

# International Workshop

## Transforming Agri Food Systems in Rural/Urban Contexts

Berlin

July 10-12, 2025

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut



Ibero-Amerikanisches  
Institut  
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

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Agri-food system changes concerning issues of sovereignty, justice, democracy, environment/climate, labor, and health, among others, demand academic attention and effective political action. In particular, the transition of agri-food systems towards agroecology involves reorganising rural/urban relationships that have structured cities and their surroundings up to now. Land use competition and speculation, low incomes for farmers and workers, the stagnation of food and environmental policies, and the concentration of power in the food industry and among retailers all pose significant challenges for initiatives seeking to transform situated food systems towards agroecology.

In the public conference and one-day workshop, we aim to bring together scholar activists and NGOs from different countries involved in the transformation of food systems and rural-urban linkages to comparatively analyse theoretical perspectives and debates, land and distribution policies, alternatives, and concrete experiences driving changes towards agroecology, food sovereignty, and food justice.

## Organizers and Funding:



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# Organizers

## Barbara Göbel

Barbara Göbel is Director of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz) in Berlin and also Honorary Professor at the Freie Universität Berlin. She is Principal Investigator and project leader of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (2017-2026), sponsored by the BMBF. She worked at the Universities of Göttingen, Tübingen, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Cologne, and Bonn (Germany), and has been Visiting Professor at several universities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and the USA. Her main research interests are knowledge asymmetries and geopolitics of knowledge; collection institutions and digital transformations; socio-environmental inequalities and resource conflicts in Latin America.

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## Kristina Dietz

Kristina Dietz is Professor for International Relations with a focus on Latin America at the University of Kassel, Germany. Her research focuses on conflicts over land and mining, energy transition, agrarian change, socio-ecological transformation, global environmental and resource politics, social movements, democracy, and participation. The regional focus of her work is Latin America, particularly Colombia. She is co-editor of the Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies (with Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Bettina Engels, and Ben McKay).

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## Bettina Engels

Bettina Engels is Substitute Professor for Peace and Conflict Studies at the Department of Political and Social Sciences at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research and teaching focuses on agrarian change, class and labor, social movements and popular struggles, recent conflicts in the Sahel, and conflicts over land and mining. She is editor of the Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies and the Review of African Political Economy.

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## Facundo Martín

Facundo Martín is Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) and Professor at the Geography Department of the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza, Argentina. He investigates agrarian transformations and land and water politics in Latin America. He is a Georg Forster Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (2024-2025) and visiting researcher at the Universität Kassel and the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut.

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# Public Conference Programme

Thursday, July 10, 2025

**Location:** Simón Bolívar Saal, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Postdamer Straße 37, 10785 Berlin Kulturforum

18:00-20:00 hs.

## “Food for Justice: Coalitions for Socioecological Transformation”

**Keynote Speaker: Prof. Dr. Renata Motta (HCIAS, Universität Heidelberg)**

Discussant: Facundo Martín (CONICET, AvH Fellow); Moderator: Barbara Göbel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut)

### Abstract

Marcha das Margaridas is a coalition of women's movements for an alternative rural development model that has organised a significant protest action every four years since 2000, bringing women from across Brazil to the national capital. Wir haben es satt! is the street protest from the coalition Meine Landwirtschaft (My Agriculture) in Germany, that brings together farmers, environmentalists and consumers that takes place every year since 2011, to demand agrarian and food change. The presentation is based on research findings from the BMBF-Research Group Food for Justice on these two coalitions and compares these two broad coalitions demanding a socioecological transformation in food system, looking at what are considered the main injustices in each context.

**Renata Motta** is Professor at the Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS), University of Heidelberg, and had previously been Junior Professor of Sociology at the Institute for Latin American Studies, at the Freie University Berlin. She is the Principal Investigator of the Research Group Food for Justice: Power, Politics and Food Inequalities in a Bioeconomy (BMBF), focused in Brazil and Germany. Her academic work follows the role of social mobilisation and state-society relations in struggles where competing visions of food and agrarian futures are at stake, as in her monograph book Social Mobilization, Global Capitalism and Struggles over Food (Routledge, 2016). She co-edited Food and Social Change: Culinary elites, contested technologies, food movements and embodied social change in food practices (The Sociological Review Monograph Series, 2021) and Global Entangled Inequalities: Conceptual Debates and Evidence from Latin America (Routledge, 2017).

Contact: [renata.motta@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:renata.motta@uni-heidelberg.de)

# International Workshop Programme

**Friday, July 11, 2025**

**Location:** Conference Room, 1st floor, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Postdamer Straße 37, 10785 Berlin Kulturforum

**09:00-09:30**

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Barbara Göbel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut), Kristina Dietz (University of Kassel), Bettina Engels (FU Berlin) and Facundo Martín (CONICET, AvH Fellow)

**09:30-11:00**

## ***Panel 1: Theorising and Investigating Food System Transformation and Rural-Urban Linkages***

Moderation: Kristina Dietz (University of Kassel)

### **Guiding questions:**

**Which theories, concepts and knowledge infrastructures help us study the transformation of agrifood systems? Which theoretical and methodological perspectives are needed to overcome the rural-urban divide and understand the rural-urban linkages?**

**Impulse 1 - Louis Thiemann** (ISS-Den Haag; Universität Bremen)

### **“Rural-urban Foodworker Alliances: The Third Class as Degrowth Agent.”**

Louis Thiemann is a Research Fellow with the Political Ecology research group at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Den Haag) and the Institute of Anthropology and Cultural Research, Universität Bremen. His work enables conversations and organising between the scattered "third spaces" of global capitalism.

Contact: [lthiemann@uni-kassel.de](mailto:lthiemann@uni-kassel.de)

**Impulse 2 - Bettina Engels** (FU Berlin)

### **“Rural, Urban, Something in Between or Beyond? Preliminary Reflections on the Terms”**

Bettina Engels is Substitute Professor for Peace and Conflict Studies at the Department of Political and Social Sciences at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research and teaching focuses on agrarian change, class and labor, social movements and popular struggles, recent conflicts in the Sahel, and conflicts over land and mining. She is editor of the Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies and the Review of African Political Economy.

Contact: [bettina@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:bettina@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

### **Impulse 3 - Barbara Göbel** (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut)

**“Why knowledge infrastructures matter? How to overcome persistent knowledge asymmetries between knowledge infrastructures? Potentials and challenges of knowledge infrastructures for comparative research designs”**

Barbara Göbel is Director of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz) in Berlin and also Honorary Professor at the Freie Universität Berlin. She is Principal Investigator and project leader of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (2017-2026), sponsored by the BMBF. She worked at the Universities of Göttingen, Tübingen, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Cologne, and Bonn (Germany), and has been Visiting Professor at several universities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and the USA. Her main research interests are knowledge asymmetries and geopolitics of knowledge; collection institutions and digital transformations; socio-environmental inequalities and resource conflicts in Latin America.

Contact: [goebel@iai-spk-berlin.de](mailto:goebel@iai-spk-berlin.de)

**11.00 - 11.30 Coffee break**

**11.30 - 13.00**

#### ***Panel 2: What Land and Data for the Agri-Food System Transformation?***

*Moderation: Facundo Martín (CONICET, AvH Fellow)*

#### **Guiding questions:**

**How and by whom is land controlled in metropolitan/urban peripheries? What perspectives and initiatives exist concerning land access to revitalise regional agri-food systems? What role does digital data play in these and the transformation of agri-food systems in general?**

### **Impulse 1 - Jan Brunner** (AbL, Mitteldeutschland)

**“Land Grabbing and Concentration in Germany: Recent Developments, Political Struggles and Consequences”**

Jan Brunner holds a doctorate in political science (FU Berlin), is Managing Director at Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) [Working Group for Peasant Agriculture] for Mitteldeutschland and is a land policy expert at AbL.

Contact: [brunner@abl-ev.de](mailto:brunner@abl-ev.de)

### **Impulse 2: Louisa Prause** (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Leipzig)

**“The farm as digital factory: Agrarian labor and the future of food production”**

Louisa Prause is a political ecologist and works as a Senior Researcher at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig. Her current work focuses on agrarian labor and the (digital) future of food production, the role of digital tech in socio-ecological transformations and the implications of the twin transition for labor and nature.

Contact: [louisa.prause@ufz.de](mailto:louisa.prause@ufz.de)

**13:00 - 14:00 Lunch break**

**14.00 - 15.30**

***Panel 3: Food Sovereignty, Labor and Resistance***

*Moderation: Facundo Martín (CONICET, AvH Fellow)*

**Guiding questions:**

**What role do labor, gender, “race”, and class play in food sovereignty struggles? What role does the State play in promoting, blocking, and/or regulating distribution and marketing? What kind of power relationships are established between producers, distributors, and consumers?**

**Impulse 1 - Rita Calvário** (DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Lisbon)

**“Power, Political Strategy, and Food Sovereignty: Feminist Insights on Struggle and Resistance”**

Rita Calvário is Researcher at DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, the Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies at the University of Lisbon. With extensive experience in rural sociology, peasant studies, and political ecology, her work primarily focuses on rural social movements, agrarian change, food transitions and alternatives, and the power dynamics within agrifood systems, particularly in Southern Europe.

Contact: [Rita.Calvario@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:Rita.Calvario@iscte-iul.pt)

**Impulse 2 - Claudia González Marrero** (ISS Den Haag; Universität Bremen)

**“Illegal Sovereignty: Why Food System Transformations Thrive on Breaking the Law. Cuba 1980-2025”**

Claudia González Marrero is a scholar-activist with the Food Monitor Program (Bogotá). This food sovereignty observatory focuses on everyday social relations around food in authoritarian regimes in Latin America. She is also a Research Fellow with the Political Ecology research group at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Den Haag) and the Institute of Anthropology and Cultural Research, Universität Bremen.

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**15:30 - 16:00 Coffee break**

16.00 - 17.30

**Panel 4: How to Change Agri-Food Systems in Times of Regression?**

*Moderation: Kristina Dietz (University of Kassel)*

**Guiding questions:**

**Which actors are seeking to transform agro-food systems towards agroecology and food sovereignty? What are their strategies and forms of action? How have labor relations been transformed? What challenges and threats do they face in the current concrete contexts? What experiences of transformation and democratisation of systems are politically relevant?**

**Impulse 1: Elisa Greco (ROAPE)**

**“Class Relations: How to Change Agri-food Systems in Times of Regression”**

Elisa Greco works on the triad of land, capital and labour in agrarian contexts. She is interested in class dynamics, land grabs, collective land claims, rural labour regimes, rural strikes and resistance, financialisation and agriculture. Her current project concerns the restructuring of rice farming in Tanzania and Uganda. She is editor of the Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE). She has held positions at the University of Manchester (UK), the University of Leeds (UK) and Lille Catholic University (France).

Contact: [eligreco@yahoo.com](mailto:eligreco@yahoo.com)

**Impulse 2 - Dhouha Djerbi (Geneva Graduate Institute)**

**“Alternative Development or State Cooptation? Rural Discontent and Appeasement in Kais Saied's Tunisia”**

Dhouha Djerbi is a PhD candidate in the International Relations and Political Science department at the Geneva Graduate Institute and affiliated with its Gender Center. She is a researcher of state-society relations in the North African countryside, with a particular emphasis on Tunisia, where she is an affiliate of the Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment. Her dissertation research focuses on contentious peasant and rural politics in the aftermath of the 2010 Tunisian uprising, examining how gender and labor regimes influence political behavior. Her work has been published in Antipode, The Journal of Peasant Studies, Review of African Political Economy, and Middle East Law and Governance, among others.

Contact: [dhouha.djerbi@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:dhouha.djerbi@graduateinstitute.ch)



### **Impulse 3: Thomas Fickel (FU Berlin)**

#### **“Agonistic Perceptions of Progressive Social-ecological Movements by German Farmers”**

Thomas Fickel is a political scientist and scholar activist, currently associated as a guest researcher at the Freie Universität Berlin. His research deals with farmer protests within social-ecological transformations, focusing on political regression. Thomas finished his PhD on "Agonistic framing in biodiversity conflicts between agriculture and conservation in Germany" at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main and is engaged in activism on land justice in Germany. In the past, he worked at the ISOE-Institute for social-ecological research in transdisciplinary projects on biodiversity and agriculture.

Contact: [tfickel91@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:tfickel91@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

#### **17:30 - 18:00 Final Remarks**

#### **Gabriela Merlinsky (UBA-CONICET)**

Gabriela Merlinsky is a sociologist, Senior Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina (CONICET) and Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). She holds a PhD in Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires and a PhD in Geography from the University of Paris 8. She has been visiting professor at universities in Europe, the USA and Latin America.

Contact: [gabriela.merlinsky@gmail.com](mailto:gabriela.merlinsky@gmail.com)

#### **18:00 -18:30 Wrapping up and looking forward**

*Moderation: Barbara Göbel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut)*

**What and how can we learn from cross-regional and comparative analyses? Assessment of the main outcomes of the workshop and discussion of future possibilities of collaboration.**

#### **Saturday, July 12, 2025**

#### **10:00 - 15:00 Field Trip**

Visit to an agro-ecological food production and supply initiative in the Berlin-Brandenburg area.