

The Political Economy of Food Systems and Food Democracy



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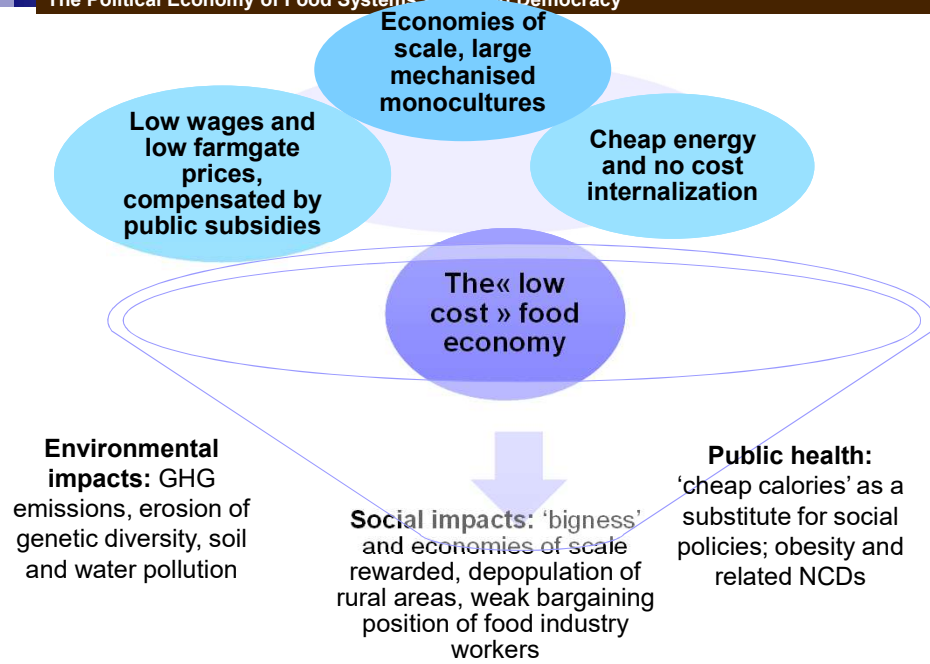
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7 billion people, almost 1 billion are hungry - less than average 2400 Kcal / day

One child out of three is stunted, with fewer opportunities for full physical and mental development : 186 million children below 5 years of age

Malnutrition explains 35% of deaths of children below 5 years of age, 3,1 million children die each year from malnutrition

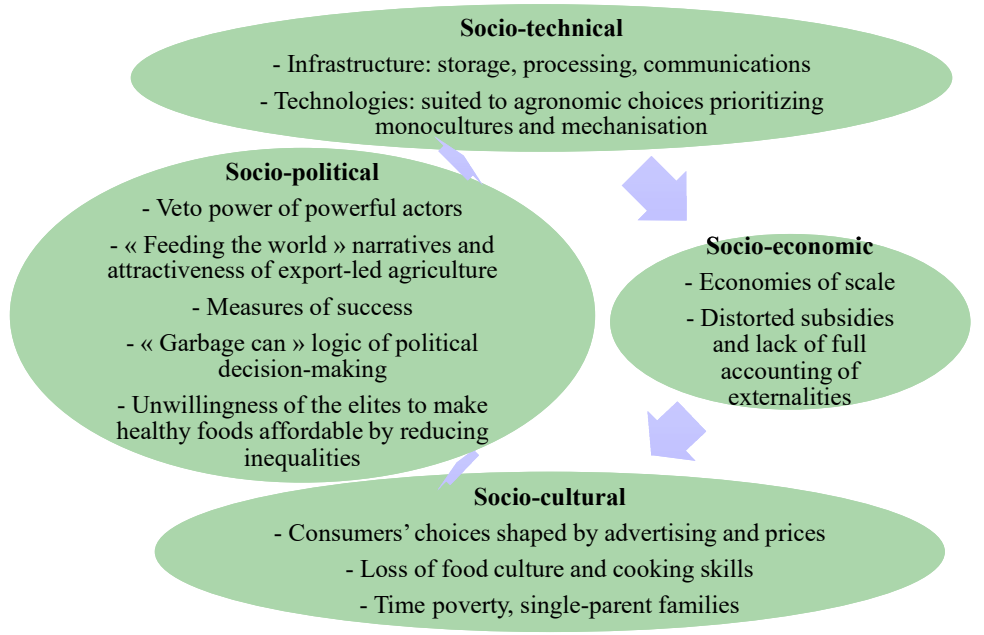
This is not a technical question, it is a political question -

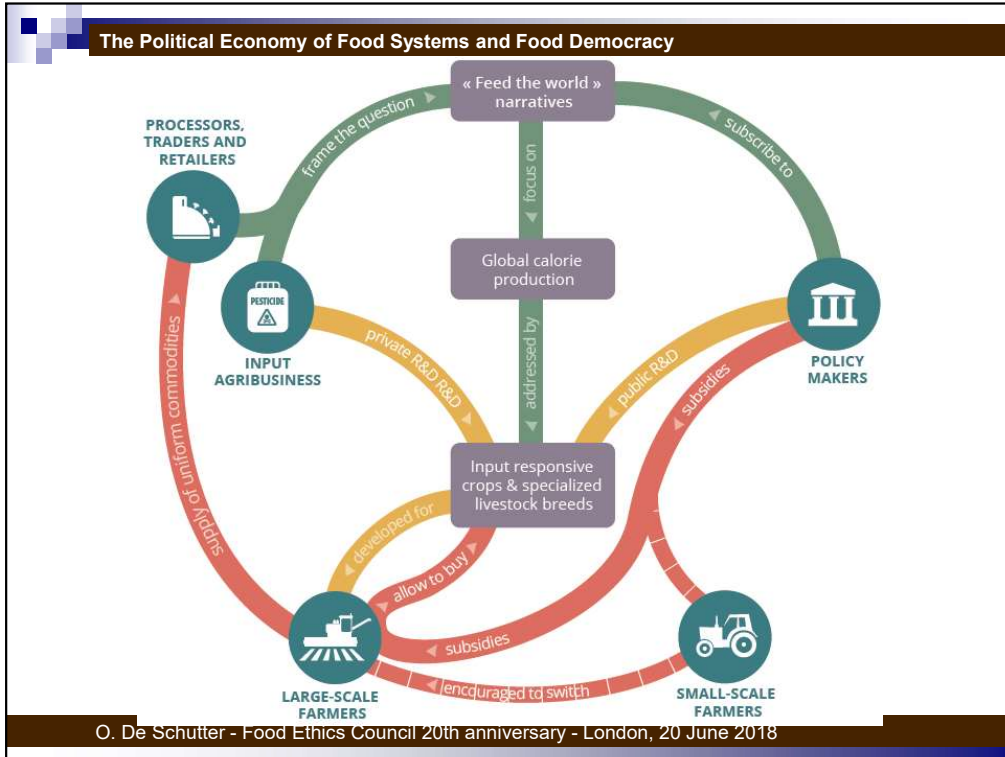


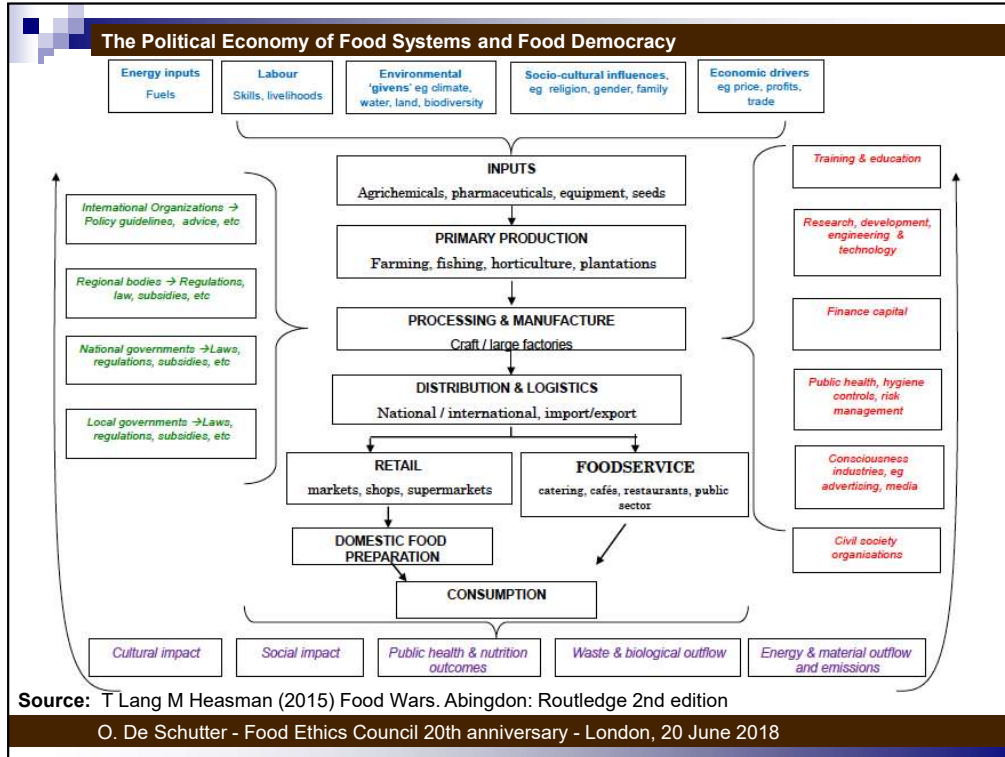


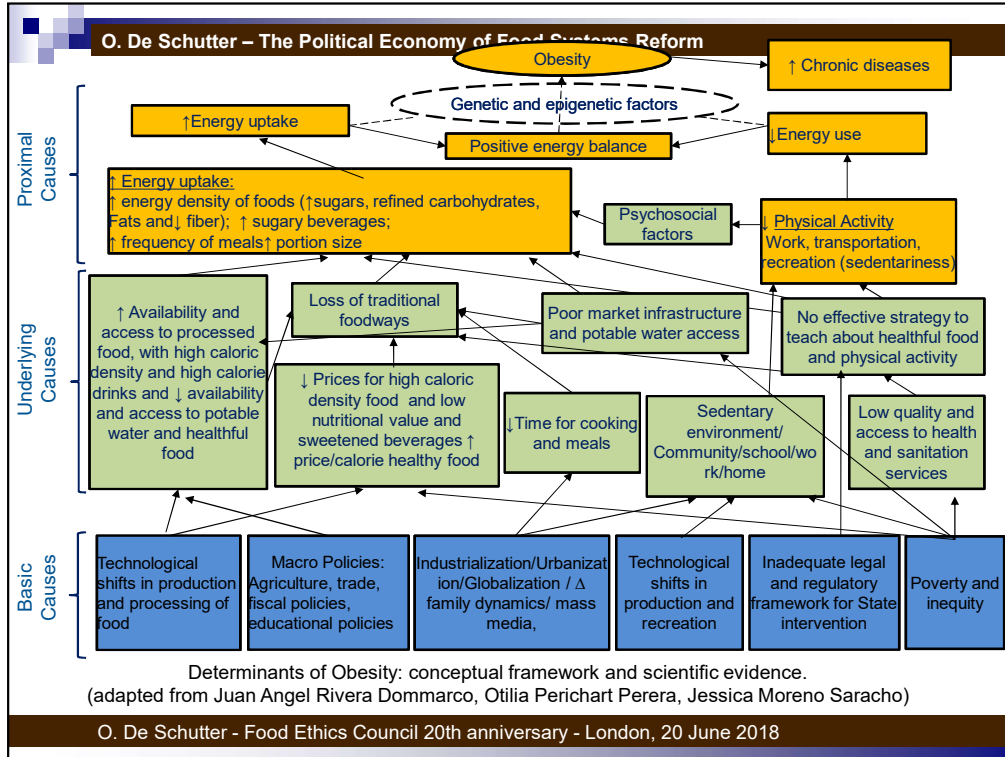
WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO REFORM?

**Three interdependencies: systemic, chain-wide,
and multiscale**









According to USDA, the estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$147 billion in 2008 U.S. dollars; the medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than those of normal weight. The American Diabetes Association released new research on March 6, 2013 estimating the total costs of diagnosed diabetes have risen to \$245 billion in 2012 from \$174 billion in 2007, a 41 percent increase over a five year period (taking into account losses of labor productivity (20 billion), absenteeism (5 billion) and reduced life expectancy or reduced QALYs (quality adjusted life years) (cost of inability to work due to diabetes-related disability: 20 billion)).



UNLOCKING FOOD SYSTEMS?

Politics as a driver of change

Green capitalism

Sociodiversity and alternative food networks

Politics : an easy prey for capture by interest groups

Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens

Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page

Each of four theoretical traditions in the study of American politics—which can be characterized as theories of Majoritarian Electoral Democracy, Economic-Elite Domination, and two types of interest-group pluralism, Majoritarian Pluralism and Biased Pluralism—offers different predictions about which sets of actors have how much influence over public policy: average citizens; economic elites; and organized interest groups, mass-based or business-oriented.

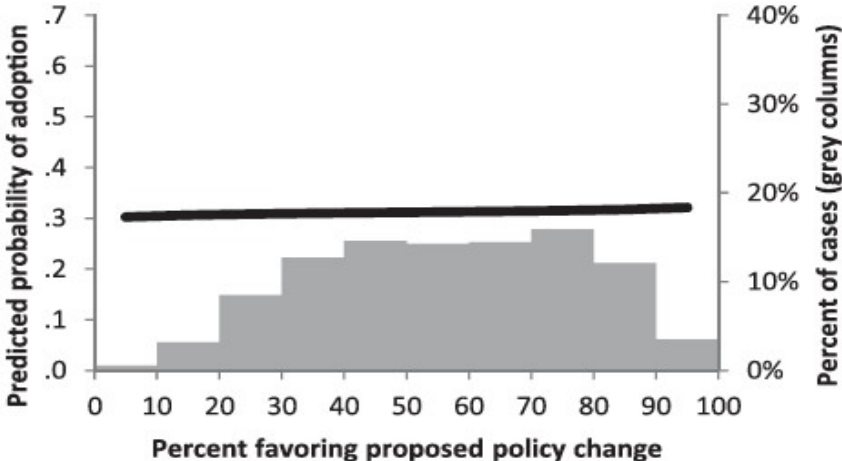
A great deal of empirical research speaks to the policy influence of one or another set of actors, but until recently it has not been possible to test these contrasting theoretical predictions against each other within a single statistical model. We report on an effort to do so, using a unique data set that includes measures of the key variables for 1,779 policy issues.

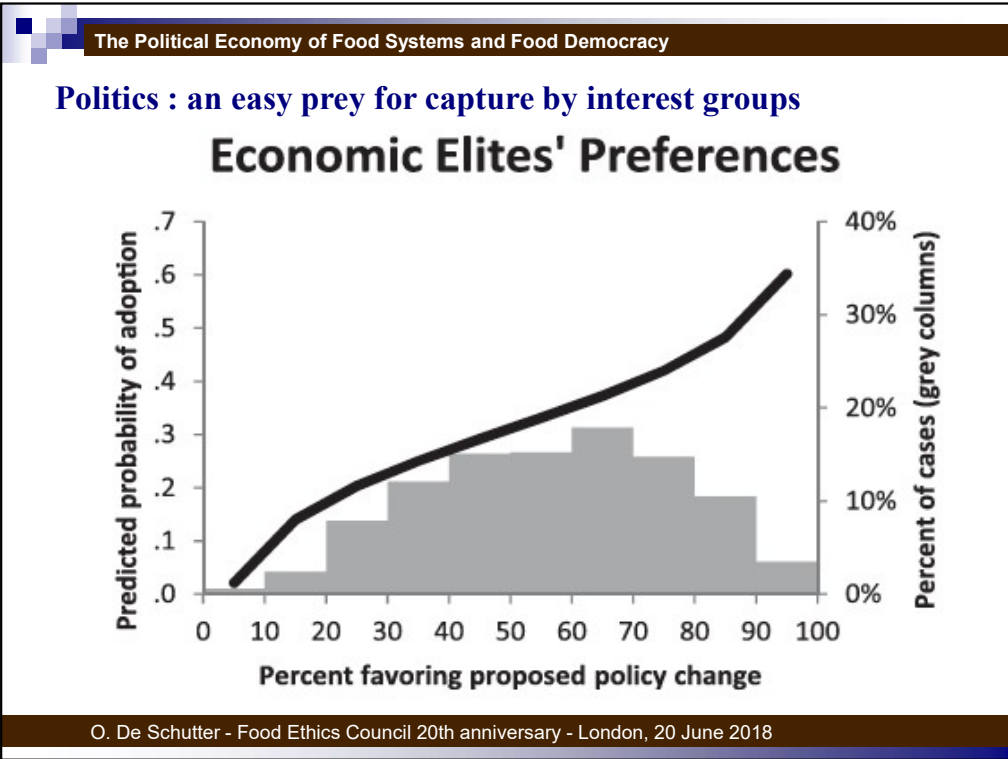
Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. The results provide substantial support for theories of Economic-Elite Domination and for theories of Biased Pluralism, but not for theories of Majoritarian Electoral Democracy or Majoritarian Pluralism.

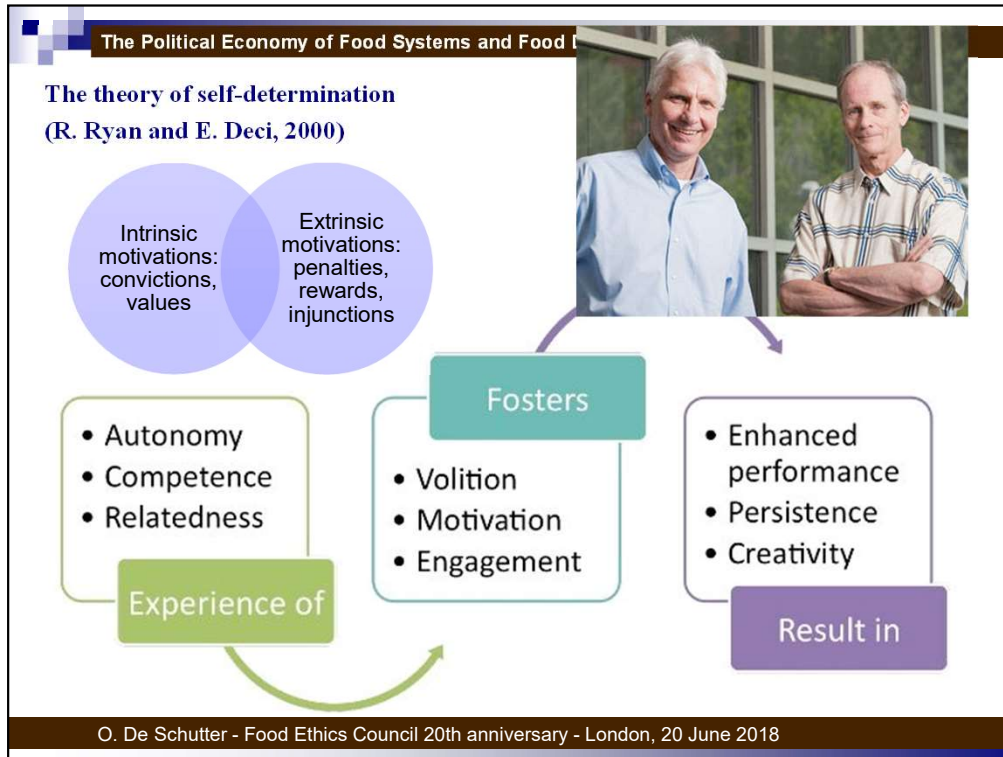
Source: Gilens & Page, *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3) (Sept. 2014): 564-581

Politics : an easy prey for capture by interest groups

Average Citizens' Preferences







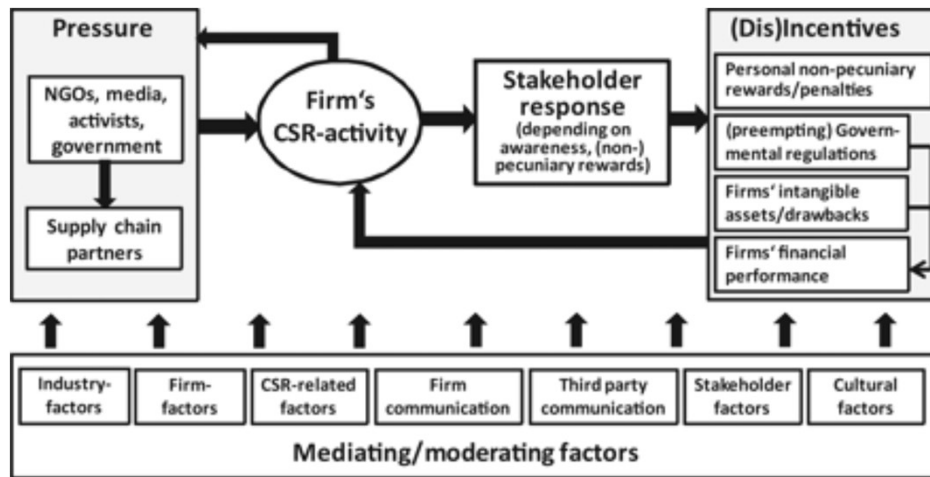
What is striking? 1° Don't address the structural causes, 2° Relies on CBA but does not ask about social acceptability nor about political feasibility, and 3° are interventions largely "external" (influencing behavior from outside) rather than aimed at changing motivations "intrinsically"



PATHWAYS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS REFORM

Politics as a driver of change
Green capitalism
Sociodiversity and alternative food networks
Hybrid solutions

Does CSR pay?



Framework for firms' decision to engage in/abstain from CSR. **Source:** Hartmann, M. (2011). Corporate Social Responsibility in the Food Sector. *Eur. Rev. Agric. Econ.* 38 (3): 297-324.

Structural limits to sustainable development through CSR

1. Financialization of the economy
2. Incentives / reward schemes for CEOs
3. Global competition as an “iron cage”



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PATHWAYS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS REFORM

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Combining advocacy and social innovations: sociodiversity in the service of sustainable food systems

- Community-supported agriculture
- Short food chains
- Urban agriculture
- Collective vegetable gardens
- Social groceries
- Transition initiatives
- *Lebensmittelretter*
- Incredible edibles



The limits of the “multi-level perspective”

1. Ambiguity about “landscape” (ex globalization of food chains, emergence of sustainable development concerns, link between food and energy markets...)
2. “The” food regime – result of co-evolution, leading to a stable equilibrium, and coopting innovations
3. The predominant role of the State and the market in regime change: a limited role for empowerment and for role-shifting

- **Incredible edibles**



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- **Lebensmittelretter**



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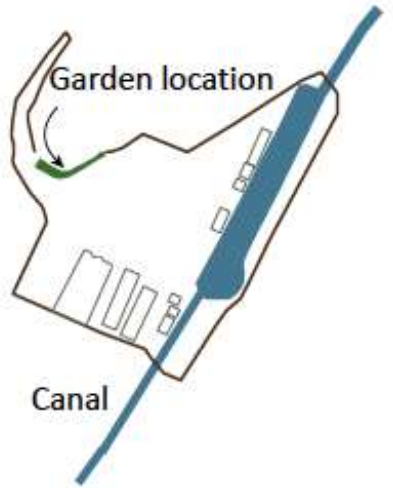
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Social innovations in the service of sustainable food systems




Social innovations in the service of sustainable food systems



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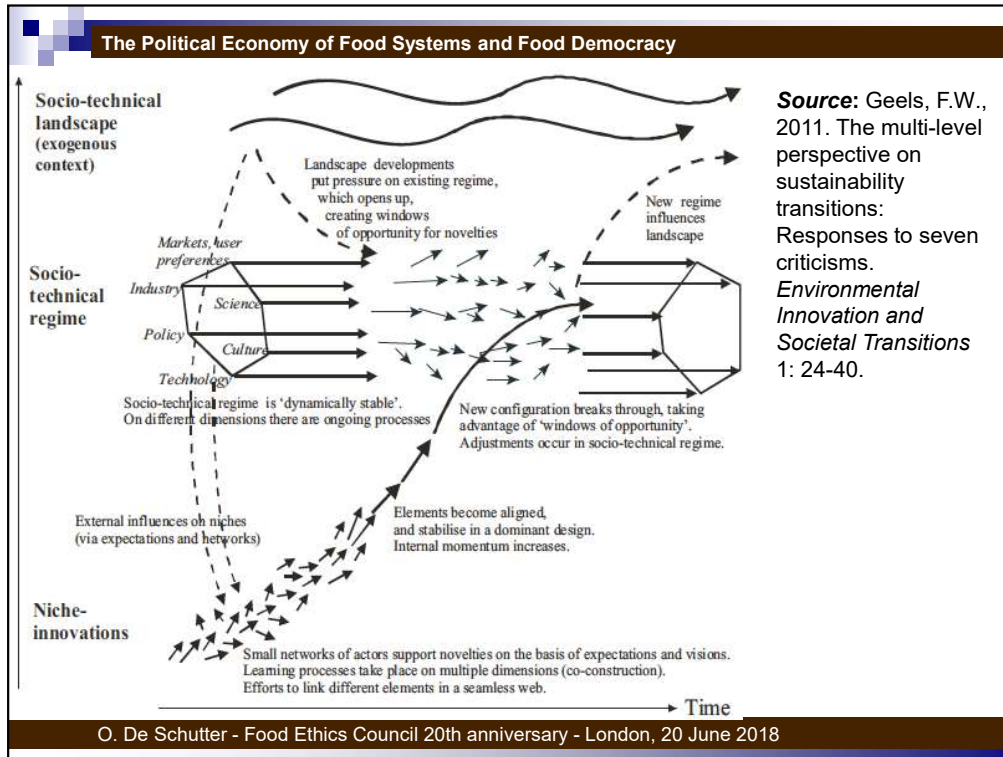
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The challenges facing social innovations

1. The trilemma: collapse, co-optation, or marginalization
2. The recycling by the neoliberal State
3. The divisions within the food movement: tactical divisions & different rallying points



Frank Geels (Manchester), Johan Schot (Sussex)



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The ‘multi-level perspective’: co-evolution of the components of the dominant regime

Source: Geels, F.W., 2011. The multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions: Responses to seven criticisms. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 1: 24-40.

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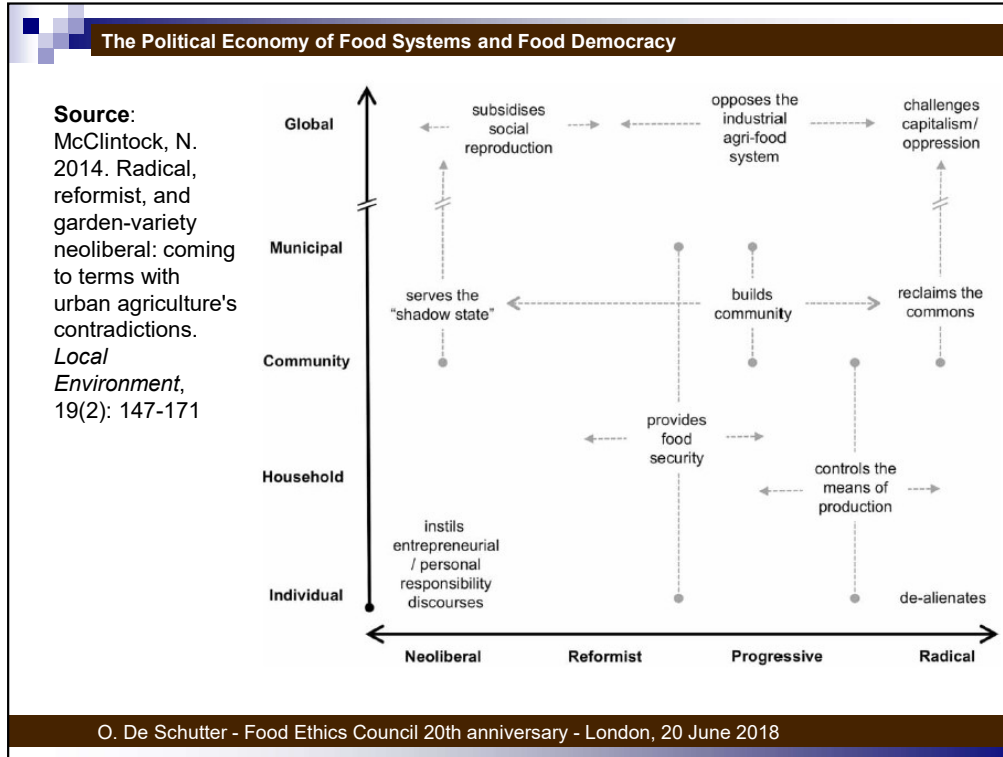
Radical, reformist, and garden-variety neoliberal: coming to terms with urban agriculture's contradictions

Nathan McClintock*

Toulan School of Urban Studies & Planning, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA

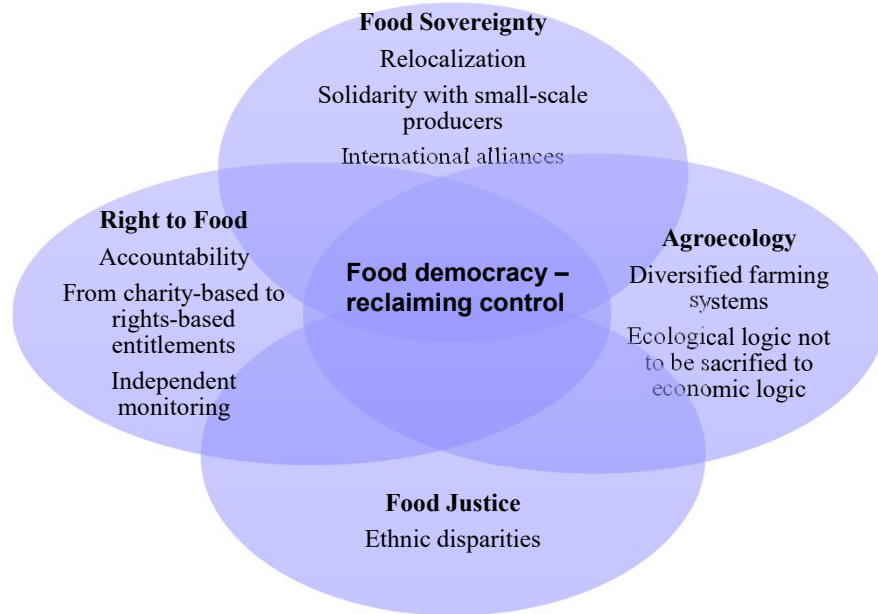
For many activists and scholars, urban agriculture in the Global North has become synonymous with sustainable food systems, standing in opposition to the dominant industrial agri-food system. At the same time, critical social scientists increasingly argue that urban agriculture programmes, by filling the void left by the “rolling back” of the social safety net, underwrite neoliberalisation. I argue that such contradictions are central to urban agriculture. Drawing on existing literature and fieldwork in

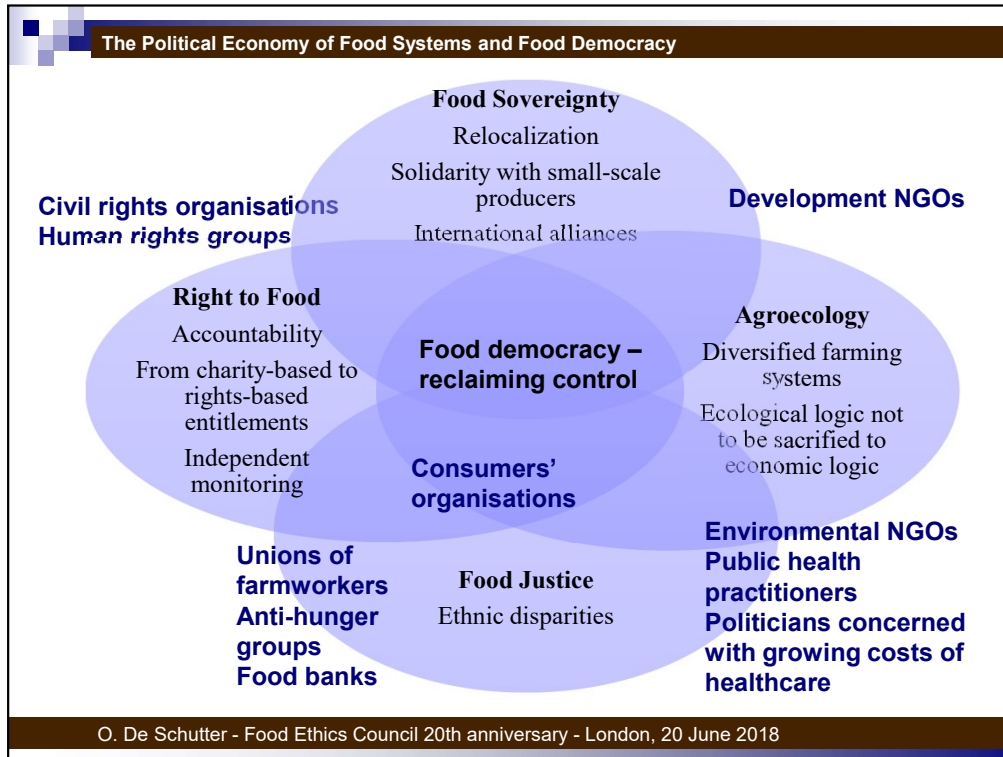
Two modes of cooptation of social innovations: (1) McClintock claims (Shifting the burden on the communities, justifying a retreat from the State; Discourse about entrepreneurialism and self-help The importance of voluntary / unpaid work: self-exploitation) (2) “exit” as a substitute to “voice” (Hirschman 1970: Exit, Voice and Loyalty) (see eg food aid by charities: convenient way for food retailers to get rid of waste without questioning overproduction (TEFAP Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program 1983, permanent since 1990: Emergency Food Assistance Program; or supermarkets not challenged to improve since unhappy consumers will switch to other channels of distribution) AND the risk of plutocracy



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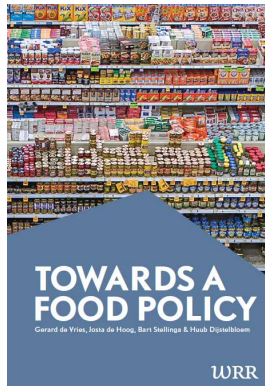
<http://mnfoodcharter.com/about/history/>

FIVE OPPORTUNITIES

1. The multifaceted nature of the crisis and the emergence of new alliances
2. The new forms of food activism
3. The awakening of cities
4. The rise of food policies
5. The institutionalization of food democracy



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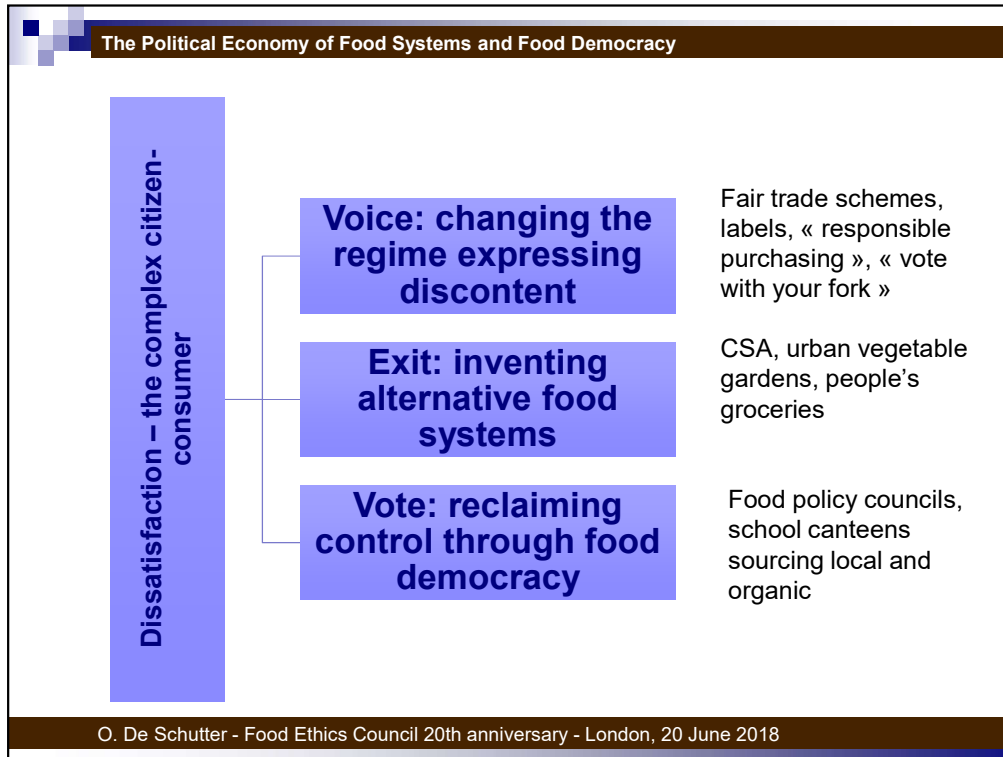


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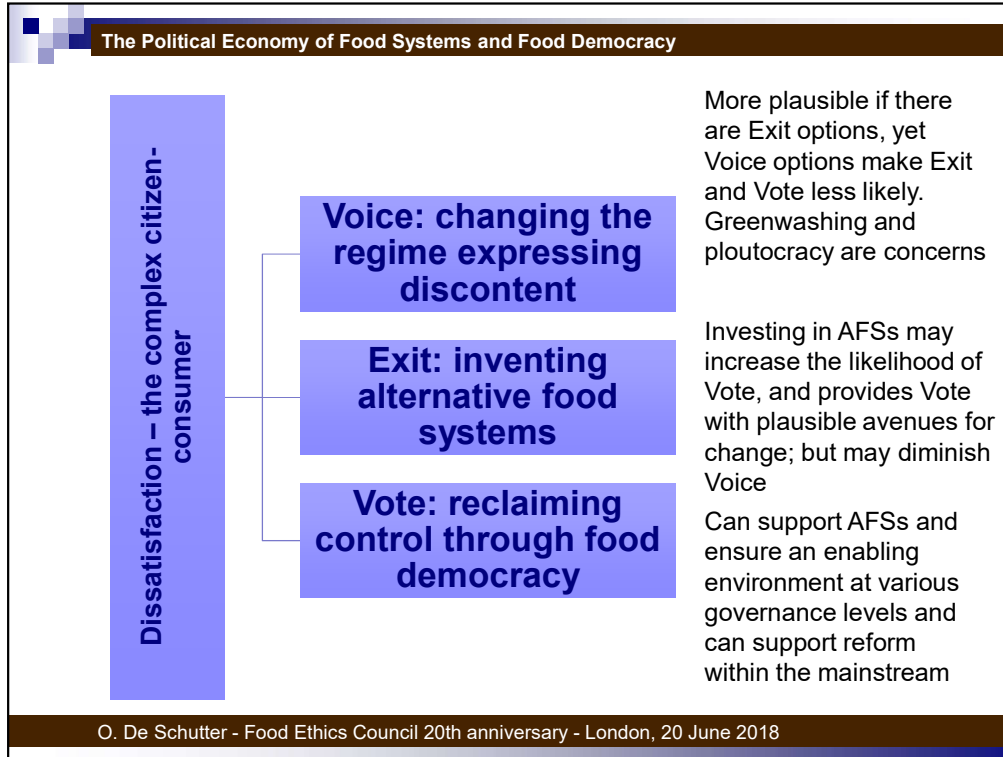


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Two changes vs Hirschman's framework: (1) VOICE here includes switching from one product to another within the mainstream food system, which AH would call 'exit' (the basic loyalty is to the system, because one is "loyal" to the retailer or to the brand or simply sees no alternative; (2) three ways to move beyond passivity, including reclaiming control of food systems through food democracy, indeed food movements see the political system is captured / unresponsive, they see the political economy of food systems as a problem deserving attention in its own right



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