

The *feria* - a Food Counter-Movement in Salcedo, Ecuador

Reduced Distancing in Times of Modern Food



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Cover Photo:

Doña Victoria, a consumer and a nurse from CEMOPLAF interacting at the *feria*.
All the photos in this thesis have been taken by Christina Beberdick

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Chapter 1: Modern Food, Distancing and a Food Counter-Movement in Salcedo, Ecuador

Distancing and Modern Food

In Ecuador, as in many places in the world today, farmers are increasingly unknown to urban populations who buy food in whole seller markets, supermarkets and even in small neighborhood shops. The other way around farmers often do not know who will end up eating the food they produce. This thesis will analyze the social construction of direct relationships between rural-based producers and urban-based consumers in the Province of Cotopaxi, Ecuador. The terms rural-based producers and urban-based consumers are used in order to indicate that in modern relationships around food two types of actors have become spatially separated and therefore often do not know much about each other. When the adjective modern is used, it is related to the insights of reflexive modernization theory (e.g. Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Many authors have described the spatial separation around food as distancing (Rideout 2012, Kloppenburg et al. 1996, Clapp 2014). Rideout (2012) sees distancing both as a symptom of the current tendencies around food as well as a reinforcing factor of the problems associated with such tendencies (Rideout 2012). Distancing refers firstly to the physical distance that in a modernized world increasingly exists between the localities where food is produced and where that food is sold and consumed. Because of growing geographical or physical distancing between production sight and consumption sight longevity and uniformity of food commodities becomes increasingly more important than taste or nutritional value, as produce have to survive long journeys by truck, ship or airplane. Geographical distancing frequently leads to social distancing. The geographical distance that often lies between rural-based producers and urban-based consumers makes it virtually impossible to know each other and to know about each other. Technical details about farming remain unknown to urban-based consumers and dietary preferences remain unknown to rural-based producers. This is why I will refer to distancing as socio-technical distancing¹ from now on.

Concerns about Socio-Technical Distancing

Kloppenburg et al. (1996) are skeptical of the nature of these new practices and argue that there are vast problems arising from socio-technical distancing. Urban-based consumers might have very distinct demands arising from not knowing about farming. Urban-based consumers often want produces to all look the same, have the same size and to be of the same quality year around. Produces with little dents or irregularities are often not bought and considered of lower quality. These tendencies have important implications for society, agriculture and the environment. In many places these tendencies have led to the need for stringent phytosanitary standards of products, leading to extraordinary management demands on growers, such as dependence on particular varieties and the regular use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, which in turn leads to the arrival of new actors and affects in production-consumption². A social production of this distancing is the existence of actors – farmers, intermediaries and consumers – that increasingly live and operate in

1 I am using the term socio-technical distancing as a collective term for processes of not knowing each other in terms of social as well as technical practices related to producing as well as consuming food.

2 The term production-consumption is used to subsume all that, which has to do with production and consumption. In this thesis production and consumption are seen as processes that should be seen as one rather and as separate processes marginally effecting each other.

distinct, specialized realities of limited to little direct encounter. From a consumer's perspective, for example, this implies that food comes from everywhere and nowhere. Not only do the consumer and producer not know one another but over time it is essentially impossible to know one another. This has been called the "heart" of the food modernization project in Dutch agriculture (van der Ploeg 2003) and in Ecuadorian agriculture (Sherwood 2009, Sherwood and Paredes 2013) as well as the basis of "organized irresponsibility" (Beck 1992). This abstraction of human relationships and experience can lead to the potential for new degrees of exploitation as well as the production unwanted socio-biological outcomes that lead to creative forms of violence at moments of social encounters. Here, I would like to refer to Sherwood et al. (2013) who point out that this 'violence' is not always intended or strategic but in many cases the self-organized outcome of a certain value system and way of living and being (modernization – see Chapter 2). For example, traditional crop varieties are increasingly disappearing from fields, because over time, specialization in production and market chains has displaced varieties from dinner tables, kitchens and markets. Oyarzun et al. (2013) find that in the highland province of Chimborazo Ecuador the number of species cultivated on a given farm is reduced, the more the farm is focusing on selling farm products in the market. In this region there is a large demand for potatoes and field beans (Oyarzun et al. 2013). The exclusion of certain products from market and the subsequent varietal erosion may come at a long-term cost to farmers, as it removes a tool from their production system that enables them to manage pests and climate. Similarly, specialization in diets on-farm as well as off-farm has worked against certain traditional Andean crops, such as mashua, melloco, quinoa and lupine beans that have to offer a number of long term cropping and dietary benefits.

Intermediaries have arrived on the scene of modern food to become important players in agricultural production (access to modern technology), food procurement (transport, marketing) and diet (in the case of food preparation and restaurants). In organizing the transport of food between rural-based families in remote villages and urban-based consumers, they have come to solve problems, but in the process also exploit vulnerabilities, create dependences and ultimately control terms of trade, which in effect provides them with considerable opportunities for profit, speculation and accumulation (Borja et al. 2013). Kloppenburg (1996) claims that distancing tends to disempower those people that historically have always been the ones shaping production-consumption – namely farmers and consumers, because if people do not know one another they do not act (Kloppenburg et al. 1996: p. 36). Further he states, "The historical extension of market relations has deeply eroded the obligations of mutuality, reciprocity, and equity which ought to characterize all elements of human interaction" (Kloppenburg et al. 1996).

Rise of a Food Counter-Movement

In his work on the world risk society (see in depth chapter 2) Beck (1992) explains that social networks, which he calls 'sub-political' movements are arising as the response to unwanted *bad's* of industrialized society. Following Sherwood et al. (2013) this thesis will describe such 'sub-political' movements as counter-movements. In the research conducted for this thesis I have investigated one such counter-movement in Ecuador. In Salcedo, Province of Cotopaxi, Ecuador a *feria* (farmers' market) was set up in October 2010. Here women farmers from a rural community relatively close by, started selling part of their production to urban-based consumers directly. The women group of the rural community Unalagua Quevedo grows fruits, vegetables and herbs without the use of large amounts of agrochemicals. Some are using no chemicals at all. CEMOPLAF Centro Médico de Orientación y Planificación Familiar (Medical Center for Family Guidance and Planification), the non-governmental organization (NGO) EkoRural and the women agreed that the women could sell their products on the premises of CEMOPLAF on a weekly basis if they could

promise that they would only sell products free from agrochemicals. EkoRural is supporting small farmer-led initiatives in Ecuador to promote healthy food, sustainable agricultural practices and community development. The doctor and the nurses who work in CEMOPLAF are interested in a space where urban-based consumers get the chance to buy fruit, vegetables and herbs that are free from chemicals and are not harmful to their health. The women farmers of Unalagua Quevedo are interested in selling part of their production to people who value their products and are interested in generating some income for themselves and their families. Before the *feria* in CEMOPLAF was set up consumers were buying fruits, vegetables and herbs at the *mercado mayorista* (wholesale market - hereafter *mayorista*). At the *mayorista* intermediaries sell products and it is not possible to find out how fruit, vegetables and herbs were produced and if they contain large amounts of harmful chemicals. The *feria* in CEMOPLAF is thus an opportunity for urban-based consumers to meet rural-based producers directly and get to know more about agriculture and rural life. The women farmers of Unalagua Quevedo have limited amounts of agricultural produce that they can sell at the *feria*. Together they have enough to sell to a relatively small group of consumers. Also because they are using limited to no agrochemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides, their products tend to be smaller and less spotless than products sold in the *mayorista*. Therefore they would not have a chance to compete in the *mayorista* and that is the main reason women give for why they did not sell on a regular basis before the *feria* was set up. The *feria* thus reacts to some of the unwanted *bad's* that small farmers as well as urban-based consumers face around modern food in Ecuador and is therefore identified in this thesis as a food counter-movement following Beck's (1992) 'sub-political' movements.

Solidarity versus Food Circulation among Capable Agents

The *feria* in CEMOPLAF is an interesting example of a relatively endogenous food counter-movement. Both urban-based consumers as well as rural-based producers are interested in keeping the movement alive and they are both profiting from it. As opposed to Kloppenburg who talks about reciprocity and mutuality some other authors argue that a "lack" of solidarity is what is the problem around food today. In fair trade initiatives and certification mechanisms it is often argued that solidarity links are needed to improve the situation of disadvantaged farmers (Raynolds 2000). Raynolds states that: "[b]y building new consumer/producer solidarity links, fair trade seeks to re-embed the production and marketing of major agricultural and non-agricultural exports from countries of the South in more equitable social relations" (Raynolds 2000: p.301). Goodman as well explains that fair trade is based on an idea of solidarity and is guided by the conviction that poorer farmers and enterprises need more help (Goodman 2004).

This idea, however, is problematic and shows a weakness in the idea of solidarity, when it is understood, either explicitly or not, as based on the notion that marginalized people and peoples are needy of outside help by the wealthy and "developed", for example during their processes of consumption in the urban-based supermarket. This approach - as noble as the intentions might be - can lead to paternalism and dependencies. Rather than viewing the smallholder farmer or urban-based consumer from a marginal neighborhood as an active agent capable of bettering his or her situation, they are seen as the poor and disparaged in need of charity and aid. Framing the issues around food as the product of ill-solidarity for smallholder farmers can lead one to forget that all people, rich or poor, possess agency, if to varying degrees and that each is complicit in both the health and ills of modern-day society. When we say people, operating as individuals as well as in collectives, have agency we mean that they, regardless of potentially difficulties and limitations, are able to carve out space in their daily activity to make active choices about their lives and how to act in it. Agency can be seen as people's intentions and actions (Orlikowski 2002) but should also

consider that people's actions are always also shaped by their surroundings (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). Focusing on agency can help to see people as actors who can empower themselves, which is what I am research in regard to the *feria* in CEMOPLAF. I therefore argue that the preoccupation with solidarity as a solution to the ills of the present-day social constructions of food may miss the point of substantially opening up a new pathway from modernization. Shifting the focus from solidarity to a counter-movement such as the *feria* investigated in this thesis, shifts the focus from a one-sided mechanism of solidarity where one side gives, while the other receives, towards a lens where consumers and producers are seen as all together creating a unique situation where they shape each others' reality around food - together they co-produce the *feria*. In this viewpoint both producers as well as consumers have something to offer and something to gain in this relationship that was build up to transform people's options around food. This idea will be further developed in chapter 2.

Complicit in today's predicament, both producers and consumers are "inside" the matrix, and as such, are potentially capable of sparking a new direction in practice and policy. Also if scholars call for more solidarity around food, it does not call into question the socio-technical distancing in food as an underlying feature of modernization – perhaps hidden, but nonetheless the bases of needed transition. Solidarity thinking, for example in international "Fair Trade" of coffee and chocolate, suggests that you can do well without reducing the socio-technical distancing between yourself and the person who produces your food. This thesis aims to unearth this assumption and places distancing at the center of the modernization concern. In this thesis I will thus investigate a counter-movement where both farmers and consumers are actively engaging to reduce distancing to organize food exchange in an alternative way.

Problem Statement

The *feria* in CEMOPLAF, Salcedo is a space where rural-based producers and urban-based consumers meet and together produce a new way of circulating food. This space can be seen as a counter-movement arising as a response towards the unwanted *bad's* around modern food in Ecuador today. The *feria* is a meeting space where not only food, but also information, believes and opinions can be exchanged. I call this intensification of food, meaning that the social relationships around production-consumption become closer and deeper. The people who meet have very different backgrounds and have not met each other in the past. The extent to which they are meeting at the *feria* is unprecedented. This thesis aims to understand if and how some of the unwanted *bad's* around modern food are reduced or resolved in the social space of the *feria*, how new meanings of food are co-produced in the setting of the *feria* and how farmers are helping each other in order to overcome the logistical challenges that arise when organizing a market on a weekly basis.

Research Objectives

The co-production of the food counter-movement and the new meanings this is creating around food are the main focus of this thesis. Two groups that have been unknown to each other before are meeting and together creating a new form of food exchange. This is not happening by one side coming in and helping the other but by both sides bringing in what they have to offer and together creating something new.

The first objective is to document the situation and practices of family farmers in Unalagua Quevedo in order to understand farmers' realties and their social surrounding better and see what shapes their practices and how. Furthermore the cooperation of farmers in organizing the *feria* in Salcedo will be documented by describing an entire day of organizing the *feria* from the early morning till the afternoon. This will help the reader to understand what it means for farmers to

create a possibility to sell. A further objective of this thesis is to analyze the coming together of those who have been labeled rural-based producers and urban-based consumers and to describe the co-production of a counter-movement around modern food. I aim to understand whether distancing is reduced and relationships are intensified in the space of the *feria* in CEMOPLAF.

These objectives together will sketch a wider picture about the backstage goings-on of this food counter-movement and will help us to understand whether and in how far new forms of ‘*responsible production-consumption*’ are created in the setting of the *feria* in CEMOPLAF. From these research objectives I am deriving the following research questions.

Main Research Question

Are the actors coming together at the feria effectively contributing to ‘responsible production-consumption’?

Sub-research Questions

- What does agricultural production in Unalagua Quevedo look like and which barriers for commercializing in the close by town of Salcedo exist?
- How do farmers co-operate in order to socially, logistically and environmentally organize the *feria* as a space for narrowing processes of food production and consumption?
- How do urban-based consumers and rural-based producers interact in the space of the *feria*?

Sampling

I wanted to learn about women’s motivation for selling in the *feria* at CEMOPLAF. I wanted to learn about their likes and dislikes, their doubts and convictions. I wanted to learn how the selling of products at the *feria* played into their daily lives and how it influenced what happened at home. I also wanted to learn about the relationships between the women and the consumers who come to the *feria* regularly. This is why the main subject of my research became the six women of *La Delicia* who started selling at CEMOPLAF about three years ago and continue to do so on a weekly basis. I wanted to learn which part the *feria* plays in the life of each woman individually and wanted to see if there were different motivation for staying involved in the *feria*. Living in Unalagua for the entire period of my research and participating in most of the women’s activities on most days I was relatively close to the women, close to what was happening and how they were organizing themselves and the *feria*. I also spoke to some women who are not selling in the *feria* in CEMOPLAF. These women were not really selected according to certain criteria, but were rather interviewed because they indicated to be open to talk to me. During my stay in the field I lived in the house of Doña Rocio, who is the president of *La Delicia*. Therefore the information I have gather about her situation are more in depth than those of other women that I spoke to.

Methodology

I mainly conducted participant observation and informal interviews, as well as a few semi-structured interviews. The reason why the number of semi-structured interviews remained limited was the hesitant reaction to more structured and less casual conversations that I was trying to have with female farmers. The reaction to semi-structured interviews in general was that women were getting very serious and tried to give me answers they thought I wanted to hear. They would answer as much as they could with yes or no, even if I had not asked a yes or no question.

I decided to focus on more casual conversations with women. I was living in Unalagua Quevedo for six weeks and I stayed in the home of Doña Rocio. I was thus close to everything that was happening for a period of six weeks. I saw a lot and could ask about what I saw whenever I was around the women, which was every day. When talking to them in a more casual setting and not calling it an ‘interview’, women would open up a lot more and tell me whole stories. This way it was a lot easier for me to find out what women’s convictions were and how they gave meaning to what they did. Also in these casual conversations they would sometimes tell me a little bit about the concerns they had and the things that were bothering them.

Every Sunday I went to the *feria* in Salcedo and followed the women in the entire process of the *feria*. This way I could exactly see how they were executing the organization of the *feria* and could also see how they were interacting with consumers. I could talk to some consumers and some of the nurses of CEMOPLAF, all of which are consumers themselves. Had I spoken better Spanish, everything would have been easier and clearer to me, and the people I was interviewing or talking to.

Theory, Data and Discussions

In the following chapters I will guide the reader through my line of argument step by step. The theoretical lens I am using to interpret my data set will be laid out to the reader (chapter 2). The data set will be presented in three separate chapters. The situation of the lady farmers in Unalagua Quevedo, their farming practices and the factors influencing women in the way they farm is described (chapter 3). The social organization of the *feria* in a group of six women, its particularities and challenges is elaborated (chapter 4). The co-production of a new space of circulating food and meeting between producers and consumers is shown (chapter 5). Finally the thesis will be brought to a discussion, conclusion and recommendation part in which the main research question is discussed: *Are the actors coming together at the feria effectively contributing to ‘responsible production-consumption’?*, (chapter 6).

Chapter 2: Reflexive Modernization, Organized Irresponsibility around Modern Food and Practice Theory

Before presenting the data collected in this research the theoretical ideas that will underly the analysis of the data later on is laid out. I briefly explain how the theoretical and conceptual ideas presented here relate to the data collected. Also a connection will be drawn between the main theoretical ideas and I will indicate why these theoretical ideas will be combined in order to create a useful theoretical framework for this thesis. The aim is to create a theoretical and conceptual lens that can be used to analyze the data from different angles and present a more detailed and in depth picture to the reader and finally be able to provide in depth discussion of the research questions.

In this chapter I will lay out the ideas underlying Beck's views on the 'world risk society' and the wider principles of reflexive modernization will be laid out. Then I will move over to practice theory to explain its underlying ideas and present how I intend to use the theory in my research. I explain how for the sake of my thesis reflexive modernization and practice theory are used to act together.

Reflexive Modernization

The term reflexive modernization has especially been coined by the sociologists Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash (1994), but has been widely used in sociology since then. Giddens, Beck and Lash use reflexive modernization to describe a phenomenon in contemporary (mainly Western) society in which it cannot be assumed anymore that modernization has only positive effects on people and the environment. Taking it one step further, authors working with the concept of reflexive modernization analyze the unintended 'bads' that arise as a consequence of the current successes of modernization and what these 'bads' mean for the people and the planet. Modernization is thus seen as having a self-destructive character.

I would like to take a moment and look at what the reflexive in reflexive modernization refers to. In relation to his concept of risk society Beck explains: "[...] 'reflexive modernisation' means self-confrontation with the effects of risk society that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society," (Beck et al. 1994: p. 6.). Aiken (2000) interprets Beck's reasoning this way:

"[W]e should think of 'reflexive' more in the sense of 'reflex' than 'reflection'. In other words the notion is about social development arising as a reflex to previous decisions and activities which may give rise to unintended or even surprising consequences.

(Aiken 2000: p. 5)

At first sight it seemed to me that these two ways of explaining reflexive did not match well. When giving it a bit more thought I realized that the two authors probably mean the same thing. The individual is confronted with certain 'bads' that arise from the society it lives in and has to deal with it (reflect) and deals with it in a certain way that can be seen as a consequence of the societal 'bads' he is confronted with (reflex). Thinking about the individual reflecting about unwanted 'bads' puts a bigger focus on the agency of the individual than to say it is following a reflex. This way it could seem like the individual is following an instinct, which might partly be true, but in my point of view it also actively engages in thoughts about how to react to unwanted 'bads'.

World Risk Society

This thesis will mainly work with the ideas related to reflexive modernization brought about by Ulrich Beck. Beck is mostly associated with the work he has done around his concept of the *world risk society* (Beck 1992). Following the argument that contemporary society is not only modernizing or evolving in a way that is good, but also brings about ‘bads’ for people and the planet, Beck is exploring the potential risks that modern society is posing to people on a level that exceeds that of the nation state and how society responds to such threats. Beck (2001) makes a distinction between risks and dangers. Risks are threats that “can in principle be brought under control“, while dangers “have escaped or neutralized the control requirements of industrial society“ (Beck 2001: p. 270). The reasons why threats can escape the control requirements or mechanisms of industrial society and therefore become dangers, according to Beck are twofold. Firstly, there exist some technologies and industries today that are not being insured anymore. Apparently such technologies do not seem safe to some and move “beyond the limits of insurability“ (Beck 2001). Secondly, many of the threats that societies are facing today reach far over the borders of the nation state and can potentially have an effect on all citizens of the world, hence *world risk society*. However, political decisions are by and large still taken at the nation state level. Such threats can be natural catastrophes associated with climate change but also nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons and nuclear catastrophes associated with nuclear power plants. The decisions about how to deal with threats of transboundary impact are difficult to take because they ask for transboundary cooperation of the kind that exists among nation states today. The best example of this according to me is that of how the international community is dealing with climate change. Even though there exists wide recognition that there are problems arising from the climate changing in various parts of the world the international community is not able to take binding political decisions as to how to manage such problems. And after a while everybody learns to live with the notion that humanity will not be able to take the political decisions necessary to offer solutions to global climate change.

Organized Irresponsibility, Agricultural Modernization and Counter-Movements

Beck calls this “[...] circular movement between symbolic normalization and permanent material threats and destruction [...]“ ‘organized irresponsibility’ (Beck 2001: p. 271). Organized irresponsibility thus means that the life people live poses threats to them that have been institutionalized in the sense that they are reenforced and even brought about by the existing laws, regulations and technological development. Socio-technical distancing, the growing nescience surrounding production-consumption (chapter 1) is one such threat that is increasingly becoming institutionalized and can thus be seen as a form of organized irresponsibility. Socio-technical distancing is a resulting ‘bad’ of the agricultural modernization trajectory described by Arce (2009) as follows:

„[Modernization policies] provided a comprehensive recipe of technological and institutional measures aimed at widespread industrial transformation of the agricultural sector. It was underpinned by expert technological knowledge denying that local people, producers and consumers, can in fact think, argue and act for themselves - individually and collectively - in a semi-autonomous fashion to achieve progress,“ (Arce 2009: p. 3).

Beck notes that the global threats that people face today cause them to act (Beck 2001: p. 273). In other words one can see reactions to the unwanted ‘bads’ of industrial society. Beck (1993) distinguishes between what he calls globalization *from above* and globalization *from below* - where

globalization *from above* refers to international institutions and treaties and globalization *from below* refers to new forms of organization that lie outside of the traditional political arena. This thesis will focus on the second kind of reaction that can be seen in people today - globalization *from below* or sub politics (Beck 1993). Beck describes sub politics as

“ad hoc individual participation in political decisions, bypassing the institutions of representative opinion-formation (political parties, parliaments) and often even lacking the protection of the law. In other words, sub politics means the shaping of society from below.”
(Beck 2001: p. 275)

This thesis will refer to sub politics or globalization from below as counter-movements following Sherwood et al. (2013). It should be noted that in his theorizing Beck is looking at sub politics as being social in nature, he sees counter-movements as a response to social problematics brought about by modernity. I will analyze the feria in Salcedo, Ecuador, as a counter-movement, which is shaped by both social as well as cultural phenomena. People are reacting to social problematics brought about by modernity, but they do so in a certain way shaped by their practices, their beliefs, their knowledge (Sherwood et al. 2013) that are shaped by their surrounding, their culture. Moving on to practice theory in the next part of this chapter I explain a bit more about the cultural aspect that underlies how people shape the world around themselves.

Practice Theory

A lot has been written about practice theory and many authors, among them Bourdieu, Foucault, Giddens and Schatzki, have studied people's practices in order to draw conclusions about social life and how people shape the world around themselves through their practices (Rouse 2007). Because different authors theorize about practices in slightly different ways, it is not always easy to grasp the essentials of practice theory. In the following I will make sense of practice theory by referring to two articles, one by Reckwitz (2002) and another one by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011), that both try to create a red thread through different practice theory literature. I will explain in which ways I see the two articles as complementary to each other.

In order to ensure a common starting point, it is crucial to define what is meant by practices. In this thesis I will be using the definition of Reckwitz, according to whom a practice “is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge“ (Reckwitz 2002: p.249). In other words practices are ways of doing things. Hereby it is important to understand that the specific interconnection of different elements (body/mind, objects, understanding, know-how, emotions and motivations) form the practice and cannot be seen as independent of one another. Here, the interconnections between different elements themselves become the focus of analysis. Examples of practices in relation to this thesis can be for example ways of organizing a *feria* or ways of consuming food.

Practice Theory and other Forms of Cultural Theory

In his article, Reckwitz focuses on common ground found in different author's uses of practice theory. He compares this standardized basis of practice theory with other social theories that try to explain what it is that shapes social order and people's actions. Reckwitz speaks about “three fundamentally different forms of explaining action and social order“: purpose-oriented theory of action, norm-oriented theory of action and cultural theories (Reckwitz 2002: p.245).

Purpose-oriented theories are those assuming that human action is driven by one's ambitions and that refer to people as *homo economicus*. Norm-oriented theories are those who speak of the *homo sociologicus* and his actions being shaped by the norms and values prevalent in society. According to Reckwitz, both these schools of thought fail to see that human action and social structure are also widely influenced by people's knowledge and beliefs, a shared understanding of the world. Cultural theories on the other side see social order as "embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, in a 'shared knowledge' which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world" (Reckwitz 2002: p. 246). Within cultural theory Reckwitz distinguishes between cultural mentalism, textualism, intersubjectivism and practice theory. Drawing on differences between practice theory and the other three types of cultural theory, Reckwitz finds that according to practice theory, social structure and action are determined by a variety of different elements acting together in a very specific way that can be slightly different for each person. Thus, while mentalism focuses on the mind, textualism on language and discourse and intersubjectivism on human interaction to analyze the social, practice theory looks at the interplay of a variety of elements playing. Following the definition of practices above, bodily activities, mental activities, objects and the way they are used, understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge are seen as acting together and through their interaction bringing about behavior and social order. It is important to note here that in the realm of practice theory no one element is assumed to be more important than another, but that it is about the interconnection of the elements (Reckwitz 2002). Using practice theory as a lens to analyze empirical data then means looking at the interplay of different elements of a practice rather than assuming an activity being born in the mind, in discourse or in human interaction solely. While this makes it virtually impossible to assume a linear cause-effect relationship between events, it invites the researcher to look deep inside a process and see the importance of relationships and effects that would otherwise be missed. When analyzing the space of the *feria* practice theory thus invites me to see people's behavior as constituted of several different elements, influencing each other, coming together in a unique combination and again effecting the behavior of others.

Three Dimensions of Practice Theory

Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) have attempted to summarize the main ideas that according to them can be found across different practice theory literature. They find that in the literature there are generally speaking three principles underlying practice theory: "(1) [...] situated actions are consequential in the production of social life, (2) [...] dualisms are rejected as a way of theorizing, and (3) [...] relations are mutually constitutive," (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p. 1241). The first point is emphasizing that it is people's actions on an every day basis that make up social life. This refers to both routines and improvised actions and can be subsumed under the term human agency (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). Additionally to human agency practice theory acknowledges the "importance of materiality in the production of social life" or the effects that technological artifacts and natural objects can have in influencing ways of acting (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p.1242).

The second point Feldman and Orlikowski identify - *the rejection of dualisms* - helps to question false dichotomies and think about the connections that might exist between things often considered as separates. The body and mind for example, sometimes presented as conceptually different, in practice theory are understood to be closely interwoven and influencing each other, just as structure and agency. In this line of thinking the practices of different actors can influence each other as well. Modern food and the socio-technical distancing that goes hand in hand with it, can lead us to see farmers and producers as standing on opposite sides and having needs that cancel out each other. However, producers' and consumers' realities are closely interwoven and influence

those of the other. The *feria* is a chance to rejoin rural-based producers and urban-based consumers and study how they are connected and influencing each other's practices.

The third point - *relationality of mutual constitution* - refers to the idea that no action, no phenomenon can be seen as a sole event, but rather has to be seen in relation to the context in which it occurs. Every event, every action is influenced by another event or action, while it in turn shapes other events and actions as well. Taking it a step further, seeing relations as being mutually constitutive also means that agency influences social structure, while social structure can also have an affect on people's agency. Social structures are thus made up of the practices that they in turn shape (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). When thinking about relationships being mutually constitutive Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) warn the reader not to think of equal relationships, but rather to acknowledge that power, access to resources and capacity to act can be unequal between actors.

Acts of Solidarity versus Intensified Relationships

In chapter one I spoke about the argument of some authors that solidarity is needed around contemporary forms of food circulation and have shown that I find that the notion does not address the core of the issues surrounding modern food - that in this thesis I define as socio-technical distancing. I have introduced the *feria* as a space where food production-consumption meets and have said that I am investigating it, looking at the activities of all actors involved. Looking at the *feria* as a space of meaning making around food I broaden my focus and can analyze many different elements that together make up people's practices around circulating food. While solidarity thinkers call for a giving of urban-based consumers to rural-based producers as an act of solidarity, a focus on people's practices allows us to see the *feria* as a space in which different actors perform different practices, each having a certain degree of agency and each influencing the way that food circulation is performed. Not only is each actor's behavior shaped by his social-cultural background and surrounding, each actor also shapes the goings-on in the *feria* and through that again the behavior of other actors involved in the *feria* and can even affect those that are not yet involved in the *feria*. Using practice theory and the notion of the *feria* as a meeting space I am automatically asking for the actions of all those involved and am not endangered to reduce my focus on one-sided forms of analysis. Asking about the nature of the encounters taking place at the *feria* I focus on the quality of the interactions rather than the quantity of interactions. My interest does not lie in extensification, growing a huge *feria* with increasingly anonymous encounters, but rather the opposite to investigate whether encounters at the *feria* grow to be more intensive through time.

Reflexive Modernization and Practice Theory as a Lens

The aim of this thesis is to analyze a food counter-movement that I have defined to be of both social as well as cultural nature. Furthermore, I want to understand how people act in this counter-movement, what might influence the way they act and whether this food counter-movement offers preferable alternatives to the situation as it was before the *feria* was established. In order to reach the aim of this thesis I draw together the different theories presented in this chapter and create a lens that I use for the analysis of the data later on.

In order to draw the different theoretical ideas together I am using a statement of Beck: "global threats cause [...] people's to act" (Beck 2001: p. 273). The *people* in the case analyzed here are the farmers in the rural community of Unalagua Quevedo as well as the consumers in the nearby town of Salcedo. I have presented socio-technical distancing and the problems emerging from this as the *threat* that these actors are confronted with. The *acting* in the case at hand is the establishment of the *feria* in Salcedo, which I have presented as a social-cultural counter-movement

that is responding to socio-technical distancing/problems associated with modernization/modern food. The reader might have noticed that Reckwitz's (2002) definition of practices is focused on routines, while Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) say that it is people's routines as well as improvised actions that make up everyday life. Of course Reckwitz acknowledges as well that in life there are moments when one's routinized ways of behaving are not appropriate to address a certain situation. Reckwitz describes moments in everyday life when 'crises of routines' occur, moments in which people's knowledge is not enough for them to know how to act. People have to adapt their practices and this is how change occurs and behavior and even structure can be changed. While Beck's 'global' threats can be seen as social challenges to people Reckwitz's 'crises of routines' can be seen as cultural uncertainties that bring about changes in behavior and new practices. Thus, even improvisations are having their influence on social life and can bring about new spaces of interaction for example a *feria* in times of uncertainty or risks (Beck 1992) around food.

When Beck says: "global threats cause [...] people's to act" (Beck 2001: p. 273), I am asking how do they act? And what exactly shapes the way they respond to these threats? I want to understand how people act by closely analyzing one example of a counter-movement. Through practice theory I will be better able to explain how people act in other words what their practices are and how their practices are interrelated and how they can bring about one another and how they bring about change.

Modern Food in Ecuador

Before I move on to present the data collected in this research I want to give a brief introduction to modern food in Ecuador. The organizational patterns and policies around modern food in Ecuador have the tendency to create a larger divide between small family farmers who produce food and urban populations that have to purchase the food they eat. Sherwood et al. (2013) talk about a threefold of food modernization policies that have taken place in Ecuador. Firstly, it is said that the aim is to "make food accessible to the whole population of the country". Achieving this aim is often seen as a success of the agricultural policies related to the green revolution. Secondly, food production is increasingly industrialized and therefore "energy compact food-like products, commonly of high sugar and high fat content" have entered the market. Thirdly, these new foods have become more "affordable and readily available" due to "industrialized food production" (Sherwood et al. 2013: p. 4). In addition to these tendencies that have especially led to unhealthy food-like products becoming omnipresent, supermarkets are on the rise and are pushing open markets to the periphery. This leads to a lower diversity of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, especially for inhabitants of poorer urban neighborhoods. Sherwood et al. (2013) also criticize that while the government and food industry have been said to have moved from a focus on quantity to a focus on quality when communicating about food, they have not stated what quality, moderation or a healthy diet could or should look like. In the next chapter, I explain how the tendencies around modern food in Ecuador create a situation in which the farmers of Unalagua Quevedo believe that they do not have an option to commercialize their products.

Chapter 3: Setting the Stage – Modern Food, Farming in Unalagua Quevedo and the Emergence of a New Market

“None of us has enough products to sell by themselves in Salcedo every week. Alone you can earn five dollars on a good day, but the transport already costs three dollars.”

(Doña Rocio about the situation before the *feria*.)

After laying out the global tendencies of modern food, the concept of distancing and the problems associated with it above, in this Chapter I provide contextual background of the study's field site. I will draw on my experiences in Unalagua, Quevedo (hereafter Unalagua³), to situate my study on the social construction of a *feria* as a counter-movement. To understand why the women of Unalagua are interested in a *feria*, I concentrate on the challenges that individuals and their families face when it comes to the strategic commercialization of their products as a means of advancing localized ideals of development. The final goal of this chapter is to discuss the first sub-research question: *What does agricultural production in Unalagua Quevedo look like and which barriers for commercializing in the close by town of Salcedo exist?*

Setting the Stage - Unalagua Quevedo

Unalagua is a rural community in the Ecuadorian province of Cotopaxi. It is a neighborhood of the parish of Mulalillo, which is located in the canton of Salcedo (PDOT 2006). One hundred and twenty families reside in the community of Unalagua, living in houses that are dispersed across the hillsides. Unalagua has a medical station, with a nurse present during the week and a doctor present at least two days a week. There is also a dental surgery in the medical station. The town center has a church, a village hall and a sports complex, but there is not a lot of activity going on there. The church is not used a lot as people go to Mulalillo to attend Sunday mass there. This is also where they buy household essentials such as dish soap and toilet paper, where they meet family and friends and exchange news. Mulalillo is typically reached by pick up taxi, but people with little money walk the three km at times. According to the municipality, essentially all families living in Unalagua own official land holding titles, 90% have electricity, but there is no sewer system or garbage collection (PDOT 2006). There are no telephone landlines or Internet, but most people have mobile phones that are used for phone calls very frequently. Some women who cannot read and write will ask for help with their mobiles, for example, to find a name in the digital register.

Unalagua is located on an altitude of about 2900m and the average annual temperature lies at around 12 °C. Yearly precipitation is between 500mm and 700mm (PDOT 2006). Officially the rainy season is between January and June, but people in Unalagua told me on several occasions that they do not perceive a difference between the seasons any more. They say that in the past the differences between seasons was more pronounced and say they are experiencing climate change. Unalagua has a system of irrigation channels to which most people in the village are connected. Every farm that lies next to the channel will get one six-hour turn of water per week.

³ Unalagua Quevedo is the full name of the rural community I studied and should not be confused with Unalagua Salatilín another rural community located in the parish of Mulalillo. Thus, when staying in Mulalillo it is very important to specify, which Unalagua one refers to. For the sake of simple reading I will use the name Unalagua to refer to the community of Unalagua Quevedo, since Unalagua Salatilín is not of relevance for this thesis.



Picture 1: Doña Victoria on her farm, on her way to get irrigation water.



Picture 2: (from left) Doña Rocío, Doña Myriam and Doña Victoria look at the veterinarian, as she is treated Doña Victoria's cows against parasites



Picture 3: Doña Rocio in her guinea pig house where she keeps about 100 animals



Picture 4: Doña Myriam trying to feed fennel and onion to a constipated cow. Neighbors came to help.

Picture 1 shows Doña Victoria with a hoe on her way to alter the water flow in the irrigation channel in such a way that water will enter her farmland. I was told that this is enough when there is rainfall as well, but that it is too little when there is no precipitation. A few people in Unalagua have a reservoir where they can collect and store rain as well as irrigation water. Due to the relatively mild and constant climatic conditions in Unalagua, people there are able to cultivate a variety of different crops year around. When I was in the area I observed the following crops in farmer's fields: red cabbage, white cabbage, savoy cabbage, Chinese cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, different kinds of lettuce, carrot, zanahorria blanca (*Arracacia xanthorrhiza*), beet roots, fava beans, field bean, green bean, corn, leak, spring onion, potato, papanabo, garden radish, tamarillo (*tomate de arbol*), pumpkin, seven year melon (sambo), strawberry and mixtures of herbs, such as lovage, celery, cilantro, mint, chamomile. Additionally, farmers grow large quantities of animal forages, such as alfalfa for their cattle, guinea pigs, rabbits and sheep. Doña Rocio even had an avocado tree that carried few, but tasty fruits. The plots in Unalagua, in contrast to other places in the Central Highlands of Ecuador, are mostly located in flat areas or on slight slopes. This means that the soils are less prone to erosion than in other areas. Due to higher temperatures, the accumulation of organic matters in the valley soils is lower than in higher altitudes (1-2 versus 8% or more) (PDOT 2006).

Located just three kilometers from the village of Mulalillo, which is the center of the scattered parish of Mulalillo (about 6,400 in the entire parish) and ten kilometers from Salcedo (about 12,000 inhabitants), Unalagua is not a very remote village. The children of Unalagua take the pick up taxi to go to elementary school in Mulalillo. Because of its proximity to the Panamerica highway, it is relatively easy to travel from Mulalillo to other highland cities, such as Latacunga and Quito to the North as well as Ambato and Riobamba to the South. Labour migration to Quito or the Amazon is very common in Unalagua - most men between the ages of 30 and 60 work as hired labour elsewhere and return to their families in Unalagua either over weekends or during one week each month. This alternative source of livelihood pumps external resources into the community, which otherwise would be largely dependent on its agricultural production. Women tend to stay in Unalagua and are responsible for the household and farming. Women commonly have limited formal education, with many women over the age of 50 illiterate. Average family landholdings vary, but usually are not greater than two ha. Female farmers generally cultivate this land for most of their family's food consumption. Until only a few years ago most farmers in Unalagua were only producing for home consumption and would only sell if they were having a very large harvest, e.g., of potato or maize. With the money that husbands bring home, women increasingly purchase off-farm commodities, such as rice, bananas and meat, but otherwise family consumption is on-farm.

FEMICAM and Asociación La Delicia

The *Federación de Mujeres Indígenas y Campesinas de Mulalillo* (Federation of Indigenous Women and Women Farmers of Mulalillo or FEMICAM) was found in the late 1980's by a group of women from the parish of Mulalillo. Today, it is part of *La Unión de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesina de Mulalillo* (the Union of Organizations of Indigenous People and Farmers of Mulalillo or UNICAM) and has 102 members. The federation is sub-divided into seven community-level associations with between six and 22 members. One of them is the women's association of Unalagua called *La Delicia* (the delight) with 20 members. In the association women help out each other when it comes to farming. In *La Delicia*, for example, some women cultivate maize and quinoa communally on a plot of about 1/4 ha that they will harvest and sell together. The federation is well known to different NGOs and government agencies that are active in the area. Thus, through involvement in the federation women become beneficiaries and gain access to the resources of different aid and development projects.

In the late 80's and early 90's federation members were given livestock, such as guinea pigs, rabbits and pigs. Often they had to pay back this gift with one of the offspring of these animals. Later women got credits of as much as USD900 that they are paying back in small installments on a monthly basis. The board members (president, treasurer and secretary) of the 7 different associations that make up FEMICAM are also often invited to workshops about diverse topics, such as agriculture, health and also human rights, children's and women's rights. While I was in Unalagua I took part in a workshop that was given for all 102 women of the federation on the topic of personal motivation and civil participation. Parts of what is communicated to the board members during the workshops, is of course communicated to the association level. When the women of *La Delicia* met to harvest their communally grown maize for example Doña Laura explained to them what an agricultural engineer of an NGO told her about how to best harvest the maize. The official position of FEMICAM is that agriculture should be practiced with as little agrochemical inputs as possible. Some women agree with this official position and actively try to reduce chemical use, while others claim they have to use chemicals in order not to lose their harvest. The reason why chemical use is declining is because there is a wide conviction that chemicals use can make sick, either while spraying or while eating the treated vegetables. However, some women also told me that it is ok if they spray once or twice, as intensive farms elsewhere spray a lot more.

Farming in Unalagua Quevedo

In the following section I will explain farming as performed by the women of *La Delicia*, provided their dominant role in today's farming practices in Unalagua. There is limited machinery available to work the land, so most of the agricultural work in Unalagua is done manually. Sometimes, if people want to have their fields plowed and they have a bit of money, they might ask somebody who owns a tractor to plow the bigger plots. From what I was told there are two men in Unalagua who own tractors and offer their plowing services to the community. Some few farmers have a water reservoir with a pump that helps them transport the water from the reservoir to the plots where it is needed. As mentioned above many adult men in Unalagua migrate to find work elsewhere. Don Fernando, Doña Rocio's husband explained to me: "If I would work somewhere in this region, I would earn about USD25 per week. This is very little money. This is why I work in the rainforest. There the pay is a lot better" Don Fernando brings home USD1000 a month, and is one of the better earning men in the community. Because many husbands migrate, the women in Unalagua are used to running their families as well as their farms by themselves. Women plow, they plant, and harvest, they cut alfalfa, take care of the animals, they go out at night to alternate the stream of the irrigation water when it is their turn; they raise the children, cook and clean. Most

women I met have a close relationship with other women, help each other out and take care of each other in time of need, especially as long as the husbands are not around.

Livestock Rearing in Unalagua Quevedo

All the (female) farmers in Unalagua I met have livestock. The numbers and kinds of livestock can vary greatly. People generally rear guinea pigs, rabbits, chicken, cows and sometimes pigs and sheep. Small rodents such as rabbits and guinea pigs are very common for people to rear - guinea pigs are a delicacy in the highland Andes. The number of guinea pigs people rear varies from 20 to over 100 individuals. Some people told me they have problems with guinea pigs getting sick and dying. Others told me: "My guinea pigs are healthy because they have enough room and because I clean the cages frequently" (Doña Rocio). Also it can be an art to carefully separate male and female guinea pigs in order to forego incest and improve the genetic diversity of the stock: "Doña Rocio is very successful with her guinea pigs. They almost never get sick, but she is also very good at separating them in the right moments" (Doña Victoria). Some people keep their guinea pigs in closed pens on the floor, while others have built concrete buildings containing above ground cages (picture 3). In these lifted cages, manure and residues from the guinea pig's alfalfa diet falls to the ground and can be collected and used as plant fertilizer. In some few cases, the concrete guinea pig shelters worth around USD1000 were built by an NGO. In this case the recipient e.g. Doña Beatrix had to contribute USD170 while the NGO covered the remaining costs. I was served guinea pig several times while staying in Unalagua, but I was never served rabbit. Rabbits are more often sold than prepared for home consumption. If female farmers have enough animals and are in need of cash they might take a few large rabbits, guinea pigs, or chickens to the wholesale animal market in Salcedo, where they will in turn be resold at a higher value. In order to get good prices massive haggling is taking place until vendor and middleman can both agree on a price. I witnessed Doña Rocio selling three big rabbits for USD39, a laying hen for USD9 and large chicken to be eaten for USD15 each. Guinea pigs were sold for around USD8. Doña Rocio went to several middlemen until they decide who to sell their livestock for and at which price. Small rodents and also chicken are thus a used for quickly coming by a few dollars when necessary.

Many people have a small number of dairy cattle -- commonly between one and four animals, with one of them expressing milk at a given time. From what people told me, their cows produced between five and eight liters of milk per day. Cows are kept outside, tied to a metal staff or a large wooden stake that is forced into the ground and graze in a circular spot around where they have been tied up. They usually graze on abandoned fields and mixtures of alfalfa and maize leaves. Also cows forage in harvested fields of (e.g. fava bean or maize) to graze on the residues.

The *Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca* (Ministry of Agriculture, livestock farming and fishery - MAGAP) is supporting farmers to buy cows. Through a MAGAP program that launched a few years ago, 12 out of the 20 women of *La Delicia* got a cow for USD100. Cows, I was told, generally cost between USD500 and USD900 -- depending on age, size, and breed. The cows that the women got from MAGAP have been officially registered and vaccinated and have a number pinned to their ear, similar to animals in Europe. If people buy their own cows, they do not let them get registered; they will not have a number in the ear. A veterinarian of MAGAP comes by on a regular basis to check on the cows and talk to the women about cow health. The cows get parasite treatments and are vaccinated and artificially inseminated for free (picture 2). The farmer are generally interested in this and assist the veterinarian if possible. The veterinarian of MAGAP told me that through this project the ministry wants to reach out to farmers and educate them about their cows, especially about nutrition: "Nutrition is the biggest limiting factor for milk productivity." All the cattle I saw in the area were holstein friesian cattle: "They can give as much as 25l of milk per day, also here in Ecuador." Because cows are a relatively stable

source of income, farmers invest a lot of time and energy into their cows and try their best to keep the cows healthy and well-nourished. However, cows eat a lot and so people with smaller land holdings might have more difficulties to keep their cows well nourished than farmers who have larger areas of land. The veterinarian also suggested to Doña Rocio that the cow should have access to water all day long, so that she could drink whenever she is thirsty. This is however logistically challenging, as the cow is moved several times during the day and can be located quite far away from the closest source of water.

While I was in Unalagua I was witness of the passing of two cows. One was the cow of Doña Rocio, a cow from the MAGAP project that had not yet entered her first lactation. The other one was that of a neighbor who was not part of the women's group, the federation or the *feria*. The death of a cow can be a tragedy for a farmer because some get emotionally quite attached to their animals, but also because a cow is a mayor investment and an important source of steady, daily income. The dairy van passes through the village every morning and picks up the milk from the farmers. It has a fixed route and a more or less fixed time, so farmers have to plan their time of milking accordingly. If a farmer misses the dairy van, there is always the option to find it passing through another street, but this usually means walking longer distances with a bucket of 5-8l of fresh milk. There are two different dairy vans, one passing more early in the morning (around 6:30) while the other passes in the late morning (around 11:00). I was told that one of the dairy vans is not really reliable, measures too little milk and dilutes the milk with water. Farmers get around 40cents for a liter of milk. Sometimes they also keep part of their milk, for making soup or a hot drink from milk and oats simply called *avena* (oats). Not all the milk is thus sold. Still farmers with only one cow producing 8liters of milk, can make as much as USD80-100 a month in milk. Farmers are paid for their milk every two weeks or sometimes once a month.

The more cows, small rodents and sheep a farmer has, the more land the farmer has a to dedicate to growing alfalfa or *herbs* as farmers refer to it. I witnessed a farmer sharing parts of her alfalfa plots with her neighbors who did not have enough alfalfa to feed their livestock. In exchange they would help on the farm at times or pay her small amounts of money. Also attention is paid to the kind of alfalfa that is fed to the livestock. While guinea pigs are quite robust, cows and rabbits are less so and farmers have to pay good attention to their diet. This can be especially tricky with cows that are grazing in large circles and sometimes manage to reach herbs that they should not have eaten. During the time I spent in Unalagua there was at least three cows that were constipated because they had eaten too much or the wrong herbs. Constipated cows are fed with large amounts of spring onions and fennel (picture 4) and splashed with a bucket of cold water. I also saw people trying to force their cow to eat their own feces in order to get the cow's digestive system moving. Doña Rocio has taken a course in natural remedies in which she also learned how to help constipated cows. She pulls hard on the cows tongue and pulls it to the side and out of the mouth again and again. She also makes sure she is talking to the cow in a very soothing manner. Neighbors call her when there is a problem with their cows and she tries to help out. I saw her once get angry with her neighbor who had let his cow eat bad herbs for the third time in a few month only. "This man is not paying good attention to his animals, he always ends up almost killing them. This is really irresponsible, the poor cows" (Doña Rocio).

Arable Farming in Unalagua Quevedo

Many ladies of the women's group of Unalagua, especially those who sell in the *feria* say that they cultivate mainly organically, that is without the help of inorganic fertilizer, pesticides and fungicides. An exception to this is generally the potato. In the region, farmers are confronted with large occurrence of different pests in potatoes, that significantly reduce their potato harvest. Generally women told me that they spray their potatoes with pesticides only once, one lady, who

does not sell in the *feria* told me she sprays three times, but that other farmers in other regions spray up to 10 times. The reason why the women of *La Delicia* are hesitant to work with agrochemicals is that they believe it will make themselves and their families sick if they eat it. Doña Myriam, who does not sell in the *feria*, but who occasionally sells by herself in Ambato told me:

“I use inorganic fertilizer as well as pesticides, but only on the products I want to sell. The people in Ambato do not look at the vegetables that I produce organically, so I spray to grow products that look nice to the consumers. The food I prepare for my husband and my two daughters I do not spray. Otherwise I would poison myself and my family.”

Doña Victoria told me: “I simply lack the cash to buy chemicals. This is also why I barely have any potatoes.” Doña Rocio got angry when she realized that her cousin had used a broom stick to stir the pesticides he had sprayed on her potatoes. “If I or my little son use the broom stick we will make ourselves sick.”

As has been pointed out before, Unalagua has a mild climate and is not located as high as other rural communities in Ecuador and therefore a large diversity of arable crops is grown. Crops that are grown on larger patches of land and in larger quantities, are generally maize and other grains, such as wheat, oats and the like, alfalfa for the livestock and also potatoes, even though it is not the preferred crops of farmers in the region, due to the pest problems (see above). In many places in Unalagua I saw many different crops planted in the same plot (intercropping). I asked again and again why farmers were cultivating their crops like this and I got a variety of answers. Maize-bean intercropping was generally seen as useful for the bean, which would use the maize as a pole when growing. Doña Rocio explained: “It is good to grow maize and bean together because they are from a different family and can give each other nutrients that would otherwise not be available.” Sometimes I was told that intercropping was necessary because there was not enough space in the plots, or because farmers wanted several crops to be ready to harvest in the same plot at the same time. In the case of fava bean, farmers were intercropping it with different grains and put the cows into the harvested plots to graze on the harvested bean plants and grains. Quinoa was generally found between maize plants. This was said to be good to protect the quinoa against pests: “The pests will now go on both: the quinoa and the maize and the quinoa plant will therefore be more healthy.” Doña Rocio told me that she always plants a combination of different plants in order to not have too many problems with pests. When I planted potatoes together with Doña Rosa we were planting three different varieties of potato in one plot: “This way we have better chances that one variety of potato will not get infested with pests” (Doña Rosa).

In Unalagua there are some people who have very small landholdings, while there are some that have larger landholdings (more than 2ha). If the husband has a good job and the woman is alone at home, responsible for more than 2ha of land, she might invite somebody with small landholdings to work on her land for two warm meals a day and a pay of about seven to eight dollars per day. Doña Rosa told me, that she sometimes worked on other people’s farms for the extra cash. Doña Rocio on the other hand hires in one of two ladies, if she needs help. Even though production goes relatively well in Unalagua, selling part of the production remained unthinkable until not all too long ago.

Commercialization in Times of Modern Food

In the first chapter I have talked about middlemen entering new relationships around food and gaining power in buying and selling agricultural products that they themselves have not grown. In Salcedo in the *mercado mayorista* (whole seller market hereafter *mayorista*) middlemen sell

fruits and vegetables, meat and fish from all over Ecuador. They cannot tell exactly where these products came from and they cannot say how the fruits, vegetables etc. were produced. However, everybody in Salcedo buys their food from the middlemen selling in the *mayorista*, also because there are limited alternatives. In the following the difficulties that farmers from Unalagua have with commercializing will be explained as well as the initiative that was taken to try to reduce such difficulties and the distancing between producers and consumers in general.

Difficulties in Commercialization

In Unalagua most of the harvest is for home consumption. Except for a few chicken, rabbits and guinea pigs here and there women do not sell a lot. Selling part of their production could potentially offer a source of income for (female) farmers, especially when they otherwise have to wait for their husbands to bring home their salary. Also husbands might have different priorities when it comes to what to spend their salary on, than do women. While I was in Unalagua, Don Fernando, the husband of Doña Rocio bought a stereo for USD870. This is most of his monthly salary. Women buy things such as rice, meat (mainly chicken), bread, bananas and the like, but also need money for cooking gas, paying the pick up taxi when their children go to school, for school notebooks and more. Women are thus encouraged by NGOs to consider commercializing. Selling part of the production at a profitable price however seems to cause several challenges to the women of Unalagua.

From what I have been told until 4 years ago, there was nobody selling products in town on a regular basis. Women told me that it is very hard for them to sell in town. They cannot compete with the middlemen selling in the *mayorista*. Even though the products sold there might be treated with a lot of agrochemicals and might not be of most taste, putting smaller and less perfect looking products next to it, will leave most consumers unconvinced. Women thus told me that with their quantity of products and the quality of their products it was impossible for them to sell their products at a satisfactory price: “In the *mayorista* nobody wants my products and people offer very small prices for my products. It is not worth it” (Doña Rosa). According to the women this was the main reason for not commercializing in the past: the fear of their products not being appreciated, the knowledge that their products are not worth a lot of money. Furthermore, it is not very easy and cheap to transport one’s products into town when one is alone: “None of us has enough products to sell by themselves in Salcedo every week. Alone you can earn five dollars on a good day, but the transport already costs three dollars”(Doña Rocio). It can thus be said that in the *mayorista* the prevalent place to buy food for citizens of Salcedo, the women who live as far as 20 minutes car drive away do not see themselves having a chance to sell their local products in a profitable manner. When being given the choice, most consumers in the *mayorista* will choose the bigger, better looking product, maybe due to preference; maybe because they do not know how the products were grown and which problematics, such as health and environmental risks can be attached to this; maybe because they have they do not see an alternative.

An Idea to Address Difficulties in Commercialization

EkoRural is an Ecuadorian NGO that wants to assist rural Ecuadorian communities to empower themselves and create a better life especially around the topics of community health, sustainable agriculture organizational strengthening and rural innovation and institutional change (EkoRural Website 2014). They encourage people to take the initiative and organize themselves in new ways. A bit more than three years ago, Ruben, who at the time worked for EkoRural initiated that the women of *La Delicia* would sell part of their production together as a group. This way they would have larger quantities and could support each other in the organization and execution of the

task of transporting and selling. Ruben knew that these women were organized in a group, produced without large amounts of agrochemicals and had some production surpluses that could be sold.

CEMOPLAF is an organization that is interested in making people aware of what it means to live a healthy family life. They are interested in promoting food that is free of agrochemicals and can therefore be considered healthier. They offered a space on their premises for the women of Unalagua to sell their products there to consumers directly.

EkoRural, CEMOPLAF and the women of *La Delicia* thus created a new space in which the challenges and difficulties that women usually faced in commercialization could be reduced - a *feria* (farmers market). Being in a protected space and having their own market where they could sell, encouraged many women of *La Delicia* to be more courageous and try to sell part of their production. Also in this *feria* they would sell directly to consumers and not to middlemen and the hope was that eventually consumers would come to the *feria* especially because they knew of the quality of the women's products and appreciated them for being chemical-free and tasty.

An Alternative Way to Commercialize in Unalagua Quevedo

This chapter unfolded around the sub research question: *What does agricultural production in Unalagua Quevedo look like and which barriers for commercializing in the close by town of Salcedo exist?* I showed that farmers in Unalagua generally have small landholdings and therefore cannot grow unlimited amounts of products. The way the commercialization of modern food works in Salcedo today, smallholder farmers believe that they do not have a chance when trying to sell their products in the *mayorista*. Even though they are the ones producing and working the land, they do not see themselves as part of commercialization and cannot compete with the middlemen selling in the *mayorista*. The organizational structures around modern food in Salcedo have thus led to small farmers being excluded from the food commercialization process.

The *feria* was set up as a space where the farmers would have a chance to sell their products out of eyesight of the *mayorista*, in a place where their products would be appreciated, but also as a space for consumers to get access to healthy products that do not contain chemicals and as a space where producers and consumers could meet and build up relationships that did not exist before.

In the next chapter the organization of the *feria* is described in depth, I will explain how the women of Unalagua cooperate to make the *feria* possible explain what the execution of a day of a Sunday *feria* looks like.

Chapter 4: Organization and Execution of a Day at the Feria

“When we sell as a group in the feria we are all united.”

(Doña Victoria about selling in the feria)

This chapter explores the social activity that underlies the organization and the execution of the weekly *feria* and its associated logistical challenges. In order to do this, I describe the general course of a Sunday *feria*. This does not mean that all the events described in this chapter are related to one Sunday *feria*, but rather that information from several occasions is presented in order to sketch a more nuanced picture of what the organization of the *feria* looks like and what it means for the six women involved. The chapter discusses the second sub-research question: *How do farmers socially, logistically and environmentally organize the feria as a space for narrowing processes of food production and consumption?* This involves exploring questions such as: how do the women decide what to bring and sell at the *feria*, how do they decide who is going to sell at the *feria*, when do women start to prepare their products, why and how? I then shift attention to the activities on the *feria* day itself, starting at the collection of the products and carrying on through the different stages of the event, until arriving home at the end of the day. In addition, I will summarize the wrap up of the *feria* and discuss the women’s mechanism of social control. The task of organizing the *feria* asks for commitment and cooperation amongst the six women and is crucial for their successful selling in the *feria*.

Development of the Feria

The *feria* was initiated by Ruben, a community organizer employed by the NGO EkoRural, who believed that the women of *La Delicia* had the potential to sell part of their production in a to consumers directly. The first *feria* in CEMOPLAF was launched on October, 14 2010. At this point all the twenty members of *La Delicia* were selling in the *feria*. When 20 women were selling in the *feria*, the variety and quantity of products was large and the responsibility and amount of organization each woman had to invest was relatively low.

Today there remain six women who are still selling on a regular basis. From talking to the women who are still selling today I tried to understand what happened to the other 14 women, who stopped selling again. It is sometimes hard for outsiders, such as me, to understand what it is that might keep women from commercializing and selling part of their production. This was also the topic in one of the workshops from the NGO FEPP (Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progreso) I participated in. Miguel Angelo works as an agricultural engineer for FEPP. The women of FEMICAN address him as Don Miguel and among each other call him *ingeniero* or *gringo*, as he is apparently not from Ecuador. Miguel Angelo told the women about the importance of commercialization and that women can make their own money through selling part of their production and in turn do not have to wait until their husbands come home, bringing money from their jobs, once a month or so. Doña Laura said: “But if the compañeras⁴ do not want sell, how can we convince them?” Don Miguel answered: “Nobody can be forced to commercialize, but it has a lot of benefits that should not be underestimated. Doña Rocio interfered with Don Miguel and gave a few reasons for why women might be hesitant to sell. These are the same reason that I was given when asking about the drop out of 14 women of *La Delicia*. Doña Rocio explained: “Some

⁴ compañera (english companion) is used by the women to refer to each other

compañeras say that they do not have enough food for home consumption, if they sell in the market.” This can be due to small land holdings, limited productivity and the use of the agricultural land to grow fodder rather than food. Doña Rocio continued: “Consumers will only buy products that are fresh and large in size. Some *compañeras* do not have products that the consumers like. The *compañeras* also have many things to do, take care of the children, the animals, cook the meal for the family, keep the house clean, work on the fields. Some *compañeras* say that they do not have the time to sell.”

When I was talking to the women about the *feria* in CEMOPLAF, I was told that it was indeed the case that some of the 14 women who stopped selling did not like consumers complaining about the appearance of products and that they did not want to put a higher effort into making the products look more presentable e.g. through washing them or taking of wilted leaves. I also heard that some husbands did not appreciate their wives going into town by themselves and selling part of their production on a weekly basis. Doña Rosa once told me that she thought the husbands were the main reason why women stopped selling: “The husbands do not want their wives to go to town alone and come back with their own money. Before marriage the men are nice and make all kinds of promises and after the wedding they become violent and oppressive. They do not want their wives to do their own thing.” The women that continue to sell in the *feria* today however, are determined to continue to do so.

Six Women from Unalagua Quevedo

The six women who continue to sell in the *feria* are generally speaking a bit more outspoken and independent than other women I met in Unalagua Quevedo. Four of these six women have husbands who are supportive of their wives commercializing and who help with the *feria*, each in their own way. Even though I have already referred to the six women above I take a moment here to introduce each of them to the reader in a little more detail.

Doña Rocio is 47 years old and has four children, two of which are police officers. Her husband works in the rainforest and only returns home for 1 week during the month. Then he helps in the house and on the farm. Doña Rocio is the president of La Delicia and used to be the president of FEMICAM. She says that her life is about serving the other women around herself. Because of her involvement in different organizations and projects Doña Rocio has followed many different workshops and courses that have been offered by NGOs and other organizations such as CEMOPLAF. These workshops and courses address a number of social and technical themes, ranging from sexual and reproductive health, awareness for domestic violence and human rights to agroecology, human and livestock health and traditional healing methods. She is well known, especially for her leadership among women but also for being helpful and friendly with everyone in Mulalillo and even in Salcedo. Therefore, especially women often come to her when they have a problem or if they are searching for advice. The family has two cows and two calves. The landholding of the family is just below three ha which is relatively large for Unalagua Quevedo. That is why she sometimes hires in farm laborers. For Doña Rocio it is very important that the products that she eats do not contain agrochemicals. Even if she gets products from her neighbors, she peels them, just to make sure. Doña Rocio has a very friendly attitude towards all her livestock and other animals and teaches her five year old son about it as well.

Doña Laura is the secretary of *La Delicia* as well as *FEMICAM*. Just as Doña Rocio, Doña Laura has been in contact with many NGOs and has participated in courses and workshops. Doña Laura is taking care of the children of her husband. She is middle-aged, maybe between 35 and 45. She has a small green house in which she can grow tomatoes, bell peppers and green beans. Doña Laura told me: “I like to grow many different types of vegetables for the *feria*, especially those that the other *compañeras* do not want to grow or cannot grow.” While I was in Unalagua Quevedo I

experienced several occasions in which Doña Laura was disagreeing with other women's wishes and opinions and got into small arguments. She was slow in making compromises that might bear disadvantages or additional work for her. Her priorities lie with her farm and her family. Doña Laura and her husband are farmers. Her husband does not have another job, like many of the other husbands in Unalagua Quevedo. The two cultivate a bit less than one and a half ha. They have three cows. For Doña Laura "healthy" food is very important. She tells me that this is the reason why she does not like to use chemicals on her land. "Some people get sick and only then realize that the food they are eating is not healthy and is poisoning them. Then they start to be interested in agroecological products and come to the *feria* in CEMOPLAF. You should not let it get this far". Doña Laura also tells me about the fact that she is grateful that the irrigation water in Unalagua Quevedo is clean and that in another village people got sick, because the irrigation water was not clean. When I asked her why the irrigation water elsewhere was not clean and she says: "It is because people use too many chemicals on their farms."

Doña Rosa is the treasurer of *La Delicia*. She is 37 years old and has one son, who lives elsewhere. Similarly to Doña Laura she is putting the interests of herself and her family before those of the *feria* and the women organizing it. Doña Rosa's husband works in the construction sector in Ambato and comes home at night. He helps out on the farm in the weekend. Doña Rosa said to me: "I can call myself lucky, because my husband helps me where he can". Doña Rosa's parcel of about one hectare lies about 20 minutes walking distance away from her house. She has four cows and two calves and therefore needs a lot of her land for fodder production. Two of her cows were pregnant while I visited and did not give milk, while two were at the end of their lactation and were giving as little as 3 and 4 liters of milk a day. Doña Rosa mainly brought lettuce and pumpkins for the *feria*, while I was in Unalagua Quevedo. Doña Rosa told me that she and her two siblings try to help their parents who are a bit older and physically not very fit, when time allows it.

Doña Hemelinda is the mother of Doña Rosa. She is 62 years old and has three children. Together with her husband she cultivates a bit more than 2 ha of land. In Unalagua Quevedo the men over 60 stay in the village rather than migrating work elsewhere. Doña Hemelinda is a person who is always smiling and even though she does not talk much, keeps an open attitude towards the other women. Doña Rosa as well as Doña Rocio told me that Doña Hemelinda's husband does most of the work on the farmland. He also brings the products when they are collected for the *feria* on Sunday mornings. Doña Hemelinda and her husband often contribute large quantities of products that they sell at the *feria* on Sundays. Doña Hemelinda once told me: "I am grateful to have children who help me, when they can."

Doña Victoria is 61 years old. She has one daughter but has never been married. Not having a husband means that she has to manage her entire life by herself and also that she is not always treated with the same respect as other women in Unalagua Quevedo. Doña Victoria cultivates about 1 ha of land - a small parcel next to her house combined with a larger area of land situated about 20 minutes walking distance away from her house, next to the farmland and the house of Doña Rocio. She has two cows. Doña Victoria is very close with Doña Rocio and is influenced by her viewpoints and opinions. She says that she takes pride in the fact that she can sell part of her production, and she really needs the money. She also gets a Bono de Desarrollo Humano (Human Development Bonus) of USD50 a month from the government, because she is considered to be poor. She explains that she relies on her own seed because she cannot afford to buy seed elsewhere. Also she says that even if she wanted to use agrochemicals she would still lack the money to buy them. Her 25-year old daughter is currently not working and not helping her mother on the farmland either. Neighbors talk about Doña Victoria's daughter and say that it is a shame that she does not help her mother.



Picture 5: Sunday morning before the *feria*: Doña Laura writes down all the products



Picture 6: Neighbors buy some carrots from Doña Victoria, before the *feria*.



Picture 7: Doña Victoria, Doña Rocio and her son Saul in front of the *mayorista*.



Picture 8: A intermediary at the *mayorista* in Salcedo evaluates Doña Rocio's rabbit, before offering her 13\$.

Doña Beatrix is about 50 years old. She was very hesitant to speak to me and also seemed to not be in close contact with the other five women who sell in the *feria*. She has six children. 5 of her children and her husband work in Quito. “My children never visit me. They don’t get any time off of work” Doña Beatrix told me. I said: “But they must have visited for Easter last week.” On Easter she said that she was alone, while all other families I spoke to were celebrating with their relatives, making Fancesca an Ecuadorian Easter soup that is prepared on Good Friday. She says her husband comes home in the weekend, but she did not mention him being helpful. She talked more vividly about her youngest daughter who studies teaching in Latacunga and still comes home in the evenings. Doña Beatrix has 3 cows and told me that she cultivates a lot of land. However, she did not tell me how much land she cultivates.

Officially none of these six women use agrochemicals in their production. They do, however, use pesticides and herbicides for their potatoes when they have the money. As the president of *La Delicia* Doña Rocio sometimes visits the other women’s farms to see what their production looks like. She says that she can tell from the plant whether or not it was treated with chemicals. Every time she checks in the other women’s fields she says, she can tell that chemicals have been used, at least on some of the plants that the women sell in the *feria*. My assumption is that the women want to make sure that the consumers will like their products. They know that in comparison to other farms in Ecuador they use a lot less chemicals and downplay their own agrochemical use.

The Organization of the Feria

Preparation of the Feria

The preparation of the *feria* begins long before the actual day of the market. Social as well as technical details have to be sorted out. Every Sunday there are two of the six women who go to sell at the *feria*. The teams rotate so that every women will go to the *feria* once every three weeks. In each team there is one women who can read and write and do the calculations of the money. Sometimes however, one of the two women of a team cannot execute her turn and then another team has to be found to take over the turn. Doña Beatrix for example once decided she could not sell in the *feria* because she needed more money quickly and was therefore planning to sell large amounts of alfalfa on the market on Sunday. Also on Mother’s day, the team that was scheduled backed out: “My children tell me that I should not work on Mother’s day and that they want to celebrate with me“, said Doña Laura. On Mother’s day finally no team could be found that was willing to go to Salcedo and sell and therefore the *feria* was cancelled on that day. Thus, sometimes the arrangement just works and the six women do not have to speak about who is going to the *feria*, while other times a lot of time is needed to phone each other or go to each other to talk and find out who will finally be willing to go and sell. The team of women who will sell in the upcoming *feria* has to make sure that the plastic crates that are used for transporting and presenting the products are cleaned and rinsed before Sunday morning.

Also before the actual day of the *feria* women have to decide what is ready to harvest and what they would like to sell the next Sunday. I was often the witness of women exchanging ideas and opinions about what should be taken to Salcedo and be sold and that women were also basing their decisions on what the other women would sell. Generally speaking the women try to have as much diversity as possible in the products they bring to Salcedo. Depending on what women decide to sell or what is ready to harvest, they have to calculate time for preparing the products, bagging them, making them look presentable so that consumers want to buy them. The packaging of for examples beans, peas and carrots is usually done on the morning of the *feria*. Some women harvest the products that need time to prepare the night before, while others get up at four in the morning in

order to harvest and clean their products. Generally speaking, products have to be fresh and fresh looking to keep consumers happy and ensure that the women will get a good price for their products. Depending on the weather, but also depending on the schedule of the women and the current state of their plots, the amount of vegetables women can harvest and sell can vary greatly. Doña Rocio once harvested a sack full of papanabo - about 25kg. This one she did not sell in the *feria*, but rather she went to Salcedo herself to sell the entire sack in the *mayorista*. Large amounts like this will not be bought by the consumers in the *feria*, who buy vegetables for family consumption.

Execution of the Feria

On the Sunday morning itself or sometimes already on Saturday evening the women bring their products to the house of Doña Rocio, who is the president of *La Delicia*. Here products are collected in large plastic crates and it is written down who has brought what to be sold in the *feria* (picture 5). This is important because each woman will later get the amount of money that is equivalent to the products that she brought and that were sold in her name. There can thus be variation in what the individual woman earns but also in what women earn over the course of time. Once all the products have been delivered to Doña Rocio's house and everything has been written down the two women who's turn it is to sell, will go to CEMOPLAF in a pick up taxi. The idea is generally that this happens at around 7 am on Sunday morning, but depending on whether the women are on time or the pick up taxi is on time, the women might only leave at 7:45 or so. The only person that is very strict with being on time is Doña Laura. For her it is very important to be on time and to be in Salcedo early. The pick up taxi to Salcedo costs five dollars. Usually the women will ask somebody they know to drive them e.g. Doña Rosa's brother in law or Doña Rocio's nephew. They will travel back with other people in a pick up taxi, which means that on the way back they will only pay around 40cents per person for the trip.

Once the women arrive in CEMOPLAF they set up the crates of products, arrange them in a way that the products look presentable - this is a very subjective task and everybody does it a bit differently - and wait for the customers to arrive. The entrance to the office of CEMOPLAF is the location where the *feria* takes place. It is a roofed house entrance about as big as a large garage. One of the ladies selling is always wearing an apron that has the logos of EkoRural and CEMOPLAF printed on it. This makes it look a bit more official. The women also carry plastic bags in order to be able to pack products for consumers. I observed some women trying to encourage passerby to purchase something and also mentioning the fact that products were organic or chemical free, while others mainly stood still and waited for consumers to approach them. The *compañeras* know all of the customers, because they come there almost every Sunday. The interaction between producers and consumers in the space of the *feria* will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. Some women, especially Doña Rocio, who is somewhat of an initiator are disappointed about low numbers of customers that come to CEMOPLAF. She talked to me about wanting to find a different space, a real market for organic products, where people would especially come, because they know that the products are fresh and directly from the producers. There are however also *compañeras* that do not express any form of new ideas or wishes and are a bit more passive when it comes to think about new options.

The fact that there are limited numbers of consumers coming to the *feria* in CEMOPLAF means that often it is not possible for the women to sell all of their products. Each team has a different strategy of how to sell the rest of the products that are not bought by the consumers in CEMOPLAF. Doña Rocio and Doña Victoria wait for 1 1/2 hours or so and then goes to stand on the outside of the *mayorista* to sell the rest of the products there, preferably for the same price (picture 7). This works especially well, because Doña Rocio is known to a lot of people and many

stay for a chat and buy something as well. Doña Laura and Doña Beatrix actively go to shops that sell natural remedies and foodstuffs such as grains and eggs as well as to a restaurant to sell their products there. They especially talked about the products being organic and healthy and people bought a lot. Doña Rosa and Doña Hemelinda did not really have a strategy. They went to some few middlemen they knew at the *mayorista* and tried to sell their products there. This however meant that they received a lower price for their products. This caused some annoyance among the other women, who stayed behind and were hoping for a good sales day in Salcedo.

After everything is sold the two women that are selling on this particular Sunday will go for lunch at one of the food stalls in the *mayorista*, before they return back to Unalagua Quevedo. The money for the lunch is deducted from the money that the women will get back for their sold products that Sunday, is thus divided by six. After lunch the women seek to find a pick up taxi that will bring them all the way back to Unalagua Quevedo for about 40¢ per person.

After the Feria

After the *feria* Doña Rocio, Doña Laura or Doña Rosa (the women who can read and write well and are comfortable making some basic calculations) write down, which products were sold in the name of each *compañera* and how much money each woman gets. Deducted from the earnings are the transport and lunch costs divided by 6. Each woman will get her money, together with a little note that will tell her, what was sold in her name, for which price and what lunch and transport cost were on that day - even though this is almost always the same. In the days after the *feria* women will collect their money at the house of one of the women who sold on that Sunday. When women meet to get their money they usually reflect on the Sunday *feria* and chat a bit. There is usually big curiosity about how the selling went, if everything was sold and how much money each woman earned, how much customers came. If the *feria* did not go well, there are usually many theories trying to explain the problem. In May for example, so the theory, people want to eat more meat, especially for Mother's day and so they will buy less vegetables.

Routines and Social Control Mechanisms

While I was in Unalagua Quevedo I noticed that sometimes women did not bring a lot of products to be sold in the *feria*. However, they always brought something. Once however it happened that Doña Beatrix did not bring any products to be sold at the *feria*. The women waited until 8:00am and then decided to leave without Doña Beatrix' products. Later I learned that nonetheless Doña Beatrix had to pay her share of the transport costs and lunch costs and additionally had to pay a fine of five dollars (one dollar to each of the other women). This is a lot of money for the women and therefore women will always try to bring some vegetables to be sold. This gives a certain security to the other women, but also to the establishment of the *feria* as a whole and ensures that the *feria* can be executed on a weekly basis. In the course of 3 1/2 years 14 women dropped out of the *feria* again and this reshaped the character of the *feria*. The six women who are still selling want to continue to do so and want to make sure that the *feria* maintains its current size and remains successful, that is why they established this social control mechanism that would hurt each of them and is therefore mostly avoided.

Overcoming Modern Challenges through Group Cooperation

This chapter has dealt with the sub-research question: *How do farmers socially, logistically and environmentally organize the feria as a space for narrowing processes of food production and consumption?* For the women of Unalagua, organizing themselves as a group means overcoming the barriers to commercialization that they faced in the past. They overcome some challenges that

exist in modern Salcedo and they have found the space where their products are appreciated. However, organizing the *feria* brings about some new challenges. It means having to cooperate, to keep appointments and to be flexible and spontaneous when plans change. The organization of the *feria* also calls for trust and commitment among the women. In this chapter the reader has learned that organizing and setting up the *feria* is a challenge that goes beyond standing in CEMOPLAF with a few crates of vegetables. It also represents an agronomic challenge, where the quality, quantity and diversity of products have to be right in order to tackle the social challenge of keeping consumers interested. The fact that 14 women stopped with selling again shows, that all that is needed to organize the *feria* and overcome challenges around modern food circulation is not easy for the women of Unalagua. In chapter 5 the social part of the *feria* the moment in which producers and consumers meet will be the subject of analysis.

Chapter 5: Co-producing a new mechanism of food circulation

“It is a lot better to sell here than in the mayorista. The people come, because they know us. They value our products; value the fact that they are organic.”

(Doña Rosa, about selling at the feria)

The previous chapter showed how the execution of the *feria* calls for organizational talent, trust and cooperation among the six women who organize it. In this chapter, I address the third sub-research question of this study: *How do urban-based consumers and rural-based producers interact in the space of the feria and do they co-produce new ways of production-consumption?* In particular, this chapter explores what happens in the moment when urban-based consumers and rural-based producers meet in exchange of food, as well as their competing and colluding cultures, wishes, ideas, and elements of momentary contentment and discontentment. Focusing on the experiences of two feria clients, I describe the people who attend the *feria*, followed by further attention to the conversations that I came across during my period there. After this, I shift my analytical lens to the practical elements of the consumer-producer encounter and exchange.

Consumers and their reasons to attend the feria

The people who come to the *feria* on Sunday mornings, instead of going to the *mayorista* are mainly neighbors who live in the direct proximity (within 3 blocks) of CEMOPLAF – a middle class neighborhood. Every week I saw many of the same women coming to buy at the *feria*. These women attending the *feria*, mostly housewives, told me that they got to know the *feria* right from its beginning.

- *“I live close by, so it is very convenient for me to come here,”*
- *“We are neighbors, so we know each other since the beginning. I always pass by here on my way to run errands.”*
- *“My husband and I run a shop, just down the road. I like when the feria begins on time, so I can do my shopping before I have to open the shop.”*

Many of the people who come to the *feria* prefer it in comparison to the *mayorista* for different reasons. When I asked: “Why do you rather come to the *feria* than go to the *mayorista*?” I was told:

- *“It is just very close to my house.”*
- *“The products that I buy here are very tasty and they are always fresh.”*
- *“We know each other, and I know where the products come from.”*
- *“I like the fact that these are products from our region - that they are produced close by and in a healthy way.”*



Picture 9: Doña Beatrix and Doña Laura setting up the crates to begin the selling.



Picture 10: A consumer asking Doña Victoria about which products she has to offer today.



Picture 11: Doña Laura packing some herbs in a plastic bag for her sister.



Picture 12: Doña Rosa and the lady who owns a shop close by calculating prices.

- *“These products are grown by these ladies. They are organic. That is good.”*

Additionally to the three to five neighbors who regularly purchased at the *feria*, the staff members of CEMOPLAF are regular customers. This includes four to six nurses and a doctor. The staff of CEMOPLAF told me:

- *“The taste of these products is very good, but they are also a lot more healthy than what we can buy in the mayorista.”*
- *“We do not know how much chemicals they put into the products that we buy at the mayorista. The ladies from Unalagua produce without using chemicals.”*
- *“I want more patients to know about how to eat healthy. Here they can buy from producers directly and ask about the food they buy.”*

The neighbors and CEMOPLAF staff made up a regular participant base of 10-12. There was the occasional passer by, as well as a few CEMOPLAF patients, following their appointments and on their way home that were buying at the *feria*. Additionally, clientele can change slightly depending on which woman from Unalagua is coming to sell on a particular Sunday. When Doña Laura was selling, her sister who lives in Salcedo passed by (picture 11). Doña Laura’s daughter was going to stay with her, that morning and play with her cousin. Doña Laura’s sister asked: “Which of these are your products? Do you also have the string beans you sometimes grow in you green house?” before deciding what to buy. When Doña Rosa and her mother Doña Hemelinda were selling, Doña Rosa’s husband and his brother as well as Doña Rosa’s sister passed by. They stayed for a little chat and helped with the selling. They all live in Unalagua and did not buy anything.

In the following I will introduce three consumers a bit closer. Two of them are a couple who have moved from the city to the countryside to live a more healthy life and one is the lady doctor who works at CEMOPLAF. This will give the reader a more concrete picture of some of the people who buy in the *feria*.

David and Angelica

One Sunday morning I noticed a couple that I had not seen at the *feria* before. I asked them if they had been here before and whether they knew that they were buying from consumers directly and that the products were organic. The two were very pleased to here that the products they had just purchased did not contain chemicals: “This is really good news. Nowadays you never know what is inside your food and whether it is healthy. Maybe it would be nice to put up a sign, so that everybody passing by can see that these products are organic“ (David).

David and Angelica have two daughters who study in Riobamba and a son with special needs. They decided to move to the countryside because their son was having many problems living in Latacunga. In their new house he can go outside and play and the air is more clean. Also, David and Angelica told me that they did not want people to stare at their son anymore. David and Angelica bought a small piece of land where they grow some vegetables for home consumption and alfalfa. They rear chicken and guinea pigs for home consumption as well. They want to purchase as little food as possible, because they believe that the food they buy in the *mayorista* is not of good quality: “We want to be healthy and especially with our son, we cannot risk to eat bad food. It is really important to us to know what is in the food we eat“ (Angelica).

When I visited David and Angelica at their house, I saw that they also have a sheep, several tomato de arbol trees, fava beans, some corn and more. The two told me that they had given most of the food they had bought in the *feria* to their daughters, who said that the food was very tasty. They themselves had only kept the corn and both agreed: “The corn is very very tasty, we can really taste a big difference to the corn we have bought before. It seems to be a very good product. We will now go to this *feria* more often.”

David and Angelica were wondering why the *feria* was not better known and why the women were not selling in a more central spot. They tried to talk to Doña Hemelinda about it, who was very hesitant with her reaction. She said: “Well in the beginning we made these Canastas⁵ that Ruben sold in Latacunga, but because he is no longer working for EkoRural making Canastas is no longer an option.” David and Angelica agreed that one should speak with somebody of the municipality about the option of expanding the *feria* and organizing it in a more central space. I told them that Doña Rocio was in contact with the new mayor of Salcedo who had said he would like there to be a *feria de los productores* - producer market in Salcedo. David and Angelica were very interested to talk to Doña Rocio and I told them they should come back in two weeks, to meet Doña Rocio then.

The Doctora of CEMOPLAF

The lady doctor who works in CEMOPLAF knows the ladies who sell in the *feria*. “We have known each other for many years. We know each other from different workshops that some of these ladies have participated in.” The CEMOPLAF office in Salcedo also organizes workshops on reproductive health and nutrition in the rural communities around Salcedo.

The compañeras from Unalagua address the doctor with *doctora*. The *doctora* visited Doña Rocio’s farm once to visit and better understand what production looked like and where the food that was sold in the *feria* came from. She told me: “It is very important that more people here in town realize that the food they buy at the mayorista might not be good for them. We have healthy, organic products growing so close by, we have to enable producers and consumers to meet and learn to understand each other again”. The *doctora* is very proud that within the premises of CEMOPLAF healthy, local food is sold and that through this the women of Unalagua are enabled to meet their clients directly and earn some money.

The *doctora* tries to purchase something at the *feria* every Sunday. She also motivates the nurses to do the same and some do their weekly vegetable shopping in the *feria* and leave with large bags of vegetables. The *doctora* always took the time to greet the women selling at the *feria* ask about their health and wellbeing and about that of their families before she would go to work.

The *doctora* and David and Angelica were consumers who were more interested in the ladies of Unalagua and the character of the *feria*. They were the ones who actively brought in ideas about how the *feria* could transform and possibly grow bigger in the future. They were actively searching the contact with the ladies of Unalagua, tried to engage them in conversations and wanted to know about them and their realities.

⁵ The English translation of Canasta is basket. Canastas are food packages that a farmers assembles and that are sold to the same consumers for a fixed price every week.

Encounters at the feria

The women of Unalagua know essentially all of the regular *feria* clients as they faithfully attend the *feria* every Sunday. Generally, their interactions as buyers and sellers only last less than five minutes and largely are limited to product exchange. In contrast, the nurses and doctor of CEMOPLAF tend to warmly greet the women and engage them in conversations on current events. When it comes to purchasing products questions are:

- *“What are you selling today?”*
- *“Are you also selling beet root?”*
- *“Why do you not have peas?”*

While some customers of the *feria* are friendly and engaged, others are a bit more blunt and tend to complain about the prices of products. They might try to barter for lower prices, but this is barely accepted. If a head of cabbage is smaller than the others or when it comes to selling things that generally vary in size such as seven year melon renegotiating prices is possible; most other prices are fixed. Some consumers would say things like:

- *“This lettuce does not look good. I don’t want to buy it. Do you have another one?”*
- *“You want 50¢ for this bag of corn? But it is a very small bag!”*

Consumers double-check the prices of each product, before they decide whether or not they will buy it. Then the ladies selling will pack the products into plastic bags. After the plastic bag with the food is handed over to the consumer the final price is determined. Doña Victoria and Doña Hemelinda have difficulties calculating the final price themselves and also the other women from Unalagua tend to a bit slower than some of the consumers. The lady who told me she was running a shop, was always very quick with calculating the final price of her groceries herself (picture 12). Once a lady disagreed with the calculation that Doña Beatrix had done and the price was recalculated. Producers and consumers always end up agreeing on the final price. After everything is packed and paid for and depending on who is selling in the *feria*, some consumers might ask one of the producers to carry their bags home. Doña Victoria was asked to do so once and returned to CEMOPLAF carrying a few bread roles, which had been bought for her, as a thank you.

Next to the prices and the quality of the products, the availability of products is discussed. For example, I did not see the women in Unalagua Quevedo producing green pea. However, there were several different consumers asking whether peas were available. In this case Doña Rocio said: “It is a bit complicated for us to produce peas here, because they are quite a fragile vegetable.” It also happened that one of the consumers came and said: “Oh, I am very surprised to see that you are actually selling today. I thought that due to the rain that we have had the last few days, you would not be having a lot of products to harvest and sell.” Doña Victoria said: “Yes, we are here – we are always here.” “I have already bought my vegetables at the *mayorista*, what a pity” was the reply. When I asked Doña Victoria whether or not consumers engaged in conversations about farming, she told me that in the beginning, when the women first started selling in the *feria*, consumers asked a lot of questions about the origin of the products and how they were grown, including questions on agrochemical use. “Now, most of the consumers do not ask anymore, because they already know what the products are like - that they are of good quality and free of chemicals.”

One Sunday, Doña Laura and Doña Beatrix were at CEMOPLAF later than anticipated and the *feria* started a bit later. Doña Beatrix put a few products in a crate that she carried on her back and passed by the lady customer who also owned the shop, down the road from CEMOPLAF. Doña Laura and Doña Beatrix knew that she would not come that day, because she only comes, when the *feria* starts before her shop opens. When Doña Beatrix was standing in front of the shop she said: “I think it is better if we do not go in. She seems to be busy.”

Consumers have diverse viewpoints and opinions about food and what they want their food to be like. Also they have different reasons for coming to the *feria*. In the following I will sketch out some of the different discourses around food and the *feria* that I could witness, while attending the *feria*.

Healthy Food

Many consumers, especially the staff of CEMOPLAF told me that they were interested in buying food that did not contain large amounts of chemicals and that they wanted to buy fresh and healthy vegetables. “The food in the *mayorista* can contain lots of chemicals without me knowing about it. I want to be sure that the food I eat will not poison me or my family”, one of the nurses of CEMOPLAF said. The doctor and nurses from CEMOPLAF are busy with health issues all day long and are concerned about whether the food they eat is healthy and they are skeptical about the quality of products that can be bought in the *mayorista*. Also they want to promote healthy food and make it available to their patients. “The food the *compañeras* produce is more healthy, because it contains no chemicals”, one nurse said.

Some producers talk a lot about healthy food as well. They make a clear distinction between their products and those that can be purchased in the *mayorista*. Doña Laura told me: “The people do not care about agro-ecological products as long as they are healthy. When they get sick, they realize that the food that they buy in the *mayorista* is not healthy and start being interested in our products.” Doña Rocio said: “When I look at the plants I can sometimes see that the other *compañeras* have used chemicals. But still, our products contain a lot less chemicals than those that can be bought in the *mayorista* and are therefore more healthy.” Especially Doña Laura and Doña Rocio, but also Doña Victoria was talking about healthy food; also when trying to convince passers-by to try their products. They consider their products to be healthy and consider this to be very important. Talking about healthy food producers and consumers can find a common interest and concern. They are convinced that the food at ‘their’ *feria* offers a healthy alternative to the rest of the food available in Salcedo.

Coming together around food

In this chapter I shifted the focus from the situation and activities of the ladies of Unalagua towards the meeting of producers and consumers in the space of the *feria*. The *feria* in CEMOPLAF is a relatively small event. There exists the idea to organize the *feria* in a more accessible location and get more producers engaged, but not all the ladies selling in the *feria* are actively supporting this idea and most of the consumers are not aware of this idea.

At the *feria* the quality of products and the price of products is discussed. Agricultural production practices and shared convictions about food remain marginal topics at this *feria* even though some new customers might ask about the origin of the food they purchase. Nonetheless, both producers and consumers are happy to meet on the *feria* on a weekly basis, appreciate the fact that they know each other and are convinced that they are creating a space where more healthy food is available for people living in Salcedo. The shared conviction exists that the *feria* overcomes some of the problems associated with the *mayorista*, such as providing food from unknown origins and

low quality. Also there exists a certain notion of empowerment around the *feria* as rural women can sell their own products and earn some of their own money, while urban women find an alternative space where they can purchase healthy food. Coming back to the sub-research questions: *How do urban-based consumers and rural-based producers interact in the space of the feria and do they co-produce new ways of production-consumption?* I hold that even though the *feria* is not a space where convictions about agricultural sustainability are exchanged it is a space to which people return again and again convinced that they have crafted a meaningful alternative to the *mayorista* - or the modern way of production-consumption.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

In the last chapter we have seen that the *feria* is simultaneously constructed and shaped by the practices of multiple actors, as opposed to mechanisms of solidarity for which some scholars such as Goodman (2004) and Reynolds (2000) have called. In this thesis, I have taken the position that food solidarity does not necessarily address the problem that lies at the heart of food modernization: socio-technical distancing. In my framing of the modern food problematic, I have argued that it is exactly this abstract notion of not knowing one another, which causes problems of unhealthy eating and unsustainable farming. For me, solidarity, as a concept, effectively means a uni-directional relationship in which a seemingly enlightened, powerful and caring consumer provides support to a class of farmers. This abstract, clean definition of roles denies the messy modern identities, politics and other entanglements of people involved in the co-production of food in an evolving context of modern Ecuador, thus placing into question dichotomies between lay and expert, traditional and modern, and rural-based indigenous producer and urban-based mestizo consumer. Instead of emphasizing a well-defined duality between these actors, here I focus my analytical lens on the *feria* as a space where such differences come seamlessly together in a shared space of encounter. In my study of the interactions, negotiations, and exchanges around food, I have described the *feria* as an interactive platform of food circulation where meanings around food are renegotiated again and again. I found the relationships among actors and the socio-technical outcomes of their food encounters to be far from static and unidirectional.

In the last three chapters, I described the village of Unalagua Quevedo, the daily life of six women who sell at the *feria*, and the *feria* as a space of social encounter over food. The presented data provides insight into the rich agricultural, socio-organizational as well as communicative practices of the actors engaged in the social construction of the *feria*. In this chapter, I aim to conceptually ‘un-pack’ the *feria* as a counter-movement to modern food. The character of this space is produced and re-produced by each actor’s practices every time he, she or it takes part in the *feria*. In my effort to explain the social construction of practice at the *feria*, I draw on three central elements to Feldman and Orlikowski’s (2011) framework of a practice-oriented analytical perspective: (1) *situated actions are consequential in the production of social life*, (2) *dualisms are rejected as a way of theorizing*, and (3) *relations are mutually constitutive*. In my conclusions, I return to the problematization of this thesis and, with the help of Beck’s line of thinking about reflexive modernization, I respond to the main research question of this thesis:

Are the actors coming together at the feria effectively contributing to ‘responsible production-consumption’?

Smallholder Commercialization in an Era of Modern Food

Chapter three took the place of an extended case study of the study site of Unalagua Quevedo and has unfolded around the first sub research question identified in the first chapter: *What does agricultural production look like in Unalagua Quevedo and which barriers for commercializing in the close by town of Salcedo exist?*

I showed that until four years ago, none of the female farmers in Unalagua sold products on a regular basis. Practice theory invites us to look at different factors that all influence a situation and together form people’s practices. Reckwitz (2002) speaks about “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge“ that together make up a person’s

practices (Reckwitz 2002: p. 249). Also every day actions of people shape the life that people live. This is what Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) identify as the first principle of practice theory: “*situated actions are consequential in the production of social life*” (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p. 1242). In the past everything that the women knew about their own farming and commercialization in Salcedo told them that selling at the market was not for them. The modern paradigm they are surrounded by suggests that larger quantities of products are needed to present oneself on the market; that small farmers produce for themselves and do not interact with urban consumers. Through their knowledge, behavior and the way they talked women were reproducing this modern mind set day by day, not only for themselves, but for other women as well. It was reflected in their language, but also in the evolving practices tied to their encounters with urban-based consumers. The practicalities of their struggle as social actors emerge in sentences, such as: “We do not have enough products.” “Consumers want larger products than those we can offer.” “If we sell large amounts of vegetables we do not have enough for home consumption.” “The transport is too expensive in comparison to what you can earn.” “Doña Victoria cannot sell on her own - she cannot calculate.” In the *feria* some of these modernity based convictions and concerns are overcome.

In the past the female farmers in Unalagua believed that consumers preferred the products they could buy in the *mayorista*. They used to believe that consumers would not value their products, because consumers preferred large and perfect looking vegetables. This is often true, but also has to do with the experience of modern food, where consumers have effectively dis-connected themselves from food production, thus unlearning the practicalities of what is needed to grow vegetables. If they see a certain product in the *mayorista* on an everyday basis, this is the product they consider to be normal and good. Thus everyday actions of farmers and consumers will decide whether they will reduced distancing between each other or not, whether they will try out new ways or remain in that which they know, remain in realities of modern food.

Organizing the feria: colliding obligations

The NGO EkoRural suggested to the women to sell together in a space that only they would use - the entrance of the building of CEMOPLAF. In order to be able to commercialize in a satisfactory manner and exist next to the strong *mayorista* the *feria* had to have a specific character. This could be ensured in the moment in which women decided to sell together as a group. This way they could support each other and begin to undermine the ‘normal’ obstacles to modern food, such as by sharing the costs of transport and thus overcoming a physical distance that separated them from urban-based consumers. Also together the women could gain access to the market space by offering larger volumes of food as well as greater varieties of products as means of capturing the attention and even the imaginations of potential food purchasers. These seemingly harmless proposals posed substantial challenges for the women – they would have to break with established ways of organizing and make big changes in the daily rhythms and patterns of the living and being, opening them up to the critical eye of their family, neighborhoods and social networks. In chapter four I showed that only 6 women remained active in the *feria*, while 14 were not able to bare the pressure this new practice created in their old life. The fourth chapter of this thesis then explored cooperation between the women asking: *How do the six women who sell at the feria socially, logistically and environmentally organize the feria as a space for narrowing processes of food production and consumption?*

The idea that “*everyday actions are consequential in producing the structural contours of social life*” (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011: p. 1242) can be used here to understand that the organization and execution of the *feria* becomes embedded in the everyday practices of producers

and re-shapes those practices. This is true for both new routines entering everyday life as well as at times a need for new improvised actions. In chapter four I showed that a lot has to be organized before the day of the *feria* itself: on an individual and a farm level as well as on a social-organizational level. Old routines are slowly transforming as women set part of their harvest aside to sell every week.

Women said that before they could not sell because they felt socially isolated. Now that they are selling as a group they feel that some of their insecurities have vanished: “Selling in the group is good, because we are not alone. We are united and can help each other” (Doña Victoria). On the other side the women are now involved in a process of social learning in which they have to take risks in their families and economies, share vulnerabilities and demonstrate trust and commitment to the other women, for example in showing up and being on time on Sunday mornings. Tensions can arise when each member must break from their established ways of living and being in order to construct their joint venture together, thus making them vulnerable to potentially ‘violent’ responses from others as each must creatively commit and forge new space of interaction among the emerging group and its demands on their time and resources and competing social commitments. “I want to be in Salcedo early, before the shops open and the consumers start going to the *mayorista*. The others however tend to be too late and so it can happen that I do not manage to be in Salcedo at 8:00am. I believe that this way we loose a lot of customers” (Doña Laura), but, more importantly for the group, such experiences also lead to a loss of faith and hope in one another, thus undermining the potential of the *feria* to become a promising, collective force of social change in their lives and more broadly. The endless task of bringing everyone together and having people stick to schedule and other commitments can be difficult at times, but such logistical matters are essential for the survival of the group and its collective project to re-assemble broader patterns of food production and consumption. This is especially the case when two women cannot take their turn of organizing the *feria*. In these cases a replacement has to be organized spontaneously or the women might have to decide to even cancel the *feria*, thus returning to the realities of modern food.

While the women are now organizing and executing the *feria* every week, they are expected to meet their other commitments and obligations. Women have to find a way to balance their domestic tasks, their work on the farm, their social commitments and their obligations to the women’s group and federation with their task of organizing and executing the *feria* in a way that pleases those around them. This can cause tensions. The mother and a sister of Doña Rocio told me: “She has time for everything and everyone, is organizing *La Delicia* and the *feria*. But for her own family she does not have time.” On the other side, Doña Rosa, Doña Laura, Doña Hemelinda and Doña Rocio have supportive husbands who encourage them to continue selling in the *feria* and help them as well. This however means that husbands also carve out time in their day and change their patterns of activity to support their wives in harvesting, de-graining beans or maize, packing or transporting or they might take over other household tasks that their wives did alone in the past. Don Fernando, Doña Rocio’s husband washes his sons clothes and cooks the morning meal, when he is at home and his wife is busy milking or preparing the *feria*. Doña Hemelinda’s husband carries his wives’ products to Doña Rocio’s house every Sunday morning at 7:00, so his wife does not have to carry the heavy crate and can stay on their farm. Dona Rosa’s husband went to Salcedo several times, to help carry heavy crates and set up the *feria* at CEMOPLAF. Other husbands however were less supportive and discouraged their wives from selling. Here we can clearly see that every family is different and reacts differently to new practices and wishes of different family members. The individual reaction of each family to new practices is the result of endless negotiations within the family. A helpful metaphor to picture this is from Gillian Hart (1997) who sees “the household as a political arena” and the negotiations going on within this arena as partly influenced by negotiations going on in other arenas that lie outside the family or the household (Hart 1997: p. 22). Thus, the

practices of organizing the *feria* and the expectations and wishes attached to this by themselves and the other women influences the practices a woman carries out at the family level and the other way around: the expectations and wishes of family members will influence the way in which women can commit to the *feria*. This is what Feldman and Orlikowski mean when they say: “relations are mutually constitutive” (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p. 1242).

The fact that the women bring home some of their own money means that they are slightly more independent and do not have to wait for their husbands to come home with the salary at the end of the week or the end of the month. They are able to make some of their own decisions when it comes to making small purchases e.g. schoolbooks and other supplies for their children or household supplies such as toilet paper and dish soap.

In chapter four I pointed out that the women are talking to each other about what they should sell at the *feria* and that they try to provide a large variety of different products for the *feria*. This counteracts the tendencies around modern food that many farms are becoming more specialized and tend to produce monocultures. The farms of the women who sell in the *feria* are highly diversified and the women find pride in cultivating many different vegetables. During a NGO workshop Doña Rocio told a woman from another village she did not know: „It is true: we are trying to produce as many different kinds of vegetables as possible. We do not have to go to the supermarket, because we grow all our food right at home on our own farm.“ Also different women told me that they were growing different varieties of vegetables in order to be able to control pests. This is a tendency against excessive pesticide use, one of the environmental ‘bads’ brought about by modern ways of producing food.

Co-producing the feria: a space of food intensification and social transformation?

Interacting with urban-based consumers is new for the women of Unalagua and the customers of the *feria* are also not used to meeting the people who produce their food. The aim of chapter five was thus to explore this new relationship and see whether distancing is reduced by looking into the question: *How do urban-based consumers and rural-based producers interact in the space of the feria and do they co-produce new ways of production-consumption?*

New practices of interacting with each other have evolved. Producers and consumers come together at the *feria* regularly, recognize one another and engage in chitchat about prices and availability of products. Conversations remain formal and slightly distant however. Here I come back to “*the rejection of dualisms*” (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p. 1242). Giddens (1984) has pointed out that many things that have been described as dualisms should rather be seen as dualities - “the quality or condition of being dual” (Oxford English Dictionary). I would say that we often see things as separates that are actually two sides of the same coin. Food is a duality consisting of two inherently connected processes: the production of food and the consumption of food. While in modern society the two have strategically become divided they actually cannot be seen as separates. In the space of the *feria* the processes of producing food and consuming food meet again. Producers and consumers become a bit closer. They are actively trying to reduce the distance that has grown between them over time even though this is not always easy. Having being treated as dualisms, as “something conceptually [divided] into two opposed or contrasted aspects” (Oxford English dictionary), for a long time, producers and consumers do not meet naturally on eye level. The divide between rural-based indigenous producer and urban-based mestizo consumers still exists - in the heads of people - while the *feria* is shaped by the practices of both. This is the reason why, although going to the *feria* has become a routine and consumers notice when the *feria* is not taking place, viewpoints are rarely discussed and consumers do not take part in the *feria* actively as co-organizers but rather as consumers. This has been shown in chapter five where consumers and producers

discuss prices and availability of products rather than viewpoints and convictions about food and agriculture.

Nonetheless, I argue that new relationships are formed in the *feria* and that this can be seen as a social intensification around food. Rather than involving more people to a weak extent, less people are involved but are starting to have more contact with each other. The neighbors and nurses who buy at the *feria* and the women that sell in the *feria* are all shaping the character of the *feria* through their practices and are thus co-producing the *feria*. This brings us to the third lens of practice theory the “*relationality of mutual constitution*” (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011: p.1242). In the co-production of a new food circulation mechanism producers’ and consumers’ practices are influenced by the interactions with each other. Farmers’ practices are influenced by the consumers being in the *feria*: “Before I start planting I think about what is bought a lot at the *feria* and what the consumers like to eat.” (Doña Rocio) The consumers’ tendency to want fresh, clean and good looking products, leads Doña Hemelinda and her husband to get up at 4am at the day of the *feria* to ensure that the harvested products are as fresh as possible and rinse them with water to make sure that they are clean.

The eating practices of consumers are beginning to be influenced by the farmers. They sell what they can produce well in the region under the given climatic circumstances. Consumers eat more products that come directly from the region and have been treated with little to no agrochemicals. They might eat in a more healthy way than they did before. Also they change their shopping habits, increasingly coming to the *feria* first, before going anywhere else. They increasingly ask for those products they experience as most tasty or of the best quality. Angelica said: „The corn we bought in the *feria* was so tasty and sweet, so different to the corn I used to buy in the *mayorista*. I will go to the *feria* more often now.“ Production and consumption practices become closer interlinked than they used to be and social encounters around food are taking place between formerly unaquainted actors. This intensification of social relationships around food is however still new and relatively weak and might be threatened by modern realities through time.

Transformed practices

The six women who continue to sell at the *feria* after three years have integrated the organization and execution of the *feria* into their every day life and today this new practice is less and less contested by their social surrounding. They begin to speak about the *feria* with other people for example in the meetings of FEMICAM and encourage other women to set up a communal selling mechanism such as the *feria* in their women’s group as well. The *feria* does not have first priority, however. If there are celebrations such as Easter or even Mother’s Day the *feria* can be called off, because the being together with the family is considered to be of higher importance. “My children told me that I couldn’t sell on Mother’s Day. They want to see me. I cannot go to the *feria* this Sunday” (Doña Laura). On occasions like these women rather follow the wish of their families and stay home. This compromise will mean that the consumers will be disappointed, but it also means that the family members are given the feeling that they are given priority. This might lead to them being more supportive of the *feria* on a week to week basis.

The women are supporting each other to a certain extent when it comes to the organization of the *feria*. However, generally they will not get involved in the matters of another family. While I was in Unalagua it was clear that Doña Beatrix was trying to minimize her responsibilities towards the *feria* and was pulling away from *La Delicia* as well. One Sunday she said that she could not sell in the *feria* because she needed money and wanted to go to Salcedo the same day to sell a large quantity of alfalfa. Another Sunday she did not bring any products to be sold in the *feria* and therefore had to pay a fine of five dollars. The other women did not ask her what was going on or whether she had a problem with her husband or her children. They were rather disappointed and

even slightly angry because Doña Beatrix was neglecting her commitments towards the *feria* and through that towards them. Doña Laura said: „It is not our problem if she does not find the time to sell in the *feria* - she has daughters as well who can help her.“

There are 14 women of *La Delicia* who have stopped selling again. For them selling regularly has not become a new routine. These women could somehow not integrate the *feria* into their other practices. This had to do with the fact that some women's farming practices or their presentation of their products did not meet the consumers' expectations. Also the prices that consumers were willing to pay were not meeting the expectations of producers. Last but not least, some husbands did not want their wives to make room in their daily practices of doing domestic as well as farm tasks for the new practice of selling their products in town, outside of their home village. When the *feria* first started one lady baked a cake of Arracacia xanthorrhiza (zanahoria blanca) an andean root vegetable for the opening celebration: „She used to enjoy the *feria* a lot, but always had to be home early so that her husband would not get angry. Then he told her to stop and since then she cannot join the *feria* anymore,“ Doña Rocio told me. The six women who still sell do not try to encourage those 14 women to come back to the *feria*. They know that the others have their reasons why they cannot make the *feria* part of their practices.

The consumers come to the *feria* regularly and say that they appreciate the taste and the quality of the products and know why they are smaller than those products sold in the *mayorista*. Consumers are however sometimes confronted with products they do not know. When leak the size of spring onions was sold many consumers were confused: „What is this?“ „What can I use this for?“. The producers explained it to them and encouraged them to buy it. The same happened when the women tried to sell lovage - or maggi as they called it. Many consumers were confused and said: „I only know the soup seasoning, maggi“. „This fresh herb can be used exactly the same way as you use maggi.“ Doña Rosa said. In these situations it can happen that the product that is unknown will not be sold. Nonetheless, consumers show interest and ask how they can use this particular food. On the other side zanahoria blanca was very popular amongst consumers and was regularly asked for.

Good reputation and new customers

One Sunday morning when the women were preparing everything for the *feria* two neighbors came. Doña Hilda came with a friend whom I did only meet at this one occasion. Doña Hilda had been in Spain for three month, to be with her husband who has worked there for several years and to give birth. She had thus not been able to look after her fields and did not have anything to harvest at that time. Her friend also said that right now she was not harvesting any vegetables. The two wanted to buy some vegetables before the other women went to Salcedo to do the *feria*. Doña Hilda said: „You know in the past I also sold in the *feria* and the vegetables the compañeras are producing are so tasty. See these carrots from Doña Hemelinda they are the best. Also, it is a lot cheaper and more convenient for me to come here and buy some vegetables in the early morning then to go into town and buy them there.“ The women's products thus have a good reputation in Unalagua and women who for which ever reason do not cultivate much of their own food at a given moment in time will come to buy from their neighbors.

The six women who sell at the *feria* have another new customer. This is Ephrain who used to work for the NGO EkoRural. He is now working for another NGO that has a shop, which tries to sell products that come from smallholder farmers. Since he has left EkoRural he tries to stay in touch with Doña Rocio. He has come twice so far to place an order and pick up vegetables a few days later. While I was in Unalagua Quevedo he once purchased USD45 worth of vegetables from the women. This is a lot of money for the women and it is also very convenient, as Ephrain will

come to Unalagua Quevedo himself to pick up the products at Doña Rocio's house directly. "I have worked with these ladies for some years and I know that these vegetables are very tasty and of good quality. I can count on Doña Rocio. When I come here and ask she will know exactly what each of the other women is cultivating right now and what they can sell to me. When I return a few days later, I can be sure that all the products are there. This is just great." The women are increasingly growing proud, because they see that there is a demand and an appreciation for their products. However, when Ephraim ordered 10 bags of fava beans (1kg per bag) and Doña Rocio was the only person who had fava beans ready to harvest, she asked her neighbors to help her harvest and was happy that I was there to help her to harvest and husk the beans as well.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have set out to discuss one response to distancing around modern food in Ecuador. I defined distancing around food as the process of production-consumption increasingly being coined by rural-based food producers and urban-based food consumers becoming more unknown to one another. I have presented the *feria* in Salcedo as a counter-movement, a response to the problems arising from socio-technical distancing. In my point of view the *feria* in Salcedo has the potential to grow bigger and involve more local producers as well as more consumers (i.e. 'extensification'). In this thesis however, I have understood 'growth' more in a qualitative way and have argued that the intensification of social relationships around food i.e. reduced distancing, is the pathway to responsible consumption as well as production. In this regard the *feria* is on a good way. Relationships between different actors are growing slowly but surely and interactions become a little bit more familiar. Consumers talk to producers about what they like to eat and how they want their products to be; producers talk to consumers about what their options are and where their difficulties lie in providing the desired products. Also the encounters at the *feria* result in more sustainable production practices in the sense that less agro-chemicals are used and the consumers bring home more healthy food for themselves and their families. In this sense we could speak about intensified relationships that bring about qualitative transformation in the form of more responsible consumption as well as production. The relationships at the *feria* however are not intensified to the extent that the different actors have a shared vision and a common way forward in which they support each other. They have not grown together as a group, which will travel down a shared path and will try to work towards more healthy and sustainable production-consumption for more people in a wider setting. The women from Unalagua tend to overlook some of the difficulties their compañeras face, instead of asking what is wrong or offering their help. This has to do with a variety of factors but can lead to one women becoming isolated and eventually might lead to somebody quitting the *feria*. At the same time most consumers will not ask about problems the women of Unalagua are facing when it comes to commercializing, which means that arising problems are not addressed. From what I have experienced during my research period I argue that there is a risk that the actors engaged in the *feria* might return to realities of modern food in the future. Threats that could bring about such a set back could be women stopping to commercialize for reasons associated with their families and village life as well as threats when it comes to the extensification side of things.

In terms of extensification, the location of the *feria* is problematic. Few people pass by CEMOPLAF and therefore the *feria* is not becoming better known in Salcedo. Also the space in CEMOPLAF is limited and it does not offer a lot of space for more producers to sell their products. It is worth following up on the rumor that the new mayor of Salcedo wants to create a space for a farmer's market in a more central space in Salcedo. If a new location could be found, more producers could be motivated to sell and more consumers might learn about the idea of buying their food from local producers and get interested. An idea to get to know each other even better could be

to invite consumers to producers' understand better what it means to produce food on a small scale under the regional climate conditions. However, few of the people involved in the *feria* at this point in time are actively considering the idea of letting the *feria* grow. This is true for consumers as well as some of the producers. The consumers who live close by CEMOPLAF are not considering the potential of the *feria* but are rather just happy to have a place where they can buy some fresh and healthy vegetables. The staff of CEMOPLAF is happy that the *feria* is taking place where it does, because it promotes healthy food under their roof. Doña Rocio is interested in letting the *feria* grow and getting more people involved. She is also the one who has been talking to the mayor of Salcedo about finding a new location for the *feria*. The other women however are more hesitant and do not really take the initiative to change something. I believe that some of them do not see that they themselves have a capacity to act while another might be hesitant to get more producers involved, as this would mean competition. A workshop with producers and consumers together could help people understand if they have a shared goal or perspective for the *feria* and what this perspective could be.

Recommendations

Practice Theory as a tool to research counter-movements

In this thesis I have introduced the *feria* as a form of sub-politics (Beck) and thus a counter-movement to modern food (Sherwood et al. 2013). Sub-politics lies outside formal politics and emerges where modern society causes problems for people that are not addressed, or at least not solved by formal politics. I believe that the women who sell in the *feria* do not see themselves as a counter-movement, let alone as being political. Rather through support of EkoRural and CEMOPLAF, they have created an alternative selling mechanism where they can circumvent the problems of commercialization brought about by food modernization. I do see the *feria* as a counter-movement however, because I see its emergence to be a response to the problematics brought about by modern food.

Counter-movements might have certain similarities: they might address a (political) problem that a group of people face, they might have a certain goal, they might influence society from below (Beck 1994) - that is: outside of formal politics. However, each counter-movement is completely unique in its way of making sense of the world and replying to it with certain actions. This is so because a counter-movement is made up of different actors who bring together a unique combination of characters, viewpoints, visions and ways of doing things. Practice theory is a useful tool for conceptually unpacking a movement and assessing how its creative proposals and activities contribute (or not) to more tangible forms of social change: new materialities – in this case in the form of more responsible co-production of food. Seeing every person's actions as constituted by their mind, body, knowledge, emotions and their way of perceiving others', practice theory helps to understand counter-movements not as static objects (a noun), but rather as dynamic spaces of giving meaning (a verb). Practice theory therefore invites the researcher to ask: what constitutes a particular counter-movement and is it and how is it bringing about social change through the creation of new materialities that may or may not resonate with its explicit purposes? I have found practice theory a very useful, yet not always uncomplicated lens to research the *feria* as a food-counter-movement.

A foreign researcher in Unalagua Quevedo

The time I spent in Ecuador was a valuable learning experience for me, being both lots of fun and very challenging. I possessed relatively limited knowledge of Spanish, and even though I could express more or less everything I wanted to say and asked, at times I lacked nuance and the

ability to be as subtle as I had hoped to be. It should be noted however that wanting to do research in rural communities in Ecuador can often mean being exposed to local languages in particular Kichwa. This is especially true for women, who can have limited knowledge of Spanish, depending on the region. In Unalagua however, most people no longer speak any Kichwa, which made it slightly easier for me.

I was lucky enough to being invited to stay with Doña Rocio the president of the women's group of Unalagua, which meant that I was close to a lot of goings-on in Unalagua and when it came to the organization of the *feria* as well. I stayed at her house for six weeks and during this time I did not leave my role as a researcher as well as a foreigner in the village. It was very valuable for me to stay with the family 24 hours a day seven days a week, to gain a more complete picture of what was happening, when and why. Living with Doña Rocio people got curious and wanted to know who I was and what I was doing. However, this did not necessarily mean that they wanted to talk to me about themselves and their lives. It was quite challenging to convince people to talk to me even if it was only for a short while. The word interview was excluded from my word pool quickly as it brought about unhappy faces among my informants. I had hoped to visit the farms of all the ladies who sold in the *feria*. Some women told me again and again that this week would not be good and I should try next week. It did however work well to talk to people casually when I met them in the *feria*, in the street or at a meeting of the federation FEMICAM. In these situations women were more open and would tell me more or less everything I wanted to know about. Walking around meeting those who would let me and assist them a bit in what they were doing worked out best for me. I could stay and asked questions about what farmers were exactly doing right in this moment and why, while I was assisting and observing. This way I could overcome some of the obstacles I faced and got the information I needed.

At the *feria* people tended to be in a bit of a rush and were also hesitant to talk. They did however have quick conversations with me, when I asked. To any other foreign student who comes to Ecuador to live and do research in a rural community I would say: learn as much Spanish as you can, do not be too forward and take some warm clothing. Assisting people in their everyday tasks, such as cutting alfalfa is the best way to get into a conversation about things that move people.

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