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Constructing Food Citizenship: Theoretical Premises and Social Practices¹

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Abstract

The reflection on food citizenship becomes pertinent if we take into account the importance of food and nourishment as constituting that which is social, its economic relevance, its globalized character, the fact that it is a highly regulated sector, and the important risks related to food. This context justifies, as well as conditions, the possibilities and difficulties of the emergence of a food citizenship. The framework establishes the expressive dimensions and the spheres of praxis of food citizenship and of the construction of the policies that facilitate the emergence and consolidation of this new space in which to exercise citizenship.

In this paper, we will propose a concept of food citizenship based on the general concept of citizenship and of its connection to other similar concepts from which it must be differentiated and with which it must be related. This concept is based on the acknowledgement of rights –to food and to information about food– and of obligations, in private and public behavior, in political participation, in justice, and in cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: food citizenship, political consumerism, food democracy.

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1. Introduction

Food is the constituent and fundamental social fact of every society.² In addition to its social and economic importance –humans employ an important part of their economic resources and time in procuring food, preparing it, and consuming it– food constitutes one of the main spheres of public regulation. This dimension has been regulated since ancient times but it is very complex in present-day societies and depends, to a large extent, on supra-national organisms.³ Food is also one of the spheres that is most affected by processes of globalization and one of the objects of analysis –along with the environment– upon which the theory of risk society pertaining to today's societies has been constructed.

These characteristics are the context in which and the framework from which the pertinence of a reflection on food citizenship is presented. This context simultaneously justifies and conditions the possibilities and difficulties regarding the emergence of food citizenship. This framework establishes the expressive dimensions and the spheres of a praxis of food citizenship and of the construction of policies that favor the emergence and consolidation of this new space for exercising citizenship.

From this point of view, the conceptualization of food citizenship should consider the following issues. 1) Food, because it is radically necessary for individuals' survival and health, is a fundamental right. 2) Given its economic relevance, the important conflicts of interest that occur in the different links of the agrofood chain and the existence of powerful macro-corporations with a great deal of influence on shaping food regimes and models should be considered. 3) The fact that it is a sector that is highly regulated by public powers should make the food citizenry consider intervening in the processes of decision-making regarding food policy, as well as in its definition and orientation. 4) Considering the world-wide nature of food markets and the internationalization of the agrofood system, the action of the food citizenry should go beyond the limits of national governments. 5) Considering the environmental impact of agrofood systems and of the models of food consumption, the food citizenry should tackle the environmental implications of food behavior and of the productive systems. 6) Considering the exposure

² In the double aspect in which it serves for individuals' survival as well as for fellowship in dining, it is one of the constituent pillars of sociability. Food is a total social act in the meaning that Marcel Mauss gives to the expression as acts that put the entirety of society and its institutions into play.

³ For example, agrarian and food policy have been one of the pillars upon which the European Union has been built.

to human health risks involved in the food production and distribution systems, citizens should be provided with information so that they can make their food choices knowledgeably and in order to make the agrofood system itself visible. 7) Considering the world-wide nature of the industrial system of food production and its implications for populations that are distant in space and time, the rights of others and the effects on inequality and equity should be considered.

These circumstances define the space of food as an essentially political and not exclusively private sphere. The possibility of talking about food citizenship and the obligation to do so stem from the political character of food –from the perspective of a political economy of food. This means that, even when we acknowledge its social importance, we must take a critical look at the social responses and resistances to the dominant food models and systems. The point would be to convert everything related to food into a sphere for political action and social mobilization, that is, for the active exercise of citizenship. To this effect, Tavernier (2011), believes that future food policies should be based on a redefinition of the consumption of food products as an expression of citizenship. Citizen-consumers should realize that they could use their purchasing power to develop a new field of social agency and political action. We shall see that the political action that we propose must rest not only on exercising purchasing power, or on what Singer and Mason (2009) denominate “voting with your fork,” or on the construction of alternative purchasing systems, such as the so-called “short supply chains,” but that they must shift their interests and objectives to government action by means of different agencies and lobbies. This is exactly what the agents who are shaping the world system of food production and consumption do: bring their interests and objectives to government action by means of different agencies and lobbies.

From this perspective, in this paper we will try to construct the concept of food citizenship and its connection with other similar concepts that must be differentiated and related to it. Food citizenship would be an extension of the concept of general citizenship to the sphere of food, similar to its extension to ecological citizenship,⁴ with which it shares some features. In both cases, the issue is to “fill out the general architecture of citizenship” (Dobson, 2003, 2005). The pertinent question in the area of food would be:

⁴ A review of the theoretical approaches to the concept of ecological citizenship can be found in Valencia Sainz et al., 2010. Dobson (2003, 2005) is responsible for the attempts to endow it with an epistemological status. A review of the conceptions of ecological citizenship can be found in Luque (2005), Gómez-Benito and Lozano (2014).

What is the role of the citizenry in achieving a sustainable model of food production and consumption? It is only through active food citizens that sustainable, fair, and healthy food models and systems that fit people's true needs can be constructed.

In this paper, we will use a general concept of citizenship to identify its constituent elements in order to build the concept of food citizenship. Even though the expression is becoming frequent in sociopolitical literature on food, there has not yet been a systematic attempt to define it, as we shall try to do here. In one of its main orientations, special attention is given to the emergence of "citizen-consumers" parallel to the fact that food consumption is becoming a sphere to which citizenship is extended. However, these uses of the expression include more or less explicit notions that are relevant for the construction of this concept. The expression is frequently used as a set phrase with different meanings and with political or normative, rather than analytic, connotations. On the other hand, the expression food citizenship is associated with other similar concepts and terms that, without being identical to it, express aspects of what food citizenship could be. In the third section, we will review these concepts to extract some features and dimensions for a general definition of food citizenship.

Food citizenship can be approached from the theoretical level, by trying to define its specific features, independently of the real existence of subjects who respond to this definition of citizenship. Or we can work the other way around, by constructing a concept of food citizenship from the characteristics of the individual or group subjects who identify themselves as food citizens or using similar expressions. Both ways of approaching the issue are, in fact, necessary. But it seems more useful to start by constructing a general theoretical definition of food citizenship –even though we must always take into account the existence of these subjects and their characteristics- in order to proceed to demonstrate the existence of food citizens based on this previous definition. This is how the conceptual construction of ecological citizenship was actually carried out. But the existence of social movements that somehow invoke this expression or similar ones allows us to borrow key elements for the conceptual construction of food citizenship, so that it is not a mere abstraction with no connection to social reality.

The procedure that we have followed in the fourth section involves taking a stand that is not only an abstract, analytic stand, but also an ethical and normative one that is, on the other hand, inherent to any concept of citizenship. While the second approach –starting with how the subjects who identify with this expression characterize themselves - is a more analytical-empirical approach. The general definition involves a commitment to a previous social and political orientation that not everyone will share. Similarly,

conceptions of political society that are ideologically different exist. But it is precisely because food citizenship defines itself above all by rights that it is possible to build a concept with a more objective foundation, so that there can be certain elements of food citizenship that are more central and more widely shared than others.

In the end, a definition of food citizenship –just like ecological citizenship- is justified by the need to promote food citizens in order to build a healthy, sufficient, quality alimentation that is sustainable and fair. Following the reasoning of Valencia Sáiz *et al.*, (2010), just as democracy cannot exist without democratic citizens, a sustainable society cannot exist without ecological citizens and sustainable alimentation cannot exist without food citizens. Not only are democratic institutions necessary, but democratic citizens are, too –and ecological citizens and food citizens, as well. Sustainable food provision requires food citizens who have a certain public tension or commitment to their community and, in this case, to the global population.

Some reflections on this issue that can orient future research and the dimensions of analysis and debate follow.⁵

2. From general citizenship to food citizenship

The notion of citizenship includes three basic aspects or elements: belonging, rights, and participation. Emphasis on one or another of these elements reveals a particular vision of citizenship. The liberal tradition emphasizes rights, the republican tradition participation, and the communitarian tradition belonging (Peña, 2000). The three elements have a specific meaning for the issue we are dealing with here. However, we believe that food citizenship involves overcoming belonging as a previous condition for rights and participation. The condition of belonging to a political community involves acknowledging rights and a capacity and legitimacy to participate in public affairs, in public administration and in public government. Given that food is not in itself a link to any political community (although it is a link to other kinds of communities: ethnic, religious, moral, etc.), rights and duties and participation are what we must pay the most attention to in our attempt to define food citizenship.

For Marshall (1998: 37), “citizenship is the status awarded to the full-fledged members of a community. Its beneficiaries are equal regarding the rights and obligations involved.” Belonging to a political community, the

⁵ This line of reflection was initiated with the above-mentioned research project, as well as constituting its true *leitmotiv*.

status of being a citizen, turns the citizen into a subject of rights. This condition is the main element of the notion of citizenship in the liberal tradition. According to this author, the development of citizenship is identified with the progressive unfolding of rights, so that the status of being a citizen guarantees the enjoyment of these rights and, with them, the feeling of belonging to a political community.

As we know, Marshall (1998) distinguishes three kinds of rights: civil, political, and social rights, each of which would produce a certain kind of citizenship: civil, political, and social. In their historical display, social rights constitute the central contents of the welfare state. It is in this sphere where we should inquire into the nature of food citizenship, as social rights are the ones that guarantee all citizens, because they are citizens, access to the necessary means for enjoying decent living conditions. Social rights are what make freedom and equality real in real life, not only on the level of principles, as neither freedom nor equality would be possible without certain minimum material conditions of existence. These social rights have to do with the main spheres of social life: the right to work, the right to housing, to education, to safety, to health, to social protection, to culture, to a healthy environment, and to food.⁶ From this Marshallian perspective, what defines contemporary citizenship best is the acknowledgement of social rights, more than of political rights, as political rights are already taken for granted and only materialize in the virtuality of social rights. Because of this, social rights should be considered a prerequisite for political rights to become real. The subjects, insofar as citizens, should hold rights in conditions of equality with everyone else. Social citizenship, which Marshall discusses, involves the link between the legal-political status of citizenship and its socio-economic surroundings (Peña, 2000), something that has profound implications for identity and for the constitution of food citizenship, as we shall see.

Another issue related to the concept of citizenship as a subject of rights is the issue of its specific or universalistic nature. And this is where the first element of citizenship that we mentioned at the beginning, belonging, comes into play. As Peña (2000) points out, if the citizenship of rights (insofar as it refers to the sphere of government) were a closed space, it would involve the exclusion (from belonging) of those who are not considered citizens of a political community. The fact of globalization would, according to the author, seriously question this. As a result, a definition of food citizenship based on

⁶ Following Marshall, social rights cover “the entire spectrum, from the right to security and to a minimum of economic well-being to the right to fully share the social inheritance and to live the life of a civilized being according to predominant societal standards” (1998: 23).

social rights should refer to the globalization of food. On the other hand, if democratic citizenship has had a universalistic foundation, the notion of food citizenship should explicitly acknowledge this universalism of rights (which would affect the rights related to feeding immigrant populations and the rights of populations distant in space and time) and a universalism of collective action, as the objectives of this action surpass the limits of national governments. To this effect, food citizenship should be a cosmopolitan citizenship.⁷ This universalistic condition affects not only the spaces of civic-public intervention (beyond government) but also works to prevent the development of the particularistic activisms that often present themselves as genuine reactive expressions of citizenship, as opposed to the agrofood powers that be and their food models. The global or cosmopolitan nature of food citizenship would be similar to that of ecological citizenship, directed toward a subject that goes beyond the nation-state.

Another aspect of the concept of citizenship linked to the rights-holding subject concerns the relationship between citizenship and equality. If social rights, as Marshall understands them, are the instruments for turning equal rights into de facto equality, materialized in the idea of “social citizenship,” these rights are incompatible with environments that generate inequality. Following Peña (2000: 33), we can wonder “to what point are the meaning and reality of citizenship determined today by the model of reference that the market establishes and to what extent would a revitalization of citizenship require breaking with the logic of the market and orientation to profit, the conception of rights as <<knowledge>> and participation as the cost of investment.” The equality that the concept of citizenship involves always presents a line of conflict with the structural inequality of the social system. One of these forms of inequality appears in the unequal access to sufficient, healthy, safe, quality food.⁸ So building a food citizenship should involve overcoming this inequality by making the rights to food real. This also leads to a questioning of whether the globalization of the agrofood system and of the markets of food products (and the logic of these markets) is compatible with, and the extent to which it is compatible with, the existence of food citizenship

⁷ Along with Peña (2000), we acknowledge the theoretical and practical difficulties that a proposal for cosmopolitan citizenship and, therefore, a cosmopolitan food citizenship, run into. Nevertheless, some of the most significant food movements have this cosmopolitan, globalized nature, as in the case of “Vía Campesina.” Regarding the internationalism necessary for food movements, see Holt Giménez (2013).

⁸ One of the permanent manifestations of poverty has been poor or insufficient food, appearing as hunger. But in so-called opulent societies, inequality also presents aspects related to food.

The third of the initial constituent terms of the concept of citizenship, in the republican tradition, is the term participation. However, active participation in the affairs of a political community has many dimensions and aspects and this element of citizenship may perhaps be considered anachronistic in complex mass societies. From the liberal position, a kind of “passive citizenship” has been encouraged insofar as, in this tradition, what is important is to guarantee private autonomy, independence, and protection with respect to third parties, more than self-government, public autonomy, and the development of mechanisms that ensure the citizen’s power to govern (Peña, 2000). We can take useful orientations for defining food citizenship from both traditions. On one hand, there is the very idea of autonomy and independence –to which the idea of “capacity” should be added- and protection from third parties. On the other hand, there is the claim to active participation in public affairs related to food, by opening spaces for public discussion and for building mechanisms to control and watch over power – both in the large food lobbies and in the public agencies related to food themselves. All of this is in the line of participative democracy, despite its theoretical and practical problems, as citizenship does not become effective without the capacity to demand the acknowledgement of rights and the possibility of exercising them. “If rights are the requirements of citizenship, they are also the result of exercising this citizenship” (Peña, 2000: 36). In addition to autonomy and independence, it is also a matter of citizens’ capacity to change their legal and material situation and of their commitment to the collectivity, following one of the elements of citizenship according to the communitarian tradition.

Citizenship has also been presented as the set of rights and duties of the members of a political community (normally a nation-state). However, for ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2005; Valencia Sáiz *et al.*, 2010), duties, responsibilities, and obligations are more important than rights because they are projected upon populations that are distant in space and time (future generations), on other species, and on the planet itself. In the case of food citizenship, rights logically precede obligations, but without the acknowledgement of obligations there is no full citizenship. What are the duties of citizens regarding food? These duties derive, above all, from their condition as consumers: that is, from the different moral, environmental, and equity implications of their food behavior. Nevertheless, obligations also pertain to other food actors: producers, distributors, etc. What has been said for ecological citizenship regarding this issue of obligations or responsibilities can be extrapolated to the food citizen.

Finally, and just as in the case of ecological citizenship, food citizenship is exercised in both the private and public spheres, in individual and in collective

behavior. We shall see that many of today's food movements are preferably located in the private sphere, but others increasingly demand greater participation in public affairs related to food. Food citizenship should respond to the requirements of both spheres.

The construction of active citizenship with all these features comes up against formidable obstacles of all sorts. In present-day societies, citizens can feel defenseless against the multiform giants of bureaucracy and the market, or the great political and economic powers, all of which mostly escape their control. Citizens find themselves subjected to an asymmetrical communication by the powerful communications media and the power of publicity, which try to convert them into passive, uncritical receivers of their messages and products. But even "consciously oriented" citizens find it quite difficult to reconcile moral and political principles and rules with everyday practice, due to the enormous power of the structural contexts. As a social space where citizenship is constructed, the political dimension of civil society's answers to these enormous challenges must, however, be strengthened. If this is valid for political citizenship, it must be valid for food citizenship, too, if we can fully accept it, on a theoretical level.

3. Food citizenship as an emerging practice

Starting from the confirmation that there is no systematic definition of food citizenship, we can proceed to analyze some theoretical constructions related to similar concepts, from which we can extract and integrate elements that can be used in the theoretical construction of food citizenship. Given the space limitations, we will briefly review the main concepts and debates that can be associated with the concept of food citizenship.

3.1. From "consumerism" to the citizen-consumer

Political consumerism appears in the 1980s with the emergence of post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1997) and the increase in environmental awareness, to describe the shift from a conception of the consumer as a passive agent, focusing on his rights, to an active consumer, a morally responsible political actor, aware of her obligations (Gabriel and Lang, 2005; Sassatelli, 2006). Political consumerism has been defined as the choice of products and producers that consumers make based on political or ethical considerations, or both together, in order to modify institutional or market practices (Micheletti *et al.*, 2003). The consumer, by exercising her purchasing

power, influences the political dimension, so that actions carried out in the individual sphere, in the private, everyday sphere, can have repercussions in the collective sphere and in the public sphere.

In recent years the term “citizen-consumer” has been generalized to indicate that this power based on purchasing choice represents a new opportunity for consumers to exercise their right to citizenship. The citizen-consumer is the person who is capable of satisfying his or her personal desires while simultaneously promoting collective responsibility and the common good. This concept has had a strong repercussion in the food sphere, as the acquisition of food is not a private or banal issue but represents, rather, a fundamental space that acts as a nexus between both the private and the public spheres and that has been shaped as a fundamental starting point for political commitment. It is a sphere in which concerns and claims about the environment, health, and social justice come together, in which socially aware and responsible, sustainable food consumption is becoming a new terrain for political action. For Tavernier (2011), citizen consumers are described as principal actors.

Many authors do not consider the combination of these two terms “citizen” and “consumer” to be the most appropriate choice, although the reasons they give differ. Some opinions point out that it is not necessary to make this distinction, as consumption choices and political choices are, in practice, interrelated. The motivations that lead consumers to opt for a certain product are a combination of different dimensions, ones that could be called “selfish” (price, quality, enjoyment) and ones that could be called “altruistic” (principles, ideals, etc.) and they cannot be separated (Bakker y Dagevos, 2011), just as public and private interests overlap. Some urge us, therefore, to include the aspects linked to “citizen” among the characteristics of “consumers,” above all in the characteristics of the new, aware consumer. Some bet on establishing alliances with “weak sustainable consumption” (Bakker y Dagevos, 2011), while others suggest that we promote “alternative hedonism” (Soper, 2007), so that the common good becomes a basic aspect of personal satisfaction but without requiring a previous awareness of either “higher” values or “higher” motivations.

Other opinions indicate that these two dimensions, “citizen” and “consumer,” are not easy to reconcile because “While consumerism maximizes individual self-interest through commodity choice, the citizen-commons ideal prioritizes the collective good, which means that individual self-interest and pleasure can be trumped in the interest of improving sustainability or access to the commons” (Johnston, 2008: 243). One criticism of this is that the subjects that political consumerism pays attention to are the consumers; this means that, even though the collective dimension is

incorporated, emphasis is still given to the individual aspect of food. Hilton (2005) holds that political consumerism –and, by extension, the concept of “citizen-consumer”– places the focus of action on the market by focusing solely on rights. If there were interest in highlighting consumers’ obligations, the focus would be located beyond the market and would be oriented not only toward individual issues, but also toward structural factors and issues that affect the entire group of citizens. Jubas (2007) points out that citizenship is something more than consumption, while, according to Shiva (2005), democratization involves a radical change in capitalism and other structures of exclusion more than a new consumerism, even if this consumerism becomes political in nature.

3.2. Food security, food justice, and food democracy

Parallel to the interest in defending consumers’ rights and highlighting their ability to shape the food system, various concepts that include other dimensions of food and that underline the importance of integrating other actors and aspects of this debate have appeared.

- The concept of *food security* was coined at the 1974 FAO Food Conference so that national governments would guarantee “the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (United Nations, 1975). Over the years and due to pressures from civil society and NGOs, this concept has been reoriented from a perspective focused on the national government and on the aspects most closely linked to the production and distribution of food, toward a focus that includes non-governmental actors, with special attention to consumers, as well as other social concerns more closely linked to access to food, nutrition, public health, and sociocultural aspects. This shift provides the frame for the definition reached by consensus by the World Food Summit organized by the FAO in Rome in 1996: “Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996).

This concept has had far-reaching repercussions among social movements, especially in the sphere of the United States of America. For example, the Community Food Security (CFS) movement arose at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s to adopt sustainable community solutions to end hunger and empower communities to be self-sufficient on

the level of food. Since the time of this movement, food security has been defined as: “all persons obtaining, at all times, a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local, non-emergency sources” (Gottlieb and Fisher 1995: 3). In order to achieve these objectives, the choice was made to develop experiences such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers’ markets, and urban farms. According to Fairbain (2011), the CFS, because of its link to the concept of food security, is characterized by several ideas, as follows. 1) The central position given to the individual’s ingestion of calories and the choices made by the consumer in the context of a free market. 2) The absence of any questioning of preexisting economic structures. The movement works with the market structures to create new purchasing opportunities for socially aware consumers and new sales opportunities for small-scale farmers. 3) Reference to the political dimension is limited. The responsibility for transforming the food system is shifted from the government to the consumer, freeing the government from its obligations. 4) Very little attention is given to the struggle against social injustice.

As the years have gone by and in response to criticism, this movement has reoriented itself, both ideologically and, in practice, toward the concept of food justice, allowing it to integrate, as basic axes of action, the right to food, commitment to political processes, and the need to develop experiences oriented toward “localizing” the food system and mobilizing social actors (Wekerle, 2004).

- The concept of *food justice* arose from certain social food movements to underline the inequalities that are present in the food system in terms of distribution. It indicates the need to ensure the availability of healthy, fresh food and communities’ access to it, and to improve the living and working conditions of the actors involved in producing, preparing, and distributing food (Loo, 2014). The Community Alliance for Global Justice (2013) points out that “Food Justice is the **right of communities everywhere** to produce, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community. Good food is healthful, local, sustainable, culturally appropriate, humane, and produced for the sustenance of people and the planet.”⁹ Even though this concept, as we have seen, has allowed many social movements to include the issue of rights as well as the collective dimension of food in their claims, on both the theoretical and practical levels, there is still no clear reference to citizenship, to participation, or to the empowerment of social actors (Loo, 2014).

⁹ Taken from Loo (2014).

- The precedent for the concept of *food democracy* can be found in the work of Lappé (1990) and Lang (1999), and its potential lies in the way it questions the food system and in the interest in turning individuals from passive consumers, located on the sidelines of the food system, to active, informed citizens who actively participate in shaping the food system on the local, regional, national, and global levels. Welsh and McRae (1998) and Hassanein (2003) consider food democracy to be an objective but also a method for constructing political practice because it incorporates the subject of participation as a key element. As Hassanein (2003: 83) emphasizes, “Food democracy ideally means that all members of an agrofood system have equal and effective opportunities for participation in shaping that system, as well as knowledge about the relevant alternative ways of designing and operating the system.” Therefore, citizen participation is the main axis that will encourage the reorientation of the food system. For Levkoe (2006), for the transition to food democracy, people need to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to participate actively in society (and this involves their action having an impact on public policy). He believes that one fundamental element in this process is citizens’ collective action because this makes it possible for them to increase awareness as well as to pressure governments and generate viable alternatives to the present-day food system.

3.3. *Food sovereignty*

The concept of food sovereignty was introduced in 1996 by the international *Vía Campesina* movement in the World Forum on Food Security celebrated simultaneously with the FAO World Food Summit, becoming a precondition for food security. In fact, Patel (2009) and Beuchelt and Virchow (2012) hold that its appearance had an important influence on both the reorientation of the concept of food security during the Summit and on the evolution of the other concepts that we are analyzing here. “Long-term food security depends on those who produce food and care for the natural environment. As the stewards of food producing resources we hold the following principles as the necessary foundation for achieving food security. Food is a basic human right. This right can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security” (*Vía Campesina*, 1996).

Food sovereignty refers, in this first conceptualization, to individuals’, communities’, and governments’ right to determine, independently, their own

food and agrarian policies. By strengthening small-scale farmers and peasants, the intention was to contribute to reducing hunger and poverty in the world, and to promote rural development and food security. The definition of food sovereignty has changed over the years. Today, the Nyéléni Declaration condenses the key elements of this conceptualization: “*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 their own food and agriculture systems.*”¹⁰ It puts 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. Food sovereignty prioritizes 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 income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our 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 classes and generations” (Via Campesina, 2007).

Beuchelt and Virchow (2012) point out that food sovereignty is characterized by its interest in the following points. 1) The right to food, the right to produce food, and individuals’, communities’, and nations’ right to define and determine their own food and agrarian systems as well as their own policies. This includes marketing policies that prioritize national foods and productive needs over exportation, international commerce, and commercial agreements. 2) The establishment of fair prices adapted to production costs. 3) Public support of small-scale producers and their communities and the elimination of subsidies that encourage non-sustainable agrarian practices (including the absolute rejection of the use of patents and genetically modified organisms) and the unfair distribution of land. 4) Improved access for peasants, family farmers, livestock farmers, and indigenous peoples to control over productive resources. 5) Consumers’ right to have access to healthy local food and control over their food and nutrition.

Food sovereignty introduced a language based on the rights and obligations of individuals and communities that allow them to define their

¹⁰ Underlining by the authors of this article.

own food system, produce food in a healthy and sustainable way, regulate production, and choose their own level of self-sufficiency. Its most distinctive element is its configuration as a political frame that is a radical defiance of the status quo of the food system because it rejects the neo-liberal governance mechanisms of the food system (Benford and Snow, 2000; Patel, 2009; Fairbairn, 2011). It calls for a promotion of political, economic, and social changes so that all the actors¹¹ have the ability to shape food policies from different levels of action. It pays special attention to the reduction of the social inequalities that operate in the food system and that other concepts and movements have dodged: the rights of indigenous peoples, immigrant agrarian workers and workers without land, women, ethnic minorities, etc., both in southern and northern countries.

3.4. Food citizenship

Even though many of the characteristics of food citizenship are integrated into the rest of the conceptions that we have analyzed, the concept has not, until quite recently, had much theoretical entity. In the pages that follow, we shall deal with the genesis and evolution of the concept and extract the main features linked to food citizenship. Regarding this concept which has, until now, been used in a fragmentary and incomplete way, we will propose a series of ideas that can contribute to constructing a systematic, articulated theoretical model of food citizenship.

One of the precursors in this line was the sociologist Lyson (2000), who referred explicitly to this term when he indicated that civic agriculture has the potential to transform individuals from passive consumers into active food citizens. Food citizenship has been gaining strength in the literature on alternative food networks as the framework that makes it possible to understand the emergence of civic food networks, as well as the aspiration toward which they should orient their objectives and activities. Food citizenship consists of the acknowledgement of the *social right* to sufficient, healthy, quality food. It means the extension of the architecture of citizenship to a specific and fundamental sphere of social rights: food. However, in contrast to some of the concepts analyzed previously, the concept of food citizenship holds that food choices cannot be understood solely in terms of citizens' rights. Food citizenship is also an issue of responsibilities, duties, and

¹¹ Even though food sovereignty was created by fomenting and to foment autonomy and to promote improvements in the living conditions of peasants, small-scale farmers, and livestock farmers, as well as indigenous populations, its focus has broadened over the years to include a wide variety of social actors.

obligations toward 1) the rest of human beings, near and distant in time (future generations) and space, 2) other consumers and producers, 3) the environment, and 4) the welfare of animals. And it has to do with justice and equity. To be a food citizen, it is necessary to think about the implications of how we eat (Wilkins, 2005). Being a food citizen means reducing present-day levels of consumption of privileged populations based on their unsustainability. It involves more equal access to food and a greater empowerment on all social levels (Johnston, 2008). It also means the development of actions on the individual and collective levels, in the private sphere, and in the design and implementation of public policy.

Food citizenship involves the pre-condition of the subject's (the citizen's) *autonomy* and ability to define and exercise her food preferences. These conditions of autonomy meet with great obstacles in the sphere of food. On one hand, there is the lack of transparency of the industrial system of food production that invisibilizes the social relations and the environmental impacts of the agrofood chain. On the other, there is the growing distance, both physical and cognitive, between consumers and producers: producers no longer know the destination of their food products, nor do consumers know the origins of their food or the processes which it has undergone, etc. This, in turn, involves the right to information that is veracious, sufficient, and comprehensible to a citizen who is fairly well informed about what we eat.

The subjects of citizenship are all citizens. Most authors (Delind, 2002; Lockie, 2008; Renting *et al.*, 2012) believe that what makes food citizenship special is the interest in overcoming the limits established by the dualistic vision of producers-consumers and in reshaping the role of social actors in the food system, *integrating a multiplicity of actors* and reducing the differences between the different profiles. In contrast to the concept of "citizen-consumer" which places the emphasis on the consumers' power, food citizenship should constitute a citizen movement in which consumers, producers on different levels, and committed distributors converge. Food citizenship expresses a belief in a food model that is sustainable in all senses - economic social, and environmental-, and that tries to articulate new alternative economic spaces and transform the structures and organization of the agrofood system.

Food citizenship becomes evident in both the *private and public spheres*, in both the *individual and collective spheres*, and is intimately linked to the concept of autonomy. The individual sphere involves citizens' capability and autonomy to define and choose their food preferences and to develop the food behaviors they feel are best. The collective sphere involves the capability of taking (collective) action to intervene in the (political and structural) decisions related to food and to change the food behaviors and food models promoted by the

large agrofood corporations. In both spheres, the issue is not only to think and be aware, but to act. That is, to become a social agent.

Another distinctive aspect of food citizenship is the importance it confers on *participation*. Welsh and McRae (1998) and Hassanein (2003) indicate that food citizenship simultaneously suggests belonging and participation on all levels. Participation would, therefore, be the main axis that would encourage the reorientation of the food system and the fundamental element that would foment the achievement of food citizenship. For Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine (2011), and Renting *et al.*, (2012: 304), citizenship is constructed not only by a change in individual actions, by education, and by becoming aware of the implications of the present food system, but especially by defending shared goods through citizens' participation in community life and the public sphere. In contrast to the concept of "citizen-consumer," food citizenship requires and involves the right to participate in the governance of issues related to food and in the design of food policy. It demands transparency and information regarding the objectives and mechanisms of these policies and seeks to incorporate food into the public political agenda. These characteristics make it seem very hard to practice food citizenship in a context that is dominated by the large agrofood corporations and in an unsustainable, oligopolistic framework that generates deep injustices. Along the same lines as the demands proposed by the food movements linked to the concept of food sovereignty, food citizenship advocates promoting political, economic, and social changes so that all of the actors, from all the different levels of action, can practice the capacity to shape food policy (Patel, 2009; Fairbairn, 2011).

Food citizenship can only be a *cosmopolitan citizenship*, in response to the globalization of the world food market, to the global environmental consequences of the food production systems, to the very internationalization of the public agencies that regulate food, and to the progressively international nature of food movements. Faced with the internationalization or globalization of the agrofood system, in all of its aspects, citizen action should operate in this globalized framework, attending to the rights of citizens who are far away from one another but united by shared and interrelated problems. It can only be cosmopolitan, a defense of universal and global rights, not just local ones. It must be a defense of global obligations, not only local and individual ones; it must be global action, not just local action. Secondly, the necessary cosmopolitanism of food citizenship is the result of the environmental implications of agrofood systems. On this point, food citizenship coincides, basically, with ecological citizenship. Thirdly, the globalization of food markets presents issues of equity between producers and consumers in different regions and countries of the world.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of these theoretical orientations allows us to extract and to complete the main features of a theoretical model of food citizenship. Based on the Marshallian concept of citizenship, our analysis of the characteristics of the most relevant and similar concepts has enabled us to extract the main features of a theoretical model of food citizenship. A model under construction that can be useful for the empirical analysis of the real existence of food citizenship, although this existence will always be more a process than a state. So the analysis should answer the following questions: What is food citizenship? Are there food citizens?

We can propose a definition of food citizenship as the individual who has access to enough healthy, quality food or who mobilizes himself to achieve it. The person must have an active interest in defining and exercising his food preferences, something that requires an effort to be informed not only about what healthy and sufficient food is, but also about the conditions and the processes of the production and distribution of food throughout the food chain. This person must also be aware of the implications of social and environmental equity and of the wellbeing of animals, all of which is summarized in the expression “sustainable food.” Someone, in addition, whose personal food practices are coherent with these value orientations and these cognitive frameworks, and who participates in some way in collective actions oriented in this direction. And someone who attempts to participate in the governance of food affairs.

So, then, the issue is that a food citizen cultivates a series of values and attitudes –preferences, the manifestation of interest and concern— and of coherent behaviors, in the private sphere –food choices and habits— and in the public sphere –defense of food rights, impact on public powers. Domestic and private behavior that is publicly oriented because the community’s benefit would be the ruling criterion of private behavior (Hassanein, 2003; Johnston, 2008). A citizen who expresses himself on the level of awareness of food (knowledge, concern, and interest), of attitudes toward food and its regulation, and of private and public behavior. A citizen who includes all the social actors involved in food: consumers, producers, distributors, preparers, etc.

As Valencia Sáiz *et al.*, (2010) state regarding ecological citizenship, the minimum requirements to consider a citizen a food citizen are not clear; it is evident that it is a normative, ideal definition, but it serves to identify and situate citizenship¹² on a scale and to orient citizen sensitivity. But in addition

¹² The analysis of food citizenship should be filled out with the analysis of the obstacles to the emergence of this kind of citizenship, a task that we are working on.

to the individual factors that condition the emergence of food citizenship, it is necessary to take the structural and contextual factors that favor it, hinder it, or make it impossible, into account. In the case of food, the limiting structural factors of this food citizenship that condition access to knowledge and to real practices are extraordinarily weighty.¹³ In any case, these values, attitudes, and behaviors that define food citizenship are at the same time indicators of its existence and intensity.

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¹³ The description of environmental awareness identifies five basic dimensions: sensitivity, knowledge, disposition, and action which is, in turn, divided into individual and collective action (Chuliá, 1995; Gómez Benito *et al.*, 1999). Valencia Sáiz *et al.*, (2010) establishes three categories: moral adhesion, voluntary cooperation, and active participation.

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