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From Procurement to Food Justice: Colombia's Institutional Turn

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Abstract. This article analyzes the case of the Colombian Government Agency *Colombia Compra Eficiente* as an example of an institutional innovation that actively challenges neoliberal rationality in the fight against hunger. It argues that, through targeted strategies, the agency is transformed into a community of resistance to the dominant capitalist paradigm, thus serving as a vehicle for the democratization and institutionalization of practices traditionally associated with grassroots social movements. By examining two key strategies – *Ruta de la Democratización* and *Mi Mercado Popular* – the article demonstrates how the agency disrupts conventional dichotomies between state and civil society in food sovereignty scholarship, suggesting that institutional actors can play a pivotal role in reorienting local development models toward social and food justice goals.

Keywords: resistance, Colombia, food security, food sovereignty, government agencies.

1. FOOD SECURITY, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, AND FOOD JUSTICE: AN INTRODUCTORY VIEW

The implementation of food sovereignty is a complex process that requires the translation of a political vision of food security into a more equitable food system. A persistent challenge in this effort is the limited attention given to the role of government policies and actions within food sovereignty debates. An estimated 735 million people still suffer from food insecurity worldwide, and it is increasingly clear that the Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger by 2030 will not be achieved (UNICEF 2023). Although food insecurity disproportionately affects rural populations, it is also closely linked to broader urbanization processes. These dynamics shape the degree of social and spatial connectivity, often leading to increased isolation and a growing reliance on nutritionally inadequate and highly processed diets. Given the complexity and interdependence of these factors, their integration into government policymaking raises a number of urgent and multi-

dimensional questions. Can government engagement be meaningfully integrated into a food sovereignty model that includes smallholder farmers? Could such a model help food-insecure nations achieve self-sufficiency? What role might alliances between governments, producers, and consumers play in building sovereign and resilient food systems? How can food sovereignty bridge the gap between corporate control of the global food system and the persistent struggles of rural food producers? Finally, can food sovereignty drive transformative change in the world's most impoverished regions?

The concept of food security has evolved significantly over the past fifty years since its original formulation, when the primary concern was on the volume and stability of food supplies. It first emerged in the mid-1970s, when the 1974 World Food Conference defined food security as "the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of staple foods to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to compensate for fluctuations in production and prices" (FAO 2003: 27). Since the 1970s, the definition of food security has expanded beyond the mere availability of food supplies. Recognizing that the Green Revolution did not inherently reduce poverty and malnutrition eroded faith in the ability of governments' technocratic systems to distribute natural resources fairly. By the mid-1990s, the concept had shifted to a more complex definition that emphasized individual and household access to food. According to the definition adopted at the 1996 World Food Summit, food insecurity refers to limited or uncertain access to safe, nutritionally adequate, and socially acceptable food necessary to support health across the life course. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security as comprising four key dimensions: (1) availability: the adequacy of food supply at the national or local level; 2) access: the ability of individuals or households to obtain nutritionally adequate, safe, and culturally appropriate food; 3) utilization: the proper use of food, including the knowledge and tools to store, prepare, and distribute it safely, as well as the body's ability to metabolize and absorb nutrients; 4) stability: the consistency of access, availability, and utilization over time, without the risk of disruption due to crises or seasonal fluctuations. The widely accepted definition states that food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 1996). This multidimensional understanding of food security evidently incorporates the four key pillars mentioned above.

While the concept of food security has played a central role in international development discourse, par-ticularly through global institutions such as the FAO and the UN and frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, it has faced increasing criticism for being depoliticized and overly focused on technical solutions to hunger that accommodate neoliberal approaches to agriculture, including trade liberalization, export-oriented production, and the concentration of power within multinational agribusiness (Friedmann 1993). Critics argue that mainstream discourse on food security often overlooks deeper structural inequalities in the global food system, such as the concentration of multinational corporations, land expropriation, workers' exploitation, and the marginalization of smallholder producers. Food security, as traditionally defined, does not question the social control of the food system, the way in which food is produced, or the socio-political conditions under which it is accessed. Raj Patel points out that food security, as a concept, can exist even under authoritarian regimes such as prisons or dictatorships. This is because, from a governmental standpoint, the definition of food security deliberately avoids specifying the political conditions under which it should be achieved. Such vagueness was a strategic choice, as including language that required certain political systems or democratic processes would have made international consensus on the definition much harder to reach (2009: 665). As a result, food security can be pursued through industrial agriculture, international trade and even food aid, often reinforcing the very inequalities that contribute to food insecurity for instance through the 'depeasantization' of rural areas in the name of efficiency (Araghi 1995), and the circumvention of food system power policies that must instead be explicitly discussed. In response, the concept of food sovereignty emerged in the 1990s, first introduced by the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina, as a more radical alternative.

Food sovereignty reframes the conversation by emphasizing the right of peoples, communities, and nations to define their own food and agricultural systems, prioritizing local markets, protecting seed diversity and biodiversity, and resisting corporate dominance over food systems. It aims at placing control of food production and distribution in the hands of those who produce, distribute, and consume food, rather than distant markets and multinational corporations. Unlike food security, which can be pursued within industrial and globalized food contexts, food sovereignty explicitly requires agrarian reform, protection of local markets, agroecological practices, and democratic control over food systems (Nyéléni Declaration 2007). It reframes food as a right and a public good rather than a commodity, centering justice, sustainability, and autonomy as

core values. As Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe argue, food sovereignty offers a transformative framework that "calls into question the micro-economic framework of the corporate food regime by placing great value on things with little quantifiable economic worth, such as culture, biodiversity and traditional knowledge" (2010: 27), thereby creating space for agrarian, environmental, and food justice movements. This transition, from a technical, access-based model of food security to a justice-oriented, rights-based model of food sovereignty, marks a profound shift in how global food challenges are conceptualized and addressed. It recognizes that hunger is not merely a supply problem, but a symptom of deeper structural inequalities in land distribution, trade policies, and governance.

The shift from food security to food sovereignty is epistemological and reflects more than a change in policy language. It represents a deeper ideological and political transformation in how food systems are understood and contested. In this view, food sovereignty is both a critique and a political project: it seeks to reclaim autonomy, dignity and sustainability for farming communities and smallholder producers around the world. As Desmarais (2007) writes, food sovereignty is a transformative process that challenges dominant power relations and reclaims agriculture as a way of life, rather than simply a sector of the economy. Peasants are not seen as passive victims of neoliberal capitalism, but as active political agents with their own visions of development and ecological stewardship. This redefinition calls into question the top-down, expert-driven approaches often associated with food security and development policy, advocating instead for democratized and territorially grounded food systems.

Building on these analyses of top-down food security policies and bottom-up food sovereignty struggles, we argue that Colombia offers a unique and dynamic example of how food sovereignty can be implemented not only through grassroots resistance, but also through state-supported institutional reform. While *La Vía Campesina* and affiliated organizations across Latin America have traditionally positioned themselves in opposition to state and corporate power, Colombia's recent developments suggest a more hybrid model, one in which small-scale farmers, Indigenous communities, and government actors engage in participatory governance to reconfigure the entire agri-food system, toward justice and sustainability. In fact, the Colombian government is promoting state-subsidized agriculture as a key element of national infrastructure. These government-funded reforms seek to expand food sovereignty through agroecology and enhance food security while driving

much-needed transformations in the agri-food system. Colombia presents a compelling case study due to its history of social and community-based resistance, as well as its current implementation of a distinct form of political-institutional resistance and transformation.

This state-driven resistance from within the system is rare in food sovereignty research that conceptualizes resistance as emerging from below led by peasants, Indigenous communities, and grassroots organization that resist dominant agri-food models imposed by global neoliberal institutions and multinational agribusinesses. The state, in this narrative, is frequently positioned as part of the problem: as a facilitator of land dispossession, a promoter of export-oriented agriculture, or a passive observer of global capitalist pressures. This framing reflects a broader skepticism in critical agrarian and food studies toward state institutions, often seen as structurally bound to neoliberal logic and elite interests. As a result, the state is rarely imagined as a protagonist in food sovereignty transformations, much less as a site of resistance. However, the Colombian case seems to challenge this dominant assumption exemplifying a state-led effort of political transformation of the food system where government agencies alongside smallholder farmers, Indigenous representatives, civil society organizations, and advocates of agroecological practices are collectively working toward increased food security and food sovereignty that will ultimately lead to food justice.

In a deeply unequal world shaped by a legacy of colonial domination that has primarily benefitted a privileged few, there are poor, racialized populations, women, and other marginalized groups that continue to be exploited under a neoliberal regime that undermines peasant-led agrarian reforms. Government-led food system reforms that address food insecurity create opportunities for community-engaged, place-based approaches to reimagining more just and equitable food systems. At a time when the transformation of the food system is no longer questionable, much of the theorizing around localized alternatives to the corporate-led industrial food model has come from the Global North often speculating on the viability of bottom-up, localized food initiatives.

This paper instead builds on an existing case study of a concrete example being enacted in practice to investigate the growing collaboration among government agencies that is taking place through state-led initiatives, platforms, and policy mechanisms in Colombia. We focus particularly on efforts to advance food security, food sovereignty, and ultimately food justice by examining the development of localized food provisioning networks that play a crucial role in reshaping the country's food system. We argue that these initiatives are not

isolated efforts. Rather, they represent a broader and increasingly robust social movement of multi-scaled food activism emerging from the Global South. This movement, often led by actors historically considered marginal or peripheral within global networks, challenges dominant agro-industrial paradigms and offers new models for socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. This growing food sovereignty movement aligns with, and in many ways pushes beyond, the international policy frameworks that aim to address global inequalities in food systems. In particular, it intersects with the goals set forth by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda, which seeks to create pathways for equitable and ecologically sustainable development.

2. INSTITUTIONALITY BECOMES A COMMUNITY OF RESISTANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF *COLOMBIA COMPRA EFICIENTE*

Collective social and political conflict is a dynamic process that manifests in various forms across different areas and levels. It involves both institutional and extra-institutional actors, generating interactions that continuously reshape the sociopolitical landscape (Bosi and Malthaner 2024). These transformations, much like a spiral, are interconnected, reflecting attempts to address the complexity of contemporary societies. This complexity demands a reproblematization and resignification of existing frameworks along with a stronger articulation between theoretical perspectives and practices grounded in cultures of sustainability and solidarity. As Mangone (2024) argues, thinking about solidarity requires a meta-theoretical approach; one that considers the growing demand for diverse forms of intervention prompted by new systems of social need, while also grappling with the challenges posed by developments in communication and technological processes.

The case study at the center of this contribution aligns with these theoretical dimensions. In a country ranked among the most unequal in Latin America, both structurally and systemically, where approximately 1.6 million people suffer from acute food insecurity (GNAFC 2024), current efforts challenge dominant neoliberal paradigms and propose an alternative model that is socially just, ecologically sustainable, and grounded in solidarity. As the need to transform the agri-food system is now widely acknowledged, despite ongoing reliance on frameworks rooted in the Global North, Colombia distinguishes itself not only through a legacy of grassroots and community resistance, but also through its current implementation of a unique form of political-institution-

al transformation. From the Global South, a vision is emerging that not only aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 2, but also remains deeply attuned to local realities and challenges. As such, it appears to push beyond standardized international policy frameworks toward more context-specific and transformative approaches.

Since his election campaign, President Gustavo Petro has prioritized food sovereignty and food security in Colombia. This commitment is clearly reflected in the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2022-2026*, titled "Colombia Potencia Mundial de la Vida" (National Development Plan 2022-2026), the key legal and strategic document outlining the government's policy agenda. The NDP places the right to food, recognized as a fundamental human right, at the center of its objectives and prioritizes the promotion of sustainable industrialization and productivity through the adoption of new technologies. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the NDP aims to strengthen the peasant, family, ethnic, and community-based economy by providing access to production resources. It seeks to foster food security efficiently, autonomously, and equitably, while fully respecting ancestral knowledge, traditional flavors, and local biodiversity. In support of this goal, the *Comisión Intersectorial de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional* (Intersectoral Commission on Food and Nutrition Security) has been restructured to consolidate governance and improve coordination across food policy domains.

The vision also aligns with Colombia's obligations under the 2016 Peace Agreement, which recognized food security and sovereignty, anchored in agrarian reform, as foundational to sustainable peace. The National Development Plan dedicates an entire chapter to "total and integral peace," framing it as the essence of governance. Within this chapter, rural reform is identified as the primary pillar for achieving territorial peace. One major outcome of this agenda has been the creation of the *Sistema Nacional para la Garantía Progresiva del Derecho a la Alimentación* (National System for the Progressive Guarantee of the Right to Food, Art. 216, Law 2294/2023). This system not only serves as the institutional mechanism coordinating the *Hambre Cero* (Zero Hunger) program, a national emergency plan targeting hunger in the most vulnerable regions of the country but also represents a structural response to one of the country's most enduring challenges: securing peace in rural areas and achieving social justice.

This intersectoral response advances a vision aligned with the People's Food Power, promoting food governance rooted in human rights. It seeks to ensure that rights holders are actively involved in decision-

making processes to realize the right to food, adequate nutrition, and food sovereignty. This agenda is tightly connected to the NDP's broader goals of social justice, equity, environmental sustainability, and inclusion. It also intersects with objectives related to strengthening the popular economy, promoting multilevel governance in food-related public policies, and contributing to territorial peacebuilding[1]. To support this transformation, the National Agency for Public Procurement – *Colombia Compra Eficiente* has launched an ambitious strategy to democratize participation in public procurement and ensure equitable access to public resources. The Agency has established a direct and continuous communication and training channel, enabling the participation of small-scale farmers, coffee and panela producers, small and medium-sized enterprises, local cooperatives, non-profit associations, and other actors within the popular and community-based economy. This strategy integrates two key initiatives: 1) *Ruta de la democratización* (Democratization Path), a series of ongoing virtual and in-person training sessions conducted nationwide, principally targeting actors in the popular economy to educate them on public procurement processes and participation mechanisms; and 2) *Mi Mercado Popular* (My Popular Market), a module within the Colombian government's virtual procurement platform. This tool allows popular economy actors to register as state suppliers, thereby revolutionizing the country's procurement systems and improving access for previously marginalized sectors.

Through this strategy, the *Colombia Compra Eficiente* government agency is transformed into a key driver of change by implementing alternative actions that challenge the deeply rooted neoliberal socio-economic model that has shaped Colombia for decades. This transformation involves a realignment of regulatory frameworks with political and socio-cultural objectives, enabled in part by a broader technological shift. Focusing on the two core strategies, efforts began in late 2023 with the *Ruta de la Democratización*, aimed at dismantling the barriers to access, capacity, and market participation that have long excluded sectors of the popular economy. These efforts are supported by technical assistance and the agency's sustained territorial presence, empowering marginalized actors with the tools and knowledge to engage meaningfully in the public procurement system. The initiative seeks to open up the public procurement market to actors traditionally excluded from state supply chains such as small local producers, micro-enterprises, women's associations, Indigenous and ethnic communities, and peasant cooperatives. By promoting their participation as potential state suppliers, the strategy aims to foster sustainable industrial development, energize vulnerable local economies, and advance social and environmental justice. In this way, the state, through *Colombia Compra Eficiente*, extends its reach into historically neglected territories.

The Ruta de la Democratización is underpinned by principles of popular critical education (Freire 2005), supported by many current government leaders. It is further enriched by the tenets of digital critical education. These principles are operationalized through three main components: a) Virtual Training School: A free, 24/7 e-learning platform that offers specialized online training for administrators of local government entities, private producers, citizens, and actors from the popular economy. This is complemented by regular informational webinars on procurement opportunities, hosted via Microsoft Teams and disseminated across the agency's social media and platforms such as YouTube; b) Expansion of Territorial Coverage: To bridge the digital divide and address educational and cultural gaps, *Colombia Compra Eficiente* conducts in-person training sessions in remote regions. These sessions use participatory and dialogic forum methodologies to engage local communities, administrators, and popular economy actors directly; and c) Specialized Technical Assistance: Beyond general training, the agency offers personalized support to ensure that participants understand the requirements, procedures, and documentation necessary to take part in public procurement processes.

The dynamics of Colombia's complex public procurement system are thus being redesigned in a democratizing direction to include the popular and community economy sector as a vital ally in the country's sustainable economic development. The *Ruta de la Democratización* strategy both strengthens and is strengthened by other instruments, such as the *Acuerdo Marco de Precios* (CCE 2023). For example, through the *Café Social* (Social Coffee) initiative, the state has promoted the participation of victims of the internal armed conflict, female heads of households, and peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant organizations. By expanding inclusive procurement catalogues, the government has enabled the direct acquisition of coffee from micro and small enterprises within the popular economy, supporting small local brands over large franchises and fostering the economic development of socially vulner-

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[1] According to Decree 2185 of 2023, the popular economy encompasses both mercantile activities (such as the production, distribution and marketing of goods and services) and non-mercantile ones (including domestic or community-based work) carried out by small economic units, whether personal, family-based, or micro-enterprises, across any economic sector.

able communities. This first block of strategic actions is complemented by a second, represented by the innovative *Mi Mercado Popular* platform, which became fully operational in 2024. Unlike traditional tools focused solely on transparency and efficiency, *Mi Mercado Popular* is conceived as a democratizing instrument. By recognizing and formalizing the contributions of the popular economy and small producers to national development, the platform seeks to disrupt oligarchic procurement dynamics and promote broader socio-economic and cultural inclusion. The platform allows micro-enterprises and sectors of the popular economy to register as state providers under *Instrumentos de Agregación de Demanda*, IADs (Demand Aggregation Tools). IADs are legal mechanisms used to group government demand for specific products or services, enabling state entities to procure them directly up to a set minimum amount through the Colombian State's virtual store. In combination with inclusive catalogues, these mechanisms primarily facilitate the purchase of agricultural and food products such as canastas familiares directly from actors in the popular economy. Furthermore, these strategic actions operate in strong synergy with broader government initiatives, such as the *Asociaciones Público Populares* (APPo), established under Decree 874 of 2024. These contracts allow state entities to directly engage, up to the established minimum amounts, with individuals or non-profit organizations classified within the popular and community economy sector for the execution of works or the acquisition of goods and services linked to local social and productive infrastructure, rural housing, food production, agriculture, and more.

The use of the *Mi Mercado Popular* platform, extended through the IADs to a wide range of products and services offered by sectors of the popular economy – including micro-enterprises, associations, cooperatives, consortia (even temporary ones) – together with the simplification of required documentation and the intuitive three-step registration process (account creation via email, completion of the registration form, and uploading of the commercial register), has produced notable results in terms of inclusion and participation[2].

Social justice, innovation, food sovereignty, and technological sovereignty[3] are the keywords that guide

the strategic action of the *Colombia Compra Eficiente* agency, which, through the design of these mechanisms, becomes a powerful executive arm of the *Gobierno del Cambio* (Government of Change). By combining these two strategic pillars, *Colombia Compra Eficiente* initiates a distinct form of resistance with significant social impact, complementing historical community struggles for social justice. Acting directly from within the institutional sphere, the agency designs and establishes alternative and progressive practices that translate the vision of food sovereignty and food security, as forms of resistance to neoliberal domination, into concrete action. Through this strategy, the Colombian National Agency for Public Procurement emerges as a kind of resistant community, becoming itself a space committed to reducing inequalities and protecting common goods (Ostrom 1990), such as food security, now broadly redefined within the Colombian context as food sovereignty and justice essential for internal pacification.

This interpretation of *Colombia Compra Eficiente* as a resistant community is further supported by the effects it produces at both the institutional and socio-cultural levels. At the institutional level, the agency's strategy allows the participation of actors and communities historically excluded from public procurement processes, thereby strengthening participatory democracy and open government mechanisms (De Blasio and Sorice 2016). Through the creation of articulation mechanisms and ongoing communication, merging traditional and digital methodologies, the agency strengthens public management from a responsible, ethical, and shared perspective. It does so because it subjects a public institution to social oversight, thus spreading a culture of open, citizen-oriented governance. The major challenge *Colombia Compra Eficiente* undertakes is to rethink its administrative mandate from a collaborative and co-management perspective, aiming at the sustainable governance of common goods and resources (Paltrinieri 2020), and to activate innovation processes capable of transforming sociocultural and socioeconomic paradigms.

This institutional transformation is mirrored at the socio-cultural level: by promoting civic engagement

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[2] According to estimates by the *Colombia Compra Eficiente* Agency, public procurement is fully open. In 2024, the number of suppliers from the popular economy was 166, and in the first six months of 2025, it increased to 663. Data on supplier participation in various public procurement processes are available on the Agency's platform at the following link: https://www.colombiacompra.gov.co/analisis-de-datos-de-compra-publica/visualizaciones-compra-publica/participacion-de-proveedores-en-los-procesos-de-compra-publica

[3] A National Dialogue Table is currently being established between

Colombia Compra Eficiente and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies to replace the existing digital platform SECOP (*Sistema Electrónico de Contratación Pública*), which manages all public procurement procedures. The new platform aims to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility while integrating advanced technologies such as AI to optimize processes and reduce costs. A key objective is to achieve national technological sovereignty, as the current platform, although operated by the government agency, relies on digital infrastructure and source code controlled by foreign companies. We thank the current Director of the Government Agency, Cristóbal Padilla Tejeda, for the information and clarification.

across online, offline, and hybrid spaces from a perspective that challenges neoliberal logic (Antonucci, Sorice and Volterrani 2024), the agency creates a bridge between the institutional and the social spheres. The agency's major decisions, such as guidelines, framework documents, and public procurement calls, are subject to ex ante citizen participation: drafts are shared on institutional websites and social media platforms, with citizens invited to leave feedback via Microsoft Forms. The same participatory methodology, both online and offline, is applied *in itinere* to assess and improve ongoing processes and ex post for annual accountability procedures.

In terms of communication, this strategy also represents an effort to counterbalance the neoliberal logic of contemporary platform societies (Sorice 2022) by constructing a socio-institutional space that fosters democratization and conscious direct participation in the pursuit of social justice. This space, starting with the guarantee of food and technological sovereignty, is dialogic: it re-signifies resistance and resilience, redefines the social sense of community, and integrates digital ecosystems with critical education and training actions. The alternative model shaped by *Colombia Compra Eficiente* thus presents innovative elements that seem to move toward a hypothesis of radical cultural democracy (Picarella 2022). Through these efforts, Colombia is not only democratizing access to public resources but is also laying the groundwork for a deeper transformation of the agri-food system. By embedding principles of equity, solidarity, and territorial inclusion into procurement mechanisms, the state is beginning to operationalize food sovereignty as a rights-based, participatory process rather than a purely grassroots struggle. This shift signals a break from the neoliberal models that have historically marginalized small-scale producers and popular economy actors, showing that institutional reforms can serve as powerful tools for systemic change when anchored in social justice and local realities. Colombia's experience thus offers valuable insights into how hybrid models of governance might reshape the global debate on food sovereignty and rural development.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The complexity of today's social, economic, political, and environmental issues demands the urgent integration of practices and production systems that both enhance productivity and protect ecological systems. Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda seeks to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (UN 2023). Achieving these goals requires a profound transformation in agricultural and food systems. These sectors hold significant potential to contribute to food security and sovereignty while also playing a key role in eradicating extreme poverty, which is one of the most persistent barriers to sustainable development (UN 2023; FAO 2006; European Coordination Via Campesina 2018). The Colombian case offers a concrete example of how these global objectives can be translated into institutional practices tailored to local contexts. It represents a significant shift in policy, emphasizing the role of the state in promoting equitable and sustainable food systems. Through the implementation of the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2022–2026* and the strategic actions of *Colombia Compra Eficiente*, the country is advancing a model that integrates food justice, ecological sustainability, and participatory governance. By aligning national policy with the principles of Goal 2, Colombia not only seeks to reduce hunger and inequality but also reframes food governance as a vehicle for social transformation rooted in solidarity, local knowledge, and inclusive economic participation.

The action of the National Agency for Public Procurement, *Colombia Compra Eficiente*, aligns with a vision of food security and food sovereignty grounded in solidarity rather than competition, aiming to safeguard human dignity and build a fairer world from the bottom up. Its approach represents the institutionalization of an alternative paradigm, one that prioritizes the protection and participation of local cooperatives, community-based agriculture, and the popular economy. By working to return control over resources and markets to small-scale, local producers (Macartan 2017; Wittman 2011), this model seeks to secure food sovereignty and food security throughout the country. Within this framework, *Colombia Compra Eficiente* becomes a community of resistance to the dominant neoliberal order mobilizing a nationwide strategy to combat hunger and promote equitable access to opportunities.

In conclusion, contrasting to dominant narratives that frame food sovereignty as exclusively emerging from grassroots resistance to neoliberal states, the Colombian case has revealed an innovative configuration of state-driven resistance. Through agencies like *Colombia Compra Eficiente*, the state itself becomes a vehicle for food justice democratizing food systems by institutionalizing practices historically associated with social movements. This reimagining of state agency challenges traditional dichotomies between 'the state' and 'the people' in food sovereignty literature, suggesting that parts of the institutional apparatus can be reoriented toward food justice goals.

In this way, food sovereignty and food justice are operationalized not only through grassroots mobilization but also through the transformation of public governance structures, procurement systems, and participatory mechanisms within the state, generating new spaces of collective empowerment and socio-ecological sustainability. Colombia's case study complicates the dominant framing of food sovereignty as an oppositional movement rooted primarily in grassroots or agrarian struggle (Patel 2009; Wittman *et al.* 2010). Instead, it illustrates a state-driven form of resistance, wherein public institutions like *Colombia Compra Eficiente* actively challenge neoliberal food systems through redistributive procurement policies and inclusive governance. This state-led engagement broadens the scope of food sovereignty, aligning it with food justice perspectives that emphasize structural inequalities, racialized access to food, and the role of state power in shaping everyday food realities (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Sbicca 2018). By embedding values of autonomy, equity, and sustainability into institutional practices, Colombia demonstrates how the state can act not merely as a regulator but as a co-creator of socially just food systems, building what Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) might call a "transformative food regime" from within the apparatus of government. The case study we have proposed pushes food sovereignty scholarship to reconsider the state not just as an obstacle or target of resistance, but as a potential ally in the construction of post-neoliberal food futures rooted in solidarity, participation, and locally grounded sustainability.

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