

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

In addition to structural issues of development, the industrialization of agri-food production, the growing market concentration in global agri-food value chains, and trade liberalization are challenging the very existence of mountain foodscapes. Nevertheless, there are various strategies for agri-food production based on collective action and aimed at maintaining environmentally just value creation in mountain areas. We suggest that the extent to which environmental justice is institutionalized in agri-food production indicates a transition pathway from the industrialized, commodification-based food regime towards an integrated, commoning-based food regime. We propose that while the former results in exploitative human-nature interactions, the latter allows for relational human-nature interactions that sustain biocultural diversity in the agri-food sector and beyond. We employ a new institutionalist approach combined with ethnographic research methods to explore the institutional settings, as well as values and motivations behind human-nature relations allowing for more environmentally just foodscapes in mountain areas. We will illustrate our conceptualization efforts with preliminary results on a Geographical Indication of cheese from a Swiss Alpine region.