

Sigmar Groeneveld: *Brotkünste: Texte zu Agrarberatung und Agrarkulturen.* Kassel: Gesamthochschule-Bibliothek, 1987. 206 pages, DM 5.– (To be obtained from: Lehr- und Forschungsbereich Agrarberatung und Agrarkulturen, Frau Pohlner, FB 21 der GhK, Steinstr. 19, D-3430 Witzenhausen)

Present-day agricultural consulting is for farmers what industrially processed dry feed is for their animals. Common to both consulting and dry feed is the departure from traditional skills, is the transition from agrarian cultures to a universal, technicized agriculture, that comprises production, marketing, processing and consulting. The yardstick for judging a new agriculture like for example ecological farming is whether it fits into the rich tradition of the art of husbandry.

These are Groeneveld's main propositions. The book is a collection of essays and lectures centred round the above topics and compiled into 7 chapters. Included is one article each by Werner Troßbach and Jochen Kuhnen (both colleagues of Groeneveld's at the Gesamthochschule Kassel).

The most important section of the book is devoted to methodology (pp. 23-72) – the methods dealing with the development related sciences as well as with the practice of development aid. The leitmotif throughout is the call for re-thinking. The quest among researchers for unequivocal results and the desire that these should be transferable and universally applicable come under particularly severe criticism. For, according to Groeneveld, this means the loss of diverse ways of thinking and consequently of the elimination of a vast number of social, cultural and technical options. It is only *one* conceivable world agriculture and *one* conceivable type of development assistance that destroy traditional agrarian knowledge. Thus the development experts degrade independent Third World farmers to laymen, dependent on charity. This is illustrated by the transfer of seed and genes. "Fatal development aid is the result of a successful development policy" (p. 38), a colonisation of the Third World for which the industry-oriented Third World sciences pave the way.

Structural violence (pp. 75-105) is diagnosed in several fields that are seen to be inter-related though they have at first sight nothing to do with each other: in the impact of the innovations of modern agricultural methods which culminate in the totally destructive "grow or perish", in the replacement of regionally adapted "seedlings" by "industrialized seed" that can be used more or less anywhere, thereby degrading autonomous farmers to the status of mere consumers and dependants of international seed producing companies; and, finally, in the structural identity of hunger in the developing countries and affluence in industrial countries, the two sides of a world economy in the interplay of disparate national economies and regions.

That science can, by using its own power of definition, be part of this structural violence has been demonstrated impressively since this book appeared: a small

group of agronomists with close affinities to the Green Revolution and responsible (partly) for its organizational aspects, has defined itself in a blatantly ideological manner as "the value-free science" and, in the controversy about "hunger and affluence" forced the Protestant aid organisation *Brot für die Welt* ("Bread for the World") to submit – one can read up on this in *Zwischenbilanz einer Kontroverse*, published in October 1987 by *Brot für die Welt*.

Since the Second World War, development has been defined by scholars (who thus exerted power) in the sense of *world* development and this has had far-reaching political consequences (pp. 109-151). World development requires world markets, world markets need standardized world commodities, including world "economy crops". World economy crops replace naturally cultivated crops and destroy "subsistence", the synchronization of the spectrum between cares and possibilities (p. 145), they destroy agrarian cultures whose traditional art of earning a livelihood is now considered to be insufficient to earn one's bread and butter. Development and culture are antagonistic concepts, which means perforce that cultures are destroyed (p. 114).

A categorical re-thinking (pp. 155-173) is the consequence pleaded for by Groeneveld. It opens the possibility of a new orientation in *action* (p. 163), in agriculture and development aid. Further "examples of interference" (pp. 177-192) are the world conference on drugs, atomic energy and disaster relief which, itself the real disaster, is often the sequel to a natural phenomenon. In the theoretical and practical development business it is often not so much the problems of foreign countries that matter but personal pre-conceptions and vested interests.

To sum up: Sigmar Groeneveld's "Brotkünste" is a highly critical discussion of agricultural and development policy; furthermore, it evinces a conceptual clarity and theoretical consistency rarely met with in this field. Empirical evidence is always examined as to its underlying assumptions and implications. The author writes a smooth style which nevertheless places quite some demands on the reader: the book makes very gripping reading. The individual essays were written on different occasions, yet they are so skilfully arranged and edited that one has the impression of a composite whole. Repetitions that do admittedly occur make it possible to pick up the book at various places depending on one's own interests, be they more practical or theoretical. The book can thus be recommended to all interested in agricultural or development policy: experts, the layman and, above all, students of the respective subjects.

Bernhard Glaeser