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Speaker

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Abstract for the session: Organizing through Standards and Value Hierarchies

Values-based Territorial Food Networks (VTFN): Qualifying sustainable and ethical transitions of Alternative Food Networks (AFN)

Localized food growing and livestock rearing initiatives with more direct transformation and commercialization structures, often at comparably small scales, gained ground worldwide. They represent various types of 'alternatives' to industrialised agri-food processes and to standard producers/consumers divides characterizing the global food system. While these alternatives are not always new, they have sparked growing scholarly interest.

Over time, the literature has addressed them via four main conceptual denominations: Local Food Systems (LFS), Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), Civic Food Networks (CFS), Alternative Food Networks (AFN). These concepts have distinct foci, partial overlaps, and they seek to capture an immense heterogeneity of empirical phenomena. Yet this conceptual plurality risks to conceal that these empirical initiatives, despite their differences, have structural commonalities at food system level, relevant for understanding pathways to a sustainable food system transformation.

Therefore, I argue for an overarching concept subsuming the existing ones. *Values-based Territorial Food Networks (VTFN)* would take into account the diverse perspectives from the four main concepts in this field, classify their specificities and address their shortcomings. The social critique at their core, leading to transitions, is constructed around values of 'doing things differently', at the level of specific territories. The more robust and authentic these sustainability values in VTFN are – in terms of environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance – the more likely they are to be incorporated into practices, to become more and more legitimate and gain a voice at negotiation tables, in order to help reorient the current corporate agrifood regime.

Key words

Values-based Territorial Food Networks(VTFN); Alternative Food Networks (AFN); comparative literature review; sustainable transitions