The 2008 Food Crisis as a Critical Event for the Food Sovereignty and Food Justice Movements

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Abstract. As a reaction to the 2008 food crisis, a diverse group of US-based organizations formed a multi-sectoral coalition to promote food sovereignty. How did the 2008 food crisis unify these diverse groups? How did different groups with different agendas find a common cause in food sovereignty? I draw on social movement theory to explain the formation of the coalition and show how its member groups have sought to strengthen its capacity, formulate a coherent message, and jointly campaign for change in food and agriculture policy. I find that a number of variables explain these processes: heightened threats and expanding opportunities encourage initial joint mobilization, while pre-existing ties and trust, organizational flexibility, and frame alignment help expand the membership and capacity of the coalition.

Introduction

'Food prices at dangerous levels, says World Bank', 'Food prices hit new record highs, says UN food agency', 'Food prices: World Bank warns millions face poverty' – these are just a few of the news stories pertaining to the global food price crisis and its effects on the world's poor published on the BBC news website in early 2011.[1] In 2011 food price levels approached the peak prices of 2008 (World Bank, 2011), when a global food price crisis plunged many of the world's poor into deeper poverty. The 2008 crisis sparked much debate and initiatives in government circles, at international organizations and in the NGO community. The 2011 crisis renewed these debates and made clear that agriculture and food are critical issues that will continue to be on the global policy agenda. This article concentrates on the 2008 global food crisis as a focusing or critical event and on its effect on social movement mobilization and movement building in the United States.

Social movement theorists have examined the impact of critical or focusing events on social movement mobilization. They have argued that these types of events can increase or decrease issue salience, focus public attention on (or shift it away from) specific issues and causes, and facilitate coalition building among social movement organizations (SMOs). Critical or focusing events can thereby expand or limit the resources as well as the political and tactical opportunities available to social movement participants to press their claims and advance their goals. SMOs, however,

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vary in their ability to use critical events to promote their agendas, and some SMOs are more adept than others in doing so due to the nature of their organizational structure and the collective action frames they develop. In other words, organizational and other variables influence the ability of SMOs to seize the opportunities that critical events create and to use these events to press their claims and policy demands (Staggenborg, 1993).

This article applies the relatively small sociological literature on critical events and their significance for social movements to the 2008 food price crisis and the food justice and food sovereignty movements in the United States. As a reaction to the 2008 global food price crisis, a diverse group of SMOs formed the US Working Group on the Food Crisis (Working Group) in the spring of 2008. In 2010 the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA), a multi-sectoral coalition that grew out of the Working Group, was formed. How did the 2008 food crisis unify the many different groups that established the Working Group? How did different SMOs with different agendas and areas of focus find a common theme and cause in food justice and food sovereignty? How did they form coalitions, bridge their differences, and unify their agendas? How did they engage in a process of movement building? And what are the important issues in the US-based food sovereignty movement? These are the questions that I will explore in this article. I draw on social movement theory to explain the formation of the coalition and show how its member groups have sought to strengthen its capacity, formulate a coherent message, and campaign jointly for change in food and agriculture policy. I find that a number of variables explain these processes: heightened threats and expanding opportunities encourage initial joint mobilization, while pre-existing ties and trust, organizational flexibility, and frame alignment help expand membership and capacity of the coalition.

The findings of this article make two contributions to the literature. First, they improve our understanding of the significance of critical events for social movement mobilization, which is still an understudied topic in the social movement literature. Second, they expand our knowledge of the food sovereignty movement in the United States, a relatively recent movement that has not been fully researched and documented yet.

The remainder of the article is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the literature on focusing or critical events and their significance for social movement organizations and introduces the theoretical framework that will inform the analysis of the food sovereignty movement. The second section introduces the food justice and sovereignty movements and provides an overview of their goals and agendas. The third section describes the meaning and significance of food sovereignty and the food sovereignty movement in the US. The fourth section discusses the effect of the global food crisis on this movement, applying the theoretical arguments reviewed in the first section to food activism in the US since 2008. Much of the information included in the fourth section was collected in interviews with some of the individuals who have been most involved in the Working Group and in the USFSA since the very beginning and are therefore in a particularly good position to offer information about and insights into the movement building process. Finally, the conclusion of the article summarizes the key findings of this research and points to opportunities for further research.

Critical Events and Social Movement Mobilization: A Review of the Relevant Theoretical Literature

A critical event or a focusing event can be described as 'an event that is sudden; relatively uncommon; can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potential greater future harms; has harms that are concentrated in a particular geographical area or community of interest; and that is known to policy makers and the public simultaneously' (Birkland, 1998, p. 54). Staggenborg distinguishes between six different types of critical events, including large-scale socio-economic and political events, natural disasters and epidemics, and accidents (Staggenborg, 1993). Following much earlier research, Staggenborg explains that large-scale events include events that significantly expand and deepen grievances, and she mentions specifically 'a change in social conditions, such as a food shortage or price increase' (Staggenborg, 1993, p. 323) as an example of this type of critical event. She also explains that large-scale unfavourable and adverse critical events affect mobilization because they can increase issue salience, bring more attention to a social problem, and enhance both a movement's visibility and receptiveness to its cause and agenda.[2]

These theoretical arguments about the impact of critical events dovetail with arguments about the impact of threats to social movement goals on the formation of coalitions between SMOs. Social movement scholars have found that threats to social movement goals, such as political setbacks, legal setbacks, the prospect of unfavourable policies, circumstances that interfere with reaching their goals, or common opponents or targets create incentives for organizations to form coalitions or alliances (Staggenborg, 1986; McCammon and Campbell, 2002; Van Dyke, 2003). In a study of the literature on coalition formation, McCammon and Van Dyke conclude that the existence of threats is one of the two most important variables that explain coalition formation (the second one being ideological convergence, which is discussed below) (McCammon and Van Dyke, 2010). This is so because threats can sometimes create difficulties and challenges for SMOs that in turn create incentives for them to try different strategies, including coalition work, and to take the risks and incur the costs that coalition work may entail (McCammon and Campbell, 2002). Adverse critical events can be seen as circumstances that encourage coalition work and, as I show below, there have been several developments during and in the aftermath of the 2008 global food crisis that represent threats to the food justice and sovereignty agenda and can help us understand the formation of the Working Group and the USFSA.

Threats, however, can also combine with political opportunities to set the stage for coalition formation (McCammon and Van Dyke, 2010; Reese et al., 2010). As mentioned above, students of social movements have argued that critical events can be seen as one dimension of the political opportunity structure (POS) (Ramos, 2008) and that they can change the opportunities available for mobilization (Staggenborg, 1993). To put this a little differently, critical events can 'open a window of opportunity for alternative policy images to compete for agenda space' (Wood, 2006, p. 433). However, not all groups and SMOs are equally effective in harnessing the opportunities created by a critical event to mobilize and call for policy change, and their ability to use new opportunities for mobilization rests in part on their organizational structure and their capacity to form cohesive coalitions (Staggenborg, 1993; Birkland, 1998). In addition, critical events do not have inherent meanings. Rather, they can be defined and interpreted in different ways, and the meanings that are ascribed to them, i.e. the ways they are framed, have an impact on the policy responses (Wood, 2006). Staggenborg's conclusions in her study of critical events and pro-choice SMOs

sums this up succinctly. She explains that 'we need to study the organizational structures and framing activities that mediate between events and their impacts in order to develop a theory of the role of critical events in social movements' (Staggenborg, 1993, p. 341; for a similar point, see Reese et al., 2010).

Explaining Movement and Coalition Building: Organizational and Cultural Factors

It is helpful to think about organizational capacity and framing in terms of Gerhards and Rucht's conceptualization of meso-mobilization (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). They explain that micro-mobilization actors can mobilize individuals to participate in a social movement, but these actors themselves are not connected to one another and often do not coordinate their work. To work jointly on issues of common interest or concern, these micro-mobilization groups must be joined together in a cohesive and well-coordinated campaign. Meso-mobilization actors serve that function: they integrate and mobilize micro-mobilization groups around a specific issue or cause, and these groups in turn mobilize individuals around that cause (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, p. 558). Successful and effective meso-mobilization requires structural/organizational integration, which entails linking groups to one another, finding resources, and planning activities and campaigns, as well as cultural integration, which entails developing joint understandings, definitions and interpretations of the issue around which meso-mobilization (and later micro-mobilization) occurs (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, p. 558–559). Members of the Working Group and the USFSA, some of whom represent grass-roots groups and other constituencies, can be viewed as micro-mobilization actors, who are coming together in a process of meso-mobilization to form a coalition.

Organizational Integration

In the cases of the two campaigns Gerhards and Rucht study, successful structural and organizational integration was possible for a number of reasons of which I highlight a few. Meso- and micro-mobilization actors had established ties, formed networks, and cooperated on other campaigns prior to their effort to coordinate the protest events Gerhards and Rucht study. Meso-mobilization actors were also organizationally flexible and ideologically diverse, which made for an open meso-mobilization process that could incorporate a diversity of groups. That process also benefited greatly from the professionalism and experience of the organizers who led it and from their effective division of labour (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, pp. 569–572).

Later research presents findings that echo and are consistent with these arguments about organizational integration. For example, recent research has found that even though pre-existing ties are not necessary or sufficient conditions for coalition work, pre-existing ties between different groups can foster trust and communication as well as support and facilitate coalition formation when threats or ideological convergence are present (McCammon and Van Dyke, 2010, p. 298). More specifically, prior personal contacts, working relationships, and involvement and membership in the same professional networks help individuals develop trust and confidence in the reliability of other coalition members, which in turn can help generate credible com-

mitments and a willingness to jointly work in a coalition, mobilize rapidly, and come to a solid consensus about the objectives and tactics of the coalition (Levi and Murphy, 2006; Corrigall-Brown and Meyer, 2010). We have evidence that the recruitment of individuals and groups to join a coalition and the decisions of groups to become a coalition member rest on past cooperation and significant levels of pre-existing trust (Corrigall-Brown and Meyer, 2010). Similarly, there is also evidence indicating that broad-based coalitions are mobilized when activists tap into a pre-existing social movement infrastructure, networks, and ties that developed in earlier campaigns (Reese et al., 2010).

Cultural Integration

Successful cultural integration requires developing effective collective action frames (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). To form broad-based coalitions and campaigns that bring together diverse groups, meso-mobilization actors must do 'meaning work' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 613), and this meaning work entails constructing frames, which are 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). Frames have a diagnostic dimension that defines an issue or problem and identifies its cause, a prognostic dimension that proposes a solution to the problem, and a motivational dimension that calls on individuals to participate in social movements to remedy the problem (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, pp. 579–584; Benford and Snow, 2000, pp. 615–618). Each micro-mobilization actor has its own collective action frame, and a key task for the meso-mobilization process is to develop a master frame that can integrate a large number of these groups. The wider the range of issues or problems included in a master frame, the larger the number of groups whose causes and agendas can be accommodated by the frame and who can therefore be mobilized, as long as the frame remains cohesive and plausible (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, p. 580). In conjunction with frame bridging, which is a process by which groups link their own frames to a separate but ideologically compatible master frame, developing a compelling master frame is a key part of meso-mobilization (Snow et al., 1986, p. 467; Gerhards and Rucht, 1992, p. 584). Recent research on coalition formation has generated findings that suggest that a common ideology is one of the two most important factors that explain coalition formation, the other factor being the existence of threats (McCammon and Van Dyke, 2010). While master frames in some ways presuppose some basic ideological compatibility, the process of creating a joint frame can help SMOs overcome some of their ideological differences (Staggenborg, 2010, pp. 324–325).

The Food Justice and Food Sovereignty Movements: An Overview

Food sovereignty overlaps with food justice, but goes beyond it. Eric Holt-Giménez describes the food justice movement as progressive and the food sovereignty movement as radical. He explains that 'some actors within the growing global food movement have a radical critique of the corporate food regime, calling for food sovereignty and structural, redistributive reforms including land, water and markets. Others advance a progressive, food justice agenda calling for access to healthy food by marginalized groups defined by race, gender and economic status' (Holt-Gimé-

nez, 2010, p. 2). In other words, while the progressive food justice movement often focuses its organizing work on the local level and calls for local change within the parameters of the existing global food regime, the radical food sovereignty movement has a more global orientation, challenges the global food regime, and calls for fundamental change in food and agriculture policy (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). However, it is also important to note that the food justice and food sovereignty movements overlap and include many groups that straddle these two camps (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011), and some of the activists and community leaders involved in food justice work see clear and deep connections between the work that they do and the broader global food sovereignty movement (Schiavoni, 2009). In addition, the two movements are considered as two trends of the civil society-driven food movement and distinguished from the corporate food regime, which is driven by agri-food corporations, G8 governments, and international financial and economic institutions and is essentially neo-liberal even if some of its actors and institutions call for relatively limited reforms (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011).

The food justice movement's goal is 'to transform where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, accessed, and eaten' (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, p. 5) and to ensure that the risks and benefits of all aspects of the food system are shared equitably (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, p. 6). The concept of food justice also entails 'an ethic of place regarding the land, the air, the water, the plants, the animals, and the environment' (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, p. 223).

Food sovereignty was defined in the Declaration of Nyéléni, which was adopted in 2007 by the first global forum on food sovereignty, a gathering of hundreds of representatives of organizations that are part of the food sovereignty movement. The forum defined the concept of food sovereignty as follows:

> '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 those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.'[3]

Food sovereignty activists have provided analyses of the 2008 global food crisis. They distinguish between proximate causes and long-term root causes of the crisis (Bello, 2008; Holt-Giménez, 2008; Patel, 2008; Rosset, 2008). Proximate causes of the crisis include agrofuels, which divert some of the agricultural land and agricultural production away from food crops, the increase of the price of oil, which affects both the transportation of food as well as the cost of manufacturing fertilizer, the increase in meat consumption, which diverts some of the world's grain production to industrial feedlots, and droughts.

The long-term causes of the global food crisis have unfolded over a long time, and many of the policy recommendations put forward by food sovereignty activists are based on their analysis of these root causes of the global food system crisis. One of the root causes lies in the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund required a significant number of developing countries to implement in the 1980s and 1990s. As part of these packages of neo-liberal economic reforms, developing countries were asked to reduce their spending, and this entailed a significant reduction in spending on agriculture and the dismantlement of agricultural programmes, such as price supports, marketing boards, technical assistance, and credit (Bello, 2008; Holt-Giménez, 2008; Rosset,

2008). In addition, SAPs entailed an emphasis on growing export crops as opposed to food crops. Food sovereignty activists also point to trade liberalization and NAF-TA and WTO requirements that developing countries eliminate trade barriers in the agricultural sector, while countries in the Global North were not required to eliminate their substantial agricultural subsidies for large farms, which had a profound and negative effect on the viability of agriculture in the South and of family farms in the North (Bello, 2008; Holt-Giménez, 2008; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010). Together, these policies resulted in the decline of the agricultural sectors of developing countries and the worsening of food insecurity, culminating in the global food crisis in 2008. Besides the SAPs, international financial institutions, together with some governments, have promoted the deregulation of the food and agricultural sector, which in turn led to growing corporate concentration in these sectors. Corporate concentration has had adverse implications and consequences for producers and farm workers and for poverty reduction efforts (Murphy, 2008).

In addition, food sovereignty activists also point to the green revolution as another long-term cause of the decline in agriculture in the Global South. They explain that input-intensive agriculture, which was promoted during the green revolution, led to the exacerbation of poverty and inequality, diminished soil quality, the loss of agro-biodiversity, and diminished water tables, and for these reasons they oppose the continuation of this model of agriculture and development (Holt-Giménez, 2008; Kerssen, 2009). Activists also point out that this model of agricultural development put control over green revolution seeds in the hands of corporations, which is another issue that activists are concerned about. They argue that the current food system concentrates power and profits in a relatively small number of large agrifood corporations, making them the beneficiaries of the current system and its crises (Bello, 2008; Holt-Giménez, 2008; Murphy, 2008).

Based on the notion of food sovereignty as 'the right of people to determine their own food and agricultural policies' (Schiavoni, 2009, p. 682) and 'the right of democratic control over food and food-producing resources' (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 128), food sovereignty activists develop a set of demands and policy recommendations. First, they call for the localization of food production and for excluding agriculture from the global trade regime (Holt-Giménez, 2008; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010).[4] The food sovereignty paradigm is based on a 'vision of an international agricultural economy composed of diverse national agricultural economies trading with one another but focused primarily on domestic production' (Bello, 2008, p. 454). In addition, the food sovereignty paradigm puts control over land, seed, water, fish stocks, and pastures in the hands of local food producers (as opposed to agri-food corporations) and relies on these producers and their traditional agricultural knowledge and skills to manage these resources and the local food system in socially and environmentally sustainable ways (Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010).[5] This entails fundamental agrarian reform that allows small-scale farmers and peasants to access land, water and other natural resources. It also requires an end to the land grabbing of recent years, i.e. the acquisition of land in the Global South through purchases or long-term leasing agreements by governments, who use it to enhance their food security and insulate themselves from the volatility of commodity prices, and private investors, who are motivated by the demand for agrofuels and high commodity prices to seek investment opportunities in agriculture (La Via Campesina, 2009, pp. 130–133; Food First, 2010).

Second, food sovereignty activists call for policies that enhance food security, create stable food prices as well as food systems that are fair to producers and consumers of food. This goal entails reinstating grain reserves and support programmes, including floor prices, credits, and marketing boards (Holt-Giménez, 2008; Rosset, 2008). It also entails the use of low-input agro-ecological practices that are based on traditional farming knowledge (La Via Campesina, 2009, pp. 182–190; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010) and a return to the model of autonomous, peasant-based and smallholder and family farming, a model that incorporates many of the goals and cornerstones of the food sovereignty paradigm and is described as a form of agricultural production that 'is socially just, respects the identity and knowledge of communities, prioritizes local and domestic markets and strengthens the autonomy of people and communities' (La Via Campesina, 2009, p. 182). According to food sovereignty activists, family and peasant farming is productive, sustainable and geared towards food production, unlike large industrial monocultures that are input-intensive and produce crops for export and for agrofuels (Rosset, 2008).

The Food Justice and Food Sovereignty Movements in the United States: An Overview

To understand the food sovereignty movement in the United States, it is important to establish the context within which the USFSA formed. While the US-based food sovereignty movement is part of the global movement and shares the food system analysis and the policy goals described above with many food sovereignty groups around the world, the USFSA brought together groups that had been working on food justice and food sovereignty issues before the 2008 crisis and the formation of the USFSA in 2010 and the effort to connect with the global movement. While some of these groups had an international focus, some focused specifically on food system issues in the US. This section focuses on some of the key issues for the US-based food movement: food deserts and urban agriculture, the racial inequalities that manifest themselves through the food system, and the rights and working conditions of food chain workers. By spotlighting these issues and some of the work that is being done to address them, this section helps to establish the context in which the USFSA coalesced and to describe food sovereignty and its meaning in the US context.

These two examples were chosen because they illustrate one of the important priorities of the food sovereignty movement in the US, namely, the empowerment of communities of colour, the poor, and other communities that are most impacted by the inequalities that manifest themselves in the food system. As Julie Guthman has demonstrated, the alternative food movement in the US, which includes the urban agriculture, local and organic food, and community food security movements, has reflected white cultural histories, which has limited its resonance with people of colour (Guthman, 2008a). For example, the term 'organic' has racial connotations, while the enthusiasm surrounding 'putting your hands in the soil' or 'getting your hands dirty' is 'insensitive to a racialized history of agrarian land and labor relationships in the US', especially that 'farming in the US continues to be based on white land ownership and non-white labor, with its persistent and well-documented injustices of various kinds' (Guthman, 2008a, p. 435). Guthman also describes the 'missionary zeal' and the 'messianic disposition' (Guthman, 2008a, p. 436; see also Guthman, 2008b, p. 388) of the alternative food movement and likens the ethos that underlies its efforts to make fresh, healthy food available in poor urban communities and

to educate these communities about farming and healthy diets to that of colonial projects (Guthman, 2008a). These efforts to involve people of colour in the alternative food movement reflect a sense of universal validity of the values and ideals of growing and consuming local, organic and fresh foods that inspire the predominantly white alternative food movement and the desire to convert people of colour to these ideals by educating them about food (Guthman, 2008b). This is problematic as it renders the alternative food movement uninviting to people of colour, whose lack of participation in the movement is then attributed to their lack of knowledge and education about good food, with no attention given to the structural barriers and inequalities that hinder their participation (Guthman, 2008b). The two examples below illustrate efforts to allow poor communities and communities of colour that bear the brunt of food injustices to play a leadership role in transforming the food system, which is a key priority for the USFSA and the food sovereignty movement more generally.

Food Deserts and Urban Agriculture

Food deserts are defined as 'large geographic areas that have no or distant *mainstream* grocery stores', which does not necessarily mean that food is completely unavailable in these areas, but rather that there is often an '*imbalance* of food choice, meaning a heavy concentration of nearby *fringe* food that is high in salt, fat, and sugar' (Gallagher, 2010, p. 3, emphasis in original; see also Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, pp. 39–43). In other words, food deserts tend to be out of balance in terms of the available food choices, with little access to healthy food options and comparatively easy access to fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, liquor stores, and other fringe food outlets, leaving residents with no cars and few other transportation options little choice when it comes to food consumption. Food deserts are a cause for concern because they have less food security and because research has shown that those who live in food deserts have poorer diet-related health outcomes and higher rates of premature deaths (Gallagher, 2006, 2010). As a social issue, this problem is compounded by the fact that in some communities and cities the dearth of healthy food options in food deserts affects certain disadvantaged racial minorities as well as low-income households more strongly as the areas in which they live tend to have the least access to grocery stores and relatively easy access to fast-food restaurants – Chicago is an example (Ahn, 2004; Gallagher, 2006; Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, pp. 39–43).

An urban agriculture movement has attempted to address these issues in cities and communities across the United States (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, pp. 145–149). Urban farming initiatives are part of the larger community food security movement (Ahn, 2004), and through this movement, initiatives centred on food have become a vehicle 'for addressing broader social and economic justice issues' (Ahn, 2004, p. 3), and therein lies the transformative ethos and transformative potential of this movement that makes it an important part of the food sovereignty movement in the United States.

One example that illustrates this very well is the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN). Like other cities and urban areas in the US, a large number of Detroit's residents live in areas with significant food imbalances, which means that they travel smaller distances to fringe food retailers and longer distances to grocery stores and supermarkets. This impacts diet-related health outcomes as well as the rates of premature illness and deaths in Detroit (Gallagher, 2007). Com-

bined with deindustrialization, depopulation, poor-quality education, the lack of reliable public transportation, and high unemployment, home foreclosure, and poverty rates in the city of Detroit, food insecurity is one of the many social problems that affect the city's residents. These problems are compounded by the fact that African Americans make up a large majority of the city's population today, adding a racial inequality dimension to Detroit's problems (White, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a)

The DBCFSN started in 2006 to accomplish a number of different goals, including developing a food policy for Detroit, launching a food buying co-op, starting an urban farm, and providing youth education (White, 2010a, 2011a). The immediate goal of the DBCFSN has been to enhance the accessibility of fresh, healthy produce to the poor and predominantly African-American population of the city of Detroit. But beyond this immediate goal, the individuals involved in the DBCFSN have also worked to claim their human right to food and to challenge the prevailing food system structures and gain control over the local food movement and the food supply in Detroit. They have done so in a number of different ways. First, they have chosen not to rely on external actors, such as the government, to fulfill their right to food and to provide their communities with a healthy and safe supply of food. Instead, they have sought to gain control over their local food supply and assume responsibility for realizing their human right to food. This is in part because they believe that other actors have not been able or willing to provide them with safe, healthy, and affordable food. Second, they have sought to educate their communities about healthy food choices in culturally suitable and appropriate ways, thereby disseminating information about food to those who otherwise cannot access information about healthy diets, either because it is unavailable or because it is presented in ways that are inaccessible to individuals with low socio-economic status. Third, they have sought to have a voice within the local food security movement that would otherwise be led by white and more affluent individuals who have access to the resources of the broader community food security movement (White, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a).

In other words, for the individuals affiliated with the DBCFSN, 'urban farming is only part of a much larger mission to create structures that end relationships of dependency and educate people about the importance of providing for themselves' (White, 2010b, p. 205). In doing all of these things, the members of the DBCFSN have sought to enhance their capacity for self-determination, for exercising agency, for empowerment and community building, for opposing 'the social, economic, and gendered oppression that complicates the accessibility of healthy food for poor people and the communities of color who have not left the impoverished city' (White, 2011b, p. 25), and for bringing about positive change in their community (White, 2011a, 2011b). In that sense, providing healthy food is a way to address broader issues of self-determination, agency, and control over one's life (White, 2010b, 2011a), and it is these aspects of the DBCFSN that makes it a powerful example of food sovereignty work in the United States. The DBCFSN has developed a national profile and national recognition for its work, and today it has a strong voice and presence not only in the local urban agriculture movement in Detroit, but also in the community food security and food sovereignty movements nationwide.

The Rights of Food Chain Workers

The rights and working conditions of those who work in all of the sectors of the food chain in the US, including food production, food processing, food distribution, and

food retail and service, have been at the centre of efforts to advance food sovereignty. Employment in food chain sectors often comes with low wages, hazardous and exploitative conditions, and few benefits or opportunities for advancement. The result is deep poverty and high rates of work-related illnesses and injuries among food sector workers (Lo and Jacobson, 2011). Because white workers earn higher wages than workers of colour, and because people of colour and immigrants are over-represented in food chain jobs, particularly in the lowest paying sectors and jobs, efforts to improve the situation of food chain workers have a racial justice dimension. And because of the high proportion of immigrant workers in the food sector and their vulnerability to discrimination and abuse, these efforts are also connected to efforts to reform the immigration system in the US (Liu and Apollon, 2011). In addition, some food chain sectors and jobs are exempt from the protection that federal labour laws offer, and therefore some workers in these sectors cannot exercise the right to organize (Smith and Goldberg, 2010; Liu and Apollon, 2011, p. 3). Other workers are unable to exercise their rights because laws designed to protect their rights are not enforced or because their legal status does not allow them to claim their rights (Smith and Goldberg, 2010). Some of the legal exclusions of workers in certain sectors, including the agricultural sector, are historically race-based and target sectors that employed minorities during the era in which key labour laws were adopted, especially in specific regions of the US (Smith and Goldberg, 2010). Examples of these exclusions include the exemption of agricultural and tipped restaurant workers from the standard federal minimum wage (they are entitled to a much lower hourly minimum wage) and the exclusion of agricultural workers from the right to organize and from overtime pay (Smith and Goldberg, 2010, p. 13).

A number of organizations have worked to improve the situation of food chain workers over the past few years, and the Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), a national coalition of food chain worker organizations founded in 2009, is a member of the USFSA. The focal points of the campaigns surrounding the rights of food system workers demonstrate that there is an intentional effort to include and empower the communities that are affected most directly by the injustices of the food system to bring about food system change. The FCWA believes that it is essential to give workers voice and allow them opportunities to play a leadership role in transforming the food system (Lo and Jacobson, 2011). Moreover, the policy goals of the food sovereignty movement include bringing about policy change to improve the working conditions of food chain workers. Policy changes that campaigners and organizers are seeking to include legislation that would require employers to offer paid sick days to employees, and increasing the federal minimum wage as well as the minimum wage for tipped workers. In addition, the FCWA and other campaigns call for the enforcement of equal opportunity and labour laws consistently at all levels of government to prevent wage theft and discrimination against women and people of colour. They also call for harsher penalties for worker exploitation. Food sovereignty campaigns also advocate for the right of food system workers to organize to secure better wages and working conditions, and they call on governmental bodies to consider labour and safety standards in procurement and to require that these standards be met as a condition for eligibility for subsidies and loan programmes (Food Chain Workers Alliance, 2012). In short, the food sovereignty movement seeks to make food system workers agents of the transformation of the food system. It seeks not only to meet the immediate needs of food system workers, but to empower them

with new rights and to allow them to be participants in the movement and to bring about systemic, structural change.

The USFSA

The 2008 food crisis was an important moment for the food sovereignty movement in the US. In addition to drawing attention to the movement's agenda, it sparked the creation of the Working Group (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 129), which was formed in 2008 'to bring attention to the underlying causes of the crisis and to promote transformative solutions to fix our broken food system'.[6] The Working Group's food system work focused on two issues: corporate control and concentration in the food system and rebuilding local food systems.[7] Membership in the Working Group was broad and diverse and encompassed a wide range of organizations with different mandates and areas of focus.

The work of the Working Group culminated in the US Social Forum in June 2010, when food justice and food sovereignty activists worked to strengthen their movement and form the USFSA, which was officially launched a few months later on World Food Day in October 2010.[8] The USFSA also has a diverse membership, and many of the members of the Working Group's steering committee are among the USFSA's core members. The purpose of the USFSA is to make the work of the Working Group, which was a loose and ad-hoc coalition, more consistent and better coordinated (interview 1). Finally, another reason the USFSA was founded was a sense among activists that even though the Working Group made progress, the food sovereignty movement was still fragmented and not big enough (interview 3). Most of the members of the Working Group were NGOs; grass-roots groups, people of colour, worker groups, farmer groups and other 'frontline' communities were for the most part absent form the initial 2008 meeting held to establish the Working Group (interviews 8, 10). The USFSA was, therefore, formed in part to give voice to a diversity of groups. The USFSA's clear underlying principles and established decision-making process can ensure that all voices will be heard (interviews 8, 10).

The USFSA is based on the goals and principles of the larger global food sovereignty movement. Its vision and agenda are sketched in its Call to Action[9] and in the Food Sovereignty PMA Resolution adopted at the US Social Forum in 2010.[10]These documents emphasize rebuilding local and regional food systems that meet the food needs of all and the rights of those who produce food, make food widely available and affordable, are socially just and ecologically sustainable, and are controlled by local stakeholders (as opposed to agri-food business).

The food sovereignty movement in the US is thus a very recent movement. As recently as 2009, one of the individuals most involved with this movement wrote that 'the US is far from having a full-fledged food sovereignty movement' (Schiavoni, 2009, p. 686). This activist, however, also saw the 2008 economic and food crisis as an opportunity to move the food sovereignty agenda forward and saw in the growing food justice and urban farming movements, which share many similarities with the food sovereignty movement, a potential for movement building in the US (Schiavoni, 2009, p. 686).

Analysing the Effect of the Global Food Crisis on Social Movement Activity: Food Sovereignty Activism and Movement Building in the United States

A combination of threats and opportunities set the stage for coalition and movement building among food movement organizations in the US. One important aspect of the international context in 2008 was the global food crisis during which global food prices rose significantly. This crisis was significant for the food sovereignty movement in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. It was an unusually severe global crisis, although there had been more severe crises at the national and regional levels. In addition, different civil society groups had worked on different aspects of the global food system, and the 2008 crisis was an opportune moment for these groups to coalesce and jointly voice their critique of the global food system because the food crisis could make this critique more resonant with the public, the media, and elected officials (interview 1). The broader food movement had been gaining momentum prior to the 2008 food crisis, and the crisis had newsworthy impacts that created a tipping point and momentum, which in turn provided an opportunity for activism (interviews 8, 10). Crises are moments when people have to reassess policy and there is a lot of media attention focused on the crisis, and that was important for advocacy (interview 3).

Beyond the opportunities for activism that the food crisis offered, there were other equally important opportunities that had developed over time and in conjunction with the crisis helped facilitate mobilization and the formation of the USFSA. By 2008, the World Social Forum (WSF) had created a process and framework for civil society groups to articulate compelling critiques of neo-liberal and corporate-led globalization and develop compelling alternatives. The WSF was first held in 2001 to help the alter-globalization movement, for which the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 was a key galvanizing moment, develop alternatives for the economic paradigm that is currently dominant. The 1999 'Battle of Seattle' had mounted a powerful challenge to and critique of that paradigm, but the alter-globalization movement had no compelling alternative (Smith et al., 2007). The WSF created a process through which global justice activists were able to begin articulating alternatives, and some of the ideas and models that emerged from this process informed the work of the food sovereignty movement. In addition, by 2008 the concept of food sovereignty and the transnational peasant movement La Via Campesina, which campaigns for a global food system based on food sovereignty, had gained visibility and recognition (Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010). La Via Campesina has its roots in the neo-liberal economic reforms and SAPs and the free trade agreements of the 1980s and 1990s. By 2008, it had become a prominent actor in the global justice movement, recognized for its leadership on issues pertaining to food, agriculture, and rural development. It had also established the food sovereignty framework as a compelling alternative to the existing global food system. The analysis and critique of the global food system as well as the proposed alternatives summarized above had already been developed by 2008 (Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010).

Moreover, both the WSF and the US Social Forum (USSF) had developed organizational repertoires on which the USFSA was able to draw. The WSF had brought together a diverse range of different civil society groups with different agendas and goals to work together in a horizontal, non-hierarchical space to articulate alternatives to neo-liberalism that restore citizens' democratic control over economic issues and decisions (Smith et al., 2007). In the US, the organizers of the first USSF in 2007 worked to create what has been described as an intentional space (Juris, 2008), a

space that is intentionally designed to have a high degree of racial and class diversity. USSF organizers sought to create this kind of intentional space at the first USSF by reaching out to grass-roots groups and purposefully giving voice and a leadership role to grass-roots organizations and communities that had had little voice historically (Juris, 2008). As I discuss below, the USFSA created organizational structures that are similar to the ones developed by the WSF and the USSF.

In short, much ideological and organizational work had been done that facilitated the formation of the Working Group and the USFSA when the global food crisis of 2008 created an additional impetus for organizing around food sovereignty in the US.

But in addition to these opportunities, there were also significant developments and trends that alarmed civil society groups and represented threats to their goals and agendas. The individuals and groups involved in the Working Group did not agree with the way the media described and interpreted the 2008 food price crisis or with the proposed solutions. The media provided a very simplified analysis and offered little discussion of the underlying causes of the crisis (interview 11). The crisis depiction in the media focused on yield losses as the cause for the crisis and identified new technologies to increase yields and productivity as the appropriate response (interview 11). By contrast, the groups involved in the Working Group believed that the problem was much more complex and that production was not the issue. Theses groups believed it was important to provide a 'counter-analysis' that made clear that the crisis was not a food crisis but a food *system* crisis (interview 11), which implies the need for structural change in the food system. At the same time, agribusiness and other key actors, such as the World Bank and the Gates Foundation, were starting initiatives and proposing solutions to the food crisis that groups in the Working Group opposed (interviews 10, 11). These solutions included biotechnology and GMOs. In addition, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, which was published in 2008 and made clear that 'business as usual is not an option' (interview 11) and called for a significant change in rural agricultural development, received little media coverage (interview 11). For all of these reasons, members of the Working Group were eager to provide an alternative analysis and interpretation of the global food crisis (interviews 4, 10, 11), promote understanding of its root causes, and work to promote a response that does not simply consist of providing food aid (interview 8) or promoting technological solutions (interview 11).

This view of the global food crisis as a catalyst for food sovereignty advocacy is consistent with the literature on threats and critical events reviewed above. Also, beyond the immediate effect of rising prices there were additional threats related to the crisis. These threats, which include land grabs, the expansion of agrofuels, commodity speculation, and the policies of international financial institutions and organizations are among the main causes and/or consequences of the global food crises, and they have become focal points of food sovereignty advocacy, which is also consistent with the literature review above. It is also important to note that coalitions are more likely to form in response to threats emanating from the policies of a common opponent (Van Dyke, 2003), and Van Dyke predicts that international organizations like the WTO, whose purview encompasses issues that affect a number of different constituencies, will continue to inspire cross-movement coalitions and protest activities similar to the protests in Seattle in 1999 (Van Dyke, 2003).

Finally, beside the policies of international institutions like the WTO, the influence that agribusiness was having on the debates surrounding the food crisis and the appropriate responses to it was perceived as a threat. One of the reasons that the members of the Working Group decided to form the USFSA was the realization that Working Group could in no way compete with agribusiness and their lobbying budgets. This in turn led to the recognition that food sovereignty work would have to be organized on a long-term basis through a less ad hoc coalition in order to bring about more fundamental and systemic change and counter the political influence of agribusiness, which is perceived to be very strong (interviews 10, 11).

Given the international context, critical events, opportunities, and threats that bear on food and agriculture, the time was opportune in 2008 for mobilizing around food sovereignty. But were civil society groups involved in the Working Group and later the USFSA able to organizationally and culturally integrate to form a cohesive and effective coalition? And how did they attempt to do so?

Organizational Integration

Organizational integration was feasible for a number of reasons that echo the arguments summarized above. Some of the organizations involved in the Working Group and the USFSA had ties prior to 2008, and many groups were aware of each other's work (interviews 5, 11) and had even cooperated with one another, albeit sometimes on a more ad hoc basis and without coordination across social movement sectors (interviews 1, 2, 6, 9, 10). For example, some groups had worked together on trade issues and the effect of trade on agriculture and food, while others had done joint work pertaining to the farm bill (interview 8). Trust had already been established due to these pre-existing ties, and some individuals already had a working relationship (interviews 4, 5, 7). In other words, joint food sovereignty work 'did not just emerge in 2008' (interview 8). This pre-existing trust allowed coalition members to have confidence that all members were committed to the values and principles of the USFSA (interview 5), and it reassured individuals and groups with limited time and staff that it is worthwhile to devote time to USFSA work and to make it a priority (interviews 7, 10, 11). In addition, some of the individuals involved in the Working Group had many years of experience working on food and agriculture issues, which was one of the reasons that Working Group participants were encouraged to launch the USFSA (interview 2). In sum, there is agreement among the interviewees that pre-existing ties and the trust that they cultivate are very important (interviews 9, 10, 11). For newcomers to the USFSA, developing trust is also very important as it allows new groups to have confidence that there is commitment to their own priorities and concerns (interview 9). This is all consistent with the literature reviewed above.

Equally important is the organizational flexibility of the USFSA and the concerted effort to integrate policy groups, which tend to be based in Washington, D.C. and New York City, as well as grass-roots groups focusing on such issues as urban agriculture, community gardens, and CSAs whose work tends to have a more local orientation. One interviewee reports that collaboration between policy groups and grass-roots groups in the US is relatively rare and has been fraught with tensions in previous campaigns (interview 2). In part for this reason, there has been a conscious effort within the USFSA to reach out to grass-roots groups and incorporate their perspectives and expertise (interview 2). Other interviewees also report that there has been a concerted effort to diversify the USFSA's leadership to include more grass-

roots groups and to widen the USFSA's membership (interviews 3, 5, 7), and that early on in the organizing process the Working Group reached out to urban food justice groups to engage them in a dialogue about systemic change (interview 4).

One interviewee representing a grass-roots group spoke very positively about the early efforts of the Working Group to reach out to grassroots groups and involve them in the process of strategic thinking about building a food sovereignty movement between 2008 and 2010 (interview 5). Other interviewees maintained that one of the main tasks of the USFSA was to incorporate local groups that might not define their work in terms of food sovereignty (interview 7), and that education, outreach, and movement building, and connecting the food sovereignty framework to local struggles has been the strength of the USFSA (interviews 4, 9). Interestingly, two respondents noted that with growing outreach to a broader circle of potential members, trust becomes something that has to be built and earned, and that it can be difficult to build trust among a very diverse coalition that includes groups that have had little preexisting trust and some rifts (interviews 8, 10).

In conjunction with ongoing efforts to expand and diversify the USFSA's membership and leadership through outreach efforts to grass-roots groups, the USFSA has developed decision-making and organizational structures that are flexible and allow for input from all members. For example, before joint positions are formulated there is consultation and discussion to seek input from all coalition members (interview 5). In addition, one interviewee reports that the coalition has organizational flexibility that allows members to be more or less involved in coalition work over time as long as they are firmly committed to the values and principles of the USFSA, which can help smaller grass-roots groups participate in the USFSA (interview 5). Another explains that the USFSA has different membership categories, which can also make it organizationally flexible (interview 9).[11] Groups can be general members or core members. General members commit to the mission and principles of the USFSA and to doing food sovereignty work or work related or relevant to food sovereignty. They also commit to support the work of the USFSA and stay connected to other USFSA members and exchange food sovereignty work information with them. In addition to these tasks and responsibilities, core members also make a commitment to provide resources for the joint strategies and campaigns of the USFSA, serve of at least on one of its work teams, and participate in solidarity actions to support other groups in ways that do not fall directly within their agendas or issue areas. Core members also vote for the USFSA's Coordinating Committee members, have the opportunity to serve on this Committee, and participate in the decision-making process of the USFSA. In sum, the two membership categories entail very different levels of involvement in the USFSA and require the commitment of very different levels of staff time and resources, which enhances the USFSA's organizational flexibility and allows groups with different levels of resources to be involved in it (interview 10). Finally, there is awareness that a coalition represents an organizational structure that can help expand the capacity of food sovereignty and food justice SMOs through effective coordination, joint strategizing, pooling resources, and alignment with the transnational food sovereignty movement (interviews 7, 8). In addition, the USFSA was seen as an organizational structure that can help the movement do more proactive work, as opposed to reacting to policies it opposes, and to articulate what it was working for, as opposed to only what it was against (interviews 10, 11). One of the decisions and priorities that emerged out of the first assembly of the USFSA, which was held in November 2011, was a renewed focus on

thinking about the USFSA's structure, leadership, and decision-making process in light of the expected continued expansion of its membership and the USFSA's commitment to consensus decision-making (interview 10). This, again, reflects a sensitivity to organizational issues.

One example that illustrates the organizational flexibility and some of the efforts that were made to develop a strong and diverse coalition and to enhance organizational integration pertains to the initial effort to include a few groups in the coalition that an interviewee describes as 'traditional' and 'not very progressive' (interviews 2, 8, 10, 11). These groups, which operate food banks in the US, had not worked with other key NGOs within the coalition whose agendas focused on international issues, and they were not receptive to the fundamental policy change that many other groups within the coalition advocated. This is in part because they receive donations from corporations and big food retailers, and so could not support the anti-corporate orientation of the members of the Working and Group and the USFSA (interviews 8, 11). In addition, many food banks are based on the charity model, as opposed to the transformative change model of the USFSA. Nevertheless, their involvement in the coalition resulted in a learning process and conversation among all groups, with food bank groups learning more about the need for structural change and policy groups learning more about hunger issues in the United States (interviews 2, 11). Ultimately, however, food banks dropped out of the coalition because they could not support the message of the Working Group and the USFSA (interviews 8, 10, 11). Some dialogue and conversations still continue, especially because WhyHunger, a lead organization among the core groups of the USFSA, has strong ties to the food bank community and the community food movement (interview 10).

Cultural Integration

The organizational integration of a diversity of groups also required and was reinforced by the process of cultural integration. In some ways cultural integration has not been difficult because there has been a broad-based consensus within the Working Group and the USFSA about key issues (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4). Even though the groups are quite diverse, they agree for the most part on fundamental issues, and much like the cases Gerhards and Rucht study, there is clear ideological compatibility even though each group has its own agenda and area of focus. For example, almost all groups are skeptical or critical of corporate-driven globalization and corporate concentration, and all of them share a common understanding of the root causes of the global food crisis and the structural nature of that crisis (interviews 3, 4, 8, 9, 11). When asked about how the USFSA can be cohesive and well-coordinated in light of the diversity of its membership, several interviewees pointed to this basic ideological compatibility, the joint analysis of the food system, and the joint commitment to bringing about systemic change and more democratic control of the food system as the basis of cohesiveness within the USFSA (interviews 8, 9, 11). Beyond this ideological convergence, an effort was made to develop a master frame that can accommodate all the diverse groups while at the same time linking their local struggles to global struggles (interviews 10, 11).

In general, there has been an expansion of the frame to accommodate all groups as more groups join the coalition (interview 2). Interviewees recall a meeting, held in Washington D.C. in 2009, at which the statement 'Ending Poverty by Rebuilding Local Food Economies' was developed as the key message of the food sovereignty

movement (interviews 1, 2, 3, 10, 11).[12] This was the meeting that set the stage for the formation of the USFSA, and based on the experience of the first year of the Working Group's activities, there was an effort to raise funds to bring grass-roots groups representing indigenous groups, farm workers, people of colour, and other communities to the meeting to make the coalition more diverse. These communities had very immediate needs surrounding issues of survival and violence, and poverty is how they experience the problems and shortcomings of the food system. There was a need to make food sovereignty real and relevant for these communities and connect food sovereignty activism to the perspectives and circumstances of grass-roots groups in the US, hence the umbrella statement 'Ending Poverty by Rebuilding Local Food Economies' (interviews 10, 11). This way of framing food sovereignty work in the US created space within the USFSA for grass-roots groups, but some national policy-oriented groups chose to drop out of the USFSA because its work was becoming more grass-roots focused – the national groups that stayed really understood the importance of grass-roots work (interview 10).

Similarly, there was some emphasis on the issue of dismantling racism in the food system in the PMA resolution at the U.S. Social Forum, and a stronger emphasis was added in the final stages of editing the Draft Founding Document of the USFSA, as was the requirement that core members attend training on dismantling racism. This stronger emphasis reflects the input of two organizations, whose niche is racism in the food system: the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and Growing Food and Justice Initiative – the latter organization holds an annual meeting before which it organizes racism dismantling training that core members attend (interview 10).

This point is particularly interesting as it indicates that there is a process of frame extension taking place to expand the USFSA's membership. Recall that Gerhards and Rucht explain that groups that join a coalition engage in a process of frame bridging to connect their own agendas and frames to a master frame. This process is one example of frame alignment, but there are other frame alignment processes, including frame extension, which refers to SMO efforts to 'promote programs or causes in terms of values and beliefs that may not be especially salient or readily apparent to potential constituents and supporters' and to 'extend the boundaries of its primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents' (Snow et al, 1986, p. 472). Frame extension appears to be the frame alignment process that the food sovereignty movement has used to expand its membership. While initially the focus of advocacy and organizing was on the food crisis and hunger, food sovereignty has come to mean different things in different places and to different people and communities. According to one interviewee, this intentional vagueness of the definition of food sovereignty is a strength as it allows the concept to be used as a framework for organizing and advocacy in different places while still allowing the food sovereignty movement as a whole to be cohesive (interview 4). This is very much in line with the approach of the global food sovereignty movement, which also emphasizes and values the diversity of the movement and maintains that 'while it is critical to have a common framework, there is no single path or prescription for achieving food sovereignty. It is the task of individual regions, nations, and communities to determine what food sovereignty means to them based on their own unique set of circumstances' (Schiavoni, 2009, p. 685).

Summary and Conclusions

The starting point for this article is the 2008 global food crisis, a critical event that helped generate momentum around food advocacy. This critical event heightened threats to the food movement's goals and created new opportunities and incentives for SMOs to form coalitions, first the US Working Group on the Food Crisis and later the USFSA, which grew out of the Working Group. I also find that the Working Group and the USFSA have purposefully made concerted efforts to organizationally integrate a range of diverse groups. This research also indicates that accommodating the agendas, priorities, understandings, and perspectives of all members of the coalition has been possible through a master frame that establishes broad parameters for food sovereignty advocacy and serves as a unifying framework while allowing each group to adapt its food sovereignty advocacy work to its agenda and the needs, concerns, and priorities of its constituents. Organizational and cultural integration have by and large unfolded in the ways described in the theoretical social movement literature, and the sensitivity of USFSA to issues of cultural and organizational integration bodes well for the future of the USFSA and its organizational capacity and strength.

There are many opportunities and avenues for further research, especially since the food sovereignty movement is very recent. It will be important and interesting to continue studying the USFSA as its members continue the process of movement building and as its campaigns unfold. Since several interviewees mentioned specific meetings at which key issues pertaining to movement building and campaign planning were discussed, participating as an observer at a few of these meetings may prove very helpful in deepening our understanding the process of movement building. In addition, the first annual assembly of the USFSA was held in November 2011, and three priority areas for 2012 were selected: land rights and land grabs, immigration reform and worker rights, and the rights of nature (interviews 8, 9, 10). Beyond attempting to understand the process of movement and coalition building, the initial focus of the USFSA's work (interview 7), it will be important and useful to see how the substantive foci and priorities are pursued by the members of the USFSA and how they will continue to expand its membership, build a food sovereignty movement in the US, and work on substantive issues at the same time.

Notes

1. 'Food prices at dangerous levels, says World Bank' (15 February 2011); 'Food prices hit new record highs, says UN food agency' (3 March 2011); 'Food prices: World Bank warns millions face poverty' (14 April 2011). All published on the BBC News web site <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>.
2. Favourable critical events also impact SMOs, but since the global food crisis is an adverse critical event, I focus here only on this type of critical event.
3. The Declaration of Nyéléni is available at <http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=282&Itemid=38>, accessed 13 June 2011.
4. Localizing food systems is one of the principles of the food sovereignty paradigm listed on the website of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/FOOTER/Highlights.aspx>, accessed 19 June 2011.
5. See the overview of food sovereignty principles on the website of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/FOOTER/Highlights.aspx>.
6. See the website of the US Working Group on the Food Crisis <http://usfoodcrisisgroup.org/node/18>, accessed 17 June 2011.
7. <http://usfoodcrisisgroup.org/node/18>, accessed 17 June 2011.
8. See <http://www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/about>, accessed 17 June 2011.
9. <http://www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/about/call-to-action<, accessed 17 June 2011.

10. <http://www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/foodsovereigntypma/food-sovereignty-pma-resolution>, accessed 17 June 2011.

11. The different membership categories and the responsibilities of members in each category are described in the Draft Founding Document for the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA), which is available from <https://docs.google.com/a/usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/viewer?a=v&pid=explorer&chrome=true&srcid=0B_830YDZbpsgZWU0MmRmYWEtNTY4My00MWU0LTg4NmQtMmRjNGU5OTA4NTYy&hl=en_US>, accessed 21 Nov. 2011.

12. This phrase is available on the website of the Working Group and, in slightly different versions, on the USFSA website and other websites. See <http://usfoodcrisisgroup.org/; http://www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/about/call-to-action>;   <http://www.whyhunger.org/news-and-alerts/48-why-reporter/1095-ending-poverty-through-rebuilding-local-food-economies-week-of-actions.html>; <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/node/3083>, all accessed 3 July 2011.

List of Interviews

Interview 1: Phone interview with staff member of an NGO involved in the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, 30 June 2011.

Interview 2: Phone interview with David Kane, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, 30 June 2011.

Interview 3: Phone interview with Stephen Bartlett, Agricultural Missions, 5 July 2011.

Interview 4: Phone interview with a staff member of an NGO involved in the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, 6 July 2011.

Interview 5: Phone interview with Rosalinda Guillen, Community to Community Development, 13 September 2011.

Interview 6: Phone interview with staff member an NGO involved in the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, 13 September 2011.

Interview 7: Phone interview with Heather Day, Community Alliance for Global Justice, 15 September 2011.

Interview 8: Phone interview with Maria Aguiar, 21 November 2011.

Interview 9: Phone interview with Joann Lo, Food Chain Workers Alliance, 21 November 2011.

Interview 10: Phone interview with Christina Schiavoni, WhyHunger, 23 November 2011.

Interview 11: Phone interview with Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Pesticide Action Network North America, 2 December 2011.

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