Holt-Giménez, Eric (2009) From Food Crisis to Food Sovereignty- The Challenge of Social Movements

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From Food Crisis to Food Sovereignty: The Challenge of Social Movements focuses on the recent food crisis due to the current recession and ways of fixing it. To Holt-Giménez, the current system is in shambles. Globalization and neoliberalism are ruining the agricultural potential of all nations and leading to an even worse food crisis. His solution is simple: Food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is “people’s self-government of the food system”, letting localities control their own production and methods. They focus on sustainable, organic agriculture, aimed at preserving and revitalizing the soil. In addition, food sovereignty also looks beyond just producing food. The idea of food sovereignty is a lifestyle that a community must embrace. Food sovereignty projects try to build community by supporting the creation of schools and agriculture universities. This allows for the passing of food production knowledge from generation to generation.

Two of the major contributors to the food sovereignty approach are La Vía Campesina (The Peasant Way), a group focused on new agrarian advocacy, and Campesino a Campesino (Farmer to Farmer), a group that works with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These two groups (where are they?), though they have the same goals, often compete with each other, as do groups that are similar. This is due to the fact that Vía Campesina is a smallholders-focused organization that is distrustful of foreign or international efforts to affect agriculture, due to the detrimental encounters with the Green Revolution, the World Bank, the IMF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with others. Campesino a Campesino, on the other hand, is an NGO that is focused on the same principles as Vía Campesina, but is international and tries to aid people from all over the world. When both styles of groups, the local and NGO, work in the same area, there tends to be competition and conflict, though they work for the same goal.

This article struck a chord with me. As an advocate for local food systems and sustainable agriculture, I firmly agree that these types of “peasant-led” programs are the key to solving the world food crisis. The more neo-Liberalism and globalization spread, the worse things will get for all poor farmers throughout the world. This applies not only to foreign countries but to the United States as well. Our food system is in shambles (as a blanket statement this arguable—e.g., Americans pay less of their income for food than anyone in the world so in that sense its working very well. Perhaps be specific about what is not working) and it is only a matter of time before it crumbles due to overzealous and unsustainable harvesting practices, the fall of crop diversity due to GMOs, and, in my opinion, the lack of true understanding of where your food comes from. Food is one thing that links everyone together; we all need it. And based on this fact over time it became an integral part of our society. We need it to come back to that, to shine in the forefront as it had in the past, both here and abroad. We need to be able to look at our plates and say, “I know where this meal came from, and I am proud of it.” Without this connection, our food system will continue on its path of self-destruction until our species starves itself into extinction.

I appreciate your passion on the issue, but showing the links of your final thoughts to the specific content of the article would have made the points even stronger in the context of a review.