

Title: Frames on food and nutrition security: media analyses in Flanders, Italy and UK

Abstract

The public perception of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) in Europe is shaped by insights and beliefs on the drivers and vulnerabilities of the food system performance and its resilience. Recently, there is a growing body of work on FNS framings that aim to gain an in-depth understanding of narrative formation and its policy implications. This paper presents a cross-country analysis of FNS frames in Flanders, Italy and UK. The research is based on media analyses in these countries, in the period 2007-2014. We focus on eight frames: the ecological frame, the free trade frame, the quality frame, the social frame, the solidarity frame, the sovereignty frame, the technology frame and the wholesomeness frame. This research contributes in countering the regressive fragmentation and aggregation currently framing conventional FNS approaches.

Extended abstract

Over the past two decades, various narratives on Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) have been developed. A narrative takes specific vulnerabilities and hazards in the food system as point of departure for shaping potential solutions. Narratives are also present in the social media, influencing public perception. Recently, there is a growing body of work on FNS framings that aim to gain an in-depth understanding of narrative formation and its policy implications.

Despite the multifaceted processes and the complexity that characterizes the FNS dynamics, solutions and conceptualizations - envisaged from policy, academic spheres and lobby groups - they have mostly revolved around oppositional narratives that reproduce old dichotomies and dialectics. These narratives have been identified under different flags such as the productivity (or efficiency) narrative and the sufficiency narrative (Freibauer et al. 2011; Huber 2000), or the bio-economy and eco-economy paradigms (Kitchen & Marsden 2009), weak and strong ecological modernization (Horlings & Marsden 2011), or productivist or demand-led approaches (Sonnino et al. 2014). Along these lines, Lang and Barling (2012) identify an "old" and an "emerging" analytical approach to food security, held by different actors competing for policy space and unveiling key tensions between a farm vs. food system focus, the role of big business, labor efficiency, western levels of consumption, and the sustainability of diets.

For this research, we build on Mooney and Hunt (1996, 2009) who applied the framing concept for identifying agrarian ideologies that constitute the fabric and social protest in American agriculture. Furthermore we rely on the work of Candell et al. (2014), who analyzed food security frames deployed in the CAP post-2013 reform process. In line with their findings, we focus on eight frames: the ecological frame, the free trade frame, the quality frame, the social frame, the solidarity frame, the sovereignty frame, the technology frame and the wholesomeness frame.

This paper presents an analysis of FNS frames in Flanders, Italy and UK which allows cross-regional comparison. The research is based on articles, opinions and policy positions published in the period 2007-2014. Over 1500 documents were selected, with sources covering the public, market, policy and scientific sphere. Based on an iterative process of query search using Nvivo©, we identified for

each frame the key concepts, described through specific narratives, metaphors and other rhetoric devices. The results of the cross-country analyses are threefold.

First, the analysis demonstrates how a limited number of organizations – including NGOs, sector organizations, political parties and scientists - frame the regional debate on FNS. This holds true for all three regions included in the analysis and explains differences in FNS frames across regions as well as the shift in power of frames over time. As an example, we refer to the initiatives of Tristram Stuart in the framework of *Feeding the 5000*. Related events have enriched the ecological frame, the social frame and the solidarity frame. Another example is the impact of Olivier De Schutter's mandate as UN rapporteur on the right to food, which has put the sovereignty frame on the agenda of popular press in Flanders. In the UK, the food sovereignty frame is not in the press however, there is a strong debate on food poverty, with the role of food banks as an important device to develop narratives.

Second, we identified a consent need to enforce the revival of local food systems. This common belief is found in several frames: the ecological frame, the quality frame, the social frame, the solidarity frame and the sovereignty frame. The results for Flanders and Italy are in line with the findings of Brunori et al. (2013), who stated that new alliances around waste, resources, sustainable diets and food sovereignty are being formed. In the UK, however, there is more a disconnection from local, ecological, community initiatives and national and international policies and discourses. Local initiatives are largely by-passed absent in the main media.

Third, we observe important conflicting views on FNS with opponents of production increase heavily relying on biotechnology and promoting free trade versus frames that emphasize the need for behavioral change in food production and consumption. The former view basically covers the free trade frame and the technology frame, which could be considered as the dominant discourse. The alternative view articulate a serious concern with respect to genetic engineering as a whole and the power of multinational biotechnology companies in particular. The conflict demonstrate the key arguments of proponents of the related frames with respect to increasing food and nutrition security at the global level, whereby the dominant discourse focuses on availability - and hence on global food production increase - whereas the alternative discourse focuses on food access and changing food patterns at the local scale. A deeper investigation on the underlying moralities might unblock current polarization.

This research contributes in countering the regressive fragmentation and aggregation currently framing conventional approaches to FNS. Focusing on public media, instead of policy documents, the research also encompasses frames that are not at all or hardly taken up by policy makers. The results confirm the relationship between scale and framing (Kirwan & Maye 2013; MacMillan & Dowler 2012) with a dominant discourse focusing at the globalised food systems and various alternative frames taking local food systems as a point of departure. In this context, the cross country analysis allows to gain insights in the geographical dimension and regional embeddedness of FNS frames. Regional and national media may add to the public popularity of specific frames, and therefore enhance the belief in specific solutions for FNS. A thorough understanding in frames and the underlying arguments contributes to the public debate on FNS in general and the debate between proponent of - apparently - competing frames in particular.

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