued»:{«d ate-parts»:[[«7,«2014]]}}],»schema»:»https://github. com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/ csl-citation.ison»} .

Food sovereignty movements are the only food movements that seriously posed a threat to the global food regime change (Mares and Alkon 2011; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011)we bring together academic literature tracing contemporary social movements centered on food, unpacking the discourses of local food, community food security, food justice, and food sovereignty. This body of literature transcends national borders and draws on a rich genealogy of studies on

environmental justice, the intersections of race, class, and gender, and sustainable agro-food systems. Scholars have emphasized two key issues that persist within these movements: inequalities related to race and class that shape the production, distribution, and consumption of food, and the neoliberal constraints of market-based solutions to problems in the food system. This article claims that food movements in the United States would be strengthened through reframing their work within a paradigm of food sovereignty, an approach that would emphasize the production of local alternatives, but also enable a dismantling of the policies that ensure the dominance of the corporate food regime. The article concludes by offering a critical analysis of future research directions for scholars who are committed to understanding and strengthening more democratic and sustainable food systems.»,»DOI»:»http://dx.doi.org/10.3167/ar es.2011.020105»,»ISSN»:»21506779»,»note»:»0000 0»,»title-short»:»Mapping the Food Movement»,»la nguage»:»English», »author»: [{«family»:»Mares», »gi ven»:»Teresa Marie»},{«family»:»Alkon»,»given»:»Ali son Hope»}],»issued»:{«date-parts»:[[«2011»]]}}},{«id »:3281, »uris»: [«http://zotero.org/groups/2314440/ items/XNCYT26F»], »uri»: [«http://zotero.org/ groups/2314440/items/XNCYT26F»],»itemData»:{«i d»:3281,»type»:»article-journal»,»title»:»Food crises, food regimes and food movements: rumblings of reform or tides of transformation?»,»containertitle»:»The Journal of Peasant Studies»,»page»:»-109 144», »volume»: »38», »issue»: »1», »source»: »Tay lor and Francis+NEJM», »abstract»: »This article addresses the potential for food movements to bring about substantive changes to the current global food system. After describing the current corporate food regime, we apply Karl Polanyi's 'double-movement' thesis on capitalism to explain the regime's trends of neoliberalism and reform. Using the global food crisis as a point of departure, we introduce a comparative analytical framework for different political and social trends within the corporate food regime and global food movements, characterizing them as 'Neoliberal', 'Reformist', 'Progressive', and 'Radical', respectively, and describe each trend based on its discourse, model, and key actors, approach to the food crisis, and key documents. After a discussion of class, political permeability, and tensions within the food movements, we suggest that the current food crisis offers opportunities for strategic alliances between Progressive and Radical trends within the food

movement. We conclude that while the food crisis

has brought a retrenchment of neoliberalization

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food movements directly and indirectly challenge the legitimacy and hegemony of the corporate food regime. Regime change will require sustained pressure from a strong global food movement, built on durable alliances between Progressive and Radical trends.»,»DOI»:»03066150.2/10.1080 010.538578»,»ISSN»:»6150-0306»,»note»:»00000 \nPMID: 21284237», "title-short": "Food crises, food regimes and food movements», »author»: [{ «family»:»Holt-Giménez»,»given»:»Eric»},{«famil y»:»Shattuck»,»given»:»Annie»}],»issued»:{«dateparts»:[[«1,1,«2011]]}}],»schema»:»https://github. com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/ csl-citation.json»} . Other food movements have been criticized as reformist since they tend to use individual market actions and consumer behaviour. For example, buying organic food is one way of promoting sustainable farming and might be endorsed by food movements as an alternative way of challenging neoliberalism, but without reverting it. According to Hall, certifications such as "fair trade" and "organic" are put in place to make consumers "feel good about the commodities they are buying." (Hall 2015). Researchers have criticized certifications for they impose Northern industrial priorities on Southern small farm producers, excluding the ones who do not comply. At the same time, it is difficult for a farmer to cope with certification requirements without technical and financial assistance from the North, creating donor aid dependency in the South. On an urban level, food justice movements have mobilized struggles against structural racism and seek access to healthy food for marginalized groups in food deserts (Holt-Gimenez, 2010). These struggles are taking place through institutions, communities and broadbased movements, often in cities in the North. The concept of food justice highlights the multiple ways in which racial and economic inequalities are embedded within the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Activists call for creating grassroots local food alternative systems such as farmers' markets, urban farms, and cooperatively owned grocery. Despite the strengths and successes of these various movements, they may be to some extent reproducing, without being aware, dominant neoliberal narrative by locating change in consumer market behaviour, surfing on social entrepreneurship by acting as non-state actors taking on the roles abandoned by the neoliberal state. Those actions would advocate subjectivities as biopolitical disciplining of the self, where health and food choices become a personal responsibility (Alkon 2013). As Harvey (2005) points out that within the neoliberal state, along welfare and social

service programs decrease, personal responsibility is presented as the alternative. Among different food movements, food sovereignty is the only one perceived to directly challenge neoliberalism by pairing local and regional ecological agriculture within international campaigns to fight the corporate food regime, using protests and political campaigns in order to oppose neoliberalism. This participatory form of political change advances a notion of collective self-determination instead of individual actions (Alkon, 2013).

It is worth noting that governments officials in the Arab region often misuse the notion of "food sovereignty" as a synonym to self-sufficiency or national sovereignty. Unfortunately, this is also true among international organizations. "Some governments in the region and elsewhere have questioned the policy of reliance on food imports and supported the notion of food self-sufficiency or 'food sovereignty'." (ESCWA 2017, p.8). It is important to note that food sovereignty is not new in the region and has its proponents and needs to be continuously supported and expanded. Some of the initiatives include Thimar, which is a research collective on agriculture, environment and labour in the Arab world. The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library and L'Observatoire de la Souveraineté Alimentaire et de l'Environnement (OSAE) based in Tunisia. The two Working Groups on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty in Egypt and Tunisia. Perhaps, the earliest initiative was pioneered by the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty (ANFS) part of the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature in 2012, and the latest is the newly formed North African Network for Food Sovereignty that held its first assembly in December 2018. It is of extreme importance to operationalize into concrete steps and join efforts among these different proponents of a food sovereignty paradigm shift in the region.

One of the ongoing examples of contestations is happening among food sovereignty supporters in Tunisia contesting the new free trade ALECA agreement, "Accord de Libre Échange Complet et Approfondi," between Tunisia and the European Union. The Working Group on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty in Egypt achieved a constitutional change in making the country the first Arab state and seventh globally to constitutionalize food sovereignty when the Egyptian constitution of 2014 adopted Article 79.5 Although the Egyptian

5 Article 79 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that "the state shall provide food resources to all

state has continued with neoliberal practices, the constitution has no potential application as legal protection for the citizens and or to be an ultimate way to hold the government or corporations accountable. As argued by Jakobsen (2018)I suggest a Gramscian reinterpretation of recent right-to-food legislation in India on the backdrop of longer histories of capital, power and nature. I argue for seeing the recent right-to-food case in India as partaking in a longstanding hegemonic process of neoliberalising the country's agrofood system, where hegemony is negotiated through unstable equilibria facilitating renewed capital accumulation for dominant classes,»,»DOI» :»03066150.2018.1449745/10.1080»,»ISSN»:»-0306 6150», »note»: »00001», »title-short»: »Neoliberalising the food regime 'amongst its others'», "author": [{« family»:»Jakobsen»,»given»:»Jostein»}],»issued»:{« date-parts»:[[«4,16,«2018]]}}],»schema»:»https:// github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/ master/csl-citation.json»} for the case of India's right to food explicitly mentioned in 2013 National Food Security Act legislation, it "is an instructive case not only of the struggles over hegemonic neoliberalisation [...]. Since India brought its globally prominent legislation for the right to food to completion in 2013, we have seen that dominant forces in the Indian polity have worked intensely at dismantling the very food security edifice upon which the legislation rests." (p.16). The same precaution and analytical reasoning should apply in the region on any enacted legislation related to the right to food or food sovereignty in the region, where one should continuously track food power relations.

The food sovereignty movement has certainly gained momentum over the last decade. It was able to propose a credible alternative to capitalist food systems and has become prominent amongst civil society and some international organizations. The UN-FAO introduced the "food sovereignty systems" as a component in its recent Decade of Family Farming. De Schutter, for example, has helped in bringing the food sovereignty concept into the UN and enabled it to gain political legitimacy (Sage 2014). As Ziegler et al. (2011, p.356) note: "In the face of mounting evidence that the current world trading system is hurting the food security of the

citizens. It also ensures food sovereignty in a sustainable manner, and guarantees the protection of agricultural biological diversity and types of local plants to preserve the rights of generations."

poorest and most marginalized, and generating ever greater inequalities, it is now time to look at alternative means that could better ensure the right to food. Food sovereignty offers an alternative vision [...]." The proponents of both paradigms, the right to food and food sovereignty, remain divided on priorities and on concrete solutions that are intended to achieve their goals, but a convergence of both fronts seems possible. New epistemic use of the right to food along food sovereignty principles is by approaching food as a common. Food communing, in contrast to food as a private commodity, could help link urban and rural struggles by "strategically facilitating material and political alliances in non-exploitive ways that share costs, benefits, and solidarity." (Holt-Giménez and Lammeren 2018, p.326). Historical examples have proven that the "de-commoditized role of food in revolutionary struggles has been significant, not only as a key component of resistance, but as a model for new social relations based on mutual aid" (ibid, 324). It also holds in the region's central role of land and food in historical and contemporary independence and resistance movements. Such an epistemology transcends and deconstructs on many levels the ideational power of neoliberal hegemony, representing people as food consumers/customers, and proposes communalizing food instead.

#### 5. Concluding remarks and recommendations

In conclusion, some recommendations could be useful for operationalizing the concept of food sovereignty in the region. The relationship between the various actors related to the food system, from farmers to citizens, should fundamentally change in order to reach food sovereignty in the Arab region. The future of food and agriculture under a human rights-based approach will not be completed without a fundamental shift from the neoliberal states apparatus, legitimized, and supported by international financial organizations. In order to counter the heaemony of the ideational. relational and material elements of neoliberal states in the region, transformative and alternative mechanisms from a 'Gramscian' perspective have to be considered. Contesting the hegemonic order is by recognizing it first, then by challenging its principles and ideology and transform it. Food movements must be driven by localism in their struggles while considering global challenges. Civil society organizations and civil movements endorsing those struggles must not replace the role of the state, but politically challenge the actual vacuum in the citizen-state relations. Noncompliance is needed to confront neoliberal discursive (ideological) and material (funds); this starts by uprooting the apolitical 'good governance' discourse among civil society organizations and NGOization of civil movements. The matter is not about transparency, accountability, or participation, but it is political. The private sector must be strictly controlled through stringent regulation and not considered as a partner in the name of the same 'good governance' principles. Instead, mechanisms should be mobilized to gain leveraging and bargaining power, from mobilizations and strikes, to propose alternative food policies backed up by knowledge, within a class, gender, and ecological emancipatory objectives. On a policy level, any change must ensure that citizens', farmers, and independent researchers are involved in framing policies and challenging the neoliberal state experts-bureaucrats-politicians authority.

There is an ultimate need in converging struggles among rural and urban movements, not only on food, but also on public services that are continuously under privatization or its threats (e.g., water, electricity, municipal waste, public transportation, health, and education). There is also a priority in healing the socio-ecological metabolic

rifts causing environmental disasters due to an extractivist production model by curing the rural-urban divide (see Riachi and Martiniello). Hence, not only must be debunked the food trade security policy employed, but also the extractivist mode of farming, depleting water and soils, such as intensive fruit and vegetable production destined for exports from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

With their embrace of neoliberalism and free trade, Arab states cuts on customs and agricultural subsidies have demonstrated to be detrimental on marginalizing farmers and citizens in the Arab region. Within the importance of regional integration among Arab countries, a regional agricultural harvest calendar must be employed, previously used at national levels to avoid harmful competition and dumping. Monopoly power granted to politically tied food importers and shopping retailers, large scale infrastructures investors, must be combatted, while farmers cooperatives have to be consolidated and created. Priority should go to local markets and revival of local souks instead of the overspread fast food chains, processed food, and supermarkets. Re-embracing and reconciling with the Mediterranean diet should be a cornerstone for any food movement and public policy enactment in the region, shifting from the endemic dangers of the neoliberal industrialized diet on health and the environment.

Small-scale family farms are the most spread production entities in the region. Thus, they must be granted priority in formulating agricultural policies, instead of privelges granted to large corporations and foreign land-grabbers, encouraged as Foreign Direct Investments. Investments in doubtful large irrigation schemes and land grabbing in and among Arab countries must be fiercely opposed and stopped. Instead, land reforms and agrarian development must take place, ensuring access to land and means of production to small and family farmers. Seeds should be in the hands of farmers and GMOs products in harvests, processed products, and fodder must be forbidden. Rural credit and investments must be managed and supported by the public sector, not commercial banks. Agroecological farming, based on local native knowledge, including agropastoralism and artisanal fishing, must be prioritized amongst production methods, instead of industrial intensive, monocultural and chemical-intensive technologies. Finally, within the recent United Nations' Declaration of Peasant Rights adopted on December 17th, 2018 and the Decade of Family Farming (-2019 2028) launched on May 27th, 2019, small farmers must be recognized as the only gatekeepers of an alternative food system in the region. They must be at the heart of any inclusive transitional, post-conflict, or liberation movement in the Arab world.

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