

Article

Diverse Citizenship? Food Sovereignty and the Power of Acting Otherwise

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Abstract: This contribution discusses two different but interlinked fields of research: political theories of sovereignty and citizenship, as well as conceptualizations of emerging alternative food movements. In drawing on James Tully’s practiced-based understanding of ‘diverse citizenship’, as well as on other selected theories of postmodern political thought, it focuses on the contested political nature of the food sovereignty movement, specifically with regard to the dynamics and actions that have brought it into being. In doing so, it conceives of citizenship as materializing on the basis of multi-faceted practices of ‘acting otherwise’, which stands in sharp contrast to a conceptualization of citizenship as an institutionalized status, as it is understood in the liberal tradition. In order to deepen and to sharpen this alternative approach, this contribution additionally draws on Theodore Schatzki’s practice theory, which, despite its rather apolitical character, makes it possible to conceive of political practices as emergent and situational phenomena that are closely connected to the quotidian practices of everyday life. The combination of these perspectives bears great potential for theoretical discussions on alternative food movements as well as for their empirical investigation, since it puts emphasis on the way *how* practitioners and advocates for food sovereignty disclose themselves in multifaceted struggles over the imposition and the challenging of the rules of social living together.

Keywords: food sovereignty; post-national citizenship; sovereignty; justice; practice theory

1. Introduction

In March 2017, the German peasant foundation “Haus der Bauern” organized a noteworthy international congress, named “Global Peasants’ Rights”, in Schwäbisch Hall in Southwest Germany. During the four-day conference, the participants—mostly small-scale farmers of various kinds and from various regions worldwide, as well as NGO-representatives, politicians, and scientists—developed a much-noted UN-declaration on the fundamental rights for peasants¹. The objective of this charter, named the “Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas”, is to protect peasants (and associated groups) from poverty, malnutrition, marginalization, expropriation and, in general, from a weakening of their sovereignty, which is, according to their view, seriously threatened by multinational corporations and state power. In doing so, the declaration redefines existing human rights, such as the right to the freedom of thought and opinion, according to the realities of peasant communities. Moreover, it also positions new rights on the global political agenda, most importantly

¹ The author of this article attended this congress and conducted participant observations, e.g., within workshop discussions. The foundation “Haus der Bauern” is the political branch of the regional farmers association “Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall” (see <https://www.hdb-stiftung.com/index.php/de/>; accessed on 27 November 2019). Detailed information on the congress “Global Peasants’ Rights” as well as on the declaration on the “Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas” can be found under: <http://www.global-peasants-rights.com/index.php/en/> (accessed on 27 November 2019).

the right to food sovereignty (FS)—a truly transformative claim that was developed and disseminated during the last 25 years by the transnational peasant movement La Vía Campesina.

The congress in Schwäbisch Hall is thus not a singular event, neither is it focused on German or European peasants' interests alone. It is rather embedded within two antagonist but yet interrelated trajectories in relation to the production, consumption and distribution of food on the global scale. On the one hand, we witness the consolidation of a 'corporate food regime' that builds on a capitalist world economy and which goes along with an industrialized corporate agriculture, with an undermining of small-scale agriculture as well as with multiple environmental and social crises (Brand and Wissen 2017; McMichael 2009a; McMichael 2014). On the other hand, both in the Global North and South, grassroots movements, such as small scale farmers, consumer movements and indigenous peoples rally around the claim for FS and call for the just distribution of food, land and resources, for cultural recognition, as well for the political representation of their identities (Andrée et al. 2014; Desmarais 2007; Patel 2009; Wittman 2009).

In view of these two trajectories, it certainly would be scientifically relevant to focus on the juridical integration of the charter of Schwäbisch Hall into the global 'legal infrastructure' (Hadfield 2017, p. 3) as well as to analyze the possible formation of new political discourses around food. However, my intentions in this contribution are somewhat different; in drawing on James Tully's (2014) practiced-based notion of 'diverse citizenship', as well as on other selected theories of postmodern political thought, I rather want to focus on the contested political nature of the FS movement, specifically with regard to the dynamics and actions that have brought it (and thus the charter of Schwäbisch Hall) into being. In particular, I want to investigate the paradox that, on the one hand, we apparently witness a politically coherent community that declares a new global legal framework for the benefit of the peasantry and which draws on the notion of sovereignty—a concept that is historically inextricably interwoven with the image of the state. On the other hand, however, this community does apparently not rest on a 'classical' common foundational ground such as a shared territorial space, a common cultural heritage, a founding myth, or an ethnic identity. In other words, their foundational frame of reference remains rather vague and contingent. In view of this apparent political 'groundlessness'² one might therefore ask: What in particular is it that ties these groups together? What has brought them into being? And on what kind of foundational grounding are their claims being built and legitimized?

As a response to these questions, I will argue in this contribution that the 'foundational backbone' of the right to food sovereignty (as well as of the political community that struggles for it) derives from and is embedded within political action itself. However, in this case, political action is to a lesser extent understood as symbolic and discursive practices such as campaigning, marching, lobbying and the like (however important these might be); I am rather referring to an amalgam of a high variety of interlinked food practices "through which the peasantry constitutes itself as *distinctively different*" (van der Ploeg 2008, p. 265, emphasis in original), such as agro-ecological cultivation methods, seed saving practices, direct marketing or subsistence farming. This rather unconventional focus on political action, however, also requires examining what it actually means to act politically, i.e., to investigate what, in detail, qualifies political practices as such, in the sense of having transformative agency and the power to change societal orders. I will therefore draw on insights from political theory and social theory and show how far political practices may contribute to the forming and the consolidation of a post-national political community of 'diverse citizens'.

² I am referring here to the notion of political 'groundlessness' that is discussed by several post-foundational thinkers, e.g., Chantal Mouffe (2007), as a fundamental and ontological condition of politics. This assumption is mostly associated with Heideggerian thought and the divide between the ontic dimension of 'politics' and the ontological dimension of 'the political'. Other post-foundational thinkers such as Bonnie Honig (2009) draw on the Rousseauvian 'paradox of politics', which she interprets as a 'hen-and-egg problematic' between 'good citizens' that shape 'good law' and 'good law' that shapes 'good citizens'. In contrast to anti-foundational thought, post-foundational thought does not presuppose the absence of any foundational political ground but rather points to its contingent nature (see also Marchart 2007).

These objectives are motivated by two aspirations. On the one hand, I want to contribute to the literature which seeks to theorize the notion of sovereignty in relation to food (Edelman 2014; Menser 2014; Patel 2009; Trauger 2014). These insights will thus help us to understand in more detail why the respective movements rest on this universal ideal and how far it contributes to the forming of coherent and powerful post-national political communities. On the other hand, I want to discuss an alternative understanding of political action that is highly compatible with and inspired by Tully's notion of 'diverse citizenship', since it does not take political practices as preexisting categories, but conceptualizes them as contingent, emergent and situational, i.e., as being highly dependent on the questions how, why and in what kind of context they are being exercised.

This contribution is divided into four sections. In the following part I, will put a focus on the recent and intensifying re-politicization of food, which includes the discussion of the origin and the normative contents of the emerging claim for FS as well as related literature on 'alternative food networks'. In section three, I will discuss selected postmodern theories on sovereignty and justice, which will help to understand why practitioners of and advocates for FS build on these universal concepts and how far they contribute to the forming of a heterogeneous, but yet coherent political community. In section four, I will combine Tully's notion of 'diverse citizenship', with Theodore Schatzki's practice theory. This combination, I argue, bears great potential for analyzing the emergence and multifaceted democratization processes of transnational grassroots movements, since it not only offers insights into the internal organization of social practices but also into their interconnection and spatial materialization (see also Jonas 2017). Finally, in section five, I will synthesize my arguments in pointing out certain aspects that will enrich discussions on contemporary food movements, as well as on the changing nature of (environmental) citizenship.

2. On the Re-Politicization of Food

Food is without doubt one of the most important domains of our everyday lives. It is not only a basic need or a cultural, economic, and ecological issue but also a highly contested political subject. However, especially this last aspect has often been overseen or actively concealed in the past³. In this section I will thus put a focus on the recent re-politicization of food in discussing the origin and the content of the claim for FS as well as associated literature on 'alternative food networks'.

2.1. The Claim for Food Sovereignty

The claim for FS represents an explicit critique of and a counter-movement to the globalized world economy of food that McMichael and Friedmann conceptualize as the 'corporate food regime' (Friedmann 1993; Friedmann and McMichael 1989; McMichael 2005; McMichael 2009a). According to the authors⁴, this regime has been shaped during the neoliberal era, especially during the Uruguay Round (1986–1994), and refers to the production, consumption and distribution of food on a world scale, characterized by capital-intensive modes of production, free trade arrangements, an international division of labor, an oligopoly of transnational corporations, the hegemony of financial markets as well as by diverse forms of capital accumulation, and a general detachment of food from cultural identities (see also Campbell 2009 and van der Ploeg 2008 for similar approaches and conclusions). Additionally, it goes along with several moments of crisis and an 'imperial mode of living' that rests on capitalist

³ I am basically referring here to the idea of food security that is often criticized for being rather a technical than a political concept. Scholars from various disciplines have shown that food security often goes along with and enables neoliberal policies and developmentalist discourses. Thereby it does not challenge the predominant growth oriented, corporate and globalized world economy of food (Jarosz 2014; Hopma and Woods 2014; McMichael 2005; Menser 2014; Patel 2009).

⁴ Although Friedmann and McMichael basically developed corresponding arguments, they also disagree about some aspects of their theory. In particular, they do not necessarily agree about the current existence of such a regime as a firmly established set of rules.

production and consumption patterns and on the overexploitation of natural resources (Brand and Wissen 2017).

Even though several movements from the Global North draw on the FS-discourse and contributed significantly in its formation (Jarosz 2014), it is very often associated with rural contexts of the Global South⁵. In particular, the transnational peasant movement La Vía Campesina plays a pivotal role in its dissemination and formation, since it ties together several movements and groups, predominantly from Latin America and South East Asia, such as peasants, indigenous peoples, small-scale farmers, pastoralists and consumer movements (Desmarais 2007; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). The most common definition of FS states that:

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. [. . .] It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food.” (La Vía Campesina 2007)

What becomes most obvious here is that FS is being claimed as a universal human right that incorporates several individual claims such as the right to land, water and seeds but also the recognition of those who produce food (Claeys 2012; Edelman et al. 2014; Patel 2009). This rather vague definition has led Edelman (2014, p. 960f.) to label FS as a “free-floating signifier filled with varying kind of content”. Patel (2013) analogously speaks of a ‘signifier on the move’ and of a ‘big tent’, within which “disparate groups can recognise themselves in the enunciation of a particular programme” (Patel 2009, p. 666). However, this openness does not imply that FS has no meaning; an essential focus lies on the right to land, agro-ecology, self-determined modes of production as well as on the cultural and legal recognition of small-scale farmers and indigenous identities. This emphasis on redistributive issues and questions of identity politics is not only related to the historical fact of colonialist exploitation of large parts of the Global South and to the political relevance of questions on land reform, in particular in Latin America (Teubal 2009), but also to the circumstance that the recent financial crisis had far-reaching effects on peasant and indigenous communities in many regions of the world (Desmarais 2007; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010; McMichael 2009b; McMichael 2014; Rosset 2008).

Furthermore, as noted above, it is most remarkable that the idea of FS essentially builds on the notion of sovereignty—a key concept of modern political thought that is, at least historically, inextricably tied to the idea of the nation-state (see e.g., Skinner 2010). This obvious paradox becomes even clearer in view of the fact that at the heart of the idea of FS lie the claim and the aspiration to displace any sovereign territorial entity or ‘top down’ exercise of power. In doing so, it rather points to the multi-faceted power-hierarchies of the global world economy (Patel 2009) and draws on discourses of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, global solidarity and global justice (Hopma and Woods 2014), which may be seen as antitheses and counterparts to the idea of sovereignty, understood as the highest and absolute authority.

In sum, we can see that the claim for FS is not only about re-appropriating land; beyond its manifold internal contradictions and tensions (see e.g., Agarwal 2014; Bernstein 2014; Edelman et al. 2014), it rather represents a “mobilizing frame for social movements, a set of legal and quasi-legal norms and practices” (Edelman 2014, p. 959), and therefore serves as a normative guideline for political action. However, when it comes to the question of how FS is being enacted in practice, the respective

⁵ Parallel to these developments, several movements, in particular in urban contexts in the Global North, raise claims for food justice and food democracy, which are closely related to the ideas and demands of the FS movement, although they are connected to a rather moderate, but yet progressive political discourse (Andrée et al. 2014; Cadieux and Slocum 2015; Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Lang 2007).

literature does not (or at least to a lesser extent) highlight conventional political practices such as lobbying, protesting, negotiating; instead, it rather points to a variety of 'alternative food networks' and spaces, such as agro-ecological farming, community supported agriculture, seed saving initiatives, guerilla gardening or direct marketing initiatives (see e.g., [Trauger 2014](#); [Wright 2014](#)). In the following section, I will briefly discuss these 'alternative food networks', since they represent a common way to conceptualize FS in practice, as well as their analytical limitations.

2.2. Alternative Food Networks

According to [Renting et al. \(2003, p. 394\)](#), the concept of 'alternative food networks' (AFN) can be broadly defined as "newly emerging networks of producers, consumers, and other actors that embody alternatives to the more standardised industrial mode of food supply". AFN are thus generally characterized by short, transparent and value-based food supply chains that on the one hand break with the complexity and invisibility of industrialized supply chains, and, on the other, they aim at allowing consumers to make their own judgments about the quality of food based on their own knowledge and experiences, as well as on new images around food (*ibid.*). In doing so, AFNs are essentially characterized by "their capacity to resocialise or respatialise" ([Renting et al. 2003, p. 398](#)) consumer-producer relationships with the objective of reconnecting food to its places of origin, to 'nature' as well as to its intrinsic values that are closely related to the questions of where, how and under which circumstances food is being produced (see also [Goodman et al. 2012](#); [Maye et al. 2007](#); [Rosol 2018](#); [Watts et al. 2005](#); [Whatmore and Thorne 1997](#); [Winter 2003a](#)).

An important and controversially debated question within discussion on AFN is the character of their alterity. [Watts et al. \(2005\)](#) provide a useful classification in differentiating AFNs in 'alternative products' such as organic and regional products, alternative networks, such as urban gardening or direct marketing initiatives, and alternative economies, such as cooperatives, community supported agriculture projects and other forms of solidarity economics. However, empirically it is rather the case that these three forms of alterity intermingle ([Rosol 2018](#)). Additionally, due the growing interest of large retailers in organic or fair-trade products, as well as the connection of alternative food supply chains with conventional ones, it has become common sense that the divide between alternative and conventional becomes increasingly vague ([Ilbery and Maye 2005](#)). Thus, in recent years respective research has moved away from binary thinking, e.g., alternative/conventional or capitalist/non-capitalist dichotomies, and rather pleads for a relational and post-binary conceptualization of alternative economic spaces ([Hillebrand and Zademach 2013](#)).

In sum, the AFN-approach reveals valuable insights into the multi-faceted spatial and practical dimension of alternative economical networks and spaces. However, its explanatory power and analytical scope with regard to the political dimension of FS remains limited, in particular due to two aspects. Firstly, the engagement with normative and political questions, e.g., in terms of sovereignty, justice and citizenship, remains rather vague within the AFN-perspective. This shortcoming is basically related to the fact that, as [Renting et al. \(2012, p. 291\)](#) state, the AFN-approach "has no clear normative content of its own, since it is ultimately defined in terms of its distinction from 'mainstream' food networks". The delimitation of AFN from "the logic of bulk commodity production" ([Whatmore et al. 2003, p. 389](#)), does therefore not serve as a basic normative principle, in particular, since the divide between alternative and conventional is not static but a "highly contested terrain" ([Goodman and Goodman 2009, p. 2](#)). Secondly, AFN-conceptualizations are often criticized for a 'defensive' ([Winter 2003b](#)) or 'normative localism' ([Goodman et al. 2012, p. 11](#)), which means that the emphasis on and the privileged treatment of the local scale—e.g., in the form of local food systems, one of the key ideas of FS—leads to an idealization and delimitation of local relationships vis-à-vis 'the outside'. Such a normative and moralized understanding of place, as being inherently 'good', therefore, neglects that local economies are neither pre-given, nor necessarily more sustainable or more just, e.g., in terms of CO₂ emissions or wage labor. [Born and Purcell \(2006\)](#) accordingly speak of a 'local trap', and thereby highlight that injustices and ecological damages in relation to food happen on various scales and are

also the outcomes of local decision-making processes. In addition, they argue that a privileging of the local scale might lead to a neglect of necessary political decisions and transformation on other scales.

In view of these shortcomings, it becomes clear the AFN-concept is important to conceptualize the spatial, practical and economical dynamics of alternative food movements. However, it is insufficient to understand the political dimension of FS, in particular with regard to its foundation. Therefore, it is important to reflect more deeply on respective theories of sovereignty, justice and citizenship, which I will do in the following two sections.

3. Sovereignty and the Politics of Representation

As noted above, the idea of FS seems paradoxical, since, on the one hand, it discursively draws on the idea of sovereignty as a guiding principle for their political action, and, on the other hand, it displaces the state or any other territorial entity, which could serve as a foundational and material basis for its normative principles. Therefore, it is useful to approach sovereignty in a first step from a postmodern perspective, in order to deconstruct its meaning as 'highest and absolute authority'. However, since the idea of sovereignty does not answer the question as to *why* most heterogeneous movements unite to a politically coherent community, it makes sense, in a second step, to engage with the normative dimension of 'the political', i.e., with a theory of justice.

3.1. Approaching Sovereignty from a Postmodern Perspective

Historically, the idea of sovereignty, i.e., the idea of paramount and untouchable authority, is inextricably bound to the idea of the nation-state (Skinner 2010). However, in the course of the processes and dynamics of globalization, it has become obvious that the image of the state as the only and unchallenged bearer of sovereignty has eroded (Fraser 2008; Agnew 2009). Interestingly, despite these developments, in political theory and political geography discussion about sovereignty persist (Kalmo and Skinner 2010; Mountz 2013). In particular, the influences of postmodern thinking underline the fragmentation and contestability of sovereign power, e.g., in relation to spaces of neoliberalism (Ong 2006), to US-exceptionalism (Gregory 2006), or to the politics and geographies of social movements (Nicholls 2007).

This fragmented nature of sovereignty is perfectly mirrored in Derrida's work, who argues that "in politics the choice is not between sovereignty and nonsovereignty, but among several forms of partings, partitions, divisions, conditions that come along to broach a sovereignty" (Derrida [2001] 2009, p. 76ff). In consequence, this means that the idea of sovereignty as the highest authority and unity is neither given nor absolute, but that sovereign power is highly contested, even if it seems untouchable as an inviolable natural law. Similarly, Gratton (2012) argues that one of the basic features of sovereignty is its fictional character, which essentially rests on histories, narrations and myths, which 'the sovereign' tells about itself. This, however, does not mean that sovereign power is not a real force, in the sense of e.g., military or economic power, or that sovereignty is not spatially effective. On the contrary, it is exactly the symbolic, ideological dimension of sovereignty, i.e., its 'apparition' (Baranger 2010), out of which 'the sovereign' derives its alleged unquestionability and through which territorial and material manifestations of sovereignty are made possible (Elden 2010).

In the light of these approaches it becomes thus clear that the transnational movement for FS—which often legitimizes its claims with the mystification of small-holders and indigenous peoples as the genuine producers of food, and who are willing to feed the worlds' people (La Vía Campesina 2007)—essentially uses the ideological dimension of sovereignty as a discursive and strategic tool in order to regain autonomy and control over territory in relation to oppressive forces of both state power and market forces (Trauger 2014). In this sense, the idea of sovereignty functions as a territorial strategy to obtain maximal self-determination and as a political program for non-state actors that is combined with certain norms and values such as non-interference, inclusiveness, plurality and sustainability (Menser 2014). As Koskenniemi (2010, p. 232) puts it, sovereignty thus becomes "a moral principle, a polemical weapon [and] part of a political vocabulary whose point is not to register aspects

of the world but to achieve them: to preserve or change a status quo, to support or oppose particular contestants”.

However, when it comes to the questions as to why most heterogeneous groups unite to post-national political communities, on which commonly shared ‘ground’ they are being founded, and how this idea derives democratic legitimacy, a further engagement with theories of sovereignty does not seem helpful. What rather might seem of worth here is an engagement with a normative theory of ‘the political’, i.e., a theory of justice, which is provided by deliberative political theorist Nancy Fraser.

3.2. *Justice and the Politics of Representation*

In her work, Fraser focuses on the content, the spatial framing and the legitimacy of justice, which she conceptualizes as a three-dimensional theory of analytically distinct but inseparably interlinked spheres of economic redistribution, cultural recognition and political representation (see, in particular, [Fraser 2005](#); [Fraser 2008](#)). I will not discuss the first two dimensions of justice in detail here (however important they are), since it would extend the scope of this contribution. Rather, for my purposes, the last sphere, the dimension of political representation, seems to be of particular interest, since it is closely connected to the question of citizenship, i.e., of belonging to a democratically legitimized (and itself legitimizing) political community.

According to Fraser, the politics of representation refers not only to seeking a remedy to the ‘ordinary’ constellations of misrepresentation which occur, e.g., in cases of malfunctioning electoral systems; it also refers to cases in which certain people or groups are excluded at all times from the possibility of raising their voice, of acting and participating as peers in a clearly defined political community. Accordingly, [Fraser \(2005, p. 15ff\)](#) speaks in these cases of ‘meta-political injustices’, since globalization has engendered a variety of structures and forces that lead to certain forms of suppression and marginalization and which cannot be traced back to the framing of the nation-state. In these cases, Fraser argues, “globalization is driving a widening wedge between state territoriality and social effectivity” (*ibid.*, p. 14), which means that, in times of globalization, emancipatory forces neither address their claims to the state, nor do they negotiate and practice their claims exclusively on the local scale; they rather seek and create new post-national democratic fora and spaces, such as La Vía Campesina gatherings—as it was the case in Schwäbisch Hall—or the World Social Forum, in order to make their agency visible and to address their particular claims to the trans- and international political sphere.

However, if it is neither the state nor any other economical or cultural category, such as class, gender or ethnicity, that “turns a collection of people into fellow subjects of justice” (*ibid.*, p. 13ff), the question still remains to what principle these emancipatory movements refer, in order to recognize themselves as legitimate subjects of justice. In view of this question, Fraser suggests orientating the legitimacy of transnational justice claims towards the principle of ‘all-affectedness’, which points to the idea that political decisions, institutions and structures are only legitimate, if those who are affected by them have a fair and equal chance to participate in their formation. Therewith, this principle holds that the establishment of a public opinion that might influence political decisions (e.g., about food and agrarian policies) is only legitimate, if it has been developed within a freely accessible political space and a communicative process, within which affected groups can participate as peers, regardless of their cultural or ethnic identity, class membership or nationality. In doing so, the ‘all-affected principle’ serves as [Barnett \(2012, p. 682\)](#) argues, as “an animating political intuition, as a worldly normative force, creating political claims and counter-claims”. Therefore, although the ‘all-affected principle’ does not explain how diverse groups are being differentially affected by the corporate food regime—admittedly one of the weaknesses of the idea—it morally legitimizes and animates the struggles for FS and unites diverse groups into a coherent political emancipatory community of post-national citizens.

Exactly this kind of transnational emancipatory politics is being enacted by practitioners and advocates of FS. As, for example, [Wittman \(2009\)](#) shows, peasants that unite around the idea of FS,

essentially build on an enhancement as well as on a deepening of their political representation in global political struggles around food. However, they do not only do so in the form of increasing their public visibility, in terms of attending, e.g., the World Social Forum or UN-conferences; they rather do so in practically reworking the disrupted human–nature relationship, i.e., in the form of multifaceted agro-ecological practices or seed saving initiatives. Thus, the foundational ‘ground’ of the claim for FS, cannot be explained by applying the ‘all-affected-principle’ alone. Beyond that, as I will argue in the next section, a focus on the practical dimension of ‘the political’ is of utmost importance.

4. Diverse Citizenship or the Power of ‘Acting Otherwise’

As noted in the introduction, Tully’s notion of ‘diverse citizenship’, in particular in combination with Schatzki’s ‘site ontology’, bears great potential for analyzing the emergence and multifaceted democratization processes of transnational grassroots movements. In this section I will show why this is the case. Therefore, I will firstly discuss Tully’s approach, and, secondly, I will introduce Schatzki’s practice theory, which allows to analytically deepen and to sharpen the former.

4.1. Modern Citizenship vs. Diverse Citizenship

The conventional understanding of citizenship, which is often termed ‘modern citizenship’ or ‘liberal citizenship’, is generally defined as an institutionalized status of belonging to a certain political and social community (i.e., the nation-state), as well as of being entitled to a set of certain rights and obligations (Isin and Turner 2007). Modern citizenship is therefore synonymous to the condition of being subject to the constitutional laws, rights and responsibilities—an understanding which has been subject to various criticisms, in particular due to the dynamics of globalization.

Nevertheless, globalization apparently did not lead to a withering away of the nation-state, nor did it lead to a fundamentally different understanding of citizenship. What has happened, however, is the dissemination of the idea of ‘modern citizenship’ around the globe. On the one hand, it led to an adoption of the Western idea of statehood and its underlying institutions in other parts of the world (which in fact already started during the epoch of imperialism), and, on the other, it took shape as a cosmopolitan understanding of citizenship, which is best mirrored in recent debates around global governance and cosmopolitan democracy (Brodie 2004; Held et al. 1999). Therefore, globalization has indeed engendered a new form and a new framing of citizenship; nevertheless, this new shape did not change the idea of citizenship as such, i.e., as an institutionalized and universal status of being entitled to certain rights and duties that are being exercised and practiced via certain institutions of cosmopolitan democracy (Tully 2014).

In recent years, however, a new and rather critical understanding of citizenship has emerged that radically questions the understanding of this concept as a formalized legal and political status and which rather highlights the emancipatory power of certain acts, deeds and events through which citizens disclose themselves as political subjects. In particular, the work of Isin and Nielsen (2008) shows in how far citizens are not passive ‘objects of the law’, but rather active agents of the law itself, which means that they actively contribute in shaping and forming of political communities and political subjectivities. In view of this different understanding of citizenship, it is no surprise that in recent years several ‘adjectival citizenships’ such as environmental citizenship, ecological citizenship, or consumer citizenship have emerged (Bell 2005). Accordingly, citizenship is not any longer understood as membership to the state, but rather embedded in high variety of different social contexts and practices, from the ‘bottom up’.

Tully’s (2014) notion of ‘diverse citizenship’ comes very close to this understanding, although it still reveals some peculiarities, which are best understood in reviewing his earlier work on the “agonic freedom of citizens” (Tully 1999). Instead of investigating political institutions, modes of governance or great political theories, Tully therein suggests looking at the concrete appearances and activities of ‘the political’ itself. In doing so, he compares civic action with a game-like activity that underlies certain more or less binding but unfixed rules, and which is played out between mutually recognizing

citizens with different viewpoints on their shared world. In doing so, he discusses the introduction of new or modified practices into the public sphere (i.e., ‘the game’) and their maintenance over time by ‘new players’ such as emerging social movements. This practice, according to Tully, may be called ‘practice of freedom’, since on the one hand it implies the freedom of resisting hegemonic practices of governance, and, on the other—in virtue of engaging in these activities—it represents the basis for political subjects to take on an identity as free citizens. Thus, what makes this perspective particularly interesting for an investigation of the practical dimensions of emerging political communities, is that political activity and thus the formation of citizenship is not referred to a radical “rupture in the given” (Isin 2008, p. 25), nor is it a “matter of the will or the intellect, or of background constitutions, laws and rights” (Tully 1999, p. 162); it rather refers to the power of “speaking and acting differently”, i.e., to the power of *routinely* exercised social practices that prefiguratively aim at “modifying the rules or even transforming the [political] game itself” (ibid., p. 164).

This practiced-based approach to ‘the political’ becomes even clearer in Tully’s recent work on ‘diverse citizenship’:

“Rather than looking on citizenship as a status within an institutional framework backed up by world-historical processes and universal norms, the diverse tradition looks on citizenship as negotiated practices, as praxis—as actors and activities in contexts.” (Tully 2014, p. 35)

Therefore, as Tully argues, ‘diverse citizenship’ stands in sharp contrast to the notion of ‘modern or liberal citizenship’, which presupposes that activities are subordinate and of secondary importance in contrast to the “conditions of civilization” (ibid.), i.e., to the universal and institutionalized rights, rules and institutions of modernity and liberalism. It thus highlights the power of multi-faceted and variegated civic activities from the ‘bottom up’ and their potential for the forming of political identities. To be more precise, this does not mean that civic actions merely constitute a *form* of citizenship, since this would imply that there exists a pre-political, institutionalized frame of reference, within which these practices are exercised. Instead, Tully rather highlights that political practices *in themselves* are the very entities out of which a *polis*, emerges. Different forms of institutionalization, e.g., the self-governed formation of social movements, can thus be the result of the practices of ‘acting otherwise’, but they are secondary. The primary thing is the activity itself. Likewise, it also becomes clear that the question of in- and exclusion of ‘diverse citizenship’ does not depend on formalized membership but emerges only in virtue of the actual doing. ‘Diverse citizenship’ is thus not only practice-based but also a highly relational concept, since it is oriented towards situational contexts of people’s action together ‘in concert’. As a result, it has to be treated as a spatially ‘flat’ concept, which means that the political frame of reference of ‘diverse citizens’ is simultaneously local *and* global and thus avoids hierarchically sub- or superordinate scales (ibid., p. 73ff).

4.2. Social Practices as Entry Points into the Political

However, if we are to follow Tully’s suggestion to look exclusively at the actual practices of ‘the political’, we are soon (at least when doing ethnographic research) confronted with a fundamental epistemological challenge. In fact, if social practices are the entry points through which the political dimension of social life should be investigated and if we do not conceptualize them as pre-existing categories but as situational emergent properties of the social (see also Swyngedouw 2011), the question arises as to how we recognize political practices as such and separate them from apolitical ones. A possible way to conceptualize this separation is to draw on the practice theory of Theodore Schatzki.

According to Schatzki (2002), social life consists of, is realized through and manifests in commonly shared social practices, unfolding in the form of ‘doings and sayings’, and material arrangements, i.e., orders, artefacts and different sorts of materiality. The separation between practices and arrangements, however, is purely analytical; empirically, they appear as inseparable ‘practice-arrangement-bundles’ that are interconnected with other ‘practice-arrangement-bundles’, such as sowing seeds, harvesting agricultural produce and cooking or selling food. In consequence, social practices are embedded in

and form a more or less complex and horizontally extending mesh of social practices and material arrangements. Similar to Tully's understanding of 'the political', the spatial categories of scales or any other type of vertical thinking are thus not compatible with the 'site ontology'. Schatzki (2016) instead claims that there is only one, or rather, no scale within which social life manifests (see also Marston et al. 2005).

Furthermore, there exist four organizing components that give social practices their meaning and which make them distinguishable and recognizable. These are: (1) the 'practical understanding', i.e., the knowing how to do something; (2) 'rules', which are more or less formalized instructions on how and under which circumstances a certain practice ought to be enacted; (3) 'teleo-affective structures', which entail both a teleological or intentional, as well as an emotional and affective dimension, such as satisfaction of needs, joy or fear; and (4) 'general understandings' or teleo-affective regimes, understood as overarching normative principles, such as shared values that organize not only one but various social practices (Schatzki 1996, p. 89).

Although social practices are not static but highly dynamic, Schatzki (2002) does not claim to provide a theory which explains *why* social change occurs. 'The political' is thus not treated as a distinct or exclusive realm of social life, rather social practices are ontologically of the same kind, which means that social change does not derive from entities outside social practices but that it is triggered by the prefigurative power that current practices exert on their future enactment (Schatzki 2002, p. 62). However, keeping in mind Tully's account of the 'practices of freedom', it actually is possible to separate political practices from apolitical ones, not in ontological terms, but according to their organization: As soon as certain practices (e.g., cooking, producing or eating food) are exercised, not only according to the 'teleo-affective' structure of satisfying hunger or of selling it in order to make a living, but also with the aim and the ambition of 'modifying the rules' of the respective practice, we can assume that these practice are fundamentally different since they reveal a double character in the Arendtian sense⁶. On the one hand, they may be characterized as 'labor', i.e., as practices that serve to sustain life and that fulfil basic needs. On the other, they represent 'action' or rather 'speech and action', which Tully interprets as 'practices of freedom', and which aim, in a self-referential manner, i.e., in virtue of their exercise, at modifying their own rules (Dünckmann and Fladvad 2016; Fladvad and Glöckler forthcoming). The exercise of these 'prefigurative practices' (Swain 2019, p. 48), however, should not to be understood as single events that are detached from overarching, in Schatzki's words, 'general understandings' or 'teleo-affective-regimes'. On the contrary, they always are connected to other social or political practices such as, e.g., campaigning or engaging in negotiations for FS, as exemplified in Schwäbisch Hall.

In sum, Schatzki's practice theory makes it possible to deepen Tully's account of 'diverse citizenship', since it enables researchers to analyze social practices according to their internal organization as well as to their situational, material and spatial embedding. Moreover, it allows us to analytically distinguish political practices from apolitical ones, since even quite mundane or quotidian social practices might inhere to the power and the quality of 'acting otherwise'. That does not mean that practices that are organized by such a political 'teleo-affective structure' do always and necessarily have political outcomes, in the sense of having a direct effect on society; their original political impetus might also vanish or fall victim to assimilation, as is the case in some forms of responsible or ethical consumerism (see e.g., Johnston 2008). In this regard, it is particularly important to empirically investigate the objectives and the affectivities according to which certain practices are carried out, as well as to analyze in how far respective practices are actually leading to a challenging

⁶ In "The Human Condition", Arendt [1958] (1998) distinguishes human activity into three separate modes: labor, work and action. In contrast to labor and work, which refer to practices that serve to sustain life and that produce tools or commodities, action is the mode of human activity that takes place in-between people via the acts of 'speech and action'. Action can thereby be interpreted as the political mode of human activity, since it makes humans distinguishable in their plurality and uniqueness (ibid., p. 179).

and to a modification of societal orders, norms and values. Such a phenomenological, or ‘real-world’, perspective (see Zorell and Yang in this issue) is of great worth because it allows us to analyze political action independently from political institutions and conventional law-making processes, but rather in terms of their situatedness, their contextuality and their affective dimension. Moreover, it enables researchers to deconstruct the local–global dichotomy and prevents them from uncritically essentializing and prioritizing local structures and policies, since it conceptualizes FS in terms of its empirically recognizable, and horizontally evolving phenomena and appearances, rather than in terms of its scale, which yields different insights into ‘the political’.

5. Conclusions: Food Sovereignty as ‘Diverse Citizenship’

Looking back at the congress in Schwäbisch Hall, while keeping in mind the theoretical elaborations of this contribution, reveals some valuable new insights. As noted in the introduction, the aim of this contribution was to focus in more detail on the contested political nature of food sovereignty as well as to discuss the dynamics and the actions that have brought it into being. In particular, I wanted to investigate the paradox that on the one hand, there exists a politically coherent community that declares a new legal framework, while on the other, there is obviously no common foundational ground, such as a shared territorial space, a founding myth or a common cultural frame of reference that ties these groups together. Therefore, my guiding questions were oriented towards the problematic of finding this foundational ‘ground’ as well as asking the question of the legitimization of the respective claims. Furthermore, I wanted to discuss an alternative understanding of political action, which conceives of political practices not as pre-given categories but as a situational and emergent phenomena that are closely connected to the quotidian practices of social life. Therefore, I want to point out in the following some aspects that provide answers to these questions and which make it possible to understand why the movement for FS may be framed as a post-national community of ‘diverse citizens’.

As discussed above, the FS movement shows very clearly in how far multifaceted post-national democratization processes emerge ‘glocally’ at multiple social sites, such as local sites of food production, processing and distribution, as well as (e.g., in the case in Schwäbisch Hall) congresses and events with a far-reaching and global impact. Therewith, according to Tully (2014, p. 33ff), these post-national spaces of ‘diverse citizenship’ are not being built on the basis of legal norms and an institutionalized *status*, in the sense of ‘modern citizenship’. They rather have to be understood as the result of a high variety of multi-faceted political practices, of people acting together ‘in concert’. In this regard, it is most remarkable—and the example of FS shows this aspect very clearly—that these practices, e.g., agro-ecological farming or saving seed, do not necessarily share the characteristics of conventional political practices such as lobbying, marching or negotiating; instead, they rather reveal their political and transformative character upon the second glance. To be more precise, and using Schatzki’s terminology, on the one hand, they are organized by, e.g., the ‘teleo-affective structure’ of, e.g., ‘making a living’ or of ‘just surviving’ (consuming and producing food, or selling it), and on the other hand they also may reveal the ‘teleo-affective structure’ of ‘acting otherwise’, i.e., of transforming societal orders and of pointing to certain social grievances, as is the case in several agro-ecological projects or community supported agriculture initiatives.

Thus, these kinds of practices reveal a dual nature; they are simultaneously social *and* political, in the sense of aiming in a self-referential manner, i.e., in virtue of their actual exercise, at modifying their own rules. Therefore, they are characterized to a high extent by *reflexivity*, in the sense that they point to certain ‘worldly’ aspects of public life and social orders, which is, as I argue, one of the most important and constitutive features of political practices (see also Fladvad and Glöckler forthcoming). Furthermore, these kind of practices, which Tully (1999) would label as ‘practices of freedom’ or as practices of ‘thinking and acting differently’, represent the ‘foundational backbone’ of the claim for FS. In so doing, they fill the rather vague idea of FS with a concrete meaning and practical substance. Or, to put it differently, the FS discourse (and thus events and congresses such as the one in Schwäbisch Hall) does not emerge out of words or ideas, but originates from manifold practices of

‘acting otherwise’, “through which the peasantry constitutes itself as *distinctively different*” (van der Ploeg 2008, p. 265, emphasis in original).

However, the congress in Schwäbisch Hall, as well as the mentioned charter on the “Rights of Peasants”, show that ‘diverse citizens’ do not necessarily avoid the conventional institutions of cosmopolitan democracy, in this case the legal system of the UN. At first glance, this might seem contrary to Tully’s argument that ‘diverse citizens’ are constituted in virtue of their very own civic activities, and not on the basis of the institutions of cosmopolitan democracy. However, at second glance this strategy is not a contradiction to ‘diverse citizenship’. In fact, ‘diverse citizens’ indeed address their particular claims to the transnational political sphere via conventional political practices such as negotiations, lobbying and the declaring of new legal frameworks, as experienced in Schwäbisch Hall. In doing so, they use existing institutions as strategical means to avoid assimilation and marginalization and in order to be recognized as legitimate political subjects within the wider public realm. In this regard, it is crucial to note that they do not accept the existing rules of the prevailing legal system, but rather introduce new or modified rules into the ‘political game’. Nevertheless, this is a subordinate step, or as Tully puts it: “Civic activities [. . .] can be more or less institutionalized and rationalized (in countless forms), but this is secondary. The primary thing is the concrete games of citizenship and the ways they are played” (Tully 2014, p. 35, emphasis in original). Thereby—and the congress in Schwäbisch Hall shows this aspect very clearly—‘diverse citizens’ actively create their own situational political spaces and disclose certain (local) food practices and rather remote or concealed peasant realities to the global public. Moreover, in virtue of jointly elaborating, authoring and declaring a common legal framework, i.e., of engaging in a freely accessible communicative democratic process, they create an intersubjectively shared sense of self-identification, self-awareness and of belonging to a post-national democratic community.

These processes and manifold practices of ‘citizenization’, however, do not emerge out of ‘thin air’. What essentially ties these practices and actors together is their shared, albeit differential, condition of being affected by the ‘corporate food regime’. This antagonist relationship thereby creates an animating and highly effective political energy and unifying power that transcends social demarcations and distinguishing statuses such as class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, borders or other. That does not mean that these categorizations have lost their relevance or their effectiveness; neither does it mean that internal differences and conflicts among this diverse post-national community are being solved once and for all. Rather, the principle of being affected by the ‘corporate food regime’ reveals its political power in democratically legitimizing their manifold struggles for the legal recognition of peasants’ rights and for FS. However, following Tully’s earlier work (Tully 1999), it is important to understand this struggle not as an end state or as a struggle that has a final goal, since this would imply that there is an ideal consensus under which all concerns and demands are being met. Rather, the “multiplicity of democratic processes or practices of challenging and negotiating the rules of mutual recognition” (Tully 2000, p. 478) are neither complete nor part of a universal common good; they rather underlie their groundlessness, their undecidability and a radical openness to the future, since they are embedded in an ongoing and never-ending political struggle between hegemonies and counter-hegemonies (see Mouffe 2007).

In view of these considerations, it also becomes clear that, ‘diverse citizenship’ is not necessarily synonymous to the idea of ‘environmental citizenship’ (which also represents a highly contested concept and field of research, see Dobson and Bell 2006). In particular, the idea of ‘liberal environmental citizenship’ (Bell 2005)—i.e., individuals, who are amenable to and equipped with certain rights and duties—prioritizes the power of institutions (represented in laws, orders, norms, rights obligations and responsibilities) over practices and not vice versa. Furthermore, ‘liberal environmental citizenship’ prescriptively conceptualizes citizenship as a theoretical ideal of universal and inclusive social fairness and sustainability (Zorell and Yang in this issue), which is not compatible to the rather open idea of ‘diverse citizenship’. However, ‘diverse citizenship’ also does not exclude notions of ‘environmental

citizenship', in particular when the perspective on environmental citizens is practice-based (ibid.), which means that it focuses on the diversity of bodily and prefigurative bottom-up activities.

The communities of 'diverse citizens' thus created have, as I have shown, no fixed place in space or territorial borders, neither do they build on a commonly shared founding myth; however, their political strength and their foundation lies in their commonly shared antagonist as well as in their shared orientation to practices of 'acting otherwise'. Based on these considerations, many new possible questions may be raised. How do different FS-practices connect to each other? In what way do they relate, e.g., to the logics of the market economy, to regulative policies, to conscious and environmentally friendly consumer choices or to the influences of the Degrowth movement? Do political practices necessarily lead to political results, in the sense of having a direct effect on societal orders? Also, the legal dimension is of great relevance. Are new rights, such as those elaborated in Schwäbisch Hall, merely symbols, i.e., talk without substance? Or, do they effectively protect peasants from heteronomy and aggressive market forces? And in what way do they lead to possible new or modified discourses and practices around food? Questions like these can only be investigated empirically, e.g., in the form of multi-sited ethnographies (Hannerz 2003) and similar approaches. However, theoretical insights from postmodern political thought as well as from social theory, as presented in this contribution, may be of great worth for future research on initiatives and practices of FS as well as on the nature of (environmental) citizenship.

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