

Ecological Concerns in Food Systems: An Ethnographical Approach on Vegan Impact in Governmentality

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Abstract : Veganism, along with different types of vegetarianism, consists in the abstinence of animal products. Far from being only an alimentary regulation, it stands as a political posture against the food industry generating itself a set of beliefs, prohibitions, and attitudes that compel the individual to a reevaluation of his obligations towards the environment. Veganism defends animal rights and at the same time reinforces a different conception of natural resources embodying it in alimentary restrictions. These practices emerge in the context of alimentary modernity, which is characterized by bringing new concerns to the consumer. An increased skepticism towards the government ability to protect food supply; a notable distrust toward the market guaranties on providing safe food with sustainable techniques and the desire to react to the neoliberal forms of exploitation are some of its consequences of this phenomenon. This study aims to approach the concept of governmentality as a coproduced system of legitimized practices and knowledge, formed by the interaction of the different actors that are involved. In a scenario where the State seems to retreat from centralized regulation of food production giving up importance to citizens, dietary consultants, farmers, and stockbreeders, veganism plays its role on the conformation of distinctive forms of environmentalism, nature rights and responses to ecological crisis. The ethnographic method allows observing the mechanisms of interaction of consumers and discourses with the mainstream food system, providing evidence about the means of generation of new conceptions about nature and the environment. The paper focuses on how the dietary restrictions, consumption patterns and public discourses of vegans in Barcelona impact local consumption, demonstrating its relevance as a mechanism that associates particular concerns about food with political economy.

Keywords : animal rights, environmentalism, food system, governmentality, veganism

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