Food Policy Council Movement in North America: A Convergence of Alternative Local Agrifood Interests?

Patrick H. Mooney
Keiko Tanaka
Gabriele Ciciurkaite

Alternative Agrifood Movements: Patterns of Convergence and Divergence
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Abstract
This chapter seeks to address questions related to the convergence among alternative agrifood movements as well as the convergence between alternative and conventional practices with a focus on local movements. We reconstruct the common conflation of the alternative/conventional binary into a multidimensional measure that recognizes the complex interactions of economic, political, social, and cultural elements in the construction of convention, alterity, and opposition. We also consider several forms of possible convergence: multi-organizational, multi-sectoral (among elements of the agrifood system), multidimensional (among political, economic, cultural, and social practices), and multilevel or scale (hierarchy of spatially embedded governance units). These matters are empirically examined by focusing on the rapidly growing Food Policy Council (FPC) movement in North America. We address the question of this movement's diffusion, consider its variable linkages between state and civil society, and examine the substantive practices and framings in which the movement has been engaged. While we find that most FPC practices are probably vulnerable to conventionalization, the movements most valuable function may be its modular form. That form functions as an incubator of multi-organizational and multi-sectoral experimental practices in a multiplicity of local environments. Further, ties between FPCs provide a networking mechanism for transmitting information about the successes and failures of those experiments among hundreds of locales and regions. Finally, the discourse among the FPC leadership amplifies values favoring the democratization of food, and articulates beliefs in the right to food as well as notions of food citizenship and sovereignty.

Citation

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