

## **Contested post-neoliberal strategies**

### **The “agrofuels project” – a key to the solution of the energy, environmental and economic crises?**

*Very first draft! – comments are very much appreciated.*

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#### **Introduction**

Since two years, there has been an intensive discussion on the (expected) boom in the production and consumption of agrofuels as well as on the consequences of this boom on food security and environmental sustainability. The assessments of the issue are quite controversial. On the one hand, agrofuels are considered a key for solving the multiple crisis the world is currently experiencing. Constituting a substitute for fossil fuels, they seem to contribute not only to solve the environmental crisis but also to overcome the threat which individual mobility is confronted with in the face of peak-oil and decreasing gas reserves. Furthermore, an intensified production of agrofuels promises to offer new investment and development opportunities, thus pointing a way out of the economic crisis. On the other hand, the social and ecological consequences of agrofuels production and consumption are well documented. Enclosures of common grasslands, evictions, the further destruction of rainforests, the loss of biodiversity because of expanding monocultures and the competition between fuel and food production are among the most obvious of the socio-environmental impacts of the agrofuel boom.

In this paper I attempt to explore the conflicts around the agrofuels project – a term I borrow from Philip McMichael – and put it into a broader context. The agrofuels project is considered as a cornerstone to overcome the multiple crisis. A major strategy of framing is that of a “global green new deal” (UNEP 2009, Green New Deal Group 2008) – but it is not the only one.

The main assumption of the paper is that in the current multiple crisis – the financial and economic dimensions, the food, energy and ecological dimensions including climate change and biodiversity loss, the crisis of political representation and governance as well as of gender relation - “postneoliberal” strategies are developed by different actors in order to overcome

the crisis. This is a permanently contested search process. The realisation of those strategies depends on their technical and economic feasibility, the ability of actors to pursue their interests and values, to build alliances, to shape other alliances, political terrains and societal orientations. My argument is close to Bob Jessop's *strategic-relational approach* where he argues that empirical analysis needs to explore the individual and collective actors, their interests and strategies, the role of alliances and opposing actors. This should be linked with the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts and how these influence the actors and how the latter are able to make use and/or shape power-shaped social and political terrains and discourses (Jessop 2008).

The focus at this stage of the paper on the contested emergence of governance structures and the question how can we approach them theoretically. The empirical role of finance needs to be explored in more detail (I will present in Manchester some data and their interpretation).

At the end, I want to emphasise that this paper deals with questions we want to research in Vienna and together with others more intensively within the next years.

### **Hegemony, state and international politics**

I start with some brief theoretical remarks.

The concept of *hegemony* can be particularly ascribed to Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1991: 101f.). Therewith, it is meant a form of bourgeois domination in which elements of open force – not those of structural violence - are stepping back behind consensus ones. Under bourgeois-capitalist conditions, hegemony implies a dynamic model of growth, accepted hierarchies, also within the ruling forces, as well as the capacity of, and the willingness to, compromises as the fundament of their domination. Furthermore, the concept of hegemony means that the social order and dynamics can only be stabilized over a certain period of time, as long as the interests, values, and identities of the ruling forces are being significantly taken into consideration by institutions and assumed as moral concepts of society.

Hegemony is not a subject-free process but it emerges through „hegemonic projects“ of the ruling classes and forces, i.e., by means of complex strategies, compromises and alliances, which, in case of being successfully established, are accepted by the relevant dominated actors. The relations of forces themselves, as constituent and hallmark of a hegemonic constellation, are consented as such. In case that these hegemonic projects are established in most sectors of society, and that they ensure a dynamic constellation of economic growth, we can talk of a „mode of development“ or, with Gramsci, of a „historic block“ (Gramsci 1991ff.: 1045). Therefore, a vital consensus element in capitalist societies consists of the economic growth, because just therewith a large amount of potential conflicts can be mitigated. The valorisation of nature represents such a hegemonic project, and, therewith, a fundamental frame condition

for actual resource, energy and climate policies (for the concept of valorisation see Görg 2003).

These processes are not free of conflicts. However, we can distinguish with Gramsci between *conflicts over hegemony* – i.e. the basic institutional and normative order, actors and their relative position in relation to others, subjectivities etc. - and *conflicts inside a hegemonic constellation*. A hallmark of these conflicts is that they are geared to the established forms of conflict resolution, and that they are not willing, or not able, to modify the latter. Thus, an established hegemony implies that the relevant societal *conflicts are carried out in a rule-guided way*, i.e., that the conflict parties adhere to those rules. This also means that forms of marginalization or use of open violence are either socially less visible, or, at least, passively consented. Whether conditions of hegemony exist or not, is highly relevant for the forms and contents of social and political conflicts. With respect to the agrofuel problematique this distinction helps us to understand that and how energy and food politics take place under specific hegemonic conditions.

An historical-materialist approach to societal conflicts has to make explicit the conceptualization of that instance which regulates the „general affairs“ of society – that is to say, the state. Different societal forces are wrestling here to convert their interests, norms and identities into permanent or even generalized ones. Thereby, the state constitutes an institutional ensemble which – through law, material, administrative and knowledge resources, as well by the fact of being acknowledged as such - disposes over specific means in order to function as terrain for conflict resolution. On this terrain, decisions are claimed to be generally binding. The state disposes of legitimated (and, in case of need, violent) means to put them through. A great deal of social conflicts is, therefore, transformed into political ones.

From a Gramscian perspective, hegemony and state are insofar connected, as state policies form part of hegemonic conditions, and as their consensus elements are created particularly in civil society, i.e., in the great deal of politically and economically organized, but also highly sectorized daily life structures and practices and the public. The state is not understood as a neutral instance, which stands above society, but as a material condensation of societal power relations and an institutional intersection point of those power relations and of discourses (Poulantzas 1978/2002). The state keeps on being centrally focused on society, and particularly on its economy, and, therewith, on social power relations.

How can the so far presented theoretical considerations on hegemony and state be referred to international politics? According to Robert Cox, we can speak about an international hegemony in case of a dynamic correlation between production relations, states and political world order. Hegemony, in turn, is conditioned by more or less coherent ideas, social power relations and institutional configurations. Correspondingly, an „international historic bloc“ emerges when the manifold strategies of a large variety of actors, and the societal institutions respectively, form themselves into a, more or less, dynamic whole (Cox 1993).

States, and accordingly international political institutions, are essentially providing the requirements for socio-economic processes. Nonetheless, they simultaneously rest upon the latter. The singular societies, which are competing and cooperating between each other, and their different actors are very differently integrated in the world market and in the international division of labour; and not lastly they orient their politics toward this. Therefore, international policies are not only cooperative, but, in many areas, also competitive and geopolitical.

The developments of the last decades demonstrate that the state is no bound to the nation-state, although, for many societies, within the foreseeable future the latter will remain to be the central terrain. Nonetheless, it makes sense to conceive a „multiscalar“ state, i.e., to conceptualize the state modes of existence and acting, and its functions respectively, on different levels. Insofar, we can talk of an *internationalized state* (Hirsch 2005). The internationalization of the state consists of the fact that the international political institutions, and, accordingly, the state apparatus, are gaining in importance (Wissen/Brand 2010). This is accompanied by a process in which, due to the changing power constellations, the nation-states are as well transformed. In this respect, today we can talk of a type of *internationalized competition state* (Hirsch 2005: 145-151).

At the same time, the different scales are not predetermined, but rather their constitution and significance themselves form part of power strategies.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, a relevant difference exists between the nation-state and the international level of politics, what is to say, the missing monopoly of legitimate use of violence on the latter. What is rather dominating here is the principle of national sovereignty. Adopting violence and open coercion is still being interpreted as an intervention into such sovereignty. Here lies the origin of the strong orientation of social science theories, concerned with international policies, toward (inter-governmental) cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

Herewith, the dimension of conflicts and competition between the singular state apparatuses is of considerable significance in international policies, and it plays an enormous role for the political dynamics on the national and the local level. Inside the different apparatuses (namely, the ministries of economics and environment; one correspondent example out from international policies follows below), specific power relations and interest constellations are condensed. On the national level, the task politics is to join together these contentious orientations; Bob Jessop defines this as the necessary, but never entirely succeeding establishment of *hegemonic state projects* (1990: 315ff.). Insofar is has to be asked if and how specific agricul-

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<sup>1</sup> Here lies the decisive difference between, on the one hand, the so-called Multi-Level-Approach or Multi-Level-Governance, and, on the other hand, scale as a concept of critical geography. In the first case, the geographical levels of scale are supposed as given, whereas, in the second case, their domination-shaped constitution is taken into account (see the overview in Wissen 2007).

<sup>2</sup> There are two important exceptions: on one hand, the capacity of intervention maintained, in certain cases, by international political organizations, and, on the other hand, the US Government's efforts to develop the US state, together with the NATO, into the centre of an international legitimate monopoly of violence.

tural and energy politics become hegemonic at the societal and governmental level and at which scale this happens.

From a historical-materialist viewpoint, the pivotal element of the internationalization of politics consists of the internationalizing socio-economic developments being legally and institutionally ensured. On the background of this hypothesis, and in addition to the concept of the internationalized state (see above), another category, which is relevant for the subsequent argumentation, might be introduced here. Intergovernmental politics and institutions - no matter whether these are analyzed conventional-hierarchically, or in the mode of Governance - form part of an emerging *global constitutionalism* (Gill 2003), that is to say, a central reference point of international politics, and of the internationalizing state, consists of the Western-bourgeois rule of property and law being internationalized. Global constitutionalism is the contested and contingent grammar of hegemonic projects on the diverse conflict fields.

### **The political ecology of hegemonic and crisis-driven societal relationships with nature**

We combine Gramscian hegemony and critical state theory with political ecology which is “a field that seeks to unravel the political forces at work in environmental access, management and transformation” (Robbins 2004: xvi) Insofar as it can be claimed that politics are “inevitably ecological and that ecology is inherently political.” (ibid: xvii) Conceptualisations of the ecological crisis as a crisis of carrying capacity as well as an a priori orientation on ecological modernisation (i.e. Westernisation) are rejected. Political ecology in this sense is not a globalist view on “humanity” and “global problems” but it focuses on questions of power and asks more for the unequal distribution of costs and benefits, how forms of the appropriation of nature and the dealing with the ecological crisis are reinforcing or reducing social inequality and vulnerability. An important methodological implication is to “denaturalise” social and environmental conditions and to show their contingent and power-shaped character (Robbins 2004: 11-12; see also Bryant/Bailey 1997). Insofar as it is of utmost importance for the issues at stake here is that it must be constantly asked whose crisis we are talking about.

From a political-ecological perspective it is important to detect the relationship between *global* discourses and strategies, institutional settings and power relations on the one hand and *national* as well as *local* realities, i.e. particular institutional and the ecological-spatial conditions, power relations etc.

This perspective is highly compatible with a Gramscian thinking.

In the German debate, political ecology refers to the concept of *societal relationships with nature*. According to that concept, neither can society be discussed independently of nature, since the social process is constitutively imparted through nature, nor does the process of history aim towards an ever more comprehensive control of nature. Certainly, the process of modernism is based on the growth of the domination of nature, but this domination does not

lead to more control; rather, it rebounds in the destruction of nature and in ever-greater dependence on the results and secondary effects of the domination of nature (Beck 1992). Thus, society basically cannot free itself of its dependencies in relation to nature because the social process always contains material-substantial elements and this process is therefore dependent on metabolism with nature. The mutual conveyance of nature and society is central, however, not only for the one side, namely society, but vice versa—it also affects the side of nature. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nature untouched by human activity virtually no longer exists.

The starting point for a critical theory of relationships with nature was provided by the processes of a practical—that is, economic/technical and cultural/discursive—construction of nature, and not by the supposedly unchangeable laws of nature to which humanity or society must adapt. Today, scientific constructions, closely linked to the technical and economic strategies of their application, have come into the foreground, which have found their expression in the diagnosis of the "knowledge society". It should be remembered, however, that there are also other practical constructions of nature not to be forgotten in analyzing the dominant one. In contrast, there is an unavoidable *pluralism of societal relationships with nature* that, particularly under capitalist conditions, is characterized by relationships of dominance. Thus, even in the age of globalization, cultural interpretations and, linked to them, forms of knowledge and practices, can be found that cultivate a completely different treatment of nature. These forms of knowledge and their agencies have even been given a greater value by the ecological crisis, for one can discover in certain practices dealing with the tropical rainforest or in certain forms of agricultural production elements of a more respectful handling of natural resources. This poses the question of whether these practices are today merely marginal, whether they have a chance of influencing the *shaping of global relationships with nature*, or whether they can even preserve their own forms. The dynamic elements of this process are determined by actors with quite different strategies and power resources. And the example of biological diversity also makes clear that, after all, the dominant strategies for the appropriation of nature are increasingly aimed at its commercialization, i.e. at a purely economic appraisal of nature (Görg and Brand 2006).

Here, the *tendency towards the domination of nature* is reproduced in a new and even stronger form, even after the experience of the ecological crisis. The domination of nature is not defined as every form of the appropriation of nature without differentiation (for then the development of society without the domination of nature would be inconceivable) but one that completely subjects nature to its objectives. Societies are confronted more and more with the consequences of the unhindered domination of nature, which causes additional costs and a great deal of trouble. The idea of the complete control of nature has therefore largely been abandoned and the scarcely controllable risks involved in the appropriation of nature taken into account. The utilization of nature is therefore increasingly accompanied by attempts to mitigate its destructive effects prophylactically or to eliminate them reactively—more pre-

cisely: to engage in the protection of nature and the environment. But the question is whether this goes beyond the attempt at an accompanying cushioning of the domination of nature because of the uncontrollable consequences, or in other words, whether we are dealing with a *reflexive form of the domination of nature*. This question can be empirically tested in the fate of strategies that follow a different, less destructive form of the appropriation of nature—a handling of nature that attempts to take account of its non-identity (see, with a pessimistic answer, Brand et al. 2008 and Görg 2003).

This approach differs from the questions often analyzed as to the general chances of the protection of the environment and nature. Of course, it also deals with whether and to what extent aspects of the protection of nature can hold their own against commercialization strategies. But especially in the field of agriculture and energy the problem cannot be grasped with a confrontation of economic and ecological dimensions, of maintenance and utilization strategies, for here maintenance and utilization, ecology and economy, are indissolubly intertwined.

### **The context: multiple crisis and the global food and energy crisis**

Societal relationships with nature base since the industrial revolution on the “trinity” – as Elmar Altvater puts it - of European rationality, fossilist energy sources and the capitalist mode of production (Altvater 2005). The Fordist mode of development after World War II was the unevenly globalised intensification of this trinity, also in the developing countries and in those where state socialism dominated. It was a specific and in the capitalist centres highly productive form of the appropriation of nature, of the social division of labour, norms of production and consumption. Attractive and productive forms of living centred around automobility, processed and cheap food, the consumption of meat as an indicator of wealth, the use of electronic equipment. However, the dominant agricultural form of Fordism was energy intensive and did not lead to the desired results in many countries and regions (IAASTD 2009)

Erich Langthaler (2006; cf. also Nützenadel 2009) proposes to distinguish three different food regimes since the coming into force of industrial capitalism. An extensive one since the 1870s focused on the industrialisation of agriculture and the emergence of new independent nation-states. Together with the revolution in the transport sector and freezing techniques, a world market for basic food was created (before, global trade was mainly that of luxury products). Strong multinational agro-firms were active in the world market.

The intensive (Fordist) phase was characterised by the mass demand in the capitalist centres and the middle-classes of some postcolonial countries, e.g. in the emerging economies in Latin America. At the level of production, the production of food stuff was industrialised and agricultural products were integrated in larger production chains. Most agricultural products were during decades relatively cheap. Since WW II the reproduction of labour force relied on this.

Already in the 1920s, regional food crises and global imbalances were politicised, modern food and hunger research as well as research in plant breeding intensified. The disaster of hunger in the world was since World War II a top priority on the international policy agenda. After World War II, the international agricultural order was established between free trade and national interest politics. John G. Ruggie named the financial and trade order in this phase an “embedded liberalism”, i.e. open markets but with certain regulations, and this was also the case in the agricultural sector.

Despite the modernising strategies, in many countries pre-capitalist subsistence farming remained important and its exploitation was a basis for cheap food for the urban population. Depesantisation became a major dynamic in the next period which began in the 1980s (McMichael 2008).

Langthaler calls the actual phase “post-productivist” in the sense that due to environmental concerns among larger parts of the population ecological products gained some market share. However, the enormous increase of the number of “new consumers” in the newly emerging countries led to a strong increase in agricultural and food production, a shift towards input intensive food like meat also strengthens the industrialisation of agriculture and food production. At the international level, free trade policies led to increasing competition and pressures on subsistence production in many countries. Many indebted countries of the global South were forced by the IMF and the World Bank to open their agricultural markets. A country like Mexico which was throughout its history an exporter of corn, became in a few years an importer given the fact that the corn produced in the U.S. was cheaper (not at least due to subsidies). Mexican corn production decreased like investment in this sector, unemployment grew and many local farmers had to migrate to the cities in order to survive.

This goes hand in hand with a strong concentration of private agro-food corporations which brings Philip McMichael to the insight to call it a “corporate food regime” (2008: 41). The policy of cheap agricultural prices – in the EU or the U.S. combined with strong subsidies - led in many regions to an undercapitalisation of the global agricultural sector. Around the year 2000 problems became obvious.

Above it was argued that a political-ecological perspective considers also the dominant forms of thinking about social development, its problems and possible solutions. In the field of agricultural production and consumption it was quite different. During Fordism, the cheap and abundant availability of agricultural products was crucial and an important precondition for the reproduction of wage-earners. But, in contrast to energy politics, hunger and the feeding of “the poor” became a central element of development thinking and practices as well as a centre-stage during the Cold War. Especially the Green Revolution since the 1960s was an attempt to shape global agriculture in line with the interests of dominant countries and powerful corporations. In the actual phase, the problem of poverty and hunger remains real and on the agenda of public policies. The most prominent indicator is that in 2001 the governments

of the world developed under the umbrella of the U.N. eight ambitious Millennium Development Goals and the first goal claims to reduce the rate of people in extreme poverty and hunger in the world until 2015 to 50 % (on the basis of 1990).

Together with the poor harvests in Australia in 2006 and 2007, this structural change at the side of production and demand is one reason for sky-rocking prizes in 2007/2008. Speculation is another dimension since money capital was looking for new spheres of investment (Wahl 2008 who argues that in mid-2008 speculation in the agricultural and oil sector became too risky and that the U.S. government offered safer bonds as an alternative). And finally, the real and potential cultivation of soy bean, sugar cane, corn and palm oil for agrofuels production

Even the prices went down due to a better harvest since mid of 2008, they are still above the level prior to the price crisis. This indicates that we experience a structural change in the agro-food sector.

The second dimension of the multiple crisis is that of energy. In continuity of the industrialisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fordist capitalism relied extremely on fossil fuels and made an enormous productivity growth possible. Fossil fuels were until the 1970s very cheap and broadly available. The discourse in energy politics was always one of cheap and secure availability and of a certain invisibility of energy production and the flows of energy resources. This changed partly through two oil price shocks, a debate about scarcity and “limits to growth” and since then energy politics gained even greater political attention. Since the 1980s there was a new “lock-in” of the world energy order. Energy politics became an important international issue and major players were private and state-owned energy companies with strong political influence (especially in the oil sector). However, cooperation was always in tension with competitive politics.

Also in the 1980s, the non-intended consequences of the burning of fossil fuels – the greenhouse effect – were more and more politicised and around 1990 an international political institution emerged in order to deal with the crisis: the FCCC. However, we know today that in the course of globalisation the use of fossil energy grew enormously and that the agreed reduction targets of greenhouse gases, especially CO<sub>2</sub>, will not be reached.

Bringing together the different dimensions of the multiple crisis, hunger and climate policies are framed with catastrophic discourses and a rationale of ecological modernisation where Western technology and expertise is considered to be a key for the solution of the manifold problems (Swyngedouw 2009) whereas energy politics is taking place in the frame of energy security. But there are important interlinkages like the justification for the production of agrofuels as a contribution to fight climate change.

Another aspect of the framing of problems is important: The problems are described as ones between countries and affecting poor people or the environment negatively (e.g. von Braun 2008 on the food price crisis). The main actors are therefore national governments and inter-

governmental organisations which create a framework of action to guide private actors into the desired direction and to refer to their knowledge and capacities.

What is left out of public and policy thinking of the food, energy and climate crisis is their political economy, i.e. the role of private companies and their interests in the control of societal relationships with nature as well as their interests in profits. Alternative perspectives from local farmers and their associations as well as related conflicts with dominant perspectives are usually denied or functionalised for the strengthening of broader and top-down approaches. There is no questioning of social power relations (in societies, North-South) and the political constitution of the world market.

In sum, environmental policies remained clearly in the shade of growth and energy security policies. The fossilist energy path is still dominant and after 15 years of the coming into force of the FCCC we can see that climate policies are on the top of the public agenda but they are not able to transform the fossilist mode of production and living. This has to do not at least with the very constituency of international climate politics and their implementation itself which is not able to transform hegemonic fossilist societal relationships with nature (Park et al. 2008, Brunnengräber et al. 2008, Brand et al. 2009).

Partly, alternative energy policies take place, but this still happens in the framework of ecological modernisation, world market competition and competitiveness and as an addition to “traditional” fossilist politics to secure the availability of gas and oil (and coal).

This is the “stage” for the emergence of the agrofuels project: High oil prices, the assumed future scarcity of oil and gas, climate change, developmentalist policies in many countries of the global South.

Our argument which should guide further empirical research is that the agrofuels project (McMichael) becomes an important strategy to secure the energy basis of the global capitalist mode of production. Given its restricted potential, it can be considered as *one* complementary strategy to a mix of energy sources. However, and this is important from a political-ecological perspective critical to globalist views, in specific social contexts like Indonesia or Brazil – and here in particular regions - it has an enormous dynamic and power. Relevant domestic and international actors promote the project, it can claim a certain temporal feasibility through assured demand in capitalist centres like the EU, is promoted by strong capital groups and broadly accepted by producers and consumers. In this sense, it is hegemonic at a global level and has intense structuring effects in the regions and countries where the plants for agrofuels are cultivated.

### **Ways out of the crisis? - Contested postneoliberal strategies**

Materialist state theory recognises the socio-economic and cultural context of particular policies and politics. From a Gramscian perspective and concerning agrofuels politics we have to

consider two dimensions of hegemony: a structural and a strategic one. The first one is the dominant mode of production and living which relies on specific forms of energy and food production and consumption, on economic and political power relations and strategic-selective institutions which tend to promote specific interests more than others.

The strategic dimension deals with the question to which extent the “agrofuels project” is capable of integrating a broad range of societal actors into the solution of the current multiple crises (both in symbolic and in material terms). In so doing, it takes up a multi-scalar perspective on hegemony, i.e. it asks on which spatial scales and with respect to which territorial units the agrofuels project becomes hegemonic - or is contested, respectively. The aim of the analysis is to reach a better understanding of the crisis-driven transformations of societal relationships with nature, their political regulation and the opportunities as well as the dangers they imply for food security, energy security and sustainable development.

But let us contextualise the agrofuels project by understanding better the different crisis strategies. The term “postneoliberalism” does not attempt to indicate a more or less clear rupture with the previous phase of capitalist development. At the contrary, it is an open concept in order to promote a debate about the continuities and discontinuities in the crisis of neoliberalism or, better said, the complex processes of neoliberalisation of manifold societal relations.

In this paper we figure out different strategies which enable us to understand better what might emerge within the next years.

The „*Rio type of politics*“ is more and more criticised due to the weak results. International agreements focus on cooperation and the development of a framework in which governments and private actors should act. They are not opposing dominant developments and concerning implementation they are systematically weak and do not question the political economy of globalisation. However, they are not purely pro-commodification and competitiveness but they bear a certain, more implicit tension that the political economy of the appropriation of nature is a problem. In food and agriculture policies, international discourses and processes promote strategies of food security. The focus is on the availability of food and the promotion of modern techniques. A basic and more general idea is to feed the world with the food surpluses in the North (McMichael 2008: 42). The FAO is one proponent of this type of strategy.

A second strategy is paradoxically de-linked from official international environmental politics but in fact the strong rationale behind the negotiations and action. Under conditions of world market competition and neoliberal orientations and power relations, *strategies of neoliberal competitiveness* are still dominant. In 2006, the EU Commission presented its trade strategy “Global Europe. Competing in the World” which is the concretisation of the Lisbon Agenda and – despite the acknowledgement of multilateral processes like the WTO - an emphasis on bilateral trade agreements. Its instruments are the reduction of so-called non-tariff trade barriers, the protection of intellectual property rights, liberalisation of the service sector and of

investment regimes. For our topic it is important to note that the EU strategy intends to secure an unrestricted access to energy and resources. (*WTOplus*)

One version of this second type of postneoliberal strategies is promoted by neoliberal think-tanks like Mont-Pelèrin-Society. Climate change became one of the main themes of this network. The same is the case for the OECD.

A third postneoliberal strategy – and partly in tension with the second one - is the positive experience in countries of the global South that not neoliberal but *neomercantilist and developmentalist politics* are more viable. Beside China where neoliberal politics have never been implemented, in countries like Brazil or Russia the move towards progressive or authoritarian power blocs led to more state intervention. The model of world market integration and the valorisation of nature are still valid and even intensified but should contribute more to the countries economic development. Not to question this model is the rationale of the respective governments in global environmental negotiations.

A fourth postneoliberal strategy is the growing *militarisation* of and use of violence in the appropriation of nature. Where labour, commodity and other markets do not work, open violence in forms of slavery, (private or public) military control of territories as we can observe in Iraq and other means might be used. This is also the case in countries like Brazil where overall developmentalist strategies articulate at the regional level – e.g. in the Cerrado – with forms of open violence. Internationally we can call this strategy military geopolitics.

Another and fifth form is *economically mediated geopolitics*. In the last years we can observe a strong tendency to rent “off-shore” land in order to control territories and enhance food and energy security. The Korean company Daewoo Logistics rented in July 2008 for 99 years from the government of Madagascar 1,3 million hectares of land – half of the agricultural useable territory of the island and one seventh of the Korean territory – for the production of forage corn. Korea, the fourth importer of corn worldwide, becomes less dependent from the world market and its volatile prices (Hoering 2009: 103). Estimates say that since 2006 between 15 and 20 million hectares of land were bought or rented in countries of the global South. Uwe Hoering (2009) argues that given the dominant development strategies, especially due to the agrofuels project, after “peak oil” we might become testimonies of “peak soil”.

A sixth postneoliberal strategy can be called *globalist-social democratic* one. It is close to the Rio type of politics but takes more seriously the political economy of socio-ecological, economic and political problems. Here, the proposal of a Green New Deal is very prominent (European Green Party 2008, Green New Deal Group 2008, Brand 2009, UNEP 2009, Müller/Passadakis 2009). The main assumption is that the financial and economic, the environmental and climate crises can be dealt with by creating a strong political framework and promoting technological innovation. A huge socio-ecological investment programme is required in order to promote social transformation. Despite the differences, i.e. between the more Keynesian Green New Deal Group and the more neoliberal orientation of UNEP, the

debate about GND opens a discursive terrain where a specific postneoliberal strategy might emerge. In general, proponents of GND are critical towards agrofuels and in favour of a consideration of local actors and experiences.

A seventh, again internally diversified, postneoliberal strategy is developed among emancipatory social actors, mainly from social movements and critical NGOs. They are sceptical towards technical orientations and modernisation in the sense of Westernisation and they are criticising the power-shaped and profit-oriented development of the world market, international politics and actual crisis strategies. Moreover, it is argued that agrofuels policies might indicate a false sense of security and impede other solution like the reduction of carbon emissions at their source and that the cultivation of agrofuels contributes to the destruction of native forests (Global Justice Ecology Project 2009). The agrofuels project is seen as creating a competition between global car drivers and the poorest people in the world. Most visible are these actors and their strategies at the World Social Forum. In the field of agricultural politics, emancipatory forces are promoting practices under the heading of food sovereignty (in difference to food security). The international network of peasant farmers, La Vía Campesina, promotes an agrarian transformation against the accumulation imperative and criticises the control of agriculture and food through TNCs, the role of the WTO and they oppose the dominant discourse of “natural” peasant redundancy (McMichael 2008, Paasch 2009).

In the capitalist centres, far reaching alternative perspective are still weak and the strategy of the GND is able to present itself as the only viable and reasonable transformation strategy. The relative weakness of an alternative discourse can be shown with the fact that also the European Greens – who are critical towards agrofuels – argue with the need to reach food security instead of food sovereignty.

## **Outlook**

What is necessary in further research is to explore how these different, often overlapping and highly uneven strategies gain importance, i.e. structuring power. Departing from the hypothesis that in the actual crisis different strategies, problem definitions and assumed viable and desirable solutions compete with each other it is worth to detect the various postneoliberal strategies. Arguing from a perspective of hegemony and critical state theory, the next step would be to identify how different actors intend to strengthen their perspectives and build alliances and how they might become a dominant or even hegemonic societal project. Part of this “generalisation” of interests and values is that they are inscribed into selective political terrains and shape them. Of course, interests and strategies are not fixed but change in the course of contest and learning processes. What makes the analysis more complex but also more realistic is the fact that we have to deal with highly uneven and multi-scalar processes. If the manifold political, economic and cultural actions on different scales become in a certain sense viable and coherent depends

This reminds us on regulation theory and its claim that a certain macroeconomic coherence (i.e. in the global agriculture and energy markets) depends on institutional and normative settings in certain branches and for the overall political economy. However, what we should have in mind is that crisis-driven processes at a global scale or at least in some regions might be normal and the “regulation” of complex societal relations an exception. In this sense we might get a nuanced picture of the contested processes how global and particular national as well as regional and local agricultural and energy production, distribution and consumption develop. And against this background, an adequate analysis of the prospects of agrofuels in the global political economy is possible.

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