

Constructing food sovereignty in Catalonia: different narratives for transformative action

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Abstract Food sovereignty can be conceptualized as a political proposal for social change in the field of agri-food relations. However, specific strategies of how to achieve this transformative potential are diverse, and context-dependent. The paper explores this diversity by examining discourses on the food sovereignty construction process in Catalonia. Using Q methodology we have explored visions held by individuals participating in the social movement for food sovereignty, identifying five discourses: activism, anti-purism, self-management, pedagogy, and pragmatism. Key strategies of transformation include social mobilization, institutional negotiation, self-management, education to foster value change, and politics of the possible. The relevance assigned to ideological affinity explains different views on the subject of transformation, particularly regarding the involvement of the administration and the productive sector. As regards transformative strategies, discourses assign differing importance to the role of agency for effecting social transformation, which influences their assessment of individual actions as an effective means for social change. Forms of individualized and classic collective action currently coexist within the Catalan agri-food movement, but such diversity is not acknowledged as an effective alliance towards food sovereignty. Moreover, all discourses agree to a dual definition of food sovereignty, both as a process, that is, as democratization of the decision-making process in the agri-food sector, and as a result,

that is, establishing an agri-food model alternative to the neo-liberal one. However, the discourses share an unclear view of democracy as decentralized collective decision-making that does not make explicit how this model should be implemented to achieve social control of the agri-food system.

Keywords Food sovereignty · Social transformation · Q methodology · Catalonia

Abbreviations

ASAC Catalonia Peoples' Food Sovereignty Alliance
FSv Food sovereignty
LVC La Vía Campesina

Introduction: food sovereignty as social transformation

The demand for food sovereignty (FSv) exemplifies the idea of food as a means for social change (Follett 2009). FSv is a political proposal originally promoted by peasants in the global South, which has acquired increasing relevance in the international agenda (Ortega-Cerdà and Rivera-Ferre 2010). The concept was first framed within the global discourse on food by the international peasants' movement La Vía Campesina (LVC) during the 1996 World Food Summit. Since then it has been used as an umbrella term for particular approaches to hunger and malnutrition, rural poverty, development, and environmental sustainability. FSv is conceived as a challenge to neo-liberalism (McMichael 2008; Calle et al. 2011; Alkon and Mares 2012; Fairbairn 2012), as a counter-proposal to the mainstream development paradigm (Rivera-Ferre

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2008), and as an expression of radical democracy (Calle 2005). As an explicit counterproposal to trade-based food security, FSv aims at raising “questions about the context of food security, and therefore to pose questions about the relations of power that characterize decisions about how food security should be attained” (Patel 2009, p. 665). Thus, FSv emerges as a “highly political argument for refocusing the control of food production and consumption within democratic processes rooted in localized food systems” (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005, p. vii).

FSv has also gained traction with advocates of change in the global agri-food system (Fairbairn 2012) who propose a shift from the corporate industrial system of food production and question capitalist globalization (Calle et al. 2011). FSv demands cut across the whole agri-food chain, from the claim of the human right to food, to the demand of a new international trade frame through the proposal of peasant-based sustainable production models and alternative distribution channels closely linked to responsible consumption. FSv also calls for a democratization of the decision-making process in the agri-food system, thus questioning the quality of democracy in contemporary societies (Calle et al. 2011). In the context of food choices, democracy concerns the achievement of “a more transparent society in which people have information to make educated decisions” (Follett 2009, p. 47). However, within the FSv framework, democracy is not simply a question of having more information but a matter of regaining control over the agri-food system. Indeed, FSv is closely linked to social control of productive resources, as a means to effectively guarantee the human right to food (McMichael 2008; Patel 2009).

Notwithstanding this empowering frame, a debate currently exists on the potential of food movements to bring substantive changes to the agri-food system (Hassanein 2003; Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Some consider that several strategies adopted by alternative food movements might represent a neoliberal turn in food activism (Roff 2007; Guthman 2008; Blue 2009; DeLind 2011; Alkon and Mares 2012; Fairbairn 2012), by reinforcing individualistic approaches to social change through consumer sovereignty and freedom of choice rhetoric. Fairbairn (2012) places this shift in focus toward the benefits of FSv for consumers in the context of a depoliticization of food politics and food activism and considers it the result of the global South to global North “diffusion” of the FSv concept, which jeopardizes its transformative potential. Holt Giménez and Shattuck (2011) assess the ability of food movements to bring about structural change and set the corporate food regime in opposition to global food movements (i.e., social movements concerned with food and agriculture), which are in turn divided into “progressive” and “radical.” The progressive reformist approach

develops “largely within the economic and political frameworks of existing capitalist food systems” (2011, p. 115). In contrast, FSv is situated as the primary frame of the radical trend, since “demands for food sovereignty are frequently anti-imperialist, anti-corporatist and/or anticapitalist” (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011, p. 116). A parallel can be drawn between this radical/progressive distinction and the warrior/builder dichotomy proposed by DeLind (2003), who uses these terms to characterize political experiences whose aim is to determine public opinion about the agri-food system (“warrior work”) versus consumption options that seek political change indirectly through consumer decisions (“builder work”).

Despite the global relevance of those debates and the universal character of FSv, the project remains open to local interpretations, more so given that social transformations are context-specific processes. FSv aims at “a widespread political control of the food system, the contours of which are necessarily defined in place” (Patel 2005, p. 82). These contours are certainly different in global North and global South contexts, as well as in urban and rural settings. In this regard, it seems possible that the South to North dissemination of the FSv concept could change its original transformative potential (Fairbairn 2012); specifically, the challenge to current economic and political institutions may be diluted by an emphasis on consumer choice and local control as a means to pursue FSv. Nevertheless, up until now there are no empirical studies of how the FSv project is interpreted by local actors in the Global North and on the extent to which such “dilution” is happening. Our study explores this in Catalonia, a place where there is an important presence of locally produced, market-based alternatives, and consumer identity-related elements within agri-food activism, and where it is not clear if and how those differ in their approach to what is the “right” social and political action to achieve FSv.

The objective of our study is to address the lack of insights as regards the (re)configuration of the meaning of FSv in a global North context. This empirical objective is also important in policy terms, as differences in visions create divisions and hamper the realization of FSv. To achieve our objective, we use Q methodology in order to identify social discourses concerning FSv in Catalonia, by enquiring the perceptions and experiences of those who engage with transforming the agri-food system. We identify five discourses, which all share an approach to democratization that is not sufficiently problematized. Our main finding is that discourses assign different importance to the role of agency for effecting social transformation. We argue that this is key in shaping how each discourse assesses the relevance of individual actions for achieving social change, a crucial dividing issue between agri-food

activists as concerns strategy for pursuing FSv. To our knowledge, this is the first empirical attempt to explore the meaning ascribed to FSv by alternative agri-food movements in the Global North.

The construction of food sovereignty in Catalonia: a Q study

The last 15 years, a new social actor promoting a critical approach to the agri-food system has emerged in Catalonia. This transformative agri-food movement encompasses a diversity of experiences and organizations: organic consumption groups,¹ agroecology-based productive projects, cooperation for development NGOs, environmental NGOs, research groups, agroecological producers' associations, associations for vegetal protection,² urban gardens, and educational initiatives, many of them participating in the Catalonia Peoples' Food Sovereignty Alliance (ASAC, from its initials in Catalan), a leading actor promoting FSv as a political project. In the global North context of Catalonia, it is urban consumers (mainly organized consumption groups) rather than producers (with the exception of a highly politicized agroecology-oriented minority) who are using the concept of FSv. This is striking given that in the global South context where FSv has emerged, the concept has largely been developed by food producers. We content that this reveals an interesting aspect of how the message of FSv is reconfigured within a global North context, that is, as a concept that mostly motivates consumers, rather than producers, into action for social change.

FSv is the reference framework of the movement generally seen as the alternative paradigm to the global agri-food system. However, a diversity of sensitivities and approaches to FSv exist. The analytical tension previously described is reproduced in Catalonia, since the diversity of the agri-food transformative movement includes both elements of radical/warrior and progressive/builder trends. The assertion that “[m]uch of what passes as politics these days is done through highly individualized purchasing decisions” (Guthman 2008, p. 1175) can easily be applied to the Catalan agri-food context. Individualized collective action (Micheletti 2003) is also present, a type of action generally not recognized as contributing to system transformation by theories critical of neoliberalism (Barnett 2005). On the one hand, food citizenship (Lockie 2009), consumer sovereignty (Korthals 2001), ethical

consumption (Clarke et al. 2007) and political consumerism (Holzer 2006) are attempts to conceptualize food repoliticization within an individualized collective action theoretical frame. On the other hand, FSv as a political proposal emerging from social movements seems to encompass a distinctive emphasis on the importance of collective—as opposed to individual—action for social transformation. Beyond individualistic approaches to social change, FSv serves as “a mobilizing slogan” “to appropriate and reframe dominant discourse” (McMichael 2008, p. 220). In addition to this mobilization potential, FSv distinguishes itself from the aforementioned concepts due to its normative component. This prescriptive basis is inferred by the “clash of models” thesis embraced by LVC (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). According to this thesis, we are currently living a historical moment of collision between two opposite agri-food models. Taking up the language of emancipation, LVC joins global North and South producers affected by the neo-liberal industrial system towards an agroecology-based FSv model. But different transition paths can be developed in different contexts and settings at the local level. It is on this premise that we are interested in problematizing the FSv construction process as it is happening in Catalonia. Beyond sharing the achievement of FSv as a desirable social change scenario in the agri-food field, different approaches within the Catalan transformative movement may prioritize interests and strategies in different ways. Revealing these can be beneficial for advancing the project of FSv in Catalonia, as it can specify issues of convergence and divergence, as well as providing information on the roots of differences among those participating in the project and thus help them advance towards forging common strategies. In order to detect such discursive typologies within the FSv movement we have used Q methodology.

Methods and procedures

Though developed within psychology (Stephenson 1953), Q methodology is being increasingly applied in other social sciences disciplines (Barry and Proops 1999). Q method is particularly used in political science studies (Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Dryzek 2005), but also in ecological economics (Barry and Proops 1999), environmental policy (Addams and Proops 2000; Ellis et al. 2007; Webler et al. 2009), rural studies (Zografos 2007; López-i-Gelats et al. 2009) and human geography (Eden et al. 2005). Q is “a technique to explore how people think and to look for patterns in their thinking” (Webler et al. 2009, p. 37). The aim of the method is “to study subjectivity in an organized manner” (Barry and Proops 1999, p. 339). Q methodology allows identifying the range and characteristics of relevant

¹ The self-organization of consumers to provide themselves with organic food through direct contact with producers is an increasing phenomenon in Catalonia. It is estimated that there are currently around 130 of such organizations (FCCUC 2010).

² These associations provide technical support to producers, from an agroecology and social values perspective.

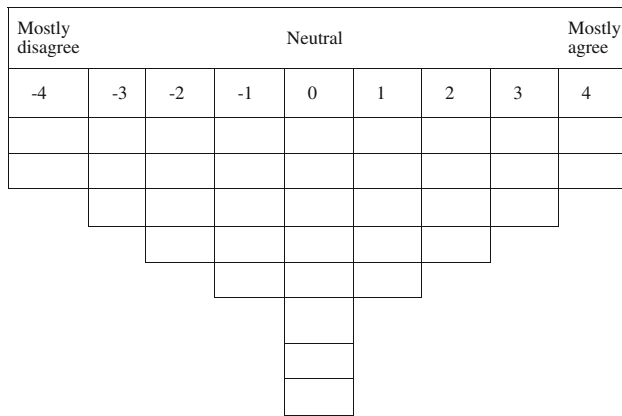


Fig. 1 The Q grid

visions, or discourses, on a topic. It is useful for specifying agreement between different worldviews on aspects of the topic, as well as issues that underlie differences between them. Nevertheless, and if activism is seen as a form of individual or collective action aiming at effecting social change (e.g., Shaw 2013), Q can tell little regarding how mainstream or marginal are the different visions of how to pursue social change within social movements. It also says little about possible material causes underlying difference and convergence in visions. Still, by revealing the breadth of discourses around a topic, and in particular the points of agreement and disagreement between them, Q can facilitate implementing more democratic and deliberative modes of negotiating positions and moving ahead collectively in the pursuit of social change.

The method is applied in five main stages. First, a pool of statements (called “the concourse”) concerning the research issue is generated. In order to do so, the area of interest has to be previously delimited, as well as the participant population. In our case, we wanted to approach the FSv construction process in Catalonia, as understood by members of the transformative agri-food movement. Second, the concourse has to be reduced to a representative sample (the “Q set”), usually through a formalized procedure. Third, participants are asked to sort the statements in a pyramidal grid (the “Q grid,” emulating a normal distribution) made of numbered columns reflecting a gradation of negative to positive values (Fig. 1). Each individual sorting (or “Q sort”) is assumed to best represent each individual view. Fourth, the Q sorts are statistically analyzed using Principal Components Analysis (PCA). Through PCA factors are extracted which are conceived as ideal Q sorts. Finally, the extracted factors have to be verbally interpreted to transform them into discourses, understood as social narratives.

In order to generate our concourse, we conducted a first round of interviews with 6 key informants involved in the transformative agri-food movement in Catalonia. These

Thematic areas	Conditioning factors for the construction of FSv in Catalonia			
	Internal (to the FSv movement)		External	
	Weaknesses	Strengths	Threats	Opportunities
What (normative aspects)	2	2	2	2
Who (actors, relations)	4	5	4	5
How (practical aspects)	2	3	2	3

Fig. 2 The concourse matrix (*numbers* refer to number of statements out of the total)

informants were selected with the premise of representing different profiles within the Catalan agri-food transformative movement, in order to make sure that the concourse was representative of the movement’s internal diversity of viewpoints. We conducted six semi-structured interviews (three women and three men), belonging to the following categories: cooperation for development NGO, agroecological production, ASAC, local activism, organic consumption cooperative, and FSv magazine, inquiring their views and perceptions on FSv in Catalonia and its challenges. The interviews were recorded and transcribed following a Q logic, meaning that the transcription was not literal but instead focused on collecting relevant statements. This initially provided us with 300 statements, which were reduced to 36 using a 3×4 concourse matrix (Fig. 2).³ A second round of interviews was then conducted (July–September 2011) in which 22 participants (the “P set”) of the transformative agri-food movement were asked to rank the statements in the Q grid on a scale +4 to –4, with +4 corresponding to “mostly agree,” 0 to “neutral/irrelevant/ambivalent,” and –4 to “mostly disagree.” In order to do so, participants were provided with 36 cards, each one containing a statement and numbered (explained in more detail and listed in Table 2 below), and a physical grid.

In Q method participants are selected attending to comprehensiveness and diversity, rather than representativeness or quantity (Eden et al. 2005).⁴ The P set subjects need to reflect the perspectives of the population of interest but do not need to reproduce their relative frequency, as Q does not seek to measure the spread of those views in the P set or in the wider population. Thus, the selection is made in a way that “provide[s] a reasonable representation of points of view in

³ Other studies have found 36 statements “to be manageable, both for the participant and the researcher” (Barry and Proops 1999, p. 339).

⁴ Representativeness in Q method is different from representativeness in surveys and other R-type methods. “The basic distinctiveness of Q methodology is that, unlike standard survey analysis, it is interested in establishing patterns within and across individuals, rather than patterns across individual traits,” as “what Q methodology attempts to elicit is the variety of accounts or discourses about or around a particular discourse domain, theme, issue, or topic” (Barry and Proops 1999, p. 339).

the relevant discourse” (Wolley and McGinnis 2000, p. 341; cf. Eden et al. 2005), in our case, the widest possible array of viewpoints on FSv within the movement. The concept of “purposive sampling” (Tongco 2007) employed for sample selection in quantitative and qualitative interviews could also be used to describe this process of P set selection in Q. People integrating our P set all belonged to the transformative agri-food movement but had different profiles—productive sector (4), organic consumption groups (5), ASAC (3), research (3), NGO (3), outreach activities (2), consumer-producer organizations (1), association for vegetal protection (1)—and different origins (though mainly from Barcelona). They were all engaged in the promotion of FSv and were familiar alike with the concept. After each Q sorting exercise an interview was held in which the participant explained her reasons for the ranking, emphasizing explanations for statements ranked in the +4, +3, -3, -4 extremes. Those interviews lasted an average of 50 min, were recorded and literally transcribed as additional material for factor interpretation.

Results: five discourses of FSv in Catalonia

Once all Q sorts were completed we used the PQMethod software (Schmolck 2002) to analyze data. This was done performing a PCA and a Varimax rotation to extract and rotate factors. The different possible solutions of the Varimax rotation were compared considering statistical criteria, total amount of explained variance and distinguishing statements, as well as qualitative data from the Q sorting process interviews. As a result, five factors were kept for rotation. This solution was considered to be the most comprehensive and explanatory, and accounted for 70 % of the variance.

Table 1 shows factor loadings for the Varimax rotation of the five-factor solution. The PQM software also identifies “defining sorts” for each factor, which are the sorts that weight significantly in each factor. In order to interpret the factors as discourses, we focused on the salient statements of each factor: those ranked at both extreme values (-4, -3, +3, +4), and those that distinguish each factor from each other (statements with $p < 0.01$) (see Table 2). This first descriptive structure was complemented with qualitative data from the Q interviews. Thus, five discourses were described, and named according to their main thrust: “activism,” “anti-purism,” “self-management,” “pedagogy,” and “pragmatism.”

Factor 1: “Activism”

The consideration of social mobilization as the essential condition to achieve FSv (distinguishing statement 28, scored +4) is the key trait of this discourse:

I believe that FSv will only be achieved if people become aware and go out on the streets to claim it, through multiple forms of collective action. (Interview 05)⁵

Because collective action is intrinsic to FSv this cannot be imposed by a government (statement 4, +3); nevertheless, the transformative agri-food movement must interact with the public administration (administration from now on), but previously reinforcing the social basis:

I think that the definition and the agenda, the strategy, must be defined from the social basis, from below. [But] at some point during the process, one must have a dialogue, or a confrontation, a debate, or all at the same time, with those responsible [for making decisions]. (Interview 02)

This perspective strongly highlights the international dimension of FSv (statement 5, +4). Though it may be raised at the Catalan level, the claim for FSv is a global demand for a solidarity-based agri-food model alternative to the dominant system and its planetary effects. Thus, while FSv is the peoples’ right to freely define their own agriculture and food systems, not all decisions are acceptable (statement 1, -3). *What* is decided is as important as *how* the decision is taken. As stated by one of the interviewees: “of course content is very important, and the content that we want to give [to FSv], not just that the process is fostered by the people and from the base” (interview 17). Moreover a risk of perversion of the FSv proposal clearly exists (statement 34, -4), as in the past the capitalist system has absorbed other concepts. Indeed, the logic of capitalism (statement 7, +3) and the weight of the agri-food industry in farm policy (distinguishing statement 32, +2) are the main problems FSv faces.

Activism strongly disagrees with the idea that a sufficient market has been developed for the productive sector to embrace FSv (statement 19, -4) (Table 3). This disagreement is expressed through different arguments: from a practical point of view, we are still far from having a consolidated market able to absorb the potential supply; from a conceptual perspective, what is questioned is the very idea of linking the market concept to the FSv ideal:

To say that a change of model is linked to the market I think is a mistake, I think it restricts the FSv definition excessively. And at the same time, I think that...the number of people consuming local, organic, whatever, is so small comparing to the rest, right? (Interview 21)

⁵ All statements and literal excerpts translated from Catalan.

Table 1 Factor loadings

Q sort	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	-0.0609	0.7756*	0.0452	0.0021	0.3691	
2	0.6824*	0.0696	0.3404	0.1432	0.0530	
3	0.5717*	0.2990	0.0513	0.1622	0.3758	
4	0.6645*	-0.0724	0.3398	-0.0501	0.4650	
5	0.8858*	0.1277	-0.0975	0.1003	0.0694	
6	0.0226	0.1431	0.0289	0.0873	0.7333*	
7	0.0408	-0.0085	-0.0596	0.5190	0.6672*	
8	0.3684	0.2344	0.3060	0.4600*	0.2929	
9	0.6364*	0.0295	0.2642	0.2542	0.1073	
10	0.7346*	-0.2709	0.0375	-0.0869	0.4339	
11	0.0284	-0.0474	0.7383*	0.2514	0.4399	
12	0.3160	0.2840	0.2110	0.1355	0.5462*	
13	0.5805*	0.2592	0.2318	-0.5325	0.1398	
14	0.3406	0.4488	0.1793	0.5730*	0.1068	
15	0.0812	0.0782	0.0758	0.9027*	0.2411	
16	0.6077*	0.5137	-0.0654	0.0720	-0.1408	
17	0.8539*	0.1341	0.0668	0.1104	0.0806	
18	0.2011	0.4222	0.0172	0.1913	0.4922*	
19	0.5800*	0.5178	-0.0572	0.3854	0.2334	
20	0.4384	0.0829	0.6826*	-0.1090	-0.3896	
21	0.7258*	0.1475	0.4274	-0.0725	0.2078	
22	0.4318	0.2073	0.1269	0.0612	0.7059*	
* 'Defining Q sorts'; significant loading cases ($p < 0.01$) in bold	% explained variance	27	9	8	11	15

Factor 2: "Anti-purism"

The main argument of the anti-purist discourse is that there are two fundamental actors missing in the FSv construction process in Catalonia: the administration and the productive sector. They both must be part of a wide alliance working for FSv because their activity is indispensable for its achievement. Regarding productive sector's absence, overcoming the current distance between it and the movement is considered to be the maximum difficulty to reach FSv (distinguishing statement 16, +4). As for public institutions, Anti-purism strongly disagrees with the idea of not involving the administration to achieve FSv (statement 15, -3). It states that despite that "the role of public administration is absolutely central, indispensable to achieve FSv" (Interview 01), the movement does not consider working with the public administration as a necessary strategy. A roadmap to interact with the administration and an actors' analysis is needed to overcome this handicap, in order to transform theory into practice and thus make the FSv proposal to move forward.

A negative assessment of the progress made with ASAC in the last few years is a strong point of divergence between this and the rest of the discourses (Table 4). Anti-purism

considers ASAC to be currently weaker (distinguishing statement 25, +4) precisely because it has not been capable of establishing a link with the productive sector (statement 13, -4) and because it does not think of itself as an interlocutor with the administration (statement 27, -4). This lack of interaction is due to an excess of ideological purism, and it is the purism of many actors in the movement (statement 2, +3) rather than the weight of the agri-food industry (statement 32, -3) that is a key factor obstructing the advance of the FSv proposal: "such 'Taliban-like' attitude is a mistake, it takes us nowhere and it is possibly one of the worst ingredients for collective action" (Interview 01).

As regards decision-making, although FSv calls for a democratization process, its result is not open but predefined (statement 1, -3):

The importance of food sovereignty does not lie in the right to decide whatever you want, it...consists of a number of specific things. (Interview 01)

Factor 3: "Self-management"

In strong contrast to the rest of the discourses, Self-management holds that the only way to achieve FSv is without

Table 2 Statement scores and salient statements for each factor

No.	Statement	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	FSv is the peoples' right to decide freely how they want their agri-food system to be; the result of the decision taken in such a way is of secondary importance	-3	-3	2**	-1	-3
2.	The purism of many actors in the FSv movement is hindering the advancement of the proposal	-2	3	-2	2	0*
3.	The gender issue is seen as important in Catalonia but it is rarely made concrete in practice	3	3	0	-1	-1
4.	I think collective action is intrinsic to FSv, otherwise it would not be FSv	3	-1	4	1	1
5.	FSv can be pursued at the Catalan level but it's a global demand, with an international perspective	4*	0	1	1	0
6.	In Catalonia we are increasingly moving far from FSv	0	-2	-3	-3	-2
7.	The problem of FSv is that it collides directly with agri-food industry interests and therefore with the logics of capitalism	3	1	-1	0	3
8.	You need to prioritize, and it is not about what is possible, but to begin doing some things renouncing to others	0	1	-1	2	4*
9.	From a production perspective, in Catalonia not many people talk about FSv as a term but they operate within it at a conceptual level without naming it as such	1	0	1	-1	0
10.	The broad base of our diet in Catalonia can perfectly meet the three pillars of FSv (family farming, agroecology and local markets)	0	1	0	1	-2**
11.	<i>With the push that we as NGOs have given to FSv we have often forgotten to leave space for farmers</i>	-1	0	-1	-2	-1
12.	Nobody has cared to make a good diagnosis of what is going on in Catalonia at the productive level: we know more about the problems of <i>sojeros</i> (soy producers) in Paraguay than about what is happening here	-2	-2	-1	-3	0*
13.	ASAC has found a way to create a link with the productive sector, finding the ways and adequate means to get closer to them	-1	-4	-3	0	-3
14.	There hasn't been any action plan to enter FSv in the political agenda, this has been and remains to be one of the greatest mistakes of the movement	-2*	2	0	3	2
15.	I think the only way of achieving FSv is to do it without the administration: to think they will do the job for us is not only to be too optimistic, but also to wish for something I don't want	-2	-3	3**	-4	-3
16.	The maximum difficulty to achieve FSv is to overcome the current gap between the movement and the productive sector	-1	4**	-1	-2	1**
17.	<i>There are prejudices in the productive sector towards our position and proposals</i>	0	0	0	0	0
18.	You need to establish alliances with the other: if you are incapable of recognizing otherness it is impossible to construct anything collective	2	1	3	4	4
19.	We have already generated enough market so that the productive sector will make a change towards an FSv model	-4	1	0	-2	-4
20.	A peasant reference in FSv issues is lacking: a farmers' union with this discourse would be a good transmission chain, and we don't have it	1	0	-2	0	3*
21.	<i>The productive sector has not moved towards our proposal</i>	0	-1	0	0	1
22.	In terms of problem formulations the problems identified by the productive sector are the same ones that we denounce from the movement side	-1	3	0	-2	0
23.	FSv can be achieved proposing feasible solutions to those who despite being integrated in the system choose to produce differently	0	0	3	2	3

Table 2 continued

No.	Statement	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
24.	If institutions do not promote agroecological practices and land access, many alternative experiences will never be more than resistance projects	1	2	-2**	3	2
25.	Three years after the formation of ASAC we are in a worse situation than when we started, and instead of broadening the group we have reduced it	-3	4**	-2	-1	-2
26.	The major difficulty we are facing is reinforcing the trench: it is clear “against whom” we are, but not so clear “with whom” we are	-1	0	1	3	2
27.	ASAC is a political actor, it is a subject of dialogue with the administration	-3	-4	-4	2**	-1*
28.	As a political demand, FSv will only be successful if it is the result of a social mobilization promoting it	4**	-1	2	0	0
29.	Although organic consumption is quite developed here, there is probably not enough to make a difference	0	-2	0	1	-4
30.	The lack of a political or mobilization perspective is one of the greatest weaknesses of agroecological consumption cooperatives	1	0	1	-4**	-1
31.	The work that agroecological consumption cooperatives have been doing is very important: they help relationships between producers and consumers, and pose alternative marketing and consumption channels to the conventional ones	2	2	2	4	0
32.	The strength of the agri-food industry in Catalan farm policy and everything related to GMOs production is the greatest difficulty to achieve FSv in Catalonia	2*	-3	0	0	-1
33.	The organic farming boom is detrimental to agroecological experiences and FSv	1*	-1	-3	-3	-1
34.	There is no risk of diluting the FSv discourse, there are no attempts of appropriating the discourse nor within the movement, nor outside	-4	-2	-4	-1	-2
35.	Farmers’ markets and imagining the neighborhood grocer as an ally in this process are instruments for FSv as long as they distribute local farmer produce	0	-1	3	0	2
36.	<i>The concept of FSv itself is still unknown by wide social sectors, but if we explain what it means in practice or its specific demands a lot of people will indeed feel identified with it</i>	2	2	2	1	1

Italicized statements are consensus statements

* Distinguishing statements with significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Distinguishing statements with significance level of $p < 0.01$

the administration (distinguishing statement 15, +3): “we have to construct our reality, and be more [people] so that they [the administration] follow us” (Interview 20). One must not depend on the administration to develop an FSv model, given its connections with de facto power: “the administration is controlled by the capitalist system and the industry, pharmaceutical corporations, etc.; therefore with them you cannot [count]” (Interview 20). Accordingly, Self-management strongly states that FSv cannot be imposed by a government (statement 4, +4). Being collective action based, alliances are a must in the FSv construction process (statement 18, +3), but not with the administration (statement 27, -4) (Table 5). However, this does not mean that it must be totally ignored, but rather that

a non-administrative interference with FSv experiences needs to be pursued.

The downplaying of productive sector involvement in the FSv construction process is another characteristic of the self-management discourse. The reasons behind this are the small size of peasants’ population in Catalonia,⁶ and the reliance in their active involvement later on once they see FSv practices as tangible alternatives: “as I see it [the bulk of] peasants would eventually jump on, they don’t have to be the key actor” (Interview 11). FSv must be strongly

⁶ According to the Catalan Statistics Institute (n.d.), the active agricultural population in 2012 (fourth quarter) was 1.65 % of the employable population.

Table 3 Salient statements for factor 1, Activism

5*	FSv can be pursued at the Catalan level but it's a global demand, with an international perspective	+4
28**	As a political demand, FSv will only be successful if it is the result of a social mobilization promoting it	+4
3	The gender issue is seen as important in Catalonia but it is rarely made concrete in practice	+3
7	The problem of FSv is that it collides directly with agri-food industry interests and therefore with the logics of capitalism	+3
4	I think collective action is intrinsic to FSv, otherwise it would not be FSv	+3
27	ASAC is a political actor, it is a subject of dialogue with the administration	-3
1	FSv is the peoples' right to decide freely how they want their agri-food system to be; the result of the decision taken in such a way is of secondary importance	-3
25	Three years after the formation of ASAC we are in a worse situation than when we started, and instead of broadening the group we have reduced it	-3
19	We have already generated enough market so that the productive sector will make a change towards an FSv model	-4
34	There is no risk of diluting the FSv discourse, there are no attempts of appropriating the discourse nor within the movement, nor outside	-4

Table lists factors with +4, +3, -3, -4 and distinguishing statements with *, **

* Significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Significance level of $p < 0.01$

practice-oriented, and so it is possible to achieve it by offering the productive sector feasible ways out of the dominant system (statement 23, +3), even through market mechanisms (statement 35, +3). However, the movement has not yet been able to establish a link with the bulk of the productive sector (statement 13, -3), mainly due to the movement's lack of organizational capacities:

People know the industry is screwing them, I mean, it's more about us not knowing how to create an organization or a social dynamic that wants to change the system's existence, right? (Interview 20)

Although sharing a dual definition of FSv with the rest of discourses, Self-management typically highlights the process dimension apparently attributing to the result dimension a secondary role (distinguishing statement 1, +2). However, as highlighted by interviewees, this is due to confidence that a truly freely taken decision would lead to an FSv model: "secondary in the sense that when you take the decision freely, with no constraints... for sure you will choose the right track" (Interview 11).

Similarly to Activism, Self-management strongly disagrees with the idea that there is no danger of perverting the original meaning of FSv (statement 34, -4), and one of

Table 4 Salient statements for factor 2, Anti-purism

16**	The maximum difficulty to achieve FSv is to overcome the current gap between the movement and the productive sector	+4
25**	Three years after the formation of ASAC we are in a worse situation than when we started, and instead of broadening the group we have reduced it	+4
2	The purism of many actors in the FSv movement is hindering the advancement of the proposal	+3
3	The gender issue is seen as important in Catalonia but it is rarely made concrete in practice	+3
22	In terms of problem formulations the problems identified by the productive sector are the same ones that we denounce from the movement side	+3
1	FSv is the peoples' right to decide freely how they want their agri-food system to be; the result of the decision taken in such a way is of secondary importance	-3
32	The strength of the agri-food industry in Catalan farm policy and everything related to GMOs production is the greatest difficulty to achieve FSv in Catalonia	-3
15	I think the only way of achieving FSv is to do it without the administration: to think they will do the job for us is not only to be too optimistic, but also to wish for something I don't want	-3
13	ASAC has found a way to create a link with the productive sector, finding the ways and adequate means to get closer to them	-4
27	ASAC is a political actor, it is a subject of dialogue with the administration	-4

Table lists factors with +4, +3, -3, -4 and distinguishing statements with *, **

* Significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Significance level of $p < 0.01$

the elements contributing to this dynamic is the organic farming boom (statement 33, -3):

...the [FSv] discourse is being appropriated, this is a reality, organic farming has become certain practices and not a philosophy, and the same is rapidly happening to agroecology. (Interview 20)

Factor 4: "Pedagogy"

The most distinctive element of this discourse is the political role it grants to organic consumption groups (Table 6). Pedagogy strongly disagrees with considering the lack of a political perspective as one of the great weaknesses of these groups (distinguishing statement 30, -4), because in fact "one of their pillars is self-consumption and the other pillar is the political perspective" (Interview 15). Moreover, Pedagogy distinctively vindicates their role (statement 31, +4), as they "have historically been very important for this movement" (Interview 14).

Table 5 Salient statements for factor 3, Self-management

4	I think collective action is intrinsic to FSv, otherwise it would not be FSv	+4
15**	I think the only way of achieving FSv is to do it without the administration: to think they will do the job for us is not only to be too optimistic, but also to wish for something I don't want	+3
18	You need to establish alliances with the other: if you are incapable of recognizing otherness it is impossible to construct anything collective	+3
23	FSv can be achieved proposing feasible solutions to those who despite being integrated in the system choose to produce differently	+3
35	Farmers' markets and imagining the neighborhood grocer as an ally in this process are instruments for FSv as long as they distribute local farmer produce	+3
6	In Catalonia we are increasingly moving far from FSv	-3
13	ASAC has found a way to create a link with the productive sector, finding the ways and adequate means to get closer to them	-3
33	The organic farming boom is detrimental to agroecological experiences and FSv	-3
27	ASAC is a political actor, it is a subject of dialogue with the administration	-4
34	There is no risk of diluting the FSv discourse, there are no attempts of appropriating the discourse nor within the movement, nor outside	-4

Table lists factors with +4, +3, -3, -4 and distinguishing statements with *, **

* Significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Significance level of $p < 0.01$

Conceived as an activity closely related to organic consumption groups, a second distinctive feature of Pedagogy is its strong emphasis on the role of education in an FSv construction process, according to which "an effort to explain must be done, an effort to translate the ideas we have into something which people can actually understand and align themselves with" (Interview 08). Although it considers collective action to be intrinsic to FSv, Pedagogy distrusts social mobilization as a vector for transformation, because of an associated element of spontaneity. FSv will rather be achieved through systematic, daily pedagogical groundwork to foster a change of habits, in which schools, but mainly organic consumption groups, are an important actor:

I always think that mobilization comes from awareness and experience, and a lot of people suddenly mobilized won't [happen]. So then I still believe that the role of the school is very important. It is very important that children are taught some things and not others. (Interview 14)

Organic consumption groups facilitate links between consumers and producers, and they do a lot of

Table 6 Salient statements for factor 4, Pedagogy

18	You need to establish alliances with the other: if you are incapable of recognizing otherness it is impossible to construct anything collective	+4
31	The work that agroecological consumption cooperatives have been doing is very important: they help relationships between producers and consumers, and pose alternative marketing and consumption channels to the conventional ones	+4
14	There hasn't been any action plan to enter FSv in the political agenda, this has been and remains to be one of the greatest mistakes of the movement	+3
24	If institutions do not promote agroecological practices and land access, many alternative experiences will never be more than resistance projects	+3
26	The major difficulty we are facing is reinforcing the trench: it is clear "against whom" we are, but not so clear "with whom" we are	+3
6	In Catalonia we are increasingly moving far from FSv	-3
12	Nobody has cared to make a good diagnosis of what is going on in Catalonia at the productive level: we know more about the problems of <i>sojeros</i> in Paraguay than about what is happening here	-3
33	The organic farming boom is detrimental to agroecological experiences and FSv	-3
30**	The lack of a political or mobilization perspective is one of the greatest weaknesses of agroecological consumption cooperatives	-4
15	I think the only way of achieving FSv is to do it without the administration: to think they will do the job for us is not only to be too optimistic, but also to wish for something I don't want	-4

Table lists factors with +4, +3, -3, -4 and distinguishing statements with *, **

* Significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Significance level of $p < 0.01$

pedagogy, because they reach a lot of people, including people who don't have the slightest idea of what production is all about. (Interview 15)

In accordance with emphasizing education as a means for FSv construction through large-scale value change, Pedagogy strongly disagrees with leaving the administration out of the process (statement 15, -4). The administration is considered to be the actor through which society can be reached as a whole. Furthermore, given its public nature it is imperative to appropriate it:

I believe that co-opting the administration is an obligation we have. We all pay for it, therefore we must do what can possibly be done to put the administration in line with what we think... and we have to ensure that what we want for ourselves is applied for everyone, and I believe there is only one way of [doing] this, and this is through administrative processes. (Interview 15)

Forming alliances with other actors is crucial for the process of constructing FSv (statement 18, +4) and this must be done avoiding exclusive approaches because “if we ignore people who don’t do things the way we like, then we’ll have our small bubble of individuals doing things really cool but we will not be effective for social transformation” (Interview 15). Within this “positive sum” logic, Pedagogy does not consider the boom in organic farming as a threat to FSv (statement 33, -3). Though it might create some confusion, it is rather an opportunity to bring people closer to the proposal while familiarizing themselves with certain values and practices.

Factor 5: “Pragmatism”

I believe you must have achievable objectives and do things step-by-step, and feel that you move ahead and pull yourself out of abstraction. (Interview 07)

A focus on transition is characteristic of the pragmatic discourse. According to a strongly strategic vision, and given the magnitude of the transformative aim of FSv, one must prioritize (statement 8, +4) (Table 7), as “changes that need to be done are many, radical, and involve doing things differently to the way we are functioning now (...). It cannot be accomplished overnight” (Interview 22). However, to assume a transitional approach does not mean losing sight of the original empowering goal and so a specific result is expected to come out of a democratic process (statement 1, -3):

[FSv] has the objective of democratizing the agri-food system through participation, and all that is...fundamental because it acknowledges that there has been a loss of power and participation...but not anything goes. (Interview 12)

In a transition process, it is crucial to set up alliances as inclusive as possible (statement 18, +4). However, wide alliances are not yet a reality due to some important absences. These absences are in fact even more important than the clash with the agri-food industry when referring to the main factors influencing the FSv construction process. An essential missing actor is the majority of the productive sector and this is considered to be the main problem for the promotion of FSv (distinguishing statement 16, +1). There are two explaining factors of this absence: the inability of ASAC to find adequate means to get closer to the sector (statement 13, -3), and the lack of a referential figure that could connect the movement and the sector (statement 20, +3) “beyond the minority experiences of our neo-rural friends” (Interview 07). Another missing actor is the administration, which is also considered to be necessary (statement 15, -3) when pursuing large-scale change:

Table 7 Salient statements for factor 5, Pragmatism

8*	You need to prioritize, and it is not about what is possible, but to begin doing some things renouncing to others	+4
18	You need to establish alliances with the other: if you are incapable of recognizing otherness it is impossible to construct anything collective	+4
7	The problem of FSv is that it collides directly with agri-food industry interests and therefore with the logics of capitalism	+3
20*	A peasant reference in FSv issues is lacking: a farmers’ union with this discourse would be a good transmission chain, and we don’t have it	+3
23	FSv can be achieved proposing feasible solutions to those who despite being integrated in the system choose to produce differently	+3
1	FSv is the peoples’ right to decide freely how they want their agri-food system to be; the result of the decision taken in such a way is of secondary importance	-3
13	ASAC has found a way to create a link with the productive sector, finding the ways and adequate means to get closer to them	-3
15	I think the only way of achieving FSv is to do it without the administration: to think they will do the job for us is not only to be too optimistic, but also to wish for something I don’t want	-3
19	We have already generated enough market so that the productive sector will make a change towards an FSv model	-4
29	Although organic consumption is quite developed here, there is probably not enough to make a difference	-4

Table lists factors with +4, +3, -3, -4 and distinguishing statements with *, **

* Significance level of $p < 0.05$

** Significance level of $p < 0.01$

You can [yourself] start some things, but for them to have a big effect it must be [done] with institutions. Otherwise, it will remain a small, diluted experience (...). If you want to improve the model and the system you have to do it at the institutional level. (Interview 12)

Finally, although the organic consumption sector is growing, it has yet not developed enough capacity to eventually help producers achieve a transition to FSv (statements 29 and 19, -4). This is a key issue because offering feasible alternatives to the production sector is an important element in the FSv construction process:

One of the first things we must do is assure, before selling a model or trying to prompt people to make a change, that you really can live out of it. Because we must not forget that people have to live. We can’t sell philosophies but a reality. (Interview 22)

The FSv construction process in Catalonia: the limits of agency for achieving change

Our results point at two interlinked issues in which discourses diverge: (1) the relevance they assign to the public administration and the productive sector as regards their role in the FSv construction process; and, (2) views regarding the type of political action necessary to achieve transformation, that is, social mobilization, institutional negotiation, self-management, education, and politics of the possible. Those two differences reflect different approaches as regards “subject” and “strategy” of transformative action.

Regarding strategies of transformation, differences in time-scales of social change divide discourses into two blocks. Activism and Self-management conceive change in short-medium terms, whereas Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism hold a medium-long term approach. Moreover, the former two seem to understand transformation as a final stage result, whereas the latter three understand it rather as an ongoing process. This difference of focus between outcome and process points to a mobilization of either structure or agency as ontological frames for “reading” the transformative capacity of practices related to FSv in Catalonia. According to Hollis (1997) political change can be analyzed in two ways: one explains change as a movement taking place within structures and sees individual action constrained by structure; the other considers those structures to be the result of individual actions, thus ascribing the capacity for agency to individual actions. In the context of our results, the duality structure-agency influences the effectiveness assigned by discourses to the so-called individualized collective actions, such as individual consumption as a means for agri-food system transformation. Activism conceives the current economic and political capitalist system as the major obstacle for FSv, and thus understands the struggle for structural change as the movement’s political aim. Social mobilization of ideologically aligned actors is the desirable strategy to channel contestation of de facto power and trigger a change of model. For its part, Self-management claims to work for FSv outside the system (i.e., the state) because of its links with de facto power and advocates for a “do it yourself and do it now” strategy, a policy of *fait accompli* according to which transformation is achieved by actually implementing the model. Change is therefore fostered by a distinctively agency-based “follow the example” attitude, which is in fact close to the Pedagogy vision. Pedagogy, Anti-purism, and Pragmatism downplay the relevance of an economic and political structure whose influence is recognized but not considered a determinant factor or the movement’s warhorse. These discourses highlight wider social dynamics (i.e., social demobilization linked to

political disaffection) and the lack of organizational capacities within the transformative movement as relevant factors influencing the achievement of FSv. Both elements are agency-related because they focus on people’s reduced capacity to contribute to change, so political action is mainly about enhancing this capacity rather than about modifying structural factors. Within a transitional context, changes in individual agency of both consumers and producers can be triggered through formal (i.e., schooling) and informal (i.e., consumers’ groups) education or through the provision of feasible productive alternatives. Public policies can also play a role supporting such practices.

Regarding the subject of transformation, the discourses are grouped into two blocks according to a broad (Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism) or narrow (Activism and Self-management) view concerning actors to be included in the FSv construction process. Political affinity is the factor that underlies different evaluations of the role of the administration and the productive sector in the process. Activism and Self-management consider the sharing of political motivations as a requirement for any person willing to be involved in the FSv construction process. This excludes from the FSv construction process those producers who at present do not share the aim of defying and emancipating from the current neoliberal agri-food system: “I don’t think that the objective situation of producers pushes them towards food sovereignty, they have to opt for it ideologically” (Interview 10). Conversely, Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism do not consider political affinity to be a necessary precondition, but a possible output of the ongoing transformative process. Following a “positive sum” logic, Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism try to build bridges with the productive sector and consider economic motivations equally valid as ideological ones for shifting productive practices towards FSv. As concerns public administration, all discourses understand that some kind of relationship must exist with an actor who unavoidably influences (mostly negatively) the FSv construction process. However, broad or narrow approaches concerning actors also influence views on how to achieve a change of administrative vision and practice. According to the narrow view (Activism and Self-management) there is a reactive relationship exemplified in the practice of denouncing policies contrary to FSv. Instead, Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism adopt a proactive perspective arguing that involving the administration is imperative if one wants to go beyond marginal experiences. Beyond denouncing, these discourses seek to implement a broader perspective, the hallmark of which is Anti-purism’s vision of the administration as indispensable for the achievement of FSv, implying that FSv must be conceived and developed as a public policy.

In line with their broad consideration of actors for FSv, Anti-purism, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism aim at changing individuals' behavior regardless their political motivations. Therefore they accept individual political consumption as a complement or even a precondition for collective action. Nevertheless, the literature highlights how food movements discursively opposing neoliberalization may in fact reproduce it through their responses (Roff 2007; Guthman 2008; Alkon and Mares 2012), thus creating neoliberal subjectivities. Along those lines, Activism questions the logic of individualization and the transformative potential of organic consumption groups because they lack systemic transformative purposes. As individual strategies, political consumerism (Holzer 2006) and the making of politics via markets (Lipschutz and Rowe 2005) are aimed at extending choices themselves, whereas systemic transformation is about changing the context in which choices are made. At the opposite side of the spectrum, Pedagogy vindicates the transformative role of those groups, which is developed through awareness raising for consumption behavioral changes. On this issue, Self-management aligns with Anti-purism and Pragmatism, which are closer to the Pedagogy vision and value positively organic consumption groups as socialization spaces that can foster political awakening and engage critical consumers in wider political commitments.

As already mentioned, there is a contrast between conceptions of transformative action as an end-result or as an ongoing process. This contrast has a normative parallel in the twofold definition of FSv, both as a result (a model radically opposed to the neoliberal agri-food system) and a process (a democratization exercise in the agri-food field). Focusing on the result means placing the emphasis on materializing FSv as an anti-neoliberal project. Instead, a procedural focus emphasizes the democratic conditions of the process heading to that materialization. In this duality Activism and Self-management stand in the result-oriented side, and Anti-purism, Pedagogy and Pragmatism in the process-based side. However, focusing on the process does not imply that the resulting output is irrelevant; it rather means that a sustainable and legitimate FSv model can only be ensured through a democratic process. Both perspectives incorporate risks. Despite all discourses being against the imposition of FSv by a government, focusing on the model may open space for state imposition and create a legitimacy problem, e.g., in case of lack of popular support. On the other hand, focusing on the process may reduce FSv to food democracy (Lang 1998; Hassanein 2003) and market-activism (Roff 2007; Guthman 2008), thus eroding its normative and system contestation dimensions. The demand of a definite agri-food model is what distinguishes FSv from other food repoliticization concepts that risk reinforcing the dominant agri-food system (Guthman 2008; Blue 2009; DeLind 2011). Neither food democracy nor the

active participation of consumers motivated by ecological or ethical criteria guarantee the structural reconfiguration of the agri-food system required to achieve FSv. In the first case a "food democratic exercise" may result in a variety of agri-food systems, depending on the balance of values, interests, and ideologies of the people democratically choosing. In the second case, individual consumption concerns can be satisfied by the dominant system itself through conventionalization dynamics (e.g., certified fair trade and organic products sold through mainstream distribution channels) (Renard 2003). A heavy emphasis on either pluralism and democratic procedures or the satisfaction of consumption options can jeopardize the normative component of FSv.

Wherever the emphasis on the definition of FSv is placed, democratization is approached as an unproblematic process by both model-based and procedural views. The use of the term is rather descriptive and is not clearly defined in operational terms. If democratization is a process involving institutions, then the definition and implementation of public policies must be included as an arena of struggle. Indeed, the fact that the administration is currently not taking part in constructing FSv is not only seen to occur due to ideological elements (i.e., viewing administration as an ally of capitalism), but also as the outcome of the movement's ambivalent approach towards public policy. On the other hand, if the claim for democratization implies a change outside the state, then the agri-food movement needs to consider the risk that food activism may lead to market-based activism (Roff 2007) and consumer choice as regulatory strategy (Kjærnes 2012). Opting for change outside current institutions might also follow a self-governance model. However, this option is not represented in our findings, as what we call Self-management is in fact premised on market-based alternatives, which may reinforce individualization dynamics via political consumerism. Indeed, as stated by Alkon and Mares for North America, excluding the government as an ally may lead to "social change strategies that work through the creation of alternative markets rather than political transformation or even reform" (2012, p. 357).

Despite some discourses showing reluctance to support the market as a domain for agri-food activism and consider political consumerism as a useful transformative strategy, the fact is that consumer activism has a strong weight in the discourses' aspirations for change. Certainly, organic consumption groups are an important actor within the Catalan agri-food movement, and there is a strong presence of consumer identity in the discourses. Although individualized political consumerism can be an eroding factor for the completion of deep transformative aims, some authors point out that consumer activism does not emerge in isolation but is supported by collective mobilization (Kjærnes

2012), suggesting that viewing individualism and collectivism as opposing means for social change may be unproductive (Barnett 2005). Currently, the social narratives on the right strategy to achieve FSv in Catalonia disagree in their assessment of political consumerism and progressive positions (as these are understood by Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011) as a risk or as an opportunity.

Conclusions

Our study is the first empirical study on the (re)configuration of the meaning of FSv in a global North context. Using Q methodology we have identified five discourses on FSv, namely Activism, Anti-purism, Self-management, Pedagogy, and Pragmatism. Not only the strategy of how to achieve FSv but also the subject of transformation are key elements of divergence among discourses. The importance assigned to ideological affinity (i.e., sharing political motivations) can explain different views regarding the subject of transformation, particularly as regards the desirability of involving the public administration and the productive sector in the process of constructing FSv. As regards transformative strategies, short temporal horizons correspond to “radical” visions of change in the agri-food field, while long horizons correspond to “progressive” visions. These issues are ultimately related with the discourses’ very understanding of transformation as either a result or a process, in other words, as an ontological division. Depending on their views of transformation as either an end-state or an ongoing process, discourses draw upon either structuralist or agency-based understandings of transformative action. Thus, although FSv is the common political framework of reference of the transformative agri-food movement in Catalonia, different approaches concerning the proper social and political action to achieve that goal coexist within the movement: specifically, individualistic approaches to social change coexist with more classic understandings of collective action.

This diversity challenges the capacity of the transformative agri-food movement in Catalonia to promote FSv, because it creates fault lines between advocates of different approaches to political action. Advancing FSv in Catalonia depends—among other things—on the capacity of the movement to consider and integrate such conceptual and operational diversity in such a way that it allows creating alliances for transformation. To address this challenge, the movement could create a space of internal dialogue to deliberate on the diversity of transformative strategies within it. Our study findings could help define the agenda of such an exercise, as they highlight that ontology and meaning of “political action” are pressing issues for the movement to reflect upon. Through discussing practical

experiences, reflections need to focus on the limits of individual agency for transformative purposes and explore ways in which the capacity of individuals to contribute to social change can be enhanced. Furthermore, the movement should explore the possibility of integrating the existing diversity of political action in the public policy sphere to advance legitimacy and further social support for FSv. This strategy could also provide a contribution to a wider and relevant project of democratization: all discourses see FSv as not only an alternative to the current capitalist agri-food system, but also as a critique to representative democracy and a claim for more participative or even radical forms of democracy. Such forms are conceived as decentralized collective decision-making processes, but it is not clear how such a democratic system is to be developed. The agri-food transformative movement must also reflect on what kind of democratization is relevant, what role public policies are expected to play within it, and in what ways does FSv challenge our current system of public decision-making. Moreover, it needs to consider which practices it espouses for achieving social control of agri-food system in terms of direct democratic participation.

Finally, we have identified political consumerism as a relevant agri-food transformative strategy in our global North case of Catalonia. This is closely related to the strong presence of consumers (vs producers) in the FSv construction process, and provides an example of how the FSv proposal and concept might be reconfigured in a global North context. In this regard, a key issue that needs to be addressed both via political dialogue between actors engaging in FSv and through further research involves identifying the extent to which political consumerism serves to reinforce neoliberal subjectivities, or is rather a precondition for political transformation in the agri-food system. There is a need to further explore the relationship between micro and macro politics for systemic transformation, which essentially involves addressing the question of whether or to what extent political consumerism and collective action can be complementary strategies for achieving FSv.

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