

Moderatorin:

Hallo und herzlich willkommen bei wir sind schon mal los. Der Podcast des Ernährungsrates Berlin der Ernährungsrat Berlin ist der zivilgesellschaftliche Zusammenschluss von Akteur innen, die sich alle für die ökologisch nachhaltige und sozial gerechte Nahrung, Produktion und Verteilung im Raum Berlin einsetzen.

Wir verstehen uns als ein Bündnis, das zivilgesellschaftliche Positionen und Forderungen für ein zukunftsfähiges Ernährungssystem öffentlich vertritt und ihnen zu politischer Geltung verhelfen sollen.

Unser Ziel ist es, den zukunftsfähigen Wandels Ernährungssystem ist in der Region aktiv voranzutreiben vom politischen Konzepte Ernährungssouveränität ausgehend wollen wir ein Klima gerechtes Ernährungssystem für Berlin, dass die planetaren Grenzen wahrt.

In unserer Podcast Reihe Wir sind schon mal los Ernährungs wende live porträtieren wir Menschen und Initiativen, die bereits diese Forderungen durch ihre Arbeit umsetzt.

Mein Name ist Janna Schneider und heute sprechen wir über Ernährung im Kiez.

Dafür habe ich hier Samie Blasingame von dem Projekt "Food in My Kiez". Der Podcast wird heute auf Englisch sein, ihr findet aber auch ein übersetztes Transkript des Podcasts auf Deutsch in den Shownotes.

To show you what Samie is doing in her project, here are some clips from her interviews with people on the streets and their relationship to food.

O-Tones:

- Actually there is this saying “good food is good mood” and I am 100% this comfort food type.
- Essen ist Leben. Ich liebe es zu essen.
- I believe in you are what you eat. So I try to take care of myself and put good foods into myself.
- I’m having a membership at a SOLAWI – Solidarische Landwirtschaft – so I’m getting every week really nice, fresh veggies from Oranienburg. So I’m getting them every week and this changed my cooking routine, because you get really regional and seasonal food and then you have to try something new because you get veggies you’ve never even seen before.
- Wenn ich einkaufen gehe für zuhause, dann gucke ich immer, wo es herkommt, Deutschland, Spanien, ich achte darauf.
- Essen bedeutet mir Zufriedenheit, keine Bauchschmerzen und Genuss. Ich genieße es auch, meistens koche ich nur das, was ich gerne esse.
- For me, it’s this nourishing thing, like you want to have something that warms you from inside and gives you some energy back.

Samie, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. Would you like to briefly introduce yourself?

Samie:

Sure, hi Janna and thank you so much for having me. My name is Samie Blasingame and I'm a researcher and facilitator, creative and now podcast producer based in Berlin.

My background is in environmental policy. I did my masters in that in Berlin and worked internationally for a few years on sustainable agriculture projects.

And yeah, I'm kind of taking my background in and sustainable agriculture and food chains and have now decided to focus more on Berlin's food system. And yeah launched this project last year too to look more into that.

Moderatorin:

So what exactly does your project entail?

Samie:

So "Food in my Kiez" is a project that seeks to expand the conversation around the future of food in cities and about what is considered to be an ecologically resilient and socially sustainable food system. By ecologically resilient, I mean a food system that's based on forms of agriculture that do not deplete natural resources and instead work in balance with them. And by socially sustainable I mean a food system that provides food that is fresh, healthy, affordable, accessible and respectful of the needs and desires of those who are part of such a system.

Moderatorin:

So why would you say is the project especially important for Berlin?

Samie:

Berlin I think is an interesting case study and a great focus for the first season of "Food in my Kiez" that's because Berlin's it's like a little island in the middle of all of this agricultural land in Brandenburg, but what exactly grows out there and how it grows is more or less unknown to the average consumer. I think there's lots of potential for Berlin to establish a strong and resilient regional food system where local farmers are championed as land stewards and where an abundance of local products are prioritised for short distance consumption, there's already many projects that aim at that and have those sort of aims, but I think they could and should be reaching many more people, so that's kind of why I decided to focus on Berlin. Also because I live here.

Moderatorin:

So in your project you try to tell stories around like food sustainability of food, generally and in different Kiezes and how the food system in Berlin works and you try to do this via different modes of storytelling so you have an Instagram page, you also have a blog and now you're also planning to develop a podcast. And so, why did you choose these different modes of storytelling that you did by like mixing different channels of yeah, storytelling.

Samie:

That's a really good question and I'm happy that you asked that because the the idea to do the podcast really was quite spontaneous. I would say I mean when I launched this project it was a way for me to deepen my understanding of the food system around me and I wanted to do that through more visual media so photos or short clips, video clips of people in the city involved in the food system, and then I would write longer form blogs to explain that and research it and more. That was the original plan for the project, but then at the beginning of this year 2021 I started to draw out like a proper concept for the project and apply for some funding. And that led me down the road of applying for podcast funding and so then I had decided to do it in a podcast.

And I've enjoyed doing it through this medium. I think audio is really interesting and I've been having fun playing around with how this can be, and all the voices I can bring together into it, but that was never the original plan. And because it's basically just me, I have a few people that are helping me with different aspects of making the podcast at this point, but because it's basically just me, the kind of different forms of media have not been as strong as I hoped, so I really would have been focused on getting the podcast done and the next phase will be making the social media reflective of what came out of the podcast.

And then in future stages of the project, I really hope to get back to the short short clip, short film Visual Media that I wanted to do in the beginning and I think once people hear, the podcasts will hear the different elements that could be expanded on in future phases of this project, and I look forward to those as well.

Moderatorin:

I feel that your project, of course it relates to food and food has so much to do with who we are with culture, with community, there's a lot of like different aspects intersecting there, and so I wonder, how do you personally relate to that project? Because of course you interview other people and they tell you their stories, but of course food is also a very personal topic, so how would you say do you relate personally to that project?

Samie:

Uhm, yeah, I think that the reason I choose to focus on food and sustainability work or like within the climate movement is because food is such an integral part of our lives.

You know it's something we all do every day, and most of us love it and so it's something that really brings people together. I mean, I've always said like it may not be like the biggest thing you can do for the climate, but it is a huge part of it and the community aspect is really important to me.

So yeah, besides the food stuff I was just saying, I mean my educational and professional background has so far been in policy, but I'm a community organiser at heart. I find lots of joy and bringing people together and trying to weave as many people needs together as possible as a basis of sustainable and impactful public policy.

And I really believe in collective dialogue and co-created solutions, so that's really at the heart of this project trying to figure out ways that we can move forward and live better collectively, and doing it in Berlin, a place I've called home for over 6 years now has been interesting because the project really was a labour of love which required me to get out and connect or reconnect with people in the city, something that is not as easy as it may sound.

Berlin for all of its magic and intrigue, is not the easiest place to settle in it. It takes quite some time to feel comfortable. Or even welcomed here. And I'm pretty sure that's a common feeling amongst many immigrants so. Yeah, I was told actually at the start of doing this project that if I wanted to work and Food and Agriculture here I would have to do it in German and I won't lie, that stunted me for a little bit.

My German was decent, but I was like OK, do I really see myself like perfecting my German before I do this work that I find so purposeful and as I said before, food is such an integral part of life. It felt strange for a language to be or for language to be a barrier, and being part of such important discussions, especially in such an increasingly multicultural city such as Berlin. So I made the decision to do this podcast in English because.

Although my German like I said is quite decent at this point. I just passed the B2 exam by the way, it's it's also my third language and, so I obviously, feel more comfortable in my first and there's many food eaters in this city that would prefer English and who I believe definitely need to be part of these conversations because they're here, but because a lot of them also have the financial capital to make the decisions that allow the food system to be pushed forward.

We'll get into into that and the equity issues there. But, but yeah, I think there's there is a need for this to be done, multilingual. Of course I did some interviews in German and on the street I often spoke to people in German and a lot of the project was me just having conversations that weren't recorded. And I also did some interviews or allowed people to respond to me when I ask them questions in French or Polish because they felt more comfortable in those languages.

And I think that yeah, like again, this multilingual aspect was very important for me and for a Community project such as this.

Moderatorin:

And I think you make a very good point there. I think this is particularly true in a city like Berlin that combines so many food cultures in one city. From that I actually wonder: we have a food system. Everybody is involved in this food system. But how do we ensure that not only a very small and elite group of people actually take part in shaping that food system? And a follow up question from that: that's why I think it's very interesting that you chose to call your project not "Food in Berlin" or something like that. But actually you chose to use the word Kiez which is the the smallest area in Berlin and like it's in the town. It's "Stadtteil" in German. And you chose that geographic scope for your project. How do these two points link? But also how do they? How are they important? Like why did you choose Kiez rather than a bigger geographic scope?

Samie:

Yeah, thanks for that question. The decision to use Kiez was was really just because I was connecting it to where I was at. But also when actually thinking about the concept of the project, like the idea of exploring the Kiez is really about connecting with what's around you. It's like that whole idea of the project, every episode is trying to inspire people to get out there and talk to their neighbours and build community, which I believe is the basis of any sort of sustainable endeavour.

So the Kiez as a focus that's your little community. You know, what I love about Berlin so much is that I can pop into my little corner store and grab an oat milk or whatever I need and run up to my flat.

You know, so I do go into the store quite often and I see those people on almost every day, and I think that's important that we think more about who those people are and and what they're doing and what's around us.

And so the idea of exploring Kiezes is really to make it more communal and neighbourly.

Moderatorin:

In that aspect you spoke about like corner shops and you know like smaller places where people meet that are very integral to like the community of the Kiez and while this is still the case to certain extent in Berlin, of course the trend, actually goes somewhere else, right?

The trend goes to a centralization of food access rather than like going to corner shop or like going to like a small organic shop owned by just the individual most food is actually provided within Berlin through big supermarkets, actually conglomerates.

They often import the food from either other areas in in Germany or even outside of Germany, the EU or often even outside of the EU.

And so, how do you think that actually plays a role in the Berliner food system? Where do you see that going in terms of like access to food in Berlin but also availability of certain foods? What is actually available with like only a handful of big chains making the decision what you can actually buy in Berlin.

Samie:

So when I said corner shops I mean honestly what was in my mind is my corner shop where I was living in Moabit. It's a EDEKA subsidiary, you know, and it's independently owned, so there are unique products in there but it is a EDEKA subsidiary, you know, and so I thought that I said that and imagine that is like my local shop. But no, that's not the local shops I I would ideally love to have, but still I think it's important to identify those places and to talk to people in there. You know, like within this project I finally asked like what's up with this?

Or like who owns this place or who runs this, you know? And so yeah, that's part of the industrial food system, but it's part of the food system that's here.

And so talking with those people who work there or run that, or manage that shop is also part of changing the food system.

So yeah, there's that. And yes, we are definitely influenced by these conglomerates that control much of the food that reaches a city. But Berlin also has still so many little shops that have little artisanal products or food shops that make ready food but also little things that you can buy there. And those are spotted around the city all over.

I've found even in the project as well, that people frequent those as much as they frequent the supermarkets you know and so it becomes really a structural issue to change what is available rather than what is available in the city already because lots of things are available but industrial food is still there, you know.

So if we wanted to not see that it would be more of a structural thing - policy change - than asking people to choose, I think.

Moderatorin:

So connected to that there is this concept called food apartheid, which especially in the US has become a bigger issue where in rural areas or in areas with a majority of people having a lower economic socioeconomic status, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to access healthy food, not even looking at the sustainability part of it, but just healthy foods.

And you were touching on that a little but do you feel like this is where we are moving towards in Berlin as well?

For example I live in Lichtenberg and it's not even far out, but it is outside of the city centre for example the existence of organic supermarkets is increasingly dropping in comparison to the centre.

Do you feel like or have you noticed in your project talking to people that this might be something that we also move closer to or do you feel like this is a trend that is not actually happening in Berlin?

Samie:

I don't think I know enough to say whether it's a trend or not. It's not something I particularly focused on in my questions with people but I have loosened up my perspective on characterising food in these conglomerates as particularly bad. You know, I think there's important reasons for why these places exist until we are able to shift things and it just made me think of like the freshness of cucumbers or tomatoes in a restaurant who get their products from the Großmarkt immediately and then those same products that get left and then moved to a truck and then finally end up in a supermarket. And then we get them. And they're not very nice anymore.

You know that's the problem that there's just not fresh in there, not that the system they came through makes them unhealthy or not good for people.

Even in Moabit there's not much like fresh farmers markets either, but we have a huge EDEKA with tonnes of stuff in there.

So yeah, I'm not sure if I would say it's moving towards that trend because Berlin.

I mean, Germany and Berlin still still takes care of their their people more than a place like the United States. I mean, I just got here. Long Beach is a food desert for sure.

I wouldn't say we're moving towards that trend. I would feel uncomfortable saying that we're moving towards that trend, but we should be cautious of that, and that there's places where people are now being pushed out too, because Berlin rents are very high and people can't stay in the centre anymore.

They're being pushed to places where the same structures they were used to where farmers markets are so prevalent, and alternatives to industrial food and these supermarkets are available, those structures aren't available yet in these farther places outside the ring. And even in rural places in Brandenburg, you'll see farmers who are not necessarily buying food from their neighbours who are growing vegetables if they are, but they go to the supermarkets as well. That could also be considered a food desert, so yeah, it's definitely something to be cautious of but I'm not sure if we can compare it quite yet to the US food apartheid.

Moderatorin:

Thinking of the struggle to access food in Berlin and then also in more rural areas in Brandenburg, my question would also be at the moment Berlin. I've read somewhere that Berlin can actually only feed itself for three days from the foods that are available in the city, if all supply chains would fail.

When you think about that, what does that say about Berlin's food sovereignty, and where we actually stand when it comes to feeding ourselves from the region be it in Berlin, be it urban agriculture or outside of Berlin where we have Brandenburg which actually has a lot of agricultural farms.

Samie:

So food sovereignty is a concept in which people who produce, distribute and consume food also dictate the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution. This is a common definition of it.

And to me that means that every actor along the food value chain has some sort of autonomy over how food is produced, distributed and consumed.

And it means that many different needs and perspectives needs to be brought together. Solutions need to be negotiated, so it's a process of co-creation. As I said before, something I very much value is the co-creation of of such solutions and they I believe need to be rooted in empathy and community because everyone is just trying to survive at the end of the day, especially in a city, and so being empathetic to where anyone is on their path towards a more sustainable lifestyle. If that is even their goal.

I think food sovereignty is an interesting concept for a city, which are notoriously individual places.

Because it's extremely important that we get back to more collective structures for our societies as we move forward and routing conversations and food sovereignty is, I think, one way to do that, and I think a way to do that in Berlin as well, I think the conversations right now, at least, that I've been in around agricultural policy, are very focused on farmers and farmers needs and land rights and things like that. And if we are connecting with activists working on that and understanding their struggles, we in the city can really help push forward and move a more food sovereignty approach to how the food system is changing.

Moderatorin:

From that, what do you think are the three biggest challenges at the moment to actually move Berlin towards sustainable food sovereignty?

Samie:

Yeah, so I'm sure there's many more great minds that could answer this question in more detail, but the things that came to my mind as far as the biggest challenges were stagnant policies. So Berlin and Brandenburg are still bound by the European Agricultural CAP that is still giving more subsidies for land size rather than the type of agriculture that's being produced.

So theres is that Berlin and Brandenburg are still bound by these EU CAP regulations that are still giving a much larger percent of the subsidies to farmers or people, not even just farmers, people with large land sizes rather

than land stewards who are actually taking care of their land and doing a form of agriculture that is ecologically sound, and that's a huge huge problem, especially for farmers who would want to switch to more ecological production methods.

They're stuck in a system that they told was how they should develop and move forward. And now we're asking them to suddenly change, they need to have the financial support and systemic support to help them do that.

So, stagnant policies is one. I think another issue is a lack of collaboration in politics. Still, there are so many branches like the food one or the climate one or the city one that don't necessarily collaborate so much. And that's not a Berlin only issue. That is a global issue where people are in their silos and not collaborating in this very necessary intersectional way.

And then the third thing with for me would be if still very price sensitive culture, especially around food. I mean there's lots of reports about how Germany is the country with the least value placed on their food, and so in a global food system, Germany gets like the the lowest grade food sent here because they know that people won't pay more for it. So already we're at a disadvantage. The food that gets to our through our borders is like lower grade food because we don't value food as much. I say we 'cause I've lived here for so long.

Yeah, so that's an issue the the the price sensitive culture, especially around the value of food. People don't want to pay more for their food. And I think there's lots of issues there. Lots of equity issues, but I think in a place like Berlin that's also fighting for rent caps and a more equal housing situation, we need to look at that all in conjunction with each other, because if we're paying so much for rent, obviously we don't have as much for food. But if we switch those priorities around, we can. We can build better societies, we just have to choose to.

Moderatorin:

And I think, especially in Berlin, it also links a lot to our social welfare system that is definitely lacking in many aspects, especially in a in a city where I think every sixth person receives social welfare in some form or other, often Hartz IV which I could not say like any like proper numbers right now, but I think it's like around like 200 to €300 for kids that they budget for food and of course, that does not leave you with much choice of food that you can actually buy, and obviously that is also a part of how you can be a member of a food system and actually participate in an equal amount to other people and so I think that's a very very good point.

What do you think, also maybe you picked up on that in your in your interviews in your project - do you think we need a more decentralised food system in Berlin, we have already touched upon lot of big players, not only when it comes like supermarkets but also when it comes to farmers.

So for example, I've read that ALDI owns a huge amount of land in Brandenburg where they actually get funding from the European CAP policies that you just mentioned as well. Which is a huge player of course, ALDI. So do you think we need more regional, more small scale initiatives and players within our food system?

Samie:

So my straightforward answer is yes. I think any systems that are more decentralised will be better for us moving forward, but that also requires more people to be engaged and participate in a food system. So there's projects that are trying to get people more people to be farmers, even part time farmers. Like the tiny farmer project. That's because if we want to have better agricultural systems, we need more labour and so that requires us to give a little bit more of ourselves into systems and structures and projects and ideas that we find beneficial or interesting or like better for us and so generally I think decentralisation not just in the food system is the very good way forward.

Yeah, definitely land decentralisation. It's locked up and a lot of investments and conglomerates that are not don't have the people or the planet as their top priority and also with production structures like mills. I was learning a lot about mills and how we have very centralised milling facilities, but if we were to decentralise those more we could have much more variety of grains and food in the city. So so yes, I would say yes, we should decentralise.

Moderatorin:

One concept that has become more and more popular, I think probably Germany-wide, but I can only speak for Berlin, is the concept of “Solidarische Landwirtschaft” or Solidarity agriculture we call it, which is obviously a very interesting concept. With consumers actually being part of the farm, being members of the farm, paying a monthly price and getting whatever harvest the farm has. Do you think this is one of the ways forward? Or maybe you've also spoken to one of the SOLAWIs in your project? Do you think that's a sustainable approach towards getting amore sustainable food system in Berlin?

Samie:

So yeah, I think the I think so, the SOLAWI projects are super beneficial and probably one of the best ways to support a better food system. Definitely to support local farmers. The one I've been a part of is “Speisegut”.

And when I learned of them all, I also learned that something they're lacking is is depots. You know, it's not like they couldn't serve more people, but they were lacking people to actually start a pickup point, which is a depot where someone manages a location where the farm brings a certain amount of boxes each week.

And so I decided to start one, you know, and like I was trying to get a community around. And then I found out I had to move and so that kind of put a wrench in those plans. But but yeah, basically they need more people to start up a depot and yeah, as land changes and people can start more farms, there will be more opportunities to have more SOLAWIs and I think right now the people involved in those is quite homogeneous and I think there's a big big gap on who can be part of these, and I think there's a bit of a bad Rap about them being expensive.

It's not so much if you think about what you get over time. I mean over the month there, I think there needs to be a bit of a perception change for consumers on on that being inaccessible in that way, and I think some of the best SOLAWI projects are rooted in depots that have a community that really talks to each other and like shares recipes and experiments with each other. Because you get a bunch of vegetables that you may have never seen before, so it's important to have some folks around that you can you know ask questions and and have fun with.

Moderatorin:

And I think you're touching on a very important point there. We we only touched upon it just very briefly in the start, is that the problem is that many of the actors within the food system, even consumers, or, you know, people trying to set up depots with all of these, are very homogeneous groups.

And I wonder if you talk to people in the Kiez. So I think you have a different access to who you actually speak to, and I think that's definitely like one of the values of your project.

Very like bottom up approach rather than like you know, just like being in the ivory tower thinking about solutions to a problem.

But you really speak to the people, so how do you think can we make sure that everyone in the city is involved in designing Berlin's future food system rather than just like a small group of people that are often of a very homogeneous background.

Samie:

I think a way to ensure more people are part of this conversation is to meet them where they're at. I mean, that's really what I was trying to do with this project as well.

I wasn't going in with any sort of like this is how things should be and you should get here.

It was like where are you at? What do you do? What do you like to eat? What do you want to eat? Like where do you buy your food?

And trying to open up a conversation and not everybody was open to that conversation, and that's OK.

I've been to a lot of projects that seem to think that they should just create the space and people will come, but it's actually very often that you need to go to people you can't expect people to come.

You need to go to the people that you want to see part of projects and talk to them. Create a relationship with them and it is slow. It is intersectional. Organising is slow because it takes you like you are taking or you should be taking the time to really understand people and their needs.

And so it's not something that happens overnight, and it's something that has a lot of trial and error, and there's in a place that is majority white like Berlin. There is likely going to be a lot of anti racist trainings and learnings that need to happen before you will properly connect with some of the communities that you probably are trying to but just recognise that and know that it's a learning process and yeah, don't be afraid to fail, I'd say.

And do the work you know and that is very unaccounted work. You're right that this project has focused on people in the Kiez and has really tried to talk to people. But you know that's resulted in the fact that I spent a lot of time just talking to people and not necessarily recording them, and so I wonder, I had to go back through all of this content and see how much I was actually able to capture, or whether I'll have to retell those stories myself, because I had lots of great conversations, but sometimes that was just me sitting by the canal with people.

Moderatorin:

I think that's a good example because often it is forgotten, what a food system is actually supposed to do in a food system is not there to only produce sustainable food or regional food.

And I feel like there's a little bit of disconnect often in this local movement, where you buy your foods local, regional, sustainable etc. And then especially in a multicultural city as well, many people obviously want to live their culture through food and that often that can also mean you know buying imported mangoes. What do you think about this tension between these two poles?

Which are both important though, and both have the right to exist of course.

Samie:

So I think it's an interesting question and something I also have been thinking a lot about with the project.

Because sustainability and equitability. Simply put, there's definitely tension there because eating an entirely local seasonal diet, which in many cases is more sustainable is simply more expensive.

So not everyone has equitable access to that.

But then you've asked this example of of buying foods you grew up with, or foods that are traditional for your culture, and that brings up a whole other issue in my mind, because First off I'm pretty sure the idea of access to culturally relevant food related to the concept of food sovereignty.

Which was meant to make a statement against the capitalization of our food system in cases where local communities are stripped from their traditional food sources due to, for example, land being converted for cash for crops. So that's one thing. And obviously something that we need to fight against, but that doesn't necessarily include someone like me. For example, moving to Berlin and desiring, I don't know, like California Mexican food.

Or any other diaspora foods for that matter.

Because now I'm in this this new place and what is traditional and grown in this place is different, and so it's definitely been something that's on my mind when we consider those needs and desires like the desires of diaspora communities in their new homes.

I think it brings up another issue for people living in Berlin, because buying and eating local or regional is not the ultimate solution to fight climate change within the food system.

Eating way less meat and avoiding food wastes are the top two things to do so supporting local regional food systems has many benefits, most notably strengthening local economies and the livelihoods of local farmers.

But the emissions from transport and our food system are so minimal. What's really important is the type of agriculture and the land that was converted for that type of agriculture rather than where the food is coming from.

So for me, I think while we should try to buy local and eat local as much as possible.

People that does not bar us that should not and does not bar us from buying and sourcing equitably and ecologically produced food and products from other parts of the world.

It's really about supporting global agriculture that is ecologically resilient and socially sustainable, and so you can do that through fair trade.

And direct trade and being conscious of who those farmers are in different parts of the world as well, you know. So that's what we have to be focusing on and, that's not always happening with the mangoes that you see in Berlin, so you still should be conscious of that.

Moderatorin:

This also seems to me like a moot argument. Actually, what it does, it shifts problems to individual people rather than tackling the big challenges such as industries or also fossil fuel.

So I think we've heard a lot about, you know the Berlin food system, the issues or challenges. But also where it could hopefully move towards.

So coming back a little bit to your interviews again and to the people you talk to, the initiatives you talked to. What would you say is the one story that you came across your work that really stuck with you the most, or also the biggest lesson you have learned in your interviews.

Samie:

So, two things have come to my mind. The first story, I suppose that kind of stuck with me and I'm still kind of processing myself is about how the food offers have shifted over time, and particularly thinking about diaspora foods in the city.

Berlin has so many Vietnamese places, for example, and they're all quite similar and I feel like a lot of the diaspora, like typical stereotypical diaspora foods are quite similar around the city, and I've had lots of conversations on why that is and how it's changed over time and it's not a nice story, you know, that food is often dictated by pallets of people who are native to Berlin rather than the people who want and need and enjoy that food for their cultural purposes, and that is problematic in a way.

And it only really started to shift as those same pallets had the privilege to start travelling and then come back and demand different food. And I haven't fully processed it because at the same time, I think those people making that food would like to make better food, but will the Berlin economy support the value that food then provides? You know will people want to pay more for it because we also have like I said, a price sensitive culture around food and a disvaluement of diaspora foods. Folks seem to think that that type of food should be cheap and readily available.

And so that's that. It was an interesting story to come across and try to figure out exactly how to tell it. Because now also we see a lot of newer generations of German-Vietnamese folks creating food spaces that are really authentic to how they grew up and how they've always eaten their food, and people do value that, and will pay for it. So what are we trying to say about the other foods? I don't know. But that sort of value meant that the value attached to diaspora foods and who is able to call it authentic, is something I think we definitely need to explore more and be more conscious of. So that was an interesting story.

Moderatorin:

This actually also reminds me of the material value that is attached to food. For example, prices in Asian restaurants are quite low around €8, maybe €9 for the main dish, whereas main dishes in German restaurants, especially like Schnitzel, for example, can be up to €20.

Samie:

People assume that food from certain cultures should be cheaper than others and it's really not about the culture, it's about the craft in my opinion, and it is about how people are making food and often these diaspora foods have so many more layers and nuances and flavours and craft behind it, and so honestly that should be valued more, but yeah, I think it's changing. It's definitely not how it was ten years ago. And even in the last five years. The idea around.

Food and the value of food in the city is constantly changing, so I don't think it's at 0 or anything.

I think there's lots of people who are conscious about this in the city now, but the way that this food has changed over the last decades is often with this kind of background of, yeah you can call it racism behind it, so it's something to be conscious of.

Moderatorin:

For example, the rumour that MSG and especially Asian foods would cause cancer or is somehow detrimental to health, which actually was disproven but it's still very much in the minds of many people.

Samie:

Definitely that I had a really good conversation with someone for the podcast about MSG, and like the horribly racist stereotypes that the whole world latched onto for that and it perpetuates. Still you see it in Berlin as well. When places have to write "no MSG" on it, you should know that is a remnant of a very racist rumour that was sent around the entire globe.

Moderatorin:

Thank you for that story and was there any like big lessons that you've learned that way, especially valuable to you?

Samie:

So I'm still kind of listening through a lot of the content I got, but one of the biggest lessons I have in my head so far is from the last episode. The last episode is focused on collaborations. We can be inspired from, and so I tried and every episode I have community questions where I try to ask people on the street like about the theme somehow and I consider Berlin to be a place full of community projects and community things, "Gemeinschaft" is all over the place.

But when I was asking people on the street about community projects that they really like, they didn't even have to be about food, just any sort of community thing that they think it works really well.

There was very little answers to that, like very little collective imagination. It felt like unlikely how we can work together and create systems that are more collective and I found that really interesting for a city that I've always found to be kind of rooted in that individuals that I stopped on the street didn't have that connection, and I think that's something to consider as we try to build these more sustainable systems that people aren't necessarily connected to that. So thinking of how we communicate better, the work that people are doing who were engaging with it.

I think it was a big lesson for me.

Moderatorin:

So what do you think we as Berliners and our listeners also can do to contribute to a more sustainable and equitable food system?

Samie:

Yeah, I think first and foremost encourage each other to value food production and all of its forms much more than we currently do.

This means for me, connecting with farmers, connecting local farmers, spending time on farms, experiment with cooking seasonal vegetables.

And value the craft that goes into making good food. And that's not only at fine dining restaurants. It's in many places around the city, so talk to the people that make your food.

Ask about the story behind your favourite dish. Learn how to make that dish from scratch so you can see how much work goes into it.

And cook with your friends.

Experiment, have fun and just yeah, learn to love real food again.

That's what I hope will help people contribute to a more sustainable and equitable food system. It's, yeah, connect with your food. Connect with people.

Moderatorin:

Today we have discussed possibilities on how to expand the conversation, run food and around food systems that are both environmentally and socially sustain.

We have also looked at the importance of the Kiez as a small area of town for communities and cultures in Berlin and how these communities are shaped and transformed by economic processes, such as for example, the growing monopolisation of food stores. We have also thought about how to include more people into the shaping of

Berlin's food system and the work the powerful actors in the food system need to do to share some of that power, for example by conducting anti racism trainings.

We have also touched upon the question whether Berlin needs a more decentralised, smaller scale food system and we looked at the example of solidarity agriculture.

Thank you so much for your unique perspectives and your insights, especially around food in the Kiez and also a more equitable access to the food system. Thank you very much.

Samie:

It was my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me. It was lovely and I hope that folks listening got a bit from it.

If you're interested in listening to food in my Kiez, you can find me on Instagram at @FoodInMyKiez or on my website foodinmykiez.com and send me a message. I would love to hear from you.

Moderatorin:

And of course we have everything also linked in the show notes and on the website of the Ernährungsrat as well.

So, und jetzt noch einmal kurz zurück zu Deutsch. Vielen Dank fürs Zuhören und wir hoffen, dass ihr etwas mitnehmen konntet! Wie immer, abonniert gerne unseren Podcast, ihr findet alle Infos zu diesem Podcast in den Shownotes und auf der Webseite. Wir haben Samies Instagram-Page verlinkt, wir haben auch ihren Blog verlinkt. Solltet ihr irgendwelche Fragen oder Vorschläge haben, emailt uns gerne an Podcast@Ernaehrungsrat-Berlin.de.