Power Relations in the Discourse of Food and Agriculture:

A critical discourse analysis of how the World Trade Organization and La Via Campesina write about the issue of food and agriculture.
CONTENTS

1 Introduction................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Background............................................................................................................ 2
  1.3 Purpose and Research Question ............................................................................ 2

2 Previous Research on Food and Power...................................................................... 3

3 Theory........................................................................................................................... 4

4 Research Design.......................................................................................................... 5
  4.1 Material..................................................................................................................... 5
  4.2 Research Method ..................................................................................................... 6
  4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis ..................................................................................... 7
  4.4 Central Concepts and Definitions ........................................................................... 8
  4.5 Discussion on Validity and Reliability .................................................................... 9
  4.6 Structure of Analysis .............................................................................................. 10

5 Analysis......................................................................................................................... 14
  5.1 Textual Practice ...................................................................................................... 14
  5.2 Discourse Practice ................................................................................................. 18
  5.3 Social Practice ........................................................................................................ 19

6 Discussion and Conclusions ....................................................................................... 20

7 Bibliography ................................................................................................................ 23
  7.1 Material used for Analysis: ................................................................................... 23
  7.2 List of References: .................................................................................................. 23
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

On the 10th of September, each year, the international peasants’ movement La Via Campesina (2016a) call upon the world to mobilize against the neoliberal agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which, according to La Via Campesina, promotes corporate power over humanity. On this day, the movement brings together over 200 million peasants all over the world to commemorate the martyrdom of a fellow farmer, Lee Kyung Hae, who died 13 years ago, on this particular date. Lee Kyung Hae worked to improve the lives for peasants in South Korea, by for example founding a cooperative and a farmers’ association. He lost his land in the year 1992, along with millions of other South Korean farmers, after his government had signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was the predecessor of the WTO.

By observing the dynamics of food and agriculture one can, according to Harriet Friedmann (2009 p. 6), get an idea of the larger political economy and its tensions since they demonstrate the commercialization of the human and natural foundations of society. Many of the global, as well as local, issues of our time are associated with the industrialization of agriculture and food production and these problems are still increasing in number as well as in severity. This, Philip McMichael (2004 p. 22ff) argues, is in part due to what he calls the ‘development project’. By development project, he refers to the paradigm, introduced just after World War II by President Truman, dividing the world into two camps: the developed and the underdeveloped. From this categorization of humanity, a new baseline was established according to which countries were measured; either a country is developed and modern, or it ought to strive to become developed and modern. Important to add here is that the definitions of development and modernity was completely based on western ideals. This was a new way of perceiving the world. With the division of the world as colonizers and colonized starting to dissolve, development and modernity became the new way of ordering the world. The new paradigm brought with it new strategies for improving the material standards of the so called underdeveloped world. It was a project which worked for the wealth of the ‘First World’ through a capitalist market economy. This was achieved by acquiring access to certain natural resources in the previously colonized countries, whilst simultaneously trying to assimilate the so called ‘Third World’ to the ‘First World’s’ living standards and civilization. The development project gravely prioritized industrialization and consumption of industrial commodities which left agriculture down
prioritized when it came to both theory and policy.

1.2 BACKGROUND
To understand the global food system – the way food is produced, distributed and consumed throughout the world – of our time one ought to have some knowledge of how it has been shaped through history. Not going too far back in time, Friedmann (2009 p. 5) explains how industrialization made a significant impact on the production of food. After World War II machinery and chemicals came to be used widely within agriculture. Farmers had the role of supplying raw materials to huge food manufacturers and the imbalance of power between them encouraged expansion and industrialization of the farms further, which led to the farms requiring more machines and chemicals. This development project, which was mentioned earlier, promoted state-centrism together with industrialization. Although agriculture was certainly not at the center of focus in policy, it came to be the most state-centered sector on a global scale. So, when the development project was replaced by the ‘globalization project’, the ambition was to enter a new era with a focus on free markets. Since agriculture had been a sector marked by protection, it became important to integrate it into the new free trade era. The integration of agriculture into international trade agreements was an essential matter in creating the World Trade Organization (founded in 1995).

The concept of ‘food sovereignty’ was brought to the global development discussion during the World Food Summit 1996, convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, when the international movement La Via Campesina presented the concept and argued for the importance of its presence in the debate (La Via Campesina, 2011). In short, they define ‘food sovereignty’ as ”[...] the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (La Via Campesina, 2007). Further, they emphasize the needs of the producers over the demands of markets and corporations. One of the main points of the movement for food sovereignty is their belief that nations together will remove the question of food from the power of the WTO and thereby not be governed by global trade rules (Peter Halewood, 2011).

1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION
Based on the previous sections of this essay, it can be argued that power is inherent in the field of food and agriculture. The purpose of this essay is to investigate whether power relations between relevant actors and organizations can be identified in the discourse of food and agriculture in our world today. The concept of power here regards the power an actor possesses
to affect and create the common knowledge accepted by the general public, to create a general understanding of an issue. Power *relations* should here be understood as the relationship between the actors within this discourse, both the relationship between big organizations and such, as well as the relationship between those and the general public. A further discussion on power relations follows in the section ‘Central Concepts and Definitions’.

By analyzing and comparing texts published by actors relevant to this matter, I intend to describe how different ways of writing about the same (or very similar) issues are connected to power. Through analyzing relevant texts produced by the WTO and La Via Campesina, the ambition is to get a deeper understanding of, and clarify, how the production of these texts has been affected by the power relations between the two, as well as between them and the general public. My research question is: How can the shaping of these two texts be understood through a power relations perspective?

The basis for understanding the power relations of the actors in this analysis will be a categorization brought forward by Hettne (2009). He explains how within every discourse there is a ‘mainstream’ as well as a ‘counterpoint’. These concepts will be further discussed in the ‘Theory’ section of this essay. The representatives of the mainstream are assumed to possess greater power to create a general understanding of an issue. The aim here is to use these categories in order to describe and contribute to a deeper understanding of how these relationships affect these two actors and their ways of acting within this discourse.

## 2 Previous Research on Food and Power

A central concept within the field of food and power is one called ‘food regime’. It was first formulated by Harriet Friedman in 1987 and has since been used by several other researchers within different fields of study. The concept places the global food system within a historical context, thus making it easier to analyze. The role of food in the global political-economy is emphasized and the depiction of modernization within agriculture as a linear process is problematized. The food regime concept is used as an instrument for analysis as it structuralizes the role of agriculture and food in capital accumulation in a historical perspective. It identifies patterns in which food is transferred in the world economy and thereby emphasizes the role of agriculture and food in geopolitics. The food regime analysis focuses on *how* global power arrangements are constituted by capital accumulation in agriculture. These power arrangements are expressed through the patterns of circulation of food (McMichael, 2009).
Philip McMichael (2009) further developed the concept of food regime together with Friedman since the late 1980’s and has recently come to focus on the mobilization of peasants transnationally and studied that in opposition to what he calls a ‘corporate food regime’, which he has argued to be the current food regime. The proposal of a corporate food regime builds on the original conception of a food regime with its element of contradictions. The first food regime was marked by tension between colonial and national interests, the next by national and transnational ones, and the current one is arguably marked by a contradiction between advocates of locally focused ‘agro-ecology’ and the globalized ‘world agriculture’. Moreover, this conception of a corporate food regime includes as well the perspectives of counter mobilizations against the modernist idea that farmers are obsolete. One of these counter mobilizations is La Via Campesina mentioned earlier. In McMichael’s analysis, social movements from the global South (such as La Via Campesina) are central in the dynamic of the current food regime. Moreover, McMichael suggests that this emergence of movements of small scale farmers around the world emphasizing sustainable agriculture and deeming it crucial for human survival, demonstrate that the industrialization of agriculture which has its roots in colonial monocultures has now reached a point of crisis. One of the main points of the movement is the question of human rights to culturally and nutritionally adequate food. This connects well to the factor of contradictions within a food regime. The same globalized system of the 21st century which enables the corporate food regime has resulted in a large mobilization in the names of ecology and humanity. The corporate food regime can be interpreted as to have resistance coming from two main directions, protective and proactive. An example of the protective is environmentalism and a proactive critique is the idea of food sovereignty, which is grounded in an alternative global moral economy. McMichael argued that “the corporate food regime embodies the tensions between a trajectory of ‘world agriculture’ and cultural survival, expressed in the politics of food sovereignty” (p. 151).

3 THEORY

In his book Thinking about development, Hettne (2009) talks about ‘the mainstream’ and ‘the counterpoint’ of a discourse. Regarding the discourse of development, the mainstream refers to the predominant view of what the goals and means of development are. This, of course, changes over time. The current mainstream goals relate to industrialization, globalization, and modernization whereas the means focus on the market as a mechanism to achieve effectiveness, as opposed to using state intervention to reach the desired goals. The counterpoint of a discourse
refers to a fundamental critique to the mainstream (in this case) development goals and thus its means as well. The counterpoint of the discourse should be understood as a reaction to, and an intent to change, the prescribed paradigm. The current counterpoint of the development discourse, which represents views of the civil society, revolve around for example ecology, community centered, and human focused societal development over economic growth. Typically, anti-modern ideas like these are expressed on behalf of those who are not allowed to reap the benefits of modernity but rather are threatened and degraded by it. The counterpoint is a completely different ideological dimension but may be able to modify the mainstream, most often is by being co-opted.

These two categories will be used as a framework in order to understand the discourses of interest in this analysis. By categorizing the actors in this sense, the ambition is that it will be easier to grasp the relationship between the two, as well as the relationship between the actors and the general public. Furthermore, an analysis of texts will be carried out and this framework will be used in order to draw conclusions from this analysis. The aim with this is to get a more nuanced comprehension of the texts by taking the position the actors represent in the wider discourse of food and agriculture in consideration.

Although the categorization of the actors can be done intuitively – the WTO as representatives of the mainstream and La Via Campesina as representatives of the counterpoint – the ambition is that this categorization will contribute to a deeper understanding, and to a clearer description, of how their positions within the discourse affect their relationships to each other as well as to the general public, thus affecting the power they have within the discourse.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 MATERIAL
The material that will be used for this analysis is parts of the annual reports from WTO and La Via Campesina. Both reports regard the year 2015, since that was the most recent year that both the WTO and La Via Campesina had yet published annual reports on. As mentioned will only parts of the reports be used for the analysis. The general criterion for which parts will be used are that they must be relevant for the general topic of this essay and for its research question. Relevance can be a rather vague expression, so I will elaborate on what was considered relevant for this analysis.
To begin with, the sections covering agriculture was logically considered relevant, since that is the main topic of the research question, and the essay as a whole. The WTO named these sections “Agriculture” and were covered both under the heading “Trade negotiations” (p. 32-33) and “Implementation and monitoring” (p. 51-53), while La Via Campesina named their section “Agroecology, Peasant Seeds & Biodiversity: For Food Sovereignty and the Mother Earth” (p. 16-19). Connected to this particular section in La Via Campesina’s report, is the topic of Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) discussed in the WTO report. The TRIPS agreement of the WTO includes requirements on how member countries handle the protection of new plant varieties (WTO, 2016a), thus affecting how peasants are allowed to use their seeds. Similar to the previously mentioned topics in the WTO report, TRIPS are discussed both under the heading “Trade negotiations” (p. 36-37) and “Implementation and monitoring” (p. 69-71).

Another topic considered in both reports is the environment. This topic is considered relevant due to its connection to agriculture. That connection is that small scale farming is a livelihood that is among the most vulnerable to climate change (Altieri & Koohafkan, 2008; Frank & Penrose Buckley, 2012) and food production has a great impact on the environment (Hertwich et al, 2010). The topic of the environment, the WTO once again covered under both the heading “Trade negotiations” (p. 39) and “Implementation and monitoring” (p. 72-74) and named it “Trade and Environment”. La Via Campesina called their section related to the topic “Environmental and Climate Justice: Mass mobilisation in Paris” (p. 32-34).

La Via Campesina has a chapter in its report called “Struggling against the WTO and free trade agreements” (p. 27-30) which is arguably relevant since it relates directly to the organization of which La Via Campesina’s report will be contrasted to in this analysis.

4.2 Research Method
Discourse analysis is a research method used to examine and question the ways of communicating certain topics, as well as how they are perceived. The goal is to unravel and discover the notions that are not the most obvious such as hidden motivations, unwritten rules, and possible conditions for change or development within the subject (Grbich, 2013). It is also interested in the coercive norms which the discourse is creating (Bergström & Boréus, 2000).

To understand what a discourse analysis is, one ought to comprehend what the concept ‘discourse’ consists of. However, there is no consensus on an exact definition of the concept. Generally speaking, the different definitions of discourse can be divided between inclusive and
exclusive (Bergström & Boréus, 2000). Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (in Bergström & Boréus, 2000) contributes with a definition which falls into the inclusive category. They regard a discourse as the use of language in speech and writing but further sees it as a ‘social practice’. By discourse as a social practice, they mean that the situation in which a discursive event occurs must be considered. They argue that the relationship between the event and the social structure that frames it is important due to the fact that the social structures shape the discursive events and vice versa. A discourse, according to them, is both socially shaped as well as socially constitutive, thus constitutive of knowledge and social identities. “It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it” (p. 224). Besides discourse as a social practice, Fairclough divide the concept of discourse into discourse practice, and the more common notion of discourse as a textual practice. Discourse practice refers to how texts are produced, distributed and interpreted while the analysis of the textual aspect of the discourse is substantially linguistic and grammatical structures are compared for example. This way of regarding discourse is mainly used within the so called Critical Discourse Analysis, one of the more well-known orientations of discourse analysis, which is strongly associated with Norman Fairclough (Bergström & Boréus, 2000).

4.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

With ‘critical’ discourse analysis, the purpose, according to Fairclough (1993), is to investigate how discursive events, such as texts, are affected and shaped by power relations and the struggle for power. Moreover, there is a focus on how these relationships between discourse and society can actually maintain a certain structure of power – a hegemony. “Critical discourse analysis is an instrument whose purpose is to expose veiled power structures” (Ruth Wodak 1996 s. 16).

Discourses should, according to Fairclough (2001), be understood as inherently positioned. Depending on how one is positioned in the power structures of society, one both sees and represents social life differently, which results in different discourses. These social practices in relation to one another is what constitutes a social order. This social order as an object of analysis, of which we are trying to make a meaning of, is called an order of discourse. An order of discourse is a social ordering or structuring of different ways of making a meaning, of perceiving, and the relationship between these different ways. An arguably important aspect of this social structuring is ‘dominance’. This is because in a particular order, or hierarchy, some ways of perceiving and interpreting the world are dominant, also called ‘mainstream’. Other
ways of making a meaning of the issue Fairclough calls oppositional or alternative – what Hettne assumedly would call a counterpoint to the mainstream.

Furthermore, Fairclough (2001) discusses, as mentioned before, the concept of hegemony. He argues that this concept is fruitful to apply when analyzing orders of discourse. A certain social ordering can become hegemonic, which means that the particular structure becomes part of a common sense which is perceived as legitimized by the public (concerned with this issue). This perception sustains this hierarchy, or relations of domination. Although, Fairclough notes, hegemony will always be challenged, to a greater or lesser extent. An order of discourse should not be seen as a system set in stone, rather should it be understood as a system open to changes which is challenged by interactions within it.

In his book, *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989) develops the thought on social order. Here he further explains how power relations inherently entails relations of struggle. He notes that this kind of social struggle appears in many relations in society, but that the relations between classes are the most fundamental relations in a class society. Hence is struggle based on class the most fundamental struggle. In a social system where the maximization of power and profits are dependent on the maximization of domination of a certain class, class struggle is inherent. According to Fairclough, all kinds of social development or exercise of power occur under conditions of social struggle (p. 34f).

Another factor brought up by Fairclough (1989, p. 33) is something he calls ideological power. This, he describes as the power to create a general understanding of something as ‘common sense’. With ideological power, one can depict reality in a way and it will be legitimized by the public. Hence, this kind of power is of great significance since it is present in discourse. Practices and understandings which are regarded as common sense often derive from a dominant group. In the long run, these assumptions work in favor of sustaining unequal power relations.

### 4.3 Central Concepts and Definitions

Michael Meyer (2001) discusses the methodology of CDA and states that the relationship between analysis and data collection is not always straight forward. Within the methodology of CDA, the linguistics play a central role instead and thus the main operationalizations are built on linguistic concepts and categories. Nonetheless, there is no set out blueprint for which categorizations to use when conducting a CDA, and that, Meyer explains, is due to the fact that the indicators relevant for an investigation mainly depends on the specific research questions.
This essay will consist of a critical discourse analysis on material published by the WTO as well as material published by La Via Campesina. For the analysis to be as fruitful as possible I will connect the discussed theories to my design. Below I will discuss the connection between central concepts, theories, and their operational indicators.

First of all, Hettne’s (2009) theory on mainstream and counterpoint ideas will be used as a foundation to understand the relationship between the two actors I have chosen to analyze. This way of perceiving the world order is arguably related to Fairclough’s (2001) thoughts on social order and order of discourse, which are forms of power relations. Therefore, the application of Hettne’s theory is interesting to apply to a critical discourse analysis.

In the research question a ‘power relations perspective’ is mentioned. This will be theoretically defined here as: a way of viewing a relationship between actors as dependent on the positions they possess in the global discussion, here divided into representatives of the mainstream and representatives of the counterpoint, which determine their power to define a common sense.

This theoretical definition will be complemented with a discussion on operational indicators for the theoretical definition, in order to make sure that the analysis is structured and easy to follow. In the textual practice, this will be done through asking the same questions, with a linguistic focus, to both texts. Since this is a qualitative, and not quantitative, analysis, the operational indicators will not be as concrete as to say that a certain amount of a linguistic feature will result in the text producer representing a certain power position, but rather is a discussion needed in order to reach such conclusions. The following step of the analysis will be conducted in a similar way, with asking the same questions to both texts, however these questions have a focus on the actors within each discourse and relationships between them. The final step will be carried out through investigating the intentions and ambitions of the two actors, mainly by looking at how they themselves formulate those and how they describe themselves on their respective websites. This analysis will be done with the theory of mainstream and counterpoint as a basis.

4.4 Discussion on Validity and Reliability
Validiety is a concept within the methodology of research and concerns the issue of systematic mistakes. In other words, it regards if the theoretical definition corresponds to the investigation – if what is intended to investigate is really what is being answered through the analysis (Fazlhashemi & Österberg, 2009). In this essay, the validity will be ensured through a thorough description of, and discussion on, the structure of the analysis and all of its steps. Moreover has the analytic structure been based on the critical discourse analysis by Fairclough which is a
recognized and well-known method within the research of social sciences. The analytic structure has however been modified in order to better suit this research question, as well as material, which arguably contributes to a higher level of validity. Important to note is that without looking at the analysis as a whole, the validity will appear low. Thus, the entire analysis should be considered when regarding the validity. The ambition is that the correspondence between the theory, the material, the method and the conclusion is made clear to the reader by explaining each step of the analysis.

The reliability concerns the issue of random mistakes, and whether the result of the analysis would be the same if it was conducted by another researcher (Fazlhashemi & Österberg, 2009). Since this is a qualitative analysis where much is derived from discussions based on the material, the reliability is not perfect. However, the reliability is enhanced through the use of structured questions when analyzing the material. But since a significant part of the analysis consists of interpretation and discussion another researcher with another background might interpret the results in another way. As long as this is transparent, and more importantly as long as the analysis and the conclusions drawn from it are clear and transparent to the reader, I argue that it is not too much of a problem. The conclusions from this analysis are not intended to be perceived as facts or truths, but rather to contribute to a deeper understanding of this issue.

4.5 Structure of Analysis
Regarding the structure of the analysis in this essay, a framework created by Fairclough (1989) will be used. It has been modified in the sense that some questions have been eliminated and one question has been broadened. A modification of the framework so that it better suits the material and the research questions is something that is encouraged by Fairclough himself.

Fairclough (1989; 1995) suggests that a critical discourse analysis is conducted in three stages; description, interpretation and explanation. The first step, description, is achieved through analyzing the text without relating it to any context, but rather doing a systematic linguistic categorization of the text. This he calls the ‘textual practice’. The second step, interpretation, regards the relationship between text and interaction. Here, the discourse is analyzed based on the context in which it is produced and consumed. The stage is called the ‘discourse practice’. Finally, the third stage is an intent to explain “the relationship between interaction and social context” (1989 p. 109). This, he calls the ‘social practice’.

Next follows a more concrete description of how I will go about these three stages.
Step 1: Textual Practice

In the textual practice, the focus is on description. The following question has been formulated by Norman Fairclough and can be found in his book *Language and Power* (1989) in chapter five (p. 109-139) (unless page numbers are specified). The descriptions and explanations of the questions are from the same source but are here in my wording. These questions will constitute a part of the framework for this specific analysis and will hence be considered when analyzing the texts:

1. What relational values do words have?
   - Are there euphemistic or dysphemistic expressions? (This question has been modified from the original)
   - Are there markedly formal or informal words?

These questions regard the vocabulary of the text and how the words chosen to use is related to the social relationships between the actor behind the text, and the recipients. A euphemistic expression is when an original phrasing or word is substituted for another which is less negatively connoted and more familiar. This strategy is often used by text producers in order to avoid a strong reaction, when one is not desired, on the receiving end of the text. A dysphemistic expression is the opposite to a euphemistic one, and thus naturally have the opposite effect of creating a stronger reaction of the reader than if a neutral expression would have been used.

Formality, on the other hand, has a restricting property in the sense that it is often used within practices of high social prestige, not seldom accompanied by restricted access. The reason to why it is restricting is since it demands that the participants possess certain knowledge or skills which has to be learnt. This is furthermore connected to social positions since people of more prestigious such learn to operate within formal situations. The result becomes that only people of certain social positions are welcome to take part of certain discourse and thereby take part of certain knowledge (65ff).

2. What metaphors are used?

Metaphors are of interest in a CDA since they may imply that a certain issue ought to be handled in a certain way. They also have the property of creating a collective feeling regarding an issue or interest by bringing it to the societal level. A metaphor may turn a non-dominant interest into a ‘threat’ against, or as undermining, the society as a whole. In the same sense, a metaphor may
take a dominant interest and formulate it as a collective interest of the entire society, thus enhancing the dominance of the interest.

3. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
   
   - Are there important features of expressive modality?

These questions concern the grammar of the text and how it relates to the producer’s authority regarding the truth communicated through the text. Modality is one indicator of this. Expressive modality concerns the producer’s evaluation of the truth, its certainty in its statements. This is interesting since modality indicates what claims to knowledge the producer makes. Fairclough (1989, p. 129) remarks that expressive modality is not restricted to the helping verbs called modal auxiliaries, such as ‘should’, ‘must’, etc. The absence of such a verb can too indicate the producer’s attitude towards a situation or fact. Thus, this question will not focus on the linguistics in a strict sense but rather the perception of how the text producer presents a possible fact, with certainty or with some tentativeness (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Fairclough notes that relations of power in the discourse, which is of interest in this research, are seldom clear to the discourse participants. Therefore, the description of texts arguably needs complementing. Interpretation and explanation serve as “procedures of unveiling, or demystification” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 142)

**Step 2: Discourse Practice**

This step, which consists of *interpretation*, concerns as mentioned the relationship between text and interaction. Interaction can be the interaction between discourse participants, for example people debating each other. In the material analyzed here there is no interaction in that sense, since the texts which are to be analyzed rather are published to the general public rather than being produced as an answer to another discourse participant. The main focus in this step will therefore be placed on the relationship between the text and its recipients.

Furthermore, in this particular investigation, the discourse practice has been limited to only investigate the situational context of the texts, due to the limited size of this essay. However, the questions chosen are arguably the ones most relevant to the research question of this essay and will hopefully make a good contribution to the interpretation of the relationship between the text and its recipients, and will hopefully suffice. The questions were once again found in the book Language and Power (Fairclough, 1989).

4. Who’s involved?
The purpose of this question is to specify which subject positions there are in the regarded context. Subject positions in this question can be understood within two different dimensions. The first dimension has to do with the activity – who is doing what? The second has to do with social identities that are ascribed to the subjects involved (1989, p. 148).

5. In what relations?

This question is closely related to the previous one but the subject positions are viewed in a more dynamic way. Factors like social distance and relationship of power that can be found within the situational context are taken into consideration (1989, p. 148)

Step 3: Social Practice

The purpose of the third stage of the analysis is to explain, and the focus is on “the relationship of discourses to processes of struggle and to power relations” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 141). By viewing a discourse as a part of a social practice, or social process, one can see how it is created on the premises of social structures, and how a discourse affects those structures, by either changing them or sustaining them. Social structures of interest in this study are relations of power. The social processes are those of sustaining or changing the existing power relations, but will not be focused upon in this analysis (Fairclough, p. 163).

This stage can according to Fairclough (1989) be rather extensive. Due to this study being restricted both in time and number of words, this part of the analysis has been restricted as well. With this said, the intention of this restriction is to narrow down the range of the study, and not to affect the quality of it.

As mentioned, the emphasis of this study is on social structures rather than social processes. The goal with this is to identify what relationships of power the shaping of these particular texts are affected by. How is the construction of a discourse affected by the power relations it is surrounded by and connected to (p. 163)?

This stage will be executed with the theory by Hettne (2009) on mainstream and counterpoint as a basis for the analysis. This will be done by analyzing the two actors and their intentions as well as connecting their position in relation to each other and in the global arena in general. This will then be connected to the social structures within which they operate. By having a discussion on these points, the goal is to unveil the power relations which determine these social structures and thereby also determine the phrasing of the texts.
5 Analysis

5.1 Textual Practice

1. What relational values do words have?
   - Are there euphemistic, or dysphemistic, expressions?

La Via Campesina:

There were some dysphemistic expressions found in this text. One example is the following.

   But still the Seed Treaty is going in a wrong direction, and is being captured by interests of the seed and biotech industry (p. 18).

By using the word “captured” in this sentence it is implied that what is happening is a violent and illegitimate action, hence creating a negative reaction in the reader.

Another dysphemistic expression is found in the following sentence.

   As in previous years, Via Campesina mobilized to demand “system change, not climate change”, denouncing corporate climate criminals and their false solutions to the current environmental crisis (p. 32).

The formulation “denouncing corporate climate criminals” is arguably negative, and invokes negative feeling in the reader.

Euphemistic expressions were not used to the same extent, although one formulation was found that can arguably be interpreted as a euphemistic expression.

   In Nairobi, various media articles were prepared and published to reignite awareness to the dangers of WTO, and street protests were organized daily (p. 29).

The formulation “reignite awareness” implies that originally “the dangers of WTO” are known to the public, and that they just have to be reminded. This makes the statement less dramatic and provocative. In that sense, it can be interpreted as a euphemistic expression.

The WTO:

One significant euphemistic expression was identified in this text.

   Export competition (export subsidies and export measures with equivalent effect) was considered to be an area where members have a well-developed idea of the potential landing zone for agreement (p. 32).

Here, ‘landing zone’ is a euphemistic expression in the sense that it makes the situation seem like reaching an agreement is just a matter of localizing a ‘zone’ which does not draw the mind
to dispute or disagreements. However, by reading the entire sentence more closely, it becomes clear that the underlying meaning is that there have actually been disagreements, or even that there still are, but that members “have a well-developed idea of the potential…” settling of these disagreements (my italics). ‘Landing zone’ hence contributes to making the message of the sentence less negative and gives it a more peaceful feeling in general.

One dysphemistic expression was identified.

The Council continued to address a cluster of subjects related to biotechnology, biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge, as instructed by the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration (p. 70).

The use of the word ‘cluster’ indicates that it is messy and unstructured which makes the reader feel reluctant to addressing these subjects, hence making them appear less important.

- Are there markedly formal or informal words?

La Via Campesina:

The text is written in a rather formal way which is not surprising since it discusses a lot of formal events and such as treaties. However, some informal events are discussed as well such as mobilizations in form of protests and flash-actions. These events too, were discussed in a rather formal tone.

Something that did stand out in regards to the level of formality of the language was the presence of the producer which became evident through the rather frequent use of the first-person pronoun ‘we’. The use of first-person pronouns is often considered informal. The following quote demonstrates how this text possesses formal and informal components at the same time.

Together we produced the first common statement across constituencies of the pillars and principles of agroecology (p. 16).

The choice of words is arguably formal, and so is the topic of the sentence, but the use of “together we...” makes the general impression more familiar and thus less formal.

The WTO:

The language in the WTO text is formal which, similarly to La Via Campesina text, is not surprising since the topics and events discussed are rather formal. Something that contradicts this formality and the possible exclusion that comes with it is that continuously in the text
appears boxes which gives the reader background information on different topics. However, the level of formality of the language is still quite high, which the following quote demonstrates.

In its regular sessions, the TRIPS Council implements other relevant ministerial decisions, notably those relating to technology transfer and dispute settlement (p. 36).

Although the choice of words may not be extremely formal, they are arguably not informal which would give these background boxes a clearer purpose and they would make a bigger difference for the recipient.

Interesting to add as well, is that the first-person pronoun ‘we’ does not occur once which contributes to an overall formal impression of the text.

2. What metaphors are used?

La Via Campesina:

Metaphors are not frequently used; however, some examples were identified.

Externally, agroecology is at a crossroads. Institutions are pushing the narrowly technical view while we are pushing for a broader political view, based on peasant agriculture (p. 17).

Describing the situation with the metaphor “a crossroads” communicates to the reader that only one way can be chosen, that a compromise is not an alternative. The continuation of the quote implies that the view based on peasant agriculture is in the interest of the broader public, thus intending to turn it into a collective societal interest.

Another metaphor found is the following.

Agriculture is not your trade, it’s our life. Our life is not for trade (p. 28).

This quote is part of a slogan La Via Campesina used in a mobilization against the WTO’s 10th Ministerial Conference. By phrasing it as a question of their lives, the issue is brought to another level. The general public not affected by this particular issue may not understand how the question of agriculture and trade can be so important, but by phrasing it as their lives, the reader is probable to relate to the issue in another way, thus making it a problem more people can relate to.

The WTO:

No significant metaphor was found in this text.

3. What expressive values do grammatical features have?

- Are there important features of expressive modality?
In regard to this question, the focus is on how the writer presents the reality – whether it is done with certainty or not.

**La Via Campesina:**

The following quotes from La Via Campesina report are some examples of their presentations of reality.

- The free trade policies destroy farmers’ livelihoods, consumers’ health and nature itself (p. 27).

This sentence does not have an auxiliary verb before the verb ‘destroy’, thus presenting the situation as a fact without any uncertainty. This is the general way situations are presented in this report, which can be observed in the following quote as well.

- Sustainable peasant agriculture has a huge positive impact on the global climate, which is completely ignored by governments in the negotiations (p. 32)

However, another way of presenting reality occurs as well. That is, presenting their standpoint towards a specific situation, which contributes to the notion that another view of reality is possible. This results in the certainty of the presentation of reality is somewhat compromised. An example of this is the following quote.

- In this dispute we are actively defending the idea that peasant agroecology works and can feed the world and cool the planet (p. 17).

It can be understood from this quote that the producer of the text considers this idea as the truth, but by presenting it as an idea which they are “actively defending” it can be assumed that another idea is actively defended by others, thus making the statement subjective.

**The WTO:**

Not a lot of features of expressive modality was found in this report. It is written with a bigger focus on how different members states considered different issues, thus not making any truth claims. One quote, however, was found where the text producer makes a statement with strong certainty.

- Transparency of national intellectual property systems is a key principle of TRIPS. It reduces trade tensions and builds productive trading relationships in knowledge products and technology (p. 70).

This formulation of the effects of transparency leaves no room for any other possible outcome, which it would have done if a modal verb (for example ‘could’) were to be used before the verb
‘reduce’. Besides from this, no important features of relative modality were identified in the text.

5.2 Discourse Practice
Since the two questions asked in this stage of the analysis are so closely related, the decision has been made to present the results of both questions, first in regard to the WTO report, followed by the results of both questions in regard to La Via Campesina report.

The WTO:

Who’s involved?

Involved in this practice are the producers and recipients of the text. The producers of the text are the WTO, so to answer the question of who is involved, the question of what the WTO is ought to be answered.

The WTO has 164 member countries, and it acts as a forum for the governments of these countries to negotiate trade agreements. According to the WTO themselves, the core of the organization consists of these agreements which they describe as contracts that bind governments to having certain trade policies, of which have been agreed to (WTO, 2016c). In other words, the WTO mainly consists of governments and agreements between them. Although the report is not written by the governments of the member countries, this is still important to consider since the WTO published the report, and the WTO is run by its member governments (WTO, 2016d). The secretariat of the WTO is located exclusively in Geneva, Switzerland, but does not possess any power over decision-making (WTO, 2016e).

The report is not aimed towards a specified recipient. Since the report is published on their website and accessible to everyone, it can be concluded that the recipient of the text is the general public.

In what relations?

The ones acting within the WTO are as mentioned mainly governments of countries. Considering social distance and power relations, governments can be considered to be placed far away from the ‘general public’ since the former possess power over the latter. Moreover, the governments can be considered to move even farther up in the hierarchies when they come together, which is what has been done in the WTO, thus increasing the social distance between the producer and the consumer of the text. The events and agreements discussed in the report
published by the WTO is arguably not easily accessible to the public, nor does it have much of a direct influence over what is happening in the WTO.

La Via Campesina:

Who’s involved?

The producer of this text is La Via Campesina, who describes themselves as a grassroots international mass movement that consists of approximately 164 different organizations, national as well as local. It was founded on the basis of giving small scale farmers’ organizations the ability to get their voices heard and to be able to have a direct influence on the decision-making that directly affects their lives. They describe themselves as having a decentralized structure with the power being shared over 9 regions. This power is being coordinated by a committee which consists of one woman and one man from every region. These representatives have been elected by the member organizations within each respective region. The international secretariat of La Via Campesina rotates every four years and is since 2013 based in Zimbabwe (La Via Campesina, 2016).

The recipient of the text is not specified, since it is not aimed at someone or something specific. Rather is it aimed at the public, accessible to everyone to download from their website. The recipient of this text is arguably the general public.

In what relations?

Since the purpose of La Via Campesina is to give the people on the ground a voice, and the ability to have direct power over the decisions that affect their lives, the social distance between them and the general public is arguably not that large. Anyone can acquire power through La Via Campesina by joining a local farmers’ organization. Local organizations are assumed to be accessible to the general public. The relationship of power between the producer and the recipient is that the producer is a platform for peasants. Peasants are typically not the most powerful in society when it comes to decision-making on a national or global scale and can be seen as a part of the general public.

5.3 Social Practice

In order to analyze the social practice of this discourse, the theory on mainstream and counterpoint by Hettne (2009) will be used. Hettne describes the mainstream as the predominant view and gives the example that the current one within the field of development is the idea that globalization and modernization are desirable. This correlates well with the goals
and means of the WTO which has the promotion of global free trade as its main purpose (WTO, 2016b). Based on this the WTO can be considered to represent the mainstream ideas of the contemporary development discussion. This arguably gives them the role of a mainstream actor in the global discussion on food and agriculture since it is a topic within the development discussion.

Regarding the counterpoint ideas of the contemporary development debate, Hettne describes it as representing “views of the civil society, [which] revolve around for example ecology, community centered, human focused societal development over economic growth” to bring up one example. The idea of a counterpoint more generally is to challenge the dominant ‘mainstream’ view. La Via Campesina (2011) defines themselves as:

[…] a grassroots mass movement whose vitality and legitimacy comes from farmers’ organizations at local and national level”.

Furthermore, La Via Campesina (2007) state the following on their website.

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.

Another important issue of La Via Campesina actually involves the WTO. As mentioned earlier, the organization has marked the 10th of September as “the international day against the WTO and free trade agreements” (2016a). This enhances their position as the counterpoint, based on the assumption the WTO represents the mainstream. La Via Campesina takes an active stance against the WTO and their agenda, thus challenging the mainstream.

Based on this knowledge about the two organizations and their main ambitions one can assume that the WTO represents a part of the mainstream of the development discourse whilst La Via Campesina acts as a counterpoint, challenging the mainstream, with an ambition to change it.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of the social practice, it was concluded that the WTO can be understood as representing the mainstream position of the discourse of food and agriculture, and that La Via Campesina can be seen as a counterpoint movement. This was based mainly on the ambitions and intentions of the two actors, as well as on how La Via Campesina consider the
WTO. This basis identified in the social practice will, as discussed, affect the discourse practice, and finally, the textual practice.

The analysis of the discourse practice showed that there is a larger social distance between the WTO and the recipients of their text, than the social distance between La Via Campesina and the recipients of theirs. Moreover, there seemed to be a wider gap in the relations of power when it came to the WTO and their recipients, compared to La Via Campesina and theirs. This is concluded to affect the power the two actors possess when it comes to express and create a version of reality which is accepted as common sense by the recipient.

The power relations in the discourse practice of the WTO arguably relate to the position of mainstream due to that the power the WTO possess places it in a position of domination, which is one characteristic of the mainstream position. In addition to the WTO being powerful, they are as well positioned far away from the public, making this domination even stronger. This domination leads to the power to create and communicate a version of reality which is likely to be legitimized by the recipient, rather than questioned. This makes it likely to be accepted as common sense.

When it comes to the textual practice the following was concluded:

La Via Campesina tended to be rather bold in their writing, for example through the use of dysphemistic expressions and metaphors that enhances the seriousness of a problem. This can be observed as well in the examples of modality of some sentences in the text. Even though most examples show a high level of certainty in regards to the grammatical features, these claims can too be considered a bit bold. There is still a claim to shaping reality; however, since the general notion is that these claims are bold they do not succeed in shaping the common sense, but rather to communicate a reality which encourages the recipient to question what they knew from before.

The general impression of the WTO report, based on the questions asked, was that it was straight forward, and not bold as the text from La Via Campesina. No dramatic metaphors were used, and only one dysphemistic expression. That one dysphemistic expression had the consequence of scaling down the importance of issues which are related to the counterpoint view of development. However, euphemistic expressions occurred which indicated that there is a difference in intention in this text compared to La Via Campesina. Euphemistic expressions are used not to upset the reader but rather the opposite. This can be interpreted as an intent to
only operate within the frames of common sense, without upsetting or encouraging questioning of the recipient’s perception of reality.

Based on this analysis and discussion, it can be noted that a textual analysis without the complementation of a discourse practice and a social practice would be quite restrictive, if the ambition concerns relationships of power. The linguistic features of a text can be of interest by themselves, but without a further discussion, the conclusions risk to fall short.

To conclude, the WTO can be considered as a representative of the mainstream in the discourse of food and agriculture, and La Via Campesina as a representative of the counterpoint. Different traits could be identified in their respective texts which can be connected to these two different positions they represent and the texts could then be interpreted in a more critical way, thanks to this perspective. Without the perspective of mainstream and counterpoint, nuances that were identified and interpreted in the texts would arguably have been understood in another way, or even missed completely.

Some final words on the topic of this essay: This investigation may not give a lot of concrete answers; however, it arguably contributes to a deeper understanding of the power relations within the discourse of food and agriculture by providing a basis with which the power relations can be grasped in a structured way. I consider this topic of power relations connected to food and agriculture to be complex and interesting, and although some research has been done on the matter, more is needed. It is important since food and agriculture does not only have to do with food and agriculture but also questions of domination, oppression of culture, access to nutrition etc.
7 Bibliography

7.1 Material used for Analysis:


7.2 List of References:


La Via Campesina. 2007. *Food Sovereignty and Trade: Declaration of Nyéléni*. La Via Campesina. 


La Via Campesina. 2016a. *No to WTO and Free Trade Agreements: "Take agriculture out of the WTO", Farmer Lee Kyung Hae | Reproducing his letter from 2003*. La Via Campesina. 

La Via Campesina. 2016b. *No to WTO and Free Trade Agreements: 'TTIP Stalls, WTO and FTAs Must Fall' | Press Release: International Day Against WTO and FTAs*. La Via Campesina. 


https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/intel2_e.htm#patents (Accessed 2016-12-26)

