

Food Sovereignty and Conceptualization of Agency: A Methodological Discussion

Judith Ehlert & Christiane Voßemer

► Ehlert, J., & Voßemer, C. (2015). Food sovereignty and conceptualization of agency: A methodological discussion. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(1), 7-26.

The latest food crisis hit food producers and consumers – mainly in the Global South – hard and refocused attention to the question of global food security. The food sovereignty movement contributes to the growing re-politicization of the debate on ‘how to feed the world’. From an actor-oriented perspective, the article presents a methodological reflection of the concept of food sovereignty in opposition to the concept of food security, both agendas highly relevant in terms of food policies in Southeast Asia. After framing the two concepts against the development politics and emergence of global agriculture following World War II, this paper elaborates on how actors and agency are conceptualized under the food security regime as well as by the food sovereignty movement itself. With reference to these two concepts, we discuss in which ways an actor-oriented methodological approach is useful to overcome the observed essentialization of the peasantry as well as the neglect of individual peasants and consumers as food-sovereign actors.

Keywords: Actor-oriented Research; Agency; Development Paradigms; Food Security; Food Sovereignty

~

Die letzte Ernährungskrise traf landwirtschaftliche Produzent_innen und Konsument_innen im Globalen Süden besonders hart und zog eine erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit für Fragen globaler Ernährungssicherheit nach sich. Zur wachsenden Re-politisierung der Debatte darüber, wie die Welt zu ernähren ist, trägt die globale soziale Bewegung für Ernährungssouveränität bei. Der Artikel stellt aus akteursorientierter Perspektive eine methodologische Reflexion ihres Ernährungssouveränitätskonzepts, in Gegenüberstellung zum Konzept der Ernährungssicherheit, an, da beide Agenden von großer Relevanz im Kontext Südasiens sind. Nachdem die beiden Konzepte im developmentpolitischen und historischen Kontext der globalen Landwirtschaft nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg verortet wurden, führen wir aus, wie Akteur_innen und ihre Handlungsmacht unter dem Ernährungssicherheitsregime und durch die Ernährungssouveränitätsbewegung selbst konzeptualisiert werden. Mit Bezug zu beiden diskutieren wir in welcher Weise ein akteursorientierter methodologischer Zugang hilfreich sein kann, um die konstatierte Essentialisierung der Kleinbauernschaft sowie das Ausblenden von Kleinbauern/bäuerinnen und Konsument_innen als ernährungssouveräne Akteur_innen zu überwinden.

Schlagworte: Akteursorientierung; Agency; Entwicklungspadigmata; Ernährungssicherheit; Ernährungssouveränität

INTRODUCTION

The question of global food security has gained renewed attention with the latest food crises, which have severely affected food producers and consumers – mainly in the Global South. The ongoing debate on ‘how to feed the world’ is re-politicized in particular by the food sovereignty movement. This article methodologically reflects on the conceptualization of agency as implied in the framework of food security and food sovereignty. From our actor-oriented research perspective as development sociologists, we contribute to a deeper engagement with the role of different actors and their negotiations on food sovereignty and security, highlighting the importance of an actor-oriented understanding of food sovereignty to strengthen the relevance of the concept for development studies and politics.

Both concepts – food security and food sovereignty – are of high relevance to the context of Southeast Asia. The region has been presented as a ‘success story’ in terms of food security. This applies, for example, to the case of Vietnam which, following the country’s market reforms and agricultural investments in the mid-1980s, moved from a severe and enduring state of food insecurity to one of the major global rice exporters nowadays (Tran Thi Thu Trang, 2011). In general, most governments adopted food security policies and the region became an experimental ground for the Green Revolution. Despite the region’s achievements in food security, food crises still occur (e.g. the rice crisis in 2008). Struggles over the ownership and use of basic productive means such as water and land are ongoing, and pressing new challenges regarding the quality and social distribution of foods arise (Manahan, 2011; Thi Thu Trang Tran, 2013 for the case of Vietnam).

The broad transformations of agriculture and food in Southeast Asia cannot be understood without taking into account the modernist development paradigm and programs that have framed them for decades. Development agendas and food policies, as well as the debates in the social sciences, can be characterized by contradictory and often conflicting positions regarding the role of structure versus agency in shaping and changing societies. The food sovereignty movement draws on and shares Friedmann and McMichael’s (1989) political-economic understanding of global food regimes. At the same time, it is a child of its time as it mirrors the actor-turn in the realm of development policies, embracing civil society participation and global social movements as actors of change since the 1990s. The movement has its origins in Latin America, but soon developed to become a global social movement from the Global South. As such, the agenda of food sovereignty also gained attention among peasant and civil society organizations in Asia, where a 2004 conference in Dhaka resulted in the People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty publishing ‘The People’s Convention on Food Sovereignty’ that focuses on the right of people and communities to food sovereignty (PCFS, 2004). In addition, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and several governments in Southeast Asia and beyond have started to adopt, at least rhetorically, the term food sovereignty (for Indonesia, see Lassa & Shrestha, 2014, for Venezuela see Schiavoni, 2014). In this context, the conceptual vagueness of the concept of ‘sovereignty’ becomes increasingly problematic. The questions of whose sovereignty is institutionalized in which spaces, and who is sovereign by what means

are essential to the quest of food sovereignty and gain momentum as a growing diversity of actors relates to it.

The term sovereignty, coined by legal and international relations scholarship, conventionally refers to the sovereignty of the state over its national territory and the legitimacy and right to impart policies without external interference. Regarding food policies, the nation state would be sovereign over food production and distribution without interference by, for example, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB), and multinational corporations (Schiavoni, 2014, p. 3), which makes this reading attractive to national governments advocating for a stronger state regulation of food chains. The food sovereignty movement, though, focuses on food sovereignty as a 'right of the peoples' (Nyéléni, 2007), thereby adopting a pluralistic concept that attributes sovereignty to both state and non-state political actors (such as cultural and ethnic communities) who may co-exist but also challenge each other (Hospes, 2013, p. 122). Patel (2009) proposes the movement to reach beyond a plurality of juridical sovereignties and clearly raises a core issue of food sovereignty when asking how people can engage with food policies in a 'sovereign' way, given the existence of disempowering social structures. Yet, the history of development in Southeast Asia and beyond cautions against his proposal of a moral universalism and egalitarianism, as we will further discuss.

New conceptualizations of sovereignty seem to be needed that not only cut across different juridical understandings, but also engage more productively with food sovereignty as an embedded agency of people. For Southeast Asia, Kerkvliet (2009) and Scott (1985) have established the necessity to broaden the understanding of the political, recognizing the less pronounced daily forms of struggle and the 'weapons of the weak' in this regard.

To account for the meanings of food sovereignty in terms of agency also requires challenging the dualism of structure and agency in critical food research and politics, analyzing how a multitude of more *and* less 'powerful' actors negotiate and shape the meanings of food sovereignty in policies and daily practices. Such processes of negotiating social change among different actors are the focus of Norman Long's (2001) methodological approach to development research which he introduced to development sociology based on his own grounded theory studies of rural transformation and agricultural development. While the methodology was coined in view of the broader context of critical food research, the reason for this article is that actor-oriented approaches are largely absent from the current debates on food sovereignty (one exception is Long & Roberts, 2005).

The aim of this article is to discuss the problems associated with narrow conceptualizations of agency in the discourses on food security and sovereignty, and to highlight the opportunities of an actor-oriented perspective to deepen the understanding of people's struggles for food sovereignty as well as the meanings attached to it, thereby strengthening also the relevance of the food sovereignty debate for development studies. In this regard, we propose research that engages with agency beyond predefined arenas of political negotiations on food sovereignty and traces food-related agency in people's life-worlds. This opens the view to spaces of negotiation over different systems of knowledge on food, agriculture, and development, in which local food producers and consumers interact with state and international ac-

tors, transgressing the local micro- and global-structural level. After developing the context of development politics and the emergence of global agriculture which frame the emergence of the food security regime and the food sovereignty movement, we elaborate how actors and agency are conceptualized under the two frameworks and how this is commonly criticized. Following up on the observed ignorance of people's life-world agency as well as the problematic essentialization of collective agency, we discuss the added value of an actor-oriented methodology to address these shortcomings and strengthen an analytic approach to (embodied) and life-worldly food sovereign agency.

GLOBAL AGRICULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS: CONTEXTUALIZING FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The modernization of global agriculture and the development paradigms and politics following World War II frame the emergence and agenda of the concepts of food security and food sovereignty. Modernization theories in the 1950s/1960s, epitomizing the universality of the Western model of progress, were directly translated into development politics and interventions in newly independent nation states of the Global South. Large-scale agriculture – including land concentration, mechanization, irrigation, and intensification of production through Green Revolution technologies – promised higher productivity and was regarded as the main driver for further economic developments in the industrial sector. In this model, smallholder and labor-intensive subsistence agriculture in so-called developing countries were seen as inefficient traditional remnants that needed to be abandoned through transfers of technological innovations, agricultural know-how, and capital from North to South (Rostow, 1960). Modernist ideology proclaiming man's destiny to tame nature, made it a 'natural' imperative to re-organize the agricultural landscape to overcome environmental boundaries to productivity in the Global South. Furthermore, industrial development and urbanization required the re-organization of the social organization of work (Scott, 1999). Agricultural labor had to be 'freed' and absorbed as factory labor by the emerging industrial sector (Rostow, 1960). The era of 'catching up development' was driven by the developmental state in countries of the Global South and by development agencies in Europe and North-America as well as the Bretton-Woods institutions transferring capital, technology, and agricultural innovations to the developing world.

This context is referred to by Friedmann (1987) and Friedmann and McMichael (1989) as the second food regime (1950–1970s).¹ Deriving from world systems theory and regulation theory, their food regime analysis problematizes dominant development models perceiving national agricultural modernization as a linear process towards economic progress. By contrast, they focus on the unequal structural economic and ecological interdependencies in which nation states have ever since been inter-woven on a global scale. In their analysis, they reconstruct how intensive and extensive forms of capitalist accumulation reproduce structural inequalities between

1 The first food regime (1870–1930s) is characterized by extensive capitalist accumulation of industrializing Europe, importing foods from tropical colonies and settler-colonies that 'nurtured' European industrialization.

the Global North and South (see below). From the mid-1960s onwards, scholars of dependency theory critically assessed the devastating effects of the modernization paradigm and its respective development politics (Rist, 2008). According to the critics, the hoped for trickle-down effects of industrial growth had failed to translate into overall economic betterment of the rural masses. Instead, top-down re-organization of subsistence to state-led plantation monocultures for cash crop production increasingly left peasants in the Global South without access to land and traditional subsistence livelihood means (Akram-Lodhi, Borras, & Kay 2007; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 110). As a consequence, agricultural communities became more and more dependent on external food aid and foreign food imports of European and US-American agricultural surplus production. Dependency theorists see the reason for the failure of industrial growth in the structural economic dependencies between industrialized and under-developed nations but share the conviction with modernization theory that industrial and agricultural modernization are the most crucial to unleash national progress (Rist, 2008).²

The Food Security Regime

Deriving from this specific political economic context, the term ‘food security’ was first mentioned at the first United Nation’s world food conference held in 1974 in Rome. Nation states pledged to combat hunger and food insecurity in the Global South by increasing global food production while guaranteeing price stability of staple foods. The technocratic faith in the productivity of industrial agriculture by followers of modernization and dependency theory alike led the debates around sufficient world food supplies (Patel, 2009, p. 664).

The global economic shocks of the 1970/1980s brought about the neoliberal turn of overall economic policies in the 1980s, which drastically downsized the developmental state. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) sharply cut down public investments, and dismantled price guarantees and tariffs. Former state subsidies of the agricultural sector were eliminated. The 1980s marked the beginning of the third ‘corporate’ food regime (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). Free trade agreements (FTA) as well as the foundation of the World Trade Organization in 1995 and its ‘Agreement on Agriculture’ further institutionalized the process of agricultural liberalization. State-centered agricultural development was gradually replaced by international financial and development institutions, and multinational corporations monopolized global agriculture by corporate-led technological innovations and proprietary regimes controlling entire food chains (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 111).

Neoliberal policies have turned food into a tradable good from which many poor communities in the South remain excluded while domestic agriculture has been structurally downsized. Acknowledging that enough food to ‘feed the world’ was available on the global market, the United Nations World Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) refigured world hunger as a problem of *access* to food and reformu-

² For a description of the respective economic development policy of ‘Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI)’, see Rist (2008).

lated the concept of food security accordingly.³ Holt Giménez and Shattuck (2011, p. 120–121) understand food security as an integral part of the current corporate food regime and as embedded in modernization theories of state-led development. The renewed role of the state within the corporate food regime is to provide food and agriculture-based safety nets cushioning the global food enterprise and its exclusive character. At the same time and in order to absorb the socio-economic externalities of the current neoliberal regime, FAO and international development agencies provide local food and agricultural aid. As the food security concept is deeply inherent to the food regime itself, functioning as an immanent development-political measure to deal with hunger in the Global South, we would like to call it the ‘food security regime’.

The Food Sovereignty Movement

Whereas this food security regime was initiated by international agencies of the UN system, the transnational food sovereignty movement emerged “out of struggle and resistance” on the streets (Schiavoni, 2014, p. 2) where peasants in different regions of the world aired their complaints with the minimalist state and the global neoliberal food order. What started out as rather fragmented global peasant protests, culminated in the formation of the global social movement *La Via Campesina* (1993). During the Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in 2007, leaders of the movement defined the guiding principle of ‘food sovereignty’ as “the right of the 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” (Nyéléni, 2007). The movement’s potent presence in the anti-globalization movement objecting neoliberal policies, free trade agreements, and agri-business monopolies generated a lot of media attention to its demand of an alternative agricultural model and visions of global socio-economic transformation.⁴ The global food crisis, which peaked in 2007/08 and which was accompanied by popular protests and food riots mainly in the Global South (Bello, 2010), has certainly lent further legitimacy to the claims of the food sovereignty movement. The extraordinary boost of rice prices triggered national crises, for example, in the Philippines (Manahan, 2011). During this time Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam even banned rice exports to secure national food security (Bello, 2010; Tran Thi Thu Trang, 2011). Whereas ASEAN’s responses to the global food crisis persist in increased food aid and Green Revolution (Manahan, 2011), peasant organizations, activists, and scholars have started discussions about alternatives to this productivist model. Control over natural and productive means by the “small and landless farmers, fisherfolk, rural women, indigenous peoples and other rural poor” (Manahan, 2011, p. 469) is increasingly being framed as a matter of food sovereignty in the region (Atienza, 2011; Caouette, 2011). In this way, food sovereignty goes beyond the food security concept as it re-politicizes global agriculture and the fundamental role and entitlement to food of the marginalized in this system.

3 In contrast to the conceptualization of food security as a matter of increasing production and a supply problem discussed at the first UN world food conference (see above).

4 For a detailed account on the genealogy of *La Via Campesina* and its strong roots in peasant resistance in Latin America, see Martínez-Torres & Rosset (2010).

Instead of searching for inbuilt solutions, it opts for a radical break with the corporate food regime.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF ACTORS AND AGENCY IN THE FOOD SECURITY AND THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FRAMEWORK

Having established the general context, we will now elaborate on how actors and agency are conceptualized in the food security and food sovereignty framework.

Under the food security regime in the Global South, authority to design and implement food policies is primarily granted to agricultural engineers and advisors because of their knowledge of Green Revolution technologies, as well as nutritionists and pharmacists because of their bio-medical expertise on micronutrients. Delivering the rational combination for the development of industrial agriculture and controlled nutrition supplies, these development experts are conceptualized as key actors of food security, and opposed to the hungry poor and ignorant masses in the Global South. In the course of the establishment of the food security paradigm, its agenda of modernization and its aid mechanisms, foreign food experts have fundamentally challenged the social organization of production and consumption in agricultural communities. Local agricultural and food knowledge have been constructed as a backward, residual obstacle to the universal leap from underdevelopment to industrial modernity. Modernization theories' positive belief in the regulating, determinant effects of structures and institutions of Western societies on 'the underdeveloped' is also mirrored in respective food security programs: Supposedly homogenous target communities of passive aid-receivers whose bodies wait to be fuelled are to be transferred from a state of under- and malnutrition to full-fledged productivity. In the food sector where neither food producers nor consumers are visible as actors with the knowledgeability and capacity to cope with everyday food-related challenges, this top-down paradigm of economic growth trickling down to the ones in need has been particularly obvious.

The dualistic conceptualization of actors, opposing global experts to passive aid-receivers, as well as its underlying paradigms of development and knowledge, have attracted numerous critiques. The logic of development as modernization, guiding the food security regime, has been problematized for its hegemonic claims of man over nature, specialist knowledge and universal science over situated forms of everyday life experiences, and modernity over tradition. For example, Hobart (1993) argues that the dichotomy constructed between the hegemonic 'progressive' global knowledge and traditional local ignorance carries a subtext of development as global top-down intervention rather than global-local interaction. The above binary constructions and their implications for the recognition of local agency in the Global South are also at the heart of the development critique voiced by prominent scholars like Escobar (1995). McMichael analyses them as mayor epistemological factors for the disregard of the global importance of smallholder farming culminating in the "narrative of peasant extinction in the modern world" (McMichael, 2009, pp. 152–153). He bemoans that, "in the name of free trade, development and food security, the current corporate food regime has imposed an 'agriculture without farmers' in a world equating industrial efficiency with human progress" (McMichael, 2013, p. 1). Neglecting

local forms of knowledge, subsistence and social reproduction, the conceptualization of actors in food security programs is also criticized for its gender-blindness. Agricultural development under the modernist food security agenda strongly favored cash crop production which is commonly dominated by male labor, whereas female peasants in many parts in the Global South tend to be responsible for reproductive subsistence agriculture (Boserup, 1970; Mies & Shiva, 1993; von Werlhof, 1991). As ecofeminist perspectives stress, a universalist and depoliticized agenda of agricultural development and food security completely overlooks the different and gendered positions in the global economy from where men and women struggle for their food needs. Furthermore, Pottier (1999, p. 16) criticizes the food security regime's technocratic focus on food preferences following the simplistic idea of 'people X enjoy food Y'. This reductionist approach decouples the individual from the complex cosmology of local food cultures.

These critics, coming from different perspectives, demand a stronger recognition of the knowledge and position of the gendered social group of peasants acting from a marginalized position of power. They meet and strengthen the claims for food sovereignty, which, as a political project, global social movement, and analytic framework, is concerned with bringing 'peasants' back in. It places food producers at the center in an otherwise technocratic project of 'feeding the world' in which peasants in the Global South in particular are seen as making up the most vulnerable group to the structural violence emanating from the global food regime (Schiavoni, 2014, p. 2).

Whereas the food security framework fully ignores local agency, the food sovereignty framework introduces the global peasantry as a collective actor, a counter movement challenging capitalist food relations in manifold ways and "to use exchange not for purposes of accumulation, but for reproduction of particular socio-ecological relations anchored in principles of self-determination/organization" (McMichael, 2013, p. 1).

This said, the food sovereignty framework has inspired and mobilized a diversity of publics, including, next to peasant movements, also workers, academic and public intellectuals, NGOs, and human rights activists in the Global South as well as the Global North. Bernstein (2014) problematizes the power differentials within the movement that portrays itself as the heart of a globally solidary peasantry but incorporates food sovereignty intellectuals' claims to develop discourse in concert with peasants, 'only' voicing their thought and experience in a more scientific language.⁵ He is even more concerned with what is defended by sympathizers of the movement as a 'strategic essentialism' of the peasantry and the 'peasant way' of forming counter-agency in a capitalist global food regime. He opposes the movement's uniform construction of the peasantry, which he sees as a diverse group in terms of the social categories different peasants fall into – especially class and its intersections with gender, generation, and ethnicity. Yet his assumption of a total commoditization of socio-economic relations in a capitalist system leads him to disapprove of the potential of counter-agency exercised by this diverse group of peasants, and of the

5 This claim would also be dunned by postcolonial feminist scholars of development with regard to its ignorance of the complex problematic of representing as well as speaking from a subaltern position (Harcourt, 2009; Spivak, 1988).

existence and potential of non-commodified forms of agriculture and meaningful peasant resistance against capitalism.

Though holding on to the collective agency of the peasantry criticized as ‘capital’s other’ (Bernstein 2014), the movement and scholarship on food sovereignty situate political collective agency in an analytic framework that strongly emphasizes structural constraints of agency. Approaching a food regime as a “rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale” (Friedmann, 1993, pp. 30–31), “the strategic role of agriculture and food in the construction of the world capitalist economy [...] across time and space” (McMichael, 2009, pp. 139–140) are at the heart of food regime analysis and its reception by food sovereignty advocates. The structural epistemic interest in understanding food as part of global capitalism translates into an academic approach to agency within predefined social categories and oppositions inherent to this capitalist system, as Friedmann reveals in her description of the interplay of actors within a food regime as “changing balances of power among states, organized national lobbies, classes – farmers, workers, peasants – and capital” (Friedmann, 1993, p. 31). Capitalism is understood by McMichael (2009) as developing cyclically, with periods of stabilization and transition, and his attention towards the potential of change inherent to the food sovereignty movement is associated with the latter.

This politically emancipative, yet structurally determined, conceptualization of peasant agency is reflected by the food sovereignty movement’s radical claims to overthrow the capitalist system and the power relations attached to it, aiming towards a moral universalism and egalitarianism, which, as Patel argues, would be the only structural context in which food sovereignty could be enacted meaningfully by everyone:

To make the right to shape food policy meaningful is to require that everyone be able substantively to engage with those policies. But the prerequisites for this are a society in which the equality-distorting effects of sexism, patriarchy, racism, and class power have been eradicated. (Patel, 2009, p. 670)

Yet, such claims are obviously problematic in view of the discussions above, both methodologically and politically. They implicitly fall back into modernization theory’s paradigm that universal institutions and structural change are to free oppressed people’s bodies and minds, denying that agency in a sense of food sovereignty could also be substantive in the context of a food regime which fosters global social inequalities.

The previous discussions have shown that the food security and food sovereignty framework clearly represent different approaches with a view to the distribution of ‘agency’ and ‘knowledgeability’ as well as the (in)visibility of food producers and consumers as sovereign ‘actors’. In the food security debate, international organizations and their corporate allies are situated as the main actors in the driving seat. The food sovereignty movement breaks with the ‘agriculture without farmers’ and the peasant as passive and ignorant aid receiver and, by contrast, constructs the collective resistant actor of the global ‘peasantry’ as a politicized collective agent endowed with the entitlement to build an alternative food order. Yet, a common feature of the con-

ceptualization of actors in both approaches is a tendency to essentialize: The food security regime does so in its conceptualization of the ignorant local aid recipient, the food sovereignty movement in its strategic construction of a collective agency of the peasantry.

We propose an actor-oriented approach to engage explicitly with the empirical heterogeneity of actors shaping, reproducing, and challenging food regimes. As we will argue in the following section, an actor-oriented perspective is useful to deal substantively with relations of power and questions of sovereignty in the current food regime of the ‘everyone’ in Patel’s citation – the peasant, the cook, the consumer, and so forth as actors, meaningfully struggling with and against food policies while exercising forms of food sovereignty in the context of their life-worlds.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AN ACTOR-ORIENTED RESEARCH APPROACH TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The actor-oriented research approach that we draw upon in the following has been developed by Norman Long (2001) in his book *Development sociology: Actor perspectives*. In this work, Long takes up theories of social action, in particular Schütz and Luckmann’s approach to life-worlds (1973 & 1984; see next section) as well as Giddens’ (1984) concept of structuration.⁶ Based on his study of rural transformations, Long promotes a paradigm shift from structural to actor-centered approaches in researching development processes. His critique of structural approaches to rural transformation and social change more generally – be they rooted in modernization theory, political economy or even postmodernism – is that they are driven by determinist, externalist, and often even linear accounts of social change.

In the critical analysis of the global food order, perspectives of political economy and political ecology dominate. In particular the already introduced food regime analysis (see above) has become a prominent framework for understanding the way global food regimes develop, and for analyzing how the dynamics of global capitalism consolidate or destabilize food-related power balances between powerful and marginalized actors, and vice versa. Long’s main concern is that such approaches are weak in understanding the dynamics of development surging from social heterogeneity and ambiguous local-global interactions. They risk overlooking the “empirical complexities and variabilities of contemporary life” (Long, 2001, p. 11), and present structural processes of social change as disembodied from the agency and the struggles of the multiple more *and* less ‘powerful’ actors that produced them (Long, 2001, pp. 11–12). Addressing such critique carries a special weight for research dealing with dynamics of rural development in the Global South in view of the modernist and colonial heritage of development, which has inscribed homogenizing views and interventionist paradigms to food security programs and development politics more generally (see above).

In order to avoid replicating these problematic assumptions on the level of research methodology and build theoretical approaches that capture social complex-

6 Giddens approaches situations of social (re)production as processes of *structuration*, based on the observation that “society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 77).

ity and human agency of more *and* less ‘powerful’ actors within it, Long encourages research to explore arenas of negotiation and structuration, spaces where different socially impeded individuals come to negotiate social change in a particular context of action (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

In this understanding, complex actors’ networks generate gendered social spaces of negotiation⁷ where different actors, their distinct forms of knowledge, resources, discourses, and symbols come to interact (Long, 2001, pp. 57, 113): Female and male peasants – collectively and individually – for example, negotiate issues of food production, distribution, and consumption with representatives of international agribusinesses and development agencies, state departments of agriculture, local authorities and family members, bringing forward ideas about rural development, or experiences of food production and perceptions of healthy foods that are shaped by technological, material, and symbolic food resources in their life-world.

Life-World Arenas of Negotiating Food Sovereignty

Whereas Patel bemoans the lack of opportunities for ‘everybody’ to engage with food policies (see above), Long detects and traces such engagements on the level of people’s ‘life-world’: the social cosmos of individual actors, which they take for granted, experience, act upon, and thus constitute in situated daily practices (Schütz & Luckmann, 1973). Long’s approach to life-world interaction clearly distinguishes actor-oriented research from food regime analysis, extending the question of political agency into the social realm of everyday life constituted by quotidian interactions between, for instance, members of a household or between farmers and extension workers.

Friedmann’s (2005, p. 234) food regime approach analytically focuses on policy arenas, for example, when stating that “each of the past two food regimes was the combined outcome of social movements intersecting with state strategies and strategies of profit-seeking corporations”. Yet, peasants do not necessarily organize in social movements to confront and exercise meaningful agency towards development policies that intrude their daily practices of food production and consumption. The Tagbanua community studied by Cuevas, Fernandez, and Olvida (in this issue) offers a classical example of a life-world arena of food sovereignty: Peasant households in the community are approached by state agencies promoting programs to commoditize former subsistence agricultural produce. And they deal with these offers by directly interrogating the meanings and potentials of such development interventions in the context of their interwoven daily life concerns over food and health, standard of living, cultural identity, and social reproduction. Food programs and agricultural development interventions are not simply adopted or rejected but negotiated by ‘powerful’ actors – in policy arenas and in immediate or indirect encounters with local rationalities in life-world arenas, such as the gendered social fields of the household and community. In focusing on these arenas of development, actor-oriented research engages with the more complex, ambiguous, and diverse processes by which particular

⁷ Dannecker and Lachenmann (2014) show that gender, next to translocality, is an axis that fundamentally structures such spaces of negotiation.

social “arrangements emerge and are consolidated or reworked in the everyday lives of people” (Long, 2001, p. 49). Actors are thus methodologically grounded as ‘powerful’ agents based on their ability to process and embed such diverse discontinuities intersecting in their life-worlds, making them capable of acting.

De-Essentializing Entities of Agency

What is constitutive of actors in Long’s understanding is that they are in a position to formulate, reach, and carry out decisions (Long, 2001, p. 16), that is, to develop agency either individually or collectively. Generally, however, the actor-oriented approach is very sensitive towards the negotiated character of social positions and the fluctuant nature of systems of knowledge and identity. In consequence, social categories such as class or ethnic group are *not* conceived of as actors, as this would imply a reification of these categories in the sense of a methodological nationalism/essentialism (Lachenmann 2010, p. 9; with reference to Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2003). An actor-oriented critique of the essentialization of the peasantry thus reaches deeper than the critique of Bernstein (see above) and problematizes the empirical grounds of the latter.

It is from this stance that actor-oriented perspectives problematize the (re-)presentation of collective actors – such as the peasantry in the food sovereignty framework – as entities. Instead, it stresses, for example, that the reification of the ‘household’ a commonly used ‘entity of decision-making’ in development research neglects the complex interactions of unequally positioned actors (Lachenmann, 2009) and the different layers of belonging to a household. Especially, gender dimensions (Dannecker & Lachenmann, 2014), but also education and age shape decisions within households in intersecting ways, making the household a space of negotiation rather than a fixed entity of decision-making.⁸

Similarly, under an actor-oriented perspective, it is crucial to scrutinize the movement’s claim of collective agency. On the one hand, its essentialization of the peasantry as ‘capital’s other’ needs to be acknowledged as an important strategy to exercise ‘coherent’ agency in highly politicized arenas where civil society, states, and international organizations negotiate agricultural and food paradigms. On the other hand, however, the movement’s quality as a collective actor and decision-maker needs to be challenged, by approaching it in itself as a space of negotiation where ‘authoritative knowledge’ about food sovereignty is generated, and where differently positioned gendered actors struggle to represent ‘the global peasantry’ or to be represented as part of it. One could critically remark that the movement’s perceived mandate to represent the ones who are the most marginalized in the dominant regime (see above) draws on the same paternalistic and dichotomizing development discourse of empowering the ‘weak’ – a discourse which is framed by the very powerful actors of the food regime itself which the movement tries to resist.

This lens seems highly important to methodologically account for the empirical complexity of food struggles in people’s life-worlds, for activists’ diverse engagements

8 Herein we also see a major methodological pitfall of the household concept applied by the food security regime and food aid programs in which e.g. gendered food rules on distribution and consumption within the household are neglected.

with food-sovereignty, and last but not least the structures and dynamics of power within the space of actors promoting food sovereignty as members or sympathizers of the movement. This must not lead to a destruction of the political subjectivity of the movement, but may strengthen its capacity to openly negotiate and thereby act upon internal structures marginalizing certain groups, knowledges, rationalities, and meanings of food sovereignty. Research of Shiavoni (2014) as well as Lassa and Shrestha (2014) point to new issues of representation within the group of actors embracing food sovereignty as international bodies and nation states start to adopt a language of food sovereignty. An actor-oriented analysis of the movement, as a dynamic arena of negotiation itself, is helpful in this context to trace shifts in the movement's internal gendered processes of empowering or dominating certain actors and their perceptions and daily practices of food sovereignty. Such shifts may be generated (and analyzed) in the negotiations between individual peasants and activists of the movement and new actors (in particular national representatives and development agents) who join and shape the space of food sovereignty from a position of material and discursive power. Who empowers whom then becomes a contested terrain.

Global-Local Interfaces of Knowledge

Knowledge and its transformation, as well as 'knowledgeability' as a basis for social action, play a central role in actor-oriented research. Long (2001, p. 16) follows Giddens' notion of human agency, attributing individuals a 'knowledgeability' and knowledge-based capacity of coping with their life, given the manifold constraints of a social world, even under situations of extreme deprivation. Social action is shaped by internalized routines and explorative practices, as well as by social conventions and power relations (Long, 2001, p. 49–50).

As depicted earlier, development thinking and food policies have for decades granted epistemological authority to the expert knowledge of (Western) agrarian scientist and technical engineers. At the same time, agency-less peasants and their farming knowledge have diametrically been constructed as traditional, naïve, and lay. Nevertheless, this does not mean that farmers receiving food or seed aids have unambiguously taken on this assigned role. Hence, in this process of generating "authoritative knowledge" (Jordan, 1997), different systems of knowledge as well as systems of ignorance (Lachenmann, 1994, pp. 287) towards alternative knowledge still are contested, reproduced or restructured between different actors and their social actions.

Whereas the food security regime accounts for the superiority of scientific knowledge over local knowledge, for the food sovereignty movement global knowledge manifests in disruptive agro-productivist technology imperializing and destroying ecologically-sound, 'ethical' local knowledge. Both knowledge concepts entail a dichotomy, which the actor-oriented approach deliberately deconstructs. The actor-perspective methodologically centers on the interlocking of different bodies of knowledge, at so-called 'interfaces', moments in which actors' different cultural interpretations and social interests come to permeate each other, bringing to the front hidden rationalities of action (Long, 2001, p. 50). At such critical points of linkage and confrontation, peasants and development organizations substantiate claims or strategies and exercise power based on the integration of different forms of scientific, ex-

pert or everyday knowledge, global technical standards or longstanding experience. Following this, agency largely derives from the actors' 'knowledgeability' and 'capacity' to process diverse forms of knowledge as basis for social action and according to their life-world rationalities (Ehlert, 2012):

Rather than seeing the 'local' as shaped by the 'global' or the 'global' as an aggregation of the 'local', an actor perspective aims to elucidate the precise sets of interlocking relationships, actor 'projects' and social practices that interpenetrate various social, symbolic and geographical spaces. (Long, 2001, p. 13)

It is exactly this empirical ambiguity of people's relation to both dominant and resistant conceptions of food and health that they interlink in their life-world struggle for and everyday coping practices of food sovereignty. Alexandra Heis' study of a local network for alternative agriculture in Northern Thailand (in this issue) is a good example to illustrate the ambiguity of the food sovereignty activists' approach to healthy food. On the one hand, representatives of the movement adopt globally dominant discourses of food security that measure healthy food in narrow terms of micronutrients. At the same time, on the other hand, they considerably stretch and challenge the narrowness of these discourses by empirically reconstructing them in their life-world context: Through the creation of green markets they establish direct food encounters between peasants and consumers that are not mediated by supermarkets or traders. In these encounters, nutrition tables, expiry dates, and sterile packaging – the symbolic markers of a global knowledge system that promotes hygienic, nutritious, and fresh food – become replaced by an assessment of 'freshness' in the direct conversations between producers, cooks, and consumers, concerning when the vegetable was picked, combined with sensual impressions like smell, consistence, size, and taste as indicators of overall quality. In a similar vein, Figuié and Bricas (2010) discuss the development of supermarkets in Vietnam. They empirically assess how the modalities of food supply in supermarkets enact new practices of assessing food quality. Sensory methods as described above and the trust between seller and customer are more and more replaced by product information supplied and consumer knowledge imparted. Nevertheless, instead of creating dichotomies between 'traditional' versus 'modern' forms of food qualification methods, the actor-oriented approach would focus its attention on the process of customers maneuvering in different markets and settings of food distribution by drawing on and combining diverse forms of knowledge. This process of maneuvering is directed by rational food 'information', but also by emic perceptions of food quality and concepts of freshness, taste, and delicacy.

Analyzing such interfaces, researchers may gain in-depth understanding about "how discrepancies of social interest, cultural interpretation, knowledge and power are mediated and perpetuated or transformed at critical points of linkage and confrontation" (Long, 2001, p. 50) – be they green markets or supermarkets. In order to theoretically grasp how the members of this movement, and the movement as a collective actor, construct and live their idea of food-health sovereignty, this ambiguity needs to be understood as part of the dynamic processes of negotiation in this translocal space of food-health and with a view to emerging rationalities of both food health and food sovereignty.

Embodiment of Agency?

An actor-oriented analysis of the sensual food-encounters in the examples above may also contribute to further developing the methodological approach of Long. Though the latter acknowledges Bryant Turner's (1992) work on the 'embodiment' of actors and action, the role of the perceiving, feeling, and experiencing body remains largely absent from his discussion. Also in the critical claims for food sovereignty, the body is largely constrained to an 'object' to be fed and treated well, as well as a victim waiting to be politically freed from the structural violence of neoliberalism and its food-related body politics. The calorific and scientific nurturing of bodies via food programs as in the food security framework on the other side strips the bodily agency off the actor. Turner (2001, p. 245), however, stresses the lived experience of eating – the smell, taste, touch, pain, and emotions associated with food – as expressions of agency over one's sensual and subjective body. Different settings than the studies cited above bear interesting hints towards the need to further explore the meaning of Turner's observation for the quest of food sovereignty. Furthermore, Feuer (in this issue) shows the entanglement of taste, embodied knowledge and sensual experience of food and eating in soup-pot restaurants as essential elements of the negotiations on good and healthy food on a daily basis. Cuevas et al. (in this issue) even find local meanings of food sovereignty in their research community to be grounded in the physical experience of swidden farming and the indulgence of the tongue in the tastes of swidden-grown rice specialties. As these examples illustrate, empirical accounts of the importance of bodily aspects of food sovereignty in production, distribution, and eating are readily available. It will be an important challenge for actor-oriented research to reconceptualize the food sovereign actor with a view to the embodiment of his or her action.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have pointed out the possible contributions of an actor-oriented research approach of development sociology to the study of food sovereignty and the quest of sovereign agency within it. To this end, we have discussed the conception of actors and their interactions in the food sovereignty framework as well as the food security regime it opposes.

A historical synopsis of the contexts of the food security and sovereignty frameworks served as a point of departure as it clarifies how the food security regime in the Global South is embedded into a wider context of a top-down modernist and interventionist development paradigm, shaping a technocratic and universalistic agenda of 'feeding the world'. The food sovereignty framework presents itself as a fundamental opposition to the food security agenda and the wider corporatist, capitalist global food regime it is integral to. Emerging from a global social movement, it revalorizes the role of the resistant peasant in a global food regime that postulates an industrial 'agriculture without farmers'.

While peasants and consumers in the Global South disappear under the aegis of the food security regime as knowledgeable actors, the food sovereignty movement reclaims them on the global agenda of food politics, introducing the global peasant-

ry as an unambiguous, anti-capitalist collective actor struggling for food rights. We argue that both conceptualizations of actors, though politically opposed, draw on similarly problematic essentializations of actors and their agency. They largely ignore the empirically visible manifold, complex, and heterogeneous struggles of peasants encountering, negotiating, and enacting development politics and programs in their everyday lives of farming routines and consumption practices, and thereby leave concrete and fundamental questions of power relations and sovereign agency 'on the ground' untouched.

Based on this critique, we see the contribution of an actor-oriented research approach in its methodological focus on how food policies are dynamically transformed and made sense of at *interfaces* of different actors and their food knowledges. It reveals how otherwise invisible food-related agency is unfolding in life-world arenas where actors at different levels, including the individual peasant and consumer, struggle over food policies and the authority of their respective (embodied) knowledges and experiences in defining them. This is where we see a crucial dimension of *sovereignty* that goes beyond its single-edged political notion, but assigns it to the actor as being capable of coping with everyday life and stimulating change not only through overtly political but, indeed, very mundane actions. Shifting the focus to the engagement with food politics in the daily lives of people and scrutinizing how specific forms of food sovereignty are developed in global-local interactions, the methodological focus on actors is thus a strong lens for addressing the increasingly pressing questions of sovereignty and representation within the food sovereignty framework.



REFERENCES

- Akram-Lodhi, H. A., Borras, S. M., & Kay, C. (2007). *Land, poverty and livelihoods in an era of globalization: Perspectives from developing and transition countries*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Atienza, M. E. L. (2011). Notes from the editor: Food sovereignty and human security in Southeast Asia. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 26(1-2), 7–10.
- Bello, W. F. (2010). *Politik des Hungers*. Berlin & Hamburg, Germany: Assoziation A.
- Bernstein, H. (2014). Food sovereignty via the 'peasant way': A sceptical view. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), 1031–1063.
- Boserup, E. (1970). *Woman's role in economic development*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Caouette, D. (2011). Notes from the guest editor: Food sovereignty: debates and directions. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 26(1-2), 1–6.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3–21.
- Cuevas, S. M. M., Fernandez, J. E. C., & Olvida, I. DG. (2015). Where peasants are kings: Food sovereignty in the Tagbanua traditional subsistence system. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(1), 27–44.
- Dannecker, P., & Lachenmann, G. (2014). Geschlecht und transnationale Räume: Feministische Perspektiven auf neue Ein- und Ausschlüsse. *Forum Frauenforschung. Transnationale Räume und Geschlecht*. Münster, Germany: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Ehlert, J. (2012). *Beautiful floods: Environmental knowledge and agrarian change in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam*. Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag.

- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Feuer, H. (2015). Urban brokers of rural cuisine: Assembling national cuisine at Cambodian soup-pot restaurants. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(1), 45–66.
- Figuié, M., & Bricas, N. (2010). Purchasing food in Modern Vietnam: When supermarkets affect the senses. In D. Kalekin-Fishman & K. E. Y. Low (Eds.), *Everyday life in Asia: Social perspectives on the senses* (pp. 177–194). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Friedmann, H. (1987). International regimes of food and agriculture since 1870. In T. Shanin (Ed.), *Peasants and peasant societies* (pp. 258–276). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Friedmann, H. (1993). The political economy of food: A global crisis. *New Left Review*, (1/197), 29–57.
- Friedmann, H. (2005). From colonialism to green capitalism: Social movements and emergence of food regimes. In F. H. Buttel & P. McMichael (Eds.), *Research in rural sociology and development: Vol. II. New directions in the sociology of global development* (pp. 227–264). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Friedmann, H., & McMichael, P. (1989). Agriculture and the state system: The rise and decline of national agricultures, 1870 to the present. *Sociologia ruralis*, 29(2), 93–117.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A., & Pierson, C. (1998). *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Harcourt, W. (2009). *Body politics in development: Critical debates in gender and development*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Heis, A. (2015). The Alternative Agriculture Network Isan and its struggle for food sovereignty: A food regime perspective of agricultural relations of production in Northeast Thailand. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(1), 67–86.
- Hobart, M. (1993). Introduction: The growth of ignorance? In M. Hobart (Ed.), *An anthropological critique of development: The growth of ignorance*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Holt Giménez, E., & Shattuck, A. (2011). Food crises, food regimes and food movements: Rumblings of reform or tides of transformation? *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(1), 109–144.
- Hospes, O. (2014). Food sovereignty: The debate, the deadlock, and the suggested detour. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31(1), 119–130.
- Jordan, B. (1997). Authoritative knowledge and its construction. In R. Davis-Floyd & C. F. Sargent (Eds.), *Childbirth and authoritative knowledge: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 55–79). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kerkvliet, B. J. T. (2009). Everyday politics in peasant societies (and ours). *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 227–243.
- Lachenmann, G. (1994). Systeme des Nichtwissens. In R. Hitzler, A. Honer, & C. Maeder (Eds.), *Expertenwissen* (pp. 285–305). Berlin, Germany: Vieweg+Teubner Verlag.
- Lachenmann, G. (2009). *Renegotiating and overcoming frontiers and constituting crosscutting and overlapping social spaces and institutions: Conceptual and methodological issues in development*. Working paper, number 360. Bielefeld, Germany: University of Bielefeld.
- Lachenmann, G. (2010). *Methodische / methodologische Herausforderungen im Globalisierungskontext: Komplexe Methoden zur Untersuchung von Interfaces von Wissenssystemen*. Working paper, number 364. Bielefeld, Germany: University of Bielefeld.
- Lassa, J. A., & Shrestha, M. (2014). *Food sovereignty discourse in Southeast Asia: Helpful or disruptive?* Working Paper number 231. Nanyang, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- Long, N. (2001). *Development sociology: Actor perspectives*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Long, N., & Roberts, B. (2005). Changing rural scenarios and research agendas in Latin America in the new century. In F. H. Buttel & P. McMichael (Eds.), *Research in rural sociology and development: Vol. II. New directions in the sociology of global development* (pp. 57–90). Amsterdam Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Manahan, M. A. (2011). Is Asia for sale? Trends, issues, and strategies against land grabbing. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 26(1-2), 466–481.

- Martínez-Torres, M. E., & Rosset, P. M. (2010). La Vía Campesina: The birth and evolution of a transnational social movement. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(1), 149–175.
- McMichael, P. (2009). A food regime genealogy. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 139–169.
- McMichael, P. (2013). Historicizing food sovereignty. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), 933–957.
- Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. Halifax, NS, London, UK: Zed Books.
- Nyéléni (2007). *Declaration of Nyéléni: Declaration of the forum for food sovereignty*. Sélingué, Mali.
- Patel, R. (2009). Food sovereignty. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(3), 663–706.
- PCFS – People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty. (2004). *The People's Convention on Food Sovereignty: Draft developed at the Asia Pacific People's Convention on Food Sovereignty*. Dhaka. Retrieved from: <http://www.archive.foodsov.org/resources/conventiondhaka.doc>
- Pottier, J. (1999). *Anthropology of food: The social dynamics of food security*. Malden, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Rist, G. (2008). *The history of development: From Western origins to global faith* (3rd ed.). London UK: Zed Books.
- Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-Communist manifesto*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schiavoni, C. M. (2014). Competing sovereignties, contested processes: The politics of food sovereignty construction. *Working Paper number 583*. The Hague, Netherlands: ISS, International Institute of Social Studies.
- Schütz, A., & Luckmann, T. (1973). *The structures of the life-world* (Vol. 1). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Schütz, A., & Luckmann, T. (1984). *Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (Vol. 2). Frankfurt a.M, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1999). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.). *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Tran Thi Thu Trang (2011). Food security versus food sovereignty: Choice of concept, policies, and classes in Vietnam's post-reform economy. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 26(1-2), 68–88.
- Thi Thu Trang Tran (2013). Food safety and the political economy of food governance: the case of shrimp farming in Nam Dinh Province, Vietnam. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(4), 703–719.
- Turner, B. S. (1992). *Regulating bodies: Essays in medical sociology*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Turner, B. S. (2001). Disability and the sociology of the body. In G. L. Albrecht, K. Seelman, & M. Bury (Eds.), *Handbook of disability studies* (pp. 252–267). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Von Werlhof, C. (1991). *Was haben die Hühner mit dem Dollar zu tun? Frauen und Ökonomie*. München, GER: Frauenoffensive.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2003). Methodological nationalism, the social sciences, and the study of migration: An essay in historical epistemology. *International Migration Review* 37(3), 576–610.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Judith Ehlert is a sociologist by training and holds a postdoctoral position at the Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna. In her PhD thesis, she worked on environmental knowledge and agrarian change in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Her current research project deals with the body politics of food and eating in Vietnam.

► Contact: judith.ehlert@univie.ac.at

Christiane Voßemer works as a university assistant and lecturer at the Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna. She is a graduate of Development Studies and currently working on her PhD thesis, applying an actor-oriented research approach to the transformation of health care in a Myanmar borderland.

► Contact: christiane.vossemer@univie.ac.at