Biotechnology and Professional Power: A Case Study of Genetically Modified Food Policy in the EU and the US

Genetic modification (GM) of food crops is one of the most innovative and controversial technologies of current times. While the use of GM food is accepted in many countries such as the United States, these products have been largely prohibited within the European Union. The differences in policies have had numerous effects on international relations, and have even resulted in a so-called trade war between the two regions. Consequently, a debate involving the use, release, and labeling of these goods touching upon several noteworthy subjects including health matters, economics, environmental concerns, hunger crises, public opinion, and the sovereignty of nations has resulted.

This study is composed of two parallel aims and research methods. First, factors which may have influenced the distinct GM food policies in the EU and the US are discussed. Specifically, a two case study comparison using the most similar systems design is employed. This analysis provides insight into this subject by considering significant similarities and differences of the two regulatory atmospheres. After such a discussion, focus is placed on the second aim of this research which asks if professional power struggles have played a demonstrable role in the transgenic food policies formulated in the EU. Such an inquiry is carried out within the framework of professionalization and considers system disturbances, conflicts, and transformations in its analysis. Furthermore, abstract knowledge is viewed as a key tool in professional contests.

After thorough examination, it is concluded that, although several factors may contribute to the strict transgenic food policies seen within the EU, conflict for professional power has been intrinsic in the development of such regulations.