

U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

Fair Fuels?

Zwischen Sackgasse und Energiewende: Eine sozial-ökologische
Mehrebenenanalyse transnationaler Biokraftstoffpolitik



Global Crises, National Policies, Local Impacts

Addressing the Complexity of Competing National and Sectoral
Understandings of the Food vs. Fuel Crisis

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Outline



- The question
 - Why agrofuels?
- The perspective
 - Gramsci!
- The issue
 - Food vs. Fuel
- The aftermath
 - (Not) Responding to the problem
- The reasons
 - Gramsci applied!
- Conclusions

Analytical perspective 1: critical political economy



- **Offers a critical investigation:** Explains rather than describes why shifts in authority and governance take place
- **Focuses upon constraints on autonomy and independence of governance actors:** Considers what shapes possible actions
- **Links material and political roles and commitments of regulators and regulated:** Revolving doors between state, economy, society, environment
- **Captures how politics happen in practice:** Networks, alliances, deal-brokering within and beyond state
- **Knowledge-holders act as agents of change:** Not only shifting interests and preferences are at hand, but (actor) ontologies as well.

Analytical perspective 2: neo-Gramscian theory



- **Unique understanding of hegemony:** a combination of coercion and consent used to advance a political and class project;
- **Dynamism of systems:** i.e. hegemony is never complete and systems are characterized by struggles for discursive legitimacy to secure prevailing order;
- **Civil society as the “extended state”:** society is simultaneously a supportive component of hegemony and a source of dissent;
- **Historic bloc:** ideas and material conditions of the (extended) state are bound together;
- **Key role of Intellectuals:** forming and stabilizing discourses of a historic bloc; legitimizing agents of both hegemonic projects *and dissent*.

Knowledge & Discourse



Knowledge:

- Is socially and historically contingent, and cannot be dissociated from the workings of power.
- Limits of knowledge and control produce risks and socially construct individual behavior.

Discourse:

- “Dying forests do not in themselves contain the reason for the public attention and concern they receive.” (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p 176)
- Discourse: an collection of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices:

agrofuels vs. biofuels

Framing food vs. fuel: Nation-building



Agro-industrial hegemonies in large producer/consumers:

Brazilian sugar as engine of growth & security; source of national pride

US corn romanticized source of economic & food security; innovation

EU/DE romanticized source of economic & food security; innovation
.... but changing....

Framing food vs. fuel: Artificial markets



Annual Production (liters) of ethanol from corn in the United States

US in 2003:	10,000,000,000
US in 2007:	27,000,000,000
US in 2008:	34,000,000,000

Food vs. Fuel: The Crisis



- Current understandings of causes of the crisis:
 - fiscal meltdown
 - low agricultural yields due to droughts, etc.
 - extremely high fuel (and fertilizer) prices
 - increased speculative commodity trading
 - increasing global meat consumption
 - radical increases agrofuels production
- Dramatic effects of commodity crisis of 2007-08
 - Food export bans
 - Food riots in 31 countries
 - Governments of Haiti & Madagascar ousted as a result
 - Widespread assumed association with increased agrofuels production

An “exceptional moment?”



- Scientific, gov, civil society intellectuals began to claim that most agrofuels were not:

socially beneficial - energy positive - economically viable - ecologically sound

- Biofuelwatch (2007). “Agrofuels – towards a reality check in nine key areas”
- Braun, J. (2007). “The World Food Situation: New Driving Forces and Required Actions.”
- Doornbosche & Steenblik (2007). “Biofuels : Is the cure worse than the disease?”
- Fargione, Joseph et al. (2008). “Land Clearing and the Biofuel Carbon Debt,”
- The Royal Society (2008). Sustainable biofuels: prospects and challenges

Responses: From “Hero” to Discursive “Zero”



- Stavros Dimas, the EU’s Environment Commissioner (2008):
 - ✦ EU policymakers “had not foreseen all the problems” that the EU’s agrofuels policy brought with it and that it must be rewritten.
- Jean Ziegler, U.N. special Rapporteur on the right to food in 2007:
 - ✦ biofuels production from food crops is a “crime against humanity” and called for a 5 year moratorium on agrofuels production
- F&C Investors (2008, p3):
 - ✦ The “industry’s future is highly uncertain because of political risks... Biofuels producers... misjudged government sensitivity to food price inflation and environmental concerns; and failed to find industry solutions to sustainability challenges...”.

Responses: Or... still the hero!



- Lula:
 - “Food is expensive because the world wasn’t prepared to see millions of Chinese people, millions of Indians and Africans eating three times a day”
- Merkel:
 - It was not the agricultural policies of the West that were to blame, but “inadequate agricultural policies in developing countries” that were causing fluctuations and increases in food prices.
- Bush:
 - Although recognizing that ethanol played a role increasing food prices, he stated that: “The truth of the matter is it’s in our national interests that our farmers grow energy, as opposed to us purchasing energy from parts of the world that are unstable or may not like us. In terms of the international situation, we are deeply concerned about food prices here at home and we’re deeply concerned about people who don’t have food abroad. In other words, scarcity is of concern to us. Last year we were very generous in our food donations, and this year we’ll be generous as well.”

Responses: Policy



- Brazil: no appreciable policy changes for ethanol
 - Phasing out manual sugarcane harvest, innovative social seal for biodiesel (non-functioning)
- US: No change to Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007
 - Double output by 2015 and triple output by 2022
- EU: Renewable Energy Directive of 2008/9
 - 10% of transport fuel must come from renewables by 2020 (and be “sustainably” produced)

Explaining the lack of change: What are they?



Political Justifications for biofuels production and support policies

Timeline	Brazil	Europe	United States	Num. of Rationales
1970s- early 90s	Energy Sec. + Rural Growth	-	Energy Sec. + Rural Growth	2
1990s	Energy + Growth	Environment + Growth	Energy + Growth	2
2001-2007	Energy + Env. + Growth	Energy + Env. + Growth	Energy + Env. + Growth	3
2007-2XXX	Energy + Env. + Growth + Innov.	Energy + Env. + Growth + Innov.	Energy + Env. + Growth + Innov.	4

Explaining the lack of change: Can you govern what you cannot define?



Are they:

- plants or industrial products?
- oils or fuels?
- nature or intellectual property?
- industrial chance (autos in Brazil) or industrial risk (autos EU & US)?

Are they *bio*fuels?

- Part of a green new deal?
- An opportunity to leapfrog?
- Local local local?
- dLUC
- growth, environmental chance, source of innovation, energy security?

Or *agro*fuels?

- Must be produced at scale = agribusiness over local business?
- Neo-neo colonialism?
- Source of food insecurity?
- iLUC
- etc.

Knowledge & the new nation building



Knowledge:

- Is socially and historically contingent, and **cannot be dissociated from the workings of power.**
- Limits of knowledge and control **produce risks and socially construct individual behavior.**

Nation building –old + knowledge economies:

- “Brazilian development model” as an export
- BR, EU, US leadership on 2nd generation technology development as part of larger “bioeconomy.”
- But.... signs of change... tariff expiration in US, reconsideration of RED in EU.

Explaining the lack of change: Knowledge & hegemonic co-optation of resistance



- “Excess of objectivity” or: too much science!
- Certification, iLUC quantification & 2nd generation agrofuels:
 - Offer the same promises as “biofuels” of the past;
 - Do not provide real solutions;
 - Allow for business to continue to expand;
 - Provide justification for more governmental assistance and industry protection;
 - Persuade detractors that there is nothing to fear.

Conclusions: Scientia potentia est?



- Is knowledge power?
 - It is power over knowledge that matters: Who is using it, how they use it, what knowledge they ignore.