

(RE)APPROXIMATING FOOD PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS IN METRO VANCOUVER, CANADA¹

(RE)APROXIMANDO PRODUCTORES Y CONSUMIDORES DE ALIMENTOS EN LA REGIÓN METROPOLITANA DE VANCOUVER, CANADÁ

REAPROXIMANDO PRODUTORES E CONSUMIDORES DE ALIMENTOS NA REGIÃO METROPOLITANA DE VANCOUVER, CANADÁ

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ABSTRACT

This paper interprets the Metro Vancouver food localization movement, through the lens of the second generation of food sovereignty, with the objective of exploring its economic dimensions. First we promote a theoretical discussion of food sovereignty explaining that it started in a rural setting of the global south as a means to contest the international neoliberal trade system, and how it has adapted in the global north to incorporate consumers. We then discuss the contradictions between British Columbia's and Metro Vancouver's food systems. In sequence, we present the results from interviews of the movement's stakeholders, offering a qualitative analysis. Our findings demonstrate that there are several economic consequences, identifying: i) farmer markets as currently the most significant channel for the commerce of local foods and how they have been responsible for (re)approximating food producers and consumers; also, ii) institutional markets as a next step that can represent a true democratization of good food.

Key-words: local food; food systems; food sovereignty; institutional markets; Metro Vancouver.

1 This reflection paper features the results of research from an analytical perspective, critically interpreting a specific topic based on original sources. The resources employed for this research are from: i) São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), that provided the first author with the scholarship Bolsa de Estágio de Pesquisa no Exterior (BEPE) to conduct the research project "Strategies for construction of food security and food sovereignty in Canada" between the period of November 2014 to October 2015 at the University of British Columbia (UBC), <https://www.ubc.ca/> Vancouver, Canada; and ii) Mitacs Globalink, that promoted the research internship which the second author participated, allowing for the field work, taking place also at UBC. Reception date 1/11/2015. Date of acceptance 15/12/2015.

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo se interpreta el movimiento de localización de alimentos en la Región Metropolitana de Vancouver, a través de la lente de la segunda generación de la soberanía alimentaria, con el objetivo de explorar sus dimensiones económicas. En primer lugar se promueve una discusión teórica de la soberanía alimentaria y explicamos que empezó en un entorno rural del sur global como medio para impugnar el sistema de comercio neoliberal internacional, y cómo se ha adaptado en el norte global para incorporar los consumidores. A continuación, discutimos las contradicciones entre los sistemas alimentarios de la Región Metropolitana de Vancouver y de la Columbia Británica. En la secuencia, se presentan los resultados de las entrevistas de los stakeholders del movimiento, ofreciendo un análisis cualitativo. Nuestros hallazgos demuestran que existen varias consecuencias económicas, identificando que: i) los mercados de agricultores, en la actualidad, es el canal más importante para el comercio de alimentos locales y la forma en que han sido responsables de la (re)aproximación de los productores y consumidores de alimentos; también que, ii) los mercados institucionales son el siguiente paso que puede representar una verdadera democratización de la buena comida.

Palabras clave: comida local; sistemas alimentarios; la soberanía alimentaria; mercados institucionales; Metro Vancouver.

RESUMO

Este artigo interpreta o movimento de localização de alimentos em Metro Vancouver, através da lente da segunda geração da soberania alimentar, com o objetivo de explorar as suas dimensões econômicas. Em primeiro lugar, é promovida uma discussão teórica da soberania alimentar explicando que essa começou num cenário rural do sul global como um meio de contestar o sistema de comércio internacional neoliberal e também como ela se adaptou no norte global, incorporando os consumidores. Nós, então, discutimos as contradições entre os sistemas alimentares da região Metropolitana de Vancouver e da Columbia Britânica. Na sequência, são apresentados os resultados de entrevistas com os stakeholders do movimento, oferecendo uma análise qualitativa. Nossos resultados demonstram que existem várias consequências econômicas, identificando: i) os mercados de agricultores como o canal mais importante para o comércio de alimentos locais atualmente, sendo que demonstramos como eles têm sido responsáveis pela reaproximação de produtores e consumidores de alimentos; e, ii) os mercados institucionais num próximo passo podem representar uma verdadeira democratização da boa comida.

Palavras-chave: comida local; sistemas alimentares; soberania alimentar; mercados institucionais; Metro Vancouver

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

In this paper we explore the economic dimension of the Metro Vancouver food movement, where we identify the emergence of new market channels for local producers. These have been a significant means of (re)approximating local food producers and urban consumers.

The hegemonic food system has been characterized by the distancing of food producers and consumers (Korthals, 2015; Pollan, 2007; Schlosser, 2001; Sonnino, 2010). This is because food has become understood, and therefore treated as, merchandise and not a right (De Schutter, 2015a; Nestle, 2002; Patel, 2012). In doing so the large producers focus mainly in the

economic dimension of food and not in its social aspects.

However, many actions have emerged that aim to prioritize the consumption of local products (Feagan, 2007; Kirwan & Maye, 2013; Weiss, 2012). There are too principle reasons for this: i) the contribution towards sustainability, due to reduced environmental impacts caused by the transportation of food (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Weber & Scott, 2008); ii) and the support of local economies (Vogt & Kaiser, 2008; Wittman, Beckie, & Hergesheimer, 2012).

This paper presents a synthesis of the results of a research conducted that identifies a process of (re)approximation

1. Vancouver is the most populous city of the province of British Columbia (BC), Canada, its metropolitan region is considered to be one of the most compact of North America (Condon et al., 2010).