

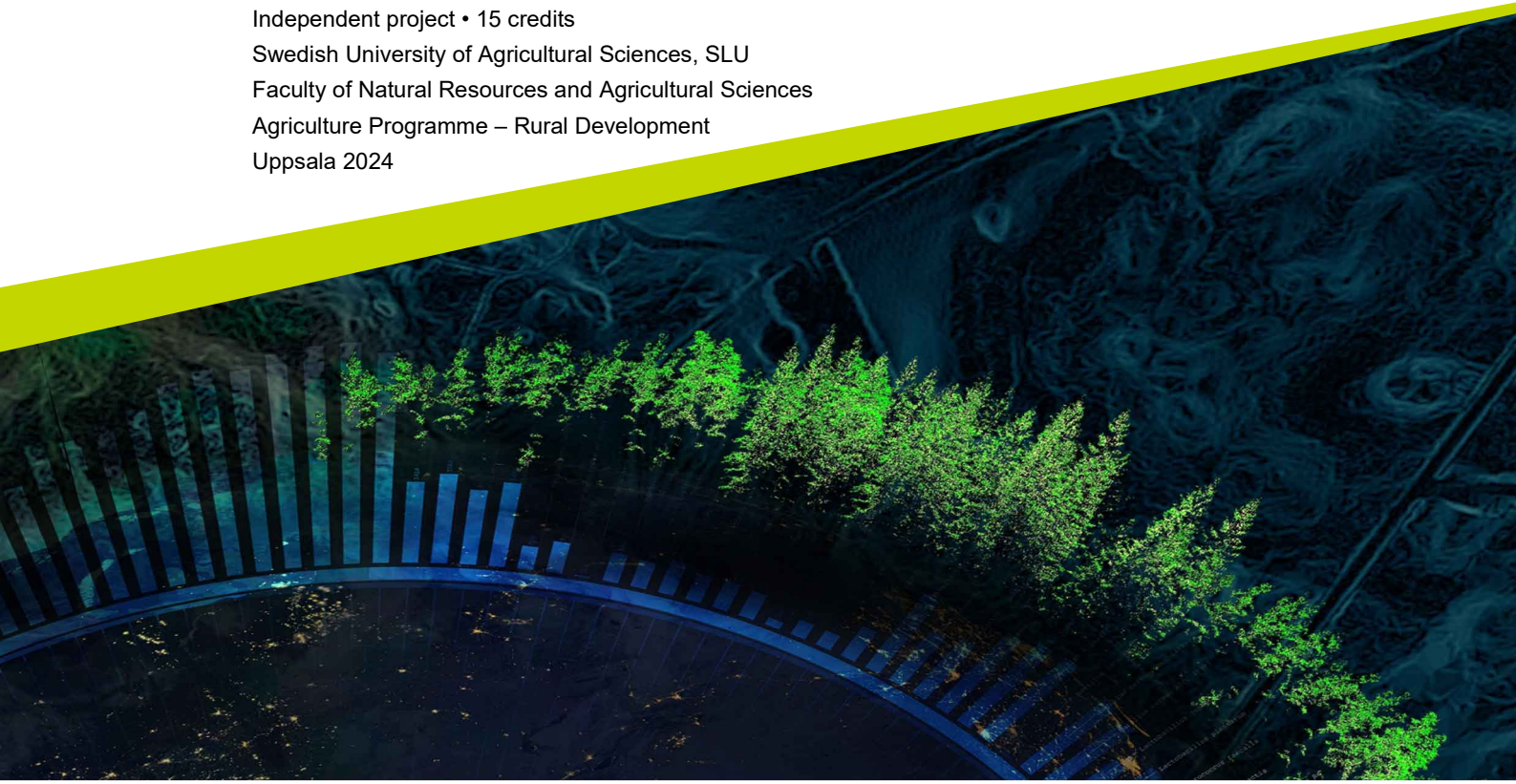


The New Italian Take on Food Sovereignty

A discourse analysis of food sovereignty in different contexts

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
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Abstract

This research is investigating the Italian Government's use of the food sovereignty discourse. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the semantic term and how its meaning changes in different contexts. Food sovereignty was originally coined by the "peasant movement" called La Via Campesina. It is an international movement with the purpose of giving voice to small-scale farmers, rural women, agricultural workers, and indigenous people all over the world. They are characterised as an international resistance movement by opposing the neoliberal and capitalist paradigm. Meanwhile, in 2022 the new Italian Government led by Giorgia Meloni decided to implement food sovereignty in their agri-food sector as one of their main priorities. Her party "Fratelli d'Italia" is a conservative right-wing party with radical nationalistic values. The ideology of Fratelli d'Italia contradicts the origins of La Via Campesina's food sovereignty discourse. This essentially becomes an interesting case for a discourse analysis of the term food sovereignty. This investigation is based on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis. Their theoretical concepts will help navigate through the structuring of meaning and how they come to challenge each other. The empirical analysis will demonstrate primarily through nodal points and chain of equivalences how articulations reproduce, challenges and forms discourses. More importantly, it will give us an understanding of how meaning enter our social field and the world of politics.

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1. Introduction

In 2022, the right-wing party Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) got the majority votes in Italy. The victory meant that Italy would have its most right-winged government since the fascist leader Benito Mussolini (Haglund 2022). For some Italians, economic and political frustration made them reminisce the fascist regime that once ruled (Boati 2022). The right-winged party's victory also led to a lot of scepticism of how it would affect the future of Italy and Europe. Meanwhile, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have been endangering the world's access to food. Enhancing food systems are now one of the main priorities for Europe and many other countries such as Italy (European Commission n.d.). Within the context of creating resilient food systems, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry decided in 2022 to incorporate food sovereignty in their political agenda. However, the term food sovereignty is not defined as one fixed phenomenon. Nowadays, food sovereignty has become contextually shaped by space and time (McMicheal 2014). La Via Campesina who established the term food sovereignty has its roots in the political left with a specific focus on farming families of the North and South (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). According to the discourse theory, no term has a fixed meaning. When the Italian Government is using food sovereignty in their politics, the term is evolving and changing according to its context. Words are given a powerful position by influencing the course of politics. In this case it is relevant to investigate how food sovereignty has developed into two different discourses, inspired by different ideologies. The analytical tool of the two thinkers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe will essentially give us some clarity and understanding of how one term can be given different meanings. By deconstructing the discourses, we will be able to detect the differences between the two and how they overlap.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The term food sovereignty will be examined as being used in two different discourses, with different contextual meanings. Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate and create a more in-depth understanding of how the term food sovereignty is used, originally coined by the international left-winged movement La Via Campesina, and now having an operative and key role in the Italian agri-

food sector. A discourse analysis is appropriate to use as an analytical tool in order to deconstruct the meaning of texts and to create an understanding of how discourses of food sovereignty are made. Hence, this research will address the question:

How can a discourse analysis explain a development of the term food sovereignty, as it is being used by the far-right Italian Government?

1.2 Discourse as a theory

In this research, the main theoretical focus will lie on the concept of discourse. The term discourse is broad and can be applied to many contexts. Language is considered to be structured according to the contexts, which people enact (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002). A discourse is generally defined as a way of talking about something, which also becomes the way of understanding the world (Bergström & Boréus 2012). A discourse analysis on the other hand is analysing structures and how they play out (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). There are different approaches of discourse analysis, and each of them have their own way of understanding the structure of discourses and how they are can be analysed (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). One of the many approaches is discourse analysis according to Laclau and Mouffe, which will be explained more thoroughly in the next section. Discourses are important for research due to several reasons. Through the methods and analysis, we can make sense of identities, cultures, and societal structures. We learn to understand how language change and affect our world and how people communicate in different domains (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Politics can be a fine example of how power of discourses in the form of language can affect institutions, national and international politics. Discourse analysis could also help us to understand how national identities are created (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). This analysis can generate an interesting perspective when researching the nation's relations with other countries, or how national identity is perceived within the country. As mentioned, discourses come with different understanding of the world and how it is constructed. Because of this, it is important to know that each discursive approach have their own theoretical premises, methodology and analytical techniques (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips summarises four key points behind a social constructionist approach, in their work *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. Firstly, there is no objective truth when speaking about knowledge and truth according to this view. The reason is that all knowledge being processed by humans are categorised differently. Our knowledge and representation of the world is therefore subjective. Secondly, we find that humans are products of the history and culture which means that our

identities and perspective of the world differs. There are however patterns related to culture, identities, and knowledge where people maintain a type of social world according to these patterns. An important point to make is that this world does not have a fixed essence that is predetermined (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Thirdly we have the idea that social interactions are part of maintaining and constructing discourses that are part of our understanding of the world. As mentioned, the discourse theory is broad with many different frameworks. Lastly, we have the relation between discourses and social actions where these social constructions normalise certain social actions while others are perceived as deviant (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002).

This research will base its theory and analysis on the poststructuralist theory, which is part of the broader social constructionist approach. The aim of this research is to analyse how structure of language organises and govern our reality, thus influencing key actors within politics, according to the poststructuralist perspective (Bergström & Boréus 2012). These linguistic structures are unfixed and inconsistent, which makes them flexible. The meanings in our language are believed to be formed and constantly reconstructed through social and institutional processes rather than having a fixed essence (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002).

1.2.1 Discourse analysis according to Laclau and Mouffe

There are many influential theorists when discussing discourse analysis (Bergström & Boréus 2012). As mentioned, this research will be using a poststructuralist framework, focusing on linguistic analysis. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are often considered to be key theorists within poststructuralism (Bergström & Boréus 2012). Laclau and Mouffe focus on the linguistic aspect of the poststructuralist theory and believe that our social world is part of the broader discourse analysis. In their main work *Hegemony and Socialist strategy* (2001), they argue that linguistic content and structure is constantly changing. A central part of their belief is that discourses govern all meaning in our world, and that these meanings are neither stable nor fixed (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Consequently, discourses must be understood critically and contextually (Bergström & Boréus 2012). The meaning of discourse will always be in negotiation, and the fixation of the discourse will never be static. It is important to acknowledge that Laclau and Mouffe's work does not provide concrete tools for analysing texts, rather it provides an important theoretical foundation to understand linguistic structures. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis is inspired by the Marxist and structuralist viewpoint. The fusion of both perspectives creates a poststructuralist understanding of how our social world is constituted through these linguistic structures. To understand the world of discourse according to Laclau and Mouffe, we need to clarify their theoretical concepts. First, we need to picture these structures as being part of a

web. The web contains so called *signs* that hold certain positions, and the signs are given a meaning through their different positional relation with each other. When signs in a system of web gets a determined meaning through their position, they become what Laclau and Mouffe call *moments* (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). The signs become organised, meaningful, and eventually become a part of a discourse (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). They are often being perceived as being fixed and natural through the practice of *articulation* or discourse, according to Laclau and Mouffe (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). The act of articulating is also referred to as the way we speak about something or the way of explaining things. When a discourse is given a meaning, there is an interchange of connected ideas and words, which makes up an understanding of a particular concept, subject, etc. Many discourses also have central concepts that are related to them. For example, democracy is a central term when discussing political discourses (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Laclau and Mouffe's terminology for this central concept is called a *nodal point*, which creates a totality or a whole, and together it determines a meaning which excludes other potential meanings within that discourse. Outside the discourse there is a world full of endless possibility to create meaning. This world is called the *field of discursivity* (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). It is a world of instability, where meanings are struggling to become part of a more unified entity, a discourse. This means that discourses are always threatened to lose its unity of a fixed meaning. The cause of threat to a discourse is called *elements* with a characteristic of multiple meanings, which can disrupt this stability and totality of a discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). There is also another theoretical name for elements that have not been ascribed a particular meaning, and the term is *floating signifier* (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). An example of a floating signifier can once again be democracy, as it can have very different meanings in different political contexts.

To recapitulate Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical concepts, the goal of discourses is to get rid of unstable and ambiguous meanings by transforming elements into moments. However, this cannot be fully achieved because the field of discursivity will always be there to possibly disrupt any fixed meanings. It is through the act of articulation, either written or verbal, and social action, that a discourse can be challenged or temporarily fixated (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Now that we understand how the different theoretical components relate to each other, we can start to figure out how articulations reproduce, challenge or forms a discourse. Perhaps elements within the field of discursivity are redefining an already existing discourse by replacing its moments? To answer this, we need to find the nodal points to the related discourse we are investigating. The nodal points are not like other signs, instead they have a "privileged status" in comparison to other signs that exists in the discourse (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002, p.30). As we identify the nodal points, we can also try to compare how the exact same signs are defined in other

discourses. We might identify some signs as a floating signifier and signs that are potentially struggling to create meaning between competing discourses. We may also ask, in contrast to a floating signifier, what signs have a somewhat fixed meaning and can be identified as a moment?

1.2.2 Laclau and Mouffe's theory of the social

The processes of discourses that was explained above are all part of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of the social world. Altogether they structure the world of meaning and the social field. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is generated through a critical analysis of the Marxist theory, more specifically the historical materialism (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). The historical materialism according to Karl Marx, distinguishes the economy, production forces and materials as the base, while all other aspects of society such as institutions, culture, and media is related to the superstructure. One of the controversies that is raised within Marxist theory is the idea of the base or the economy determining the superstructure. The superstructure is also referred to as our consciousness, according to Marx. He explains how people within the capitalist system live under a "false consciousness", determined by the economic conditions (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002, p.30). He further explains how people struggle to see through the ideology and finding their true interests beyond the capitalist system, due to the system being naturalised (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Now, the argument that the economy determines the superstructure has raised questions by many, one of them being Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci believed that economic conditions could not alone be the reason for controlling the superstructure. Instead, he introduced *hegemony* as an alternative way of explaining that people's consciousness is determined by processes within the superstructure (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Hegemonic process within the superstructure creates meaning that are not as rigid, allowing people to resist existing conditions. What specifically inspired Laclau and Mouffe's was the creation of meaning. However, in contrast to both Marxist theory and Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe discards the idea of objectivism and the division of groups within society. Instead, they believe that discursive processes create the whole social field, including the base and the superstructure (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). Laclau and Mouffe takes it a bit further to highlight the importance of political processes when discussing discursive processes (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). They believe that politics should be understood as something broader, and that our behaviour and language are all part of organising society (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). The different views of organising society can also be understood as discourses competing with each other. These contesting discourses are believed to be dismantled and dissolved through the process of *hegemonic interventions*, where one of the discourses overpowers the other discourse (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the process of hegemonic intervention and the "objective truth", are

important aspects for understanding the fixation of elements into moments and the deconstruction of them (Laclau & Mouffe 2001).

1.2.3 Empirical use of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis

Just as Jorgensen and Phillips have argued, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis can be difficult to apply on empirical material because they do not provide concrete analytical tools (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). However, their theory development can still be fruitful for determining how food sovereignty discourses are being established by using their theoretical concepts. It will simultaneously give us an understanding of how the different articulation of food sovereignty organises the social and political field. To carry out this analysis it is important to understand that signs are always given their meaning through the relation with other signs (ibid). These connections can be referred to as *chain of equivalence* (ibid). For example, democracy can be combined with other meanings such as equality and elections, which then demonstrates the chain of equivalence. Democracy can also stand in opposition to other meanings, such as dictatorship or tyranny. However, just like Laclau and Mouffe describes, no discourses are fixated to a meaning. This would make democracy a floating signifier, which can be challenged by other discourses (ibid). The relevance of this analysis is the understanding of how discourses can affect our social field, and whether there is any antagonism between discourses.

1.2.4 Discourse analysis and its criticism

Discourse analysis has been criticised for the central belief that the world is constructed through language and that everything is relative (Bergström & Boréus 2012). If we base our understanding of the world on the idea of relativity, that nothing is static, that there is no truth, then what does that leave us with? How we perceive the existence of discourses must be evidence of a stronger stability or regularity than the theory suggests. Moreover, the discourse analysis fails to bring further attention to the individual or the subject, being part of constructing and reproducing discourses (ibid). Discourse analysis is part of the hermeneutic tradition which argues that meaning is a matter of interpretation (ibid). There is an important aspect of the subjective interpretation of meaning that is missing when reading about discourse theory and analysis. Another challenging aspect is Laclau and Mouffe's theory on discourse analysis and the practical implementation of it. As mentioned earlier, the abstract characteristics of the theoretical concepts can be difficult to use as a concrete analytical tool. Their theory on discourse requires

readers to enter an imaginary world full of new complex theoretical terms. Laclau and Mouffe's work on discourse requires a careful reading to fully understand their reasoning behind the discursive structures. This is once again a matter of subjective interpretation and how we understand articulations.

2. Methodology

The choice of method is a qualitative method, more specifically a text analysis within the framework of a discourse analysis. The justification of using this method is based on the idea of developing an understanding of food sovereignty as a discourse within different contexts. Hence, it is a way of understanding both the origin of the term food sovereignty from La Via Campesina, and the new take on the term by the Italian Government. The material that is appropriate and relevant to use for analysis are documents and policy statements published by the Italian Government. The Prime Minister Meloni talks about food sovereignty and the implementation of the term in their politics during a conference which makes her speech a concrete and direct source of material, thus appropriate for analytical means. This research will also use complementary literature gathered from databases and other search tools such as “Web of Science”, “Scopus” and “Google Scholar”, all offered by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Moreover, the literature used in this research will provide material for the background history of La Via Campesina, the theoretical framework, and other valuable information. La Via Campesina has also published several reports and articles of their history, visions, and missions, which will be used in this study. The material all together will set the ground for answering the research question in relation to the discourse theory. The term that will be operationalised is food sovereignty, which then will be analysed more in-depth. The qualitative method that is used when processing the material is highly interpretative, which makes it an interpretation with a hermeneutic character (Szklański 2002). As mentioned earlier, the meaning is a matter of interpretation according to the hermeneutic tradition (Bergström & Boréus 2012). For that reason, a text analysis can lead to several different interpretations. Due to the scope of this research, it has been necessary to narrow down the food sovereignty discourses to only two.

Discourse theory is also a term that can be defined and explained in diverse ways (Bergström & Boreus). That is why it is important to be transparent on which perspective and definition the analysis will be based on. To process the data in a way which aligns with the purpose of this research, it is relevant to use Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis for the literature and the empirical data. However, some of the empirical data have been in Italian, which then have been translated to

English by the Cambridge dictionary tool. After living in Italy for half a year and studying Italian on an intermediate level, it is still not sufficient to analyse the empirical data without any help from dictionaries. This causes further implications which is important to be aware of. Translating to another language may or may not lead to changes in meanings or misinterpretations. Nevertheless, the analysis of the translated material can lead to an interesting discussion regarding meaning and interpretation of different terms and words, which should not be rejected or devalued. Moreover, to avoid any biases this research will be looking at the original source primarily, to avoid any secondary influence on the material.

Another important aspect that has been taken into consideration is being aware of how things are being defined. When referring to different ideologies or using terms like sustainability, it is important to clarify its definition, since there are many definitions and ways of describing sustainability. The context is once again becoming a central part of this study. Using the right sources is a challenge and can also be questionable because there might not be any “right” source, however maybe a more applicable and relevant source for the context. Since this research is focusing on a discursive perspective, the main objective is not taking a particular standpoint or letting subjective opinions affect the investigation. The main point is to investigate the research question, and how the term food sovereignty is understood and used by the Italian Government. The discourse theory is the lens for this research. My subjective opinions regarding the ideologies presented will hopefully not influence the outcome of this research. The purpose is only the will of gaining more understanding of the term food sovereignty. On that note, it is also important to be aware of the role as researcher in relation to this study. The choices of empirical data and interpretation of the material will undoubtedly affect the outcome of the results. The text analysis will detect specific words that are interpreted as being part of creating the different discourses. The aim is to explain and be transparent when presenting the analysis using primarily nodal points and chain of equivalences, hopefully making this research more credible by doing so.

Another approach in terms of methodology would be to do a case study that focuses on a discourse analysis within one specific context only. It would enable an interesting in-depth analysis of the Italian food sovereignty discourse exclusively. A case study as an alternative method could still examine the development of the term food sovereignty, however it would narrow it down into one context only (Robson & McCartan 2016). This research aims at understanding the similarities and differences between the two discourses. Thus, a case study would not generate the same results or a comparison analysis. However, a case study would be appropriate to combine with other research with related topics, to create general understanding of the subject.

3. Literature review

3.1 The concept of food sovereignty within La Via Campesina

As mentioned in the introduction, food sovereignty is not defined as one constant and static phenomenon. It comes in different forms and is shaped by the context (McMicheal 2014). To understand the term food sovereignty, it is crucial to trace it back to its origins. The term emerged due to the effects of globalisation and the influence of capitalism on agriculture. Smallholders and agricultural labourers with lower social status, also referred to “peasants”, have for a long time fought for their rights as a result of the dominating capitalist and neoliberal paradigm (Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010). The economic and agricultural models have been causing struggles for peasant’s social emancipation and their right to access food and land. La Via Campesina have linked the global food, energy, and climate crises together, all representing the dysfunctions of the neoliberal doctrine (Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010). The struggles have been concerning these local families and communities, but also the role of the state in terms of social justice, equality, and democracy. The expansion of the areas of cultivation is now experiencing a decline of peasant population worldwide, when comparing it to the development of urban areas (Herrera & Lau 2015). Land areas are nowadays cultivated to a greater extent by enterprises that are involved with international production of goods and services, where many countries in the South do not get to benefit from the agricultural production. These big enterprises and agribusinesses get their profit out of exploitation of the poor (Herrera & Lau 2015).

In April 1993, La Via Campesina or “The International Peasant’s Movement”, was founded during a conference that was held in Mons, Belgium (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). According to La Via Campesina, the representatives gathering in Mons were both women and men, and a mix of small-scale farmers, indigenous people, and farm workers from all over the world (ibid). The representatives of the conference that was held in Mons were aware of the political shift that was happening in the world, a change from nationally controlled economies to a more

market-driven global economy. La Via Campesina argues that further impact of neoliberalism would make national governments continue to tear down agrarian structures (ibid). Neoliberalism would also be a threat to the structures that promote national food security, agro-ecological driven production, and the well-being of small-scale farmers (ibid). The importance of the conference was that leaders were not turning a blind eye to the challenges that farming families were facing (ibid). To solve a problem, the problem needs to be detected and articulated. That was the case of the conference in Mons, which also united different farmers all over the world. Thus, the common grounds that the different farmers in North and South were sharing were the negative effects of free trade agreements, industrialisation and liberalisation of agricultural structures and programs (ibid). These structural changes were causing challenges such as restructuring of agriculture, destruction of biodiversity and further degradation of environment (ibid).

In present times, La Via Campesina is characterised as an international resistance-movement, mobilisation, and a coalition of around 148 organisations coordinating food producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous people worldwide (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). The organisation is advocating small scale family farming based on sustainable agriculture, which they mainly refer to as agriculture that promotes social justice and dignity (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). Furthermore, they also coined the term food sovereignty and presented it to the public during the World Food Summit in 1996 (Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010). The term originates more specifically from the agroecological movement and is defined by La Via Campesina as: “*the people’s right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologic and sustainable methods, with the right to define their own food and agricultural systems.*” (Via Campesina 2021, p.2).

The reclaiming of power, which is stated in the definition of food sovereignty, is aiming at putting power back into the hands of the local people who produce, consume, and distribute food, rather than with the large transnational corporations. Food sovereignty also consist of six pillars which recognises food as a right and highlights the vital relationship between social and environmental aspects. The pillars of Food Sovereignty according to La Via Campesina are:

1. *Focus on Food for people*
2. *Value Food Providers*
3. *Localise Food systems*
4. *Putting Control Locally*
5. *Build Knowledge and Skills*
6. *Work with Nature*

(Anderson 2018)

As stated in the pillars, the movement is envisioning a different world where food is a basic human right. They also believe that food production should be based on small-scale farming systems, integrating local resources, and adjusting to a domestic market. The concept of food sovereignty is a way of transforming farming systems into coexisting with social, ecological, and economic principles (Martinez-Torres & Rosset 2010).

La Via Campesina have for a long time associated the global food crises with private corporations, international institutions, and national governments (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). To find a way out of the crises, these institutions, corporations, and governments would have to change away from the neoliberal policies that encourage global food systems to be technologically driven and market based, while simultaneously harming the environment (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). La Via Campesina do not fear radical changes and solutions. They have been characterised as being both visionary and fearless by changing and shifting discourses (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). More concretely, their courage led them to introduce and advocate a new term called “food sovereignty” during the World Food Summits in 1996 (Martinez-Torres & Rosset 2010). It was time for a revolution in terms of food systems, a new way of thinking which would give the power over production and distribution back into the hands of people, rather than with market driven corporations and institutions (Martinez-Torres & Rosset 2010). La Via Campesina is inspired and constituted by locally based rural movements. Within each territory, national and local organisations cooperate, mobilise, and participate in democratic decision-making, in order to promote food sovereignty (Martinez-Torres & Rosset 2010). La Via Campesina believes in supporting a bottom-up structure through regional coordination, consultation, and communication. Their work is highly based on the vision of inclusivity and working against neoliberalistic structures. The movement strongly believes in social cohesion and solidarity. They argue that consensus-building are key instruments in on-going struggles (Martinez-Torres & Rosset 2010).

3.2 La Via Campesina on green economies

La Via Campesina have strategically chosen to reject any “false solutions” regarding market-based green economies proposed by several NGOs, UN Committee for World Food Security, and other human right’s organisation (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013). These “false solutions” are seen as being market-based, instead of primarily focusing on solving the climate- and food crises. La Via Campesina demands a complete realisation of the need of a systematic change. A change of the current food regime would require more radical and progressive

ways. By building international and national alliances with other radical movements and NGOs, La Via Campesina have succeeded in establishing a global civil society movement (ibid). They believe that the logic of neoliberalism recognises food and agriculture as a profit-making business. To break free from this order and transform society in radical ways, La Via Campesina propose a complete adaptation of the food sovereignty framework (ibid). Over the past two decades they have succeeded with a lot of changes in terms of promoting debates on agriculture and food. The debates have been focusing on putting power and control back at the hands of farmers instead of agro industries. Moreover, they have succeeded with banning GMO crops and highlighting the importance of women's and youth's participation and representation in agriculture. These topics have all been important aspects when proposing new policies for food production, consumption, and distribution, within the framework of food sovereignty (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013).

3.3 La via Campesina on World Trade Organisation

According to La Via Campesina, there should be available and accessible enough quantities of healthy and safe food (La Via Campesina 2003). However, this is not a reality for many countries in the world. La Via Campesina argues that one of the main challenges with liberal global markets and policies is securing food for the world's population. Countries and institutions such as the United States, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the European Union (EU) have been prioritising export-oriented production, hence resulting in an increase of global hunger and malnutrition (ibid). Once again, La Via Campesina is determined that the global neoliberal regime must change if we want to see improvements in the world. They have openly spoken against the WTO, and how the institution itself and their free trade policies should be dismantled (ibid). La Via Campesina wants to promote policies and practices which provides people with healthy, safe, and ecologically sustainable production (ibid). They claim that market policies should abolish any unsustainable agriculture, production subsidies and unsustainable fishing practices. A lot of societal benefits would also come from a domestic agricultural production (La Via Campesina 2003).

Their concept of food sovereignty is threatened by harmful technologies and any use of hormones and antibiotics, which would decrease the nutritional value of food (La Via Campesina 2003). To prevent this, La Via Campesina proposes the implementation of a food quality criterion with regards to the needs and preferences of the people. The quality of food should be nationally controlled making sure that they are sustainable in accordance with social, health and environmental quality

standards. These national mechanisms should be performed by governmental bodies without involving any private corporations (ibid). Furthermore, La Via Campesina wants to enforce and recognise local communities by giving them rights and access to productive resources. They also dismiss any type of system that would want to reinforce any privatisation of public resources (ibid). One thing they are clearly against is genetically modified organisms (GMOs). They want to see a ban of the production of genetically modified food, animal feeds and other seeds. Instead of promoting methods of GMOs, they want agricultural systems to be based on alternative agriculture and organic farming (ibid). They believe that people should learn from indigenous people's knowledge on sustainable and resilient agricultural methods (ibid). Finally, labelling should be transparent and accurate instead of causing any misinformation about the food's content and its origins. Companies should be monitored and regulated to create transparency and accountability, according to the standards of sustainability (ibid).

3.4 The concept of food sovereignty in Italy

The fact that food sovereignty has its roots from a radical left movement, does not stop the Italian Government from using it. The political right in Italy has gained more popularity over the years and the Italian people recently elected its new government represented by the "Brothers of Italy" ("Fratelli d'Italia"). The party is described as a national conservative right-wing party led by the prime minister Giorgia Meloni. The election in 2022 quickly gained media attention, and the spotlight was mainly on the formed coalition as being the most right-winged Italian Government since World War II (Haglund 2022). The same year they were elected, the Italian Government decided on a reorganisation of the different ministries. The "Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policy" was changed to the "Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests", which clearly illustrates an implementation of the term food sovereignty, without any acknowledgement of La Via Campesina (Italian Government 2022). Prime Minister Meloni also stated that the issue of food sovereignty is among their highest priorities (Italian Government 2022).

In addition to this reorganisation of the ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the "Ministry of Business and Made in Italy". The Government's "Made in Italy" merchandise mark, is an indication of a product being manufactured, planned, and packed in Italy (Italian Government 2022). The labelling "Made in Italy" has a holistic purpose by branding fashion, food, mechanical engineering, and furniture (Confagricultura 2022). The agri-food sector has a great role in both the promotion and production of "Made in Italy" (Confagricultura 2022). Giorgia Meloni and her government is putting their food

promotion at the heart of their politics. Food has become an important symbol, cultural heritage, and identity in Italy (Coldiretti n.d.).

There is also an organisation named Confagricultura, which protects and represents agricultural enterprises in Italy, innovation, sustainability of agricultural practices and the competition of companies on domestic and international markets (Confagricultura n.d.). The organisation is also committed to promote protection and growth of the labelling “Made in Italy” (Bechi 2023). In an interview with Confagricultura, the current Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry Francesco Lollobrigida stated the important connection between food sovereignty and “Made in Italy”, explaining that the agri-food has a strong territorial and cultural identity in Italy (Bechi 2021). Lollobrigida and the government have described the Italian food as “excellence”. For that reason, the government wants to enhance the work of agriculture and agri-food systems through support and protection (Bechi 2023). Moreover, Lollobrigida clearly opposes artificial food by saying: *“our country will be at the forefront to defend natural food, which is one of the strengths of ‘Made in Italy’”* (Bechi 2023).

In 2017, a system of nutritional rating was selected by the French Government and has been promoted by the World Health Organisation, European Union, and European Commission (WHO 2021). The implementation of Nutri-Score has been controversial in a few countries in Europe, Italy being one of them. In August 2022, the Italian Competition Authority (AGCM) published their decision of opposing the nutritional rating system and that Italy should withdraw from the system. The role of AGCM is to enforce laws against any conflicts of interest for the government and to promote Italian and European consumer protection laws (AGCM n.d.). According to the authority, the rating system is seen as threat to the Italian market, government, and the people. The AGCM believes that the system will mislead consumers to assess the healthiness of products without taking other aspects into account such as the individual need, lifestyle, and dietary requirements (AGCM 2021).

4. Food sovereignty as understood in different contexts

4.1 Food Sovereignty according to La Via Campesina

When looking at La Via Campesina's six pillars of what food sovereignty means to them, it highlights central aspects of their definition of food sovereignty and its objectives. They envision a world where there is "food for people", that food is accessible and a human right (Anderson 2018). By emphasising "localised food systems" and "a local control", they want agriculture to be based on a small-scale production, adapted to domestic markets (ibid). However, sustainable agricultural methods must "work with nature" while promoting social security and justice. They do not believe that GMO is working with nature, instead they want to promote organic farming (ibid). We should also "build our knowledge and skills" and learn from indigenous people who have been able to produce sustainable and resilient agricultural practices, which we are highly in need of in times of climate changes (ibid).

The history behind establishing the term food sovereignty is highly connected with the rights of peasant population all over the world (Herrera & Lau 2015). La Via Campesina describes peasants as smallholders and agricultural labourers with lower social status. By using the word peasants, they shed a light on a marginalised group that for a long time has been "swept under the rug". In other words, they want to "value our food providers", in particular small-scale farmers and agricultural workers (Anderson 2018). Moreover, their work is based on inclusivity of all genders, small-scale farmers, and indigenous people (Herrera & Lau 2015). La Via Campesina believes that the struggles of these groups are a result of the dysfunctions of neoliberal economic models, policies, free trade agreements and the capitalist paradigm. The use of food sovereignty is a way of resisting market-driven economy that tears down important agrarian structures. As mentioned previously, food sovereignty is a way out of this paradigm, by creating democratic decision-making structures and methods based on solidarity and consensus. To summarise in short, La Via Campesina's definition of food sovereignty covers

primarily environmental and social dimensions of sustainability, where the economic dimension is adjusted to reinforce the other two.

4.2 The Confagricultura General meeting 2022

4.2.1 The agri-sector as a system of protection

On 15th of December 2022, the Italian Government presented a video message of the Prime minister Giorgia Meloni for The General Confederation of Italian Agriculture (Confagricoltura General meeting). In the meeting she greeted President of General Confederation of Italian agriculture, ministers, representatives of economic categories, institutional representatives, and all delegates present (Italian Government 2022). Meloni starts by emphasising the importance of agri-food sector and that it is the heart of the Government's work. She argues that the government want to see the industry of the agri-food sector as a *“system of protection and growth for all the skills, high quality products and values that can be found in their nation's traditions, work methods and rural areas”* (Italian Government 2022). She states that all those qualities mentioned above make the so-called 'Made in Italy' agri-food industry a strategic asset for Italy's economy and a distinguishing feature of their skills and expertise, making them stand out internationally (Italian Government 2022).

4.2.2 The boost of economy, social security, and productivity

During the conference, Meloni also discusses the government's choice of change of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forest Policies to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. She says:

“Ours was not a symbolic decision; it was a substantive decision, as this Government has set itself a dual mission; on the one hand, we want to defend a nation's right to choose its own food and production model as an alternative to the global standardisation of products and synthetic food; and, on the other, we have the duty to protect consumers, ensuring quality food is available to everyone. This is precisely the direction we took when writing the budget law.” (Italian Government 2022).

Economically, the government have implemented a fund of 100 million euros towards food sovereignty. This budget will enhance the nation's supply of agricultural materials while reinforcing the supply chain (Italian Government).

According to Meloni, producers within agriculture and the food industry in Italy have been able to show their resilience during the economic crises with high energy bills and inflation (ibid). However, she still believes that people within this sector needs more support, “*they must not be abandoned; they must be supported*” (Italian Government 2022). Meloni also highlights the challenge of modernisation connected to increases of greenhouse emissions. However, she believes that technology and productivity can still be managed in a sustainable way. Hence, the Government is implementing taxation and addressing the problem of sustainability while supporting companies at the same time. As Meloni stated:

“...there has always been the need for tradition to go hand in hand with modernity. In this regard, we have focused our efforts and created a EUR 225 million fund to support technological innovation in processes, thereby boosting productivity, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. We also support generational change in agriculture, providing under-40s with the possibility to start their own agricultural business without having to pay any social security contributions for the first 24 months.” (Italian Government 2022)

The Government is committed to provide social security and support farmers by guaranteeing aid in rural areas and supporting businesses in local areas (Italian Government 2022). Meloni continues to highlight social sustainability within the agricultural sector, wanting to ensure that working conditions are improved and respected while eliminating any exploitation of labour (ibid). Moreover, the Government want the Italian agri-food sector to support sustainability while candidly opposing any food standardisation, imitation of their top-quality products, and any misleading labelling systems which could damage their ‘Made in Italy’. The damaging source that Meloni is referring to is first and foremost the project of Nutri-Score which was introduced by the European Union (ibid). The Italian Government is not supportive of the Nutri-Score, and it will be carefully monitored by them (ibid). On the other hand, the Italian Government will be maintaining constant dialogue with the EU to make sure that they seize the best opportunities that will support their agricultural sector, especially in the more disadvantaged areas in Italy, through investments and technology (ibid). She explains:

“I am thinking, for example, of the mechanisation and upgrade of agricultural machinery, in relation to which we want to combine modernising the existing fleet with protecting national industry. Likewise, we believe it is important to work at EU level to revise the reduction of crop protection products, in order to prevent the possibility of paradoxically having to resort to supplies from nations that do not respect the same rules we do.” (Italian Government 2022)

Here Meloni is referring to the technological efficiency and boost of productivity within the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, the Government want to create tools that

can provide consumers with transparency of what they are consuming and purchasing. The reason for this is to make sure that Italy is in the forefront of providing and defending natural food, which will be one of their strengths in their label “Made in Italy” (Italian Government 2022). The point is to get rid of artificial food, which otherwise would risk to “break the age-old link between the agri-food chain and products intended for consumption” (ibid).

Meloni states that the Government will implement a resilience plan which will align with the sector’s needs, through “The National Recovery and resilience Plan” (Italian Government 2022). The aim is to work with the structural problems affecting the agricultural sector, which are connected to climate changes causing droughts that are becoming more frequent. Meloni discussed how some of the sustainable objectives will be approached by promoting proper water regulation combined with sustainable management of forests and rural areas, which will allow the country to efficiently respond to hydrogeological instability (ibid).

4.3 An analysis of the two different discourses

This chapter contains a discourse analysis of La Via Campesina and the Italian government food policy, and their respective definitions of Food Sovereignty. The analysis will be using Laclau and Mouffe’s theory on discourse and their analytical tools on selected documents from La Via Campesina and the Italian Government. It will be an analysis on how signs create meaning and how they build chain of equivalences.

4.3.1 Analysis of food sovereignty according to La Via Campesina

The selected citations that will be investigated are composed by different authors, who have published articles and reports regarding food sovereignty within the frame of La Via Campesina. The first extraction is La Via Campesina’s definition of food sovereignty, and they define it as:

*“people’s **right** to **healthy** and **culturally appropriate** food produced by **ecological** and **sustainable** methods, with the right to **defend** their own food and agricultural systems” (Via Campesina 2021, p.2).*

By dismantling the definition, we find that the signs that creates a chain of equivalence are 'right', 'healthy', 'culturally appropriate', 'ecological', 'sustainable' and 'defend'. As we can see, all these signs are referring and connected to the word 'food', which naturally makes food a nodal point. As explained earlier, a nodal point is a privileged sign, connecting other signs where they acquire their meaning according to that privileged sign. In this case food should be considered healthy and culturally appropriate and sustainable. Food is also something that is not to be negotiated, it is a right and that right should be defended according to La Via Campesina. Furthermore, we can see that the nodal point food can be found in La Via Campesina's six pillars of food sovereignty. The pillars states: Focus on food for people, value food providers, localise food systems, putting control locally, build knowledge and skills and work with nature. Here the chain of equivalence on food is primarily connected to the first three pillars: **food for people, value food providers and localise food systems**. Food for people is referring to the non-negotiable right of food, and that farmers and local food systems should be defended. This shows the central aspect of La Via Campesina's definition of food sovereignty, that it is the people's right to define their own agricultural and food policies. Regarding the definition of "people", La Via Campesina states in their Bangalore Declaration that they refer to:

*"We, the Via Campesina, a global movement of **rural women, peasant and small-scale farmers, agriculture workers and indigenous peoples' organisations**, from all over the world (Asia, Europe, The Americas and Africa) have gathered near Bagalore, India in the 3rd International Assembly to confirm our determination to defend our cultures and our rights." (Via campesina, 2000)*

In this extraction, the word 'people' becomes a nodal point and 'rural women', 'peasant', 'small-scale farmers', 'agriculture workers' and 'indigenous peoples' organisations' creates a chain of equivalence. La Via Campesina essentially wants to represent the ones that are not defended in the world's food and agricultural policies. Now that we understand the context of the organisation's work and their vision, we can challenge the nodal point 'people' and use Laclau and Mouffe's concept of a floating signifier. As mentioned earlier, a floating signifier can have different meanings in different contexts, which would make 'people' a floating signifier. This means that other discourses could challenge La Via Campesina's definition of people within the discourse of food sovereignty. Even though La Via Campesina defines 'people' in several documents, the term in itself is still open to be contested. The articulation can be different depending on the political interest. La Via Campesina also have a broad way of defining the people they defend and represent, which makes it less concrete. The signifier can easily develop over time and absorb different meanings, affecting the course of the discourse.

Interestingly, the literature also demonstrates how La Via Campesina defines the opposition of food sovereignty. In other words, food sovereignty is something that cannot be pursued within the context of neoliberalism and capitalism. It is therefore relevant for this analysis to find out how they are presenting the problem of neoliberalism and capitalism.

*“Very early on la Via Campesina began forming alliances with other progressive forces in efforts to mobilise a global civil society movement to challenge **neoliberal capitalism**.” (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013)*

Moreover, La Via Campesina clearly states how they want to resist the modern industrial and neoliberal ways of food and agricultural production (Desmarais 2008). The literature states that rural areas have in recent decades changed and adapted to the global market through **privatisation, trade liberalisation, size rationalisation, price and import controls, land reform** laws and ownership, which naturally have affected small and medium-scale farmers. They describe these political changes as being devastating to the farmers whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. La Via Campesina also believes that neoliberalism has contributed to major losses of biodiversity, cultural diversity, environmental degradation, increased food insecurity and inequality (Desmarais 2018). Here we can detect that ‘neoliberal capitalism’ is the nodal point, and ‘privatisation’, ‘trade liberalisation’, ‘rationalisation’, ‘price and import controls’ and ‘land reforms’ makes the chain of equivalence. This is a central part of understanding why the food sovereignty discourse have come to develop over these years, and how the discourse will enter and change the social field. They believe in rejecting the neoliberal model and to challenge the capitalist system.

The literature also presents two contesting discourses, food sovereignty and neoliberalism. According to Laclau and Mouffe, contesting discourse are believed to be dissolved through the process of hegemonic interventions (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002). In this case one could argue that there is struggle going on between the neoliberal capitalist discourse and food sovereignty. Laclau and Mouffe believe that society is in constant change where discourses such as capitalism appears to be fixated. La Via Campesina are therefore challenging current agricultural policies and models by creating new articulations. In other words, they are undermining the naturally perceived system of capitalism with the purpose of advocating small-scale farming, sustainable agriculture, social justice, and social dignity (Desmarais & Nicholson 2013).

4.3.2 Analysis of food sovereignty according to the Italian government

Starting off by analysing the Confagricultura meeting, the aim has been to find how Meloni and her government have been articulating food sovereignty as their framework for the agri-food sector. The term food sovereignty is broad, covering various aspects in the agri-food sector in Italy. During the conference Meloni states the value of the agri-food sector for the nation and consumers. Moreover, Meloni explains the Government's decision of changing the name of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry:

*“The **agri-food sector** is at the heart of this Government's work, and we want to see this industry as a **system of protection** and **growth** for all the skills, high quality products and values that can be found in our nation's traditions, working methods and rural areas” (Italian Government 2022).*

*“Ours was not a symbolic decision; it was a substantive decision, as this Government has set itself a dual mission; on the one hand, we want to **defend a nation's right** to choose its own food and production model as an alternative to the global standardisation of products and synthetic food; and, on the other, we have the duty to **protect consumers, ensuring quality food** is available to everyone. This is precisely the direction we took when writing the budget law.” (Italian Government 2022).*

Here Meloni ascribes the agri-sector meanings, which makes 'agri-sector' a nodal point. She explains that the Government wants to see the agri-sector as a 'system of protection' and 'a system of growth', which would make these two a chain of equivalence. The Government does not explain what they specifically mean with food sovereignty, instead they attempt to defend food sovereignty by explaining the purpose of the agri-food sector. This is not only the process of articulating a food sovereignty discourse, but also the deconstruction of La Via Campesina's original definition, by inserting the meaning of system of protection and system of growth within the new food sovereignty discourse. The nodal point of agri-food sector also creates another chain of equivalence of 'defending the nation's right', 'protecting consumers' and 'ensuring quality food for everyone'. This chain of equivalence is referring to protecting the interests of the nation, specifically the agri-food sector. One important aspect to analyse is the Government's definition of nation, when speaking about defending the nation. 'Nation' can be ascribed several meanings depending on the context and interest. Therefore, the meaning of 'nation' becomes a floating signifier since there is no clear definition of which groups or institutions are represented within that term. Is it the Government's, the farmers' or the consumers' interests that are being protected or defended here? On the other hand, this floating signifier could be a tool

for the Government to use the food sovereignty discourse more broadly in their food and production models. It could also challenge La Via Campesina's discourse and overpower it through the process of hegemonic intervention. It could be a strategic move by the Italian Government by moving the food sovereignty discourse in a particular direction.

During the conference Meloni speaks about the ways of supporting the agri-food sector. She states that:

*“Producers in the agriculture and food industry have proven their ability to deal with the effects of economic crises, the burden of high energy bills and inflation, but nevertheless they must not be abandoned; **they must be supported.**”*

*“..we have focused our efforts and created a EUR 225 million fund to **support technological innovation...thereby boosting productivity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability**” (Italian Government 2022)*

In this extraction, ‘support’ clearly becomes a nodal point by serving different types of function. Firstly, Meloni refers to a support system for the producers within the agri-food sector. Then she speaks about supporting technological innovations, boosting productivity and competitiveness, and lastly supporting environmental sustainability. The signs creating a chain of equivalence are ‘producers’, ‘technological innovation’, ‘productivity’, ‘competitiveness’, and ‘environmental sustainability’. After reviewing La Via Campesina's definition of food sovereignty we find that modern technology, increasing productivity and competitiveness can be contradicting factors for sustainability. However, the Italian Government have chosen to use technical innovation, productivity, and competitiveness to reach sustainable outcomes. Here we can connect it back to Laclau and Mouffe's concept of elements and floating signifiers. Elements have the characteristics of multiple meanings, just like ‘technology’, ‘productivity’ and ‘competitiveness’ have in the two different discourses. As soon as the elements have invested in creating a meaning in a particular discourse, they transform from being an empty element into becoming a floating signifier. Floating signifiers are then articulated differently in different discourses, just like ‘technology’, ‘productivity’ and ‘competitiveness’ within the food sovereignty discourses.

5. Discussion

As presented in the analysis, discourses might be contesting and competing through hegemonic interventions. When a discourse becomes hegemonic, it also becomes naturalised and institutionalised. Interestingly, in this research we have analysed food sovereignty, which happens to have developed different meanings connected to it. What we can clearly distinguish between the two discourses is the different contexts in which they exist in. One is La Via Campesina and their movement, and the other is the implementation of food sovereignty by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. The question that has permeated this study is how a discourse analysis can detect the differences in understanding of the term food sovereignty. By using Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical concepts we can reveal both similarities and differences between the two discourses. As proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, politics can be a battle of meanings and discourses have an important role in constructing these meanings. The theoretical foundation has given us an understanding of how the structuring of discourses can be characterised as either ambiguous or stable, and sometimes both. The field of discursivity illustrates how there is always a possibility to disrupt any meaning that is perceived as being natural or fixed. It is through the act of articulation, that a discourse can either be fixated or challenged. What the Italian Government has essentially done is renaming their Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, and applying food sovereignty in their food and production policies. The initial food sovereignty discourse from La Via Campesina have on the other hand been ascribed a different content. Consequently, the Italian Government has created its own food sovereignty discourse, without compromising their politics. Neither Meloni nor the Italian Government refer to La Via Campesina when speaking about food sovereignty. What we ultimately see is a new Italian take on the concept of food sovereignty.

As Laclau and Mouffe explains, meaning can be seen through nodal points and chain of equivalences. Main differences found in meaning in the Italian discourse, as compared to La Via Campesina was that Meloni recurrently defined food sovereignty as a system of protection that will promote growth, productivity, and high-quality products (Italian Government 2022). The Italian agricultural organisation Confagricoltura has also incorporated protection in their main

objective, which is to protect agricultural enterprises and the labelling “Made in Italy” (Bechi 2023). There is a great influence of the economic perspective, such as promoting enterprises, production, and efficiency. These visions can be a way of becoming self-sufficient in terms of agricultural production. However, these visions do have the tendency to be implemented in ways that are not sustainable according to La Via Campesina. The increasing productivity and competitiveness are what La Via Campesina traces back to the neoliberal and capitalist paradigm. It is also contradicting to the main principles of the “original” food sovereignty discourse. The analysis also demonstrates how La Via Campesina primarily emphasise social and environmental sustainability. Meloni, on the other hand, speaks highly on productivity while maintaining sustainable objectives of environmental, social, and economic (Italian Government 2022). During the Confagricultura meeting, Meloni chooses to mention the environmental aspects, while embracing the economic perspective. The Italian Government’s focus on economics can be interpreted as one of the main differences between the two discourses. Another difference between the two discourses is that La Via Campesina favours food quality control, while the Italian Government have disapproved of the system of nutritional rating named “Nutri-Score”, that was proposed by the European Union. As presented in the analysis, Italy believes in protecting their interests and that the EU should perhaps be more percipient towards their agri-food sector.

Even though the two discourses show differences in their meanings, they also share similarities. La Via Campesina has been working against GMO crops, food, and animal feeds in several countries. The Italian minister Francesco Lollobrigida and his government have also opposed artificial food and defended natural food (Bechi 2023). There is also a similarity between the peasant movement and the Italian Government, which is that food sovereignty is more than just a food and agricultural framework. In Italy, food sovereignty, the agri-food sector and “Made in Italy” have a significant role in creating the national identity. For La Via Campesina it is more about transforming societies. The organisation is now a reference point for many countries as a social movement that seeks radical change. Moreover, both discourses want to promote domestic food and agricultural protection. The reason is to promote production for domestic consumption and contributing to national food security.

By revisiting Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical inputs, we can conclude that both discourses have different chain of equivalences and nodal connections. However, both discourses use resembling chain of equivalences, by using the signs ‘defend’ and ‘protect’. Both La Via Campesina and the Italian Government believe that there are forces and institutions that are trying to work against their political goals. It is a struggle that can be described in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’. La Via Campesina wants to protect food sovereignty and farmers against neoliberalism, WTO, and other institutions, while the Italian Government wants to protect their political interests

and farmers against the European union. The Italian use of food sovereignty, specifically by Meloni and her government, is an instrument of power and a way of opposing the outside world. The discourse analysis has helped us understand Italy's relationship with other countries and how they connect their national identity with food sovereignty. Additionally, the Italian Government seems to be striving towards becoming sovereign in terms of both food production and consumption. In contrast to La Via Campesina's food sovereignty discourse, the Italian Government have not explicitly advocated a bottom-up approach by delegating decision-making power back to the local people.

5.1 Final words

The concept of food sovereignty was born as a countermovement to the "food regime" within the capitalist era, according to La Via Campesina. Food sovereignty is described as a movement, underlying the importance of social equality and the local perspective. The countermovement is seen as a demand for agrarian reform which will benefit all societies sustainably. Over time, the food sovereignty discourse gained power, strength, and essentially different meanings. An increasing number of rural and urban social movements have started to embrace the term as a framework for rural development, agricultural and food policies. It is understood by countries such as Italy and movements like La Via Campesina that food sovereignty is a tool to transform policies and politics. It has been a way for Italy to go against the EU reforms and policies, which are not agreeable to their interests such as the labelling "Made in Italy". It might also be a conscious move by the government when using use a term that has prior symbolic power that could transform the current Italian society towards their own interests.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this research has been to investigate and create a more in-depth understanding of the food sovereignty discourses with the aid of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis. The analysis has shown both similarities and differences in nodal points and chain of equivalences. The analysis has also demonstrated that signs can have an ambiguous character. This instability of meaning can leave room for other contesting discourses to overpower and challenge them through hegemonic interventions. Food sovereignty discourses are evidently in both contexts a tool of power and change, with different purposes and political aims. More importantly, this study has shown how discourses can affect our social field and how meaning is socially constructed, tracing it back to the poststructuralist theory.

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