

The hare & the tortoise: Who will prevail? Knowledge, power & rationality in the contested transition to sustainable food cultivation & consumption

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Industrialized agro-food systems are based not on need but on greed, persuasion & indoctrination by advertising, branding & discounting. They produce roughly 40% of global GHG-emissions (IPCC 2013) and up to 50% of the produce in OECD countries ends as waste (Gustavsson et al. 2011); they are from robust scientific evidence anything but sustainable (EEA 2013; IAASTD 2009). A meaningful transition to sustainable agriculture (Pretty 2008) as fundament for a sustainable food chain requires pivotal changes in production as well as in storage, processing, distribution and consumption. We observe an uneven race between scientific & traditional knowledge on the one hand and hegemonic power of global acting agro-food corporations on the other. In the course of the industrialization of food systems knowledge about food from cultivation to cooking more and more has been canalized from farms and households to industrial corporations and the associated science. National politics in most countries acted in favor of industrialization and globalization, thus inter alia promoting the paradox of the powerless nation state (Jessop 2008). The proposed paper deals with institutional as well as epistemic conditions of the present-day unsustainable constellation of the food system and identifies crucial junctures for a real turn to sustainability.

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