

Chapter 5

Food Systems: How Can the Normative Practice Approach Help Toward a Just and Sustainable Food System?

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ABSTRACT

Today's predominant food system on the one hand produces plenty of food, making food relatively cheap for most people in the world. However, for many people, the food they can afford is insufficiently nutritious. Major global health problems like obesity are partly a result of the present food system. Furthermore, the modern industrial way of producing food has negative environmental consequences, consisting among others of a decline in soil fertility and a loss of biodiversity. Another food system is required to obtain sustainable global food and nutrition security. This food system should observe the normativity of the agricultural practices that produce food. The authors' analysis of agricultural practices shows that the farm is economically qualified but that the primary process of care for soil, crops, and animals can best be seen as an ethically qualified supporting practice that steers the "meaningful shaping" of the interventions foundational for agricultural practices.

INTRODUCTION

Loren Cardeli is the Founder and President of 'A Growing Culture' (AGC), an NGO "that works to uphold farmer autonomy and stimulate agro-ecological innovation" (Cardeli, 2017)..¹ Food Think, a think tank for food, had an interview with Cardeli. Here are some fragments of the interview that simultaneously shows Cardeli's inspiration and the problems our current food systems face (Cardeli, 2017):

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Food Systems

Food Tank (FT): What originally inspired you to get involved in your work?

Loren Cardeli (LC): While in Belize, I was living on a kind of compound with two local Belizean guys. We would drink from the same sink where we bathed and washed our clothes. We grew most of our own food, but we were horrible at hunting meat. One day I decided to walk the hour and a half to the local logging village to barter with a neighbor for chickens. During this, I heard screaming nearby. I immediately ran over to where I heard the noise and I saw a man about my age today, holding his son. His son had passed away from drinking pesticides on his farm from an unmarked bottle. That experience really messed me up, I was away from my family and I realized that the potential of industrial agriculture and how destructive it is.

My most important realization, though, was that environmental erosion is the result of culture and knowledge erosions. We dehumanize and devalue the local knowledge and the culture of the grand communities around the world. Once we do that, then we can bring in this agricultural model, that is now a destructive one. It dismantles their communities and cultural cohesion.[...].

FT: Are those same things what continue to inspire you to be involved in this kind of work, or has that morphed over time?

LC: By now I've traveled around the world, to almost 40 countries, and met with thousands of farmers. There are two primary things that keep me focused in this work.

The first thing is the amazing innovativeness of the world's farmers. Smallholder farmers are on 19 percent of the land, and 19 percent of land produces 70 percent of the world's food supply. That is ingenuity. This is a community that is operating on a fraction of that land that industrial agriculture is operating, yet they are out-producing industrial agriculture. [...]

The second thing is one of the greatest lessons I've learned in this work: that our relationship with the environment reflects our relationships within societies and with each other. Until we can eradicate the barriers of exploitation, oppression, hierarchy, and social stratification that happen within societies, [we] can't hope to foster relationships with the environment that are inclusive and sustainable. If there are individuals that are oppressed in our society, they are going to reflect that oppression wherever they can, and often that is the environment. I really believe that this is a human rights and social justice issue, and we have to look at that at the forefront to drive an environmental response.[...]

About 1.2 billion people go to bed hungry at night and 100 million are severely hungry, 70 percent of them are farmers. We are starving the ones who we depend on for food. Agriculture has a major role to play in mitigating climate change, combating gender inequalities, and strengthening rural communities.

In these interview fragment with a representative of an NGO lobbying for a more sustainable and just agriculture, some serious problems with the present predominant kind of agriculture in industrial countries are mentioned. These problems in the long run imply a threat to the world food and nutrition security. Against this background the Sustainable Development Goal 22 'End hunger, achieve food

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