

## **Between Daily Practices and Political Action Community Supported Agriculture in Switzerland**

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„Developing and developed countries alike need a paradigm shift in agricultural development: from a "green revolution" to a "truly ecological intensification" approach. This implies a rapid and significant shift from conventional, monoculture-based and high external-input-dependent industrial production towards mosaics of sustainable, regenerative production systems that also considerably improve the productivity of small-scale farmers.“  
(UNCTAD 2008)

The central aim of this input is to give some insights about possible new relations between agriculture and nutrition culture. When we ask questions about degrowth and the good life, the way we eat is absolutely crucial: Tell me, what you eat, and I tell you who you are. (In German: Sag mir was du isst, und ich sag dir, wer du bist). Food production, but also the way we nourish ourselves mirrors our lifestyles and social relations. Historically food ceremonies are an expression of social cohesion. A degrowth strategy for nutrition has to develop new communities of producers as well as consumers. They are fundamental for forming a food movement that centres on the concept of food sovereignty. I will draft some aspects focusing Switzerland.

### **Some (problematic) developments in the last 50 years**

At the beginning of my considerations I argue that the main politico-economic strategies in the last 50 years on the production side: green revolution and free trade haven't been successful enough towards solving hunger problems and might even endanger the nutrition system of the whole human society in the long run. On the consumption side, especially in the north, but also in the wealthy classes in the south, changing feeding habits need more energy and produce a lot of rubbish. Finally the attention for the quality of food in generally is largely eroded.

First, as the IAASTAD-Report (2013) holds the green revolution after the Second World War promotes a model of agriculture which tries to grow the agricultural entities and rationalizes the cultivation methods, all of it with the use of pesticides, dung and a large machinery – are extremely dependent on oil. Nowadays agriculture requires more energy than it produces. Under the internalization of all aspects of food production, transport and consumption food is responsible for 40 percent of the total worldwide CO2 emissions. With Peak Oil and the rising of oil price in the next decade's big challenges and dangers will rising.

Second, it seems as though the free trade strategy of the last 30 years strengthens the position and the power of big multinational corporations. They are dominant in the seed and pesticide market, but they also have the power to set prices for farmers and peasants because there is a high market concentration (Rosset 2006).

Third, on the consumer side food trends like fast-food, convenience-food and functional-food lead to a more crucial position of the food industrial sector, which in turn produces a wide variety of new products. However, biodiversity in consequence is shrinking dramatically, while energy consumption increases enormous (Infante/González 2013). The consequence is a significant alienation from the food we eat. Finally, nourishment has lost its central social, but also financial position in the daily life in the developed countries. By way of example, in the middle of the 20th century people in Switzerland had to spend nearly the half of their incomes on nutrition. In comparison, the average expense for food today equals about ten percent of the income.

## **Food sovereignty and degrowth**

The concept of food sovereignty was first developed and implemented by the Via Campesina Movement in 1996, at the food conference in Rome. Via Campesina is a small-scale peasant movement which originally represented peasants from the south. A part of the ideological fight is to revalue the negative connotation of peasant in a positive picture of a real durable small-scale agriculture.

The food sovereignty concept is an alternative to the more demand oriented food security concept that places global food markets as one of the central institutions. Food sovereignty in contrast emphasizes the independence of peasants from multinational corporations on the one hand and solidarity relations to the consumers on the other.

An essential aspect here is that organic farming systems do not challenge the monoculture nature of plantations and rely on external inputs as well as foreign and costly seals of quality. Fair-trade systems destined only for agro-export offer very little to small farmers that have come to be dependent on external inputs and foreign and volatile markets (Altieri 2011).

Thus, food sovereignty is crucial, as local structures allow independence from the crises and price volatilities of global markets. Additionally, there is a need for agro-ecological processes which are characterised by references to local knowledge and agricultural traditions. This lays the foundation for peasants empowerment as well as continuous innovation by rural communities in the south and the north (Choplin 2011). Seen from this perspective, food sovereignty is a very important example of the re-localisation of the production - and it is one of the central claims of the degrowth movement. However, re-localisation is only one of the "8Rs" proposed by Latouche (2006, see also Lievens 2010): The additional claims of degrowth that Latouche mentions are to revalue, to re-conceptualize, to re-structure, to re-distribute, to reduce, to re-use and to re-cycle. All of them are compatible with the concept of food sovereignty. The aim of them all is to re-organize economy beyond the dominant anonymous value added chains. Complementary these local economies have to be connected with other local economies all over the world and make possible a new fair trade system (instead of a free trade system).

The development of a sustainable agriculture will require significant structural changes, in addition to technological innovation, peasant-to-peasant networks, and peasant-to-consumer solidarity. At least, it also requires political action to change agricultural policies.

I will present a number of successful Swiss cases of community supported agriculture-projects in order to argue that such projects not only build new local communities, but how they connect daily practices with political interventions and protests to change agricultural policies as well. Thus, I will outline some strategies.

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