Self-Organized Economic Governance in Values-Based Food Economies: The Case for Alternatives to the Market Driven System

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Our current food system is designed to create wealth, not to feed people.

This is a wicked problem for humanity, on every possible front, and for values-based local and regional food producers.

This last group, local and regional food producers and their "communities, is what my presentation focuses on.
Who am I, and what is my connection to this issue?

I am a scholar-practitioner. With over 10 years of experience in food production, in different bioregions and on both local and regional levels, I have an intimate understanding of the complexity of food systems issues in practice as well as from a theoretical perspective.
Prior Research Questions and Thesis

• What ideals and values are shared within the social ecology of local food producers?

• How do community-based food producers understand themselves in the context of the local food movement and the larger market based capitalist economy?

My thesis suggests emplaced food producers are building self-organized values-based food networks, creating the capacity for transformative social change.
Q2: How strong is your commitment to "place", as a factor in why you are a local food producer? Place being defined as a community of people, or physical community, and/or environment.

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<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>Moderately Important Factor</td>
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Highlights of Our Results

• Commitment to Place
• Quality Food
• Connection to Scale
So….. What’s the Problem?

Despite alternative food movement ideals of re-claiming a more localized, healthy, secure, just and accessible food system; values-driven community-based food producers find themselves trapped within a limited conceptual frame. The local food movement is based on entrepreneurial models and intones the strategies, language, and measurement tools of capitalism. Despite decades of existence, the narrative for the movement has not moved beyond valorizing the language, initiatives, and measurement tools of capitalism.
“Growing healthy organic food for my family, employees, and community and the relationships we build with these same people. Working outside in nature and taking care of our land are important to me.”

“I believe the community is important, we need to have a relationship with both our land and our neighbors and community. We cannot build a better society unless more people invest in this.”

“I derive a sense of well-being in the ability to provide clean food to my family and community.”

“Integrity and authenticity are two of my primary values (and they're in my business plan). I think it's very important for small/local producers to distinguish ourselves from bigger companies that are diluting the language used to describe truly local/sustainable agriculture. Forming genuine, personal, meaningful connections with customers/in the community is key to achieving this.”
Theory

Local/regional food production, as both a social and environmental concern, can be effectively evaluated in terms of the critical relationships between, and contributions to, structures of oppression, power, and democracy. In this way, the potential for more liberatory socio-ecological measures emerge, establishing examples of cooperation, environmental and social justice, mutual aid, decentralized power, and diverse economic structures as new values-based metrics.
Creating “truly sustainable” local food economies...
“Most of human history has been bred, fed, and watered by another sort of economy, but the market has replaced, as far as possible, the social capital of reciprocal obligation, loyalties, authority structures, culture and traditions with exchange, price and the impersonal principals of economics”
(David Fleming, 2016. Lean Logic)

“Today’s economic actors play out their roles on the international stage and so enact the economic drama of our times. But who got to set that state, who defined the telltale traits of the leading roles— and how can we rewrite that story?
(Kate Raworth. 2017. Donut Economics)

“The barriers in the way of that path (Ecocommunities) are certainly not material, but are rather ideological, imaginary, cultural and psychological”
(John P. Clark 2013 The Impossible Community)
What Can We Do?

• Personally Challenge your Own Market Based Mindset
• Educate and Advocate
• Be Willing to Pay More for Food (those of us who can)
• Be Inclusionary and Check Your ”Othering”
• Create Sharing Economies
• Measure Transformational Social Alliances
• Connect your Community to “food” that is nearby, create a network, rethink distribution.
• Create Local Infrastructure
• Use Different Metrics to Measure “True Value” of Place-Based Food
• Re-localize Money (Ithaca hours, Berkshire Bucks)

• Support Reforms on a Federal Level.
• Support Dialogue and Legislation Regarding of Basic Income
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Q4: To what extent does your Desire to Provide Quality Food impact your overall decision to remain a local or regional business?

Q2: How strong is your commitment to "place", as a factor in why you are a local food producer? Place being defined as a community of people, or physical community, and/or environment.

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Change can come from various ideologies. If we were to translate this into a political affiliation which of the labels below would you be most likely to give yourself?

Answered: 292  Skipped: 5

- 61.3% Primary Vegetable and fruit farmers
- 15.5 Diversified, produce and livestock
- 14.48% Primary Livestock
- Top three age groups being 35-44, 25-34, and 55-64
- Most Response from Mid-West and New England,
- 40.4% Have Bachelor’s Degrees

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Bioregional Food Systems Social Networks and Transformative Social Change

Self-organized, values-based food systems relationships build capacity for values-based social change

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