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KEVIN MORGAN, ROBERTA SONNINO, *The School Food Revolution: Public Food and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*

London, Earthscan, 2008, 231 p.

Kevin Morgan is Professor of Governance and Development, and Roberta Sonnino Senior Lecturer in Environmental Policy and Planning, both at the School of City and Regional Planning in Cardiff University (UK). Part of their work deals with public policies and sustainable development relating to food challenges. The book is published by Earthscan, a publisher very involved in environmental issues, such as global warming and renewable energies, as their slogan makes clear, "publishing for a sustainable future".

This work is based on a comparative study of different school food programmes in various parts of the world. One of the authors' aims is to provide a basis to conduct what they call a "*school food revolution*" to make "*good food on a child's plate {be} the norm, not the exception*" (p. xxi). The question the authors raise is to what extent can school food reforms involve the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development?

This book is likely to be of interest to policy makers, school food reformers and any actors concerned with school food issues, and provides information about what has already been done elsewhere and suggests means to "*change the way our children eat*". It could also be used as a support for researchers and students working on public policies, environmental issues and school food, as it offers a large-scale inventory of school food programmes around the world. As we might imagine with this publisher, the authors are committed to sustainable development and healthy food choices, often meaning local and organic.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first two chapters introduce what sustainable development means and involves in public policies. The following five chapters deal with several school food programmes implemented in various places (London, New York, Rome, Ghana, etc.). The authors explore each place in great detail, closely examining the history of school food programmes, showing how it has evolved over time and demonstrating the scope and limitations of each programme. The final chapter acts as a conclusion, with a more theoretical approach to the current food challenges of obesity and hunger.

In this review, we propose a double reading: a theoretical approach, with the first two chapters and the final one, and a case study which aims to compare the programmes in the various places studied in the five central chapters.

In the opening chapters, the authors explain the major issues for sustainable development and how food can be seen as one of the main solutions to tackle the global ecological crisis. These chapters are more complex than the others because they deal with the financial, legislative and political aspects of sustainable development, notably how school food reforms can be implemented on different scales (international, national and sub-national).

Sustainable development makes up the heart of this book. In the opening chapter, both positive and critical viewpoints are set out. The authors give the most famous definition of sustainable development (Brundtland Report, 1987): "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (p. 2). They raise the problem that sustainable development remains, above all, at a "*global and theoretical level*" (p. 2). Taking the opposite side, this book provides a very practical approach to sustainable development by giving concrete examples of experiments using school food as a

means towards greater sustainability. For the authors, sustainable development should be adapted to the different environmental and socio-cultural contexts in which it is introduced: it "should be territorialized" (Cavallaro and Dansero, 1998). To the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, environmental and social), the authors add three principles: economic development, sustainable consumption and participatory democracy. Food has a multidimensional effect on sustainability; it affects the environment (agriculture, transport, etc.), the economy (employment, international, national or local trade, etc.), social inclusion and public health. Re-localization is often seen as the best way to increase sustainability, but the authors show that this should be called into question, one of the arguments being that making some products locally can have a high environmental cost in areas not adapted to their production. The authors suggest that the school food revolution should combine local and global solutions and conventional and alternative food systems, and thus transcend "*binary thinking*" (p. 197).

The role of the State is extremely important because it is "*the most legitimate and powerful institution*" (p. 15) and the book outlines the concept of the "Green State". The authors raise the interesting idea that it would be preferable to speak of "*greening the state*" because sustainable development is a "*moving target {...} it is more about becoming than about arriving.*" (p. 15)

Public procurement of food is now a major political issue because food's close connection with health is becoming increasingly accepted. Governments' capacity to buy goods and services represents a huge power that is often underused. A large number of rules and regulations govern public procurement at different levels – internationally with the World Trade Organisation or plurilateral agreements such as the Agreement on Government Procurement; nationally, for instance in US with the Buy America Act; and at local levels. These regulations ensure "*that the process is as open and competitive as possible and that the product is safe to eat*" (p. 21). What space is there, then, for creative procurement, "*a greener, more sustainable form of procurement*" (p. 22)? It appears to be complicated in most countries; in the US, for example, buying local food is not allowed in compliance with the prohibition of local geographic preference because of competitiveness. However, changes are gradually occurring – the 2007 Farm Bill "*clearly allows contracting authorities to use a geographic preference for the procurement of locally produced goods*" (p. 39). In the EU, "*the concept of green public purchasing is virtually non-existent*" in most European countries (Day, 2005). Nevertheless, the concept of "*value for money*", in other words not choosing the lowest price but the best quality in terms of nutrition or the environment, is at work in some countries such as the UK, "*driven by a desire to become a world leader in sustainable procurement*" (p. 28). The EU is following this trend with new rules obliging states "*to pursue sustainable and not merely green public procurement*" (p. 35), which is more difficult, because the effects on the final product are less easy to prove. Another barrier to greening the State is the "*multi-level governance structures of the state*" (p. 194), which complicate the implementation of measures: a collective work model needs to be disseminated throughout the world.

The final chapter echoes the first two chapters, giving concrete applications of the ideas raised at the beginning of the book and discussing them again. The authors introduce the concept of an "*ethic of care*" that should be used in a "*broader public framework*" (p. 168) instead of remaining a woman's affair in the private realm. It should be associated with justice, and encourage States to support both "*distant others*" and "*nearest and dearest*" (p. 168). Children

should benefit from this ethic of care as they are being positioned in our societies as consumers and targeted by a huge amount of advertising, above all for junk food and especially in the US. Attempts to regulate the marketing of junk food (which even exists in schools) have failed, despite the US being "*the most obese nation on Earth*" (p. 181). An interesting idea raised by the authors is that obesity cannot be tackled at an individual level (by injunctions in the media, for instance, as occurs in France), since it is a societal problem, and States have to take responsibility. "*To refer on an individualistic model is a strategic error which is likely to lead to counterproductive messages*" (Poulain, 2009). The authors do not forget to mention the other side of the coin – hunger in the developing world. The book is also engaged in the struggle against food insecurity and for a fairer world where effective help is given to developing countries' agriculture.

The central section of this book is composed of five chapters focusing on different examples of school food programmes and revolutions in developed and developing countries. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 refer to three urban, industrialised, very large cities (New York, Rome and London) whereas chapter 6 focuses on rural areas in England, Wales and Scotland. By giving the example of the "Ghana School Feeding Programme", chapter 7 deals with the necessity of promoting home-grown feeding programmes in developing countries.

In developed countries, the same reasons were at the origin of a good number of school food programmes: "pauperism, working mothers and the distance between school and home" (Téhoueyres, 2003). These concerns had already emerged in the 19th century, with the challenge of providing hungry children with at least one healthy meal per day. To quote only some of these programmes, in 1944, the Education Act was passed in London to provide meals and milk in primary and secondary schools, specifying that the price of the meal should not exceed the cost of the goods and that the school lunch should constitute the principal meal of the day and cover the daily nutritional standards recommended and introduced in 1941. In New York, the National School Lunch Program was established in 1946. Its aim was to avoid wasting farm surpluses by helping farmers and, at the same time, contributing to children's health by proposing healthy meals. In Rome, the programme *Cultura che Nutre* or "Culture that Feeds" was established in 1998, with the aim of increasing awareness and educating schoolchildren to "*adopt an informed and healthy diet*" (p. 72). However, like any reform, these measures experienced moments of historical, economic and social crisis. Periods of war and recession, the reduction of the public expenditure for the benefit of private choices, the fear of a welfare service, the stigmatization felt by children of poor families were some of the obstacles facing these programmes at one moment or another during their development. Each city finally took a different direction, depending on its history, its latitudes and its means. London – whose 1980s' neo-liberal government made the choice of cheap food in its schools – is now championing an "*ecological era*" to make London a "*Sustainable World City*" (p. 97). New York, confronted by a rise in obesity in the 1980s, opted for a change in its public food policy. Having been subjected to the commercial constraints of its private partners for a long time, the city is now struggling with junk and unhealthy food in its schools. Rome does not have the same kind of problems because school canteens have never experienced competition or private cafeterias within schools. The city started a quality revolution in which the relationships between producers and consumers were economically viable but also connected to environmental and social projects.

Following the example of capital cities, rural areas also began to revolutionise school food, (some had already begun to do so before the capital cities). The authors devote a chapter to measures implemented in three counties in the UK to show that school food revolutions can take place in rural areas even if the actors do not have the resources and means of large capitals. For a long time, the county of South Gloucestershire in the southwest of England was hampered by the imposition of "Compulsory Competitive Tendering", which obliges local authorities to open the school food market to outside competition. However, in 2001, the county took the decision to establish in-house management of its 125 school canteens, thus promoting the work and training of qualified and involved teams. In Carmarthenshire, west Wales, local authorities were confronted with a similar problem. After the "Best Value Inspection" of 2001 – which found that meals were of a high standard but too expensive and not very productive – the county decided to improve its system by procuring more local produce. In spite of the headway made, the county's local producers were not able to satisfy demand completely for the 145 schools. These two examples show that the practical application of local food procurement is, unfortunately, a difficult task in restricted rural areas, even areas experiencing economic growth, such as Gloucestershire. The final example describes East Ayrshire in west central Scotland. This county is a perfect example of a successful school food revolution. East Ayrshire managed to put into practice the "Hungry for Success" report carried out in 2002 which recommended a "*radically new school meal service*" (p. 94), while getting round its main weakness, the lack of local produce. Reforming school meals involves more than merely producers and consumers; it also implies democracy, social justice and valuing the personnel who prepare and serve these meals in the canteens.

Chapter 7 describes the "World Food Programmes" devoted to developing countries. It is an alarming fact that there are almost as many obese as malnourished people in the world today. Food aid to developing countries is insufficient and too often used as a geopolitical weapon. A home-grown policy has to be adopted to give developing countries the assistance they need. In 1963, the World Food Programme was launched globally. Sub-Saharan Africa needs a "*twin-track approach*"; the accent ought to be on synergy, taking combined actions (community nutrition programmes, home-grown "School Feeding Programmes", soil health and water programmes) as well as domestic measures because "*food insecurity is more a political than a purely agricultural problem*" (p. 152). The authors illustrate their theory with the example of the Ghana School Feeding Programme, launched for four years in 2006. They show that perhaps the success of the home-grown model depends on developing countries' governments' greater involvement in projects, and the support of developed countries to enable them "*to help themselves*" (p. 163).

In this book, each school food revolution is described in great detail and set in its historic, political and legal context. The authors also underline each programme's scope and limitations in order to grasp the complexity of the challenge posed by sustainable development. The very concrete examples of this rich, dense book show that a practical application of school food programmes is possible in spite of the various difficulties. From a sociological perspective, we are curious about the methodological choices of this large-scale research, and wonder how data was collected and from which sources. The work appears to be a titanic study of archives, official documents and interviews with those working in the sector. However, we would like to have seen how the programmes are perceived by children and their families, and thus to know if they have a long-term effect on children's food behaviours.

In conclusion, this book offers an international perspective on the question of food and allows us to compare practices in different countries. Moreover, it also supplies many legal, historical and economic notions that may be of interest to research and contemporary debate. Nevertheless, the first two chapters may be somewhat difficult to grasp entirely on first reading for readers who are not experts in matters of public procurement mechanisms.

The authors highlight practical options for reforming food habits, targeting school food and making changes to the food served to pupils, thus directly affecting what children eat rather than what they think. France's National Nutrition and Health Programme launched in 2001 was based on theories but not on what children ate on a day-to-day basis. An example of this is the advertisements "For your health, eat five fruits and vegetables a day", a slogan that every child now knows. Conversely, with the National Programme for Food launched in 2010, France is attempting to change children's food environment by reforming the school food system. It seems to us more effective to change practices rather than theories alone.

Although the choice of local programmes is one of the strengths of this book, we regret the lack of information about national food programmes that almost certainly exist as they do in France, as this would have given readers an even deeper understanding of the countries described.

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