State narratives and Nature: The struggles of Food Sovereignty and case of the Ecuadorian State

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NATALIA RUBIANO RIVADENEIRA

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit
University College London

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the state’s way governing and framing nature with a particular focus on food production and the emergence of the potentially paradigm-altering notion of food sovereignty as a movement and a response to the global food crisis. It examines how the contemporary state can respond to and incorporate alternative concepts like food sovereignty by focusing on the particular case of Ecuador, where food sovereignty became part of the National Constitution in 2008. It argues that the state can adopt a diversity of roles at different scales and in different contexts, which can often contradict themselves in terms of narratives, ideals and practices. Though new forms of governance and alternative ideas of development have begun to emerge along with concepts like food sovereignty, the traditional model of the state’s natural and agricultural governing still seems to prevail. In the context of capitalist globalisation and following the ability of non-state actors to permeate and influence governance processes, I argue that less consolidated states such as Ecuador face a constant struggle between business-as-usual practices promoted by the mainstream and the possibility of implementing transformative ideas; a struggle that translates into a conflict of pluralistic modes of sovereignty and an idea of absolute sovereignty within the state itself.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEPAL – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe)

FPS – Food production systems

FS – Food Sovereignty

FSM – Food Sovereignty Movement

GATT – General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade

GHG – Greenhouse Gas

GR – Green Revolution

GMOs – Genetically Modified Organisms

IEPS – Institute of Popular and Solidary Economy (Instituto de Economía Popular y Solidaria)

LVC – La Vía Campesina

MAGAP – Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca)

SENPADES – Secretary of Planning for Development (Secretaría Nacional de Panificación para el Desarrollo)

TRIPS - Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights

PE- Political Ecology

WTO – World Trade Organization
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The state is the dominant mode of political organization, a human creation with the purpose of organizing and governing social, economic and natural interactions. It is a way to regulate, organize and mediate in the production and consumption of resources. The state is so present in our lives that we often think of it as natural and inevitable (Storey, 2001). However, as present as it is, it is not monolithic or static in any way. States around the world vary in terms of governing, organization, power and sovereignty. Though the idea of the idyllic – and highly Eurocentric- Westphalian sovereignty state has been propagated globally, it remains an exception instead of a rule, both historically and globally (Risse, 2010).

States are different in context, in geography and in history; hence the one-size-fits-all formulas do not usually work. Yet following the on-going process of homogenising development, neoliberal globalization and the capital induced ecological crisis derived from this, some characterizations on how states regulate and organize nature can be broadly recognized in the different contexts. There is an important amount of research in Political Ecology (PE) around state-nature interactions and environmental governance. The state in PE is often portrayed as menacing or sympathetic, strong or weak, territorial or porous and networked (Robbins, 2008). These depictions portray the different ways in which the state adapts to govern social, economic and natural interactions.

Nature has played an important role in the construction of the contemporary state. As the state has framed and organized nature for its legitimization, it has transformed nature through a process of simplification and scientific abstraction (Scott, 1998). Agricultural modes of production provide one of the most visible examples of this organization of the natural world to serve humanity’s purpose (Scott, 1998), a one-size-fits-all Eurocentric model that was spread around the world narratives of development, networked interactions, and the creation and legitimization of a particular way of knowing and doing.

This forced attempt of homogenization in the state’s agricultural – and overall- governing, however, has not come without consequences. The current neoliberal system is in crisis and one of its clearest manifestations is evident in the global food system. For instance, many countries are not able to satisfy their internal demand for food and have to rely on food imports and food aid. In the world, food availability has risen from 2220 kcal/person/day in the 1960s to 2790
kcal/person/day in 2006-2008, yet it is estimated that one in nine people in the world suffer from hunger (Worldhunger.org, 2015). The global food system accounts for one third of the world’s GHG emissions (Gilbert, 2012), while around 30% of the food produced goes to waste (Worldhunger.org, 2015). And so on. Following these conditions, paradigm changing ideas have begun to emerge. Collective and grassroots movements are raising their voices in an attempt to counteract these processes, bringing new ideas and paradigms of development, production and state-nature interactions into the discussion. Food sovereignty (FS) is one of these ideas. It emerged as a contestatory social movement from the grassroots and has been adopted as a policy from above by a handful of states around the world, particularly in Latin America.

FS does not only seek to change the agricultural production and consumption systems but it entails a deep transformation in the way society, the state and nature are framed and organized, namely, a deep transformation in the state’s narratives and practices by challenging the cultural values assigned to food production and to nature (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007). FS recognizes the importance of the state for its implementation, however while FS aligns with the state in several ways, it simultaneously contradicts and seeks to contest many aspects of the contemporary neoliberal state narrative. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how contemporary states respond to the emergence of concepts such as FS, focusing particularly in the case of Ecuador and its attempt to adopt FS as part of its national policy.

In this paper I explore this question by first examining the different depictions of the conventional state and its relationship with nature in PE in chapter 2: 1) The state as a simplifier of nature, a vision that began in the north and was expanded to the world through an idea of development; 2) The state as a network and a porous institution where a diversity on actors can interact and influence decision making processes through emerging practices of governance; 3) The state as a creator and eraser of knowledge (Robbins, 2008). In chapter 3 I continue the discussion with the food system that resulted as part of the process of simplification of nature, following up with the emergence and up scaling of FS as an alternative to traditional development and governing practices. Then, I expand on the implications and limitation of the idea of FS and its practical implementation, with a particular focus on the debate around the definition of sovereignty rooted in it. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I analyse the case of Ecuador as one of the very few countries that have attempted to adopt FS as part of their national policy. Ecuador successfully
adopted FS as part of its new Constitution in 2008, however in practice the idea of FS has encountered several deadlocks and difficulties that are yet to be overcome.

CHAPTER 2: THE STATE AND NATURE IN POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Characterizations of the state in political ecology

The state as the dominant mode of political organization is so present in our social imaginary that it is often assumed as natural or taken for granted. The state can be easily defined as a formalized set of political institution with jurisdiction over a specific territory and the citizens within it (Storey, 2001). Drawing upon Marxian theories of the state, David Harvey (1985) affirms that the role of the state in capitalist societies is to create the specific settings and conditions to foster capitalist modes of production and accumulation. The state presents itself as an independent and necessary mediator in society to transcend from the individual to the common interests. However in this process it provides a space for specific social groups or classes to exercise control and power over others.

In regards to Nature-State interactions, Whitehead et. al. define the state as “the dominant political ordering principles around which our world continues to be constructed and conceived” and where “nature is continually being ordered and framed” (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007; p.1) with the creation of specialized administrative structures and institutions. In the process of construction of the state, nature has played a strategic role, and the state has created narratives of nature for its own legitimization and political power and transformed nature in this process. Considering the complexity of environmental governance, according to Robbins (2008) in the field of political ecology (PE) the state is frequently portrayed in contradictory ways, sometimes appearing strong or weak, menacing or sympathetic, territorial or porous and networked. Researches have often characterized the state in three different ways:

“1) The state tends towards ecological simplification, even while non-human responses to state efforts almost always result in increased ecological complexity. 2) The state interacts with diverse human and non-human players to produce networks that mediate between multinational capital, local producers, and soil, water and plant ecologies. 3) The state is an institutional knower, with its own fragmented epistemology, which simultaneously erases and produces environmental knowledge.” (Robbins, 2008)
The state as a simplifier

The modern framing of nature that contributed to shape the contemporary mainstream mode of state-centred organization was coined during the European scientific revolution. Nature became a synonym of un-civilization, wilderness, disorder and primitiveness that needed to be tame and controlled for the purpose of human progress. It endorsed the emergence of a new context to understand and experience nature (see Merchan, 1989). It became detached of its “social attachments, values, and meanings” and became a “purified object of scientific reflection, exploration and exploitation” (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007: p.18). In other words, the process of understanding of nature became on of abstraction that enforced the creation of a dualistic relationship between society and nature.

The continuous attempts to manage and categorize the complex natural world in a tendency towards extraction, reductionism and the simplification of complexity involved a degree of focus on the specific, thus facilitating measurement and control form a centre, while ignoring other aspects and interactions that are too hard to categorize or not fully understood (Scott, 1998; Whitehead, Jones & Jones, 2007; Robbins, 2008). As Scott points out:

“Certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision. The great advantage of such tunnel vision is that it brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality. This very simplification, in turn, makes the phenomenon at the centre of the field of vision more legible and hence more susceptible to careful measurement and calculation” (Scott, 1998, p.12)

This framing of nature and centralized process of simplification enabled the establishment and propagation of top-down regulations and policies from the state. Furthermore, this model of governing expanded from the north to the rest of the world through an early vision of development as a linear path towards progress, a one-size-fits-all formula. This process of modernizing simplification not only came with the dichotomy of nature and society but also with the division of the world in developed and underdeveloped. In an early phase this development formula proliferated with the support of the state, but eventually neoliberal imperialist practices and multinational corporations gained terrain in the state’s decision-making process, hence absorbing some of its sovereignty in favour of their interests (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011).
This linear idea of progress and development promoted a route towards homogenization, thus hindering creativity and other ways of thinking and knowing. In the 20th century the emancipatory process of modernity seemed to be transforming into a system of human oppression (Harvey, 1992). This process of development was questioned in the 60s and 70s, particularly with the emergence of the dependency school, and in the 80s with the notion of sustainable development. However, the conceptual and structural basis of the society/nature dichotomy prevailed and continued to dominate the mainstream political discourse sponsored by states and international institutions while adapting to the different circumstances and political contexts in time (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011).

The Latin American region, in particular, adopted and generated a diverse amount of ideas around development in the 60s and 70s, going from the conventional one-size-fits-all Eurocentric model, to Raul Prebisch’s initial structuralism and CEPAL’s neo-structuralism. However, in spite of this, the vision of development as economic progress that could be more easily achieved through imported modernist processes persisted and was later accentuated with the adoption/imposition of neoliberal policies of the 80s and 90s in the region (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011) and the expansion of state network and decision-making arena fostered by neoliberalism.

The agricultural modernization brought by the Green Revolution (GR) is perhaps the greatest embodiment of the imposition of a monolithic, homogenizing and highly modernist development, and possibly the greatest attempt to organized and simplify nature in the name of progress. The GR was a multinational attempt to achieve food security in the world by transferring productive technology and research to local farmers to enhance production and encourage the abandonment of their ‘retrograde’ traditional practices. Even though international development agencies and multinational corporations played an important role, this effort was largely state-driven (Robbins, 2008). In addition, despite the fact that it emerged with the promise of progress, freedom and emancipation for the south, it became a control tool for neo-imperialism (Biel, 2015). The GR and its accounted and unaccounted consequences – externalities- and adaptations to continue to propagate in the current context are discussed further in Chapter 3.

The networked state - emerging geographies of governance

In PE the state has shown itself to work simultaneously on different levels and with a varied set of actors and institutions where power is distributed unequally both within and outside
of it. It is a porous entity where international capitals, local communities and non-human actors can exercise influence and where the state is portrayed as cooperative, parasitic or mediating (Robbins, 2008). This intricate portrait of the state has been further shaped and reconfigured with globalization, the appearance of new actors and the emergence of new geographies of governance. Though the definition of governance remains quite broad, it differs from government as the latter is often associated with a centralized, formal and vertical process of governing or managing. Governance on the other hand is often referred as a horizontal, decentralized, non-hierarchical and pluralistic formulation and implementation of public policy (Reed & Bruyneel, 2010).

It is often argued that the state has been “‘hollowed out’, with the redistribution of state functions upwards (to international and transnational institutions), downwards (to state/provincial/regional and local authorities), and outwards (to non-state actors)” (Reed & Bruyneel, 2010, p.646). Either through neoliberal practices or through the emergence of new forms of governance that have empowered other set of actors. For example, often multinational capitals, transnational corporations and private stakeholders are able to impose agendas and to gain access to the decision making processes of states by being portrayed as ‘representatives of the interests of capital’ (Griffin, 2012). However, despite this expansion in the decision-making process, and redistribution of power in multiple spheres, the state continues to play an important role in terms of political organization, creation of narratives and distribution of power in the world today as an institution and as a regulator.

The contemporary state has shown to work simultaneously at multiple levels, in a network-like mode and to be “highly porous to the influence of capital, local producer communities and natural objects... these forms and are in turn reformed by state players and institutions. This image of a ‘network state’ has come to dominate political ecological explanations, with implications for thinking about governance more generally” (Robbins, 2008, p.209). This expansion in the decision making process is referred by Erik Swyngedouw (2005) as ‘governance-beyond-the-state’ and it is defined as “…the emergence, proliferation and active encouragement (by the state and international bodies...) of institutional arrangements of ‘governing’ which give a much greater role in policy-making, administration and implementation to private economic actors on the one hand and to parts of civil society on the other in self-managing what until recently was provided or organised by the national or local state.” (Swyngedouw, 2005, p.1992)
Increasing academic literature draws on the foucauldian concept of ‘governmentality’, where the ‘governmentalization’ of the state is based on the accumulation of knowledge on what is to be governed for political regulation (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007), and the narratives of that collected knowledge embody the ‘practices, relations and intentions’ in politics (Griffin, 2012). Often, emerging practices of governance-beyond-the-state can be democratizing, empowering and open to innovative ideas, however when encountered with a neoliberal agenda and market forces, they can prove to be oppressive and disempowering for already marginalized groups (Swyngedouw, 2005).

In the specific context of Latin America, the disillusionment and detriment in the confidence of the progress that the neoliberal laissez-faire and free market policies of the 80s and 90s were supposed to bring triggered the discussion and re-emergence of new alternatives of development. The questioning of this neoliberal phase was formalized in the post-development critique (see for example Escobar, 2010). This critique deepend the discussion by questioning not only the instrumentalization of the different ideas of development but also the conceptual, ideological and cultural basis embedded in these. Thus calling to drop the previous ‘development alternatives’ and to start thinking about ‘alternatives for development’. With this at play, the XXI century began witnessing the emergence of a new wave of Latin American progressism, political transformations and the emergence of a ‘new left’. (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011)

**The ‘knower’ state – epistemological struggles**

These depictions of the state as a simplifier and as a network of interactions are joined by a further representation of the state as an epistemological entity, as even the most neoliberal states, as asserted by Robbins (2008), continue to retain a certain monopoly in the production of narratives for the creation of policies and restrictions in regards to natural/environmental knowledge, with the food production system as part of it. The narratives promoted or ignored by the state serve to legitimized budgets, programs and even to obtain international funding.

In the process of producing conventions about the natural world to legitimize the construction of the state not only new ontologies and etymologies are created or adopted but also they also acquire a certain hierarchy in a specific time and space. Likewise, practices undertaken by the state in it spheres of power to legitimize specific ideas and knowledge also serves to delegitimize and invisible other types of knowledge. “Epistemological work [from the state] not
only renders such knowledges and claims invisible, it can actually cause them to be forgotten over time, making them disappear altogether.” (Robbins, 2008, p.213) Mainstream processes of development and the expansion of neoliberal globalization practices have usually imposed hierarchies of knowledge where traditional, local and customary knowledges and practices are displaced and erased through the institutionalization of the modernist science-based ways (Himley, 2008).

One of the most successful cases of invisibility of knowledge to the point of almost extinction is evident in the food production system. The imperial pretension of the agricultural system to modernize production through the abandonment of traditional, ‘backward’ and ‘non-scientific’ knowledge led to the point of almost disappearance of indigenous knowledge systems, along with the culture and values embedded in them. As Scott points out “Modern agronomic science, with its sophisticated plant breeding, plant pathology, analysis of plant nutrition, soil analysis, and technical virtuosity, is responsible for creating a fund of technical knowledge that is by now being used in some form by even the most traditional cultivators.” (Scott, 1998, p.264)

In this context, the state can also be seen as a ‘process or location in epistemological struggle’. In other words, taking into account the porosity of the state to the influence of diverse actors, knowledge production and erasure is a struggle of power among actors. This becomes more evident with the governmentalization of the state. Under this vision the state is a space for negotiation as “decision-making has become increasingly decentralized and ‘participatory’ with a number of new actors actively invited by the state to participate in the process of constituting facts and reviewing information” (Robbins, 2008). Often those spaces of governmentalization permit the permeation of traditional local knowledge into state narratives, as a way to counteract imperialist neoliberal narratives, particularly in the global south. Often, non-government actors make use of these epistemological spaces to critique the western science-based and state-led production of environmental knowledge and call for an integration of traditional or indigenous ecological knowledge (Himley, 2008).

In this process of struggle between western mainstream and traditional local knowledge, the differentiation between ‘nations’ and ‘states’ provides an example of the utilization of knowledge in the process of legitimization of the state. While the state is a representation of the political power and organization of a given country, the idea of nation, on the other hand, is not necessarily territorially bounded, but a set of values, cultural symbols and modes of ethnic
identification that bring people together and create a sense of belonging or nationhood among citizens (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Even though the territoriality of nations not always corresponds to that of the state, states often use the practices and symbolism of nationhood for their own legitimization, promotion of authority or specific agendas. However, often these may be mobilized in struggles of resistance against state power and ‘the logics of modern state development’ (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Alternative symbols of nationhood, in particular some highly indigenistic visions have been adopted by Latin American states as alternatives of development, with a variety of results and the emergence of new forms of struggles, as the case of FS discussed below.

Though these depictions of the state as a simplifier, networked and epistemological entity can be easily located in particular moments of time, they are not concrete and static. Contemporary states are in a constant struggle to face and adapt to a variety of circumstances, struggles and crises and can be seen to undertake these different, often contradictory roles simultaneously in different scales or in short periods of time. The events and concurrences of the contemporary global food system epitomize the multiplicity of roles that the state can adopt at the same time.

CHAPTER 3: THE EMERGENCE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The global food system – glimpses of a system in crisis

Agricultural production, much like the rest of nature, was organized and framed to facilitate control through simplification. In this context, the biodiversity of food was reorganized into a system that could be more easily measured and calculated (Scott, 1998). As Scott states “the designs of scientific forestry and agriculture...seemed calculated to make the terrain, its products, and its workforce more legible from above and from the centre.” (Scott, 1998, p.2) The processes of abstracted scientific inquiry and creation of nature contributed to improve the productivity of crops in the north. These modes of production were, later on, spread to countries in the south through the GR in the 1960s: high-yielding crops (especially rice and wheat), chemical pesticides, fertilizers and big scale plantations came to revolutionize the food production in the global south (Borlaug, 2002). Increased productivity seemed to be a success story, the potential route to end world hunger. However this was not the case.
With the expansion of globalization, this became a new tool for imperialism. It contributed to feed the idea that southern states needed help from the north to develop with the “artificial importation of false modernity” (Amin, 2011, p.7). The GR arrived with the promise to contribute to the modernization and industrialization of the south. The surplus and non-labor intensive agricultural produce would contribute to feed the urbanizing population that would be employed by the emerging southern industries (Biel, 2015). However, the GR helped to integrate southern countries in the global political economy with an uneven process of development under the precept of comparative advantage and industrial development that contributed to consolidate countries them as specialized exporters of primary products from agriculture –and extractive industries- (Bieler & Morton, 2014), and undermined their national sovereignty (Biel, 2015). Countries in the global north, with their years ahead of advantage in the production of staple crops with this technology would export their surplus to the global south, while the south would specialize in the production of cash crops (Biel, 2015).

As argued by the Marxian theories of the state (Harvey, 1985), the institutional state offers a space to promote the agenda and interests of the ruling classes where knowledge and ideas are presented and promoted in a neutral way in favour of society as a whole. Agricultural modernization –namely the GR and its posterior developments- came as an opportunity for the perpetuation of some southern elites. They welcomed the GR ignoring its imperialist pretension with its promise to bring economic prosperity and food sufficiency as it did not challenge land property relations on which their political power depended (Biel, 2015). The modernism of the GR would naturally favour big producers and land owners and disposes small farmers in the name of productivity, efficiency and economic growth. A phenomenon justified with the expected growth of the urban industrialization that would employ the displaced farmers as it had happened in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Amin, 2003). In other words this process of modernist simplification contributed to further consolidate the north-south hierarchies of state power globally and the social elites within countries of the global south. Furthermore, this so called revolution did not account for the socio-ecological crisis that this new agricultural mode production entailed (Biel, 2015).

As for the farmers, this system made them dependent of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and seeds suppliers –as some hybrid seeds do not reproduce-. This, in the capitalist competitiveness driven system, favoured big scale producers who could afford the investment
required for their production, while small scale farmers became victims of a process of dispossession (Biel, 2015). In India, for example, the suicide of farmers triggered by financial debts has become an epidemic (Shiva, Poverty & Globalisation (lecture), 2000). As Vandana Shiva states:

“Their [the farmers’] native seeds have been displaced with new hybrids which cannot be saved and need to be purchased every year at high cost. Hybrids are also very vulnerable to pest attacks. Spending on pesticides in Warangal has shot up 2000 per cent from $2.5 million in the 1980s to $50 million in 1997. Now farmers are consuming the same pesticides as a way of killing themselves so that they can escape permanently from unpayable debt.” (Shiva, Poverty & Globalisation (lecture), 2000)

A critical point was reached by the international food system in 2007-2008, with the global food crisis. The international food system transitioned from a low price crisis from the last 20 years that dispossessed millions of peasants around the world, to a high price crisis that spread hunger, malnutrition and incited riots around the world (Rosset, 2008). With many countries depending on the import of food products to satisfy local necessities after the dismantling of national food production capacity –particularly in the global south- in favour of the production of cash crops and agro-exports, the insecure nature of the global food system was more evident than ever. This situation was aggravated with the infestation of speculative financial capitals into the food market, increase in the production of biofuels and volatility of oil prices (Rosset, 2008).

In spite all of this consequences and the continuous struggles from peasant farmers against this industrialist model, high-tech agriculture sponsored by big multinational corporations has continued to interfere in the food production systems of the Global South in new ways. It not only continues to spread its dependency generating modes of production, but it has also started to appropriate the knowledge of local communities to foster further accumulation through patents, biopiracy and the introduction of GMOs (Shiva, 2000; Shiva, 2007). In other words, globalization and modes of governance-beyond-the-state have created spaces of opportunity for transnational food corporations to taken advantage of the porous nature of the state and not only permeate its markets but also to influence policies and processes of knowledge production and distribution.

In addition, in these new processes of agribusiness growth the value of the knowledge enclosed in traditional practices that not long ago were seen as primitive and backwards are increasingly being recognized by scientific researchers as potential new sources of exploration and
exploitation. This common knowledge that has been accumulated, improved and perfected through time and tradition by communities of producers is now being enclosed by individuals and corporations through Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights -TRIPS, sponsored by market based laws and capitals beyond state-nations that allow the patenting of genetic material –the source of life- (Biel, 2015). This appropriation of knowledge and commodification of local wisdom is presented as “creation, when in fact it is destruction – of ecosystems, of local economies, of cultures.” (Shiva, 2014)

This mutating but continuous crisis of the international food system, along with the increasing, adapting and homogenizing interference in local food systems have triggered the emergence and expansion of new ideas and social movements, some of which have been able to permeate state policy thanks to the emergence of new forms of more inclusive governance and the state’s apparent openness to alternatives of development. The Food Sovereignty Movement (FSM) embodies one of these processes.

**Constructing food sovereignty**

Food sovereignty was raised in 1996 by *La Vía Campesina (LVC)*\(^1\), an international peasant movement. The concept was said to emerge from the notion of *national food security*, previously coined in Central American the mid-eighties as a response to the increasing food imports from the United States, the loss of state support for local production and the imposition of structural adjustment programmes from international agencies (Claeys, 2013).

The food sovereignty movement was born in front of the weakening of state control in the local food system to neoliberal capitals and policies (Schiavoni, 2014). This emerging bottom-up concept responded to the top-down imposition of international trade agreements in response to the liberalization of food under GATTs –Uruguay round- promoted by the WTO and the harm these were causing to the ecosystem, farmers and peoples (Hospes, 2014). The latest definition was coined by LVC in 2007, in the Declaration of Nyéléni:

“*Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define*

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\(^1\) La Vía Campesina - LCV: Movement born in 1993, self-defined as an autonomous, pluralist, multicultural and non-politically affiliated movement conformed by 164 local and national organizations –representing around 200 million peasants- in 73 countries of Africa, Asia, Europe and North and South America. (La Via Campesina, 2011; 2013)
their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations.” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007)

FS struggles against “the internationalization and globalization of paternalistic and patriarchal values and...development projects, models and extractive industries that displace people and destroy our environments and natural heritage” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007); the FSM is not only challenging the high tech, homogenizing food production system, it advocates for structural changes in regards to state-nature relations and the configuration of the state itself. As stated in the Declaration of Nyéléni, FS is a fight against “imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and eco-systems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples.” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007)

One of the most vital innovations embedded in FS is that it seeks to change the conventional model of externally oriented state ‘development’ where value flows from the rural to the urban then to the north, to an internally centred model where this value is capitalized internally for the benefit of the local peoples (Rosero Garcés, 2008). Moreover, by changing the organization of the food system, FS aims to reorganize the whole organizational dynamics of society not only in economic terms, but in land tenure and property, patters of consumption and
value chains, women’s rights, use and ownership of natural resources, approach towards ecosystems and nature, culture and traditions, working rights and even territories (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

“.... there is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities’ access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honours access and control by pastoral communities over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside;...where agrarian reform revitalises inter-dependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men...where agrarian reform guarantees rights to territory and self-determination for our peoples.” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007)

The FSM fights against “the domination of our food and food producing systems by corporations that place profits before people, health and the environment; and...food aid that disguises dumping, introduces GMOs into local environments and food systems and creates new colonialism patterns” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007). By proposing agro-ecology as an alternative technology of production in fights against the loss of diversity and resource depleting industrial production processes, FS opens an area of discussion for the revalorization of diverse forms of production beyond high-tech and offers a tool for emancipation from the international markets.

Furthermore, as FS promises a change in paradigm, it faces the on-going challenge of the continuous promotion of modernizing agricultural practices -such as those of the GR- by state and non-state actors that contributed to the profound impairment and dismissal of local and alternative practices and knowledges. The FSM seeks to upscale alternative forms of knowledge that have been historically marginalized and it encourages and defends “...peoples’ power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

The FSM proposes a bottom up approach towards agricultural/natural governance displacing the centralism of decision and policy making from the state and expanding it towards the people that are directly affected by these decisions. This process of agro-knowledge governance presents itself as an alternative to the traditional state centralization of knowledge.
production and distribution that has been capitalized by agribusiness corporations to promote their agenda. With the bottom up approach emerging from the FS movement, instead of passively absorbing the imposed mainstream food production techniques, communities have the chance to inform local—and national—policy with their knowledge through the autonomy granted to them, with the state as a key actor in its further regulation and promotion. In this context, the state’s role in the process of epistemological struggle becomes crucial for the FSM. In other words, FS seeks to reconcile different forms of knowledge by expanding the narrowed state-centred vision; it calls to embrace complexity and participation.

Food sovereignty as national policy: struggles and sovereignties

Regarding its application, thanks to the structural changes that FS entails, according to Hospes (2014) advocates of the idea do not expect it to be manipulated or co-opted by mainstream neoliberal and capitalist accumulation-driven practices. The difficulty however lies in the scale and process of the political order that needs to be transformed and the way these changes need to occur in order for the concept not to be annulled or marginalized. Similarly, he implies that “it is also difficult to imagine how communities or states can contribute to radical transformation of a political order in which they operate.” (Hospes, 2014, p.124)

The most persuasive and prevalent explanation of the lack of adoption or enforcement of the term in national policies and in international debates is that the power structures in the political system and the modes of production are focused on maintaining the neoliberal corporatist food production system and conception of food security based on scientific knowledge and trade centred on access to food and the individuals. However, a handful of countries in the global south—six countries between 1999 and 2009—have been tried to embrace FS as part of their national policies. Though the concept has been adopted relatively recently, a successful integral implantation is yet to be seen (Hospes, 2014). This suggests the possibility of there being other drivers within the epistemic construction and institutional implementation of

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2 Food Security is defined as: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” (FAO, 2008)

This definition points out to four dimensions: availability, access, utilization and stability (World Food Summit, 1996). By focusing mainly on the individual access to sufficient local or imported food it leaves out all the systemic and institutional relations embedded in the production and consumption of food. By focusing on availability and stability, it consolidates the commoditization of food and creates a range for the expansion of the seemingly more productive high-tech agriculture.
the concept from a state’s perspective that go beyond the political and economic interest to maintain the status quo and the current neoliberal practices.

The multiple sovereignties of food sovereignty

In the conceptualization of the state, the mainstream definition of state sovereignty portrays the term as a plain territorial expression: A contained, bordered space that at the same time encase narratives of identity and homeland (Kuus & Agnew, 2008). Hospes (2014) distinguishes two definitions of sovereignty in social sciences: 1) An absolute sovereignty where the state is the highest authority and links authority to territory; 2) A pluralistic sovereignty where both state and non-state actors can claim some degree of sovereignty. Furthermore, sovereignty is highly unequal both within and outside the state’s territorial boundaries (Kuus & Agnew, 2008). Power to co-opt sovereignty as absolute or as pluralistic can be exercised internally and externally (Kuus & Agnew, 2008), and simultaneously there can be different types of sovereignties competing with each other within the same territorial boundaries (i.e. food sovereignty vs. energy sovereignty – in terms of access and use of resources).

In the evolving definition of food sovereignty, Hospes (2014) suggests that it is not easy to identify the territoriality, absolutism or pluralism, and the holder of sovereignty in the definition of FS. However, by analyzing the narrative of the definitions he suggests that the first characterizations of FS were state-centric but pluralistic: The 1996 definition called for heads of state to endorse FS as a right of each ‘nation’. Therefore in state where multiple cultural ‘nations’ exist, multiple sovereignties of food would be embraceable. In the definition of 2002 ‘nation’ was replaced by ‘peoples, communities and countries’, suggesting again an idea of pluralism in the ownership of that sovereignty. In posterior definitions, he suggest that approaches of state-centric sovereignty are not as evident as before. In regards to the Nyélénéi declaration, he argues that: “On the one hand...food sovereignty is about peoples’ sovereignty relating to food and agriculture, challenging the state as the sole sovereign in this domain. On the other hand, to qualify food sovereignty as a right is not incompatible with the idea that the state as supreme authority is ultimately responsible for guaranteeing such a right within its territory.” (Hospes, 2014, p.123)

Essentially, one of the contradictions that lie within the concept of FS is that while it emphasizes the importance of the state, it can also exist beyond it (Clark, 2015). FS, as currently defined, reclaims the power of the state in the formulation of national policy while simultaneously
questioning its ability to do so in the context of globalization (Hospes, 2014). FS seems to recognize this porous role of the state simultaneously as an advantage and a threat. Thus the reclamation of autonomy from local communities in the decision making process of food would be an adaptive response to this dynamics, to contest high-tech agro-industrial production informing national policy and imposing knowledge and practices, and to inform policy from their local practices and potentially influence international spheres by working with and within the state.

FS seeks to reclaim the spaces of participation within and for the state and at the same time expects to be legitimized and enhanced by it. Thus, autonomy in this context would not be an attempt to undermine the role of the state but a demand for better representation and participation (Hospes, 2014) and to give communities a space to counteract mainstream discourses around food production – often more powerful and sponsored by policy makers through state institutions. In terms of governance, FS requires a governance-beyond-the-state system to be functional, a state of horizontally networked interactions “between independent and interdependent actors who share a high degree of trust, despite internal conflict and oppositional agendas, within inclusive participatory institutional or organisational associations.” (Swyngedouw, 2005, p.1995)

The idea of FS embeds principles of structural societal transformation, an alternative to the current neoliberal model rather than just a variation of it. The establishment of a new food governance system around FS requires a deeper reconceptualization of the institutional arrangements, policies and practices at all levels (Hospes, 2014). Or, as Patel points out “Food sovereignty has its own geographies, one determined by specific histories and contours of resistance. To demand a space of food sovereignty is to demand specific arrangements to govern territory and space” (Patel, 2009, p.668). An alternative would be for example, the creation of agricultural policies based on pluralistic notions of sovereignty where local authorities would have a greater voice in the regulation of local food production and consumption (Hospes, 2014).

Ecuador, as one of the very few countries that has adopted FS as a national policy illustrates the struggles, challenges and opportunities that the concept brings in terms of state formation, consolidation, legitimization and conflicts.
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY – THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ECUADORIAN STATE

In 2007, after a severe economic crisis at the end of the 90s, followed with over 10 years of political instability and the adoption of the US dollar as the new national currency in the year 2000, the arguably post-neoliberal government of Rafael Correa emerged in Ecuador. It came with the promise of structural changes for the country and alternative economic measures to those promoted by the IMF and the World Bank (Acosta, 2012b). As part of this process, a new Constitution was drafted by a Constituent National Assembly elected by popular vote. The new Constitution was approved in 2008 in a national referendum. In the constitutional attempt to move away from the impositions from the international system, the espousal of ideas born from the grassroots and their historic struggles seemed the most grasparable reaction. During the previous decades, the Ecuadorian state, like many others in Latin America, was dismantled through neoliberal structural adjustment practices that promoted de-regulation as efficiency and undermined national sovereignty (Araújo, 2010).

While the world suffered a systemic crisis and the global food system staggered, the Ecuadorian Constitution came along with the idea of the formation of a new state narrative, moving away from oppressive neoliberal and imperialist practices and with the adoption of paradigm shifting and grassroots concepts around nature and society. Ideas like Food Sovereignty, the Rights of Nature and Good Living –Sumak Kawsay- played a crucial role in this process and in the formation of a new national identity. The new constitutional framework came with a promise of a pluralistic, inclusive, participatory state, oriented towards environmental justice, equity and transparency and new forms of governance.

The narrative of the new constitutional document seemed to be a first consolidated step to defy the modernizing one-size-fits-all idea of progress derived from the process of simplification of nature, to reclaim the sovereignty of the state to international capitals and to embrace an alternative vision of development through good living. It embraced, reclaimed and up scaled alternative forms of knowledge through traditions and ancestral practices. It sought to reconfigure society and the state’s relation with nature through the inclusion of the rights of nature. It promised to transform the whole food system in a moment where the world was going through a staggering crisis with the adoption of food sovereignty as part of its framework.
After the continued neoliberal political process from the previous decades, that could account as the ‘hollower’ of the Ecuadorian state, it was able to recover lost spaces of interaction and began projecting itself as a key player in the Ecuadorian economy (Acosta, 2012b). In other words, this process of re-emergence of the state seemed to promise a new balance in the power structures of governance within it by reclaiming spaces that had been taken by the international neoliberal machinery. Ergo, this emergence of a new post-neoliberal politics, labelled by many as ‘the return of the state’ seemed to open new spaces of governance where once marginalized actors could participate. In fact, social movements, and particularly indigenous and peasant movements played a crucial role in the rise of the government of Rafael Correa and at the same time their demands were channelled and up scaled to governmental spheres and subsequently consolidated as national policies (Clark, 2015).

**The Ecuadorian Food Sovereignty: struggles and contradictions**

Indigenous organizations that identify to LVC\(^3\) were represented in the Constituent Assembly; and even though many disagreed in other topics, they worked together to push for the inclusion of FS in the Constitution (Clark, 2015). The drafting of the constitution portrays a model of ‘governmentality’ that “considers the mobilisation of resources (ideological, economic, cultural) from actors operating outside the state system as a vital part of democratic, efficient and effective government” (Swyngedouw, 2005, p.1994). A participatory approach that is vital for FS. Furthermore, it came as an opportunity to reconcile the historically undervalued indigenous knowledge with mainstream knowledge. It also brought the possibility to ‘re-nationalized’ the production of food in a country that used its best productive lands to produce cash crops for export (Acosta, 2012a).

FS appears to have been broadly captured narratively in the Ecuadorian regulatory framework -Appendix 1 includes all the articles that mention FS in the Constitution-. In the Ecuadorian Constitution FS is recognized as a strategic objective promoted by the state, which has the obligation to guarantee “that persons, communities, peoples and nations (nationalities) reach permanent self-sufficiency in nutritious and culturally appropriate food” (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008, Art.281). This draws back to the earlier definitions of FS –from 1996 and 2002- that entail a state-centrul but pluralistic vision of ‘sovereignty’.

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\(^3\) Five Ecuadorian peasants organizations are officially recognizes as members of La Via Campesina: CONFEUNASSCE, FENOCIN, FENACLE, FEI, CNC (La Via Campesina, 2013)
Whereas the Constitutional framework captures much of the essence of FS, some ideas that seem to contradict some vital FS principles stand out. The first definition contained in Art.13 of the Constitution revolves around ‘access y consumption of culturally appropriate food’, the omission of the process of production suggest an inclination towards food security (Rosero Garcés, 2008). Another blurry line in the Constitutional framework is drawn by GMOs and biotechnology, considered a direct threat for FS. Art.401 declares the country as GMO free, but notes that in exceptional cases of national interests the President can introduce GMO seeds and crops with the approval of the National Assembly, as well as the development of biotechnology under strict governmental regulations (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008). These contradictions left again a potentially dangerous space for business-as-usual practices to permeate state policies and practices. A small hole where international agribusiness corporations could find new spaces of commodification to capitalize.

These contradictions embedded in the adoption of the term portray the state as a clear location of epistemological struggle where different knowledges and practices around agriculture strive to find their place in national policy. While there is a recognition of the value and importance of local knowledge in agricultural production, the mainstream high-tech agricultural science derived from simplification and control that devalued that knowledge still find this presence in the state’s new narrative. In other words, this epitomizes the still relevant role of the state –and its representatives- in the production of knowledge, both as a mediator and legitimizer and demonstrates how competing ideas can permeate its epistemological spaces, thus creating a set of dissonant contradictions.

These spaces of inconsistency were furthered in the Law of FS presented in 2009 that was partially vetoed by the President. According to Acosta (2009) after the presidential veto, this law opened the possibility to continue supporting and subsidizing large agribusiness instead of small producers, it avoided tackling land distribution issues, it opened the door to the import of transgenic seeds, it lifted the ban for the production of biofuels from agricultural crops, among other things. This veto was highly criticized by indigenous organizations advocating for FS who denounced the influence of agribusinesses in this decision and the lack of participation in the drafting of this law (Acosta, 2009). Thus highlighting the epistemological struggle of the State as a space of power between traditional ruling elites that foster neoliberal and GR practices and alternative and paradigm altering indigenistic practices that challenge power relations.
As Clark points out “if the ‘contents’ of public policy are going to reflect societal needs, political will from the top-down is necessary rather than sufficient, and civil society needs to be an integral part of policy-making and implementation.” (Clark, 2015, p.7) The adoption of the Constitutional FS portrays a model of co-production of state policy in Ecuador, with a state willing to adopt this transformative ideas and the creation of networked spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange with the civil society. Here we encounter a networked state open to new forms of governance that embraces pluralistic sovereignty and complex forms of knowledge. However, in practice, there seems to be a shift towards a hermetic institutional state seeking to retain an absolute sovereignty in territorial and epistemological terms; a step backwards towards a state-centred simplifying government. In simpler words, the adoption of FS was bottom-up and embraced alternative methods of policy making, but its attempts of implementation have been strictly hermetic and top-down.

Furthermore, beyond the closing porosity and reducing spaces of governance in the state, another problem that the implementation of FS has encountered is the demobilization of many key social movements. Partly because there has been a fragmentation between supporters and opponents of the government of Rafael Correa and partly because many indigenous leaders and advocates of FS have been co-opted by the government and other organizations as emerging politicians and to carry on with the process of re-centralization of the state (Clark, 2015), signifying the consolidation of a new political elite through the use of these local ideas of nationhood, a political elite that, however, has not been able to challenge prevailing traditional power structures. In this way, the potential creative tension between the state and the different social movements that could trigger change through food sovereignty has been neutralized by the government apparatus. Hence neutralizing the spaces where networked interactions for governance emerge.

In order to move away from the neoliberal ideology that had debilitated the state institutionality, the adoption of contesting ideas was key in the proce of strengthening and consolidation of this re-emerged state. As stated earlier, often states borrow ideas from the nations within them to create a sense of belonging among their citizens (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Peasant/indigenous concepts like FS along with Sumak Kawsay (Good Living), and the Rights of Nature seemed to have the answer embedded both to fight neoliberalism and to create a new national identity. However, as the ostensibly presidentially supported pro-GMOs
legislation points out, reconfiguring states are not immune to the permeation of modernist and hegemonic ideas portrayed as the voices of capital and productivity, the carriers of economic prosperity and progress that can be more easily fostered and controlled by the center.

As previously argued, one of the key processes for the operationalization of FS is the intuitional re-organization of the state. Swyngedouw (2005) draws upon Bob Jessop’s argument that ‘the state is capitalism’s necessary other’, thus highlighting the functional and strategic connection between the state and the market, as state institutions and rules serve a specific function to sustain capitalism. Bringing into play the intense neoliberalization of the Ecuadorian political model of the previous decades, it is reasonable to assume that the state’s institutions, policies, budget and practices were moulded for this purpose.

Even though in the process of ‘return of the state’ many institutional arrangements have been made to foster the implementation of FS, i.e. through the Ministry of Agriculture –MAGAP-, the Secretary of Planning for Development –SENPLADES-, the Institute for Popular and Solidary Economy –IEPS-, etc. investment, while increasing, has not reflected the Constitutional Priorities and has largely benefitted big scale producers (Clark, 2015). In 2009, for example, the investment that benefitted small farmers was around 10.24% of the total budget for agriculture as “only 2.53 per cent was dedicated to land reform, 0.16 per cent on legalization of land titles, 7.21 per cent on agricultural extension services and 0.33 per cent on subsidies and credit” (Clark, 2015, p.14) Furthermore, the provinces with bigger concentrations of land and predominantly export-driven industrial agriculture where the ones who received the greatest amounts of public investment (Clark, 2015).

It seems that in the process of consolidation of the state, the pluralistic modes of sovereignty portrayed by FS are seen as a menace to the absolute sovereignty of the bureaucratic state. With obsolete institutional arrangements inherited from the previous neoliberal governments and the lack of understanding of the participatory institutionality required for the implementation of FS –and other ideas-, coupled with the need of economic revenue and re-permeation of neoliberal concepts, these contestatory terms that helped to initially consolidate the emerging post-neoliberal state do not seem to fit the state practices anymore.
“Genetically modified seeds can quadruple production and pull out of misery the poorest sectors.” (President Rafael Correa cited in El Comercio, 2012).

-A change of posture professedly occurred after a visit from the President to a university in the USA and after some exchanges with a multinational GMO company (El Comercio, 2013).

However, as argued before, these ideas of nationhood utilized by states for their own legitimation are, as well, often mobilized to resist state power and modern conceptions of development (Whitehead, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Indigenous movements have begun contesting the increasing obsolescence and delegitimization of these terms through state policies. In March 2015, for instance, with the emergence of a new land legislation that could have been the opportunity to enhance FS, indigenous organizations raised 18 claims around it in regards to land grabbing, concentration and lease, mechanisms of land redistribution, equitable access, the lack of consultation in its drafting, among other things. These claims were presented to the Food Sovereignty Commission of the National Assembly (El Universo, 2015). This state-driven attempt to create policy without challenging structures of power -in the shape of land ownership- reminds us of the previously discussed earlier justifications to adopt GR practices by southern elites, to improve productivity and enhance economic progress without challenging traditional structures of power in agriculture, an issue that FS specifically tries to address.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation has explored the construction of the state and beyond the state interactions through its relationship with nature in terms of food production, with the particular case of Ecuador and the adoption of FS. It attempted to show how the traditional contemporary state can adopt simultaneously a diversity of roles, often in contradiction with itself at different levels, to adapt to specific circumstances and favour specific interests. Though new forms of governance have begun to emerge and alternative ideas such as FS have started to be adopted and embraced, the traditional model of state governing that led to the food and systemic crisis still seems to prevail.

In the context of capitalist globalization and following the ability of non-state institutions to permeate and influence governance processes, it seems that the Ecuadorian state has moved
from veiling for its citizens’ well-being and interests to maintaining its bureaucratic and institutional sovereignty. The emerging alternatives of development that promise structural transformation, do not seem to find a place through state driven implementation in practice as state institutions and policies are not entirely able to challenge traditional elites and power structures both locally and internationally.

FS offers an opportunity to think about new ways to make democracy, to re-imagine political communities, to empower people in the process of construction of their own well-being. Extending the pluralism of sovereignty from the centralized, territorial control of the government, to the local production and consumption landscapes may be seen as a detriment of power for the state apparatus at first glance, however that could help to create or reinforce new forms of governance that strengthen the internal networks of the state and the people who it represents and make it less vulnerable to the influence of external markets.

However, as the state has returned, and strengthened its institutionalization in Ecuador, it has tried to close its porosity in the struggle to maintain its role and institutional power. This seems to be creating a “lockup trap”: by closing the spaces of porosity where neoliberal concepts can permeate, the state has also closed spaces of participation. The alternative ideas that brought back the state in Ecuador are now being undermined by the state itself. With this, it is not out of focus to consider a possible return to the old neoliberal practices.

Though a deep analysis of power relations is not included in this research, it is not hard to pinpoint the fluidity of power among actors and institutions. FS in Ecuador is an interesting case because it highlights the tensions between a consolidating post-neoliberal state, an organized civil society -grassroots movements- and nature; a tension between emerging and traditional ideas of the state, modern (imported) and local (traditional) knowledges, governing and governance. It shows the apparent openness and state-driven attempts to adopt alternatives of development, some of which have been deeply romanticized as a promise of change by academic literature. However, in practice, the same state apparatus that embraced these concepts to contest international balances of power is the one that undermines and dissolves these ideas, not only in light of external neoliberal and capitalist pressures but when they challenge internal power structures and traditional power elites, which in turn advocate for the return of the conventional ideas of development.
To implement FS not only changes in the state narratives are required but continuous and iterative processes of dialogue and debate are necessary. FS’s deeply transformative nature requires a change in the state’s institutional arrangements, policies and practices, many of which are not fully understood by the state’s bureaucracy and consequently cannot be implemented from the centre. The roots of FS implementation are in society, hence FS governance without the participation of the people who practice it –i.e. peasant and indigenous communities- is simply not possible. Furthermore, social movements are vital in preventing the dissolution of the term as they play a key role in the processes of contestation and struggles against the neoliberalization of the state’s environmental governance in front of the expanding processes of globalization, as the struggles of the indigenous organizations around FS in Ecuador clearly demonstrate.

The main challenge of the Ecuadorian FS is that while the adoption of the term was bottom-up, its implementation has clearly been top-down. To enhance and reclaim its implementation I would suggest a twofold mechanism through a top down political openness and regulatory will from the central state and a bottom up implementation of projects, policies and plans to be scaled up gradually. As shown in Figure 1. So, after adoption of the constitutional principles, would it be possible to adopt policies and create institutions locally and regionally, adapted to the varying local circumstances and with the national constitutional framework as a regulatory ‘umbrella’, instead of national policies to be scaled down?

**Figure 1. Current vs. Ideal model of implementation**
This could perhaps re-open spaces of empowerment, democratic self-determination and transformation. Social organizations need to start reclaiming those reduced spaces of governance starting from below before all the effort in promoting FS is watered down. The greatest difficulty, however, lies in finding again those spaces of porosity in practice along the state’s institutions and in finding the political will to challenge the traditional power structures that are not fully permitting the consolidation of new alternatives and that disguise themselves in outmoded ideas of development imported from the north.

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APPENDIX 1: Articles about Food Sovereignty in the Ecuadorian Constitution
(Translated by Natalia Rubiano Rivadeneira from Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008)

Art. 13.- People and collectivities have the right to safe and permanent access to healthy, sufficient and nutritious food; preferably produced locally and in accordance with their different identities and cultural traditions.

The Ecuadorian State shall promote food sovereignty.

Art. 15.- The State shall promote, in the public and private sector, the use of environmentally sound technologies and alternative non-polluting energies of low impact. Energy sovereignty will not be achieved in the detriment of food sovereignty, nor affect the right to water.

The development, production, possession, sale, import, transport, storage and use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, highly toxic persistent organic pollutants, internationally prohibited agrochemicals, experimentally harmful technologies and biological agents and genetically modified organisms that are harmful for human health or threaten food sovereignty or the ecosystem, as well as the introduction of nuclear and toxic waste into the country is strictly prohibited.

TITLE VI
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (Régimen del Desarrollo)
CHAPTER THREE
Food Sovereignty

Art. 281.- Food Sovereignty constitutes and strategic objective and an obligation of the State to guarantee that persons, communities, peoples and nations (nationalities) reach permanent self-sufficiency in nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

For this, it is a responsibility of the State to:

1. Promote the production and agrifood and fishing transformation of small and medium production units, community production units and of the social and solidarity economy.
2. Adopt fiscal, tributary and tax and tariff policies that protect the national agrifood and fishing sector to prevent dependency on food imports.

4. Promote redistributive policies to enable the access of peasants to land, water, and other production resources.

5. Establish preferential financial mechanisms for small and medium producers, to facilitate the acquisition of means of production.

6. Promote the conservation and recovery of agro-biodiversity and related ancestral wisdom; along with the use, conservation and free exchange of seeds.

7. Ensure that animals destined for human consumption are healthy and are raised in a healthy environment.

8. Ensure the development of appropriate scientific research and technological innovation to guarantee food sovereignty.

9. Regulate under biosecurity regulations, the use and development of biotechnology, as well as its experimentation, use and commercialization.

10. Strengthen the development of organization and networks of producers and consumers, as well as the commercialization and distribution of food that promotes equity between urban and rural spaces.

11. Generate fair and solidary systems of distribution and commercialization of foodstuff. Prevent monopoly practices and any kind of speculation with food products.

12. Provide food to population groups that are victims of natural and manmade disasters that jeopardize access to food. Food receives as international aid shall not affect the health nor the future of production of locally produced foodstuff.

13. Prevent and protect the population from the consumption of contaminated foodstuff, or food that jeopardizes their health, or those whose effects are still scientifically uncertain.

14. Acquire food and raw materials for social and nutritional programs giving priority to associative networks of small producers.

Art. 282.- The State will regulate the use and access to land that must fulfill a social and environmental function. A national fund for land, established by law, will regulate the equitable access of peasants to land.

Large estate farming (latifundio) and land concentration is forbidden, as is the hoarding and privatization of water and sources thereof.
The State shall regulate the use and management of irrigation water for food production, abiding by the principles of equity, efficiency and environmental sustainability.

**Art. 284.** The economic policy shall have the following objectives:

[...]

3. Ensure **food and energy sovereignty**

**Art. 304.** The trade policy will have the following objectives:

[...]

4. Contribute to guarantee food and energy sovereignty, and to reduce internal disparities.

**Art. 318.** - Water is a strategic national assets for public use, inalienable and imprescriptible domain of the State, and constitutes a vital element for nature and the existence of human beings. All forms of water privatization are prohibited.

[...]

The State, through the single water authority, will be directly responsible for the planning and management of water resources their use for human consumption, irrigation to ensure food sovereignty, ecological flow and production activities, in this order of priority. State authorization will be required for the use of water for productive purposes by the public and private sector and by the popular and solidarity economy, according to the law.

**Art. 334.** The State shall promote equal access to factors of production, for which it shall:

[...]

4. Develop policies to promote domestic production in all sectors, especially to ensure food sovereignty and energy sovereignty, create jobs and added value.

**Art. 410.-** The State will provide support to farmers and rural communities for the conservation and soil restoration, and for the development of agricultural practices that protect and promote food sovereignty.

**Art. 413.-** The State shall promote energy efficiency, the development and use of environmentally clean and safe practices and technologies, as well as diversified, low-impact renewable energy sources, which do not pose risk to food sovereignty, ecological balance or the right to water.
Art. 423.- Integration, especially with countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, will be a strategic objective of the State. In all instances and processes of integration, the Ecuadorian state is committed to:

[...]  
2. Promote joined strategies of the sustainable management of natural heritage, particularly regarding the regulation of extractive activities; the cooperation and complementation of sustainable energies; biodiversity, water and ecosystems conservation; research, scientific development, the exchange of technologies and knowledge; and the implementation of coordinates strategies for food sovereignty.