

Co-Production Beyond Alternative Food Networks

Christof Lammer
Department of Methods in the Social Sciences
Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology
University of Vienna

STS Conference Graz 2014
"Critical Issues in Science and Technology Studies"
May 05-06, 2014 GRAZ, AUSTRIA

Special Session 5: Key Concepts of Agro-Food Studies

In studies of alternative food networks the notion of *co-production* is increasingly being used to bridge the gap between consumption and production. Anthropologist Cristina Grasseni, for example, by becoming a member of a solidarity purchase group in Italy, actually crosses the line between consumption and production in a very practical way before doing so theoretically. This raises the question of how the widespread separation between production and consumption in social scientific research is connected to a social context in which consumers and producers of food hardly ever meet.

In this presentation I reflect on how one can rip the concept of *co-production* out of its original empirical context in order to fruitfully think across the production/consumption divide in any kind of food network. *Co-production* has many different meanings in various contexts. Grasseni borrows the notion from food activists who think of themselves as more than mere consumers. Here *co-production* means "actively enabling production" in "alternative" food networks. In contrast "conventional" food systems implicitly appear as fixed structures without agency. However, if we do not restrict *co-production* to the "alternative", we can ask how seemingly "passive" consumers in the supermarket are continuously enabling the production of "conventional" food and the reproduction of "conventional" socio-economic relations through their agency. Also, by focusing on processes of *co-production*, fixed lines between "consumer" and "producer", between "alternative" and "conventional" and other dichotomies are called into question. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork on peasant cooperatives in China, I study how these boundaries are continuously constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed and to what effect.

Affiliation and contact information:

Christof Lammer

Junior Assistant Professor (prae-doc)

Department of Methods in the Social Sciences

University of Vienna

<http://methods.univie.ac.at/team/lammer-christof/>

e-mail: christof.lammer@univie.ac.at, lammer_christof@hotmail.com

tel: +43-1-4277-49907

address: Room 1/09, Rathausstraße 19/1/9, 1010 Vienna

PhD candidate in Social Science (Social and Cultural Anthropology)

Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology

University of Vienna

Supervisors:

Tatjana Thelen, Department of Methods in the Social Sciences, University of Vienna

Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Institute for East Asian Studies, Sinology, University of Vienna

Topic:

A "New Socialist Countryside" in China? Rural Cooperatives, Re-Peasantisation and the State

Research interests:

political anthropology, economic anthropology, peasant studies, rural China

Specification of the conference theme or special session:

Special Session 5: Key Concepts of Agro-Food Studies

(or Special Session 4: Foodscapes Beyond the Alternative/Conventional Food Networks Binary)