

A shift to relocalised food systems

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What I want to highlight from what I heard

- a convergence of local food systems and agroecology stakes, justified by ecological arguments (cycles, circular systems) and social ones (small farmers first, fair share of added value, relationships between farmers and consumers etc.)
- a need to redesign the whole socio-technical system (network approaches)
- **reconnecting food and agriculture** (food sovereignty and agroecology)
- the universal pattern of agronomy and diet/cuisine based on 3 elements: a core (grain / tuber), legume (for protein... and nitrogen fixation) and fringe (for flavor) cf S. Mintz... against the logic of commodities which has been imposed by the capitalist ideology
- ... health as a meeting point of social and environmental expectations
- plenty of promising experiences and pathways -> also, a need for more generic understanding and maybe more critical views

What I did not hear...

- Stories of failure or negative effects of relocalisation (well informed by the literature, ie. within CSAs, exclusion of some farmers, asymmetries between producers and consumers)
- cases where relocalisation would not have been expected and is taking place
- relocalisation is not always the only desirable future, also **reconnection** beyond geographical distance can also be at stake (between distant farmers or of distant farmers and consumers, ie. Ecovida rotas, fair trade)
- Bottom up seems the must, but could not there be also efficient top down processes?

The place and role of relocalised food systems in a wider transformation

- Fit and conform vs stretch and transform (see Levidow and al.)

- Other way to see it:

1. relocalised food systems can remain outside the dominant food system / secession (exit)

2. they can try to influence it (loyalty)

3. They can build alliances in order to reach a higher degree of change (voice?)

... even with conventional food systems “in transition”

At the territorial scale, the ecologisation of the agrifood systems relies on a combination of strategies

A hybrid and evolutive system which trajectory is to analyse, with networks in constant redesign... (case studies in southern France)

A territorial approach of the agrifood system

Allows identifying the diversity of social actors and institutions involved in food production; transformation, distribution and consumption (farmers, middle men, processors, CSOs, agric institutions, local authorities etc.)
... despite some aspects remain exogenous (seeds regulations, pesticide industry, CAP etc.)

At the farmers' scale, complementarity between different kinds of outlets and networks (short and longer food chains) for a better « livability »

When considering the diversity of agrifood initiatives:

- alternative and more conventional ones (which may have the infrastructure)
- hybrid initiatives: organic producers informal group, school procurement network, a consumers cooperative which build original modes of coordination

= not only niches up-scaling, also redesign the interdependencies in a virtuous way

- Governance issues: Involve local civil society, local authorities and economic actors, in order to build a shared vision for the territory

Some crucial questions

- the issue of agricultural and food workers
- social equity and access of poorer populations to quality food
- the future of specialized regions or areas with rare bottom up initiatives?
- How to reconnect food and agricultural policies when they are disconnected in the institutions and administrations
- Tension between formalism/unformalism
- conceptual alliances: draw on the notion of public goods

*“**Food democracy** ideally means that all members of an agro-food system have equal and effective opportunities for participation in shaping that system, as well as knowledge about the relevant alternative ways of designing and operating the system.”*

[food democracy] embraces the pragmatic, that is, the achievement of what is presently possible coupled with ongoing inquiry by an active and informed citizenry (Hassanein, 2003)

Towards an integrated and dynamic approach

Methods?

- need to acknowledge the processes and trajectories, not only current state, with the actors involved
- combine a socio-historical study of past changes and an ethnographic analysis of on-going changes,
- a systemic approach (interdependencies, modes of coordination, processes of alliance and exclusion).

- several theoretical frameworks can help : *ESR* (when enlarged in order to include the redesign of food practices and policies), *transition theories* , *etc.*

- + a focus on the **material and metabolic nature of agricultural and food processes**
- > modes of coordination have to take into account the **variability** and the uncertainty of food and farming metabolism, and in turn it requires adapted and **mutual learning processes**

- + Governance modes that allow building a **longterm vision and seize opportunities**