



Biodemocracy: An Introduction

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Abstract Biodemocracy refers to a balance between political and ecological democracy. Essentially, biodemocracy is all about the responsibility of all engaged citizens to respect the environment. It involves the prevention of all forms of ecological degradation such as noise and physical pollution and support of environmentally friendly practices and policies. Biodemocracy requires us to rethink responsible consumption and production through an explicit recognition of the interdependence of all life forms. This paper is a brief introduction to the concept of biodemocracy.

Keywords Biodemocracy, corporatocracy

Introduction

As public access to and control over the commons has eroded, so has true democracy. For democracy to thrive, for racial, economic, social, and environmental justice to take deep root, and for sustainability to flourish new visions are needed to respond to ecological dilemmas in a culturally diverse global world and interconnected earth.

Today, a corporation or government entity may discover a natural substance found in a Third World location, isolate valuable genetic material, and have a monopoly on commercial uses of the genetic product for long. Biodemocracy would recognize the rights of source communities and require that nation-states renounce the international trade structures

Biodemocracy raises timely questions about how the science is being done. It strongly believes that disease and starvation will not be solved by corporations. It insists that every nation has a duty to protect its rights from globalization. It encourages local residents to come together and learn from each other. With a shared commitment and collective responsibility to putting our values and vision into action, we can and will counter their corporate bio-devastation with our peaceful uprising for biodemocracy.

Concept of Biodemocracy

The term "biodemocracy" was first introduced by Ronnie Cummins in 1994 as a major goal for their organization: The Organic Consumers Association (OCA). Biodemocracy refers to democracy and reverence for all creatures, in opposition to biotechnology and bioimperialism.

It involves collectively raising our voices to stop the inordinate corporations, technocrats, and politicians who are leading in the wrong direction [1]. It requires that bio-imperialism be replaced by biodemocracy. It recognizes the rights of local communities to the biodiversity they are used to [2].

Some see biodemocracy as a concept that allows us to think of the political and the ecological as not separate or opposed but interrelated. It helps to build more resilience for the twin environmental and developmental challenges of the future. It aims to bring together scholars, policymakers, professionals,



businesspersons, parliamentarians, teachers, entrepreneurs, citizens active in media, non-governmental and civil society sector, and students to think about these challenges and produce a knowledge-bank. As an interdisciplinary, boundary-crossing concept, it focuses on co-creating knowledge networks. Such networks are important in understanding and addressing the role of individual political consciousness and consent can foster responsible production and consumption [3]. Figure 1 shows Bhutan as biodemocracy [4].



Figure 1: Bhutan as biodemocracy [4]

What Biodemocracy is Against

Advocates of biodemocracy are strongly engaged in a fundamental battle. Without being exhaustive, they fight for some global issues including the following:

- **Food Sovereignty:** Advocates fight for food sovereignty against profit-at-any-cost corporations that are threatening our environment, our health, and our climate. Without biodemocracy there can be no political democracy. A critical mass of educated consumers, food and health activists are organizing a powerful movement aimed at overthrowing North America's trillion-dollar junk food Empire. If they succeed in stopping buying GE ingredients, US farmers will drastically slow down on their planting of GE crops [5].
- **Biotechnology:** Biodemocracy is a compelling critique of the biotech industry and genetic engineering. It resists biotechnology with its industrial exploitation of biotech research, agricultural, pharmaceutical, and weapons-manufacturing corporations at the expense of our health, popular food sovereignty, and biodiversity. People are concerned about the recent breakthroughs in biotechnology [6]. Sustainable, community-based alternatives to corporate biotech are possible and viable in the twenty-first century, the "biotech century."
- **Genetic engineering (GE):** GE is extending humanity's reach over the forces of nature as no other technology has ever done. The biotechnology boom in the United States and other advanced nations has massively increased corporate demand for natural resources (genetic materials) found in the developing world which yield cures for diseases as well as cash. Biodemocracy requires an immediate moratorium on the genetic engineering of the permanent genetic code of plant and animal species in the US. 19 states in the US have passed laws restricting Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). Most Americans want GMO foods to have mandatory labels. American consumers, like their European counterparts, are wary and suspicious of GE foods. They resist to be guinea pigs in a biotech food safety experiment. They want biotech and food companies to put an end to the deceptive practice of



radio and TV marketing of GE-tainted foods as “natural” and falsely claiming that GMO labels would significantly increase food costs and hurt family farmers. There is a shift from GE foods toward organic and sustainable food production [7]. Figure 2 shows an organic activist seeking to eliminate the use of GMOs in food production [8].

- *Modern-day biopiracy*: Biopiracy is already occurring in some developing nations. This implies some corporations use the wisdom of indigenous peoples to understand the uses of plants and then exploit them commercially, giving them little or no compensation. Biodemocracy would recognize the contributions and rights of source communities.

Other issues include global capitalism, oppression, biodiversity, bioethics, and bioimperialism.

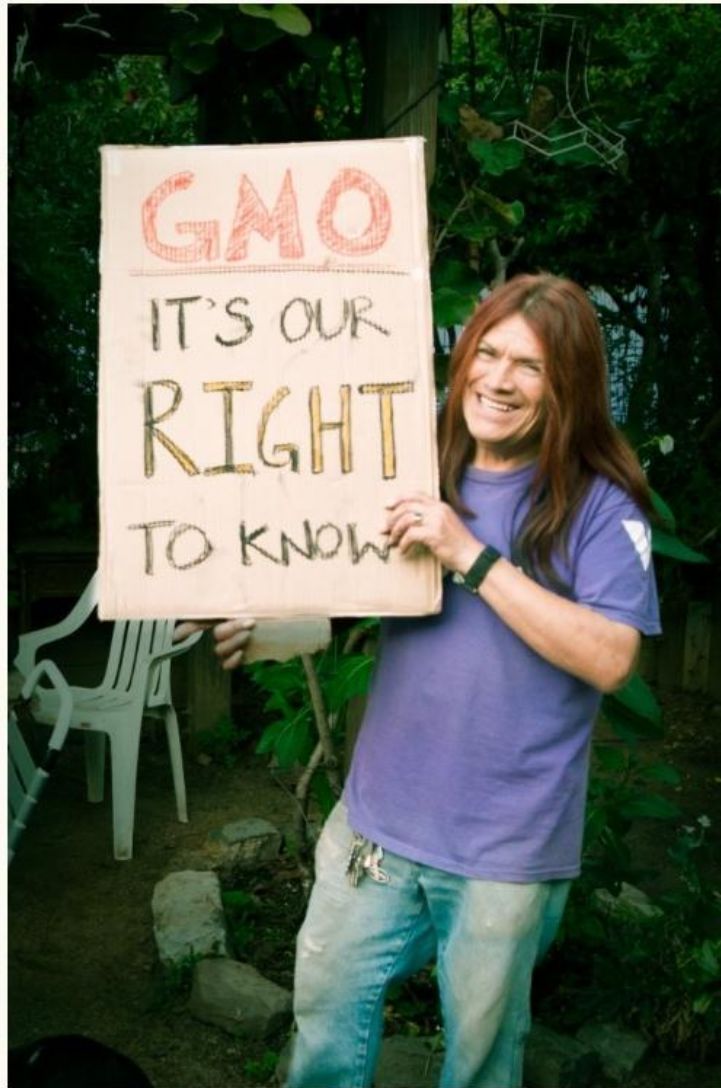


Figure 2: Organic activist seeks to eliminate the use of GMOs in food production [8]

Benefits and Challenges

GE crops and foods have absolutely nothing but hazards to offer consumers or the environment.

Biodemocracy seeks the best balance between creating employment and rural livelihood generation while simultaneously maintaining biological and social ecosystem sustainability.

With biodemocracy, it is not going to be easy to fool people in United States and other industrialized countries. However, it is a tough challenge to find the right balance between economic and livelihood opportunities. A lot of organic and local food activists are mobilizing to label or ban GMOs. Their point is that when you do not label, you give the impression that you are hiding something. They are also speaking out against general



agricultural and food practices such as chemical-laden junk (food that constitute the bulk of America's diet), antibiotics, growth promoters, climate disrupting nitrate fertilizer, and inhumane, pollution (of groundwater, farms, and gardens), food waste, fraudulent labeling, and deceptive advertisement. These practices pose a threat to public health, the environment, and climate stability.

It is argued that the animal-inclusive "biodemocracy" in which humans and nonhumans should treat each other with mutual compassion and courtesy, is both compatible with, and potentially in conflict with the tenets of the Earth Charter. There is currently no federal law or FDA regulation on GMO labeling and is there no federal prohibition on state GMO or other food safety labeling laws. However, there are over 200 state food labeling laws in the US. It is not unlikely that any federal court overrule and nullify the numerous state laws. There is a compelling state interest in labeling genetically engineered foods [5].

Conclusion

Biodemocracy is a way of thinking about the relationship between science, religion, and the environment in the twenty-first century. Although no one seeks to overturn democracy, we should all make effort to tackle the problem of how to make the saving of our planet consistent with democracy. Saving the planet requires restrictions and sacrifices from all of us.

The organic and natural health movement is growing, getting more popular, and becoming more radical. The nationwide movement against notorious chemical companies like Monsanto (the most hated corporation on the planet) and GMOs is larger and stronger than ever. Biodemocracy would require the political will on both ends of the spectrum. Southern governments must refuse to allow their resources and people to become commodities of the North. The battle to minimise human-induced climate change has to be a worldwide endeavor among cooperating states. In this battle to save the planet, we must not cede our food sovereignty rights but let biodemocracy prevail. For information about biodemocracy can be found in the books in [9,10]. To join Biodemocracy movement, visit the website:

<https://www.organicconsumers.org/essays/biodesmocracy-or-corporatocracy-food-fight-our-lives>

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