

## Chapter 15

# Coexistence as Assemblage: The Multiplicity of Dairy Models in Switzerland



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During meetings with farmers, I often hear them say that each farm and each situation is unique and can only be understood in its irreducible distinctiveness: the specific soil, plot layout, heritage and history, outlet, expertise, passion or desire, etc. The ethnographer must take such an observation seriously. However, the human mind insists on looking for points of convergence and lines of demarcation to bring order to the mishmash of the diversity of reality. Whether we are farmers, agronomists, sociologists, civil servants or others, we mobilise the analytical tools familiar to us in an attempt to find unity in diversity. It is this very fundamental thought process that allows us in this book to mobilise the concepts of agricultural ‘models’ and their coexistence. In itself, the exercise makes sense and offers fertile ground for reflecting on the complexity of agriculture in a given territory and its articulation with the perspectives for this territory’s future, as we see in this book’s various chapters. However, every process of categorisation brings with it a risk: the fixation with reifying a concept, its slide from the status of a tool for dynamic thinking to that of a box in which the complexity of reality is locked up and concealed, as my interlocutors insist. The concept of an agricultural ‘model’ is not immune to this risk, whether it refers to an expert’s ideal-type, to a project of committed actors (a desired ideal) or to a regulatory and normative standard.<sup>1</sup> When an ideal-type is accorded too much importance, it masks specificity and originality. An ideal model requires a specific translation for each application context. And it is essential to accept that a standard always offers only a partial and reductive vision. In contrast, once put into practice, a model becomes anchored in space and time, and its limits dissolve in the richness of reality.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the triple definition of the agricultural ‘model’ proposed by this book’s editors.

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In this reflective chapter, I wish to use the case of the Swiss dairy sector and what makes it internally diverse, particular and united at the same time to propose an approach to coexistence and to the concept of a model that does not divide reality into fixed analytical categories. To this end, I will start from categories commonly used to make sense of the diversity and complexity of agricultural worlds, and will discuss their value and limitations: lowland and mountain, milk and cereals, production and environment, industrial and artisanal (Protected Designation of Origin, PDO), conventional and organic, policies and market.

I propose to use this process to reflect on coexistence by shifting the focus away from agricultural models (without giving them up altogether) as central elements of the analysis and paying more attention to the multiplicity of modes of engagement and integration in an agricultural and territorial assemblage, and to the links between them. This approach draws on Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) concept of the French term 'agencement', which is usually translated as 'assemblage' in the international literature. Even more than the concepts themselves and a discussion about them, what interests us here are the possibilities offered by such an approach to think about the multiplicity and coexistence of agricultural models in a non-exclusive, dynamic way that is open to possible futures (Forney et al., 2018), in order to help make them more precise and effective tools for territorial and food governance. The notion of assemblage is thus offered as a compromise between a reification of models and a renunciation of the attempt of categorisation.<sup>2</sup>

## **1 Multiplicity and Uniqueness of an Agricultural Sector as a Starting Point**

To think about and represent the multiplicity of social forms of agriculture and agricultural models (*who* produces?) is also to ask a series of questions about the *why* (what place in society?), the *for what* and *for whom* (with what partners and for what markets?) and the *how* (what techniques?). I will use these basic questions to trace a path through the Swiss dairy sector by calling into question certain categorisations that are commonly used to analyse the diversity of forms of dairy production.

### ***1.1 Who? Producing Milk in Switzerland***

Swiss dairy farming is a relatively homogeneous agricultural sector. In the vast majority of cases, it is represented by a highly capitalised and technologically advanced family farm, small in size by international standards (average of 25 ha). This relative homogeneity is the result of history and a strong and generally protectionist

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter was written as part of the New Directions in Agri-Environmental Governance project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, which I thank here for its support.

agricultural policy, which was able to alleviate certain economic pressures during the twentieth century while actively promoting productivist agricultural modernisation. Today, protection against imports through customs duties and production subsidies have largely given way to other instruments tied to environmental specifications that the vast majority of farms (nearly 98% across all sectors) conform to, most notably out of economic necessity. Thus, these ‘Required Ecological Performances’ (REPs) define a national environmental standard. These successive protections have however not prevented the sector’s erosion, which has accelerated since the abolition of the milk quota system in 2009.<sup>3</sup> Falling prices and a lack of coordinated quantity controls have led to a phenomenon of restructuring and growth in production: fewer producers, but more milk per farm. In one decade, from 2007 to 2017, the dairy sector lost almost 30% of its producers.<sup>4</sup> To summarise, this political and economic context provides a shared framework that induces a certain uniformity in the sector, between the adoption of agri-environmental parameters and market pressures.

Milk production can also be described through its diversity. One of the main demarcation criteria generally used in public discourse (media, producer organisations, public services, etc.) is between the plains and the mountains. However, what underpins this demarcation has always varied depending on economic and political contexts. The specialisation of the mountain dairies in cheese production has historically taken place as a complement to the cereal orientation on the plains and because of the emergence of export markets. Competition from American wheat in the nineteenth century pushed the farms on the plains towards more intensive milk production, and mountain cheeses saw new competition with the development of cheese dairies on the plains (Ruffieux & Bodmer, 1972). Nevertheless, post-war food security policies have revitalised crop production (Moser, 2003) and provided strong support to mountain farming.<sup>5</sup> The story of dairy specialisation, partially presented here, is far from straightforward when put into a historical perspective. Dairy territories have been constructed and deconstructed according to different logics. Natural conditions interact with industrial history, the active promotion of agricultural techniques (such as silage), and the circulation of agricultural products, to name just a few factors. Today, the progressive liberalisation of the dairy sector is producing new forms of heterogeneity through differentiations in increasingly competitive markets. To summarise this initial overview, dairy farming is caught up in a set of forces, some of which have an obvious homogenising power, while others are leading to increasingly specific processes. This observation also reminds us of the fact that ‘*who* produces

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<sup>3</sup> The milk quota system was introduced by the Swiss federal government in 1977. It allocated a maximum production level to each farmer. Subsequently, trading in these quotas (sale and rental) was allowed to impart more flexibility to the system. Its dismantling left the issue of quantity management in the hands of market forces.

<sup>4</sup> According to the website of the Swiss Milk Producers’ Federation: <https://www.swissmilk.ch/fr/producteurs-de-lait/marche-du-lait/faits-et-chiffres/graphiques-illustrations/chiffres-annuels/>.

<sup>5</sup> This preferential support for mountain areas continues to this day in the form of the direct payment system: in 2017, mountain farms received an average of CHF 84,431 each in direct payments annually, as compared to CHF 66,344 for farms on the plains (according to the 2018 Agricultural Report of the Federal Office for Agriculture, <https://www.agrarbericht.ch/fr>).

milk' can only be understood by situating the question in a broad societal framework that combines technologies, markets, and national and international policies.

## ***1.2 Why? The Opposition Between Production and the Environment***

The dairy sector is the most important one in Swiss agriculture in terms of its actual size as well as of its symbolic significance. However, it costs more to produce milk in Switzerland than in other countries.<sup>6</sup> Looking beyond differences in calculation methods and their technical and political issues, we note that the factors behind higher production costs are the small size of the farms, the often difficult natural conditions (mountain farming) and the high cost of labour and equipment. In a context of progressive liberalisation, these costs pull down the farms' economic performance. However, several mechanisms still protect Swiss producers and Swiss markets from foreign competition. One example is the ban on the import of fresh milk for the Swiss market. (This is allowed, however, for processing into products for direct export.) The fact remains that milk has lost a significant part of its economic value and that this is perceived by many producers as a fundamental decline of the productive and food functions of agriculture.

But in the context of Swiss agricultural policy based on promoting multifunctionality, asking *why* milk is produced forces us to think beyond the roles of producers and food providers, and to confront an upsurge in societal expectations from agriculture and political objectives concerning it. Over the past 20 years, the Swiss federal government has implemented a policy of paying farmers for the public services they provide that are unremunerated by the markets. Thus, in 2017, each Swiss milk producer received on average the equivalent of about Euro 60,000 per year from the federal government<sup>7</sup> in the form of direct payments in return for complying with required ecological performances (REPs) and for participating in various programmes for animal welfare, promotion of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the amount received through the direct payment system is on average equivalent to one third of the farm's income and exceeds the activity's final profit. In other words, the income from the sale of milk does not cover production costs, and the farmer survives on the money earned from providing environmental services. No doubt, averages gloss over huge differences, and the significance of direct payments in a farm's economic performance varies according

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<sup>6</sup> For example, a study comparing Switzerland and Norway attributes the high cost of Swiss production primarily to structural costs (especially machinery and buildings), identifying in particular 'real investments in buildings that are 47–63% higher in Switzerland than in Norway, net of subsidies' (Gazzarin et al., 2014: p. 254).

<sup>7</sup> According to the 2018 Agricultural Report of the Federal Office for Agriculture, <https://www.agrarbericht.ch/fr>.

<sup>8</sup> This is a somewhat of a rough summary of a complex system. For further information, see the website of the Federal Office for Agriculture ([www.blw.admin.ch](http://www.blw.admin.ch)).

to many factors (type of production, geographical location, size, strategic choices). Different farming models and production methods are inevitably constructed in interaction with and based on this policy framework. However, this same policy produces a fundamental distinction between production and the environment, which is the topic of public debates and finds expression in the actors' discourses. This separation (or decoupling) between the market (products) and environmental services (direct payments) is indeed this policy's fundamental principle. The result is a tension between a de facto overlap (subsidy instruments as determinants of agricultural practices) and a fragmentation of sense (the abstract separation between productive and environmental functions).

### ***1.3 For What and for Whom? 'Quality' Agri-chains and Strategies***

The Swiss dairy sector is usually divided into two main agri-chains according to the type of final product. First, the 'cheese milk' agri-chain represents about 43% of total volumes and is based on several PDOs, some of which are well-known.<sup>9</sup> Because of the restrictions imposed by cheese making (unpasteurised milk), this milk is produced without the use of fermented fodder (silage). The State compensates the farmers with a non-silage subsidy. Second, the 'industrial milk' agri-chain encompasses milk processed by dairy companies into fresh products for the national market—milk for drinking, yoghurt, cream, quark cheese and other products, which represent about 26% of the total volume—or into butter (15%) or other milk preserve products (10.8%) for the food industry or export. The cheese milk agri-chain is better protected against the difficulties that confront the industrial milk agri-chain. This is clearly shown by the significant difference in the prices paid to producers.<sup>10</sup> To complete this first binary overview, we note that the share of organic production continues to grow in the entire sector (cheese milk and industrial milk combined) and had reached about 7% of total volumes in 2018, offering more remunerative and stable prices to producers.<sup>11</sup> As expected, this seems to confirm the advantage of so-called 'quality' strategies (PDO and organic) over standardised industrial production. The idea that

<sup>9</sup> Gruyère PDO (341 million kg) and Emmentaler PDO (207 million kg) together account for more than half of the milk processed by the country's cheese dairies (1100 million kg).

(<https://www.swissmilk.ch/fr/producteurs-de-lait/marche/acteurs-et-structure-du-marche/trasformation-du-lait/>, retrieved 25 November 2021).

<sup>10</sup> According to the October 2021 Milk Price Monitoring report, 77.67 CHF cents per kg for cheese milk versus 65.41 CHF cents per kg for 'industrial' milk, average over 12 months, 'effective ex-farm REP' price (<https://api.swissmilk.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/rapport-psl-prix-du-lait-surveillance-2021-octobre-2021-12-23-fr.pdf>, retrieved 17 January 2022).

<sup>11</sup> According to the October 2021 Milk Price Monitoring report, 88.64 CHF cents per kg for organic 'industrial' milk and up to 92.23 CHF cents per kg for organic cheese milk (Gruyère PDO), 'effective ex-farm REP' price (<https://api.swissmilk.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/rapport-psl-prix-du-lait-surveillance-2021-octobre-2021-12-23-fr.pdf>, retrieved 17 January 2022).

Swiss agriculture should strive for 'quality' in globalised and competitive markets makes for common sense in agricultural circles and in wider society. However, this notion of a quality strategy needs to be rethought, as does the separation between agri-chains. Indeed, the different agri-chains and strategies can also be analysed through what links them.

Let us take a few examples. The Vacherin Fribourgeois PDO, a small brother of the big, well-known PDOs, shares their link with historical cheese production in mountain pastures. Today, the largest producer of Vacherin PDO is Cremo, the second largest Swiss dairy company, which also specialises in the production of industrial milk preserves (butter, powder). The same 'quality strategy' thus brings together producers from the plains who deliver their milk to an industrial entity and mountain farmers who process their own milk in the mountains. Another example: when the Gruyère PDO interprofessional organisation decreed a reduction of 10% in the quantities produced in 2015, the industrial actors bought and incorporated part of the surplus of this cheese milk into their supply chains and thus played a welcome role of buffer for the cheese milk producers. However, such a role can lead to dissatisfaction on the part of industrial milk producers due to the additional pressures resulting from the arrival of new quantities of milk in an agri-chain already close to saturation.

The success of 'quality' approaches also deserves examination. The example of Emmental PDO shows that a protected designation does not guarantee success, even for a cheese with a world-famous name and well-established production structures. Production of this cheese has collapsed in recent years, with periods when the price paid to milk producers has fallen below the average price paid for industrial milk. This uncertainty of economic viability is also found in the industrial agri-chain, where some actors specialising in processing fresh products for Swiss consumers are in a very different situation from other processors whose significant part of the production is destined for other less favourable markets (agrifood industry, international markets, etc.). Furthermore, a discussion on quality-oriented strategies goes hand in hand with the issue of quantity, even if only pertaining to efforts to avoid oversupply or to maintain market share. The cut-backs in quantities imposed in 2015 by the Gruyère interprofessional organisation, for example, made it possible to anticipate and compensate for the drop in exports that an unfavourable exchange rate would lead to. More generally, the possibility for a milk producer to join a specialised agri-chain depends largely on access to production rights. Whether in the framework of a PDO or the organic sector, the strict control of quantities conditions and limits the access to these agri-chains by new producers. In essence, not all producers can adopt quality strategies even if they want to.

These few examples are an apt illustration of a key characteristic of the coexistence of dairy models in Switzerland: the broad agri-chain categorisations conceal a multiplicity of interdependencies and overlaps. These interdependencies are such that it is difficult to imagine the existence of one model without that of the others that complement it.

#### **1.4 How? Grasslands-Rich Country and Yet Fodder Imports**

Switzerland is a grasslands-rich country. The climatic and geomorphological conditions of Swiss agricultural territory confirm the reasoning that since grass is what grows best in this territory, livestock farming, especially dairy farming, is necessary in order to transform the grass into food for human consumption. An analysis of farming practices shows that grass does indeed make up the largest share of feed for Swiss dairy cows.<sup>12</sup> However, practices vary significantly depending on location, breed of cattle and type of farming system. The intensive nature of livestock production in Switzerland also sometimes encourages a significant use of maize, cereal mixtures and protein crops, both on the plains and in the mountains. Dairy cattle feed practices raise the question of production techniques in a more general context, especially because they contrast with the image of a pasture-based agriculture and because Switzerland is increasingly importing fodder, in particular Brazilian soya. Here, coexistence takes place in a network of strong interdependencies: a supposedly sustainable mountain peasant agriculture (the image of a grazing cow), an intensive and 'profitable' agriculture that supports the existence of processing infrastructure (which mountain farmers also need), and a Brazilian monoculture (soya) that provides the proteins that are lacking at the scale of a Swiss agricultural system. There is a tension between an overproducing dairy sector and the import of foreign fodder that makes it possible to exceed the production limits dictated by the availability of local fodder. This tension is coupled with a contradiction between the ecologisation of agricultural practices within the country's borders and what can be perceived as a form of externalisation of the environmental impact of fodder production through its relocation. In this case, the territorial limits of coexistence become blurred.

## **2 Beyond the Hybridisation of Agricultural Models: The Multiplicity of Assemblages**

This overview of the Swiss dairy sector through the prism of its multiple facets confirms the relevance of the concept of coexistence itself. This sector is indeed marked by a diversity of agricultural models which constitute its reality and which interact with each other. The few discussions developed above of the relevance of the usual categories of differentiation of models—whether analytical-descriptive (industrial milk vs. cheese milk) or programmatic ('quality')—in the specific case of the Swiss dairy sector allows us to make some more general comments on the concept of coexistence and to propose an interpretation inspired by assemblage theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980).

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<sup>12</sup> According to a study, the proportion of grass in cattle feed exceeds 80% on average in more than half of the country's dairy farms (Schmid & Lanz, 2013).

## ***2.1 Some Comments on the Concept of Coexistence***

First is the matter of the scale of analysis. What are we referring to when we speak about ‘agricultural models’? Individual farm strategies? Regional agri-chains? General orientation at a country scale? Every agricultural model, as an abstraction, is embedded in a larger framework of an agricultural and food landscape. This is illustrated both by the diversity of the fates of models that at first sight seem similar (between cheese PDOs, for example) and by the predominant role of structures common to different models, such as the direct payments system in agricultural policy. Various agents such as the State, supermarket chains, consumers (in all their diversity), international agreements or even topography and climate contribute to shape models in practice, in their lived form, anchored in a territory and a temporality. This has several consequences that may well be known, but which are worth recalling, especially in the context of territorial development projects. Thus, an agricultural model cannot be considered or designed in isolation from its societal and environmental framework. The models are not simple options between which one can choose freely according to one’s aspirations and individual visions: the situation of each actor, farmer or non-farmer, is constrained and made up of local specificities, access or lack of access to agri-chains and their infrastructure, access to markets (e.g. obtaining of production rights), and the possible presence of legal frameworks (e.g. synergies with an agricultural policy) or economic frameworks (e.g. a PDO or industrial infrastructure), to mention but a few examples.

Second, it seems important to emphasise the interdependence between coexisting models. As shown for the Swiss case, the fates of systems often categorised as binary opposites (cheese/industry; conventional/quality) are in fact inevitably linked. The differentiation of the alternative depends on the existence of a predominant model (what would organic be without conventional?). Complementarity between agri-chains is also evident in the sharing of processing and marketing infrastructure (e.g. PDOs that mobilise industrial structures for production or for managing surpluses), or in the sharing of tasks between the embodiment of an image based on mountain tradition, which is whole-heartedly used in advertising for the entire sector, and the economic viability of intensive production on the plains, which is essential for the survival of processing structures. Furthermore, the cases presented above tend to show that it is difficult to confine agents to exclusive models: networks and agri-chains overlap and intersect. These observations contradict the idea of an agricultural model as a distinct (and transposable?) unit. In other words, the concept of coexistence of models is not as useful for reflecting on parallel strategies in their specificity as it is for focusing our attention on the relationships and dynamics between ‘models’ with fuzzy boundaries.

Third, the concept of coexistence of agricultural models as a tool for reflecting on the diversity of today’s agriculture at a territorial scale contrasts with the reality of globalised agricultural and food systems. The dependence of a part of Swiss dairy production on soya imports from Brazil is a good example. Indeed, the current Swiss model of intensive milk production is reliant on the existence of a complementary

model, several thousand kilometres away, of intensive (non-GMO) soya production. Other examples can also easily be mentioned (e.g. around international seed or animal networks), but we can cut straight to the question that arises: How can we analyse coexistence and territory in such a way that these long-distance interdependencies are not excluded?

Finally, the temporal dimension should not be forgotten just because a territorial approach makes it easy to think about spatial coexistence. The continuous arrangements of the models, according to a constantly evolving context as well as their own dynamics, in turn raise the question about what defines a model's identity and its permanence over time. For example, the prerequisites and factors necessary for producing industrial milk in Switzerland have continued to change over the last few decades (to speak only of the short term), both in terms of agricultural techniques as well as in terms of relations with professional organisations, economic partners and the State. Looking beyond the permanent elements that maintain their identity, how can we integrate this highly dynamic and evolving dimension of the models into their concrete applications? After what degree of transformation and variation, and according to what criteria, will we decide that one model has given way to another?

## 2.2 *Coexistence of a Multiplicity of Assemblages*

The concept of coexistence fundamentally calls into question that of the agricultural model, and in particular the spatial and temporal delimitation of the model in question. For a response, I propose to draw on the notion of assemblage proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1980). More specifically, I will focus on a few central aspects that are especially useful here for rethinking the concept of coexistence, namely the concepts of multiplicity and territorialisation.

### 2.2.1 **Assemblage**

An assemblage<sup>13</sup> is a complex of lines and relationships, organised in such a way that any element or point can and should be connected to another point. An assemblage does not really have a centre, nor a hierarchy between the elements that constitute it, and it always remains open to the addition or removal of elements. To understand an agricultural model as an assemblage, according to these few defining characteristics, is to allow oneself to think of it in terms of its openness and its insertion into wider networks of relationships, and to place the emphasis not on the specificities of the elements that characterise it, but on the links that form it. An agricultural model,

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<sup>13</sup> This definition of assemblage is especially valid for rhizome-like assemblages, in the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, I avoid the detailed terminology of these authors in this chapter as it is not essential to the argument and rely instead on a simplified reading.

understood as a particular organisation (an assemblage) of elements pertaining to the production, processing, distribution and consumption of agricultural products, is thus defined not by what happens at a specific point, but by the set of links that constitute it—including the links that join it to other models.

Similarly, considering models as assemblages resolves the dilemma of the scale at which coexistence should be considered. In an agricultural model, everything can be broken down into a web of relationships, without any imposition a priori of territorial barriers. Thus, the coexistence of agricultural models cannot be defined merely by their co-presence in a geographically delimited territory. It is instead defined more by the links that connect (or separate) the models, uniting them in a broader assemblage, which itself is not on a different scale, but only in a more extensive framework, in a set of links without any real end.

### 2.2.2 Multiplicity: Beyond Hybridisation

Defining agricultural models in terms of assemblages requires us to stop thinking of them as exclusive categories with well-defined boundaries. Such an approach also means that we can no longer characterise the fundamental ambiguity of models as hybridisation. Indeed, the notion of hybridity relies on the assumption of the existence of fixed and clearly defined boundaries, without which it loses its meaning (Pieterse, 2001): there can be no mongrel without the thoroughbred. If the models are conceived from the outset as imperfect, interdependent and interconnected—which is theoretically and empirically verifiable—then the heuristic utility of the concept of the hybrid disappears, except to defend the relevance of ideal-type categories.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) reflections on the notion of multiplicity, which allowed them to free themselves from a binary thinking characterised by the opposition between the multiple and the unique, can lead us to this kind of conclusion. In a way, as an assemblage, a model, in its practical application, is several things at the same time. To confine it to a single category would be to distort it in some way, to distance it from its own reality.

### 2.2.3 'Territorialisation' and Temporality

The concepts of territoriality and deterritorialisation, central to assemblage theory, are useful here, perhaps counter-intuitively, to provide an answer to the question of the temporality of agricultural models. Indeed, these concepts do not refer to territory in the geographical and spatial sense, but rather to the anchoring, the fixing of an assemblage (territoriality) and the constant tensions that tend to dismantle and recompose it along other lines of relationship (deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation). These tensions make assemblages 'multiplicities of becoming, or transformational multiplicities' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 631). An assemblage is constantly subjected to transformative forces (elements that leave it, changing power relations, etc.) that run up against capacities for resistance and inertia. It reproduces itself over

time while transforming itself. Following the example of the Swiss cheese speciality agri-chains, which incorporated the principles of PDO at the turn of the twenty-first century, it can undergo a radical transformation whose effects will be noticeable in the medium term, while still remaining apparently identical in many respects.

Looking beyond the salutary reminder of the inconstancy of all things and the permanence of change, and focusing attention on the tensions between transformative and stabilising forces also makes it possible to integrate more centrally the question of the future of models, their possible evolutions and their potentialities. What makes an assemblage is not only what it is today and was yesterday, but what it is tending towards, with all the uncertainties that this question embodies.

### 3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I wanted to present a description of the Swiss dairy sector and undertake a more theoretical reflection on the issue of the coexistence of agricultural models, as seen through the prism of assemblage theory. Such an effort encourages us to embrace the complexity of the social world and to be wary of simplifying categorisations, whether derived from common sense or from analytical models proposed by scientific approaches. However, we require categories for functional and analytical reasoning. Furthermore, we need the idealisation and simplification of models as projects in order to look at the world in a way that allows us to determine what is preferable, to make decisions and sometimes to commit ourselves. In my opinion, the assemblage approach offers a compromise between a reification of categories and their total deconstruction. Rather than focusing on the specificities of categories and their delimitation, this approach encourages a search for connections and future potentialities. The category, in our case the agricultural model, becomes a snapshot of a moving object caught in a framework that is itself evolving, and which is constituted by its interactions with other categories. The concept of coexistence offers a prism through which to think about these entanglements. What I propose here is that it will play this role well only if it is focused on the inherent interdependencies between models, if it is turned away from the search for ideal models as an ultimate goal, and if it incorporates the inevitable imperfection and ever-changing character of assemblages as an essential characteristic of social reality.

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