Transnacionalism and Regionalization in Latin América: The Struggle for Food Sovereignty of Rural Women

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Abstract

Peasant women of social movements in Latin America are creating transnational networks, coalescing in claim for food sovereignty that involves searching aside for greater autonomy of peoples to produce food in a sustainable design distributive. Beside this, food sovereignty presents an opportunity for empowerment and recognition for women, their knowledge and their roles in social movements. From working in a MST settlements the paper addressed spiral and boomerang mechanisms linking local labor women with transnational demands by La Via Campesina on food sovereignty

*Keywords:* Peasant woman, transnational networks, food sovereignty, La Vía Campesina, spatial scales.
Peasant women in Latin America: transnational networking on Food Sovereignty as an empowerment tool on a multiscale perspective.

This article aims to understand how women networks are built within la Via Capesina (LVC), specifically in Latin America, around a specific demand such as food sovereignty.

From a multiscale perspective, we also endeavor in tracing how the transnational practices may be turned into a tool for the empowerment of peasant women at a local scale, or, in other others, in their daily lives. At the same time this is a search to understand how demands may be able to contain in themselves other demands, being transformed into demands that have the capacity to agglutinate other claims and several women's groups for the pursuit of gender equality.

In order to comprehend how the scales interact in the process of transnationalization of the demand for food sovereignty it is necessary to perceive how they are connected, and the impact they have on each other. Mostly analyzed at the local level from my research on gender identities of peasant woman around the food sovereignty and violence gender, made with peasant women from the Movement of Landless Workers (MST), settled in Hulha Negra County, Rio Grande do Sul. From this research, it was possible to understand how the different scales interact with each in the construction of the demands and practice of women collective action. Also, I propose to understand the role that gender identities has in this process.

In order to study about peasant women’s networks a qualitative analysis seemed more appropriate for the research, because of the subjective dimension of the issue. In addition to the literature review, empirical data were collected through participant observation in Hulha Negra settlements, as well as through semi-structured interviews
with women of different ages, but all of them were mothers, and who are or have been married. The selection of respondents was defined through participant observation, looking for different profiles including different levels of political participation within the settlements.

**Women’s transnational networks: the need to create new action spaces**

Changes happened in the international global system, changes on policy and economics, known as globalization. These changes were responsible for the emergence of new inequities, but also new opportunities. Marchand (2001) and Moghadam (2005) explain how these transformations, or, as proposed by Marchand (2001:1), "global restructuring", had an impact on women's lives. Transformations characterized by changes in politics and economy in the world order, can be characterized by neoliberalism, open markets, technology expansion, etc. (Jelin, 2003).

Both Marchand (2001), Moghadam (2005), as well as Dominguez (n.d.) noticed that from these changes the work of women in the public sphere remained connected to their work in the private sphere, even legitimizing the sexual divisions of labor, the divisions between productive and reproductive work, facing global restructuring resulted in further marginalization and exploitation of women. Furthermore, the relationship between gender, class and ethnicity seems to be fundamental to understanding how women felt the process of globalization.

The transformations of the "global reorganization" involved a new order and a new organization of space. The contestation and rearticulation of space also brings a new production of meaning, therefore linked to the identities and the construction of identities. Networks and transnational strategies arise as a response to this change called
globalization as a way of defense from the re-articulation of space that operates in conjunction with the construction of identities (Marchand, 2001).

Alvarez (2003: 534) claims that the feminisms are responsible for the “construction of new alternative public spaces and counter-hegemonic spaces” in different scales, local, regional and global, where new practices, identities, new meaning and resistances are forged.

Transnational networks are constituted by actors in different scales, as global, regional or local, this way, both action and discourses are territorialized (Causa, 2006). Besides, they develop a common sense and naturalization of interests that are symbolically effective (Causa, 2006: 3). For this reason, transnational networks not only operate in the international space, or out of nation-states, but also in global, regional and local scales, translating in the last one to the everyday practices as the result of the networked action, and that generates new proposals for these actions, as a double incidence (Keck y Sinnink, 1998). Understanding the transnational networks phenomena from a multiscalar perspective allows us to comprehend it in its generality. From local to global, understanding, in this case, the importance of the creation of networks and the need to exceed the boundaries of the nation state. Thus, a multiscalar approach enables better understanding of the phenomena. As explained by Cabezas (2012a: 9) a multiscalar perspective allows us to understand the relationships, which characterize the territory in its representations, since they are represented in more than one scale, then it is necessary to understand the transfers that occur on scales.

For better understanding the spatial scales interaction, the "boomerang" pattern proposed by Keck and Sikkink (1998) helps clarify how the demands can be constructed from different scales. This pattern consists in taking the claim from a scale to another within the organisations, which in this case could be either to local, regional scale or the
global scale, thus as a form of pressure and resistance to states, but also within the movements themselves as an expansion of a domestic demand. In this article the authors “boomerang” concept is adapted with the aim of understanding how women construct and take their demands at different scales, from transnational networks and how these demands become tools for women empowerment, with a constant back and forth movement between local and global, thus giving support for their claims and recognition.

**Women and Transnational Feminist Networks**

Until the mid 1980's women still have not developed a collective identity, not even a common sense of justice or common ways of organisation (Moghadam, 2005:2). Most of the literature produced about globalisation treats it as an economic process, but not as an engendered process (Op. cit.).

Since the 1990's the transnational feminist networks proliferate and help establish connections between North and South, their agendas centralized in the critics of neoliberalism, structural readjust, reproductive rights, physical integrity and autonomy (Moghadam, 2005: 9). The feminists agendas continued to express critics towards international organisations as the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, also policies that came from de U.S.A. (Op. cit.).

Moreover, the structural policies proposed by the international organizations, mentioned before, legitimize this tendency (Brenner, 2003). Women countered the neoliberal policies with policies and actions based on women's needs, thus bringing the together working class and peasant women under the argument that social rights are more important than the individual civil rights (Op. cit.).
Women organized in Latin America: different experiences

The process of emerging actors in Latin America was noticed in the end of the 1980's and mainly in the 1990's, in which the feminism appeared different than decades before, introducing in their discourses issues as class, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality, etc. as constitutive of their gender identity (Alvarez, 2001: 356).

Women became relevant regional social actors, not only in the feminist movements, but also in movements that were led by them, like the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, or from the Federación de Comedores Populares de Perú (Cabezas, 2007:270). As explains Cabezas (2007), the women's action were directed to the elaboration of public policies that look for an end to inequities, against the marginalization of women in social development.

The IV World Conference of Woman in Beijin, 1995, can be considered a benchmark in the organization of women in Latin America, as points Alvarez (1997). The process that started in Beijing had as a result the decentralization of spaces and practices of women that recognise themselves as “feminist”. Since then, the participation, the practices and the transformation discourses from these women were built inside not only the Woman Movement, but looking for the gender mainstreaming in different spaces (Alvarez, 2001: 354), as in the case of la Vía Campesina.

Over the 1990's arose in Latin America many women transnational networks, with different approaches, labor and claims, such as Remte (Red de mujeres transformando la economia). Remte arises in 1997, in opposition to the free trades in the region, as the ALCA, seeking women's economic appropriation in the search for alternatives to improve their life quality (Cabezas, 2007).
To better illustrate, the organization of women, at regional scale, with transnational practices in Latin America, was constituted by the indigenous women constructing collective demands against formal and informal actors (Cabezas, 2012:2), consolidating inside the space of Abya Yala. The identification of these women from different cultures and places is linked to the many forms of exclusion and violence they experience (Op. Cit.). These women that came from diverse movements, do not have their own space inside their movements, their participation was taken as complementary, and this is how the demand for a full participation started (Cabezas, 2012). Nevertheless, women with such diverse cultures created a common space supported by the identification with gender and ethnicity, building a transnational network, with a transnational practices agenda of struggles. Therefore, a form of transnational organization from common demands that intersect, such as gender and ethnicity, as well as historical identification.

Another example are the transnational networks the women built against the NAFTA free trade treaty. Edmé Dominguez (n. d.) analyses, from de Mexican women perspective, how transnational networks were constituted as a tool to face globalization. Women used transnational networks against the regional integration process, in other words, they organized around a demand. Dominguez (no date) tells that different networks against NAFTA emerged, showing different experiences. Some positive experiences towards transnational solidarity, as in the case of the Red Mexicana Frente al Libre Comercio (Mexican Network against Free Trade) exchanging information with Canadians and Americans getting to exert pressure to revise the terms of the free trade, and on the other side, asymmetries among women from different countries were also present in some cases. Those Mexican women had difficulties negotiating with Americans and Canadians, especially in the case of NGOs, because of inherent problems in perceiving who owned the resources for the organization (Dominguez, n. d.). Some
Mexican women felt that was possible to work around other claims, but the NAFTA issue was sometimes sensible to North American women.

**Women networks in Vía Campesina**

The Vía Campesina is itself a transnational network of peasant social movements, which involved 164 organizations from 79 countries, 80 of them in Latin America. The Vía Campesina aims to change the neoliberal political and social model, in a solidarity way, global, anti-capitalist and towards a popular sovereignty for the people. The Vía Campesina is understood as a transnational network of social movements in which there are both formal and informal organizations that through a shared identity are seeking social transformation (Eschle and Stammers, Niemeyer, 2007: 179). It acts as an external speaker, representing organizations that are part of the network, and as internal articulator (Borras, 2004).

In 1996, the year following the Beijing Conference, women of Vía Capesina organize themselves forming the Women's Commission to evaluate the needs and specific interests of women with purpose to develop strategies, mechanisms and action plans in all levels of LVC, establishing communication and coordination among women of the many organizations in LVC (Desmarais, 2007: 260). Thus is possible to see that the LVC itself fosters internal networks, within the network.

In addition to the claims of gender, it is also possible to realize that the objectives and class identity of Vía Campesina are present in women’s speech, bringing the fusion of both. Women recognize as their enemy not only patriarchy, but also capitalism and its

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2 The information about the organizations part of La Vía Campesina can be consulted on their official website. Retrieved from: <http://www.viacampesina.org/es/index.php/organizaciainmenu-44/los-miembros-mainmenu-71>
consequences for rural workers and indigenous women, positioning itself against changes in "global restructuring" mentioned by Marchand (2001) and Moghadam (2005) as well as the policies of international organizations, and the action of transnational corporations and their responsibility in ecological degradation, local production and people’s self-determination right.

One of the biggest challenges of La Vía Campesina is the transformation of its own sexist culture that is inside of the organizations that are part of it, as well as overcoming the gaps between theory and practice in relation to gender strategies and strengthening the ties between peasant women (García, s/f : 23).

The Vía Campesina operates at different scales, it is in itself a peasants global movement, it implements its policies and resolutions as well as many spaces are built to collective action. The regional scale in Latin America of the LVC is known as Cordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC). The CLOC is the regional arm of Vía Campesina, is defined as an anti-patriarchal organization fighting for social justice, preservation and distribution of land, water, seed, food sovereignty, sustainable agricultural production and equity in small and medium scale (CLOC, 2013). The CLOC does not act directly as organizing local scale, unlike the LVC that acts often articulating movements at local scale. The CLOC support actions at transnational level, articulates the peasant movements in the region, and represents their interests when necessary. It also has a Women's Commission which has the function of ensuring that the LVC are met in all instances gender policies, the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the struggle consensus own proposals.

Policies that are determined by the set of the LVC women are put into practice in local collective action, and local collective demands, running through the movement on a larger scale as the purpose of lobbying the proper motions (Brochner 2013 : 95). If we
look from the perspective proposed by Keck and Sinnink (1998) the space of LVC allows women to have a double incidence, in one hand they position itself within a specific demand as food sovereignty and against gender violence, the search for social and gender justice, projecting their demand to other scales. Moreover, in the other hand, this demand returns to within the movements. The LVC is used as a space of struggle, for the recognition of these struggles and empowerment tool as through different scales (Brochner: 2013).

Thus, to understand how the struggles are organized at the local level, by LVC, we take as example the case of Aracruz Farm. The women of the settlements of the Landless Workers Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST) from Brazil, in Hulha Negra, at the International Working Women's Day, in 2006, along with about 2000 women of Via Campesina, especially from Women Peasants Movement (MMC) and MST, invaded Barba Negra doing in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Their goal was to cut trees, eucalyptus trees, and destroy the cloning lab that was at the farm (Desmarais, 2007). The peasant women of Hulha Negra consider that March 8 is marked by struggles appropriated by them, in which they feel part and feel owners, enabling their empowerment (Brochner: 2013). The perception of these women in relation to this type of action is related to the need to preserve biodiversity and community care.

Women from Hulha Negra MST have clearly noticed the difference since the implementation of gender policies and the changes they brought to within the movement and especially in their settlements. If it were not for these policies for gender equality perhaps, they were kept away from power positions. There are still difficulties in participating, but now they can dispute spaces, and claim for shared power. In this sense the other scales in the local processes have a key role in women's empowerment and
political participation thus exerting pressure and opening roads (Brochner 2013). The organization of struggles on International Women's Day is an example of this.

**Transnational networks and food sovereignty: tools for empowerment**

Transnational networks of women can also function as a strategy for women found empowerment. The empowerment can be understood according to its definition in the Beijing Conference, as a way to redress the unequal distribution of power between women and men, as well as "the correction of inequality between men and women share power and decision making in all levels (Madrigal et Al, n. d.: 4)". The concept of empowerment linked to the notion of power from the basics of social movements, to participate in daily life. Women as subjects of gender empowerment, and are receiving the same social actors. International institutions that defend the idea of participation of women whose reference only formal spaces, leave invisible spaces where women act as social movements and actions of empowerment in everyday life. For this reason the idea of self-empowerment (Madrigal et Al, no date) arises from social movements.

For the definition of empowerment Irene Lopez (2000) adds that even acknowledging the inequalities of men and women’s empowerment emphasizes the fact that the oppression suffered by women can occur in different ways according to race, class, colonial history and its position in the international economic system, and therefore women must fight oppression at different scales.

In this case, transactional networks used as empowerment strategy to pressure mechanisms at different scales, from local to global and vice versa. Women's demands, the fight for their gender demands, undergo several scales arise at local scale, bringing
the regional scale reaching global scale, in this case the LVC, which turns the claims into shares, returning the local scale, where the empowerment takes place.

At this point, the claim for food sovereignty can be a key for the empowerment of peasant women, assuming the value of women tasks that been long considered of minor importance. Another aspect to highlight is that food sovereignty is based on principles such as autonomy, respect, sustainability and equality, are also tools for women to have the perception that gender equality is across all aspects involving food sovereignty (Sepúlveda, 2012: 79). In addition, the demands that are intertwined to the food sovereignty demand are accompanied by questions about the distribution of power and gender relation.

**Food Sovereignty: a unifying demand**

The concept of food sovereignty arises in 1996, presented by La Vía Campesina at the World Food Summit held by FAO (Stédile and Carvalho, 2011; Desmarais, 2007; Pimbert, 2009).

This concept has undergone several changes up to what it is today, but, mainly, the concept was about nutrition, food quality, etc. Then, and especially since the claim of women delegates of La Vía Campesina, the concept was covering more stages of production and assuming a more agroecological and sustainable character. It also aimed at preventing the liberalization of markets and higher profits for multinationals, as the WTO intended to do, when it tried to appropriate the concept.

To understand the role that food sovereignty as a unifying demand of women, around which new networks of peasant women are formed, one must understand that the
bond between women with this claim is related to the social roles played by them, regarding identities and sexual division of labor.

The peasant women of LVC understand that care of the seeds is critical in times of monoculture and transnationalization of food production by large agribusiness companies. The idea of the creole seed appears in women’s speeches and is linked to the idea of actually being the owner of what is produced (Brochner, 2013). Thus the peasant women preserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable and agroecological ways to produce.

**Peasant women in Latin America and the demand for food sovereignty**

Food sovereignty has been primarily appropriated by women in Latin America. The Woman’s Commission from La Vía Campesina in an attempt to increase inclusion and participation of women launched the project "Peasant women on the frontiers of food sovereignty" (Desmarais, 2007). This project focused not only on issues of food sovereignty, but also in training activities, creation, empowerment, knowledge sharing, etc.

The identification of women with this claim relates, as said before, to the roles they have played historically in society. The role that rural women played in agriculture has always been connected to family care, food, alimentation (Senra & Leon, 2009: 17). According to FAO report (2001), the production of food by women in developing countries is approximately 60% to 80%, which is an indication that women are instrumental in building food sovereignty. Principally because they have the knowledge necessary, since they are historically responsible for feeding the family, caring for biodiversity, the variety of crops, as well as caring for the seeds.
Mauro Martín Ramos Pintos and Drago (2013) from REDES - organization Amigos de la Tierra Uruguay, made a collection of testimonies in order to show the situation in which rural women live in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Interests us here the testimony of peasant women in Latin America specifically, using here the interpretation of some of the statements contained in the article, as the representatives of the Women Network in Costa Rica, the Rural Women Network Groups in Uruguay and Association of Rural Women Uruguay, Puna Network of Jujuy, Argentina, and the National Federation Peasants Woman, Artisans, Indigenous, Native y salaried from Peru (FEMUCARINAP).

In this regard, the testimony of women related to the experience of food sovereignty linked to food production establishes the relationship of ownership of seed to food. Also, to reinforce what has already been said, these women feel responsible for the preservation of biodiversity and ecological production, and renovation of resources. In one of the testimonies in Ramos and Drago (2013:143) given by Lloyda Olivo of the National Federation of Peasant Organizations, Indigenous and Black People (FENOCIN) of Ecuador, it is possible to see both the identification of women with this type of work as well as the primary concern about food, where it recognizes that the work of peasant women in all social organizations for the recovery of seeds.

The same view of the seeds is shared by women of MST settlements of Hulha Negra, they realize the need to preserve the seeds in order to be in charge of production itself …dentro disso assim que engloba a soberania alimentar é a questão das sementes... de tu conseguir ser dono daquilo que tu precisa, da semente né...” (in this that includes food sovereignty is the matter of the seed… you have to own that which you need, so, the seeds….) (settled, 24.05.2013, seating Conquista da Fronteira, Hulha Negra; in Brochner, 2013). In Hulha Negra women are primarily responsible for the cultivation of seeds.
Another important thing to understand is the women identification with food sovereignty claim, and their role in the sexual division of labor women from LVC openly identify with the demand and the justification that is expressed in the IV Meeting Of Women (La Vía Campesina, 2013):

*Our struggle and action for Food Sovereignty has given us women the opportunity to make visible our historical participation in the development of the food systems in the world and the role we have played since the invention of agriculture, in collection and propagation of the seeds, in the protection and preservation of biodiversity and genetic resources, placing us as primary emotional, ethical and social pillars.*

Within La Via Campesina, women's claims are linked primarily to those claims in which women are identified, and also identify their collective identity of their respective movements. So within these areas women need to find mechanisms to assist in their emancipation, empowerment and to increase the opportunities for participation. Transnational networks function as a tool for this. For example, when we think of different spatial scales, from local to regional and global, as we see from the boomerang effect (Keck and Sinnink, 1999), demands come and go through different scales, within social movements themselves, and to the outside. Women's demands are built sometimes in local scales that transcend the boundaries of nation-states, in seeking greater support and greater incidence of both to achieve new spaces of participation within the movements themselves, as in the search for recognition of their work and their knowledge, and the reconfiguration of gender relations both within the family and in their own movements.
This example within Vía Campesina has served as a mechanism for enabling women to ensure that gender parity policies were applied by pressure and the organization of transnational networks. As it appears in the International Manifesto of Women (La Vía Campesina, 2013):

*Women's work and power within families and in movements must be recognized, including the economic and productive value of seed selection and food production by women, which requires personal and collective processes, of us and our partners. The economic contribution that our work represents to agriculture, the household economy and macro economic indicators of the nations must be appreciated.*

The demand for food sovereignty also carries the idea of social justice, when linked to gender claims. The concept of social justice from Nancy Fraser (2008) points to two dimensions, the redistributive justice, about issues linked to production, resource management, etc. Secondly, justice of recognition. Fraser explains that these two dimensions should not be divided when it comes to gender, since we speak of a two-dimensional category, seeking justice in both directions. In this sense food sovereignty is also the pursuit for social justice in the moment that the claim is supported on justice regarding the production and distribution of resources as well as the recognition of the knowledge, recognition in pursuit of gender equity.

*Por eso, la agenda reivindicativa de las mujeres de la Vía Campesina asocia inextricablemente la justicia de género con el desarrollo de la propuesta de la soberanía alimentaria, no sólo en consideración del importante papel que ellas juegan en la materia, sino porque ellas la conciben como una ética para el desarrollo humano y no*
como un simple vehículo para la alimentación. Las mujeres campesinas consideran que han de estar atentas y muy vigilantes sobre cómo se implementan las políticas para asegurar la Soberanía Alimentaria, pues si estas políticas avanzan sin la presencia de las mujeres campesinas en los lugares de toma de decisión, tanto en las organizaciones como en las instituciones, se corre el peligro de que las campesinas sigan estando discriminadas con la Soberanía Alimentaria. No sería la primera vez en la historia pasada y reciente, que las mujeres se impican en una lucha y, cuando ésta se gana, el “interés general” de los hombres las ha seguido excluyendo y discriminando (León y Senra, 2009: 36).

The claim of women for food sovereignty is combined with other relevant gender-claims. The ideological dimension of food sovereignty is directly related to the concept of social justice, and, therefore, the gender issue. It is through food sovereignty that women find a new space for empowerment. Food sovereignty acts as a new channel for seeking gender equality movements. It is noticeable that for women to struggle for food sovereignty can no longer be separated from the struggle for gender equality (Brochner, 2013: 105-106)

Combining food sovereignty to claims against gender violence.

Gender violence is related to gender identities of the binary separation between "masculine" and "feminine" (Lamas, 1996). Gender violence in many studies in Latin

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3 The protest agenda of women from la Vía Campesina inextricably associates gender justice with the development of the proposed food sovereignty, not only in consideration of the important role they play in the issue (issue é sempre mais bonito que matter é issue indica “questão da mulher” = woman issues, matter indica problema), but because they conceive it as an ethic issue for human development and not as a mere vehicle for food. Rural women feel they have to be very attentive and vigilant about how policies are implemented to ensure food sovereignty, as if these policies are moving without the presence of rural women in places of decision making, both in organizations and institutions, there is a danger that they continue to face discrimination with food sovereignty. Not the first time in the past and recent history, that women can engage in a fight, and when it is won, the "general interest" of the men has continued to exclude and discriminate (León and Senra, 2009: 36 – Traduced by the author).
America is also understood as synonymous of violence against women, by its structural nature (Segato, 2003, Castro & Riquer, 2003; Femenías and Rossi 2009). Gender violence based on gender identity and based on gender relations of control and therefore violence against women is perhaps the most ingrained type of violence in our society, considering the existence of diverse gender identities (Butler, 2006). When we talk about gender, we are talking about a power relation where the "male" is above the "female". The Latin American feminism helped visualize the addressed issue of violence against women as a social problem, and not individual, calling attention to the debate (Castro & Riquer, 2003: 136).

As we saw in the previous epigraph, the demand for food sovereignty becomes a tool for gender equality, which allows it to encompass various other struggles hampered by women. The fight against gender violence seems to be the main one for several reasons. The first one is that within La Vía Campesina there is the idea on part of the women themselves that gender violence is not only committed by their conjugal companions, but also by the state4 (Vía Campesina 2012: 14-18). As seen before violence against women is a gender subordination mechanism that produces a symbolic system of legitimation of woman as inferior and man as superior (Femenías and Rossi, 2009). The fight against gender violence, as well as the struggle for food sovereignty, transcends the local scale and it is present in different scales of struggle action of peasant women (Desmarais, 2007).

4 Forms of gender violence are understood and worked for the LVC are: physical (Physical assault of any kind), sex (any kind of sexual contact, whether physical or verbal made unwillingly, intimidating), psychological (actions or omissions with control purposes), and economic equity (destruction, subtraction or damage to property), moral (damage to reputation), institutional (state police, lack of public policies) and the ethnic and racial prejudice.
If we think of the demand for food sovereignty within Fraser’s (2008) concept of social justice, we can understand that when women are struggling against violence from states, which may even be in the form of market-opening policies, distribution of land, or neglect of environmental issues, health and education, for example, we see the injustice of distributive nature. These are gender violence because women are responsible for care, life maintenance, they are the first ones to suffer the consequences of these problems. Then, if water is missing, or if there is no medical attention, or if the children have no formal education, women are the first to feel the hardships, mainly related to the construction of woman-mother identity within heteronormative family patterns (Brochner, 2013).

However, gender violence also responds to the injustices of recognition, women seek to have equal rights and be as much protagonists as the men in social movements, not only at local level, women seek to increase their participation in power positions, recognition of their knowledge and their capabilities.

In this direction, transnational networks have been an important tool to combat gender violence locally. The policies of LVC were decisive for the inclusion of women in political processes in motion, they served as a way of empowering women at the local scale. In the settlements of Hulha Negra where violence was still perceived inside, women's participation in transnational networks within the LVC gave them support to claim for their demands. The campaign against violence launched by the LVC in collaboration with other movement networks such as the World March of Women, served to women so they could strengthen their claims, both within and outside (State, and transnational corporations) the movement, demanding an end to gender violence (Brochner 2013).
Food sovereignty seems to be a convergence of demands and have the ability to bring together not only different groups of women but also different claims. Food sovereignty cannot exist if there is no recognition of activities and knowledge held by women. Just as the term sovereignty, gender violence in its different forms (either by the state, either by his teammates) is typical of the organizations of which they are part, is by transnational corporations) may be an impediment to the process of building it.

**Gender identities and the food sovereignty claim**

Women’s identification with the demand for food sovereignty comes from several aspects. First, because women who are part of the LVC have established networks for collectives struggles partly share their common values related to the LVC collective identity, however gender identities play role in understanding the process of appropriation of a demand and turning it into empowerment tool.

The identification of women with food sovereignty as mentioned above is related to the division of social roles assigned to women and men in society. The woman usually has its functions related to the reproductive sphere, connected to family care (Quiroga, 2007). The identification with this claim, also demonstrate their identification with the role assigned to women, and show that identities can often be essentialized (Kubissa, 2006). The women of the MST for example, understand that the care for the family and community is linked to the idea of giving life, maternity care, and therefore, is a way of identifying with the struggle for food sovereignty (Brochner 2013).

Fraser (2008) argues that the essentialized identities can be a problem for feminist practice, but in this case seem to turn into a tool for ownership and leadership of their struggles.
When we speak of gender identities in the plural, we are reinforcing that gender identity is not one, and that forms of oppression on women take place in different ways. Gender identity is not the same as a white woman than a black woman, in spaces where there is racial discrimination, in the same way that is not equal an urban woman to a rural woman, and the class, studies, age differences are also relevant factors (La Barbera, 2009).

In Latin American women of Vía Campesina are no different, we can detach from the statement made by the women at the Fourth Joint Meeting of Women of the Field of CLOC (op. cit) that they recognize themselves as peasant, indigenous and African descent. However, they constructed a collective gender identity that allows these women to organize themselves into networks and to appropriate a demand. Collective identities can be constructed from several factors such as values, worldviews (Della Porta & Diani, 2011), and in this case it seems that the experiences related to the social division of labor is a point of convergence, class values along LVC, life experiences related to reproductive work, and patriarchal oppression, albeit in different ways.

Conclusions

After global restructure situation of social exclusion, several sectors of civil society mobilized, thus creating new opportunities for the organization. Women responded to these changes by finding new forms of organization, such as transnational networks, thereby creating counter-hegemonic spaces. Feminist agenda in the principal axes was fighting against neoliberalism and for women's right. In Latin America, the feminist movement takes a new direction from the Beijing Conference, in which women
decide not only work in the Women's Movement, but also work across gender issues within organizations and other social movements.

In this way, the Women's Commission of Vía Campesina arises to deal with specific issues of women within organizations, seek to represent the specific demands of gender. The identities of women in the LVC combines gender and class. In Latin America, women of Via Campesina took the struggle for food sovereignty as flag, thus forming transnational networks, combining various gender issues, gender demands, this struggle also acts as a tool for gender justice. First the identification of women with this application relates to the valuation of their work and their knowledge, which strengthens the question of recognition, as well as the search for autonomy and respect that are related to participation in positions of power, against women violence.

From this comes the potential for empowerment that brings together more of a gender-related issue demand, causing women to adopt a feminist stance questioning the established social roles and their position in power distribution on different scales. The function then is to work from transnational networks of local to global scale, and vice versa, allowing women in their daily lives to live transformations and create new mechanism for gender justice, while creating new meanings and forms of organization, pressure at regional and global scales.

Transnational networks impel the organization of women at local scale. In the case of MST settlements of Hulha Negra, transnational networks have a key role for empowerment, they exert pressure and give support to apply gender policies at local scale, well as women's participation assured and recognized. It is likely that without the construction of transnational networks the fight for recognition and gender equality can be harder than already is.
Transnational practices of women's networks are mainly perceived the local scale, and so the movement back and forth between the scales is important, after all it is the local level that practices, transnational struggles materialize. If constructed as claims, demands on local scale, beyond the spaces of nation-states, creating new spatiality from new relationships, seeking new forms of resistance and transformation for the promotion of social and gender justice.
References


