

Dynamics of Alternative Markets

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Presentation Outline

- **Theoretical Framework**

Civic Practice, Governance, Science Studies

- **Synopsis of the Harvey Case**

- **Conclusions**

AAFNs depend upon publicly negotiated and constructed civic markets for credibility and legitimacy

Theoretical Framework

Civic Practice -- open participation in the public sphere

-- **Civic Agriculture** (Lyson, 2004): Alternative Agriculture as a civically engaged process

-- **Reflexive egalitarian politics of food** (DuPuis, Goodman and Harrison, 2006):

an “imperfect politics” in which abandons the idea of creating one “perfect” idea of society. There is no assumed consensus about organic food, but there is a collaboration around the creation of organic food.

Modes of Governance

“...the rationalities, agencies, institutional relations, and technologies of governing that coalesce around particular objectives and entities to be governed”
(Bulkeley, et al, forthcoming).

Science Studies

- Experimental Fields (Hess, 2007; Bourdieu, 1984)
 - The arena in which experimental action as collaboration and competition take place
- Experimental Systems (Rhineberger, 1995)
 - forms of collaboration that focus on the particular material objects created by those collaborations

Science Studies

- **Boundary Work** -- the work that people do establishing, maintaining and struggling over the existence of boundaries between what is considered legitimate and what is considered not legitimate
- **Epistemic Object** -- an object that is both material and a concept
- **Object Conflict** – describes the conflicts that arise in the creation of these boundaries for objects

Major Questions

- How does “reflexivity” and “civic practice” happen?
- How do we create “alterity”?
- Specifically: What are the micro-interactions around the creation of “organic” food as separate from “conventional food”?

Observations

- Rules of interaction
- Legitimacy “organic credibility”
- Civic Markets as a “mode of governance”

USDA Organic Certification



- Organic Food Production Act (OFPA) passed in 1990
- Standards developed and approved in 2002 amidst much controversy (see Vos 2000)
- National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) established as part of process
- Ongoing standards vs. process debate (Guthman 2004)

Harvey vs. Veneman

- Harvey files lawsuit in 2002
- 9 counts against the USDA and their NOP
- Litigation ended with a Maine Appellate court ruling on January 26, 2005
- Harvey was ruled in favor of on three counts: counts 1, 3 and 7

Harvey vs. Veneman

Count One - nonorganic agricultural products

- Jim Riddle, a longtime NOSB member wrote an open letter asking the USDA's NOP to restore the "due process" in standards rulemaking
- Harvey ruling changed this process; USDA required to address and eliminate "blanket exemption" for nonorganics not "commercially available"
- Currently- 38 new nonorganic agricultural product additions pending

Examples

- Inulin

- Hops

» Natural sausage casings

- “Now, if we think that those of us who are in our fifties and sixties are looking at an issue with osteoporosis, I am very frightened about what's going to happen when these children reach their thirties and forties” (Stoneyfield Farms, NOSB Public Hearing, March 28, 2007).

Boundary work with Inulin

“... it improves the product, as far as now we are shipping more product further. And when it gets handled, you have more whey separation, and so forth. And because of the added benefit of the calcium absorption. With so much competition on the shelves right now, in natural and in mass market, we are much deeper into mass market now, that having, if you have choice between two markets and one says on it, increases calcium absorption by 30 percent, that's a very important claim for our, you know, it's an important attribute for our consumers.”

-Coni Francis, Stoneyfield Farms nutritionist

Hops

- This sleight-of-hand has not gone unnoticed in media discussion about organic: a Los Angeles Times article reported that Anheuser-Busch, in a flier aimed at selling their two new lines of organic beer to wholesalers, urged retailers to “Capitalize on this growing market with Wild Hop Lager and Stone Mill Pale Ale.” (Wilson 2007). The same article went on to report that a smaller producer of organic beer, Milwaukee’s Lakefront Brewery has had no trouble finding organic hops and was confused as to why it was unfeasible for Anheuser-Busch to arrange for their purchase or production; a statement likely contingent upon their small relative size. In addition, vociferous public comments against such actions, even in an extremely short comment period of seven days, showed a strong reaction against the addition of nonorganic hops to the list (USDA NOP website)

Harvey vs. Veneman

Count Three - synthetics in organics

- Synthetic ingredients prohibited pursuant to Harvey case
- Readmitted after OTA rider, through congress, altered the OFPA instead creating new, publicly negotiated standards
- Example of boundary work in the construction of the organic object

OTA Rider

- Harvey ruling - January 26, 2005
- 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill with rider - November 10, 2005.
- language change to allow synthetics into production process
- Count 1 upheld, count 3 overturned
- “a discreet, very limited, legislative action” (OTA) or “sneak attack” (OCA)

Organics as Process

- “...organic farming and food handling to continue to evolve. As a consequence, Congress left some gaps in the law. Congress specified the public, participatory process that was to be used to fill in the remaining details of the requirements of the organic certification program authorized by OFPA. In addition to formal rule-making, that process included appointment by the Secretary of a 15-member National Organic Standards Board (“NOSB”) to develop a proposed ‘National List’.”

-Friends of the Court, *Harvey v. Veneman*

Organics as Process

“In the broadest and most basic sense, the OTA rider takes away the organic community’s leading role in setting and monitoring organic standards for processed organic foods, and instead places this power in the hands of the USDA and industry.”

- Organic Consumers Association 2005

Organics as Standards / Product

“The rules themselves are written so that standards evolve as new organic ingredients become available,” and “As organic products become available to replace ingredients on the [National] list, OTA will work to see associated synthetics dropped from acceptance.”

-Organic Trade Association 2005

Conclusions: Organic as Object Creation

- “Organic object” the product of (reflexive) civic practice
 - Organic is an “epistemic object”: both an object and a concept
 - Organic subject to “object conflicts” the struggle over the creation of an object
- When this practice breaks down, the object loses credibility/legitimacy
 - Civic practice necessary to maintain the legitimacy of organic

Conclusions: Organic as Process

- *Process vs. Standards Approach*
 - Standards approach threatens the legitimacy of organic
 - Collaboration/boundary work necessary for the creation of the organic object and market “alterity”

Process, Legitimacy and Credibility

- Industrial organic interests need to recognize that:
 - *Organic is civic practice.* Without civic practice, loses credibility and therefore loses value
 - *Organic civic practice is a process.* Mere defense of standards is bound to fail
 - *Civic practice is ongoing.* Can't say the process is "over and closed"