



# **PIGS, SOY & LABOUR**

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# the ethos of homo oeconomicus



economic activity is  
separate from moral  
values

individuals naturally and  
rationally seek to  
maximize **profit**

this jungle attitude &  
maximizing behaviour  
eventually increases the  
welfare of the community

# labour, values, communities & unfinished commodities

artisanal food is an  
“unfinished commodity”  
as defined by Heather  
Paxson, Professor at MIT,  
in her book *The Life of  
Cheese: Crafting Food  
and Value in America*



# from China to the Amazons



- 800 million pigs slaughtered yearly
- 8 million hectares of soy monoculture
- 80 million tons of Amazon soy to produce Chinese pork



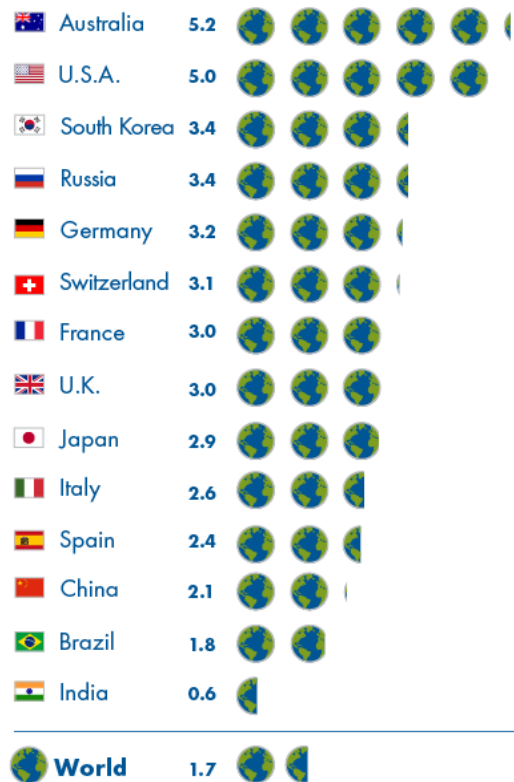
# the locust corporation



- financial powers jump to follow soy and pigs
- in 2008, Goldman Sachs diverts assets from derivatives to food chains, buying 25% of Shuanghui, which in 2013 buys Smithfield Foods, the world largest pig and pork producer

# overshoot day

How many Earths do we need  
if the world's population lived like...



Source: Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts 2017

- Earth Overshoot Day marks the date in the year when we have used more resources from nature than ecosystems can regenerate
- this year we are using 1.7 Earths; through overfishing, overharvesting, and polluting more than Earth can absorb, in 2018 Earth Overshoot Day came on August 1<sup>st</sup>

# finance and hunger



- in 2008, the price of all 25 main raw materials increased at the same time; while usually some prices rise and others fall, this increase in unison is unique in history
- no particular natural event took place in 2008: no floods or droughts that triggered that increase in the price of rice or wheat
- the cause was the huge mass of capital fleeing from the subprime mortgage collapse

# today finance is an end in itself



- the role of finance as serving the economy is lost, and finance today means making money out of money quickly
- hence the gigantism of financial markets: in 1990 Wall Street was as big as 35% of US GDP; before the crisis in 2006 it exceeded 350%
- i.e.: there is a hypertrophic mass of purely speculative transactions whose expected profits largely exceed real production profits



# casino-finance & catastrophe



instability is the essence of casino finance, not just a side effect: **speculators buy just to make prices go up and then sell at a higher price – the greater and quicker the increase, the more they will gain; the greater the disaster, the more lucrative the game**

**hunger!**



since there are no rules on speculating against food prices (and hunger!) the food market, naturally subject to price fluctuations, becomes an ideal hunting ground

# the Wall Street bull



- financial speculation has disastrous effects on the worldwide production of agro-goods
- a rational and fair production of food is a general concern to be protected by international law against private transnational interests

# the little bull (torèt)

today:

844 million lack proper access to drinking water

(WHO & UNICEF, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*)

815 million are chronically undernourished

(FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World. Building resilience for peace and food security*, 2017)



# the Villarceaux bull





# food, the Earth & human labour



- food is part of a complex balance between agriculture, environment, health and culture
- on the contrary, markets regard food as a mere product (food as a private good makes hunger still triumph in a world of lavishness)



# WHY IS IT?

# the ethos of the commons



- the “commons” are spaces, services and goods functional to the protection both of basic individual rights and vital public interests
- they are crucial for the free development of the individual as a human being

# what history actually shows



- more equal societies are more prosperous – i.e. societies with a fair distribution of wealth work better not only socially but also economically
- they cannot do without the commons, i.e. goods and services functional to the protection both of social equity and of individual rights

# global commons



- some commons go beyond a local perspective to reach a global dimension:
- natural commons such as great water reserves, a clean environment, climate stability, biodiversity, and the ozone shield
- human-made commons like transnational infrastructures (the internet)
- global policy objectives like peace, security, sustainability, monetary and financial stability



# Pacha Mama: a common world

global commons are  
essential for a fair and  
“regenerative” world;  
they satisfy the need of  
the present generation  
without foreclosing options  
for the future ones;  
yet, they are underprovided  
due to the lack of national  
and international regulation



# a world of commons

- great migrations of capital, goods and people challenge the distinction between national and international issues
- issues like labour exploitation, inequality, food scarcity, and climate change enlarge beyond state borders the duties of nations, making them transnational
- global commons should be enjoyed in an inclusive and non-rival way, while their situation is critical for depletion & lack of legal safeguards

# food as a human right



food is a basic human right crucial for peace and security, humanitarian assistance, innovative sources of financing for development, monetary and financial stability

UN (2003), *Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, Final text*

UN (2008), *Doha Declaration on Financing for Development*

# labour as a human right

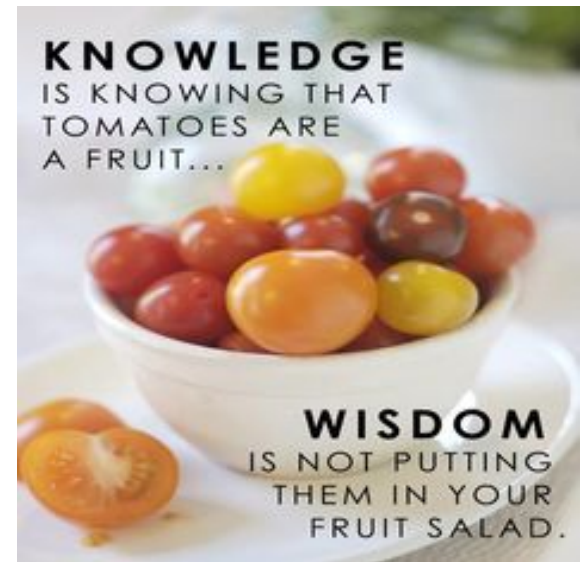
everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment  
everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection

United Nations (1948), *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, art. 23

# food as global knowledge

food produces various utilities  
both as a cultural good and as a  
material good generated by  
(agri)cultural techniques

a shared knowledge about food  
production and preparation  
that guarantees the ecological  
cycle of life is a global commons





# the city as a commons

- citizens collectively produce different kinds of values and can decide which of them will remain commons and which will be turn into a commodity, e.g. language, ideas, art, products.
- can we make food into a commons resource?



# Francis, food & labour



“There is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world’s peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste. Economies of scale end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops.” (Laudato Si’, 129)

# a local future



- local diets can be a basis for a regenerative policy on agriculture and food
- they protect local products and labour
- they promote the knowledge of the local environment and the culture of the territory, and provide the basis for their collective protection

# the current crisis



- the revival of almost forgotten food traditions can confront the standardization of food production caused by supermarket distribution
- the crisis clearly shows how **worldwide food chains are distorted by financial speculation**, revealing the catastrophe that casino finance can be for the regeneration of life on this planet

# Terra Madre

“A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people’s quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth, and talk of sustainable growth usually becomes a way of distracting attention and offering excuses, absorbing the language and values of ecology into the categories of finance and technocracy.” (Laudato Si’, 194)



# for a regenerative world

a thick ideological apparatus  
today proclaims its faith in  
technological innovation as a  
condition sufficient for survival

but there will be no future  
without a radical ethical shift to a  
different labour market and a  
renewed “glocal” food chain





**thank  
you!!!**

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