Reimagining Agroecology: Food Sovereignty and the Politics of Cooptation

Agroecology is now being incorporated into the plans of powerful governing bodies. It is widely seen as a framework to address the environmental, energy, food and water crises related to agriculture and food1,2. However, civil society organizations have raised concerns that these institutions are mainstreaming agroecology in a way that reproduces the dominant logics and political-economic relations that underpin these intersecting crises1,3. This cooptation of grassroots discourses has historical precedence as exemplified in regards to organic food, local food and other languages of sustainability. Civil society groups are thus contesting the cooptation of agroecology and asserting an Agroécologie Paysanne or a Peasant Agroecology3 - one that reflects fundamentally different socio-political relations based on principles of food sovereignty4. Food sovereignty emphasizes the political and economic rights of farmers, indigenous peoples, fishers, and consumer-citizens to determine food and agricultural policy and practice4,5.

**Agroécologie Paysanne / Bottom Up Agroecology**

- **Control**
  - Bottom up
  - Citizen deliberation
  - Participatory democracy
  - Food sovereignty

- **Ways of knowing**
  - Holism
  - Dialogue of knowledges (diálogo de saberes)6
  - Citizen and farmer led

- **Ecology/Economy**
  - Circular
  - Regenerative
  - Small scale farmers’ access to and control of land and natural resources

**Top Down Agroecology**

- **Control**
  - Top down
  - Undemocratic governing bodies controlled by corporations & elites in governments & international agencies

- **Ways of knowing**
  - Scientism
  - Controlled-trials
  - Scientist-led

- **Ecology/Economy**
  - Linear
  - Extractive
  - Concentration of land ownership