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ABSTRACT

The goal of the direct participation of food producer constituencies – and other citizens – is a key component of food sovereignty, the policy framework first launched by La Via Campesina and engendering the much wider food sovereignty movement. In this paper I outline the reasons why the reform of the UN Committee on World Food Security can be regarded as historically significant to this goal. Focusing upon the CFS's aspirations for inclusivity, in this paper I outline a framework for interrogating the experiences of social movement activists representing food producer constituencies seeking to convert their formal right to participate in the CFS into substantive participation. Going beyond the capturing of their experiences, the framework also reveals the different ways in which their challenges attaining substantive participation can be overcome, with a particular emphasis upon adjustments within the arena itself. The paper concludes with an overview of the research agenda suggested by Raj Patel, amongst others, and alluded to further in the content of this paper.

1. Introduction

> Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.
>
> (La Via Campesina, 2013).

The right of peoples to define their own food and agricultural policies is a fundamental component of food sovereignty (La Via Campesina, 2013; Patel, 2009). Indeed, according to the creation narratives that chart its emergence, it was in part to demand and attain that right for its members – peasant-, family-, and small-, and medium-food producers – at the *global* level, that La Via Campesina – the TAN that first launched the food sovereignty framework - first emerged (Desmarais, 2007). The membership of La Via and the wider activist network of the food sovereignty movement (e.g., the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty) have demanded and sought to attain their inclusion in transnational food policy-making in a number of ways. They have mobilised to provide a vocal and dissenting presence before the meetings of various international food and agriculturally-relevant bodies, such as the World Trade Organization. They have taken the floor in spaces such as the UN General Assembly, or participated in processes such as the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture (the 'Treaty'). And they have also created autonomous spaces of civil society mobilisation, deliberation and movement building[1], which include the movement itself, leading to its conceptualisation by Borras and Franco (2009: 38) as a 'new citizenship' space, and elsewhere as a 'subaltern counterpublic' (Brem-Wilson, 2012; Fraser, 1990).

The food sovereignty goal of the direct, democratic participation of small-scale, family food providers – and other citizens - in food policy-making, has given rise to a corresponding and complementary research and activist agenda. Raj Patel, for example, has argued that the pursuit of inclusive food and agricultural political decision-making implies recognition of the power asymmetries in society that result in unequal opportunities to participate in policy processes for those subject to their effects. Recognising these power asymmetries, Patel argues, implies a 'radically egalitarian' agenda that consists of interventions at a societal level to neutralize the distorting effects of "sexism, patriarchy, racism, and class" and enable full democratic participation (Patel, 2009: 670). He argues, in other words, that before you can attain "substantive" participation for social movement activists representing food producer constituencies in formal processes of

[1] E.g., the *Nyéléni 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty*, held between 23rd - 27th February 2007 in Sélingué, Mali and the *People's Food Sovereignty Civil Society Forum*, held in Rome, Italy, between the 13th – 17th November 2009. The latter of these two events was timed to coincide with the World Food Summit being held at FAO at the same time.

food and agricultural policy-making, you need societal transformation.[2]

In this paper I'm going to take up in fairly broad terms the research agenda defined by Raj Patel: that of identifying and seeking to eradicate the power asymmetries that obstruct the attainment of substantive participation for food producer constituencies in (transnational) food and agricultural policy-making. Specifically, whilst recognising that the attainment of substantive participation is dependent upon a range of complementary dynamics coming into alignment, here I'm going to concentrate upon one localized cluster. This concerns the arena itself (and its processes), and the conditions of effective participation that have to be met by aspirant participants therein.[3]

In part, this paper addresses the question "Where and how is power relevant in the *processes* and *arenas* of food and agricultural governance?" Or, to put it another way, in what ways does or could "sexism, patriarchy, racism and class" function in such spaces to disempower some and empower others?"

In answering these questions I'm going to depart from Raj Patel's suggestion that societal transformation is a precondition of democratic food and agricultural governance, by revealing the ways in which participatory outcomes in policy processes reflect the complex interaction between, on the one hand, those – such as social movement activists –seeking voice within such processes (*agents*), and on the other the conditions that have to be attained for this to happen (*structures*). The elucidation of such dynamics reveals both the possibility and desirability of interventions to eliminate obstacles to participatory parity *within the arena itself*, and the corresponding insight that interventions at a societal level to eliminate power inequalities are – though of course constituting a non-negotiable strategic objective - not in themselves a precondition of democratic food and agricultural governance. This insight, I argue, is of key importance in pursuit of the goal of meaningfully inclusive food and agricultural policy-making and governance at the global level and, indeed, beyond.

In order to achieve these goals the paper will proceed as follows. Firstly, I will identify a relatively recent moment in the history of transnational food and agricultural governance with historic significance for the struggle for food sovereignty: the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Three properties of this reformed body are relevant here: it's aspirations for political centrality, to be a site of policy debate, and for inclusivity. Indeed, in relation to the latter, as I will discuss, the unprecedented (McKeon, 2009b) extension of formal participation rights attained by and for social movement activists in the CFS reform process has brought a range of new challenges to the fore, some of which are being met, others of which go unaddressed, and still others go even unrecognised. However, to systematically capture the experiences of

[2] In this regard Patel echoes the viewpoint of critical theorists such as Nancy Fraser (1990) - who posits social equality as a precondition of participatory equality - and reinforces the convergence I have identified elsewhere between scholars and activists working within the context of Habermasian, public sphere theory, and the food sovereignty agenda (Brem-Wilson, 2012).

[3] The degree to which the aspirant participant is able to attain the conditions of effective participation within policy-making arenas and processes is but one of at least three other sets of dynamics, attention to which is necessary to determine if the formal right to participate has translated into substantive participation. Others are a) *the degree to which the area has the capacity and competence to manage a policy debate* (e.g., can provide meaningful participation opportunities; can recognise what is being contested - i.e., norms, values, foundational definitions; can translate inputs into outputs; can recognise and accommodate dissent); b) *the degree to which decisional-outcomes in the arena are connected to discursive processes* (and not backroom deals or influence 'in the corridors'; and c) *the degree to which decisional-outcomes are translated into concrete action/influence* (i.e., influence over the behaviour of agrifood system actors). If, for example, an interlocutor has fully attained the conditions of effective participation in the arena, but the arena's outputs don't translate into concrete influence, or if the arena's outputs translate into concrete influence but the process managers can't manage a policy debate of this scale then it is reasonable to anticipate that politically meaningful participation will be absent.

social movement activists representing rural constituencies seeking to convert their *formal* right to participate in the reformed CFS into "substantive" participation (Patel, 2009) we need an analytical framework. In the second part of the paper, articulating with the relevant scholarship – e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis, Public Sphere Theory - I outline such a framework.

This section will proceed by positing the conditions that have to be attained for effective participation within the arena (the *Requisites of Effective Participation*) - in this instance, the Committee on World Food Security - and the different ways in which the inability to meet these conditions (*Requisites of Effective Participation deficits*) can be addressed. As it does this, the framework reveals that participation obstacles can be remedied by a combination of capacity development, facilitation, and adjustment of the participatory conditions. In revealing these possibilities the framework constitutes a more dynamic mid-way point between those approaches that argue for, on the one hand, societal intervention (Patel, 2009; Fraser, 1990) to address such deficits, and, on the other, 'pragmatic adaptation' by those seeking voice to the constraints/conditions of the arena (Holzscheiter, 2005: 738). These points will be elaborated more fully in the conclusion.[4]

2. A historic moment for the food sovereignty struggle?: Reform of the Committee on World Food Security

> "This would have been unimaginable 10 years ago."
>
> (La Via Campesina activist, October 17th, 2009, Rome).

In autumn 2009 - following the break out, provoked by the 2007-2008 "food price crisis", of a wide spread concern with the underperforming international food security institutional architecture – a relatively obscure and widely perceived to be failing organ of global food security policy-making was reformed. For the food sovereignty movement – containing a diverse range of actors and organizations including grassroots social movement activists and international NGOs – both the reform process itself and its outcomes are highly significant. Within the reform process civil society actors enjoyed participation rights – notwithstanding decision-making authority – more or less equal to states. The outcome of this process was a blueprint for a body that in its functions and in its aspirations for inclusivity and political centrality promised to realise the longstanding ambitions for global food and agricultural governance of important food sovereignty actors such as La Via Campesina. At the least, it represented a significant step towards that end. That body is the Committee on World Food Security.

2.1. The CFS: From precarious irrelevance, to reform

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was first established, as part of a raft of actions taken at the in 1974 World Food Conference, the declarations of which it was tasked with overseeing. 1996 saw another attempt to martial the international community's political will in support of the elimination of hunger, the World Food Summit, and the CFS was re-tasked with monitoring the Plan-of-Action that this summit produced.[5] Importantly, civil society were recognised as having a significant role to play here, and member states committed to encouraging their participation in the monitoring process.[6] By 2006, however - with

[4] This paper and the framework it articulates are based upon doctoral research conducted between May 2008 and October 2011. The period research consisted of a political ethnography focusing upon La Via's articulation with UN food and agricultural activity, during which time I conducted research for La Via Campesina, observed their participation in a range of fora, both intergovernmental and civil society, and interviewed (N=70) a range of embedded actors, including diplomats, UN officials, and representatives from civil society (Brem-Wilson, 2012).

[5] "The CFS enjoyed revived fortunes in 1995-1996 when it became the principal forum for inter-state negotiation in preparation for the 1996 World Food Summit." (Margulis, 2012: 237).

[6] As stated within the Summit Declaration. The final of the seven commitments made by member states within this document asserts "We will implement, monitor, and follow-up this Plan of Action at all levels in cooperation with the

another World Food Summit (2002) inbetween - dissatisfaction with the performance of the CFS was sufficiently pronounced for serious proposals for reform to be floated, by Brazil. “Boring” and “Talking shop” were labels that seemed to capture the mood.[7,] Persistent problems - or resistance - operationalising civil society participation, moreover, meant that for these actors the CFS was a frustrating experience, as captured in their walk out from a Special Session in 2006.[8] However, despite these issues, between 2006 and 2008 the reform proposals didn’t really go anywhere, and the CFS was assigned, from some quarters, a precarious status in the global food security institutional architecture.[9]

Indeed, even following the formal announcement of a reform process in October 2008, seasoned FAO-watchers were less than overwhelmed by this prospect, anticipating a fairly slow process.[10] Within less than 9 months, however, from its launch, the process of formulating a vision for reform was complete, resulting in the delineation of a body that far exceeded the expectations of many within civil society. Though there is not the space here to provide a detailed account, an overview of the circumstances behind this process helps to underscore its propitiousness and, by extension, that also of its outcome: the document that provides the blueprint for CFS reform.

Firstly, as suggested above, the 2007-2008-food price crisis - which saw rioting and social unrest in over 30 countries – provoked a significant elevation of food security up the agenda of global political elites, resulting in a raft of initiatives and declarations pledging both action and finance.[11] When French President Nicolas Sarkozy, participating at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, 3rd to the 5th of June, 2008, announced a proposal for a Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, the issue of governance reform became formally part of this post-food crisis response agenda. At the time, the idea of the Global Partnership never really achieved traction, in part due to a lack of clear definition of what it might entail (even amongst those who were supposedly its advocates) but it did have one important effect: It was sufficiently inchoate to trigger, in the minds of a wide group of actors committed to Rome as the locus of UN food security governance, the fear that an attempt was being made to shift multilateral responsibility for food security to New York (UN headquarters) or Washington (Bretton Woods, IFPRI) or even to open up food and agricultural governance even more to the

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international community.” Sub-objective 7.3g adds that, “to monitor actively the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action” member states will “[e]ncourage the effective participation of relevant actors of civil society in the CFS monitoring process, recognizing their critical role in enhancing food security”. World Food Summit (13 – 17.11.1996) “Rome Declaration on World Food Security”. http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm (19.2.2011).

[7] This perspective was communicated to me both in interviews and through the comments of member states I observed intervening at various intergovernmentals, particularly the 37th Session of the CFS.

[8] Interview, Beatriz Gasco, IPC Secretariat, 23-24.3.2011.

[9] For example, the Independent External Evaluation of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – the Committee on World Food Security’s host institution – stated in 2007 in its summary report that the CFS was ‘losing some of its momentum’ and ‘questions have arisen as to whether it meets for too long and too frequently.” (IEE, 2007: 178). The CFS itself recognised that prior to its reform it was ‘weak performing’ (CFS, 2009: Paragraph 2).

[10] This was the view articulated, for instance, at the January 2009 annual meeting in Rome of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, an international network of food sovereignty social movements and NGOs.

[11] E.g., In April 2008 the UN Secretary-General launched a High Level Task Force on the Global Food Price Crisis (HLTF), designed to improve inter-agency coordination between twenty UN entities deemed to have mandates of relevance to food security. The issue of global food security also featured very prominently on the agendas of the July 2008 meeting of the G8, in Hokkaido, Japan, and again next year at L’Aquila, Italy. See July 2008 G8 Hokkaido Toyako Leaders Statement on Global Food Security http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2008/doc/doc080709_04_en.html And: July 2009 G8 L’Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security http://www.g8summit.it/G8/Home/Summit/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_Atti.htm

influence and participation of TNCs and Philanthropic Foundations.[12] Whether or not this was ever the case, this possibility certainly sharpened the minds of those committed to Rome as the locus of multilateral food security action, emphasising the importance of a Rome-based reform effort.[13]

The process of reforming the Committee on World Food Security was greatly, aided, moreover, by the fact that the member states of the FAO were just emerging from an extensive process to reform the FAO itself, and were, therefore, 'reform ready'.[14] Prior to the FAO reform process, effective collaboration – and, indeed, the effective discharge of their governance responsibilities – amongst and by FAO member states were hampered by narrow, short-term thinking and mistrust (across the G77-OECD divide).[15] Within the crucible of the committee that was established to respond to the findings and recommendations of the external evaluation of FAO (which provided the basis for the reform effort) a new dynamic emerged.[16] This saw FAO member states begin to work collaboratively and with a focus on the wellbeing of the institution, something that was a completely novel experience to many diplomats posted there. Thus, by the time that the CFS reform was launched, the practices of dialogue and collaboration amongst its membership necessary for an effective process were well established.

And finally, the input of an organised and purposeful civil society has been acknowledged as central amongst the contextual factors that contributed to both a relatively speedy process and ambitious outcome (McKeon, 2009b). Particularly important was the contribution of the activists of the International Planning Committee, an international network of NGOs and social movement representatives working on a food sovereignty platform, and oriented to facilitating the participation of food producer constituencies in transnational food and agricultural policy-processes.[17] Emerging out of the desire of social movements seeking voice at the global level, the IPC defined for itself a modus operandi based upon autonomy (self-organising) and the protagonism of representatives of food producer constituencies (in contrast to the 'mediated' representation provided by NGOs). By the time the CFS reform was launched in October 2008 the IPC had been facilitating rural constituency participation in FAO policy processes for around seven years, establishing a resilient and high quality core activist network – though still at times too dependent upon the extraordinary contributions of a handful of very committed individuals - with clearly defined objectives and communication channels (McKeon, 2009; Brem-Wilson, 2012). Thus they were well positioned – both in terms of capacity and recognition by FAO – to respond.

[12] Not only are the Committee on World Food Security and its host institution the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN based in Rome, but so also are the World Food Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and Bioversity (a member of the CGIAR). Rome therefore has four multilateral food and agricultural bodies. Throughout the summer and autumn of 2009 I interviewed a range of actors from both outside and inside these institutions, and the fear that the Global Partnership represented a covert attempt to relocate the locus of food security from Rome to another location was widely entertained amongst them.

[13] Central amongst the considerations of La Via analysts and the IPC network was the contrast between the decision-making modes of UN institutions (one-member one-vote) and that of IFIs (one-dollar one-vote), the former regarded by them as providing a minimum democratic safeguard and so they seek for food and agricultural governance and policy-making to remain within that framework.

[14] The relevance of FAO dynamics for the performance of the CFS is rooted in the fact that States participate in the CFS for the main part through their Permanent Representatives at the FAO, and the Secretariat functions of the CFS are predominantly provided by FAO officials.

[15] A dynamic captured by the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE, 2007).

[16] This insight was obtained through interviews with diplomats who participated within this committee, including its process managers.

[17] Though its roots stretch back to frustrations emerging out of participation within various different UN spaces in the preceding years, it was in 2001 that the proposal to establish an autonomous civil society group to interface with FAO in the preparations for the World Food Summit: *five years later* (scheduled for 2001 but rescheduled to 2002 following "9/11") and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002 was first made (McKeon, 2009: 54).

Of course, without an opening for them in the reform process the influence of civil society might well have been minimal.[18] The bold decision by the CFS Bureau – with Argentinean ambassador Maria Del Carmen Squeff driving things as Chair – to grant civil society representatives from the outset of the process rights of participation, notwithstanding decision-making authority, more or less equal to states, therefore, was crucial. And at the conclusion of the reform process, the contribution of civil society actors such as the IPC – working in a very effective collaboration with international NGOs Action-Aid and Oxfam International - was identified by Bureau members and non-Bureau member state participants alike as fundamental to the attainment of the high level of ambition that the reform blueprint contained.[19]

2.2. A Food Sovereignty Perspective: Three Key Properties of the Reformed CFS

The reform of the CFS was not without its moments of drama and controversy (not the least of which being a misconceived last minute attempt by newly re-staffed US delegation to replace the document negotiated over the previous 9 months with their own text) but the mood amongst both civil society delegates and a number of member states at the adoption of its reform blueprint was nothing short of jubilation, with IPC members being particularly pleased with the outcome.[20] The reaction of La Via activists present at this final meeting, for example, signalled the historic nature of the outcome, with one key member from their delegation describing the result as 'unimaginable' 10 years earlier. From a food sovereignty perspective, three properties of the reformed CFS are particularly salient.

2.2.1 The reformed CFS aspires for political centrality

The first feature of significance concerns the CFS's aspirations for political centrality. The post-WWII history of the international food and agricultural institutional architecture is, in part, a history of progressive fragmentation.[21] This can be captured by tracking the history of the FAO, which, though being for the first 25 years after its founding in 1945 the 'pre-eminent [international] agricultural organization" found itself in the mid-2000s as just one body in a 'very crowded field' (IEE, 2007: 53-68). The exact number of internationally located food and agriculturally relevant entities is debatable, but when the now defunct World Food Council conducted its review in 1990 of UN agencies working on hunger and malnourishment issues, it counted no less than "well over 30 multilateral institutions" at work in this area (Shaw, 2007: 206). A more recent illustration of the number of food and agriculturally relevant entities operating at the global level is provided by the fact that when in 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon convened a High Level Task Force to

[18] Civil society was not, for example, invited to participate within the prior FAO reform process.

[19] The document that was produced during this process and which provides the blueprint for CFS reform is locatable at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep../fao/Meeting/018/K7197E.pdf.

[20] See, for example, Brem-Wilson, 2010: 12-13 and La Via Campesina, 2012 for a somewhat fuller list of IPC achievements in the CFS reform process.

[21] The drivers of this fragmentation are debatable. Whilst more institutionalised analysts tend to explain it within a relatively de-politicized narrative, focusing upon issues of institutional 'performance', for others power and interests come to the fore. For instance, a communiqué issued in January 2008 by the Ottawa based ETC Group – whose ranks count globally respected long-term agri-food governance watchers (and participants) such as Pat Mooney – explaining the fragmentation of the multilateral food and agricultural system, assigned more explanatory power to the desire of the OECD countries to insulate the areas through which they advanced their interests in the face of a changing geopolitical reality heralded by the post-colonial era, and the rise of the New International Economic Order. In the one-country one-vote context of the FAO, the increased voting power of the developing countries meant a politicization of FAO's agenda, and so "[d]uring the 1970s and '80s, the OECD took away the highly-political management of food aid, agricultural and rural finance, and responsibility for the science and technology necessary to advance industrial agriculture." (ETC, 2008: 8).

respond to the 2007/2008 "food price crisis", it included twenty different bodies within its membership.[22] The centrality given to the need for "coordination' in the post-food price crisis agenda, again, underscores the fragmentation that exists in this domain.[23]

For all but the most resource rich actors, such as powerful OECD states and TNCs, and especially so for representatives of non-elites such as the food producer constituencies represented in the food sovereignty movement, participation across all of the potentially relevant international food and agricultural decision-making spaces is just not possible.[24] This endows the richer actors with a distinct advantage, enabling them, for instance, to "shift the debate across a range of policy-making arenas." (Lang et al., 2009: 87). For La Via Campesina, therefore, the pursuit of a single food and agriculture decision-making space at the global level has been an important strategic objective, regarded as necessary to enable their representatives the opportunity for "effective impact" therein (Interview, Nico Verhagen, Technical Support to the IOS of La Via Campesina, 28.2.2011). Within the negotiations of the CFS reform process this goal formed a key part of the IPC's overall package of objectives. Though they were not completely successful[25] - some member states were particularly keen to dilute robust language pertaining to the CFS's status and character vis-à-vis the international food security institutional architecture - the final language of the reform blueprint does articulate a vision of the CFS which at least represents a significant step towards the goal of transnational food and agricultural policy-making sought by La Via. This identifies the CFS as:

> "[T]he *central United Nations political platform* dealing with food security and nutrition…"
> (CFS: 2009/2: Paragraph 2). [Emphasis added].

And:

> "[T]he *foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform* for a broad range of committee stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger…"

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[22] The full list of HLTF members includes: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), World Trade Organization (WTO), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Department of Public Information (DPI), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). This list also excludes other important bodies such as those working on food and agricultural genetic resources, including the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

[23] See, for example, UNGA, 2010: Paragraph 70, L; EU-US Transatlantic Development Dialogue, 2010;and G20, 2010: 13.

[24] The challenge of participating in the work of even just one body - the Codex Alimentarius – is illustrative. An international food standards body whose "semi-binding" authority derives from its links to the WTO - through the latter body's agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) (Smythe, 2009: 95, referencing Victor, 1997) - between mid-October 2011 and March 2012, 8 of its sub-committees met in no less than 7 different countries. http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/current.jsp?lang=en (5.6.2011).

[25] As noted above, the CFS reform was initiated in the context of competing views about the location of multilateral food security decision-making and action. The positions of some member states within the reform process and articulated later within CFS policy processes, and the emergence of initiates such as the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (http://feedthefuture.gov/article/new-alliance-food-security-and-nutrition-) communicate that this is still the case. At the time, however, for the civil society participants in the CFS reform process the strength of the CFS's aspirations for political centrality attained in the context of these alternate perspectives were part of a range of outcomes that enabled them to claim a 'food battle won' (McKeon, 2009b).

(CFS: 2009/2: Paragraph 4). [Emphasis added].

2.2.2 The reformed CFS aspires to be a site of policy debate

The next of the CFS's aspirations of significance to food sovereignty is its goal to be a site of policy debate. Again, situating this aspiration in the post-war history of food policy is instructive. Broadly speaking, this period is divided into three to four key stages (Maxwell and Slater, 2004; Lang et al., 2009). These chart the transition of food policy from a post-war productionist consensus, through an era of neoliberalism, to the contemporary period in which a wide range of issues and dynamics – what Lang (2010) has called the 'new fundamentals', and Maxwell and Slater (2004) the 'new food policy' – challenge food policy-making on a number of fronts. These new issues include, for instance, energy concerns, human rights, poverty reduction, ecological sustainability, biodiversity, and issues of power and control in the food system. Thus, charting this post-war transition, Lang et al. describe the shift from an initial period of "optimism" and "consensus", to one – via, amongst others, persistent food insecurity, ecological crisis and market failure – of "confusion," to the contemporary period of competing and contested policy options (2009: 42-44).[26] Changing views on the appropriate locus of action and responsibility – e.g., state vs. market, public vs. private – is a key variable in tracking the shift of food policy in the post-war era (Fairburn, 2010; McMichael, 2005).

The emergence of La Via Campesina and the wider food sovereignty movement can very much be read as both emblematic and constitutive of this transition from consensus to contestation. Food sovereignty challenges contemporary and more institutionally sanctioned food policy framings on a number of levels. Firstly, it posits a wide range of *ends* for food and agriculture – and by extension, food policy – such as political autonomy, ecological sustainability, and cultural diversity, contesting the narrow, economistic framings to be found in institutional texts such as the 2008 World Bank Development Report, which reduces agricultural activity to a means of income generation and therefore can ultimately equate farming with 'urban jobs' (e.g., World Bank, 2007). Secondly, it seeks to expand the range of *means,* of policy instruments, under consideration, particularly in terms of breaching restrictive neoliberal prescriptions on state-market boundaries. So La Via advocate for a range of market interventions/restructuring, including restricting patterns of accumulation, locally orientating food systems, collectivizing resource control, and reconstituting and redirecting state support structures towards agroecological, small holder food production (La Via Campesina, 2000, quoted in Desmarais, 2007: 34). Importantly, in relation to the means through which food and agricultural objectives should be attained, food sovereignty has important things to say about the *rights to be enjoyed*, and *responsibilities owed*, by different agrifood system actors. Thus peoples have the right to participate in food policy-making, peasants have the right to be protected by human rights instruments, and governments have the responsibility to manage the food system. TNCs, on the other hand, do not have the right to appropriate control of natural resources, or to foist GMOs upon either farmers or consumers.

Food sovereignty, therefore, contests food policy framings to be found in more institutional or orthodox narratives. Indeed, this dimension of La Via's activity is explicitly recognised by key intellectuals within the movement. Paul Nicholson, for example, co-founder and two-term member of the movement's International Coordination Committee, states that it was in part to provoke a debate in food policy at the global level, and provide a voice for small holder food producers in that debate, that La Via first emerged.[27] In this regard La Via and the food sovereignty movement can be regarded as seeking to provoke and enact an 'argumentative

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[26] This shift in the transnational policy environment is also signalled by the growing importance attached by TNCs to 'discursive power', which augments the 'structural' and 'instrumental' power through which they defend and strengthen their influence over the direction of agrifood policy-making (See: Clapp and Fuchs, 2009: 8-10).

[27] "To date, in all the global debates on agrarian policy, the peasant movement has been absent; we have not had a voice. The main reason for the existence of the Via Campesina is to be that voice…"
(Paul Nicholson, founder member of La Via Campesina, and two-term member of the ICC, quoted in Desmarais, 2007: 77).

rationality' (Risse, 2000; 2004) contesting the "validity claims" – claims to truth and normative rightness - buried within institutional food policy framings. And from this perspective, both the aspirations of the reformed CFS "to ensure that voices of all relevant stakeholders are heard in the *policy debate* on food and agriculture" [Emphasis added] (CFS, 2009: Paragraph 2), and the functions attached to its annual plenary meeting, quoted below, are significant.

> The Plenary is the central body [in the reformed CFS] for decision-taking, *debate*, coordination, lesson-learning and convergence by all stakeholders at global level on issues pertaining to food security and nutrition and on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.
>
> (CFS, 2009: Paragraph 20). [Emphasis added].

2.2.3 The unprecedented inclusivity of the reformed CFS

The final attribute of the reformed CFS of significance for food sovereignty is its inclusivity. As noted above, during the reform process the Bureau of the CFS extended to civil society participation rights more or less equal – notwithstanding decision-making authority – to states. This preempted the rights that they would go on to secure for themselves in the post-reform CFS itself, including the right "to intervene in plenary and breakout discussions, approve meeting documents and agendas, and submit and present documents and formal proposals" (CFS, 2009: Paragraph 12). During the reform process there was a suggestion from a sympathetic UN official that civil society should enjoy decision-making status also, but this was firmly rebutted by the civil society participants, who cautioned against any dilution in the principle of ultimate government responsibility for food and agricultural decision-making and hunger elimination.

Civil society are not, however, the only group of non-state actors to enjoy these participation rights in the reformed CFS, and the reform blueprint differentiates in fact between 5 different categories of (non-member state) "Participant', including representatives of the private sector and International Financial Institutions.[28] However, with an emphasis given to prioritising the participation of "those most affected by food insecurity" and differentiating further amongst 11 constituencies of civil society participants, including smallholder family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, and herders/pastoralists, the CFS is unique in providing a formally guaranteed right of participation to representatives of these groups. Or as activist and author of a key study of UN-civil society relations Nora McKeon has put it:

> For the first time in the history of the UN system, representatives of small-scale food producers and other civil society organizations, along with private sector associations and other stakeholders, would be full participants and not just observers of the intergovernmental process.
>
> (McKeon, 2009b).

These three properties, then, provide the basis for the claim that the reform of the UN Committee on World Food Security represents a significant historical moment in the food sovereignty struggle. Of course, there is an important distinction to be drawn between the promise contained in a text, and the degree to which that promise can and is being actualized in practice.[29] Indeed, a snapshot of post-reform outcomes in the specific domain of the CFS's inclusivity aspirations suggest the picture is a mixed one.

[28] The five categories are I. Representatives of UN agencies and bodies with a specific mandate in the field of food security and nutrition; II. Civil society and non-governmental organizations and their networks with strong relevance to issues of food security and nutrition. III. International agricultural research systems; IV. International and regional Financial Institutions, regional development banks, and the World Trade Organization (WTO); V. Representatives of private sector associations and private philanthropic foundations active in the areas of concern to the Committee. (CFS, 2009: Paragraph 11).

[29] The analysis and anticipation of which constituted a major focus of my doctoral thesis (Brem-Wilson, 2012).

On the one hand, there is no doubt that rural constituency representatives have experienced a qualitative shift in the opportunities for their participation in an intergovernmental body, both in the CFS's "intersessional" work and its plenary, with such representatives literally sitting side by side with state and UN representatives, and other actors, in the various meeting spaces of the CFS. With the creation of the Civil Society Mechanism – the autonomous body through which civil society organizes its participation in the CFS - and the freedom civil society had to organise their own participation in the recently concluded process of negotiating the Voluntary Guidelines,[30] also suggests that to a large extent the principle of civil society autonomy is being respected.[31] However, it also true that the burden of increased participation is posing serious challenges to the technical and infrastructural capacities of social movement organisations such as La Via Campesina, and the post-reform attractiveness of the CFS to more resource rich NGOs and the private sector is threatening to marginalise the rural constituency voice (La Via Campesina, 2012). Moreover, a civil society walk out at the 2012 plenary in response to their exclusion by the Chair from the Roundtable on Price Volatility signals the disconnect between the formal right to participate and the operationalisation of that right in actual CFS sessions.[32]

Following its reform, the CFS represents an important historical moment in the food sovereignty struggle. It is clear, however, that picture post-reform is mixed, particularly in relation to the CFS's aspirations for inclusivity. In this regard, the CFS is especially significant because it extends formal participation rights to representatives of rural constituencies. Recapitulating the agenda defined by Raj Patel (2009), a discussion of which introduced this paper, we may say that this extension of formal participation rights prompts the need to interrogate the power asymmetries that obstruct the translation of that formal right into substantive participation, or 'discursive power' (Holzscheiter, 2005: 734).[33] Partly, as I will now discuss in the second part of this paper, this involves, in part, *interrogating the status of the aspiring interlocutor – rural constituency representatives - vis-à-vis their attainment of the conditions for effective participation* in the discursive arena to which they enjoy formal participation rights (van Dijk, 1996: 87; Holzscheiter, 2005: 734). To do this we need a framework for analysis. In the second part of this paper I will now present such a framework, which I will unfold through the positing of two propositions.

3. Systematically analysing rural constituency participation in the CFS: Two Key Propositions

3.1. Proposition One: The arena represents a more or less stable confluence of participatory conditions: the Requisites of Effective Participation

The first proposition through which to introduce an analytical framework necessary for the capturing of rural constituency experience in the reformed CFS is that the arena – in this case, the Committee on World Food Security – constitutes a more or less stable confluence of interrelated, participatory conditions: the *Requisites of Effective Participation.* This communicates that, irrespective of normative desirability, the parameters of effective participation – assuming that the objective of participation is to influence decisional outcomes – are fixed within a more or less boundaried range.

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[30] The full name of which is the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests.

[31] As communicated in an reflection distributed through the IPC by Sofia Monsalve, FIAN, who performed a key role in the International Facilitation Group that organised civil society participation in the *Guidelines* consultation.

[32] Brill, M. (2011) "And We Walked Out… Conclusion of the Food Price Volatility Work at the CFS." http://www.actionaid.org/2011/10/and-we-walked-out-conclusion-food-price-volatility-work-cfs (30.10.2011).

[33] "Discursive power can be witnessed only through analysis of those processes of influence and exclusion that take place once particular actors, issues and modes of speaking have secured their place in the political forum under scrutiny" (Holzscheiter, 2005: 734).

3.1.1 Intelligible and persuasive communication

For instance, effective participation in such a context requires that the aspirant interlocutor can communicate in a manner that is a) intelligible and b) persuasive to the other interlocutors within the arena (particularly decision-makers: the member states). Intelligibility is partly a matter of language, which in the context of the CFS necessitates speaking in one of FAO's six official languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese, for which interpretation at formal meetings is provided. However, in less formal though still institutional spaces the working language may and often does default to English.[34] In terms of persuasiveness, meanwhile, it has been well established that arenas – at whatever level - may attach particular value to distinctive modes of communication, on the one hand, and shared meanings, on the other. These may range from 'protocols of style' (Fraser, 1990: 63; Calhoun, 2010: 323) to particular 'inherited meaning-structures' (Holzshceiter, 2005: 734) or 'discursive repertoires' which are already understood by the interlocutors within the arena and resonance with which, therefore, can be a precondition of both intelligible and persuasive communication (Holzschieiter, 2005; Keck and Sikikink, 2005; Berkovitch, 1999; Litfin, 1994). In the context of the CFS – an intergovernmental body populated by diplomats, senior politicians, UN officials and other "policy professionals" (Stone, 2008), the prevailing modes of communication are both technical and highly formalized. And newly admitted rural constituency participants in the reformed CFS have quickly become conscious of their 'speaking differently' (Interview, Sofia Monsalve, FIAN, 29.8.2011).

Intelligibility, however, is about more than simply trying to be understood. It is also about remaining true to what one is trying to say. This can be seen most clearly in the difficulty that La Via and the food sovereignty movement has in carrying its comprehensive food sovereignty messaging – emphasising ties of solidarity between its members and allies and a collective culture of the earth through literal and symbolic communication - as evident in the fact that sympathetic officials and institutional allies have become conscious of not quite fully understanding the movement until they were invited into *its* native arenas, where they could experience the full range of 'mistica', other symbolic enactments and native discursive modes (McKeon, 2009a: 91).

Whatever the modes of communication that prevail within the spaces of processes within the CFS – and this is a question for empirical research[35] – it is clear that there is and will be a finite range of possibilities in this regard. For instance, if you don't speak one of the formal languages of the FAO you can't participate in its formal sessions. And if you aren't able to muster a communicative mode that is persuasive to decision-makers within the CFS you won't be able to persuade them. *What* the persuasive modes are is, as I indicate, a matter for empirical research. The point is simply that there will be a finite range of what constitutes persuasive communication in the CFS – as with any arena – and that this range constitutes part of the *Requisites of Effective Participation*. Other Requisites of Effective Participation include the following:

3.1.2 Attaining spatial and temporal convergence with the arena

At a minimum, if an interlocutor wants to be effective within an arena they have to attain spatial and temporal convergence with that arena. In the case of the CFS, this means, often, going to Rome at specific points in the year. For all of those representing non-European constituencies – the majority, of course – this necessitates intercontinental travel, which is both expensive and often long. Flying from Rio De Jeneiro to Rome, for instance, costs typically £750.00 and can take between 15 to 25 hours. To resource poor, time

[34] The FAO itself has indeed previously noted an informal tendency, within the various different fora of its work, to default to English, with arising issues of inclusion and exclusion (FAO, 2000: 19-25).

[35] As noted above, rural constituency participants gaining entry to the CFS and its related policy processes are very much conscious of 'speaking differently'. Given the almost infinite range of analytical units via which speech and text can be differentiated (van Dijk, 1993) empirical research is necessary to identify the exact basis of this sense of distinction, as I discuss in the conclusion.

stretched social movement activists these are not insignificant details. Attaining spatial and convergence with the arena, moreover, is also about knowing how to enter into specific discussions, and in the case of intergovernmental spaces this necessitates a degree of understanding of the protocols that prevail therein.

3.1.3 Being informed

To participate effectively in a policy process an aspirant interlocutor must have some understanding of what it is that is being discussed, the dynamics of the discussion, the issues at stake, the background to the discussion, the policy instruments under consideration, and so on (Menser, 2008: 22; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001: 47; Scholte 2004: 19).[36] For rural constituency representatives, who are often active food producers and whose participation in transnational policy processes is typically secondary to their participation in *national* and *regional* processes, the constraints - e.g., temporal, informational - to their attainment of full technical understanding of the issues and proposals under discussion in transnational policy processes can be significant (La Via Campesina, 2012; Brem-Wilson, 2012).

Being informed, moreover, also implies that not only does the constituency hold an understanding of the issue under consideration, but also, crucially, that they have a clear sense of how this issue affects, or is likely to affect their constituency, and what counter proposals are desirable (Interview, Sofia Monsalve, FIAN, 29.8.2011).

3.1.4 Being psychologically comfortable with participation in the arena

To participate effectively in a discursive arena the aspirant interlocutor must possess a degree of psychological comfort with the dynamics of participation in such arenas, being confident in their own right to speak and not intimated by the status of the other interlocutors within it (Gaventa, 2004). They must also possess some understanding of the protocols and procedures of the arena, knowing when and how to intervene, and so on. Intergovernmental arenas such as the Committee on World Food Security are very large, comprising in excess of four to five hundred participants, and are governed by protocols that are not always self evident to recently admitted.[37] Rural constituencies, moreover, contain some of the most marginalised people on the planet, and whilst they often possess strong oratorical abilities in their native arenas[38], it is again not to be assumed that they will have attained the confidence to participate alongside policy elites – who are often socialised into such confidence via education or training - such as diplomats, ministers, and senior UN officials, even when they are granted formal rights to do so.[39]

3.1.5 Being recognised as having the right to speak

At a minimum, participation within a discursive arena is dependent upon admittance to that arena by the other interlocutors. In the case of the CFS – and many other transnational policy spaces, including those of civil society – this necessitates *formal* admittance. The attainment of formal participation rights, however, does not in itself guarantee the degree of recognition of the right to speak by the other interlocutors necessary for them to be moved to hear or pay attention to what the formally admitted is saying. Feminist scholars, for instance, have long tracked the ways in which gender – being a woman – functions as a unit of

[36] “Citizens voice efforts are more effective when informed by an excellent understanding of the obstacles to effective service delivery. This includes developing a sound grasp of technical matters.” (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001: 47).

[37] I have witnessed, for example, newly appointed FAO member state representatives struggling to work out in FAO governing bodies how to signal a request to speak to the Chair (flipping their country’s nameplate on its side).

[38] Capacity in one arena may indeed be incompetence in another.

[39] “[I]nternalized forms of powerlessness (for example, long established forms of deference based on class, gender, education, or other hierarchy) may affect the ability of community leaders to exercise their voice effectively even when they do enter new participatory spaces.” (Gaventa, 2004: 24).

exclusion in a range of contexts where women are formally entitled to participate though denied these rights by male negation – e.g., speaking over, restricting turn taking (Fraser, 1990). Scholars, moreover, working within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have also identified the ways in which the rules of participation may be 'obligatory, optional or preferential […] as a function of [an interlocutor's] institutional or social power." (van Dijk, 1996: 88). The status that an interlocutor is bestowed by those with whom they are seeking to discourse, moreover, may also be a matter of largely "automatized" socio-cognitive processes (van Dijk, 1993: 262).

As I discuss in the final section of the paper, the relationship flagged here between status and the conditions of participation alludes to the fact that the recognition of the right to speak falls on a continuum, with mere admittance to the arena at one end, and, at the other, the capacity of the interlocutor to bestow status upon the arena through their participation. This last point is particularly relevant in relation to how deficits in attaining the conditions of effective participation are addressed by process managers, discussed below.

The Committee on World Food Security in terms of class and status attributes is a highly heterogeneous arena, containing both predominantly urban political and social elites and, following their recent admittance, rural non-elites. In a great many countries the world over rural peoples are subject to prejudice by urban elites, and so it is reasonable to anticipate, therefore, that social movement activists representing rural constituencies may not always enjoy the appropriate degree of interlocutionary status in the consciousness of those whose decision-making powers are the target of their mobilisation. At the least, this should not be assumed.

Attaining spatial and temporal convergence with the arena; communicating in a manner that is a) intelligible and b) persuasive; being informed; being psychologically comfortable with participation in the arena; and, enjoying recognition of the right to speak – these constitute the Requisites of Effective Participation in an arena such as the Committee on World Food Security. Or rather, they constitute what might *reasonably be expected* to be such requisites. As I discuss in the Conclusion, it is a question for empirical research as to what precisely are the conditions that have to be attained by rural constituencies seeking to convert the formal right to participate in the CFS into substantive participation. These categories, at least, provide a preliminary framework for analysis and to sensitize us to the types of dynamics that need to be explored.

Centering an analysis upon the Requisites of Effective Participation serves another purpose, particularly when we move to consider the ways in which Requisites of Effective Participation *deficits* can be addressed. This reveals the inherent dynamism that exists between the capacities and participatory preferences that aspirant interlocutors bring with them to the arena (their agency) and the Requisites of Effective Participation themselves (structure). This has implications – as I will now discuss – for how we think about intervening to overcoming the 'obstacles to participatory parity' (Fraser, 1990) that may restrict the conversion of the formal right to participate enjoyed by rural constituency representatives in the reformed CFS into substantive participation.

3.2 Proposition Two: There are three primary classes of responses to Requisites of Effective Participation deficits

As I discuss above, in order to participate effectively within an intergovernmental arena such as the UN Committee on World Food Security, it is reasonable to anticipate that certain – interrelated – conditions, the Requisites of Effective Participation, will have to be met. For example, at a minimum, (effective) participation within the arena necessitates that the aspirant interlocutor is able to attain spatial and temporal convergence with the arena. This requires a certain degree of *capacity* – both in terms of monetary resources and time. However, if an aspirant interlocutor does not possess the requisite amount of capacity, then their participation may be *facilitated* by a second party (e.g., a government, NGO, or UN institution), via funding for

flights and accommodation. And finally, if the aspirant interlocutor is unable to attain this requisite via capacity or facilitation, then the location and time of the meeting itself may be changed or alternate means of participation – e.g., webcasting – provided by process managers in order to enable their participation. In other words, *there are three primary classes of response to Requisites of Effective Participation deficits: increased capacity, facilitation*[40]*, and adjustment of the Requisites of Effective Participation.*[41] (Table 1, on page 17, provides an example of three different classes of response to REP deficits).

This insight is simple, yet it has potentially significant implications. Particularly important is that it challenges the assumption – often held implicitly by institutional process managers - that Requisites of Effective Participation deficits should be addressed by increased capacity, or even facilitation. For instance, the history of civil society interactions with multilateral and intergovernmental processes and spaces is in part the story of the progressive 'professionalisation' of NGOs as they adjust to the communication modes and rhythms characterised by such spaces (Mautner, 2008). The costs, however, for organisations that seek to retain a vital and vibrant connection with their social base by adopting to the "working procedures and linguistic codes" of intergovernmental arenas can be high, involving "a slow 'estrangement' from their constituencies and the otherwise voiceless subjects they represent." (Holzscheiter, 2005: 746).

This communicates a potential dialectic between the degree of adjustment to such spaces, and the ability to service and express the agendas of grassroots constituencies, the continuation of which for a movement like La Via is fundamental to their maintenance of a 'mobilising agenda' (Interview, Nico Verhagen, Jan 2009). Indeed, it was in part to provide a more authentic and immediate voice for rural constituencies beyond that provided by NGOs that La Via Campesina first emerged (Desmarais, 2007). Moreover, if deficits in the Requisites of Effective Participation are construed as a matter of the individual interlocutor or constituency attaining increased capacity then this has significant implications for the time frames in which we can expect to see inclusive transnational discursive arenas. It is not a simple matter, for example, to acquire linguistic competence, whether that be speaking a particular (formal) language, or marshaling the techno-diplomatic speech characteristics which may in the perception of some interlocutors be equated with effective communication in such spaces.

The existence of three potential responses to REP deficits, particularly *adjustment*, moreover, speaks to the importance of communicating to process managers the experiences of those – such as rural constituencies – seeking to convert their formal right to participate into substantive participation. At the moment it might be reasonable to anticipate, given van Dijk's recognition of the relationship between institutional or social power and the degree to which the rules of participation may be 'obligatory, optional or preferential" (1996: 88) that the willingness of CFS process managers to address REP deficits through *adjustment* is closely tied to their perception of the status of the interlocutor. So, for example, at the opening session of the 2012 CFS Plenary UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon was afforded the opportunity to address the session through *video message* (UN News Centre, 15 October 2012). No doubt, this adjustment of the REP to enable the spatial and temporal convergence of the UNS-G with the arena was undertaken because as the CFS seeks to affirm its status in the wider institutional sphere of food and agriculture, his participation increases it credential as the place where things *do* or *should* happen. This implies that the positive recognition of the right to speak falls on a continuum, with 'merely admissible' at one end, and 'bestowing value' to the arena at the other. Determining where rural constituency representatives like the social movement activists of La Via fall on this spectrum in the eyes of their interlocutors in the CFS is an important part of the research agenda that, going forward, I outline in the Conclusion.

[40] Facilitation can be regarded is a sub-set of what Piper and von Lieres have labelled 'democratic mediation' (Piper and von Lieres, 2011).

[41] 'Forum Design' can be regarded as one instance of adjustment of the Requisites of Effective Participation (see: Dryzek *et al.*, 2011: 36).

Requisite of Effective Participation (REP)	Example of *Deficit*	Example of Response (Burden upon the participant): *Capacity*	Example of Response (Burden carried by second, third party): *Facilitation*	Example of Response (Burden carried by the arena): *Adjustment of the REPs*
Attaining spatial and temporal convergence with the arena	Interlocutor lacks time and resources (for flights, accommodation)	Free up time, obtain more money	Provision of financial support by sympathetic government, or institution	Relocation of meeting (creation of regional meeting); provision of e-participation opportunities
Communicating in a manner that is a) intelligible, and b) persuasive to other interlocutors	Interlocutor doesn't speak formal language of arena	Learn formal language	Provision of additional interpretation services	Extension in number of formal languages; creation of subsidiary meetings that allow for participation in native discursive modes
Being informed	Interlocutor can't follow a policy process	Increase capacity for independent analysis (hire extra staff)	Provision of interpretative texts by sympathetic ally (e.g., resourced NGO; academic)	Creation of formal, preparatory meetings to share information and provide orientation
Being comfortable with participation in the arena	Interlocutor is inhibited by scale and protocols of the arena	Undergo training to improve confidence	Sympathetic second party intermediates between interlocutor and arena	Creation of subsidiary, formal meeting with scale and protocols comfortable to interlocutor
Enjoying recognition of the right to speak	Actor/group not perceived as legitimate/ authoritative by other participants within the arena	Interlocutor affirms their right to speak through performance in arena or by various routes (e.g., affirmation of subjecthood via demonstration, symbolic actions)	Sympathetic second party with appropriate credentials and status intermediates between actor/group and arena	Other participants are educated to recognise the previously denied interlocutionary subjecthood

Table 1. Examples of Requisites of Effective Participation deficits, and three possible classes of respons

4. Conclusion

There is little doubt that the CFS finally provides civil society with a platform where it can speak, hear and carry its experience beyond the doors of offices that were once closed. However, the participation of representatives of food producers is certainly a huge challenge for them and their movements. Effective and productive involvement require continuous preparation, technical support and organizational skills, especially when it comes to negotiating in a multilateral system, responding to the increasing pressure of lobbyists, or coping with the monopoly of the English language. These new dynamics undoubtedly demand the deployment of more resources, both in

> time and people, by social movements and their partners.
>
> (La Via Campesina, 2012: 2).

In this paper I have argued for the historic importance of the reformed Committee on World Food Security for the food sovereignty struggle, particularly its goal of the direct, substantive participation of citizens in (transnational) food and agricultural decision-making. In this regard, the CFS's aspirations for inclusivity – embodied amongst others in the extension of formal participation rights to social movement activists representing rural constituencies - are particularly important. Whilst recognising however that the conversion of a formal right to participate in an arena such as the CFS into substantive participation is dependent upon a range of complementary dynamics coming into alignment, in this paper I have focused upon a framework for identifying the *status of the interlocutor*, vis-à-vis the conditions of effective participation within the arena (the CFS) itself.

In the introduction I noted the activist and research agenda suggested – amongst others – by Raj Patel, which involves eliminating the power asymmetries – dynamics of "sexism, patriarchy, racism and class" (Patel, 2009: 670) - that inhibit the attainment of substantive participation. I also noted that for Patel the elimination of these power asymmetries necessitated societal interventions. Connecting this idea to the content of this paper, however, it is clear that the concept of the Requisites of Effective Participation indicates that it is not asymmetries *per se* that are the issue, but asymmetries in a context where at least one group – out of those seeking to influence decisional-outcomes - enjoys attainment, or a higher degree of attainment of the REPs, relative to another. It is at least hypothetically possible, for instance, that none of the groups that seek to participate in policy processes enjoys attainment of the REPs, and that power asymmetries between the different groupings are, therefore, irrelevant. This communicates that analysis to determine the degree of substantive participation attained by social movement activists representing rural constituencies in the CFS should be conducted along two axes. Firstly, in relation to *their* attainment of the REPs, and secondly, in relation to the degree to which they have attained the REPs *relative* to the other constituencies entitled to participate in the CFS's work.

The recognition, moreover, that participatory outcomes in a policy-relevant discursive arena like the CFS reflects the dynamic interaction between the *capacities* of the interlocutor, the *facilitation* that is available to them, and the *REPs* themselves also communicates that societal interventions are not in themselves a precondition of substantive participation. A deficit in any one area can be remedied by adjustment in another. This communicates both that interventions are possible in the social field – where capacities are developed – or in the arena itself – where the REPs are located - and that the *burden* therefore for making up a REP deficit can in principle be equally borne by the aspiring participant, a second party, or even the arena itself. This insight is crucial, particularly in a context where thus far, civil society have been responsible for "shouldering more of the burden of bridging the gap between spaces than have the intergovernmental organizations." (McKeon, 2009a: 89). Going forward, the inculcation of an awareness of the possibility of REP adjustment amongst institutional process managers will be crucial.[42]

It is, however, not possible to determine in advance the appropriate response to an REP deficit. In the defense of their autonomy, for instance, movements such as La Via Campesina may wish to dig deep into their resource base to respond to a deficit through increased capacity rather than accept an offer of facilitation, particularly from an institutional actor. Crucial in this regard is the need for the social movement activists participating in transnational policy spaces such as the CFS to maintain a meaningful articulation with

[42] For instance, Duncan and Barling observed "the CFS is an established and formal governance space that operates under formal UN procedures. Thus, while the CFS is in favour of including those most affected by food security, the organization structure, financial mechanisms and the political culture have yet to fully adapt to facilitate their involvement." (Duncan and Barling, 2012: 157).

the movement's membership at the base, expressed in the idea of the 'mobilising agenda' (Interview, Nico Verhagen, Jan 2009). This may well mean that the preferred rhythms and modes of communication of the movement will need to be protected, shifting the focus, going forwards, to REP adjustment and facilitation.

Indeed, going forwards we can outline some of the contours of the research agenda implied by Raj Patel and alluded to further, in the context of the CFS, within this paper. The goal of this research agenda is both to identify the experiences of social movement activists seeking to attain the REPs within the CFS, and to contribute to their remedying, particularly by inculcating amongst institutional process managers a recognition of the arena's latent capacity for transformation: REP adjustment. A key goal of this research, therefore, will be the creation of spaces and processes of reflection for social movement activists, civil society process managers *and* institutional process managers. With this in mind this – food sovereignty oriented - research needs to:

- Identify the Requisites of Effective Participation within the CFS (e.g., which modes of communication are persuasive);
- Identify the experiences of social movement activists seeking to attain these, including their experiences relative to the other groupings formally entitled to participate; the factors that have both enabled and constrained their participation; and, importantly, any deficits encountered;
- Support social movement activists and their allies' (civil society process managers) reflections on how best to address those deficits; and, given the importance of sharing the burden of addressing REP deficits between institutional and non-institutional actors;
- Communicate any REP deficits experienced by social movement activists to institutional process managers, and inculcate within them an awareness of the degree to which REP adjustment can address these.

Clearly this is not a straightforward agenda, but given the importance of the goal to which it seeks to contribute – democratic transnational food and agricultural decision-making – an essential one.

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Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue

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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM PAPER SERIES

A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has – as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework – barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University and the Journal of Peasant Studies, and co-organized by Food First, Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute (TNI), the conference "Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue" was held at Yale University on September 14-15, 2013. The event brought together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting was to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an "intellectual future" in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

The Yale conference was a huge success. It was decided by the organizers, joined by the Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI), to hold a European version of the Yale conference on 24 January 2014 at the ISS in The Hague, The Netherlands.

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