

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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論文題目	<p>Practicing Solidarity between Farmers and Eaters: Understanding the diverse economies of Alternative Food Networks in Japan (農業者と食べ手を結びつける実践の諸相—「多様性経済」の概念からオルタナティブフードネットワークを読みとく—)</p>		
<p>(論文内容の要旨)</p> <p>The current global industrial agri-food system has long been criticized for its negative impacts on producers, consumers, and the environment and calls into question the sustainability of agri-food systems. Many consumers are far removed from understanding the daily realities of agriculture. This is often due to non-transparent and often complicated flows of global food supply chains making it difficult to comprehend how food is grown and how it arrives on one’s dinner table. The global industrial agri-food system also hurts local economies as producers’ economic margins are squeezed in favor of global food corporations and distributors. As a response to these concerns, Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) became a broad umbrella term to encapsulate practices often aimed at investing in a smaller-scale, less exploitative food provisioning that enabled consumers to ‘reconnect’ with producers who grew their food. Examples include practices such as community supported agriculture (CSA), food cooperatives, farmers’ markets, or box schemes that uphold values such as stewardship, sharing, self-production, equity, self-governance, sustainability, cooperation, and embeddedness.</p> <p>It has been a little over 30 years since the term AFN was first introduced within academic spheres. What started as mere niches of resistance and pockets of innovation to oppose the industrial agri-food system, AFNs have been perceived as drivers of transformation of foods systems. However, what determines the success of initiatives like AFNs remains theoretically unclear. A recurring debate questions to what extent the mainstream success of AFNs is representative of transformative agri-food system change or is demonstrative of co-optation by major food retailers and manufacturers that have leveraged the language and imagery of AFNs in their marketing and advertising.</p> <p>Within AFN literature, there have been criticisms regarding the nature of AFN as an over-glorification of small-scale agriculture and its creation of exclusive niche markets accessible only to affluent consumers. This has prompted an interrogation on what constitutes the ‘alterity’ of AFNs, leading scholars to dabble in diverse economies and/or non-capitalist spaces. The diverse economies framework is useful to apply to AFNs as it expands opportunity to analyze AFNs beyond a conventional and alternative binary. This research embodies the diverse economy framing by unpacking and exploring everyday business and domestic life to better understand the complex interdependence of those engaged in AFN practices. In an ideal sense, AFNs provides a space of experimentation to carry out local solutions to fundamentally transform society by connecting to food and agriculture in new ways. Therefore, this research is most keenly interested in understanding the complex relationships that exist within the agri-food system, especially the relationships that exist among actors that are trying to enable transformations of both agricultural production and food consumption for a more sustainable agri-food system.</p> <p>There are few academic works regarding AFN initiatives in Japan, despite efforts to reject the industrialization of agriculture such as the 1960s <i>Teikei</i> movement and consumer cooperative</p>			

movements. While the composition and trajectory of AFNs in Japan share some commonalities with Western European and North American discourse, this thesis explores AFNs in Japan to shed light on how they have unfolded and are progressing. Each of the core chapters is focused on understanding how alterity of AFNs are understood and perceived to consider how AFNs serve as a transformative vehicle for sustainable agri-food systems. By exploring perceptions concerning the efficacy of AFNs from producers, consumers, activists, greengrocers, and public officials' perspectives, this thesis unpacks the challenges and triumphs in how AFNs serve as drivers of transformative change and can expand on the negotiation of new norms to transition the current conventional agri-food system. In the face of growing crisis, including the current COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis, the strength and resilience of AFNs both in their diversity and capacity to strengthen social ties and potential for solidarity building with actors within agri-food systems can serve as hopeful viable solutions.

Chapters 2, 3, and 6 analyze *Teikei* groups and their relevance to today's landscape of AFNs in Japan. Chapter 2 analyzes the evolution of *Teikei* groups and how they adapted to the macro-shifts Japan faced since the 1960s (e.g., rapid urbanization, rise of female employment, and increasing convenience in food consumption). Chapter 3 explores the intergenerational transitions and how *Teikei* organizations adapted to changes in mindsets as younger consumers and producers were less interested in the activism and outright rejection of the industrial agri-food system. I then extended my study to other AFN models that emerged since the 2000s to capture the insights of the younger generation of farmers, consumers, and food retailers. Their activities and approach differ from the social-movement orientation of earlier groups and organizations, such as *Teikei*.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 reflect this more expansive view of AFNs in Japan. Chapter 4 explores organic greengrocers (*yaoyas*) and their roles as intermediaries between farmers and eaters. Chapter 5 dives into distribution challenges that AFNs face and reflects on the conventional agri-food system and its use of wholesale markets. This chapter further investigates the role of aggregation and distribution in agri-food systems to assess the limitations of direct marketing between farmers and consumers, by reflecting on the role of local wholesale markets. Chapter 6 assesses the role of digitalization within AFNs by contrasting *Teikei* and the recent rise of e-commerce sites that aim to directly connect farmer and eater. Chapter 7 focuses on women farmers to analyze their participation in AFNs and how their engagement also points to shifts in gender norms outside of traditional patriarchal structures. In chapter 8, I conclude by relating the many ways that alterity is conceptualized and practiced by several different models of AFNs in Japan to reflect on how transformative agri-food system change is not a linear clear-cut process. Rather the pathway towards transformation is muddled with complexity-- various tensions and opportunities, and holds many dimensions and schisms, such as generational gaps, movement activism vs community building, radical ideology vs entrepreneurial innovation, face to face interactions vs digital, and gender related challenges. For AFNs to be drivers for transformative change, there is greater need to engage with conventional food systems and working to find effective entry points for actors within both systems to engage and build new solutions.