

Washing process against Food sovereignty.

This proposal is an advancement of my phd thesis debated last March at University of Palermo. The title was “ New representations of rural Southern Italy. An ethnographic research of olive chain in west Sicily”. I studied relationship among actors of the chain from the bottom, including seasonal workers employed in the harvest, to the large scale distribution. One of the focus was on the role of pdo certification in growers community and in the all chain.

Now I am developing a project research about the organic, origin and workers' rights certification as buyers' tool to control and impose condition. I want to compare two main cases of use of this kind of certification in Spain imposed by the Rewe german company and in Italy proposed by Coop company with two european example of food sovereignty network. I insert this research project into an general and international one about the food sovereignty. Actually I am following the european process toward the second european forum of food sovereignty will happen in Cluj Napoca at the end of this October.

The aim of this project is identify some elements, actors, policies, public campaigns apparently linked to food sovereignty in order to stress out the current process of “ethic and biological washing”. In 70's the crisis of agriculture and growing competition drive to the necessity to find new ways to exploit natural resources. So in Europe rural development became one of pillar of Cap. Main tools became organic certification or origin ones. Today many companies above all retail ones promote new certification to demonstrate the importance for social aspects and for workers'rights.

So for example coop in Italy that is one of the main actor of italian large scale distribution promote a campaign called “Buoni e giusti coop” to impose to all suppliers to respect an ethic code. Or at the same time in Italy government is involved to promote a law against gang-masters. Also in Spain all farmers producing in Almeria district are obliged from large scale distribution from Germany or Great Britain to adhere to an ethic platform. In many cases we know firms have many ways to avoid the respect of rights workers even if they declare to be against exploitation. We can suppose companies are involved in respect of natural resources, quality of food or rights just a marketing strategy. So how explain this kind of actions or statements?

I believe is usefull identify this kind of falsification to avoid the plagiarism of words, topics and tools of the movement in favour of main actors of retailing revolution. We have to improve tool to face this process of washing.

In order to identify this “dangerous” elements of mistification is necessary to reinforce the awareness and knowledge about concrete process of food and social sovereignty. For example in Italy is actually alive a net composed by growers, consumers, activists, logistic workers that has the aim to support

local food system. The name of this net is “Fuori Mercato” and the main aim is to plan local exchange in order to exchange work for products or services. They are building local closed system based on basic needs of autonomous community composed by precarious people. But at the same time they underline the importance of solidarity even out of local system. Actually it is a national net with the aim for the moment to manage in an autonomous way the logistic for extralocal exchange. This is not a system to link growers from the south of Italy with consumers of the north but is also a try to organize autonomously the logistic aspect. For the moment extralocal exchange are allowed inside the net with the aim to collect collective resources to convert monoculture in the south of Italy in local food and social system. So starting from this example I will attend Nyéléni Europe Forum For Food Sovereignty to take a census of concrete experience of local sovereignty in order to identify distinctive elements between food sovereignty applied and abstracted slogan or campaign using words of food sovereignty movements.

So at the end I will compare some experiences of European network applying food and social sovereignty with the role of social, organic and origin certification in rural development in order to stress out how the most powerful actors of “Supermarket revolution” use topic, words and tool of food sovereignty movement to improve their power in market.

I am referring to literature on “Retailing Revolution” studying how the global supermarket chains and big manufacturing/food corporations have outsourced the most part of their production and have become mainly distributors (Harrison 1994; Gereffi 1994) (Burch, Lawrence 2007). The Retailing Revolution is thus strictly linked with what has been called the “logistics revolution” (Bonacich, Wilson 2008) or the “container revolution” (Cohen 2014). Since the 1960s, in many advanced industrial countries the power of retailing and logistics to determine how, where and when things are produced, assembled, transported, consumed, and finally transformed into waste, has grown enormously. In the US, Australia, and Northern Europe, these processes have been studied in different disciplines and domains. The sociology of agriculture and food (e.g. Burch et al. 2013), and the socio-economic historiography of capitalist food regimes (McMichael, Friedmann 2007), have analyzed how, in the current “corporate (or neoliberal) food regime”, supermarkets, fast-food outlets, and other large-scale food retailers have assumed a dominant position in global food chains. Retailers have been defined as “food empires”: they control a growing share of the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food. The power of “retailing giants” (such as Wal-Mart, the corporation with the largest number of employees in the world) to impose “private standards” on the global supply chains has been remarked (Lichtenstein 2009; Barndt 2002; Ploeg 2008; Burch et al. 2013).