

Convergence and diversity among national agrifood movement organizations: A field-level approach

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Growing public interest in food and agricultural issues now coincides with evidence of increased social movement activity to advance food and agricultural system sustainability, health, justice and other concerns. Research on these “alternative” agrifood movements (AAMs) frames them as diverse, for having distinct issue foci (e.g. sustainable agriculture; food security; anti-obesity), and as convergent, for sharing an overarching belief that the current food system must be changed. This research will empirically examine convergence and diversity among U.S. national-level food and agriculture organizations to improve understanding of contemporary AAMs. While most social movements research recognizes the importance of organizations in efforts to mobilize people and resources, research specifically addressing AAMs has paid little attention to organizations. Moreover, research on AAMs has entirely overlooked how the field-level dynamics among *all* agrifood organizations, not only AAMs organizations, can shape the trajectories for these “alternatives.” This project proceeds by asking: In what ways do AAMs and their organizations converge and diverge to pursue their goals? I apply a field-level approach to AAMs, analyzing not only AAM organizations but also the full set of national agrifood organizations in the organizational environment. After building a data set of national agrifood organizations, cluster analysis techniques will categorize U.S. national agrifood organizations based on their goals and policy statements to determine issue areas of convergence and diversity. Comparisons across clusters will demonstrate similarities and differences regarding the resources these organizations garner, the strategies they employ, and the organizational structures they select. This research develops a more comprehensive understanding of AAMs, and findings will contribute to the growing literature on AAMs by inductively clarifying points of convergence and diversity within the organizational field. Agrifood organizations themselves will benefit from a clearer picture of the organizational field in which they operate, with the potential to identify new allies to better access available resources and openings in the political sphere.