

# Food sustainability transitions: what citizen-consumer role for the Transition movement?

*An evaluation of six food projects of Transition movements in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands through the ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics*

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*'Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end'*

*- John Lennon*

# Abstract

Food sustainability transitions refer to long-lasting and unpredictable processes of socio-technical transformation guiding food practices towards social and environmental sustainability. An important contribution to these phenomena of structural change emerges from the Transition movement, a grassroots network of environmental movements eager to build food resilience in response to climate change and peak oil. In order to investigate roles, strategies and resources the Transition movement puts in place when conducting food sustainability transitions, this thesis proposes a conceptual framework which identifies three ideal-types of citizen-consumers as fundamental authorities for the greening of production-consumption practices. Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics represent three basic dimensions of environmental governance that through different resources and power relations, put forward various sustainability objectives. The model is applied to evaluate six food projects of Transition movements in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder and Nijmegen. The empirical study, conducted through interviews and literature review, shows that given the success of the movements in mobilising people in urban agriculture projects and voluntary domestic carbon reduction initiatives, the ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship and Lifestyle Politics play a prominent role, whilst Political Consumerism is left aside. Without a definite strategy to rely on the ideal-types, the Transition movement is very keen on reforming food practices from the bottom-up through localisation and community-building.

**Keywords:** Food practices, citizen-consumers, Transition movements, food localisation, sustainability

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# 1. Introduction

The growing concerns over the current state of affairs of food practices, characterised by industrialised methods of production feeding increasingly global markets, have driven the quest for alternatives. What nowadays are considered conventional food practices, at least in the OECD countries, result from processes of intensification of agricultural productivity occurring from the past century, which have implied the application of machinery and exponential reliance on fossil fuels in order to support a booming population (Post Carbon Institute, 2009). In the post WW2 period, food security was arguably an important paradigm for policymakers, farmers organisations and food industries, which paved the way for the provision of a constant, relatively cheap and abundant supply of food (Maxwell, 1996 and Maxwell and Slater, 2003).

At the same time, most food systems became articulated around a global structure, of which key features have been analysed by Lang and Heasman (2004), Kennedy et al. (2004) and Norberg-Hodge et al. (2002), as characterised by large scale, chemical-intensive production oriented towards global markets via globalised logistical chains. In specific sectors where food systems are globalised, including legumes, seeds and meats, few transnational corporations have affirmed their market dominance and contextually imposed homogenisation of food supply (Morgan and Murdoch, 2000 and Norberg-Hodge et al., 2002). Clearly, such dynamics have affected all the practices associated with food: production, processing and packaging, distribution and retailing, and consumption (Ericksen, 2007 and Maxwell and Slater, 2003).

However, not all the food sector is abstracted to globalising forces, as some limited but crucial instances of food production and consumption are still shaped according to local cultures and conditions (Oosterveer and Spaargaren, 2011). As discussed by Friedman and McNair (2008), there is a growing variety of examples of farmer initiatives that in attempt to respond to the market dominance of global agriculture, find creative ways to protect and valorise local food and farming customs. On the side of consumers, Oosterveer (2007) notes how consumer rationality takes form according to individual and at the same time social considerations (e.g. religious, ethical, environmental), which can be embedded into the local as well. These two issues certifies that food consumption and production are positioned within global-local tensions, which reflects also when investigating the environmental impacts of such practices.

Established food practices are increasingly under pressure from an economic, social and environmental perspective (Ericksen, 2007). When looking at consumption practices, consumers nowadays are increasingly demanding healthier, more socially and environmentally responsible food (Oosterveer et al. 2007). This results from a growing awareness of the downsides of “mainstream food systems”, with the words of Anneke H. van Otterloo (2012:60). As reported by Unni Kjærnes and Hanne Torjusen (2012:91), European consumers worry about a wide spectrum of food safety and sustainability matters, including the mad cow disease, food poisoning, genetically modified foods, animal welfare, pesticides, additives, and allergies. Given the global structure of food supply chains, it comes with no surprise that other kinds of consumer concerns are the food miles

(Seyfang, 2009), and the ecological, carbon footprints associated with food production (Morgan and Murdoch, 2000 and DeLind, 2011).

Responses to such problems have taken various shapes and sizes. Market-based initiatives widely acknowledged in the academic literature consist of many kinds of certification schemes for foods and food practices, like the carbon, organic, Fair Trade and eco labelling; information campaigns for consumers; and the application of different standards and regulatory frameworks to make food practices more environmentally and socially friendly (Klintman and Boström, 2012). A significant contribution to the understanding of those initiatives came from Kjærnes and Torjusen, who stated that “interest in information and knowledge about the provenance of food and its biography along the food chain may be interpreted as a driver for finding alternatives to the modern, industrialised food system and recapturing more control over food” (2012:94). However, these have also been subjects of criticism because said not represent a true step forward from the mainstream agenda. Market-based measures to overcome the negative consequences of conventional food practices fail to revolutionise the food sector towards more ecologically sound fundamentals mainly because lay on the top-down side of possible options and furthermore because are instances of eco-rationalisation strategies of governments, by which sustainable development must be compatible with economic growth (Seyfang, 2009).

Nonetheless, due to the public interest granted to food matters, a parallel process in search for alternatives to mainstream food practices has been prospected by the rise of food movements, prone to contribute to this transformation from the bottom up. The past decades have seen the emergence (and dissolution) of many kinds of social networks, consumers associations and other sorts of activist groups purposed to experiment alternatives forms of production and consumption by organising around natural or ecological production, small-scale supply chains, biodynamic farming, healthy, local or natural food, just to mention a few (van Otterloo, 2012). Taste was the key theme of possibly one of the most famous movements still existing nowadays, the Slow Food, which positioned itself against the mounting success of fast-foods (van Otterloo, 2012). These grassroots initiatives have had a significant role in fostering the establishment of alternative food practices, of the kinds of farmers markets, community supported agriculture projects, local food cooperatives, organic vegetable box schemes and many more. All these movements rejected the idea that the status quo was given and provided voices and actions to widespread concerns over food.

Against this background, this thesis seeks to investigate the role of a particular social movement that is gaining momentum at present in many countries around the world. The Transition movement (also known as Transition Towns) contributed to the shaping of “alternative food practices” by developing a wide range of projects in response to climate change and peak oil. What is particular of this grassroots movement with an explicit urban orientation (Bulkeley, 2010) is that it focuses on resource reduction instead of replicating existing approaches (Hodson and Marvin, 2010:306-307). In other words, it promotes a reduction in energy usage in all spheres of life, which underlines a “decarbonisation and localisation of food, energy, housing, education and much more” (Hopkins, 2011:236). This movement is an umbrella organisation which includes more than a thousands small movements worldwide, which not only work on food but also concentrate forces in making economics, education, transports, housing, health, and art more environmentally sound (Transition Network, 2013). An intriguing argument of the movement co-founder, Rob Hopkins, is that “while renewable energy sources will have a key role to play beyond the peak [oil], the idea that a Western consumer society can continue, let alone grow while being

powered entirely by renewables, is absurd, and that redesigning for a far lower energy world is inevitable” (Hopkins, 2008:34). Hence, a vision for a low resource society is one of the *raison d'être* of the movement.

In practice, when it comes to food, the movement attempts to reform the mainstream system by developing both educational events to pursue behavioural change and practical activities in community contexts (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). At present, there are more than 500 initiatives worldwide wholly focussed on making food practices more resilient and less resource-intensive, among which local or organic food cookbooks, community gardens and orchards, permaculture courses, community bulk-food buying and food festivals (Transition Network, 2013). Underlying the activities is the idea that building resilience, “the ability to withstand shocks from outside, be they from climate change, problems of energy security, or rising fuel prices” (Hopkins, 2008:88), would help people and communities to cope with the impacts of the current (and future) ecological, climate and economic crises (Hopkins, 2011; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009).

The Transition movement is an active contributor to the diverse processes of social transformation touching all food practices, which are constituting factors of the so called ‘food transitions’. Food transitions (the latter only coincidentally relates to the name of the social movement) “refer to structural changes resulting in the emergence of new modes of production and consumption” (Spaargaren et al., 2012:4). Given the environmental considerations that lay at the core of such dynamics, food transitions are processes of change towards more sustainable practices, both socially and environmentally. The need for food sustainability transitions, in the words of Spaargaren et al., “has been one of the major factors putting an end to the post WW2 consensus on rationalisation and intensification”(2012:3).

Investigating food sustainability transitions by paying particular attention to the doings of the Transition movement is the task of this thesis. At this point, it is important to notice that transformations of the food sector have been the subject of various studies already, which have resulted in an astonishing amount of literature. As a consequence, the food sector has been researched with many approaches and trajectories. This thesis is oriented to study food transitions from a consumer viewpoint: understanding how these human agents can make changes to established practices and challenge dominant regimes. To accomplish this, the research will combine in a unique body two strands of theories: the transition theory viewed through Loorbach and Rotmans (2006) and later adapted to the food sector by Spaargaren et al. (2012) and the literature framing citizen-consumers as key actors for greening global consumption, according to the understandings of Spaargaren and Mol (2008).

Transition, as a theory to analyse processes of change within a situation, is useful to identify the trajectories of transformations before becoming institutionalised and helps to recognise the actors carrying them out. In fact, “transitions are processes of change with a certain focus, orientation and direction that are all formulated, put forward and defended by designated groups of human agents”(Spaargaren et al. 2012:9). For the realm of this thesis, the human agents conducting transitions are envisioned through three ideal-types of citizen-consumers who are empowered as environmental authority: Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumers and Lifestyle Politics (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). These three dimensions have the potential to bring structural changes to established practices from a public (political), consumer, and lifestyle perspective respectively. Hence, this thesis seeks to investigate what ideal-types are connected to specific food projects of the Transition movement while working to conduct transitions towards sustainable food practices. To this end, a specific group of indicators for each ideal-type is developed. Six food initia-



tives will be analysed in as many Transition movements distributed between The Netherlands and United Kingdom: social movements in Deventer, Den Helder, Nijmegen, Cambridge, Leicester and Ipswich will provide the case studies to be assessed under the lens of the citizen-consumer theory.

This thesis report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 describes the Transition movement, by offering a brief historical perspective, discussing its principles, key concepts and addressing its relation with food. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework of the study: starting from the transition theory, it continues by addressing sustainability transitions in food practices and discuss the theoretical dimensions of citizen-consumers as authorities of environmental governance. The three ideal-types are introduced along with a conceptual framework to characterise them in the empirical research. This chapter also includes the research questions underlying the study. Chapter 4 contains the methodological perspective of the research, illustrating the modality of data collection and the criteria for selecting the case studies. Chapter 5 presents the key empirical findings and their analytical interpretation in correspondence with the three ideal-types. The report ends with Chapter 6, which draws the conclusions based on the answers to the research questions. Finally, that chapter provides some insights for the advancement of the presented theories and presents some recommendations for the Transition movement.

## 2. The Transition movement

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the social movement subject of this thesis: the Transition movement. It seeks to present the most important characteristics concerning the origins, development, model, key concepts and its relation with food. To this end, the chapter is organised according to the following structure. Section 2.2 presents the origins and development of the movement, and adds some relevant information on the groups in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Within this part, Box 2.1 includes some key terminology used by the social movement. Section 2.3 offers an overview of its operative model, by drawing on its principles, the 12 steps of transition, and the resources made available through the network. Section 2.4 outlines one of the crucial concepts advocated by the Transition movement: resilience. Finally, section 2.5 gives an idea of the significance of food for the movement.

### 2.2 Origins and development

The Transition movement is an umbrella network of social movements involved in organising community action and empowering public participation towards low-resource use and low-carbon living as response to peak oil and climate change (Hopkins, 2011; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Initially, the movement was called ‘Transition Town’ because emerged and structured around towns, but soon its denomination was adjusted to fit into wider (or smaller) organisational dimensions (Hopkins, 2011). The movement seeks to engage communities to draw their own vision for progressively diminish oil dependance and “inspire, encourage, connect, support and train [them] as they self-organise around the Transition model, creating initiatives that rebuild resilience and reduce CO2 emissions” (Transition Network, 2013; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009).

The movement has grown exponentially since the first Transition Town was launched in 2006 in Totnes, England. At time of writing (May 2013), the network expanded to 1105 communities active in 43 countries worldwide (Transition Network, 2013). Rob Hopkins, a co-founder, originated some of the ideas of the movement from research conducted in Kinsale, Ireland concerning community-led energy reduction programmes which sought to develop “transitions to more sustainable socio-technical systems and infrastructures” (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009:5). The success of the movement in south-west England has inspired many country fellows to get together and start working on the infrastructures, institutions and habits underlined by a ‘post-oil model’ (Hopkins, 2008; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). At present, the United Kingdom is probably one of the countries hosting the largest number of Transition movements: 390 groups has been so far recorded (Transition Network, 2013).

In the Netherlands, the community of Transition Towns comprises 85 groups which are eager to “cause waves of small-scale social and affordable solutions, and thus accelerate the transition to a fully sustainable world” (Transition Town Nederland, 2013). In 2009, Deventer became the first official Transition Town, and is still among the largest in the country (Transition Town Nederland 2, 2013). The *Stichting Transition Towns Nederland* (Transition Towns Foundation Netherlands)

was established in 2010 as a formal point of reference between the international network and the local movements in the Netherlands (Transition Town Nederland 3, 2013). The motivation of the movement might be captured from these words: “[as] independent civic initiatives around sustainability, [we] break the deadlock in politics and economics. And give people the opportunity to contribute and be part of the group for a beautiful, healthy and happy world”(Transition Town Nederland, 2013). The rhetoric of the Transition movement makes use of a variety of terms which are defined in Box 2.1.

### **Box 2.1 Common terms of the Transition movement**

- **Transition Network:** broad international community of individuals and groups basing their work on the Transition model (Transition Network, 2009).
- **Transition initiative:** place where a community-led process based on Transition model has been set up. These communities organise projects in their town/village/city/neighbourhoods on housing, transport, energy, food, waste as local responses to global problems such as peak oil, climate change and economic crises (Transition Network, 2013).
- **Transition Town:** former term for describing a Transition Initiative, which was discredited after the emergence of larger and smaller units of action - the Transition initiatives (Hopkins, 2008).
- **Transition model:** loose set of real-world principles and practices that have been built up over time through experimentation and observation of communities as they drive forward to build local resilience and reduce carbon emissions. As every Transition initiative organises and operates differently, the model is often referred to as Ingredients for transition (Transition Network, 2008).
- **Peak Oil** is about the end of cheap and plentiful oil, the recognition that the ever increasing volumes of oil being pumped into our economies will peak and then inexorably decline. It's about understanding how our industrial way of life is absolutely dependent on this ever-increasing supply of cheap oil (Transition Network, 2008).
- **Climate change:** disruption of balance of planetary climate caused by incessant and ever-growing release into the atmosphere of carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels, from changes in land use, from deforestation and so on, alongside the increases in emissions of methane from mining, livestock and the drying out of wetlands as well as nitrous oxide from agriculture and aeroplanes. These lead to significant, widespread and increasingly unpredictable alterations in the world's climate (Hopkins, 2008).
- **Resilience** is the ability of a community to withstand external shocks and stresses without significant upheaval (Adger et al., 2002). It also requires communities and societies to have the capacity to self-organise and to manage resources and make decisions in a manner that promotes sustainability (Adger, 2003).

*Box 2.1. An overview of the crucial terms of the Transition movement.*

#### **2.2.1 What transition?**

The movement makes use of the term 'transition' because it fosters societal transformations on the opposite direction from the 'conventional' culture of industrialised countries, where unlimited

economic growth is fundamentally anchored at the centre of a limited system, that is, planet Earth (Hopkins, 2008). Heading beyond the consumer society, which greatly contributed to depleting natural resources and to polluting the environment, is the transition the movement works for (Hopkins, 2008). As Rob Hopkins writes in 'The Transition Companion', "the starting point for transition is that the future with less oil, and producing less carbon emissions, could be preferable to today"(2011:72). In fact, a philosophical underpinning is that "climate change makes this carbon reduction transition essential; Peak oil makes it inevitable; Transition initiatives make it feasible, viable and attractive" (Transition Towns Wiki, 2009).

Through its network, the movement spreads the idea that a planned, positive and ordinate transition towards less energy use is to be preferred to a sudden and dramatic transformation (Hopkins, 2011). While supporting changes to the unsustainable way people live today, it does not propose a universally applicable solution: each movement draws its priorities according to local circumstances, and at the same time finds support from the international network through the Transition model, which is the theme of the next section.

## 2.3 The model of the Transition movement

The Transition model is a loose set of guidelines meant to inspire and empower communities in drawing strategies for diminish their fossil fuels use and develop alternative ways of dealing with transports, food, energy, housing and many other fields of life (Hopkins, 2008 and 2011). The model is deliberately designed to be flexible in order to reach as many communities as possible which can adapt it to their local conditions (Hopkins, 2008 and 2011). The model is characterised by a pragmatic approach.

Communities are core units of the model: participation at community level is thought to be as much effective as policies at national and international levels (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Communities organise around neighbourhoods, villages, towns or cities and offer the ground to share achievements and failures in the development of new 'sustainable' habits, ideas and practices (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Hopkins does not consider governments as secondary actors in the fight against the changing climate, but their ability to bring environmentally sound change is "too little, too slow" (2011:17). Although the scale of action of the Transition movements might be small, they certainly are important catalyst for social and environmental change. The Transition movements self-organise according to local circumstances. Books and manuals of Transition network support the idea that clarity about group structure is a fundamental basis to make transitions happen. For example, many groups have a steering group which role is to facilitate, organise and inspire the community (Transition Network, 2008). Next to the steering group, subgroups organise around themes, such as food, transport, energy, health and so on.

There is no single recipe for forming and running a movement: the model is there to inspire, more than serving as strict guideline. In this respect, the movement clearly states "there is no right way to do transition"(Transition Network, 2013). According to Rob Hopkins, transitions are processes of unknown outcomes, where people and communities learn by doing and inspire each other along the way (2011). The next sections present some basic elements of the Transition model: the principles, steps and resources, that help visualising what the movement is, what it does and how it does what it does.

### 2.3.1 Principles

The set of principles at the heart of Transition movement are specified in a way as to be easily adapted to local circumstances. This idea finds its roots in the intention of attracting as many

people as possible in facilitating transition alongside stimulating diversity. Briefly, the listed principles are based on The Transition Companion (Hopkins, 2011:77).

1. *Positive Visioning* – Creating clear and practical visions of a community to help it reduce or lose its dependence on fossil fuels.
2. *Help People Access Good Information and Trust Them to Make Good Decisions* – When raising awareness of peak oil and climate change and of related issues such as unsustainable economic growth, Transition initiatives give people the best information available, non-directive, and respecting each person's ability to respond how best they can.
3. *Inclusion and Openness* – While involving local business, community groups and local authorities there is no room for 'them and us' thinking.
4. *Enable Sharing and Networking* – Transition initiatives dedicate themselves to sharing their successes, failures, insights and connections across the Transition Network.
5. *Build Resilience* – Transition initiatives help building resilience in many areas (food, economics, energy, etc.), locally and nationally, within a global/international perspective.
6. *Inner and Outer Transition* – Transition is a process regarding the individual dimension, with its psychological, spiritual and so inner perspectives. At the same time, it is also about the outer world, made up of people and their interactions. The latter standpoint involves transition in energy, transport, food, for example.
7. *Subsidiarity: self-organisation and decision making at the appropriate level* – Transition allows everyone to be involved at the most appropriate, practical and effective level.

### 2.3.2 The 12 steps of Transition

The steps of transition that follow are to be considered as an informal pathway for Transition movements to get started and develop. Drawn by the experience of Transition Town Totnes, the list is meant to help others to set up their own movement (Hopkins, 2011). Recently, these have been further specified into the so called 'Transition Ingredients': a set of stages (Starting out, Deepening, Connecting, Building and Daring to dream) as tools for communities to get engaged with transition (see Hopkins, 2011 and Transition Network, 2008).

1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset; 2. Awareness raising; 3. Lay the foundations; 4. Organise a Great Unleashing; 5. Form working groups; 6. Use Open Space; 7. Develop visible practical manifestations of the project; 8. Facilitate the Great Reskilling; 9. Build a Bridge to Local Government; 10. Honour the elders; 11. Let it go where it wants to go...; 12. Create an Energy Descent Plan.

### 2.3.3 Resources of the Transition Network

The Transition Network, the web of Transition movements, was established with the purpose of "inspiring, encouraging, supporting, training and enable networking" (Transition Network, 2009:15). This section reviews the resources offered through the network, based on the document 'Who We Are And What We Do' (Transition Network, 2009).

- **Transition Training:** the network offers trainings and workshops for core groups of Transition initiatives.

- **Communication:** the network provides a clear and recognisable brand together with equipping communities with i.e. internet services as to successfully spread their mission.
- **Media:** the network works to produce movies, videos, newsletters, books and articles.
- **Tools:** the network gives information on best practices of Transition initiatives, offers maps to locate them, an online forum platform etc.
- **Consulting:** a team is designed to advice businesses about their fossil fuels risks' exposure and analysis of companies' degree of resilience. Practical advices are also made available for groups.
- **Research:** the network facilitates research and evaluation at national and international level.
- **Events:** the network organises and supports new conferences, workshops, local and regional gatherings, etc.
- **Support:** the resources outlined above serve to strengthen the international Transition Network as well as supporting everyday undertakings of the Transition movements.

It should be noted that each Transition group offers and manages its resources in a creative manner according to own principles and values. The network provides all the strengths of a network, comprising the share of experiences, mutual learning and last, but not least, visibility (Transition Network, 2013). The next section presents a summary of an important theme for the whole Transition Network: resilience.

## 2.4 Resilience

The Transition movement has placed the idea of resilience at the core of its mission: "the rebuilding of resilience is, alongside the need to move rapidly to a zero carbon society, central to the Transition concept" (Hopkins, 2008:142). In the 'Transition Handbook', one of the most successful publications of Hopkins (2008), resilience was initially defined according to ecology, as "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks" (Walker et al, 2004). In the Transition model, the term holds significance within socio-ecological systems (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009) and was further specified at community level (Hopkins, 2011). That is how the definition presented in Box 2.1 emerged, which means that communities adapt from dramatic or sudden changes occurring in economic, social or environmental contexts. In parallel to that, the process of 'building resilient communities' is not limited to sustain conventional functions and practices, but offers the opportunity to reconsider the fundamental assumptions of the current state of social development, which, according to Rob Hopkins, should lead to a "more sustainable, resilient and enriching low carbon economy" (2011:45). Therefore, setting up resilient communities is the 'desired state' to strive for (Transition Town Totnes, 2013). It appears that resilience is important for the Transition movement as sustainability is for several other environmental movements.

The Transition Companion presents three elements defining the level of resilience within communities (Hopkins, 2011:44-45):

1. The degree communities can direct and shape decisions that affect them, e.g. by increasing local democracy and engagement;

2. The ability of communities to learn and adapt, e.g. by developing new skills and flexibility in education;
3. Planning resilience as collective project is fundamental.

Building community resilience is a necessary step to reduce vulnerability to shocks the currently world faces. Indeed, increasing resilience can be one answer to the risks posed by global economic crises, peak oil and global climate change. Hopkins elaborates on how communities were resilient before what he calls the “Age of Cheap Oil” (2008:50), which coincides with the industrialisation of systems of production occurring during the Industrial Revolution of the mid-19 century by the great availability of fossil fuels (see Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009).

#### 2.4.1 Resilience indicators

To help communities getting a pragmatic idea of what resilience really is, Rob Hopkins (2008) provided a set of indicators:

- The percentage of local trade carried out in local currency;
- The percentage of food consumed locally that was produced within a given radius;
- The ratio of car parking space to productive land use;
- Degree of engagement in practical transition work by the local community;
- Amount of traffic on local roads;
- Number of businesses owned by local people;
- Proportion of the community employed locally;
- Percentage of essential goods manufactured within a given radius;
- Percentage of local building materials used in new housing development;
- Percentage of energy consumed in the town that has been generated by local ESCO (Local Energy Company);
- Amount of sixteen year-olds able to grow 10 different varieties of vegetables to a given degree of competency;
- Percentage of medicines prescribed locally that have been produced within a given radius.

These indicators have inspired the activities of several groups worldwide. It is interesting to see that a relevant amount of the indicators are related to localisation. These two concepts are indeed related to each other: resilience can be seen as “re-localising all essential elements that a community needs to sustain itself and thrive” (Transition Network, 2008:7). An overview of localisation is given in the next section.

#### 2.4.2 Localisation

In the vision of Rob Hopkins (2011), the practice of localisation does not imply a process of going back in time (e.g. before the Industrial Revolution), neither abolishing international trade nor globalisation. The significance of localisation he puts forward is through the following definition:



*“the essence of localisation is to enable communities around the world to diversify their economies so as to provide for as many of their needs as possible from relatively close to home. Economic activity on this scale can be adapted so as not to undermine biological and cultural diversity, and seems essential if we are to avoid further ecological and social breakdown. This does not mean eliminating trade altogether, as some critics like to suggest. It is about finding a more secure and sustainable balance between trade and local production”* - Helena Norberg-Hodge, et al. (2002), *Bringing the food economy home*

Although several Transition movements are primarily anchored to a local dimension, there is the awareness that ‘local’ is just one of the scales where to develop responses to global challenges: the movement is aware that international, national and local transitions must be closely connected, to be successful (Hopkins, 2011).

#### 2.4.3 The movement in practice

Resilience and localisation inspire the activities of the Transition movement in many areas of everyday life, especially in transports, energy, food, and economy. This section, drawn by the examples presented in the Transition Network (2009), Hopkins (2011) and Haxeltine and Seyfang (2009), offers an idea of what the movement does.

- *Transports* – low carbon means of transportation are the top priority: cycling, walking and public transport services are widely promoted. There are communities that even set up car sharing schemes to reduce the amount of privately owned vehicles.
- *Energy* – at domestic level, there are activities seeking to persuade people to diminish their household energy consumption and shift their provision to renewable sources. Some movements arrange websites, public events or flyers with tips and tricks to this goal and others even set up their own energy company.
- *Food* – local food production and consumption is fundamental: the movement offers opportunities to learn and share gardening skills; organises farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture schemes and weekly vegetable box; publishes cookbooks based on low carbon or local recipes; and is keen on urban agriculture.
- *Economy* – the network increasingly offers channels for mutual exchange of goods and services without involving conventional money, but instead promotes the use of barter exchange, Local Exchange Trading Systems or community currencies. A few movements have even set up local currencies (Transition Currencies) serving to strengthen the local economy.

These examples are just some of the initiatives promoted by the movement. What presented is not exclusive domain of the Transition movement as there are organisations, people or other voluntary associations that do similar actions without connecting to the Transition movement. The next section offers a perspective of the relation between the movement and food.

#### 2.5 Transition movement and food

Since the origins, food has been an important theme for the movement. Several features are recognisable as common to the whole network. The movement is keen on reducing people’s reliance on long food supply chains, not only because local food is seen as better, but mainly because conventional supply chains are heavily dependent on fossil fuels and cause major CO2 emissions (Transition Network, 2013). There is a shared vision that replacing conventional supermarkets and

food producers with different systems of provisions would be preferable, given that the latter would be anchored to local cultures and adopt environmentally sound practices (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Traditional consumption patterns must be redesigned in favour of local and environmentally sustainable diets (Hopkins, 2008). Research reveals that regardless of the fact that each Transition initiative conducts its own food activities, altogether they “aim to offer some aspect of an alternative set of systems of provision, based around deeper green values and a rejection of consumerism” (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009:6).

The movement seeks practical solutions to increase local food production and consumption, while supporting a vision for a food sector dramatically different from that of today (Hopkins, 2011). The ‘Transition Companion’ provides details of how the food system might look like in the future – in a scenario where fossil fuels are increasingly expensive and scarce and where the Transition movements are successful. In this vision, Rob Hopkins sees more and more people sharing knowledge, skills, tools, and ideas to grow food; both in rural and urban areas, land will very much be used to grow vegetables, fruits, mushrooms and medicinal plants, without reducing forests; a greater variety of Community Supported Agriculture schemes will enable people to participate in the production of lots of different foods; most food deliveries will be conducted within walking or cycling distance; red meat will lean towards exclusion from people’s diet, while fresh and seasonal vegetables will be the rule (Hopkins, 2011). That vision embodies where the efforts of the Transition movement are heading to.

In many of the activities concerning food, the movement gives importance to permaculture, a type of ecological design to create sustainable systems, which is introduced in the next section.

### 2.5.1 Permaculture

Permaculture is a contraction of ‘permanent agriculture’ as well as of ‘permanent culture’, and was conceived by Australian ecologists in 1970 as the:

*“Conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of the landscape with people providing their food, energy, shelter and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way”* - Graham Bell (2004), *The Permaculture Way: Practical Steps to Create a Self-Sustaining World*

Three beliefs are at the root of permaculture (Mollison, 1991):

1. *Earth care*—care for the earth and all of its living systems;
2. *People care*—care for yourself and others (individuals, families, and communities);
3. *Fair share*—be fair: take, have, and use only what you need, and when there is surplus, give to others and recycle resources back into the system.

Permaculture holds a key role in the philosophy and practice of the Transition movement. Rob Hopkins identifies it as “a design system which draws from observations of how natural systems function and insights from systems thinking, applying them to how we design the world around us” (2011:98). While on the one hand, the philosophy of Transition movement draws inspiration from permaculture, on the other the branch of ecological design finds wide (practical) applications among the activists. It has been reported that many initiatives make use of permaculture to create sustainable agricultural systems for urban agriculture, community orchards and community

gardens. In its essence, permaculture is a tool that has intensively inspired activists' thinking and undertakings: that is why permaculture education is widely supported throughout the network (Hopkins, 2011).

The following chapter dives into the theoretical background of this study, drawing from the transition theory and citizen-consumer theory to define a conceptual framework which will be used to investigate food projects of the Transition movements.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the theoretical background on which the current thesis is based upon. It comprises of three general parts: the first, in section 3.2, discusses the theory on transitions as social-driven phenomena of change; the second, section 3.3 addresses the dynamics of sustainability transitions in food practices; and the last, section 3.4 continues by presenting a conceptualisation of citizen-consumers as actors of environmental governance committed to greening global consumption. This part identifies three ideal-types of citizen-consumers, each defined against a specific authority, which are presented as basic dimensions conducting food sustainability transitions. The ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics will be included into a conceptual model in section 3.5, which will then be applied to research the food projects of the Transition movement. Last but not least, the research questions underlying the present thesis are presented in section 3.6.

### 3.2 Transition Theory

In the realm of social sciences, transitions are considered as processes of structural transformation of social systems, varying their equilibrium in terms of practices, culture and structure (Loorbach, 2007). Such fundamental changes are conducted by identifiable actors with the intention of constituting different patterns in particular domains of social interaction such as politics, economics, technology and ecology (Loorbach, 2007; Rotmans, 2006). Transitions can be long-lasting and non-linear developments which are recognisable in definite time and place (Spaargaren et al., 2012; Loorbach and Rotmans, 2006). Transition theory is a meaningful method to understand and keep track of these dynamics of social change.

This section will not present a complete vision over the theory of transitions, but seeks to put forward several themes instrumental to understand who (and how) conducts transitions in the food domain. Four sub-sections create the fundamental chain of analysis for specifying the food sustainability transitions researched in this thesis: 3.2.1 Transitions in socio-technical systems; 3.2.2 Multi-level perspective on transitions; 3.2.3 A bottom-up approach for transitions; 3.2.4 The role of sustainability and globalisation in influencing transitions.

#### 3.2.1 Transition in socio-technical systems

In accordance with what presented by Spaargaren et al. (2012:5), transitions are instrumental to “enforce a breakthrough in a deadlock situation”. This transformation does not only take place at societal level, with the development and affirmation of new practices, behaviours and ideas, but results in parallel with the emergence of new infrastructures, systems and objects (Smith et al., 2010; Spaargaren et al., 2012). An example may enhance the understanding of this concept. If one looks at the road transport sector before the affirmation of fossil-fuels powered vehicles, can recognise that at that time, people adopted certain practices (i.e. short-range journeys at low speed), coherent with the infrastructure and objects available (no paved roads and animal-drawn vehicles). With the improvement of roadways and widespread use of automobiles, broader opportu-

nities were there for people to travel long distances in little time. This example shows that societal transformations are shaped by both technical and social developments, which must be analysed in aggregate to effectively keep track of their trajectory.

Therefore, also when studying food transitions, it is important to keep in mind that established conventions are challenged only when social and technical innovations become available and widespread. This thesis concentrates on the role of human beings as carriers of transitions, thus emphasises the *social* element. In this context, the capacity and role of people to bring alternatives to established practices is prominent.

### 3.2.2 The Multi-Level Perspective on transitions

The Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) on transitions is a methodology to analyse the trajectory and development of broad socio-technical transformations. It consists of three different levels of institutionalisation of practices: niches, regimes and landscapes (Smith et al., 2010). An elaboration of these hierarchy of processes follows hereafter, according to the understandings of Spaargaren et al. (2012) and Smith et al. (2010).

- *Socio-technical niches*. This level comprises the attempts of proposing ‘novel practices’ or ‘innovative practices’ in contrast with prevailing processes of higher levels. Novel practices are small-scale initiatives of (groups of) individuals who seek to inform the dominant regimes about their views, concerns and their experiments to overcome institutionalised situations. Innovations at niche level are not well known among higher regimes and have little capacity to break through a status quo, unless a wide range of successful experiments opens up and creates the condition to challenge the dominant culture (Grin et al., 2010). As stated by Smith et al. (2010:441) “niche actors need to perform considerable cognitive, institutional, economic and political work: they have to be persuasive to a variety of constituencies on different terms”, in order to successfully scale up.
- *Socio-technical regimes*. This refers to the “stable and dominant way of realising a particular societal function” (Smith et al., 2010:441). The prevailing practices of ‘regime’ or ‘well-established practices’ (Spaargaren et al., 2012:11) are institutionalised through the presence of rules and resources that generally avoid innovations from modifying the current state of affairs. This level shows interdependencies both inside its practices and with other levels. As for the latter, regime practices may be influenced by developments taking place at landscape level and/or from interactions with niches. Incrementally, such interplay may sustain the affirmation of new regime practices.
- *Socio-technical landscapes*. Landscape dynamics characterise “all the major institutions in society in a certain period of time” (Spaargaren et al., 2012:12), implying that it is the highest reach of institutionalisation of practices. This level has an overarching influence on dynamics at regimes and niches (Grin et al., 2010). Transformations occurring at landscape level can either represent a resource for changes at niche or regime level, or undermine any attempt to modify the established practices.

In essence, transitions in socio-technical systems take place by following the path of novel practices influencing the established regime, which in turn can generate opportunities for reforms at landscape level. In contrast, landscape changes can also affect the beneath practices and foster the establishment of new regimes. Clearly, those pathways as well as the MLP are simplifications of intrinsically complex processes of transformation, but are necessary analytical tools for study-

ing societal changes. The following figure captures the three levels of analysing transitions through the MLP and their interactions.

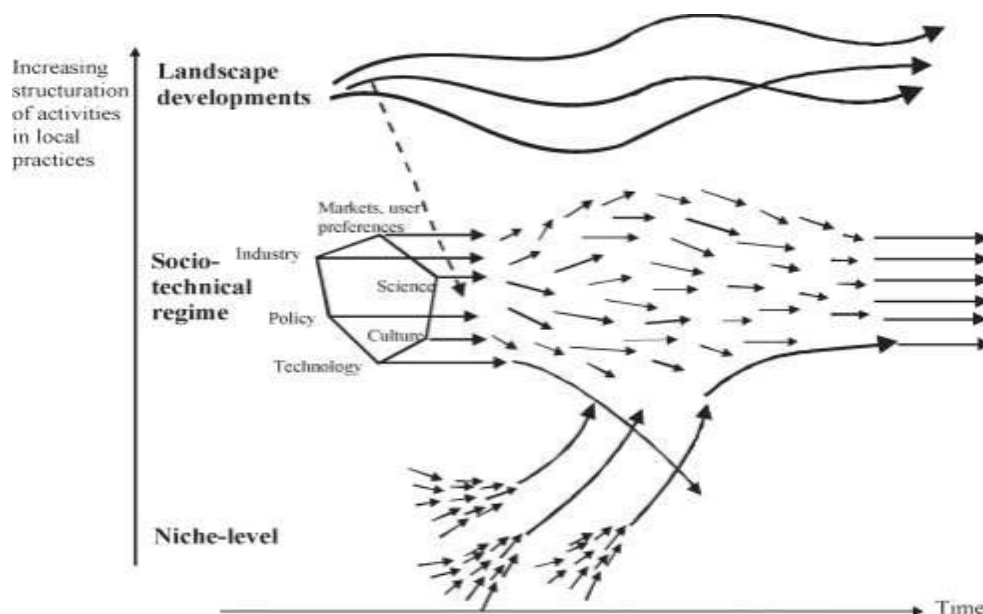


Figure 3.1. The Multi-Level Perspective on transitions. Retrieved from Grin et al. (2010:64)

The present thesis investigates transitions in the specific spectrum of niche-regime interactions: it concentrates on the availability and capacity of novel practices to expand and influence main-stream dynamics. These aspects constitute the bottom-up approach, which is the subject of the next section.

### 3.2.3 Bottom-up approach for transitions

The bottom-up approach for studying transitions entails that the key focus is granted to novel practices, their actors, their evolution and their ability to bring incremental changes to regime practices (Spaargaren et al., 2012; Roep and Wiskerke, 2012). To be successful, innovative practices must become institutionalised overtime and aim at increasingly interact with the established regimes. Dirk Roep and Johannes Wiskerke speak of “seeds of radical regime changes” (2012:207) when looking at those practices capable to challenge the dominant regimes.

This thesis makes use of the bottom-up perspective because distinguishes three ideal-types of citizen-consumers, working at niche level, that through their novel practices attempt to reform the conventional regimes. The approach adopted in this thesis is not meant to underestimate the importance of transformations occurring at landscape or the openings resulting from interactions across different levels. The object of the next section is to address two fundamental dynamics of change at landscape level: sustainable development and globalisation.

### 3.2.4 Sustainability and Globalisation

Following Spaargaren et al. (2012), two major factors affecting all levels and practices of MLP are sustainability and globalisation. These landscape processes offer an unpredictable outcome to present and future practices given their widespread and structural impacts. The authors state that sustainable development is a crucial principle governing transitions, and is to be considered a landmark underpinning the practices of all subjects of social systems. On the other hand, globalisation, the second element altering all the dynamics of transitions, is referred to as the outcome of events occurring at the end of the 1980s:

- the end of the cold war, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall,
- the world wide success of the Internet,
- the affirmation of neoliberalism with consequent dissolution of barriers to trade and financial deregulation, and
- the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl.

The authors highlight that the combination of these events has led to a massive shift at landscape level: from simple to reflexive modernity. Simple modernity is identified with the period post WW2 which saw the centrality of the nation state, the separation of society from their natural environment and the distinction between scientific knowledge and the dominant culture (see Beck et al., 2003). In contrast, reflexive modernity reconfigures those assumptions through the emergence of new actors of (environmental) governance, recalibration of the relation between people and nature, and re-conceptualisation of the role of science.

The setting created by the current period of reflexive modernity is a major cause for transitions taking place in many (if not all) domains of life. This thesis points to investigate only one socio-technical system where reforms are taking place nowadays: food. Food sustainability transitions are, as noted in the introductory chapter, phenomena of structural transformation involving the practices of recognisable actors in society. The next section seeks to point out the most important aspects in this regard.

### 3.3 Food practices in transition

This section connects the theory of transitions with overarching transformations taking place in the food domain. In accordance with what stated above and with the views expressed by Spaargaren et al. (2012:14), this thesis highlights transitions in *food practices* because “food transitions are the result of human interventions, although the consequences of these interventions cannot be predicted from the intentions of (groups of) human actors in any direct, predictable or linear way”. Food practices can take form through the following categories:

- food production and processing,
- food distribution and retail, and
- food consumption.

The identification of these (connected) practices is meaningful to understand the changes happening between and within them as well as recognise the carriers of changes. Those categories are meant to describe the pathways of what Maria Laura Viteri (2010) names food ‘net-chains’, a concept that detects the array of networks and chains concerning food production and consumption. Their interrelation occurs along food net-chains on the upstream side for producers, on the downstream end for consumers and in the middle for retail and distribution practices (Spaargaren et al., 2012).

The authors also propose a set of dimensions underlying transitions in food practices, which are referred to as socio-cultural, socio-technical and governance. These dimensions are briefly addressed through the bottom-up perspective on transitions, and so, key importance is paid on the downstream of food net-chains, that is food consumption, while referring to the original conceptualisation to Spaargaren et al., (2012:21) for a complete analysis.



- a) *Socio-cultural*. The environmental and social risks associated with current food production, distribution and retailing are triggering factors for transitions in food consumption. Concerns related to e.g. food safety, human health and animal wellbeing affect choices and preferences of consumers, who increasingly demand sustainable, healthy and animal-friendly foods.
- b) *Socio-technical*. Technological innovations have driven some massive transformations in the modes of production, processing, distribution, and conservation of foods. This dimension concentrates on elements such as methods, technologies, and locations underlying food practices. Consumer concerns about e.g. chemical-intensive methods of production, food technologies, food miles and also food preservatives drive the search for reforms. Examples of responses include the development of local food supply chains, food certification schemes and localisation of food practices.
- c) *Governance*. Dynamics of globalisation and sustainability enable the affirmation of new actors in the governance for sustainable food. Consumers are no longer passively undergoing the negative effects of practices associated with food producers and retailers: they can now “co-govern by voting with their wallet” Spaargaren et al. (2012:23). New forms of governance in reflexive modernity allow them to take the responsibility and challenge dominant production and distribution practices at political level through economic means. In other words, consumption preferences can be tools to affirm political, social and ecological concerns. An example of this dimension is given by the figure of the Political Consumer, who can boycott or buycott specific market actors to affirm its views (which will be discussed in a later section).

These dynamics of change represent the major driving forces towards the development and institution of sustainable food practices. It follows that sustainability transitions of food practices are intended as human-made processes of change in established patterns of food consumption, retail, distribution, processing and production underlined by sustainability.

The perspective adopted to investigate transitions in food practices is bottom-up, which entails that individuals operating at the lower end of food netchains (along with their practices), are given absolute importance in this thesis. Consumer practices will be researched for their capacity to reform established food practices by operating at niche level, therefore conceptualising their actions as seeds for transitions. By drawing on the theory of citizen-consumers, the next sections define in more detail three different ideal-types, which through various strategies, resources and power relations seek to foster transitions of food practices in three different domains. A conceptual model based on the ideal-types will then be used to evaluate several food projects of the Transition movement.

### 3.4 Citizen-consumer theory

This part aims to point out the theory of citizen-consumer, which are conceptualised as powerful actors committed to make global consumption practices more sustainable. Their role as environmental authority was presented by Spaargaren and Mol (2008) and later specified in Spaargaren and Oosterveer (2010). Those works have inspired the argument presented in the following sections.

This part is organised as follows. Section 3.4.1 introduces the opening of new actors in the environmental governance, while section 3.4.2 connects citizenship and ‘consumership’ and draws



them as new forms of environmental authority in section 3.4.3. The chapter then continues by presenting the ideal types of Ecological Citizenship (section 3.4.4), Political Consumerism (section 3.4.5) and Lifestyle Politics (section 3.4.6). Finally, these typologies will be included in a conceptual model to study food sustainability transitions within the Transition movement, which is the topic of section 3.5.

### 3.4.1 Introduction

Following the discussion of new actors in the governance for sustainable consumption, the authors reflected on the importance of recognising the agency of (organised groups of) citizen-consumers. Involving these actors in policies for greening production-consumption practices is anchored to two main factors. First, the environmental impacts of the consumer society are greatly expanding, and the current rate of consumption cannot remain unchanged forever. Emblematic of the new balance of responsibilities for environmental degradation is that “consumers turn out to be among the major obstacles for sustainability transitions in crucial segments (food, housing, transport, tourism)” (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008:354). Therefore, it must be realised that engaging consumers in policies for greening such segments gives an opportunity to make sustainability transitions really effective. Second, given the complexity and non-territoriality of environmental risks, the capacity and authority of nation-states to lead the way towards solutions declines, which is counterbalanced with the emerging influence of other actors. This shift in environmental governance enables both market actors and civil society organisations to step in the political debate on sustainable production and consumption practices: their commitment can make a difference. Such dynamics reframe the role of both citizens and consumers into a unique characterisation, which is the argument of the next section.

### 3.4.2 Connecting Citizenship and ‘Consumership’

Throughout history, citizenship and ‘consumership’ served different purposes and developed under separate fields of study, especially when thinking of disciplines as political science and economics. In concordance with fundamental changes in many spheres of social interaction including the economy, politics, culture and technology occurring at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, their diversion was reconsidered (Spaargaren and Oosterveer 2010).

Globalisation processes in the last decades have been prominent factors for the recalibration of citizenship. The expansion of citizenship roles through the elements of denationalisation and ‘cosmopolitanisation’ of rights and duties is a consequence of the diminished authority of nation states, which enable the exertion of citizenship beyond the classical political system (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). Here the affirmation of ‘transnational’ forms of citizenship as well as market-based kinds of citizenships (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). The idea of global kind of citizenship is rooted in the intrinsic nature of environmental problems, which occur across national borders and affect human beings with no distinction. Therefore, citizens must hold duties and responsibilities to the world as a whole as they do for their nations (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). This type of citizenship will be addressed in later sections and referred to as Ecological Citizenship.

Correspondingly, the ‘private’ practices of market-based actors are increasingly debated in the public domain (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). In the past decades, the public has scrutinised and often condemned practices of industries and producers, especially for their ecological and social responsibilities (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). Hence, consumers have realised that their consumption choices do have social and ecological impacts, even though are not always directly visible.

This has led to a careful reconsideration of their consumption practices: when connecting ecological and social concerns to the products they buy, consumers make use of their role as citizens.

The exertion of citizenship roles into the ground of ‘consumership’ and vice-versa is important because “breaks through the separation of nationally articulated political preferences of sustainable development and globally organised economic practices” (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008:355). In other words, by referring to both consumers as citizens or to citizens as consumers in the context of sustainable development, their potential for playing a decisive role in environmental governance is unlocked, which addressed in the next section.

### 3.4.3 New forms of environmental authority for citizen-consumers

The ideal-type of citizen-consumer no longer relegates ecological concerns in the consumption sphere only, nor associate it just in the political arena as typical sphere for citizenship action. The combination of roles implies that sustainability objectives are pursued through various forms, in various domains of life and distinctive power relations in a non-exclusive way. New kinds of environmental authorities are therefore derived from resources and sites of action that organised groups of citizen-consumers put in place.

Among all the possible domains where citizen-consumers have a role, this thesis, in accordance with Spaargaren and Mol (2008) and Spaargaren and Oosterveer (2010), recognises three of them, against which three different ideal-types of citizen-consumers are defined: the state as the site for Ecological Citizenship, the market as ground for Political Consumers; and the moral dimension for Lifestyle Politics. These three ideal-types are the basic forms of environmental authority for citizen-consumer empowerment in greening consumption practices (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics are the dimensions through which food sustainability transitions are to be researched within the food activities of the Transition movement. Figure 3.2 offers a schematic illustration of the three ideal-types of citizen-consumers in relation to the three authorities they face, in a context of globalisation. The following sections provide an in-depth analysis of these forms of environmental authority.

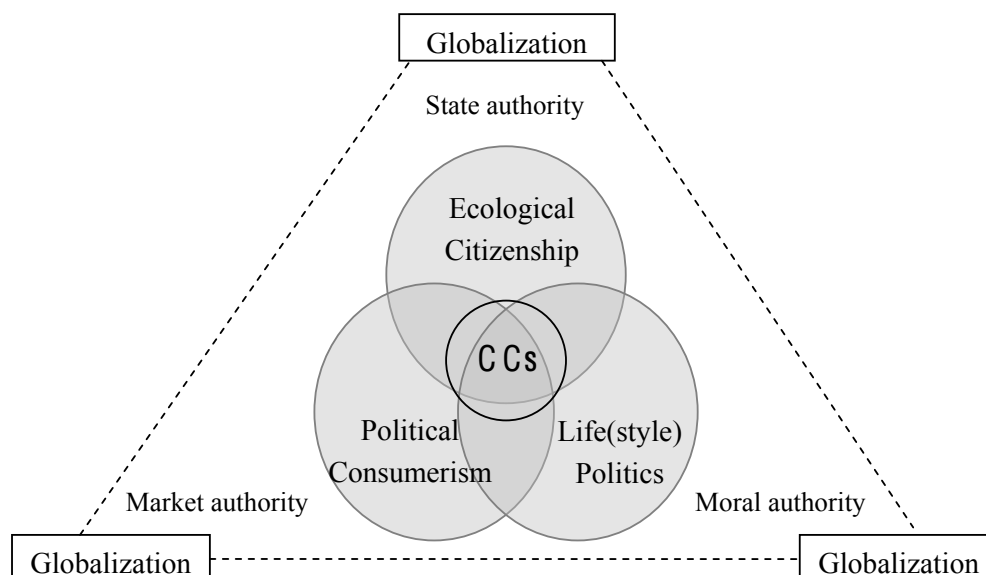


Figure 3.2. The three ideal-types of citizen-consumer and their authority. From Spaargaren and Oosterveer (2010:1890).

### 3.4.4 The ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship

Arguably, one of the most significant contributors to the development of the notion of Ecological Citizenship is Andrew Dobson. He proposed the idea that this ideal-type does not belong to the classical liberal and civic republican traditions of citizenship (Dobson, 2004). In fact, he presented Ecological Citizenship as a form of ‘post-cosmopolitan citizenship’ which is in contrast with the traditional views because of the following four dimensions, retrieved from Dobson (2004):

- *Ecological non-territoriality.* It entails the idea that citizenship goes beyond the boundaries of nation-states. Environmental problems are not geographically limited to the political borders of modern states, therefore Ecological Citizenship promotes an innovative vision over the territoriality via the notion of individual “ecological footprint”. That is the limit within which ecological citizens should operate, in order not to compromise the potential of future generations to do so too.
- *Duty and responsibility.* While the main duty for ecological citizens is to ensure the sustainable character of their ecological footprints, the primary responsibility is “to ensure that her or his ecological footprint does not compromise or foreclose the ability of others in present and future generations to pursue options important to them” (Dobson, 2004:18). Responsibilities are owed ‘asymmetrically’, which means that are held towards both present and future subjects who owe ecological space, with no distinction of the boundaries they inhabit.
- *Virtue.* Justice is the first virtue for Ecological Citizenship. It embodies the purpose of ensuring the right ‘distribution of ecological space’ among individuals. Virtues of care and compassion are instrumental to perform justice, thus regarded as secondary. Altogether, virtues are crucial to meet ecological duties and responsibilities.
- *Private sphere.* Ecological Citizenship is fundamentally tied to the private sphere as site of action, thus not only about the public domain as traditional views of citizenship. The private realm is considered important for the development of virtues and obligations of citizenship activities. Given the public impacts of private actions, Dobson highlights that public and private spheres should not be separated.

Although Dobson’s vision of Ecological Citizenship has enjoyed deep appreciation in the literature on sustainable consumption (see Seyfang, 2009), his work shall be adapted to fit in this research. Dobson’s concept serves as an umbrella for including ethical, moral and behavioural matters that are not necessarily built around a tangible connotation of citizenship. To avoid overlaps with other ideal-types of citizen-consumers, it is preferred to keep the concept anchored to a public, political sphere.

The adapted version of Ecological Citizenship embraced in this thesis makes use of the first two principles mentioned by Dobson, while leaving the last two to other forms of citizen-consumers. To begin with, the idea of an ecological non-territoriality implying that Ecological Citizens claim the world as a whole as sphere of action is connected to globalisation processes. The latter has unlocked new forms of participation for sustainable development on a global scale as well as increasing the awareness of individuals belonging to a world-community facing similar environmental challenges. That is why this characteristic is deemed important in considering that organised groups of Ecological Citizens have the potential to play a role globally, not just nationally. The

second characteristic, regarding duty and responsibility is to be considered close to the prevailing notion of citizenship adopted in political sciences. Ecological citizens hold duties and responsibilities towards the environment as citizens similarly have in nation-state contexts. In a broad perspective, it can be argued that Ecological citizens share their footprints at global level while citizens share their commitment to a nation. Such idea implies the existence of duties and responsibilities towards present and future generations.

Next to these principles, the interpretation of Ecological Citizenship in this thesis is enriched by the work of Spaargaren and Mol (2008). Their vision for Ecological Citizenship is primarily rooted in a public sphere. They wrote how Ecological Citizenship denotes “the participation and orientations towards political discourses on sustainable development” (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008:356). This specific definition involves the commitment of organised groups of Ecological Citizens to direct their ecological concerns to public (political) organisations at different levels (Spaargaren and Oosterveer, 2010). While Ecological Citizens are assigned rights and responsibilities by actors at multiple levels such as international, national, and local, the exertion of such does not occur exclusively on one level of spatial scale but as part of a world community (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). Whereas this ideal-type articulates its authority in the public (political) domain, Political Consumerism refers to market-based forms of environmental authority, which is the topic of the following section.

### 3.4.5 The ideal-type of Political Consumerism

Michele Micheletti (2003) captured the second dimension of citizen-consumers, mainly related to the private consumption sphere. She introduced the concept of Political Consumerism to describe the practices of consumers to include political concerns in the act of purchasing. The idea of ‘politics behind products’ denotes the existence of a set of political considerations marking consumption choices beyond the classical relation between quality and price of products. Such political reflections are not strictly ‘political’, since include a wide range of themes, like social issues, ecological footprints, animal welfare and much more, which are relevant for the political debate at a specific time and place. These factors constitute the primary consumption criteria for Political Consumers (Micheletti, 2003).

Political Consumers have the potential to step in the political debate through economic means. Their self-empowerment challenges the classical political system, centred in the idea that politics is only a domain of the nation-state. It enables new forms of political participation through daily consumer preferences (Micheletti, 2003). Therefore, since consumption is the arena to show (dis)approval for practices of actors higher up in the supply chains, the market is the first entity targeted for Political Consumers’ action. In practice, this market-based form of citizen-consumer manifests its authority through negative, positive or discursive forms, as noted in Micheletti (2006:23):

- Negative Political Consumerism (boycotts): encouragement of people to protest against perceived corporate and government wrong doings by not buying targeted goods or patronising targeted corporations or stores;
- Positive Political Consumerism (buycotts): encouragement of people to purchase products, producers, and services that promote sustainable development. Part of this category are seals of approval labelling schemes (eco, organic, fair trade) and socially responsible investing;

- **Discursive Political Consumerism:** this form includes a variety of communicative efforts directed at business and the public at large about corporate policy and practice. It can be as contentious and confrontational as boycotts or represent attempts to engage in dialog with corporate actors and the general public about the politics behind the products offered in the consumer market today.

Through this ideal-type, citizen-consumers make use of their buying power to deliver political (along with social, economic, and ecological) arguments. In the words of Spaargaren and Mol (2008: 357), “Political Consumerism refers to all the political forms that connect environmental activities of up-stream economic actors of production–consumption chains and networks more directly and visibly with the interests and activities of citizen–consumers at the lower end of these chains and networks”. It follows that Political Consumers have the potential to influence practices of market actors through the three (general) characterisations outlined above. This ideal-type is fundamentally tied with the private sphere, and so makes use of Dobson’s last dimension of Ecological Citizenship. Nevertheless, the expression of Political Consumerism can also take place in the public realm, given the public visibility of campaigns demonstrating opposition or approval to practices of targeted market actors. The third and last ideal-type of citizen-consumer, as shall be seen next, is primarily anchored to personal choices, morals, responsibilities and commitments as sites to exert environmental authority (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008).

#### 3.4.6 The ideal-type of Lifestyle Politics

As noted by Micheletti and Stolle (2009:126), the “concept of Lifestyle Politics was introduced into political science to focus attention on creative forms of political action occurring outside the realms of conventional politics and through alternative and more individualised modes of expression”. In the governance of sustainable consumption, the politics of lifestyle is an important element that constitutes the third ideal-type of citizen-consumer. The claim of people pursuing lifestyles coherent with political values, morals and commitments cannot be categorised through the outward oriented type of Ecological Citizenship or the market-based articulation of Political Consumerism. Lifestyle Politics refers to an “individual’s choice to use his or her private life sphere to take responsibility for the allocation of common values and resources, in other words, for politics” (Micheletti and Stolle, 2009:126).

The concept of lifestyle is typically referred to as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of the self” (Giddens, 1991:81). Considering lifestyles as a site for politics of sustainable consumption entails dealing with behavioural thoughtfulness grounded on ecological and social responsibilities, which characterise everyday life practices. The emphasis given to private, domestic commitments to realise political views is inherently tied with the public (global) implications of the private sphere: in fact this ideal-type “deals with individual affairs without disconnecting the private and the personal from the public and the global” (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008:357). In a nutshell, Lifestyle Politics is a significant dimension for greening consumption practices due to increasing awareness of the ecological and social consequences of the private sphere, against which responsibility-taking efforts are directed.

Lifestyle Politics lies closely to the ideal-type of Political Consumerism. Not only the politics of lifestyle is an incremental result of market-based actions underlined by political concerns, but beyond the consumption sphere, it gives voice to political, ecological and social concerns in everyday life routines. So, one may argue that the ideal-type of Lifestyle Politics is a behavioural characterisation of Political Consumerism.

When confronted with consumption practices, the articulation of Lifestyle Politics greatly varies between individuals. The specific 'combination of sustainability concerns' and political views of citizen-consumers results in very diverse forms of lifestyles, which are not always consistent (Oosterveer and Spaargaren, 2012:134). For example, time pressure and economic constraints hold the potential to undermine the integrity of Lifestyle Politics in real world situations. Even so, given that this ideal-type embraces political norms and values fulfilling the everyday life behaviour, it is undoubtedly connected to the idea of a virtue so expressed in the context of Ecological Citizenship.

The following section provides a conceptual framework which draws on the three ideal-types of citizen-consumers in the context of food sustainability transitions. A set of indicators for each given ideal-type will be illustrated as to investigate them in practice within the food projects of the Transition movement.

### **3.5 A conceptual model for studying food sustainability transitions**

After having introduced the theoretical foundations of this thesis, it is important to point out a conceptual model which adapts the three citizen-consumer dimensions to the constraints of real world situations in the domain of food. In order to investigate food sustainability transitions from the bottom-up, the environmental authority of the ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism, and Lifestyle Politics is set in the context of food via the definition indicators. The conceptual model proposed in this section seeks to provide an exhausted typology of indicators through which evaluate food projects of the Transition movement. Given the challenge to develop a practical approach consisting of both precise and comprehensive criteria illustrating each ideal-type in reality, what follows must be considered as a first step in an arduous climb. As far as the author recalls, until now there has been no empirical research evaluating the role of three ideal-types of citizen-consumers in food sustainability transitions. Hence, this is the first concrete application of the model.

The conceptual model consists of a set of three indicators for every ideal-type of citizen-consumer. Each indicator represents a particular connotation of its ideal-type.

Ideal-type	Indicator	Description	Example
Ecological Citizenship	<b>Collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain</b>	Drawing partnerships or alliances with (local) authorities, civil-society organisations, ENGOs to reform or influence food practices through public policy.	Support or help realising climate initiatives of Municipalities, gain sponsorship or funding from local authorities or other organisations.
	<b>Mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain</b>	Raising citizenry awareness and participation about sustainable food practices.	Public events, festivals, manifestations, information events, petitions on the Internet. Encourage others to adopt sustainable food practices.
	<b>Taking part (or organising) citizen-shareholder schemes for unconventional food practices</b>	Engaging citizenship with forms of ownership to foster sustainable food production and consumption.	Community supported agriculture schemes, shared ownership of vegetable gardens or orchards, common property of tools and devices for food production and processing.
Political Consumerism <sup>1</sup>	<b>Boycott specific kinds of food producers, food retailers, products</b>	Avoiding to buy specific foods because are perceived as unsustainable on ecological or social rationalities.	Not buy GMOs, meat or fish products, or food from overseas. Not buy from specific supermarkets or brands or companies.
	<b>Buycott specific kinds of food producers, food retailers, products or certified foodstuff</b>	Buying specific foods (or from specific market actors) because (practices are) perceived as sustainable on ecological or social grounds.	Buying labelled foods (eco, organic FairTrade), or local. Buying from local independent shops, or from trusted companies, subscribe to vegetable box schemes
	<b>Take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains</b>	Throw campaigns to inform consumers of good or wrong doings of market actors.	Promoting sustainability records of market players, online campaigns for critical consumption, spreading news about practices of market players
Lifestyle Politics	<b>Abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria</b>	Adopting diets and eating habits coherent with self-defined sustainability rationalities.	Choosing vegetarianism, veganism; preferring local or seasonal foods, or foods requiring low water or energy to be produced, low-carbon food.
	<b>Sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food</b>	Adopting sustainable practices while buying, growing or handling foods.	Buying sustainable food, growing own food, natural food preservation, making own marmalade or tomato sauce or fruit juices, using low resources when cooking, avoid packaging.
	<b>Environmental education and trainings are important</b>	Welcoming opportunities to learn, share and compare views, routines and knowledge on food, as ways to reflect on individual food behaviour	Learning skills to grow and process food, changing diets and routines, trying low-carbon cooking,

*Table 3.1. A conceptual framework for studying food transitions through the three ideal-types of citizen-consumers. <sup>1</sup>The indicators of Political Consumerism were originally proposed by Micheletti (2006:23).*

As it appears from table 3.1, several indicators share features or even overlap to certain extents. Minor overlaps are accepted given that this is a conceptualisation of real-world situations which serves to identify theoretical typologies that in turn are instrumental to draw conclusions on socio-technical transitions. When this framework will be applied in the empirical study, in case a food project connects to several indicators of more than one citizen-consumer ideal-type, only the most prominent ideal-types will be associated with that project.



The next section presents a brief series of examples of food initiatives evaluated through the conceptual framework: that is a first illustration of the model in preparation of the empirical research.

### 3.5.1 An application of the conceptual framework

This section offers some insights on food projects analysed through the conceptual model. With these examples, the use of the indicators should be clear and prepare for the “real” practical application.

#### *An example of Lifestyle Politics: the Eco Team Programme*

The Eco Team Programme took place since the 1970s in the Netherlands and was organised by the Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP) (Harland and Staats, no date). By bringing together small groups of people keen on improving their personal environmental performance, the objective of Eco Team was to “improve ecologically relevant behaviour within households” (Harland and Staats, no date; Spaargaren, 2011). This “community energy conservation project” consisted of regular meetings where participants discussed and shared experiences, ideas, achievements and challenges in themes like transports, consumption, food, waste, electricity, gas and water (Darby 2006:8; Staats et.al, 2004). Participants were given a handbook containing background information and coached by a facilitator, while they were free to draw own sustainability targets (Staats et. al, 2004; Harland and Staats, no date). This Dutch programme was organised around feedbacks: data accounting for participants’ environmental performances were collected and sent to a central office, which gave feedbacks to all the members based on results of other Eco Teams (Staats et.al, 2004). This initiative included roughly 8000 participants (Harland and Staats, no date).

This programme shows important connections with two indicators of Lifestyle Politics. As a learning experience, it offers an opportunity to reflect upon their daily domestic practices and begin a process of de-routinisation in favour of more sustainable behaviours. It leaves room to share best practices with fellow participants and gain insights on household routines of others, which can support the process of change. These factors undoubtedly connect to the indicator “*environmental education and trainings are important*”. At the same time, this mutually learning context might results in people adopting sustainable behaviours while dealing with food: they have the potential to shift their daily preferences towards buying local, seasonal, or organic food, eat vegetarian or vegan meals, or even use low impact cooking methods. These are included in the indicator “*sustainability is key issue when dealing with food*”.

#### *An example of Political Consumerism: the Fish wallet cards*

Fish wallet cards are instruments engaging consumers with sustainable seafood: these consumer guides report information about the environmental impacts of fish species and fishing practices as to support environmentally sound purchasing practices. Although there are many kinds of fish wallet cards, a differentiation of species based on their ecological footprints is very common. For example, it can include a fish specie that should not be bought because endangered and fish that can be purchased without sustainability concerns. In practice, a wallet card may offer a distinction between “best choices”, “good choices” and “worst choices”, each classifying fish according to specific environmental indicators defined within the issuing organisation (Oosterveer and Spaargaren, 2011).

Fish wallet cards are examples of Political Consumerism because associate the purchase of seafood with environmentally responsible meanings, as part of the politics behind products. Techni-



cally, this is a “*communicative effort directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains*”, since it aims at greening fishing practices by pointing at consumers and their (informed) buying preferences. Consumers power is therefore recognised as key element along the path to sustainable fishing.

### ***An example of Ecological Citizenship: the Incredible-Edible Todmorden project***

This grassroots project involving one-third of Todmorden’s population has changed the use of public spaces in this English town of about 17000 inhabitants (Paull, 2011). All over town, people work to plant and grow vegetables, fruits, herbs and trees. The movement has engaged with local authorities to grow food in their land as well, for example next to the Council building, the Railway, and also at the Police and Fire Brigade stations. Schools are involved in the project too: children and college students are taught food-based skills and knowledge (like cooking, bee keeping and permaculture) and take part in growing food. Pieces of land in the graveyard are also used to gardening. People are free to pick fruits and vegetables that others had planted (Incredible Edible Todmorden, 2013).

The project is clear example of Ecological Citizenship. The movement cooperates with local authorities and organisations to convert as many public spaces into edible gardens. This highlights the intention to address food sustainability in the public domain as well as offering alternatives to the conventional systems of food provision: there is room for people to rely less on supermarkets. Moreover, the involvement of local schools demonstrates the public orientation of the project, which is open to everybody. These elements present insights of the indicator about “*collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain*”, and is also a way to raise participation for urban agriculture, which is part of the indicator “*mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain*”. In addition, reclaiming public spaces to grow food offers an opportunity for people to rethink the current land uses and may influence future city planning.

Following this brief evaluation of citizen-consumer ideal-types to food projects, this chapter concludes with the research questions underlying this thesis.

## **3.6 Research questions**

Now that the conceptual framework to study food sustainability transitions is clarified, a fundamental step towards the empirical research lays in the definition of the research questions guiding the present work. The research questions are specified to include the Transition movements whose food projects are evaluated under the conceptual model, which means they anticipate the case studies of the empirical research. However, before explaining their selection criteria in the methodology chapter, it should be noted that the empirical study is conducted within food projects of six Transition movements located in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, precisely in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder, and Nijmegen. The research questions are:

1. How do food projects of Transition movements in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder, and Nijmegen connect to citizen-consumers ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics?
2. What strategies are put in place when referring to the ideal-types of citizen-consumers?
3. What resources, rights and responsibilities are there in the food projects of those Transition movements when making use of one of the three citizen-consumers ideal-types?

The next chapter seeks to draw a connection between the conceptual model to study food transitions, the research questions and the food projects of the Transition movement. In other words, it discusses the methodology to conduct the research in practice.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This study is designed according to qualitative research methods, as it endeavoured to determine in what manner food projects of six Transition movements relate to the specified ideal-types of citizen-consumers while fostering sustainability transitions. The next sections display the methodologies applied in the empirical research in the following format. Section 4.2 presents the research design and provides the selection procedure for the case studies of the empirical research. The data collection methods are presented in section 4.3, while section 4.4 addresses the limitations of the empirical study. The final section (4.5) briefly discusses instances of validity and reliability.

### 4.2 Research design

#### 4.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a proper method to understand diversity and variations featuring social situations (Kumar, 2011). As the object of study is investigate the relation between ideal-types of citizen-consumers as authorities for sustainable consumption with practices and strategies of the Transition movement, the flexibility provided by qualitative study design is preferred to the characteristics of quantitative methods. In other words, qualitative methods are applied to investigate real world variations of ideal-types of citizen-consumers.

#### 4.2.2 Case studies

As introduced in earlier sections, the empirical research is conducted through food projects of six Transition movements located in the Netherlands and United Kingdom. The food projects are considered as the case studies where to evaluate the connection with the three ideal-types of citizen-consumers. The Netherlands is selected because is the country hosting the researcher, whilst the United Kingdom is chosen because offers a great variety of projects of the Transition movement, that facilitated the scan for relevant initiatives. Avoidance of language barriers also played an important role: as the research is performed in English, countries where English is not a widely spoken language, are excluded<sup>1</sup>.

Time and resource constrains shape the decision to conduct the empirical research on a limited number of case studies. It follows that one case study is selected from each Transition movement. Case studies do not offer the opportunity to draw generalisations beyond the studied Transition movements, simply because each food activity differ from others and takes place according to local circumstances, which are not replicable. Therefore, case studies do not provide a comprehensive overview of the Transition movements, nor explicitly represent their strategy to reform food practices.

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<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of Dutch people fluently speaks English.

### *Selecting the Transition movements*

The following procedure illustrates the way Transition movements were selected to be part of the empirical research. Initially, thirty-five movements were scanned based on information available from the website of the Transition Network ([transitionnetwork.org](http://transitionnetwork.org)) and from the Dutch branch of the movement ([transitiontown.nl](http://transitiontown.nl)). The thirty-five were then analysed under four criteria: history, dimension of the movement, concentration in food, and availability of information. History refers to the background of the movements including their origins and development, the accomplished projects and other historical information to convince that the movement is solid and not temporary. The dimension has to do with the number of people directly or indirectly contributing to its undertakings, and used to understand how big and embedded in society a movement is. Concentration in food refers to the amount, quality and originality of food projects being conducted, which was useful to estimate how important food is for a movement as well as the intention to promote reforms. Last, availability of information was instrumental for all of the above indicators: the website of each movement was scrutinised to see the quality, amount, and accessibility of available information, which showed the potential of each movement to be included in the research.

### *Selecting the case studies*

Of the twelve Transition movements that passed the first selection, only six fulfilled the criteria concerning the food projects. In order to be selected as case studies, food projects had to meet the following four criteria: being realised, outward oriented, original, and having activists willing to take part in the research. Food projects had to be put in place, which means they could be either running while the research took place or be recently concluded. Outward orientation entails that food projects ought to be open to involve third party organisations, authorities or local associations and/or seeking public participation, and not limited to activists. The criteria of originality means that a project had to be unique in promoting sustainability reforms to food practices, and not replicate other projects. However, drawing inspiration from successful initiatives did not undermine the fulfillment of this criteria. Last, and the most obvious criteria, is about the willingness of the activists conducting the projects to participate in the research.

### *The Transition movements and case studies for this thesis*

As a result from the selection procedures outlined above, the selected Transition movements whose food projects are appointed as case studies for the empirical research are:

In the United Kingdom

- Transition Cambridge – Growing Spaces
- Transition Leicester – Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction programme
- Transition Ipswich – 30-mile Food Challenge

In the Netherlands:

- Transition Town Deventer – Regional Market
- Transition Town Den Helder – Gardening courses and consumer advice
- Transition Town Nijmegen – Edible Gardens

### 4.3 Data collection

The following qualitative methods of data collection are adopted in this thesis:

- Literature and document review
- In-depth interviews

Combining these methods provides the advantage that data can be crosschecked, although potential drawback include researcher bias and a lack of uniform information. The next sections present an overview of the data collection methods.

#### 4.3.1 Literature and document review

Literature review is a meaningful way to become familiar with theories and concepts embraced in this research and further help placing the study within a specific field. Academic articles, books, books reviews, reports were analysed. Information about the Transition movement was collected from direct and indirect sources. Official books, documents and websites of the movement are examples of the former, while indirect literature include research papers on the topic. Information gathered from interviews was supplemented with documents which were either mentioned from respondents or published on the website of the Transition movements in question.

#### 4.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted during the empirical research to gather detailed information on the food projects. The object of interviews was to make Transition activists reflect on their undertakings and share knowledge about the questioned food projects as to help the researcher building a relation between the empirical typologies of citizen-consumers and real-world undertakings. This instrument of data collection was used after purposively sampling Transition activists involved in the selected case studies. Purposive sampling suggests the researcher to select respondents who have the required information (Kumar, 2011). Next to that, snowball sampling approach contributed to finding people truly involved in the food projects. Potential respondents were drawn among the food working groups and contacted either via email or phone. Respondents were interviewed anonymously: they had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the group of people who took part in the specific food project.

##### *In-depth interviews*

In-depth interviews were performed in an unstructured manner, despite an interview guide was developed to organise the topics. The interview guide consists of a series of questions and issues arranged according to five themes: General information, Food projects, Individual and lifestyle, Consumption, and Citizenship. During the interviews, the interview guide was not followed step by step but instead served to inspire the interviewer to cover arguments of enquiry. Respondents were given the opportunity to come up with additional topics if deemed relevant.

Interviews took place in January and February 2013 and lasted between one and three hours. In total, eight people were interviewed in The Netherlands and six in the United Kingdom. Eleven interviews were performed in person and three on Skype. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to the respondent for a quality check to avoid misunderstandings. The interview guide can be found in Annex 1.

#### 4.4 Limitations

A limiting factor in the empirical research is the restricted number of people who took part in the interviews. Only few people involved in the food projects accepted to attend interviews, possibly because of time constraints. Nonetheless, the amount of information acquired is thought to be appropriate for the object of this thesis. Another limiting element concerns the great variety of food projects conducted by the Transition movements, which undermines the possibility to draw general conclusions on behalf of the three ideal-types.

#### 4.5 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the “ability of a research instrument to demonstrate that is finding out what you design it to” (Kumar, 2011:184). Positive aspects for the validity of interviews is the fact that respondent had a lot of expertise with food projects under question, which facilitated data collection. Additionally, no inconsistencies emerged between data collection methods. Negative elements for the validity of this thesis is the limited number of people interviewed, which can affect the results. Similarly, respondents shared own experiences about food projects which do not necessarily reflect the endeavours of the entire group.

Reliability concerns the consistency of the findings of a research instrument (Kumar, 2011). Attitude of interviewer and respondent may have had a positive or negative effect on reliability of interviews, given the researcher’s ability to formulate questions and understand answers without ambiguity. To avoid misunderstandings, the researcher made efforts to discuss and sometimes repeat unclear responses or arguments. Negative for reliability was that some interviews were done in cafes with background noise, which reduced the quality of recording of the respondent’s arguments. An issue arose when information gathered from the Dutch Transition movements was translated into English by the researcher: there may be some inconsistencies resulting from meanings lost in translation.

## 5. Results and evaluation

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research conducted in January and February 2013. The empirical findings concern food projects of six Transition movements located in the Netherlands and United Kingdom. The presentation of the empirical findings is organised in two general parts composed of several sections. The first part seeks to describe the objectives, philosophy and characteristics underlying the case studies, primarily from data gathered from interviews with representatives of the Transition movement, literature review and official websites. Featuring this part is also some background information on the social movement. The second part represents an evaluation of the empirical results in relation with the theory and the conceptual framework. This section aims to understand how case studies connect or represent variations to the proposed theoretical dimensions of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics, mainly by looking at the indicators of the conceptual framework.

The chapter begins with the three cases in United Kingdom and continues with the ones in The Netherlands, according to the following structure. Transition Cambridge's Growing Spaces concentrates on transforming public areas into vegetable gardens and is presented in section 5.2. Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction programme of Transition Leicester is devoted to improving individual environmental footprints in a community setting and is discussed in section 5.3. Section 5.4 is dedicated to the 30-mile Food Challenge of Transition Ipswich, which invites people to eat, buy and grow local food for one month. Transition Town Deventer's Regional Market is introduced in section 5.5. This project was organised to give consumers a chance to buy truly local products from farmers of the IJssel region. The gardening courses and advices on buying sustainable products arranged by Transition Town Den Helder are in section 5.6, while the projects of Edible Gardens of Transition Town Nijmegen are presented in section 5.7 and concern growing vegetables in public land in a community setting. The chapter concludes with section 5.8, that summarises the main empirical findings into a table, and adds some considerations based on common dynamics evidenced from the case studies, preparing the way for the final chapter of this thesis.

### 5.2 Growing Spaces - Transition Cambridge

#### 5.2.1 The project

This project aims at improving the quality of Cambridge public areas by converting as many pieces of land into edible gardens – here is where the title 'Growing Spaces' originates from (TC2, 2013). College or school gardens, abandoned or unused public spaces and rooftops are among the areas suitable to be transformed to grow fruits, herbs and vegetables by activists of Transition Cambridge (TC) (TC1, 2013). Growing spaces are designed to suit best with local conditions and are made available to grow low maintenance plants (TC2, 2013). At time of writing - April 2013 - there are 13 Growing Spaces and more are underway (TC2, 2013).

Growing Spaces work as follows, as evidenced from an interview. Activists of TC either spot a potential space or are approached by people pointing their attention to a neglected area (TC2, 2013). In any case, consent to grow food is asked to the owners, who “are usually enthusiastic about our project” (TC2, 2013). Most Growing Spaces are done in areas owned by the City Council, which generally grants the permission, although activists do not give up when no response arrives (TC2, 2013). People in the neighbourhoods are approached ‘door to door’ by the activists, who search participation in planting and maintaining the gardens (TC2, 2013). Once the land is clear up from grass, twigs and rubbish, it is then designed to maximise its potential and offer as many edible plants as possible: Transition volunteers dig and plant soft fruit bushes, fruit trees and vegetable plants, while local residents or community associations are asked to keep an eye to those plants needing maintenance (TC1, 2013). “The produce is free to be picked by anyone, although people in Cambridge need to get used to eat food growing next to buildings or parking lots”, said the respondent (TC2, 2013). Successful Growing Spaces find a place in the Free Fruit map, that illustrates the location of fruit trees and plants growing across town (TC1, 2013 and TC4, 2012).

Although volunteers of the ‘Growing Spaces group’ vary from time to time, there are five activists regularly working on the project (TC2, 2013). To make the project happen, skills and tools are made available by activists whilst the City Council supported it with £3,000 grants via the Sustainable City scheme; in addition to that, some £1,000 was provided by the Future Friendly Awards (TC2, 2013 and TC4, 2012). Rights and responsibilities among Growing Spaces participants are not clearly defined and depend on each particular garden, although TC’s volunteers are the clear coordinators (TC2, 2013). In some occasions, a permaculture expert assisted with advices on designing and building edible gardens (TC2, 2013). A coordinator of the project highlighted that the success of Growing Spaces has motivated people to make their own edible garden or transform other public spaces independently from the movement (TC2, 2013).

### **Background of the movement**

Growing spaces is one of the food projects of TC, which comprises circa 50 members working on a great variety of food and energy activities. Among the food projects in progress, exemplar are CamBake, a community-run bakery, and GardenShare, a scheme that combines garden owners and volunteer gardeners to grow fruits and vegetables (TC4, 2012). TC draws from Transition Movement the idea to build local resilience by involving the community in practical actions (TC1, 2013). Their stated mission is

*to raise awareness about the implications of climate change and rising energy prices in Cambridge, and to encourage everyone to get involved in activities which reduce our carbon emissions and make Cambridge more resilient to energy supply challenges. We focus on practical ways that we can work together as a community rather than individually, because we can achieve more that way - and it's more fun too.* Transition Cambridge (2012:2) Annual Report.

The branch of Transition movement in Cambridge has adopted a ‘Constitution’ that encloses the fundamental principles through which network organises and exerts its activities (TC5, 2010). The movement works closely with Cambridge Carbon Footprint, a charity active to inspire people to reduce environmental footprints and “helping to create low-carbon communities that are sustainable, resilient and rewarding” (TC2, 2013 and CCF, 2013). Growing Spaces is central within the future plans of the movement, so expressed in the Vision 2030 document (TC2, 2013 and TC3, 2012). The project is part of the strategies to localise food production and will be expanded to



offer even more edible gardens to fellow citizens: the wish is to create as many as 30 Growing Spaces by the end of 2013 (TC1, 2013 and TC3, 2012).

### *Inspired by the Incredible Edible Todmorden project*

Origins of the Growing Spaces can be traced from the emergence of a series of local food movements across the United Kingdom inspired by the Incredible Edible Todmorden project (TC2, 2013). As introduced in the theory chapter, Incredible Edible project has changed the landscape of a small town in West Yorkshire. Citizens have converted unused or neglected public areas to edible gardens, freely accessible to all citizenry (Incredible Edible Todmorden, 2013). As a result, people changed the way they deal with food as they grow herbs and vegetables not only for their household but also for their fellow citizens (Incredible Edible Todmorden, 2013). This initiative seem to have inspired many other citizens and grassroots organisations across the United Kingdom to follow its footsteps.

## **5.2.2 Evaluation**

### *In relation with the conceptual framework: evidence of Ecological Citizenship*

By working on increase edible areas in the city, activists of TC offer a service that benefits the citizenry as a whole: reclaiming abandoned public land for food purposes recalls several elements of Ecological Citizenship. Throughout the practices of seeking spaces, granting permissions, designing, planting, growing and maintaining plants, TC activists “constantly seek to make local residents active” (TC2, 2013). This practice relates to the Ecological Citizenship indicator concerning “*mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain*”. Although TC does not conduct public mobilisations like strikes or protests, it nevertheless persuades people to grow food in public areas, as a way to promote small-scale sustainable food production. What was stated in the 2012 Annual Report confirms this view: “we organise activities that encourage people to get involved in food growing, cooking, preserving and project a message of the importance of local, sustainably grown food” (TC4, 2012:7). The empowerment of local residents is fundamental for keeping Growing Spaces running and flourishing. Making citizens participating in this urban agriculture initiative is also a way to show the Local Council that people are keen to grow food themselves, which can persuade the authority to allocate dedicated areas for gardening.

Frequent and at the same time informal consultations with local Councillors and offices of the City Council portray the intention to bring issues dear to TC into local politics (TC4, 2012). The interview evidenced that activists of Growing Spaces had dialogues with the City Council in two events: when gathering permissions to convert public spaces into edible gardens and while receiving support through Sustainable City Grants (TC2, 2013). These interactions suggests that the team of Growing Spaces bring to public offices their attempts to change the status quo and at the same time promote their vision of food sustainability in a political arena. Granting economic support from the Council entails the project is recognisable as the city farming initiative for Cambridge. This is the underlying goal of having contacts with local politics, by which “demonstrate the Municipality that growing food within town walls is possible and visible to all citizens” (TC2, 2013). Furthermore, the close relationship with Cambridge Carbon Footprint indicates that the project has gained the support of a local environmental organisation. These factors recall the Ecological Citizenship indicator about “*collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain*”, which is clearly inherent Growing Spaces.

The strong connection with two indicators suggests that Growing Spaces represents an instance of the ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship. Evidence from this case study recommends that TC seeks

to pursue food sustainability transition through three domains: the public (supporting citizenry participation), public policy (attempt to influence the local authority), and public land (transforming land into edible areas).

### *An instance of Lifestyle Politics in the outskirts*

The informal support for sharing knowledge and skills around growing food recalls the indicator of Lifestyle Politics anchored to environmental education and training. In Growing Spaces, although this feature occurs occasionally, people who actually get involved are said to increase their knowledge about edible gardening (TC2, 2013). However, this is not aimed at a reflection and subsequent de-routinisation of everyday eating behaviour to embrace sustainable eating practices. Moreover, information gathered in this respect is too superficial to discuss a relation with Lifestyle Politics. Therefore, the role of this ideal-type is considered to be unimportant in this case study.

### *The public responsibility of food*

In an article dedicated to local food movements, Laura DeLind has reflected upon the role of food as instrument for people to take charge of and share “public responsibility” in a context where “community residents” are key contributors of the local food systems (2011:279). The case of Growing Spaces seems coherent with her point of view because citizens of Cambridge are asked to take responsibility of the public land where food is grown. Following this line of thought, it can be argued that through Growing Spaces, people regain possession of their public land, which otherwise would remain abandoned. So, although Growing Spaces does not seem to be an example of a local food system, the sociological perspective of DeLind is relevant to qualify this initiative in the context of public responsibility.

### *Transition Cambridge: a local food movement*

Given the example of Growing Spaces, TC is in the trajectory of the local food movements that are gaining momentum nowadays, although prominent even in the past decades (Mason and Knowd, 2010). Local food movements advocate localisation of food practices and are driven by the convergence of public attention on global forces, like food security and safety, climate change and oil dependence (Mason and Knowd, 2010). Considering that these social experiments seek to reconnect people to their food and arise around similar themes worldwide, they represent some “local instances of a global phenomenon” (Mason and Knowd, 2010), and therefore have to deal with two faces of the same coin: glocalisation. While, on the one hand these movements share identities, strategies and modus operandi through international (web-based) channels, they are intrinsically local when it comes to food practices on the other, which entails that are part of the local-global interface of food sustainability transitions.

## **5.3 Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction - Transition Leicester**

*‘Either we undertake voluntary change now, or we face involuntary change later’*

*- Chris Martenson*

### **5.3.1 The project**

‘Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction’ is a project seeking to help people reduce their individual carbon footprints within a mutually supportive community ambience (TL1, 2013). Partici-

participants join the sections to “motivate, inspire each other and discuss emotional and practical aspects of making positive changes in life” (TL2, 2013). The project consists of seven meetings dedicated to: information on peak oil, climate change and motivations to make changes in life, home energy, water and waste, consumerism, food, transport, and the last meeting covers themes chosen by participants (TL2, 2013). The following Box 5.1 presents the goals of the project.

#### **Box 5.1 The objectives of Footpaths**

- Help people reduce their carbon footprints because of climate change.
- Support people to become less oil dependent because of peak oil.
- Give people an awareness of – and some skills to deal with – the interactions which go on in groups, so that if they choose to continue as a group after the initial meetings, things are likely to go well.
- Help people to build themselves communities.

*Box 5.1. The objectives of Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction programme of Transition Leicester. Retrieved from TL4 (2012).*

Pursuing lifestyle changes at individual level as part of a community project is central to Footpaths because “supporting each other in this journey” (TL2, 2013) facilitates changes and makes people “stronger and more able to cope and adapt in times of change” (TL1, 2013). Participants are equipped with a handbook, specifically written by Transition Leicester (TL) initiators, serving to guide and sustain the process (TL2, 2013). Awareness-raising activities on carbon footprint reduction conducted during meetings include games, exercises and trainings: all representing the starting point for discussions and critical thinking of “how people can meet what they need in a low carbon manner” (TL2, 2013). Meetings are held every two or three weeks and involve six to nine participants, aggregated on the basis of area of residence (TL2, 2013). Two facilitators of group meetings are designed prior to the beginning of the project and undergo a two-day facilitator training run by TL: facilitators gain skills and knowledge to help participants working together (TL1, 2013).

At time of the interview - January 2013 - the project had run for two and a half years and had gathered approximately one hundred and fifty participants (TL2, 2013). Activists of TL spread the word of Footpaths any time there is a chance: host talks at events of civic associations, Vegan Society, religious groups and also take part in public events like the Green Light and Riverside Festivals, running workshops and fun activities made to attract people (TL2, 2013). Most of the participants are “middle-class people or who is generally well-off”, though TL aims at attracting people regardless of job, income and education level (TL2, 2013). People’s carbon footprint is estimated before and at the end of the project, while there is a plan to continue for extra calculations a year after the end of the sections (TL2, 2013). So far, research has shown that Footpaths participants reduce their fossil fuels use (TL2, 2013) along with substantially diminishing carbon footprints (TL3, 2012). Although the project relies on spontaneous donations, lately some solid funding schemes have been established: participants are asked to offer their Handbook deposit to support the project whereas Transition activists sell ‘fair trade organic cotton bags’ showing food carbon

footprints (TL2, 2013). In addition, Footpaths was awarded with funds from Leicestershire County Council (TL1, 2013).

A fundamental activity in the Food meeting is the 'Food Game': a set of blocks, each representing specific foods' carbon footprints, assembled to form an upside-down pyramid by which on top there are foods with high footprints and at the bottom those with low footprints (TL2, 2013). Foods included in the game are said to be typical for an English diet, comprising red meat, white meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables (TL2, 2013). While playing the game, people become familiar to carbon footprints associated with food production, processing, packaging, and transport (TL2, 2013). The game is designed to increase peoples' awareness and stimulate critical thinking to the way they personally deal with food (TL2, 2013). In the discussions following the game, people reflect and share ideas to move towards eco-friendly eating habits (TL2, 2013). An interviewee underlines that talks are not imposed on specific topics or food choices: people are free to decide for themselves the pathway to lower their environmental impacts (TL2, 2013). Nevertheless, it is said that participants became more keen to avoid high-carbon foods and there is the general tendency to eat less meat and dairy products (TL2, 2013).

Featuring the consumerism section is questioning "why do we buy what we buy?" and "are there other ways to fulfil those needs, rather than buying?" (TL2, 2013). Typical themes include how media advertise unnecessary products, what emotional needs are linked to buying products, relations between happiness and consumption besides what is ethical consumption (TL2, 2013). Exercises such as "finding items in the room that are not made of oil" and "what would you do in case of power cuts?" stimulate reflections on the relation between products and fossil fuels (TL2, 2013). The interviewee said that generally people tend to talk about organic labels and Fair Trade certified products, although that is not featuring the purposes of the consumerism meeting, which intends to activate a reflection process on consumerism rooted on diminishing fossil fuels dependence, without directing the path to specific do's and do not's (TL2, 2013). Although outcomes of Footpaths project greatly fluctuate between groups and meetings, the respondent noted a tendency of several participants to localise their food supply chain, for instance by subscribing to Community Supported Agriculture projects, purchasing weekly box schemes of local farmers and also collectively buying bulk food (TL2, 2013).

### ***Background of the movement***

TL is a network of people committed to a lower energy future by building up community resilience and promoting practical solutions to climate change and peak oil (TL1, 2013). Next to the Footpaths Community Carbon Reduction, activists run projects including a course on permaculture gardening, a community-energy organisation and a festival to celebrate sustainable living named Green Light (TL1, 2013). In addition to building community, one of the central aims of the movement is 'supporting inner transition', which connects individual and community-level changes towards resilience encouraged by the "development of values and world-views that recognise our interdependence with the rest of the natural world" (TL1, 2013).

The group works closely with a wide range of associations and organisations, among which Friends of the Earth, The City Council and Leicestershire Food Links, an organiser of farmers' markets (TL1, 2013). Interestingly, in a 2008 report Leicestershire County Council delivered a motion of support to the movement by stating that it "fully endorses the Transition Town Movement and subscribes to the principles and ethos of the organisation's goals to reduce dependence on fuel oil and create more sustainable communities" (Leicestershire County Council, 2009:2). Another significant support from the Council derives from a commitment to make available funding for local

communities working on carbon emissions reduction (Leicestershire County Council, 2009). During an interview, it was reported that the success of Footpaths depends in part from the active support of Local Authorities (TL2, 2013).

### 5.3.2 Evaluation

#### *In relation with the conceptual framework: evidence of Lifestyle Politics...*

Footpaths Community Carbon Reduction seems to follow the route of Lifestyle Politics while elements of Ecological Citizenship play a supportive role on the outline. Objectives and content of Footpaths relate directly to Lifestyle Politics. The role granted to individual practices and routines when reducing carbon footprint is central to the sections, and to a certain extent, these dynamics go beyond the three indicators introduced in the conceptual framework. Within Footpaths Community Carbon Reduction project, lifestyle is the fundamental side of action in improving environmental performances. Considering the content of Footpaths sections, which is about discussing and reflecting upon individual routines around home energy, food, transports, consumerism, water and waste (TL2, 2013), it recalls a philosophical underpinning of Lifestyle Politics grounded in becoming aware of the ecological impacts of the private sphere and taking responsibility for diminishing that.

The freedom left to participants to set own carbon reduction targets embraces even further the theory of Lifestyle Politics because it recognises the asymmetry of individual habits. Furthermore, by concentrating on to the “emotional aspects of making changes in life” (TL2, 2013) Footpaths has a role in the set of morals and choices characterising everyone’s way of livings. Given that the project offers the opportunity to learn, share and get inspired around low-carbon living routines, it fully suit the Lifestyle Politics indicator about “*environmental education and trainings*”. The fact of covering all aspects along food chains concerning food production, processing, packaging, transport and cooking denotes the attempt to make people aware of the environmental impacts of foodstuff in each step, claiming that people would draw own conclusions and set objectives toward low-carbon food. Such elements connect to the indicator addressing “*sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food*”. In the meeting concerning food, there is also room to discuss vegetarianism and veganism, which is common practice among participants. This entails the fulfilment of the last Lifestyle Politics indicator about “*abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria*”.

Footpaths as a source of de-routinisation of everyday life practices (which is key to Lifestyle Politics) connects straight some individual dynamics (transport routines, consumption choices, eating habits and so forth) to phenomena of a global reach (e.g. Greenhouse gases emissions, Climate Change and all the adverse effects associated with them). It comes with no surprise that a theoretical standpoint of Footpaths considers every individual decrease of carbon emissions as a direct benefit to the planet in its integrity (TL2, 2013). Such reflections pertain that participants frame their daily life in a background of global challenges.

#### *...in a background of Ecological Citizenship*

An underlying idea behind project can be summarised as ‘helping individuals improving their balance with the planet’. This evokes the ideal form of Post-Cosmopolitan Citizenship of Dobson (2004), apart from recalling the connection between individual practices with the planetary so introduced by Spaargaren and Oosterveer (2010). Dobson (2004) referred to Ecological Citizenship as a model and also as precise connotation of Post-Cosmopolitan Citizenship while writing that it belongs both to the private and public sphere besides holding an unequivocal character of non-

territoriality. These features come to the fore when reflecting upon Footpaths. On the one hand, the project deals directly with the private sphere because encourages low-impact behaviours, and on the other it relates also to a public dimension as the project occurs in a community setting. Moreover, the non-territorial aspect makes sense to this end since Footpaths participants offer their contribution for the good of the world as a whole: beyond local and national boundaries, they seek to tackle in an unambiguous manner some global environmental problems - however complex that may sound. This connects to a form of participation as Ecological Citizenship that refers to the non-territorial trajectory of pro-environmental action, suggesting that environmental policy is not only responsibility of governments, but essentially site for lifestyles.

As for the set of indicators presented in the conceptual framework, the way people are reached to take part in Footpaths (i.e. via public events or meeting associations) connects to Ecological Citizenship indicator of *“mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain”*. The support granted from the Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council is instrumental to meet the Ecological Citizenship indicator about *“collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain”*. Furthermore, on a functional level, the funding granted by the County Council suggests Footpaths is a recognised initiative among those working on climate change, leaving room for stronger partnerships with local authorities in the future.

The robust relation with Lifestyle Politics recommends that Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction is a variation of that ideal-type of citizen-consumer, and recognises the lifestyle as the key dimension to carry out food sustainability transitions. The fact that elements of Ecological Citizenship are founded on the outskirts is significant because connects to crucial actors in the public policy domain. The combination of both ideal-types suggests that food transitions within lifestyles, to be successful, need to be outward oriented and backed by local policymaking. Correspondingly, local politics can foster lifestyle food transitions by making such grassroots projects more organised and institutionalised.

## 5.4 The 30-mile Food Challenge - Transition Ipswich

### 5.4.1 The project

The Transition Ipswich's (TI) 30-mile Food Challenge is about eating “only food that has been produced and processed within a 30 mile radius of the centre of Ipswich – for 30 whole days” (TI1, 2012). The first Challenge took place in September 2012 specifically because of the large amount of seasonal foodstuff available (TI2, 2013). *‘Buy local, grow local, and eat local’* is the basic principle of the project (TI2, 2013 and TI1, 2013). Next to the stated objective of “shift people's buying habits to become more local, and thus grow the local market and keep money in the local economy” (TI1, 2012), an underlying intention was that of “make people reflect on what they eat and possibly change their shopping behaviour” (TI2, 2013).

In order to make local food more accessible to everyone, organisers mapped local food producers and independent local shops for them, creating an online-interactive-directory of producers, retailers and ‘eat out’ places located within the 30 miles (TI3, 2012). To gain momentum and gather as many people around the challenge, there was a series of activities dedicated to local food, including local cooking sections, vegetables growing courses, farms visits and also a two-day food and drink festival celebrating the end of the project (TI2, 2013). This awareness raising exercise



was organised in 10 months' time by a group of 10 to 12 TI activists (TI2, 2013). "The 30-Mile Challenge enjoyed considerable success among people of Suffolk since the organisation took place with the support of other Transition Groups surrounding Ipswich, like Woodbridge and Bungay" (TI2, 2013).

Although the total number of participants has not been quantified, "many of people were informed of the initiative through leaflets, posters, appearances on BBC Radio Suffolk, articles in the local press, websites, blogs and through word of mouth" (TI2, 2013). About 50 people signed up on the mailing list and many more participated in the activities occurring during the challenge (TI2, 2013). An extensive array of frequently asked questions on the website helped potential participants gain deep understanding of the project as well as contributed overcoming possible difficulties evidenced by questions of the kind "what about processed foods and drinks that contain a number of products? or "what if I'm up for it but the rest of my family aren't?" and similarly, "but won't shopping for local food take much longer than just going to the supermarket?" (TI1, 2012). In particular, people were critically informed that local food is not always sustainable and of the fact that local or independent retailers do not always sell local products (TI2, 2013 and TI1, 2012). Consumers were asked to go even further to evaluate what is 'local' by considering food processing and packaging in their buying choices: for example "supermarket Suffolk/Essex-grown vegetables are likely to have been washed and packaged out of the county and returned here" (TI1, 2012).

Overall, shopping at major supermarkets was not recommended, although three 'wildcard' non-local products were allowed as means to facilitate the Challenge (TI2, 2013). People were provided with cooking recipes for local foods and given the opportunity to follow three blogs of Transition activists who shared their life experiences during the month-long challenge (TI1, 2012). In order to clarify even further the array of 'local food', some participants coined a distinction between primary and secondary local food, referring to food made with local ingredients and processed locally in the first case, and food locally sold, produced or processed but prepared with non-local ingredients in the case of secondary food (TI2, 2013). Participants were free to set their own target period of eating local, as long as that would be sufficient to try new food and explore local alternatives (TI3, 2012). All in all, the information given about the Challenge served as platform to "inspire and support people making it happen in a way that is fun, too" (TI2, 2013).

As well as private donations, some local producers, retailers and eating out places supported the project by granting funds necessary to design and print leaflets (TI2, 2013). Although effects on participants have not been reported, during an interview it emerged that some avoided meat from supermarkets, whilst others subscribed to local CSA memberships schemes (TI2, 2013). The 2013 30-mile Challenge is planned to be a County-wide event, made with joint efforts of several Transition groups in Suffolk each hosting less events by number but more organised and bigger (TI2, 2013). It is hoped that Suffolk County Council will play a role in the second Challenge by granting funding, and local schools will also be more involved in lectures and demonstrations about the strengths of food locally grown (TI2, 2013). There will be efforts to record the number of participants as well as questionnaires seeking to report the consequences of the initiative on people (TI2, 2013).

### ***Background of the movement***

TI is a network of about 100-120 people committed to make "the community more resilient to the growing social pressures of peak oil and climate change" (TI4, 2012). Besides food, working groups organise around energy, transport, heart and soul (TI4, 2012). Several are also members of the

Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture scheme (TI4, 2012). TI has connections with other local voluntary associations including The Ipswich Food Coop, a community-run vegetarian and organic whole foods retailer, Cycle Ipswich, a group campaigning to promote cycling as well as other Transition-type projects around the town (TI4, 2012). As reported from interview, to this point there have been only marginal contacts with the City Council and other local authorities, although the movement is planning to draw more attention and support from local politicians in perspective of the 2013 Challenge (TI2, 2013).

#### 5.4.2 Evaluation

##### *In relation with the conceptual framework: a Lifestyle Politics perspective*

The fundamental part of the Challenge was that of promoting de-routinisation of everyday life in favour of localised food practices. This was pursued by making people reflect on their eating habits in a background of ecological sustainability, food miles, and support for local food along with local producers and retailers. Instrumental to deliver the message was the directory of local food producers, shops and restaurants in addition to the campaign organised during the 30 days. As a source of de-routinisation occurring at social level (see Spaargaren and Oosterveer, 2010), the Challenge stands on the side of Lifestyle Politics because turns to raise participants' awareness about the environmental implications of their food buying choices and their everyday eating behaviour. Not only, as those who partaken experienced first-hand changes in the way they deal with food, so adapting to more localised and possibly new diets (TI2, 2013). The initiative articulates as a sort of 'reflexive agent' which can make individuals committed to greening their everyday food practices in a background of localisation.

With respect to the conceptual framework, the practice of avoiding non-local foods for the 30 days of the Food Challenge suggests the fulfilment of the Lifestyle Politics indicator about "*abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria*". Even though the context created around the challenge had a role in orienting eating choices at social level, being epitomised by the slogan 'buy, grow and eat local', those choices were nonetheless defined at an individual dimension. In other words, every participant was free to set her/his own sustainability criteria for (local) food. In practice, the 30-mile Food Challenge was a platform to test people's willingness and capacity to adapt their eating behaviour to local circumstances. This line of thought envisions that people were equipped with resources aimed at placing local and sustainable food at the top of their preferences, which relates to the indicator about "*sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food*". Following these indicators, the 30-mile food challenge is an example of Lifestyle Politics.

##### *Clarifying the role of Political Consumerism and Ecological Citizenship*

Although food is endorsed with additional significances that enable visualising it as political issue similar to the understandings of Micheletti (2003 and 2006), the case of the 30-mile Food Challenge makes use of local food as an end in itself and not as means to urge food producers and retailers to change their practices. The empirical research shows that local food is preferred because of sustainability concerns and as a way to connect with the locality. Therefore, privileging the local food market is a way to rediscover flavours, traditions, identities and to behave environmentally friendly –first and foremost – while not necessarily as means of divergence with non-local shops and producers. It follows that Political Consumerism does not play a relevant role in this case study. Similarly, elements recalling Ecological Citizenship are important to make the food challenge happen, but do not change the argument that the project is primarily an instance of Life-



style Politics. In this respect, the challenge raises citizenry awareness on local and sustainable food, thus connects to the indicator *“mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain”*, while the partnership with other Transition movements suggests the fulfilment of the one about *“collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain”*.

Despite the possibility to recognise some parallelism with the ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship and Political Consumerism, the 30-mile Food Challenge connects clearly with the ideal-type of Lifestyle Politics. The case study's 30 days boundary provides a 'try out period' for transforming the everyday eating behaviour, which can be an interesting starting point for effective food sustainability transitions at lifestyle level.

### *The challenge as a fragment of a broad tendency*

With respect to the 2013 event, TI is prone to develop some aspect of social embeddedness around both local food and short food supply chains, by integrating the efforts of other Transition movements in Suffolk. In this way, it stands as pivot of social relation as well as spatial location for making local food increasingly common among the regional community. This can be read as part of a global tendency advocating localisation of food systems. Seen under the banner of alternative food initiative (see Allen et al., 2003), this stream features tensions about the “re-spatialisation of food systems in contradistinction to the conventional, globalising food system” (Feagan, 2007:24). The Ipswich Food Challenge favours the emergence of so-called “relations of proximity” with respect to food, which entails the reduction of food “spatial orbits” and increasingly a search for “personal contact” between producers and consumers (Feagan, 2007:25; Halweil, 2002; Renting et al., 2003). This new equilibrium created around food may be a significant factor for sustaining people's changes in food routines for a longer period than the 30 days of the challenge.

## 5.5 The Regional Market - Transition Town Deventer

### 5.5.1 The project

In spring 2012 Eetbaar Deventer, the Edible Deventer group of Transition Town Deventer (TTD), organised several regional market events in partnership with the movement Slowfood Ijsselvalley (TTD1, 2013). Many farmers coming from the surroundings of Deventer were invited to promote their products during the regular town markets at the Brink: this initiative took place every last Saturday of the month from March to June (TTD1, 2013 and TTD2, 2012). Among the various products for sale, such as pasta, vegetables, flour and honey, all came from small-scale artisan production and of course, from the Ijssel region (TTD1, 2013). Large part of local foodstuff was also organic (TTD1, 2013). These features represented a major source of difference from products on sale at conventional market stalls, where regional and organic products were not guaranteed regular appearance (TTD1, 2013). Moreover, several market vendors of the regular Saturday market were neither food producers nor came from the Ijssel region (TTD1, 2013). All in all, a collection of about six between farmers, gardeners, backers and beekeepers participated in the initiative (TTD3, 2012).

The Regional Market was a pilot project aimed to “understand the conditions to set up a regular market of local producers and regional food next to the established town market” (TTD1, 2013). Although “sales were good and local products gained lots of success among people”, the initiative did not continue in 2013 because of emerging contrasts with conventional market stalls, which

saw their revenue decreasing during the trial period (TTD1, 2013). It should also be noted that the events “were made possible by a considerable effort of Edible Deventer’s activists, who decided to abandon the follow up for time pressure” (TTD1, 2013). Despite the amount of consumers showing up was not recorded, it was reckoned that a major effect of the Regional Market was that “people increased their awareness on what is local and organic food besides getting to know who local producers are” (TTD1, 2013). To help the kick-off, the initiative granted funding from the City Council and was run by volunteers of the movements (TTD2, 2012). The most important principles of the Regional Market are summarised in Box 5.2.

### **Box 5.2 The Regional Market in Deventer**

- **Fresh products:** farmers from the region sell really fresh products. This makes them tastier, healthier and more nutritious.
- **Nice prices:** local products require little transportation and no intermediaries or retail costs. This can lead to convenient prices comparable to supermarkets.
- **No preservatives:** because the food directly from the land on the board of the consumer, there is less or no preservatives involved.
- **More money in the region:** local consumption of local products ensures that there are more money in the region, which strengthens the local economy.
- **Citizens learn peasants know:** citizens learn the local farmers and their work know. They can see and learn how their food is produced.
- **Less food miles:** the Regional Market provides less food miles and therefore less CO2 emissions than food from supermarkets.
- **More self-sufficient, less vulnerable:** strong local agriculture makes us more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to global environmental, political and economic crisis.
- **Awareness about healthy cycle:** all together, it can make people more aware of the cycles of nature, food, land, farming, production, consumption and waste..
- **More transition:** and this awareness may, we sincerely hope, make even more people transitioning to sustainable, healthy and happy life with less (fossil) energy.

*Box 5.2. Principles underlying the Regional Market of Transition Town Deventer. Translated from TTD2 (2012).*

The philosophy behind the initiative can be portrayed from the following text that seems as relevant as ever for this research. It is translated and adapted from the website of TTD:

“[In the] past fifty years, agriculture has remarkably specialised, with more machines, fewer staff and [also] a growing gap between farmers and citizens. In recent years, other developments [are] noticeable. Consumers want / need fresher and healthier food, they want to know / see how their food is produced. Restaurants and top chefs reveal their biggest secrets: cooking with fresh food, carefully cultivated, not for mass production. Farmers living in a healthy [environment] cultivate in small scale, seek the support of the citizen-consumers in unequal competition with mass-companies. Local products have

become popular because of their unique taste, quality and personal contact with the farmer and his company” (TTD4, 2012).

### ***Background of the movement***

TTD collects approximately 450 people interested in increasing local resilience, while active members organise around working groups based on themes such as Hearth and Soul, Repair Cafe, Local Energy and Transition Town Radio (Transition Network, 2013 and TTD5, 2012). Next to drawing inspiration from the international movement, activists in Deventer “work with local solutions that can be performed by everyone: we call on everyone's strength, social behaviour, wisdom, creativity and experience” to seek low carbon living (TTD5, 2012 and TTD1, 2013). The movement supports third party projects and cooperates with many local associations like LETS Deventer and SpullenDelen.nl, a stuff-sharing scheme (TTD5, 2012). Edible Deventer consists of 8 committed activists - all of whom are women - who held regular talks with other Transition movements in the area in search for inspiration and collaboration (TTD1, 2013). Since 2008 this group has organised projects comprising wild fruit picking, trainings on edible gardens, a bee corridor, and some community garden around the city (TTD1, 2013).

In 2012 the movement was awarded with honours from Deventer Municipality and Provincie Overijssel for the plan of restructuring an old building into a multiple purposes environmental centre which will be the new head office of the network (TTD1, 2013). The new centre will be used for youth and adult environmental educational as well as knowledge centre around growing food (TTD1, 2013). Representatives of TTD regularly hold talks with offices of the Municipality mostly about plans to increase edible landscape in the city (TTD1, 2013). In recent years the network granted several subsidies from Local Authorities and from the Green Left (‘Groen Links’ - a political party) for its efforts on urban agriculture (TTD1, 2013). The movement plans to enhance its relation with the Municipality in the coming years by getting more and more involved with organising interest around local policies centred in sustainability and resilience (TTD1, 2013).

### **5.5.2 Evaluation**

#### ***In relation with the conceptual framework: a proactive form of Political Consumerism***

The Regional Market goes beyond the ideal-type of Political Consumerism. Given that the project promotes an alternative infrastructure of food provision, focussed on a regional and environmentally friendly perspective, the concept of Micheletti (2003) seems quite limitative to describe this phenomena. This sections aim to discuss the emergence of an advancement of the Political Consumerism type proposed in the conceptual framework.

If one takes a step back, would probably see that TTD organised a collection of farmers offering local products, and correspondingly gave consumers the opportunity to (get to know and) purchase food coming from the region. On the side of consumers, the initiative delivered fresh prospects of consumption that seemed not to be existing beforehand. As for the group of farmers, the success of the market made them more known among people wanting to find local flavours. These reflections are key when shaping the new form of Political Consumerism.

The Regional Market was initiated by two associations wanting to provide consumers with additional opportunities to spend their money in a background of local supply chains and environmental consciousness. In this way, the two principal forms of realisation of Political Consumers, based on the indicators on “*boycotts*” and “*buycotts*”, can be categorically excluded. The initiative can be seen as a way for TTD to manifest disapproval for products or practices of regular market

stalls. This emerges following what reported in an interview, where a coordinator of the project noted how conventional vendors “did not sell much local produce” (TTD1, 2013). The role of the Transition movement in gathering a group of food producers under the heading “local” in contraposition to “non-local” vendors may represent a breakthrough to the common notion of Political Consumerism. This practice lays closely to the indicator about “*take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains*”, however seem further developed by the fact that local market stalls were made to compete with conventional vendors. This means that TTD had a proactive role in organising disapproval to the status quo, and so, offering alternatives.

Setting up the Regional Market was a way to democratise consumers choices: consumers were given the chance to decide whether or not shorten their food chain and thus reduce food miles. These considerations are central to frame what the author calls a *proactive form Political Consumerism*, which is symbolised by the removal of barriers of access to local foods by organising an alternative infrastructure of food provision. This kind of Political Consumerism suggests that food sustainability transitions can take the shape of regional supply chains organised by grassroots organisations.

#### **Similarities with the 30-mile of Transition Ipswich**

This initiative stands close to the 30-mile food challenge. Like in Ipswich, the organisers of the Regional Market wanted to promote social relations pivoted around food. In fact, the market offered the context for tracing the identity of people who cultivated food, as antithesis to the anonymity of producers behind conventional marketplaces. The project in Ipswich sought to influence people’s eating habits, and was aligned to Lifestyle Politics, while the one in Deventer changed the market structure of regional food and is associated with a hybrid kind of Political Consumerism. Anyhow, the Regional Market is an example of reconfiguring the balance between food and territory, which also Transition Ipswich is contributor.

### **5.6 Educational activities and consumer advice– Transition Town Den Helder**

Transition Town Den Helder (TTDH) is a group of people committed to sustainable living (TDH1, 2013). Based at the Environmental Centre De Michaëlshof, activists adopted an integrated approach for sustainable and self-sufficient living in the areas of food, energy, and housing (TDH1, 2013). Among the spectrum of projects carried out by the group, food plays a crucial role in the weekly and monthly educational programmes running throughout the year (TDH1, 2013). TTDH is also involved in informing consumers around the environmental performance scores of brands and products through Rank a Brand (TDH2, 2010; Rank a Brand, 2012).

#### **5.6.1 Educational activities**

In the gardening course people are taught practical skills for organic farming and grow vegetables in a communal area surrounding the Environmental Centre (TDH1, 2013). The 10 participants of the course started in January 2013 share the produce based on the needs of their household (TDH1, 2013). The course runs every week for half a day: a fee covers guidance of a coordinator of TTDH, rent for the garden, seeds and equipment (TDH2, 2010). The second course concentrates specifically on permaculture: 20 participants meet on a monthly basis for a whole day and have free choice over the subject of the lesson, remaining however in matters related to permaculture

(TDH1, 2013). Besides growing vegetables and self-sustaining plants in dedicated allotments, typical topics covered in both courses range between pruning, wine making, learning edible wild plants, canning and cooking (TDH2, 2010). In addition, TTDH conducts an environmental education programme with children in cooperation with a local primary school (TDH1, 2013). Over a period of one afternoon a week for six consecutive weeks, students aged between 11 and 12 are taught both theoretically and practically to look after nature, by i.e. recognising plant and animal species, maintaining flowers, taking care of hens and are also given the opportunity to grow edible plants (TDH1, 2013).

An underlying objective of the educational activities is to “connect food production and consumption in a way that people feel responsible for growing the food they eat” (TDH1, 2013). During the courses people experience the strengths of food self-provision: “growing own food is good for the mind because helps against stress, good for the body because is a source of healthy nutrition and free from fertilisers and good for nature, because it adds biodiversity” (TDH1, 2013). Participants are likely to develop experience on how to process food naturally as well as sharing culinary tips and farming skills (TDH1, 2013). As a result “people can learn a new way of living, because permaculture is not only about growing vegetables by following natural laws or sharing food surplus, it is also looking after others” (TDH1, 2013).

### 5.6.2 Advising consumers

Next to educational programmes, the movement emphasises sustainable shopping: its website offers information on choosing products featured by ecologically or socially responsible purposes (TDH2, 2010). Consumers are invited to check the “sustainability grades” given by a brand-comparison website which assesses companies and products on their environmental, labour, climate and transparency scores (TDH2, 2010; Rank a Brand, 2012). “By buying the highest ranked brands, you can contribute to a better world. The more people do this, the greater the incentive for companies to be more open, greener and fairer” (TDH2, 2010). Rank a brand’s mission is “empowering consumers to make informed choices about where to spend their money”: to this end it has developed a method to research brands sustainability performance (Rank a Brand, 2012). Although this initiative is not constantly promoted, it represents an important way of influencing consumer preferences.

### *Background of the movement*

The core group of Transition Town consists of three people who are regularly busy to run the activities of the Environmental centre De Michaelshof (TDH3, 2012). Some of them have gained decennial experience with sustainable building, water management and closing resource cycles, together with bio-dynamic and permaculture farming (TDH3, 2012 and TDH1, 2013). Most of the food eaten at the Environmental Centre is sourced from the surrounding land, “which make us resilient to diseases and less vulnerable to food industries” (THD1, 2013). Activities of De Michaelshof are widely known among people living in the area of Den Helder due to the regular presence of articles in local media (TDH1, 2013). The Local Council is said to have ‘diametrically opposed’ views to those of the movement: that is why there is “absolutely no” relation with local politics (TDH1, 2013). A reason for conflicting ideas lays possibly in the Council’s support for intensive farming, which goes against the basic principles of the movement underlined by organic and permaculture agriculture (TDH1, 2013). The movement will not seek any help in the future since local politicians are mistrusted (TDH1, 2013).

### 5.6.3 Evaluation

#### *In relation with the conceptual framework: Lifestyle Politics for the educational activities...*

The experience drawn from the educational activities conducted in Den Helder relates mainly to the ideal-type of Lifestyle Politics, due to the importance given to learn and reflect upon personal eating practices. The indicator referring to *“environmental education and trainings”* clearly pictures this case study. Since people learn the skills to grow their food in a sustainable way, their relation with food changes because that is the result of their labour. It appears that people tend to feel more attached to the food they have grown, thus transform their daily practices correspondingly. Furthermore, because the courses of TTDH feature a direct contact with nature and participants get the chance to learn, discuss and share everyday life eating practices, they hold the concrete potential to influence the way people live. This is also valid for the regular discussions of food (un)sustainability themes including food miles, plastic packaging and chemical fertilisers used in conventional agriculture (TDH1, 2013). As a remedy, activists of TTDH encourage people to take responsibility for their own food and so diminish their reliance on supermarkets and food industries. These elements, along with the centrality of growing own food, leave room for the fulfilment of the Lifestyle Politics indicator saying that *“sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food”*. In fact, it seems that activists of TTDH share their expertise on how to make people more connected to their food in an ecologically responsible manner. Overall, food self-sufficiency is an important aspect of educational activities of TTDH, through which the activists seek to foster lifestyle transitions in a way that cannot be fully captured by the ideal-role of Lifestyle Politics.

#### *...and Political Consumerism for the consumer advice*

Inviting consumers to check sustainability indicators of brands and products before purchasing is a recognition of the power of consumers in inducing market actors to adopt sustainable practices. In this instance, TTDH addressed consumers as important players for greening practices of industries and retailers. The example lays within the Political Consumerism indicator about *“take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains”*, because essentially reports businesses' practices to consumers, who in turn can use their buying choices to approve or disapprove them. However, this instance is only a partial expression of the Political Consumerism typology because limited to providing information to consumers and claiming it will affect their consumption preferences. The use of this kind of citizen-consumer dimension is therefore limited to advising consumers choices, but has no visible effects nor offers structural transformations to consumers and producers practices. This project is very small in size (refers only to a website) and does not hold the potential to reach wide amounts of public, given the dimension of this Transition movement.

Overall, the case studies of TTDH offer the perspective that food sustainability transitions can be pursued by people taking responsibility for the food they eat by aiming at food self-sufficiency and sharing skills and knowledge to make that happen. This represents a version of Lifestyle Politics also because of the strong conviction that individual eating behaviour is the domain where environmentally sound reform takes place. Lastly, the minor version of Political Consumerism emerging from the consumer advice does not represent a breakthrough to the conceptual model nor to the broader characterisation of this ideal-type.



## 5.7 Edible Gardens - Transition Town Nijmegen

### 5.7.1 The projects

The Edible Nijmegen group of Transition Town Nijmegen (TTN) works on two gardening projects directed to grow food across the city. The first is named 'Permablitz actions' and is about "changing an ordinary garden into a maintenance-friendly and sustainable edible garden" (TTN1, 2013). These one-day activities take place both in private and public spaces, under the guidance of some permaculture experts sharing their skills with other participants (TTN2, 2013). When Permablitz are done in private gardens, a gardener assists with designing the future permaculture area according to the wishes of the owner, while the search for volunteers begins (TTN1, 2013). Once people, equipment and resources needed to build up the garden are ready, the blitz takes place (TTN1, 2013). Volunteers are informed about how the process will be like and can learn first-hand how to plant and grow mutually sustaining plants (TTN2, 2013). Several Permablitz took place in public land as well: along sidewalks, cycle paths and next to parking lots activists had grown vegetables and edible plants (TTN2, 2013). When volunteers participated three times in Permablitz, have the option to request a Permablitz in their own garden (TTN1, 2013).

The second gardening project is the Grootstal community garden, which is "a place that attracts people to learn and grow food" (TTN2, 2013). The Edible Nijmegen group assisted local residents setting up the garden by granting permissions from the Municipality, while experts gardeners from Transition Town helped designing the land by allocating space both for private allotments and for a community garden (TTN2, 2013). People in that neighbourhood were invited to participate in the activity with door-to-door talks and by distributing flyers (TTN2, 2013). Activists noted how the community garden "gathered much interest and enthusiasm from the local community: 30 households have joined from the start" (TTN2, 2013). "People mutually learn from each other, share seeds and surplus of produce" (TTN2, 2013). Resources to run the project are generally private though made available for shared use (TTN2, 2013). There are plans to involve in the project the Food Bank of Nijmegen (Voedselbank) as well as local primary schools (TTN2, 2013). Grootstal project helps building and strengthening community networks besides increasing people skills around permaculture design (TTN2, 2013). Participants become familiar on how to make compost, plant and maintain edible plants and share cooking recipes (TTN2, 2013). Respondents highlight that an informal purpose is that of making the city planning office aware that residents are displeased with the current plans of housing construction in Nijmegen (TTN2, 2013). Several activists of Grootstal hope "the Municipality stops giving permission to construct and will support us developing more edible areas across town" (TTN2, 2013).

### *Background of the movement*

TTN is a network of 19 people keen to make the necessary steps to "be more self-sufficient, which in turn creates resilience" (TTN3, 2013). The movement is very informal and there is no much connection with other groups or associations (TTN2, 2013). In addition to Edible Nijmegen, workgroups are busy with Transition Cafe, Repair Cafe, Films and Heart and Soul (TTN2, 2013). The motivation of the movement is based on the idea that "a sustainable Nijmegen has little chance of success if it is not endured by citizens themselves" (TN3, 2013). To that end, TTN claims to promote citizen activism toward "small-scale local solutions to peak oil and climate change" (TTN2, 2013).

According to several interview respondents, the Municipality of Nijmegen does not seem to be interested in the group's activities: in all the years TTN existed, there have been very little

contacts apart for Grootstal. The movement is discouraged because local politics appears distant from their views on food sustainability and urbanisation of food production, but hope there will be more support in the future (TTN2, 2013).

### 5.7.2 Evaluation

#### *In relation with the conceptual framework: Ecological Citizenship*

Given the fundamentally public orientation of Edible Nijmegen's gardening initiatives, the movement appears to connect to the ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship. The strong focus on converting public and private areas into edible gardens denotes the intention to make good use of the common space belonging to all Citizens of Nijmegen. In this process, persuading people to take responsibility emphasises that TTN organised public participation around growing food and taking care of the land. These elements evidence the indicator about *"mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain"*.

TTN has also played a role as an intermediary between Municipality and Grootstal community for making the shared garden actually possible. In a similar manner, the group has a strong commitment to create a sense of social integration around the Grootstal project, given the will to involve schools and the Food Bank. These relate to the indicator about *"collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain"*. It seems that beyond the primary aims of developing community involvement and growing food, a secondary important goal was that of reframing the relation with the Municipality. In this view, as a group of ordinary citizens with no involvement in local politics, they demonstrated to the local authority that being accountable of public land is not only possible, but fruitful. This success may persuade local politicians to allocate more public areas to citizens-led initiatives.

#### *Framing this example as a fragment of greater dynamics*

Similar to what stated for Cambridge, the projects in Nijmegen can be framed as instances of a greater and transnational trajectory advocating urban agriculture as remedy for reconfiguring the nutritional needs of communities exposed to environmental pressures (Hinrichs, 2003). Although the effects of such environmental challenges have not yet been massively evident in the area, Edible Nijmegen aims to prepare for the changes by making people aware of the importance of local food as initial alternative to the globalising structure of conventional food chains. This focus on localising food practices around communities sounds parallel to 'Community Food Security', a concept introduced by Robert Feagan meant to represent "a process of respatialisation of food systems oriented around the spatial delimitations of community" (2007:27). Although what seen in Nijmegen is less radical than the implications of that definition, the concept is useful to recognise dynamics where locality and community involvement are increasingly related while promoting changes to current food practices.

The gardening initiatives of TTN lay closely to the ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship proposed in the conceptual framework, due to the strong relation with two of its indicators. It appears that changing the way people relate to public and their own private land in a way to grow food is among the most important aspects of this characterisation of Ecological Citizenship.



## 5.8 Empirical Considerations

This chapter presented the key findings of the empirical research. Food projects of the Transition movements in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder and Nijmegen were not only described, but also analysed to understand their significance with the conceptual framework. This section draws the conclusions of the empirical research by providing an overview of the relation between the case studies and the ideal-types of citizen-consumers, prior to diving into the final chapter. A summary of the relation between case studies and conceptual framework is illustrated in the following Table 5.1.

Ideal-type	Indicator	Growing Spaces	Foot-paths	30-mile Food Challenge	Regional Market	Activities of TTDH*	Edible Gardens
Ecological Citizenship	Collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Taking part (or organising) citizen-shareholder schemes for unconventional food practices						
Political Consumerism	Boycott specific kinds of food producers, food retailers, products						
	Buycott specific kinds of food producers, food retailers, products or certified foodstuff						
	Take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains				✓	✓	
Lifestyle Politics	Abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria		✓	✓			
	Sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food		✓	✓		✓	
	Environmental education and trainings are important		✓			✓	

Table 5.1. Summary of the relation between the case studies and the indicators of the conceptual

*framework. \*Activities of Transition Town Den Helder refer to both the educational activities and the advice on consumers.*

### 5.8.1 Evaluation of Ecological Citizenship

Within the empirical versions of Ecological Citizenship, there are two crucial differences between main and marginal case studies. On the one hand, main initiatives are Growing Spaces and Edible Gardens which are deeply characterised by this typology of citizen-consumer. On the other, there are case studies like the Footpath: Community Carbon Reduction and the 30-mile Food Challenge which connection to indicators of Ecological Citizenship occurs only on the outskirts. Given the prominence of the main initiatives, only those are worth discussing.

#### *Citizens caring for local space*

This chapter reported how the Ecological Citizenship dimension characterising Growing Spaces and Edible Gardens empowered citizens to care for local space. Central to both projects was the commitment to reclaim public land to grow food, in search for developing a locally oriented food systems. People were engaged to take responsibility in their status of citizens, and incentivised to do so because beneficial for the entire community. These initiatives were publicly oriented, due to their non for profit nature and involvement of third parties. Both projects aimed to influence the local authorities to allocate more public spaces for gardening initiatives and to demonstrate that the Transition movement is capable of managing public land. Although the relation with local politics is underlined by functionality (e.g. sponsorship), there is the potential that the Transition movements will have a role in future policies for urban planning. These case studies can be framed as instances of international movements advocating urban agriculture and localised food production as small scale alternatives to global - agriculture, food production, and food supply chains (Feagan, 2007).

### 5.8.2 Evaluation of Lifestyle Politics: processes of community de-routinisation

Three empirical variations of Lifestyle Politics emerged from the case studies in Leicester, Ipswich and Den Helder. These projects empowered people to reconsider daily habits against three different backgrounds: low-carbon living, shortening food miles, and self-provisioning food respectively. In various intensities, all three projects sought to influence people's eating behaviour and draw reforms according to individual wishes. The structure created around the lifestyle change was plural: a sense of community involvement emerged in all the cases and played a key role while motivating, helping and measuring changes. It follows that these Transition movements proved to be successfully persuasive to make peoples adopt sustainable food routines. Besides that, people were equipped with information and skills to begin de-routinising their food habits. A common aspect of those projects was the organisation of food de-routinisation in a community ambience. Finally, food was not only a means to 'go green' but also a means of social cohesion, and associated both with traditional as well as local meanings.

### 5.8.3 Evaluation of Political Consumerism

This chapter presented how the Regional Market in Deventer and the advice on consumers of TTDH represent instances of the ideal-type of Political Consumerism. These case studies envisioned consumers as potentially powerful players for changing the status quo - of the food market and for companies' practices respectively. A proactive and locally focused characterisation of Political Consumerism shaped the analysis of the Regional Market. TTD had a role in filling the gap between consumers seeking for more local and organic food and the lack of such products on sale

at the existing market: that is why the movement proposed a new infrastructure of food provision. This characterisation goes beyond the set of indicators proposed for recognising Political Consumerism in practice, and shows an innovative form that this ideal-type can take. Correspondingly, TTDH informed consumers of the importance of checking the sustainability record of brands and products before shopping. That was meant to orient consumers' preferences towards goods with a high sustainability score, but given the small scale of the project, it did not accomplished massive results. The ideal-type of Political Consumerism was the least common among case studies, which leads to the conclusion that the Transition movements do not strictly consider the purchase of food as a crucial domain to address sustainability reforms. However, this will be addressed in the last chapter of this thesis, which follows.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1 Introduction

The study was set out to evaluate how food initiatives of the Transition movements are related to three theoretical dimensions of citizen-consumers in the specific spectrum of food sustainability transitions. It has identified some empirical variations to the proposed ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics based on six case studies distributed in the Netherlands and United Kingdom. The study has also sought to know what strategy was adopted to pursue certain ideal-types and which resources, rights and responsibilities helped shaping those typologies in the particular circumstances of each movement. The theoretical literature on this subject embodies into a unique framework the three ideal-types as political actors for greening consumption practices but it was inconclusive on some questions within the agency of social movements dealing with food sustainability transitions. The study sought to answer three questions:

1. How do food projects of Transition movements in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder, and Nijmegen connect to citizen-consumers ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics?
2. What strategies are put in place when referring to the ideal-types of citizen-consumers?
3. What resources, rights and responsibilities are there in the food projects of those Transition movements when making use of one of the three citizen-consumers ideal-types?

Among the current spectrum of social movements, the Transition movement is dedicating much effort to reforming practices of food production and consumption. The six case studies investigated in this thesis represent interesting points of reflection on the capacity of a social movement to bring changes to the current food system. The argument of this chapter is structured in this way. Section 6.2 presents the answers to the research questions. Section 6.3 illustrates the significance of this thesis, and points at some additional remarks emerging from the case studies, concentrating on localisation and community involvement, which are discussed in section 6.4 as considerations for the Transition movements. The theoretical reflections are presented in section 6.5, and includes considerations on the three citizen-consumer ideal-types, the theory on transition and sustainability transitions in food practices. Section 6.6 offers two recommendations for the Transition movements, and lastly, section 6.7 provides some thoughts for future research.

### 6.2 Responses to the research questions

This section presents the answers to the research questions based on the integration of the key empirical findings reported in the preceding chapter.

**How do food projects of Transition movements in Cambridge, Leicester, Ipswich, Deventer, Den Helder, and Nijmegen connect to citizen-consumers ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics?**

The answer to this question is organised around the real world characterisations of the ideal-types of citizen-consumers, and therefore divided in three parts.

### *Ecological Citizenship*

Among all the case studies, Growing Spaces of TC and Edible Garden of TTN truly represent some empirical variations to the ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship. Both connect to two of the three indicators presented in the conceptual framework, and more specifically, to those about *“collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain”* and *“mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain”*. The significance of these empirical variations lays in the fact that the Transition movements organised public interest around urban food production as well as turning attention to urban space degradation. Indeed, improving the urban landscape by converting abandoned areas to grow food is an underlying aspect of these characterisations of Ecological Citizenship.

The recognition that everybody can contribute to growing food in public areas is possibly a driving factor behind the use of this type of citizen-consumer. The success of turning public participation into concrete actions visible to the entire citizenry (and so, to policymakers), implies that there is some real chance that local authorities will consider these urban agriculture projects when drawing new urban plans. One arguable condition for this is that the Transition movements should relate more closely to local politics.

Within the framework of food sustainability transitions, activities underlined by this type of citizen-consumer propose reconsiderations in the quality and functions of (but also actors managing) public space. That is why an argument resulting from the empirical research is that Ecological Citizenship is defined in relation to local (public) space. Therefore, relying on Ecological Citizenship to conduct food sustainability transitions means shortening food production and consumption chains by involving fellow citizens in growing food in public areas.

### *Lifestyle Politics*

Given that Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction programme of TL meets all three indicators of Lifestyle Politics, it entails that this case study represents an accurate kind of that ideal-type of citizen-consumer. Being it an informal *“environmental education”* scheme which promotes that *“sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food”* and leaves room for *“abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria”*, this project equips people to go through lifestyle changes. Other good approximation of this ideal-type emerged from the educational activities of TDH and the 30-mile Food Challenge of TI. These case studies meet the first two and the last two indicators of Lifestyle Politics respectively. The presence of empirical versions of Lifestyle Politics suggests that three of the researched Transition movements regard individual (eating) routines as fundamental sites of intervention for minimising environmental footprints. This is significant because the activities designed around lifestyle changes address individual responsibilities in the background of global environmental challenges. The projects evidenced that dealing with routine changes occurred at a social level, within what the Transition movements call ‘communities’.

In the context of food sustainability transitions, these case studies suggest the Transition movements provided the means for people to understand the roots of their established food routines, a collaborative review of their environmental impacts, and advices on possible adjustments to undertake. This follows the argument arising from the empirical chapter that the Transition movements organised community de-routinisation processes in the domain of food. The out-

comes of these processes might not be the same for all versions of Lifestyle Politics. In fact, while TL endorsed low-carbon foods, TI promoted local food and TTDH focussed on food self-provision. By drawing a common line, it follows that making use of Lifestyle Politics to pursue food sustainability transitions entails persuading people to take individual responsibilities for recalibrating their own routines in a way to prefer food self-provisioned or buy low-carbon and locally produced food.

### **Political Consumerism**

While a clear characterisation of the ideal-type of Political Consumerism was not found in the empirical research, two variations to this role were recognised in the Regional Market in Deventer and in the advice to consumers in Den Helder. Both case studies made use of what Micheletti (2003) named “discursive political consumerism” which was included in the set of indicators as a way to “*take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food networks*”. Whilst the case study of TTDH was limited to informing consumer choices, the one of TTD is a bolder version than that of the conceptual model, given the involvement of food producers to create a new infrastructure of local food provision. This requires some additional thoughts, because although the Regional Market was initiated to approve regional producers and disapprove those non-regional, it is nonetheless challenging to conceptualise this project within the given framework. The creation of alternative market platform for regional food goes beyond the indicators of Political Consumerism: this ‘conceptual lack’ can be filled by an advancement of this citizen-consumer ideal-type, which takes a proactive role in reforming a market structure characterised by disapproved practices. Therefore, this local and proactive form of Political Consumerism results in the creation of a regional supply chain from the grassroots.

It is important to recognise that none of the empirical versions of Political Consumerism made use of the two core principles of this ideal-type. Boycotts and buycotts were not considered as instruments to promote sustainable food consumption or to reform current market practices. As it appears from the empirical research, the ideal-type of Political Consumerism was less present compared to the other typologies. The main conclusion is that the Transition movements had a confined role in steering consumers’ buying preferences as a way to pursue transition towards sustainable food consumption and production. Even if one can argue that the everyday consumption preferences lay closely to lifestyle choices, and so to Lifestyle Politics, the fact that Political Consumerism is not widely associated with the initiatives of the Transition movements leads to the reflection that consumers are not considered having a crucial role in carrying out food sustainability transitions.

Prior to continuing with the second answer, it should be reminded that even if several case studies showed minor elements referring to more than one ideal-type, it was decided to prioritise only those with a strong characterisation emerging from the conceptual framework.

### **What strategies are put in place when referring to the ideal-types of citizen-consumers?**

To begin with, an important prerequisite for this answer concerns the fact that all Transition movements approached in this research were characterised by a some lack of organisation in the mode of conducting the activities as well as an unclear vision for evolving the projects in the future. However, this is tolerated because is common among social movements. With this in mind, it should be appreciated that the researched Transition movements do not have a clear or consistent strategy underpinning the use of the ideal-types of citizen-consumers. What emerges from

the empirical research is that no Transition movement decided to make use of the ideal-types at first place, but that was rather occurring from local circumstances and from the driving forces behind the projects.

In this context, some parallel factors behind the use of the ideal-types can be recognised. First, the activities connecting to Ecological Citizenship represent local responses to growing concerns over the degradation of urban space and risks associated with food. These responses are meant to be the first steps towards localised food systems characterised by personal relationships, as critique to the abstract, anonymous global food system. Second, an underlying intention for referring to Lifestyle Politics is the prioritisation of individuals' daily routines in the challenge for minimising environmental impacts. This led to the development of initiatives keen on intervening in individual practices, from reconsidering current behaviours to adopt new behaviours. In different intensities, activities relying on this ideal-type sought to reform personal practices in a way to reduce their reliance on the global food system. Third, the case studies connecting to Political Consumerism did not share similar backgrounds or intentions, that is why it is challenging to draw symmetries. On one side, the creation of an alternative infrastructure of food provision through the Regional Market emerged because of the growing concerns over the economic situation of regional food producers, and underlying preferences for their products. On the other side, the consumer advice of TTDH was meant to offer consumers an additional tool to relate for their choices. These factors are possibly at the root of the informal strategies to make use of the ideal-types of citizen-consumers.

### **What resources, rights and responsibilities are there in the food projects of the Transition movements when making use of the three citizen-consumers ideal-types?**

#### **Resources**

Apart from the resources needed to practically run the food projects, when reasoning upon the resources necessary to make use of the ideal-types, one can identify a series of clusters for each given ideal-type based on the fulfilled indicators. The resources listed below represent a generalisation from the empirical variations of the three typologies of citizen-consumers. Because resources serve multiple purposes, the following clusters can show some overlaps.

- Ecological Citizenship
  - Resources to attract public interest and participation (within the indicator about mobilisation or campaigning for sustainability issues in the food domain): information on websites and social media, public meetings at the 'Transition Cafes' or festivals, open days at the edible gardens, door-to-door involvement of people, use of participants' network to involve more people.
  - Resources to link with local politics (within the indicator of collaborating with public or political organisations to address sustainability issues in the food domain): apply for funding schemes and green awards, hold talks with local politicians, use of participants' network to involve local politicians.
- Lifestyle Politics

- Resources serving for environmental education (within the indicator about environmental education and trainings are important): spreading information via handbooks, websites and group discussions; skills and knowledge about (permaculture and organic) gardening.
- Resources about sustainable food (referring to the indicator sustainability is a key issue when dealing with food): sharing recipes, inspiring practices of low-carbon cooking methods and natural food processing, creating a directory of food producers, food shops and eat out places within a specific radius.
- Resources to avoid specific foods (as pragmatic view of the indicator about abstain from consuming specific types of food that do not fulfil own set of criteria): holding talks and sharing information on environmental impacts, water and energy use for producing and processing specific foods through handbooks, discussion of implications of vegetarianism and veganism, creating a directory of food producers, food shops and eat out places within a specific radius.
- Political Consumerism
- Resources to take part in communicative efforts directed to approve or disapprove practices of specific actors along food netchains: informing through websites about the sustainability record of products and producers, organise a group of “approved” food producers around a market and advertise that in local media.

Some of the resources outlined above can be reconfigured into a set of two categories which are useful to explain two important phenomena occurring through the empirical versions of citizen-consumers.

- Resources which shapes individual identities collectively. This includes all the resources that affected the personal dimension but manifested in the outer-world. Public events like local food festivals, food markets are part of this category: they made people feeling like belonging to a certain group whilst supported personal adjustments to their worldview, to their diet or to their consumption preferences. The handbook on low-carbon living can also be included here because offers guidelines to live consistently with the way other people live.
- Resources to empower people. The above resources had the effect to touch personal visions, and hold the potential to trigger people to take responsibilities to change the current state of affairs of food. The context created around awareness of food unsustainability was instrumental to mobilise people to take action for themselves and for the wellbeing of the community. For instance, information about the risks posed by e.g. climate change and peak oil was used to seduce activists to take action within the community.

### **Rights**

Given the informal nature of the empirical characterisations of the ideal-types, it is not significant to discuss the rights regulating such authorities of environmental governance. It should be reminded that the case studies are organised from a social movement from the bottom up, in which rights are not defined as well.

### **Responsibilities**

When making use of the ideal-types, the Transition movements primarily claimed responsibilities to people in their citizenship status, and so, as both of a public and moral obligation to be contributor of, and accountable to, the community. Although it is challenging to identify specific re-



sponsibilities within the empirical variations of citizen-consumers, an overarching appeal to citizenship can be recognised when:

- Claiming to take care of public space and grow food for the community (a public commitment of Ecological Citizenship);
- Undertake low-carbon food behaviour (a private commitment to reduce public consequences of individual routines - of Lifestyle Politics), and
- Buy sustainable food (a private but also public commitment to reject unsustainable food and producers - of Political Consumerism).

These are all political statements indicating that transitions towards sustainable food practices are driven by citizenship commitments, which can be pursued through the three different routes corresponding to the ideal-types of citizen-consumers.

### 6.3 Significance of the study

This study represents the first empirical application of the citizen-consumers theory in the domain of food sustainability transitions, and has proposed a conceptual framework to identify and evaluate the ideal-types of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics within several food projects of the Transition movements. The general conclusions that can be drawn for this thesis are that:

- Food sustainability transitions can be explained through the use of three ideal-types of citizen-consumers, which are useful to describe small-scale and bottom-up developments as part of broad in socio-technical transformations in the domain of food. The empirical variations of the ideal-types are important because help locating the area (on a public, private or consumption sphere), the actors, the resources, and the dimension of such developments in food practices.
- As initiatives at the grassroots, the food projects of the Transition movements connect prominently to Ecological Citizenship and Lifestyle Politics, while relegate the type of Political Consumerism. The movement is successful in mobilising people to undergo lifestyle reflections, grow food in public areas, and connect with third parties, but does not consistently draw activities aimed at influencing consumer behaviour. There is no strategy underpinning the use of the ideal-types nor there is clear direction for future scenarios.
- As shall be seen in more detail the following sections, the Transition movements very much use a rhetoric keen on localisation of food practices, which does not entail that they seek to disconnect to broader dynamics, but consider the local as the priority when conducting reforms. Furthermore, real world versions of the three citizen-consumers ideal-types, except for Political Consumerism, have shown the commitment to build community while undergoing changes to established food practices.
- Given the prominence of Transition movements structured within towns (the movement is also known as Transition Towns), it follows that town is the level of governance at which it proposes food sustainability reforms. Among the empirical versions of citizen-consumers, Ecological Citizenship is the keenest on influencing policies of local governments.

These conclusions are further completed by the considerations that follow in the next sections, which draw the significance of the thesis more specifically for the Transition movements, the citizen-consumer theory, and the transition theory.

## 6.4 Considerations on the Transition movements

### *The prominence of localisation*

In accordance with what introduced in the chapter about the Transition movement, it appears that the six movements researched in this thesis hold a robust convergence on local food in their activities. Although with due differences, all case studies supported local food production and consumption<sup>2</sup>. In other words, localisation of food practices was among the top priorities of all the case studies. This is important because the Transition movement is an international network of sustainability-concerned people, and devotes much interest to local circumstances and more precisely seeks to explore and adapt local solutions to global instances, which are often referred to as the driving forces. These features can be brought together under the banner “think globally, act locally”, because such Transition movements are committed to develop local practices of food production and consumption as first solution to the negative consequences of globalisation. But this is not the entire picture. Through their global Transition Network, the movements share best practices on food localisation, thus setting themselves in contrast with globalisation but also make use of it. This logic, one can argue, is part of a global-local tension that may be worth considering as ‘glocalisation’. In this case, glocalisation is both considered as a way to offer local alternatives to globalising dynamics and at the same time make use of global platforms to spread that resistance.

This reasoning excludes the idea that the Transition movement is locked into a *localist* viewpoint, by which there is a rejection of what is non-local. In contrast, the movement seeks localisation of food production and consumption which entails a reduced reliance on the global food system. The latter is not negative per se, but its projection as a group of environmentally reckless multinationals fighting for the last euro cent worth of profit (as reported during several interviews), triggers local communities to draw their own alternatives. Hence, the Transition Network makes its strength from the union of such communities that organise in search for making local food happen.

### *The force of communities*

The commitment to build community while reforming food practices was a significant theme that shaped the empirical findings. With different degrees of intensity, this was common to all the food projects, evidencing that communities can serve as a powerful agent to propose alternatives to the current landscape of food. Communities, apart from being the first point of reference for activists at public level, represent also a context for individuals to process change at domestic level, as known from research on energy consumption (Heiskanen et al, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> Although the promotion of local food was not a key theme of Footpaths: Community Carbon Reduction programme of Transition Leicester, it was reported how several had a tendency to prefer local products after attending the project.

## 6.5 Theoretical considerations

This section aims to point out how the empirical findings can influence the common understandings of the theoretical design of Ecological Citizenship, Political Consumerism and Lifestyle Politics also in relation to the conceptual framework. It will also provide some additional reflections about the transition theory and food as theme of sustainability transitions.

### 6.5.1 Citizen-consumer theory

#### *Ecological Citizenship*

The empirical variations of Ecological Citizenship presented a clear difference to its classical view shaped by Andrew Dobson (2004). The idea of Ecological Citizenship as a post-cosmopolitan form of citizenship and characterised by ecological non-territoriality, was only partially reflected on the empirical findings. While, on the one hand, driving forces to make use of the Ecological Citizens dimension had a non-territorial nature, due to the appeal to global environmental problems, on the other hand, the horizon of activities conducted through the role of Ecological Citizenship was undoubtedly local. In practice, its real-world versions did not see the world as sphere of action, but defined its role in relation to local space. That is why on the basis of this thesis, it is recommended that further empirical elaborations of this role will consider its narrow spacial horizon.

When reflecting upon the conceptual framework adopted to research this ideal-type in practice, it is striking that none of the empirical characterisations had a relation with the indicator *“taking part (or organising) citizen-shareholder schemes for unconventional food practices”*. This indicator was included for the sharp increase of innovative forms of sharing initiatives involving people with sustainable food practices. Given that these initiatives are mostly small-scale and attract sustainability-concerned people in general, cannot yet be considered as established food practices. With this in mind, it was expected that the Transition movements addressed in the research were among the frontrunners of this trajectory, but empirical evidence provided the opposite.

#### *Political Consumerism*

Micheletti's (2003) view of Political Consumerism can be challenged according to what emerged from a specific case study. Although projects of Transition movements did not make an excessive use of this role, the case of the Regional Market in Deventer hardly fits into the framework she proposes and thus into the one adopted in the conceptual model. Whilst its proximity to the “discursive political consumerism” was recognised, it was also mentioned that such did not completely picture its authority. Having regard to the (temporal) change of infrastructure of food provision, the Transition movement offered an advancement to the common form of Political Consumerism: not only it criticised wrongdoings of specific market-players, but implemented reforms to the market structure by arranging a group of ‘approved’ producers to compete with the ‘disapproved’ ones.

As a result, consumers benefited because had an additional choice to do their purchases. This proactive role was influenced by a local dimension given the fact that ‘approved’ food producers were those coming from the region. All this took place without making use of Micheletti's (2003) characterisation of boycotts and buycotts, mainly because consumers' buying power was not meant to be organised to urge producers or retailers to change their practices. On this basis, the importance to include a more pragmatic view of Political Consumerism capable to alter an existing market structure is suggested for further investigations that make use of such dimension.

## *Lifestyle Politics*

The empirical characterisations of Lifestyle Politics have shown to be very close to the conceptual model proposed for this thesis. Important real-world implications of this ideal-type have been captured when reasoning around the fact that the Transition movements successfully gather interest and participation in activities specifically aiming at influencing domestic behaviour. The strength of this is the rhetoric over the link between individual (private) practices and international environmental challenges, in a way that people feel responsible for their contribution to environmental degradation and then take sound action.

### **6.5.2 Transition Theory**

When considering the transition theory to reflect upon what the activities of the Transition movement as a whole represent, it may appear clear that it reproduces the so called 'novel practices' placed at niche-level. Together, the food practices that the social movement sought to forge were very small in scale and had little capacity to influence the dominant practices. Indeed, the investigated food projects cannot currently develop structural differences to the established practices of mainstream actors, being them food producers, supermarkets or even City Councils. The informal nature of the movement also did not help shaping a clear recognition at political level, which undermined their capacity to go higher up in the transition process. Despite the orientation of such novel innovations is quite clear (local focus), the fragmentation of the projects as well as the grassroots nature of the movement makes it hard to envision a sudden breakthrough onto the regime level.

Nevertheless, a first instance of competition with established practices came to the fore when analysing the meaning of the Regional Market in Deventer. The emerging practices of the movement that organised regional producers around a market, have clashed with mainstream actors being represented by non-regional vendors. The project did not survive because society or specific actors within society were not yet ready for such changes. However, this is part of the nature of transitions. Indeed, transitions are long-lasting and non-linear developments that sometimes need to undergo an embryonic stage before becoming established in society (Spaargaren et al., 2012; Loorbach and Rotmans, 2006).

### *Transition in food practices*

The Transition movements investigated in this research stimulated reforms of food practices from the downstream. Food consumption, through the three citizen-consumers ideal-types, was the subject to change due to the movement's demands for more sustainable food and consequent shift of preferences towards specific foods that met their self-defined 'sustainability criteria'. The search for alternatives from established food practices of consumption was primarily anchored to the Lifestyle Politics and Political Consumerism dimensions. Given the fact that those roles focused on people's everyday life food routines and consumption preferences respectively, they explicitly offered opportunities to reconsider the decisions underlying such routines and preferences. It must be distinguished that the cases of the Regional Market and 30-mile Food Challenge affected some dynamics of food retail and distribution practices, due to the preference awarded to local producers and retailers.

Although the reforms promoted to food netchains through the typology of Ecological Citizenship seem related to the upstream side, concerning to practices of food production, it is nonetheless important to note that those practices are considered to be part of the downstream side. The limited scale of action of Transition movements' food production initiatives do not have the power to

affect established practices of food production. In addition, food production sites were primarily for communal or personal use, and did not replace people reliance on conventional food producers due to the small amount of foodstuff they provided. Overall, through the ideal-type of Ecological Citizenship, the movement sought a climb towards the higher end of food netchains, without lifting the anchor from the consumption side.

With regard to the dynamics of change of food practices proposed by Spaargaren et al. (2012), it is worth considering that the Transition movements created a socio-cultural context to support changes in food consumption. The analysis of empirical findings has shown that food was associated with additional meanings than just a nutritional factor. Food was also an immaterial means to reconnect to a proximal spacial dimension. Furthermore, when picturing the three citizen-consumer types, food was instrumental to live more sustainably, served to improve the quality of green areas and was key to support the local economy. Hence, the context created around food was made to deliver social, economic and environmental concerns over the current mechanisms of food production and consumption and at the same time inspire for locally centred alternatives.

## 6.6 Recommendations for the Transition movements

This study proposes two recommendations that the Transition movements should consider when adjusting current projects or drawing future strategies. The author believes these can play a decisive role for the success of the movement.

First, as it appears from the empirical findings, the role granted to consumers and the economy in general to make the food sector sustainable are only of marginal interest for the movements. However, in order to make a difference and affirm 'resilient' or 'sustainable' food practices, the movements should not only rely on urban agriculture or voluntary carbon reduction programmes, but recognise the huge potential that consumers hold to alter the current market structure of food. They should boldly involve consumers and steer their consumption preferences in a less fragmented manner, and thus, make a more effective use of the Political Consumerism type. Apart from awareness rising campaigns about food labels, food miles and similar, they could learn the strengths of incentivising specific consumption patterns through policy and economic instruments like complementary currencies. For instance, Transition movements in Lewes, Bristol, and Brixton have already developed their own local money system that effectively shifts consumption choices towards local, low carbon and sustainable products, thus supporting the local economy at the same time. Correspondingly, such undertakings seem more effective than the typical boycotts or boycotts of Political Consumerism mainly because complementary currencies offer a clear, existing solution to problems that otherwise are difficult to address. Through the Transition Network and with the support of experts, virtually all Transition movements could have a role in the creation of complementary currencies that would meet specific purposes.

Secondly, it seems clear that the movements are not capable to meet their own goals by acting as isolated actors in society. Given the fact that 'town' is the level of governance adopted by the movements, they should relate more on existing platforms of city or town networks that work on similar purposes as well as steadily connect to local authorities. That would enhance the movements' recognition at local, regional and global level while the connection with town networks would enable them to share and learn best practices to an unimaginable extent. Partnering with town networks would also offer interesting opportunities to become institutionalised, offering identity as a formal movement and possibly increasing their power to influence local policies. It is foreseeable that, in doing so, the local authorities would consider the movement as an important

interlocutor for discussing future municipal, provincial or regional food strategies. As it turns out, these are two sides of the same coin. Lastly, in the context of food transitions, such upgrade would create the background to progressively influence established practices of regime actors.

## 6.7 Future research

While working on the present thesis, the author came across a range of issues that seem interesting for future studies. These issues start from the point that there is already an overwhelming body of literature concerning food sustainability, food movements, and localisation of food practices. The questions raised at this stage seek to find out how economic phenomena like incentive schemes, complementary currencies and the “sharing economy” can make some decisive steps towards truly localised and environmentally friendly food systems. Here the ideas for future research.

- How to integrate existing incentive schemes (green cards, loyalty cards) into multi-level governance strategies aiming to make food systems more sustainable? What are the potentials and drawbacks for different actors across food netchains to make use of such instruments? (e.g. incentive systems to diminish food waste for consumers; point-credits to support regional or national consumption; credit schemes for food suppliers or retailers to develop a national or regional supply chain)
- How can complementary currency systems be instrumental to shape food strategies at municipal and regional level? What can be learned in this respect from the existing alternative currencies? Has the role of complementary currencies been fully exploited? Is it foreseeable that in the future there will be a wide spectrum of currencies seeking to meet similar purposes at different levels of governance?
- The so called “sharing economy” or “collaborative consumption” comes to the fore when considering the rise of internet-based services that enable consumers to share their vehicles, rooms, tools etc. On a similar ground lays a phenomena called “food sharing”, in which people not only cook for themselves, but post on the internet their meals for others to buy. Will this be reckoned as a breakthrough to current dynamics of food consumption or is it simply a new trend that will meet its end sometime soon? Can the potential of the sharing economy be used also for greening the food domain? What can be learned from other sectors that might turn out useful for the food one?

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## 8. Annex 1- Interview guide

### General information

- Role of the respondent within the movement and in the food projects
- How the movement developed locally and how it organises (working groups)
- Approach of the movement
- Members (how many, education, age, occupation)
- Cooperation with other organisations (ENGOS, Consumer or farmers Associations, Public Bodies, Universities, Food networks); TT network

### Food domain

- What food initiatives are being conducted? Intention of such initiatives (experimental, raising awareness, cultural) Description? Documents available?
- How roles and responsibilities are defined in food activities (among experts, participants, third parties and ordinary people)?
- How many participants are involved?
- How do you reach ordinary people in food initiatives?
- What kind of resources are needed to run the projects and how to access them?
- What network of farmers, food experts or other organisations (schools, municipalities, charities) are connected to the food projects?
- What importance is given to local, seasonal and organic food? What is sustainable food for the movement? Local, seasonal, organic, Fair-trade?
- What conditions for the Transition movement's food initiatives to become more spread in society?
- Achievements and challenges
- Vision for the food sector

### Individual & lifestyle

- What is the role of lifestyles in greening food practices? Initiatives to this?
- What target group of food initiatives? Segmentation by education, age, income, occupation?

- What importance is given to abstain from eating certain food? e.g. vegetarianism or veganism, non-local, non-seasonal?
- What is the role of sustainability when dealing with food?
- What importance given to environmental education and training? workshops, festivals, events about sustainable or local food?

### **Consumption**

- How can sustainable consumption contribute to greening the food sector?
- What importance is given to sustainable consumption? Are there strategies to use the wallet to urge food producers and retailers for more sustainable products?
- Do you see a sort of consumer power? Or see consumers as victims of transnational corporations? Is there any Transition movement's initiative to support consumer power?
- What is the position of the movement on food labels or certification schemes? Are those effective instruments for greening the food industry?
- What emphasis is given to purchasing from conventional supermarkets, local shops, farmer's markets or self-provisioning food instead? What about alternative food networks?
- How you associate food products with meanings beyond their economic value? What meaning e.g. social, ecological, ethical, political?
- How do you boycott, boycott producers, retailers, products or labels?
- Is there any kind of communicative strategy put in place to show approval or disapproval to food producers and retailers practices?
- Do you cooperate with NGOs, consumers associations for more sustainable products in supermarkets or alternative retailers?
- What is your position on 'green campaigns' of conventional producers and supermarkets, that show themselves as sustainable? Is that green washing?
- Vision on the market and consumer roles for changing current food practices

### **Citizenship**

- What connections are there between your food initiatives and the local council?
- Do you lobby with the municipality for more sustainable products in hospitals, schools etc.?
- How do you seek more transparency in producers and retailers practices?
- Is there a Transition movement's office where people can discuss their ideas and inputs for food initiatives?
- Is there a political branch of the movement?



- How do you raise public awareness on ecological footprints, food miles, food imports and unsustainability of current food production and distribution?
- How do TT members self-empower to produce food? How can that be exported in society?
- Vision on the citizenship roles for changing current food practices