



DIE ERDE

Journal of the  
Geographical Society  
of Berlin

# Engaging in the ‘multi-territorial site of the political’: Political practices of Latin American landless movements in the struggle for food sovereignty

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Manuscript submitted: 14 April 2019 / Accepted for publication: 14 November 2019 / Published online: 20 December 2019

## Abstract

*In both the global north and south the claim for food sovereignty (FS) has become a powerful antithesis to the globalized economy of food. Drawing on scientific debates around the spatial and political dimensions of FS, we will focus in this contribution on how this emerging claim materializes in practice and space. Therefore, we will analyze in an exemplary manner political practices of the Brazilian and Bolivian Landless Movements, which adopted the idea of FS as a guideline for their political action. Our results reveal that these groups do not only fight for FS in the form of ‘typical’ representational and overt political actions such as land occupations, the blocking of roads and manifestations. Rather, we will show that the Landless Movements also express their claims quite subtly, in surprising but yet very powerful ways through multifarious, spatially effective and meaningfully interconnected social practices, which reveal their political character only upon second glance. In order to conceptualize our observations and to recognize the political momentum of these practices, we draw on insights from social theory and political theory and identify three constitutive principles that enable us to make political practices in their ‘worldliness’ distinguishable and recognizable. Building on this conceptualization, we will further propose the approach of the ‘multi-territorial site of the political’ as an analytical tool to investigate the complex geographies of social movements, in particular but not exclusively, in the context of FS in Latin America.*

## Zusammenfassung

Die Forderung nach Ernährungssouveränität ist sowohl im Globalen Norden als auch im Globalen Süden zu einem mächtigen Gegenentwurf zur globalisierten Agrar- und Nahrungsmittelindustrie geworden. Aufbauend auf den wissenschaftlichen Debatten um die räumlichen und politischen Dimensionen von Ernährungssouveränität, widmen wir uns in diesem Beitrag der Frage, auf welche Weise sich diese Forderung in der Praxis und im Raum manifestiert. Zu diesem Zweck untersuchen wir beispielhaft politische Praktiken der brasilianischen und der bolivianischen Landlosenbewegungen, die die Forderung nach Ernährungssouveränität zum Leitbild für ihre politischen Aktivitäten gemacht haben. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass diese Gruppen nicht nur in Form von ‚typischen‘ offen ausgetragenen und symbolischen politischen Aktionen für Ernährungssouveränität kämpfen, wie z.B. Landbesetzungen, Kundgebungen oder Straßenblockaden. Vielmehr wird deutlich, dass die Landlosenbewegungen ihre Forderungen auf subtile und häufig überraschende, aber dennoch machtvolle Art und Weise einbringen – und zwar durch verschiedenartige räumlich wirksame und kontextuell miteinander verwobene soziale

Benno Fladvad, Johannes Glöckler 2019: Engaging in the ‘multi-territorial site of the political’: Political practices of Latin American landless movements in the struggle for food sovereignty. – DIE ERDE 150 (4): 197-213



DOI:10.12854/erde-2019-448

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Praktiken, deren politischer Charakter sich erst auf den zweiten Blick offenbart. Um unsere Beobachtungen zu konzeptualisieren und um das spezifische politische Moment dieser Praktiken zu erfassen, beziehen wir uns auf Ansätze aus der Politischen Theorie und der Sozialtheorie. So wird es möglich, drei konstitutive Prinzipien herauszuarbeiten, die es uns erlauben, politische Praktiken in ihrer ‚Weltlichkeit‘ erkennbar und unterscheidbar zu machen. Aufbauend auf dieser Konzeptualisierung schlagen wir als analytisches Werkzeug den Ansatz eines ‚multi-territorialen politischen Ortes‘ vor, der dazu dient, die vielschichtigen Geographien von sozialen Bewegungen – insbesondere, aber nicht ausschließlich im Kontext der Forderung nach Ernährungssouveränität – zu untersuchen.

**Keywords** food sovereignty, political action, re-/territorialization, practice theory, peasant movements, transnational justice

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, Latin American peasant movements have gained significant political influence and power. Especially in regions most affected by negative consequences of the globalized world economy as well as by persistent poverty and ongoing struggles for land, the transnational peasant network La Vía Campesina (LVC) has a strong influence on debates around the redistribution of land and resources, self-determined food production and the assertion of peasants' rights. The underlying notion of their key demand, the right to food sovereignty (FS), is entirely emancipatory and represents a radical counter-claim to processes of de-peasantization (Araghi 1995; van der Ploeg 2009) and to the dominant 'corporate food regime', represented by industrialized agriculture and globalized food policies (Friedmann 1993; McMichael 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014).

Many influential Latin American peasant organizations have adopted the idea of FS as a guideline for their political action. In particular, the Brazilian and the Bolivian Landless Movements (MST)<sup>1</sup>, both leading members of LVC, are key actors of the FS movement. In both countries, these groups are known for executing land occupations as the primary means to access land and to establish agroecological communities. Yet, the occupation of land and agroecological farming are not the only MST-activities: Our empirical observations from Bolivia (in 2013 and 2015) and Brazil (in 2016/2017) show that the MST – parallel to overtly expressed political action such as marching, protesting, blocking roads – expresses its demands in a rather 'micro-political', mundane and subtle, but yet surprising and very powerful way. In doing so, the MST engages in multifaceted forms of political practices, understood as agonistic practices "of speaking

and acting differently" (Tully 1999: 164) that aim to change the intersubjective rules of living together. Thereby, the MST creates situational and multi-territorial political spaces that transgress the boundaries of their agroecological territories or remote rural contexts.

In this contribution, we will examine, in an exemplary manner, how the claim of FS materializes situationally in practice and space. Therefore, we will show how FS practices unfold their complex geographies and their transformative, political character. In doing so, this article adds a political-geographical perspective on the production of space and territories in the context of the struggle for FS in Latin America. We draw on insights from political theory and praxeology in order to discuss the core characteristics of political action. On the one hand, this makes us alert for the relational and complex geographies of FS in Latin America; on the other, it enables us to recognize the distinctively political momentum of FS practices, which at first sight may seem rather mundane, quotidian and apolitical. We are convinced that this discussion is most helpful for a deeper and analytical understanding of FS in practice and of political action in general. Firstly, because contributions that explicitly focus on the spatial dynamics of FS are rather the exception than the rule within relevant research (these are Hopma and Woods 2014; Jarosz 2014; Trauger 2014); and secondly, because such an approach emphasizes the meaning, the construction and in particular the *reclaiming* of political space and power, which from our point of view are the key aspects of the struggle for FS in Latin America.

After outlining in brief the origin and the concept of the right to FS, we draw, in section 2, as a conceptual starting point, on a notion of territory that takes into

account both the physical and the ideological dimensions of space, which are both central within FS practices. Building on these insights, in section 3, we will develop a geographical concept of political action, since we argue that the struggle for FS is best understood as a conglomerate of multifaceted forms of political practices, which emerge "from worldly situations of injustice" (Barnett 2012: 678). We will refine this Arendtian notion of the political, emphasizing three constitutive principles that give social practices a distinctive political meaning. In section 4, we discuss two empirical examples from Bolivia and Brazil. In these, the right to FS spatializes situationally in the form of allegedly quotidian practices, which reveal their political character only at a second glance. Subsequently, in section 5, we suggest the concept of the 'multi-territorial political site' as an open and relational 'topology' that is alert to spatial and temporal multiplicity and which represents a tool for political geographers and other scholars to analyze the geographies of social movements and their transnational claims for justice.

## 2. Territorializing food sovereignty

When referring to territory, one usually considers it being a delimited portion of bounded physical space, a 'bordered power container' (Giddens 1987: 120), which is controlled by a sovereign power. In the modern world, in particular since the Peace of Westphalia, the most obvious manifestations of this division of space are national borders dividing the world into a tessellation of sovereign nation-states (Skinner 2010; Elden 2013). But what happens if this territorial order is put to the test? What happens if social movements, e.g. indigenous, feminist or environmentalist movements address their universal rights-claims directly at the transnational sphere in order to call for transnational solidarity and justice?

### 2.1 Food sovereignty: An emerging signifier on the move

One of these emerging universal rights-claims is La Vía Campesina's call for food sovereignty. It emerged throughout the 1990ies as a political counter-claim to neoliberal, entrepreneurial and globalized agrarian politics and practices, which Friedmann (1993) and McMichael (2005; 2009; 2014) conceptualize as the 'corporate food regime'. Analogously, van der Ploeg

speaks of a 'food empire', which he describes as an all-encompassing ordering principle "that increasingly governs the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food" (van der Ploeg 2008: 11). In the face of land grabbing, rural displacements, structural adjustment policies, price dumping and an increasingly industrialized and privatized monocultural agriculture, FS received broad attention within peasant organizations and movements, primarily of the global south (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). Its most common definition was formulated in 2007 during a seminal La Vía Campesina meeting in Mali. It states that:

"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. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations." (LVC 2007: unpag.)

It becomes obvious that FS is not a full-fledged political concept. It rather includes a variety of claims for justice and self-determination and is therefore best understood as a 'big tent', within which "disparate groups can recognise themselves in the enunciation of a particular programme" (Patel 2009: 666). FS thus ties together subaltern identities and their claims to a powerful utopian vision that Edelman (2014: 960f.) has labeled a "free-floating signifier filled with varying kind of content". Its mobilizing power does not consist of a clear definition or categorization what FS should look like but rather in its contingency and its transferability from the local to the global, from the rural to the urban and from one place to the other (Bové and Dofour 2001; Jarosz 2014; McMichael 2014). Consequently, Patel (2013) metaphorically describes FS as a 'signifier on the move', emphasizing its contingency and processuality on the one hand as well as its spatial fluidity on the other.

However, despite its contingent character, FS has a particular political meaning. At its core lies the right of peoples to control their own local, regional and national food systems, without being subject to external pressures and global market forces. Simultaneously, it refers to a set of norms and rights such as fair markets, agroecological production modes, unrestricted access to natural resources, self-determined food consump-

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tion as well as the full recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and women (Rosset 2003; Wittmann 2011). In contrast to the older United Nations concept of food security, which "is agnostic about the production regime, about the social and economic conditions under which food ends up on the table" (Patel 2007: 89), FS entails a radical and emancipatory notion in addressing and questioning the circumstances and spatially effective power relations of food production, distribution and consumption (Hopma and Woods 2014; Jarosz 2014; Fladvad 2017).

In the last years, several papers have been published that discuss the paradoxes, the contradictions and the various contents of FS (see e.g. Patel 2009; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Bernstein 2014; Edelman 2014; Edelman et al. 2016). Now, instead of reciting these discussions in depth, for our purposes, we want to focus in more detail on FS' spatial modes of action: As noted above, FS serves as a countermovement, as an antithesis to the deterritorializing forces of neoliberal globalization, which are characterized by a violent appropriation of food and agriculture, i.e. via land grabbing, privatization of common goods and other forms of capital accumulation (McMichael 2005; McMichael 2012). However, the practitioners of FS do not respond in merely criticizing the capitalization of agriculture and food in claiming redistributive measures and state interventions. They rather aim at a self-determined re-appropriation of food and natural resources via engaging in different forms of solidarity-based or 'moral economies' and agroecology (Edelman 2005; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012) as well as by referring to community spirit, to customary and indigenous rights, which van der Ploeg (2008) synthesizes as processes of 're-peasantization'. This strong orientation on re-ordering and re-appropriating space, therefore, urges us to have a deeper look at the conceptualization and usage of the idea of territory within FS discourses.

### 2.2 Fighting for FS – a dispute over material and immaterial territories

The notion of territorial sovereignty, i.e. the rule over enclosed and clearly defined material land, is by no means omnipotent and irrevocable. Likewise, the actual practices of sovereignty are rarely absolute and can be questioned (Agnew 2009; Elden 2010). As Trauger puts it, "the myth of the territorial basis of the Westphalian state system is increasingly chal-

lenged, and is being replaced with a network ontology in which sovereignty is an emergent property of social relations" (2014: 1141). Some argue that in particular neoliberal economic relationships are the key drivers of the eroding sovereignty of individual national states, leading to new post-national forms of exceptional sites and hegemonies (see Ong 2006; Agnew 2009; Mountz 2013). True or not, without defining a proper scale at which FS ought to be realized, LVC draws on the idea of self-determined and self-governing communities and producers, distributors and consumers of food. Thereby, FS essentially builds on a spatial imagination that challenges both the paramount sovereignty of state territoriality and the ordering power of capitalism/neoliberalism (Patel 2009; Trauger 2014), which includes the construction of alliances between most heterogeneous groups from both urban and rural places. In one of its newsletters, LVC states:

"Capital is appropriating our territories. Hence, we must respond by turning the struggle for land into a struggle for territory. This will require forging unions between – on one side – peasant farmers, day laborers, indigenous peoples, nomad shepherds, artisan fishermen, forest peoples and other rural communities, and – on another – city dwellers, especially those in suburban communities and consumers. [...] We must show that land in community hands is better for society and Mother Earth than land which is at the mercy of capital." (LVC 2016: 1)

Obviously, LVC understands the struggle for land as a strategic struggle for territories of food sovereignty. Now, one could interpret these struggles as being disputes over purely material entities – over land, water or resources. Likewise, LVC's activism appears as a claim for the formal recognition of peasant territories within the territorial boundaries of the respective state (Patel 2009; Edelman 2014). However, territory, in this case, is used in a much broader sense, namely as a 'political technology' (Elden 2010: 812), since it is embedded in an ideological struggle between two diametrically opposed understandings of how food ought to be produced, consumed and distributed (Rosset 2003: 2): One, in which food is a commodity, interchangeable and decontextualized from local food production; and another, in which food bears deep intrinsic values, originating from localized, culturally and ecologically adequate farming systems and in which it is perceived as a fundamental human right.

Following *Fernandes* (2009), this discursive struggle is best understood as a dispute over material and immaterial territories that constantly produces spaces of domination and spaces of resistance. This means that the (re-)claiming of territories of FS is indeed a matter of the occupation of physical materiality in the form of land and resources such as water, seeds and livestock. Furthermore, these struggles are part of a larger contestation of societal relationships and intimately interwoven with the immaterial sphere of ideas, paradigms and normative explanations. This far more subtle dimension of the struggle for FS refers to the cultural-symbolic appropriation of space, to the world of ideas and intentionalities that organizes and structures the world of objects and things. The dispute over material and immaterial territories is thus complementary and both dimensions are not to be dissociated from each other.

Consequently, we argue that peasant movements are not only to be understood as a sociological object of study, which could be analyzed adequately by simply dismantling its forms of organization. They also have to be interpreted as political counter-movements to capitalist modes of production and state power that spatialize through the struggle for (im)material territories. This struggle, in turn, materializes via the enactment of a multiplicity of transformative and political practices of peasants fighting for autonomy and sovereignty in the context of neoliberal globalization (*van der Ploeg* 2008; *Haesbaert* 2013; *McMichael* 2014; *Trauger* 2014). However, these practices, we argue, can neither be reduced to 'classic' forms of doing politics, such as negotiating, marching, blocking roads, nor to rather hidden and destructive forms of peasant resistance (*Scott* 1985). We rather follow the suggestions of *van der Ploeg* to look for "a wide range of heterogeneous and increasingly interlinked practices through which the peasantry constitutes itself as *distinctively different*" (*van der Ploeg* 2008: 265 [emphasis in the original]).

Nevertheless, if we also take *Swyngedouw's* (2011: 376) argument seriously that political action "cannot be theoretically posited or socio-spatially located a-priori, [but that] it is an emergent property [that] can arise anywhere and everywhere", we have to conjecture that it is possible to find FS practices in basically every imaginable situation of human living together, no matter how mundane it may seem. This, however, does not mean that any situation and every social practice are always inherently political. On the

contrary: In previewing our empirical results, we are convinced that there *are* specific characteristics that give social practices a distinctive political meaning and that allow us to recognize them as such.

### 3. Towards a geographical conceptualization of political action

In this section, we will dissociate ourselves from FS-related literature in order to gain a broader and more differentiated perspective on the peculiarity and the meaning of political action and spaces. In drawing on insights from political theory and practice theory, we will discuss three common constitutive principles of political action – 'publicness', 'affectedness' and 'self-referentiality' – that will provide an adequate basis for interpreting our empirical examples outlined in section 4 and for putting forward our own conceptual approach in section 5.

#### 3.1 Publicness

Since human geography is traditionally concerned with the spatial dimension of social life, we start in asking the question 'where' political action materializes and at which sphere of human living together it is directed. In doing so, it is most helpful to gain an insight into the work of *Hannah Arendt*, which in the past has been rather neglected by human geographers and spatial social scientists (for exceptions see *Markell* 2011; *Barnett* 2012; *Debarbieux* 2017). In "The Human Condition", *Arendt* (1998 [1958]) distinguishes human activity into three separate modes: labor, work and action. The first two – labor and work – signify all those human practices that serve to sustain life and that produce artifacts and objects of use, such as tools or commodities. Action is the mode of human activity that takes place and materializes in-between people via the acts of 'speech and action'. It therefore makes humans distinguishable in their plurality and uniqueness: "In acting and speaking, men [sic] show 'who' they are, reveal actively their personal unique identities and thus make their appearance in the human world" (*ibid.*: 179).

In consequence, 'speech and action' operate at the same time as the cause and the effect of plurality and difference and can thus be interpreted as the political mode(s) of human interaction. This becomes especially evident in view of the presumption that

'speech and action' rest on and actively produce the public realm, which *Arendt* separates from the not commonly shared private sphere of property, feelings and intimacy (ibid.: 50ff.). The public realm, instead, is the political realm, the 'space in-between people', a 'dissensual space' (*Swyngedouw* 2011: 376), where humans interact and communicate with each other, using 'speech and action', to express themselves in their plurality and distinctness (see *Lipping* 2010). 'The public', however, is not exclusively tied to human deeds and utterances; it also materializes in the form of shared symbols, artifacts such as commodities, everyday utensils or works of art. It does therefore not disappear as soon as physical encounter or visibility has ended; it rather persists in the form of various materialities and their particular social significances. In consequence, 'the public' is best understood as a shared space of diversity, difference and pluralist perspectives (*Schmidt* and *Volbers* 2011: 29).

Furthermore, when refining her notion of 'the public', *Arendt* (1998 [1958]: 50) establishes a distinction between "two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena": 'appearance' and 'the world'. The latter signifies the commonly shared space as it appears to us. It is not identical to the material earth and to things or humans themselves but rather to the shared space of interaction in-between things and humans. 'Appearance', instead, entails an active and spatial notion. It signifies the making visible or audible of individual experiences, passions, thoughts and feelings with the objective and with the result that they can be commonly shared by others in a 'space of appearance', "through which shared worlds of association and co-existence are constituted" (*Barnett* 2012: 679). With this idea, *Arendt* explicitly emphasizes the potential omnipresence of political action as well as their contingency and their spatial situatedness: "Wherever people gather together, it [the space of appearance] is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever" (*Arendt* 1998 [1958]: 199).

In sum, *Arendt* teaches us that 'to act politically' means to act in the public sphere. Additionally, it becomes clear that the boundary between the public and the private realm has to be understood in a relational way (*Markell* 2011), since it is possible to make private things – situationally and in a purposeful way – public, i.e. to express them, or to put it in *Arendt's* words, to 'deprivatize' and to 'deindividualize' them (*Arendt* 1998 [1958]: 50). However, if publicness alone would

be the only criterion for political action, it would imply that every thinkable social practice is per se political, unless it is carried out privately and hidden from the public. Therefore, the aspect of publicness in itself does not enable us to recognize the difference between apolitical and decidedly political practices, understood as practices that aim at changing the organizational structure of human living together. Therefore, we will now turn our attention to the aspect that political practices from our point of view always refer to and presuppose commonly shared experiences of affectedness and subjection.

### 3.2 Affectedness

The discussion of this second feature of political practices requires an engagement with an explicitly geographical understanding of the substance, the framing and the legitimacy of justice claims, which is especially mirrored by the work of political theorist *Nancy Fraser* (*Fraser* 2005; *Fraser* 2008). Without abandoning her former argument that justice claims are moving between the analytically distinct but empirically inseparable poles of economic redistribution and cultural recognition (*Fraser* 1995), *Fraser* develops a theory of justice that takes into account that contemporary "disputes about justice are exploding the Keynesian-Westphalian frame" (*Fraser* 2005: 4). She argues that in times of "injustices in a globalizing world, which are not territorial in character" (ibid.: 12) – e.g. free trade regimes, global media, the bio-politics of climate change – the regulatory power of national (social) democracy is no longer apt for guaranteeing equal rights and obligations for their citizens. In consequence, *Fraser* introduces a third, explicitly political dimension of (in-)justice which refers to the normative question of *who* belongs to a political community as "fellow subjects of justice" (*Fraser* 2005: 12).

This third dimension, which she calls 'representation', is however faced with a fundamental issue: If the state is no longer the adequate politico-legal arena for addressing, negotiating and guaranteeing justice in a globalizing world, there is neither an entity nor an ordering principle that decides who is represented, i.e. who belongs to a political community, and who is entitled to raise claims for justice. Furthermore, the question arises: How can we understand why people across borders, cultures and continents unite and form coherent and powerful political communities, such as the transnational movement for FS?

The answer is as easy as persuasive: Since nowadays, "globalization is driving a widening wedge between affectedness [from deterritorialized institutions, decisions and structures of governance] and membership" (Fraser 2008: 95), Fraser argues that it is necessary to decouple the idea of affectedness<sup>2</sup> from the principle of state-territoriality. In consequence, basically all structures of governance that are not limited to the national frame are only democratically legitimized, if those who are affected by and subjected<sup>3</sup> to them, have fair and equal chances to participate in the process of their political genesis (Barnett 2017: 173ff.). Accordingly, the answer to the question, "what [is it that] turns a collection of people into fellow subjects of justice" (Fraser 2005: 13), is neither shared national citizenship, geographical proximity, nor a common cultural heritage, "but rather their joint subjection to a structure of governance that sets the ground rules for their interaction" (Fraser 2008: 96).

This principle therefore urges us to take into account that the emergence of political energies and communities, contemporarily, has to be analyzed first and foremost in terms of the context out of which the experience of affectedness and subjection results. Affectedness is therefore the second constitutive principle for the exertion of commonly shared political practices, since it functions as "an animating political intuition, as a worldly normative force generating political claims and counter-claims" (Barnett 2012: 682).

If we now transfer this mode of thinking to our example of transnational peasant movements fighting for FS, we understand why, for instance, politically moderate and rather conservative farmers from Southern Germany seek alliances with Latin American or Southeast Asian peasant and/or indigenous movements who deliberately fight for radical agrarian reforms, autonomy and global peasants' rights<sup>4</sup>. The reason is that these groups are all affected by a specific contextual structure of governance, i.e. by the 'corporate food regime', which levels out differences in class, culture, identity, nationality and political socialization and thereby generates a unifying and highly political energy. It becomes thus clear that being commonly affected by structures of governance or being commonly subjected to forms of domination is the key driver for the emergence of political energies and communities.

### 3.3 Self-referentiality

As 'publicness' and 'affectedness' are from our point of view crucial to understand where, why and within which geographical framing political actions are being carried out, the questions of how they come into being and in which way they change society, nevertheless remain unanswered. In approaching these questions, it is most useful to have a deeper look at social practices themselves, in particular at their modes of action and their modifiability. We will therefore recall in brief the main assumptions of *Theodore Schatzki's* practice theory – the 'site ontology' – that explicitly focuses on the internal organization of social practices and their spatiality (Everts et al. 2011). However, since *Schatzki's* theory is relatively silent about the political dimension of social life, we will open his theory to the ideas of the agonistic thinker *James Tully* (see also *Dünckmann* and *Fladvad* 2016).

Central to *Schatzki's* theory is the ontological assumption that the world is being constituted by a more or less dense and far-reaching mesh of commonly shared social practices, unfolding in the form of 'doings and sayings', and arrangements, i.e. orders, artifacts or materialities (*Schatzki* 1996; *Schatzki* 2002). Even though it is analytically possible to separate social practices and arrangements, they appear as inseparable 'practice-arrangement-bundles'. These 'bundles' are, as *Schatzki* (2015: unpag.) claims, "inherently spatial phenomena [since] the spaces pertinent to social life are ever increasingly the product of practices". Furthermore, there exist four organizing components that give social practices their meaning and that make them recognizable as such. These are: (1) the 'practical understanding', i.e. the knowing how to do something; (2) 'rules', which are more or less formalized instructions how and under which circumstances a certain practice ought to be enacted; (3) 'teleo-affective structures', which entail both a teleological as well as an emotional dimension; and (4) 'general understandings', understood as overarching principles, such as shared norms, values, or ideas that organize not only one but various social practices (*Schatzki* 1996: 89).

According to the 'site ontology', social practices as well as their organizational components are never static or remain unchanged. *Schatzki* emphasizes this aspect in denoting that social practices are constantly being replicated and modulated within a 'field of possibility', in which only specific paths are open and

only certain changes can occur (Schatzki 2002: 211f.). However, in regard to the questions how and why social change takes place, Schatzki's theory remains rather silent. It is therefore most appropriate to look at a branch of political philosophy, which (like Schatzki) draws on Wittgensteinian philosophy.

According to Wittgenstein (2011 [1953]), human living together manifests in social practices that are organized by more or less binding social rules. These rules, however, are never fixed and always open for interpretation, adaptation and transformation – an understanding that is made very explicit by Tully. Drawing on Arendt's thoughts, he accordingly speaks of "the freedom of speaking and acting differently" (Tully 1999: 164) and thereby indicates that even in the most mundane, quotidian and routinized contexts there is always room for "reasonable disagreement and dissent" (ibid.: 170f.). These 'practices of freedom' thus bear the capacity of breaking with the routine, of beginning something new and thereby aim at modifying the intersubjective rules and understandings of human living together. In contrast to the widespread assumption that 'the political' consists in fundamental ruptures with the norm and in most visible clashes of antagonisms (see e.g. Rancière 2010), Tully thereby emphasizes the notion that political action, and therefore the exercise of power, exist and emerge within the alleged banalities and routines of everyday conduct (Tully 2008: 307).

However, it would be highly misguided to assume that social practices are always *per se* political. On the contrary, we are convinced that there is a fundamental difference in the large variety of social practices, not in ontological terms, but rather in regard to the question *how* these practices are being organized. This becomes especially evident as soon as one tries to comprehend the 'teleo-affective structures' of certain social practices (Dünckmann and Fladvad 2016), which means asking why and with which objectives and affectivities they are being carried out: Do they merely serve to sustain life or to satisfy needs (labor)? Are they carried out in order to produce enduring things such as tools or other objects of utility (work)? Or do they – additionally or exclusively – aim at the public realm, at 'the world' with the objective that they are commonly shared by others (action)?

As soon as this last question is answered in the affirmative, we may also have a look at the context they are embedded in: If they are related to an affecting and

subjecting structure of governance and if they simultaneously aim at questioning or altering in a self-referential way the rules of social living together, we can assume that the respective practices are 'practices of freedom', i.e. decidedly political practices that bear the capacity to question, to dispute and to alter in a self-referential way the intersubjective rules of social living together. 'Practices of freedom' are therefore characterized and organized by self-referentiality, i.e. by their ambition to question and to change their very own organizational components.

In the next part we will show, in an exemplary manner, how this geographical conceptualization of political action enables us to recognize political practices of Latin American Landless Movements struggling for food sovereignty.

#### **4. Political practices of Latin American landless movements**

In this chapter, we will firstly reflect in brief on our epistemological and methodological approach. Secondly, we will present two examples from Brazil and Bolivia, in which it becomes obvious how the struggle for food sovereignty materializes in practice and space.

##### **4.1 Following the phenomenon across space – epistemological and methodological reflections**

As we have argued already, the claim for FS takes concrete shape and manifests itself in specific political practices. These 'doings and sayings' always occur in a specific local context: They literally *take place*. Hence, they form contextual bundles of practices and material arrangements and thereby they become empirically perceptible in the shape of specific political sites. Taking into account this phenomenological, social-constructivist presupposition, it is most appropriate to draw on a hermeneutic approach that is attentive to the relational spatiality of the social (see Crang and Cook 2007). We thus conceive of social space as a dynamic, horizontally evolving 'topology' of meaningfully interconnected social practices and material arrangements, which represent our objects of research (Marston et al. 2005). In so doing, we simultaneously move away from the notion of a research field that is imagined as a spatial container with a predetermined shape, waiting for the researchers to describe



its social content. Rather, the actual field of research is essentially being co-constituted and co-designed by ourselves, i.e. by our research practices such as observing, asking questions or taking pictures (see Marcus 1995; Hannerz 2003). As we 'follow the phenomenon' through space and across multiple sites, the contours of the field emerge and take concrete shape *in situ*. We therefore connect with the investigated practices and never leave the respective sites untouched. Taking into account these methodological reflections, we adopt a 'multi-sited ethnography' approach whose essence is "to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)" (Falzon 2009: 2).

In exploring these facets of food sovereignty in practice, this section draws on several months of ethnographic research in Bolivia in 2013 and 2015 as well as in Brazil in 2016/2017. In particular, we combined narrative and problem-oriented interviews with MST members and field notes from participant observations during MST-gatherings and events. The research stay in Brazil comprised four interviews and several participations at local and regional MST events, e.g. the annual state-wide meeting 'Encontro Estadual do MST/PE'. The work in Bolivia was part of a broader research project on state-led and civil society efforts to realize FS, including five interviews with MST representatives and three participations at MST-events such as the annual MST-meeting in the context of BioBolivia, a national fair for agricultural produce (see Fladvad 2017).

#### 4.2 Modifying the rules: 'Um modelo diferente'

The Brazilian Landless Movement Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) is considered to be one of the most influential new social movements in Latin America. Since the 1980ies, the MST pressures the authorities for a profound and extensive Agrarian Reform, consisting of the redistribution of land and the construction of agroecological communities in the rural, so-called *assentamentos* (see Fernandes 1996; Ondetti 2008; Carter 2015; Robles and Veltmeyer 2015). As one of the leading members of the transnational peasant network La Vía Campesina, the MST has increasingly inserted the struggle for land into larger contestations of the dominant model of agricultural production on a global scale.

One of its *assentamentos*, the settlement Chico Mendes III in the state of Pernambuco in the Brazilian Northeast, is located at the rural margins of the metropolitan region of Recife, the state's capital with about 1.5 million inhabitants. The former sugar cane plantation was occupied by MST activists in 2004 and the general land tenure was granted to the 55 settling families by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) four years later. The established settlement covers 385 hectares for housing and cultivation as well as 126 hectares for forest restoration.

The manifold histories of the farmers before having joined the occupation are remarkable. Some of them were already agriculturists that were unjustly displaced from their lands or were forced to abandon their farmlands in the Sertão region due to severe droughts. Many others have been employed on the vast sugarcane or fruit plantations in the surrounding area, commonly with the oral, non-committal permission of the landowner to cultivate a small portion of land for self-supply. Some, in turn, had been urban workers or unemployed city dwellers.

Although different in extent and effect, they shared a political and economic marginalization and social exclusion and it was this joint experience of subjection that provided the common ground for their 'practices of freedom' (Tully 1999). According to the logic of the 'all-affected principle' (see section 3.2), the historical mechanisms of exclusion and exploitation of the rural and urban poor, the denied access to the means of production – particularly land – as well as the expansion of the 'corporate food regime' with its social and ecological consequences, generated an imagined community of 'fellows of justice', independent of their social or cultural origin (Fraser 2005). This 'worldly normative force' gained significance and fostered the exertion of political practices in order to proactively change the circumstances of life. Marginalization, police repression and violence during the years of occupation further consolidated this community over the course of time.

Due to their very diverse contexts, the majority of the occupants had little or no small-scale farming experience and even less knowledge about the concepts and techniques of agroecological and organic agriculture when joining the occupation. In combination with extreme soil degradation as a consequence of decades of monocultural sugarcane production or intensive livestock farming on the site, the new farm-

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ers faced serious difficulties in establishing productive plantations and suffered crop failures caused by nutrient deficiency, water scarcity or phytosanitary problems. Lacking technical or financial support by the local government, the settlement then initiated a process of agroecological transition in cooperation with students and academic staff of the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFPRE) in Recife. This transition involved projects of soil regeneration, reforestation activities, education and training in agroecological farming methods, field visits to other settlements working with agroecology as well as organic markets. The transition's final objective was the complete adoption of organic cultivation practices by all settlers in the *assentamento* and the successful establishment of an organic farmers' market. Therefore, the 'Rural Farmers' Association of the Settlement Chico Mendes III' was founded in 2011 and cumulated shortly after in the creation of the farmers' market 'Feira Agroecológica Chico Mendes', located at a public square in Recife.

In an interview, the president of the association remembers how they resolved that

"the settlement won't cultivate anymore with pesticides, won't cultivate anymore with slash-and-burn, this will all come to an end, because what we want today is preserve nature. And in order to achieve this, we have to begin a different form of plantation, a completely different model"<sup>5</sup>.

In view of our arguments in the preceding section, this statement gives us a first insight into the way how political practices of FS are characterized by the aim of changing their very own organizational components: The association's president emphasizes the initiation of a different model of agricultural production. On a weekly basis, this completely different model becomes visible as a mesh of certain practices and arrangements during the farmers' market. The president of the association, a farmer herself, gives an insight into

"the manner how we work on the market: on the market, we don't shout out loudly, you know? On the market, we ensure that the clients feel at ease, we don't urge them to buy, because if I have the right to sell my goods, my comrades have the same right. So we let the clients decide freely where to buy. We don't make a mess, we don't

shout, we don't call the clients, you understand? The only thing we do is, if the client comes and asks, let's say – Do you have cabbage? – And I don't have cabbage, I tell him – I don't, but my comrade over there, he has cabbage to sell! – And then I let him know, because everyone should sell"<sup>6</sup>.

What makes this profoundly interesting for this work is the fact that these rules – which appear to be rather informal agreements among the farmers – derive from a comprehensive codex established by the association's members. Titled 'Internal regiment for the agroecological production and commercialization', it comprises basic agreements for general orientation as well as a concrete set of praxis-orientated rules, which are mandatory for all members of the association. One of the more generalized principles encourages the producers to always cooperate and seek the equilibrium with nature by respecting, conserving and restoring the natural resources at the farm. Another principle encourages them to sell directly to the consumers and, in doing so, to create new societal relationships. Regarding the production, they agree on rules such as the abandonment of any industrialized agro-chemicals or artificial fertilizers; animal-friendly and species-appropriate livestock breeding; closed energy cycles, etc. With regard to the commercialization, the framework contains norms like the maintenance of clean market stands in good condition; respectful and pleasant behavior; uniformity and neatness of the vendors' shirts, aprons and caps; high sanitation standards; no price-beating among the vendors, etc.

At first glance, these practices might appear to be nothing more than simple supportive indications to establish successful farm management and marketing. Anyhow, is it really a political act to grow vegetables, selling them in a friendly manner while wearing a neat apron? In order to answer this question, we need to recall the remarks relating to political practices outlined in section 3.3. With that in mind, this mesh of practices and arrangements reveals a distinctively emancipatory dimension. The associations' members impose quite strict rules, or 'moral economic norms' (Edelman 2005: 338), on themselves and seek for 'shared values' (van der Ploeg 2008: 269) of mutual respect, community spirit and solidarity. The agreement not only defines what constitutes their model of farming as completely different. Moreover, it also defines what it does *not* comprise – the '*not*-doings and *not*-sayings', in modified Schatzkian words – and thus

creates an explicit and clear-cut distinction from the conventional, predominant model of agricultural production and commercialization. It provides guidance for the farmers and underlines the message of Jorge Mattos, the academic supervisor and co-initiator of the farmers' market: "The people have to see that what we do here is being done in a different way"<sup>7</sup>. The modification of rules by no means occurs as a political disruption, but in the form of a self-determined enactment in a peculiar 'micro-political' way. The rule breaking of the conventional praxis takes place in a quite neat, organized and mundane manner. Those trivial practices, though, unfold their effectiveness and potency by the self-referential act of breaking with the routine and turning alleged banalities into efficacious and powerful 'micro-politics' with a high transformative potential. As Jorge Mattos points out, a key component of the project is the creation of public visibility. The farmers' market not only provides an opportunity to commercialize products. It also serves as an important platform to generate attention. Thus, it creates a situational political space in the urban public realm, which, on the one hand, inheres features of both material and immaterial territorialities and, on the other, mirrors *Arendt's* idea of the 'space of appearance', outlined in section 3.1.

#### 4.3 Producing the public: '13 años MST-B'

In order to further illustrate how the MST purposefully makes use of specific situations to position their claims symbolically and physically in the public realm, we want to take a glance at another scenery that was orchestrated by the Landless Movement in the neighboring country Bolivia.

Driven by liberal reforms in the 1990ies and growing international demand, in the tropical lowlands of Bolivia, vast areas of arable land are being converted into monocultural plantations for the production and exportation of soybeans, sugarcane and sunflowers. Additionally, the country's food security depends on low price policies and importation of staple food, which undermines domestic production and small-scale farming (*Ormachea* 2009; *Ormachea and Ramirez* 2013; *Castañón Ballivián* 2014). Despite of the government's ambition to decolonize the state of Bolivia from economic and cultural heteronomy as well as to establish a society which is based on the cosmopolitanism of the 'good life' and the right to Mother Earth<sup>8</sup> (*Kennemore and Weeks* 2011; *Yates and Bakker* 2014),

these manifestations of the 'corporate food regime' are driving more and more small-scale farmers into landlessness. This development is further reinforced by deficient legislation and a lack of executive power, especially in the defense of customary and official land rights (*Urioste and Kay* 2005).

Hence, inspired by the MST in Brazil, the Bolivian Movimiento Sin Tierra (MST-B) was founded in 2000. Since then, it rapidly gained attraction by landless farmers and migrants from the western parts of Bolivia. In the last years, the MST-B basically gained prominence by occupying land and converting it into 'islands' of agroecological production within agro-industrial plantations and by fighting publicly for agrarian reform and for food sovereignty<sup>9</sup>. Although being less numerous and institutionalized than its Brazilian ally, its struggle is indeed successful. After years of physical and juridical struggles, the oldest and largest of these *asentamientos*, named Tierra Prometida, became formally recognized by the Bolivian state as Comunidad Agroecológica Tierra Prometida (*Collière and Cruz* 2011). Additionally, the MST-B is expanding its economic activities through the establishment of a national cooperative. Its main objective is to reduce the dependency from intermediaries and to gain more control over the supply chain for their agricultural produce<sup>10</sup>.

We therefore see that the MST-B is not only making progress in terms of the growing number of members or of receiving a legal status for their *asentamientos*. Furthermore, the MST-B also aligns itself strategically towards economic issues in building up self-governed and independent market structures. Apart from that, the MST-B also redefines its ways of 'doing politics' in presenting themselves not as a combative organization of squatters that use means of civil disobedience to push their political demands. They rather appear and describe themselves as an organization of producers with high community spirit, equipped with the unalienable right to produce food organically, self-governed and according to shared traditional norms and values<sup>11</sup>. The following observations, that were made during a research stay in 2013 in the city center of La Paz, the politically most important city of Bolivia (see *Fladvad* 2017), are therefore of utmost interest. BioBolivia is a yearly fair for agroecological produce, which also serves as a meeting place for those organizations and movements that feel associated with the food sovereignty movement. In particular, this affiliation stems from a joint affectedness by the corporate

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food regime that either manifests in various forms of material and economic dispossession, indignation and deprivation; i.e. in restricted access to markets, credit and resources, in price dumping, food insecurity, or in physical exposition to GMOs and chemical pesticides. Therefore, numerous and quite different organizations attend this event: Peasant and indigenous movements from the Western Bolivian Altiplano and from the Eastern tropical lowlands, associations of producers and cooperatives of quinoa, amaranth, tubers and other products as well as the Bolivian Landless Movement. This heterogeneity, however, is not a matter of course, especially if we take into consideration that there are several conflicting relationships between these organizations, due to different understandings of land tenure and market access<sup>12</sup>. Once again, we therefore see how the unifying signifier of FS unfolds its 'worldly normative force' in creating an imagined and powerful community of 'fellows of justice'.

As typical for a fair, BioBolivia stages agricultural produce and the traditional ways of rural life. The stall of the MST-B is no exception and several members present the high diversity of ecologically produced food-stuff such as fruits, vegetables and nuts. However, the MST-B not only attends BioBolivia for market activities. Furthermore, they use the whole scenery for a celebration of their 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In singing and dancing together, taking group photos and arranging produce to spell out "13 years of MST-B", they turn the fair into a public stage for their anniversary and their community spirit.

In view of our arguments in section 3.1, this specific situation obviously represents *Arendt's* idea of the 'space of appearance', a situational political site. In purposefully making themselves visible and audible in a specific contextual and situational arrangement, they recontextualize quite mundane 'doings and sayings' (dancing, singing, taking photos, arranging a collage) as political 'speech and action'. While aiming at a 'deprivatization' of their community spirit, of their way of living together and, most importantly, of their way of producing food, they situate themselves (and their claims) symbolically and physically in the public realm and thereby produce a situational and (im)material territory of FS. To be more precise, the MST-B members use their agriculture produce, i.e. objects of consumptions and commodities – those things that originate from 'labor and work', and which are, if considered individually, dissociated from the public realm – to "make their appearance in the human world" (*Arendt* 1998 [1958]: 179) and to materialize

the ideological and symbolic dimension of 'the space of appearance'.

From the perspective of the site ontology, the described practices (presenting food, dancing, singing, arranging a collage) and their materialities (the stalls, the produce, the bodies of the MST-B members) are thus being actively connected to other practices and arrangements such as occupying land, fighting for agrarian reform or sovereignly producing, consuming and distributing food. Furthermore, these interlinkages illustrate very clearly that the boundary between 'the private realm' and 'the public realm' is neither pre-given nor fixed, but movable, relational and ultimately dependent on the social practices and their contextual embedding (*Markell* 2011).

In consequence, the described scenery and the publicly performed practices of the MST-B members are not political *a priori*. Instead, what gives them their distinctive political meaning, i.e. their 'worldliness', is the fact that they are, on the one hand, embedded within a certain contextual framing of affectedness and subjection (see section 3.2) and, on the other, that their 'teleo-affective structure' basically consists in questioning and altering in a self-referential way the rules of social living together (see section 3.3). The MST-B does not only celebrate its anniversary at BioBolivia to win new customers or improve its public image, they rather engage in these practices because they aim to change society's relationship towards food and towards those who produce it. Obviously, these 'practices of freedom' are not characterized by direct political confrontation and fundamental ruptures with the norm, but rather by triviality, happiness and laughter. However, this does not mean that they are ineffective; on the contrary, following *Tully* (and bearing in mind our Schatzkian interpretations) we see how they reveal their political character in the actual doing, i.e. in conducting practices of "speaking and acting differently" (*Tully* 1999: 164).

### 5. Engaging in the 'multi-territorial site of the political'

These two sceneries illustrate, quite vividly, in which ways the Landless Movements of Brazil and Bolivia produce and engage in situational political sites which express the human capacity to 'act', i.e. to intervene in the world through 'speech and action'. Thereby, the MST-members actively contribute to giving the

emerging claim for FS practical meaning and material shape. In this regard, our argument here is that we consider the described social practices of engaging in market activities and of celebrating an anniversary to be decidedly political practices, since they are characterized by three common constitutive principles that make them in their 'worldliness' distinguishable and powerful: (1) they are directed at and manifest in 'the public', (2) they are embedded in and structured by a commonly shared feeling of 'affectedness' and subjection and (3) they aim, in a self-referential way, at changing the rules of social cohabitation, in particular of those social practices that are associated with producing, consuming and distributing food.

At this point in our argument, we would like to introduce the idea of the 'multi-territorial site of the political' in order to synthesize this geographical conceptualization of political action. This notion emphasizes that political action is not dissociated from social practices but that political practices are closely connected to seemingly mundane practices of our everyday conduct. Also, it highlights their contextual interconnectedness. We therefore frame the 'multi-territorial site of the political' as a far-reaching 'large social phenomenon' consisting of a collection of political practices that hang together in a meaningful way, without being physically bounded to each other (Schatzki 2015; Everts 2016; Schatzki 2016): The plenitude of political practices enacted by the MST in Bolivia and Brazil is thus being intertwined to a spatially discontinuous, but symbolically continuous arena, in which the peasant lifestyle, the *campesino* identity, is being staged and where the 'different model' of agricultural production and commercialization is made 'worldly'. In doing so, the MST carries the spatial metaphors and perceptions of rurality, a traditionalist lifestyle and local food into the urban environment in order to position their claims on the political agenda. Thereby, they representationally 'jump' between scales (Nicholls 2007), i.e. they strategically use 'the urban' as a topological nodal point and affective perceptions and images of rurality in order to raise a far reaching, transnational claim. It thus would be an insufficient account to conceive of the 'multi-territorial site of the political' as a collection of place-based worlds, as if the struggle for FS was constituted by actors in discrete areas bearing homogeneous identities and separate interests. Rather, it is by means of those sites that this struggle materializes, constituted by a wide range of heterogeneous and yet interlinked bundles of socially embedded practices and material arrangements. Not

only does each site represent an actively constructed (im)material territory of FS, the entirety of political sites jointly forms a complex network-topology of political practices that in different ways and to different extents are organized by the three constitutive principles outlined above.

This multiplicity, though, is not only of spatial nature. It also accentuates that transience, situatedness and alternative temporalities are as well peculiarities of the 'site of the political' – an aspect which is also illustrated by Honig in her discussion of the Slow Food Movement (Honig 2009: 57ff.). This multi-temporal perspective helps to put allegations against the FS movement of being a nostalgic anachronism that romanticizes agricultural practices from pre-industrial times into a new light: Even though they regularly emphasize seeking to protect traditional peasant forms of life and agricultural production, it seems misguided to see these territorialities as being backward and retrograde imaginations. In a certain way, the resurgence of a way of life in closer synchronization with the slower, non-industrialized pace of local and regional food production much rather represents a new temporality that tends to overcome the fixation to the speed of modernity embodied by the 'corporate food regime'. Following Haesbaert's (2013) suggestion, we should then, instead of dichotomizing and counterposing tradition and modernity, recognize those territorialities as a post-colonial amalgam in which multiple spatialities and temporalities merge together.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has outlined a geographical conceptualization of political action that we synthesize as the 'multi-territorial site of the political'. In so doing, it proposes specific bundles of practices and arrangements as an entry point into the political and emphasizes the importance of material and immaterial territorialities for social movements. The peculiarity of this approach lies in its attentiveness to the multiplicity of spatial expressions in far reaching political phenomena such as the struggle for FS. It thus allows political geographers to make the transient mesh of certain spatio-temporal 'micro-politics' tangible: FS comes forth as a counter-act to the perpetual expansion of capital shaping and dominating large parts of food production and commercialization. But not only does the globalized 'corporate food regime' construct multi-territorial enclosures, e.g. land grabbing and

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the construction of global value chains, its transnational counterpart likewise manifests in a multitude of territories of resistance that bear both a material and an ideological dimension. Central to our conceptualization is the notion that political action is not tied to pre-given, *a priori* extant political sites but that it manifests in a large variety of situationally emerging political practices that are characterized by 'publicness', 'affectedness' and 'self-referentiality'. This praxeological way of thinking, furthermore, emphasizes an understanding of political action as being closely connected to seemingly mundane social practices of our daily conduct. Such an approach opens a new research perspective for scientists interested in the spatial dynamics of social movements and their transnational claims for justice.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Florian Dünckmann and Jens Reda for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this article.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In order to simplify the reading flow, we will use the abbreviation 'MST' ('Movimiento Sin Tierra' in Bolivia and 'Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra' in Brazil) to denominate both the Brazilian and the Bolivian Landless Movements. In section 4.3, we additionally use the abbreviation 'MST-B' in order to differentiate the Bolivian from the Brazilian Landless Movement.
- <sup>2</sup> The idea of affectedness is not clearly defined in political philosophy. *Gould* (2004) understands affectedness as a violation of human rights by certain practices or institutions. *Bohman* (2007) rather interprets affectedness as shared experiences of domination and heteronomy.
- <sup>3</sup> In her book "Scales of Justice", *Fraser* (2008) prefers the terminology subjection instead of affectedness, which she used in her earlier publications (*Fraser* 2005). After *Fraser*, the term subjection, in contrast to affectedness, underlies a stronger notion of morality and the feeling for injustice (*Fraser* 2008: 64f.).
- <sup>4</sup> This was especially evident in the case of the congress "Global Peasants Rights" in March 2017 in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, which the authors of this contribution attended. See: <http://global-peasants-rights.com>.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Enilda Silva de Melo on 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 in São Lourenço da Mata, Brazil (Translated by J.G.).
- <sup>6</sup> See fn. 5.

- <sup>7</sup> Documented during a working meeting of the participants and organizers of the Farmers' Market on 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 in Recife, Brazil (translated by J.G.).
- <sup>8</sup> The guiding principle of the 'good life' (*vivir bien* or *buen vivir*) was entrenched constitutionally in both Bolivia and Ecuador as a fundamental normative directive and as an alternative to the Western growth paradigm. Although there are differences between the Bolivian and the Ecuadorian versions, it can be broadly described as an indigenous cosmovision, which is centered on the unity of human and non-human entities. (*Escobar* 2010; *Kothari* et al. 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> Interview with Silvestre Saisari, founder and former leader of the MST-B on 06<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 in La Paz, Bolivia.
- <sup>10</sup> See fn. 9.
- <sup>11</sup> See fn. 9.
- <sup>12</sup> Interviews with several representatives of Bolivian peasant organizations and association of producers in 2013 and 2015 in St. Cruz and La Paz, Bolivia.

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