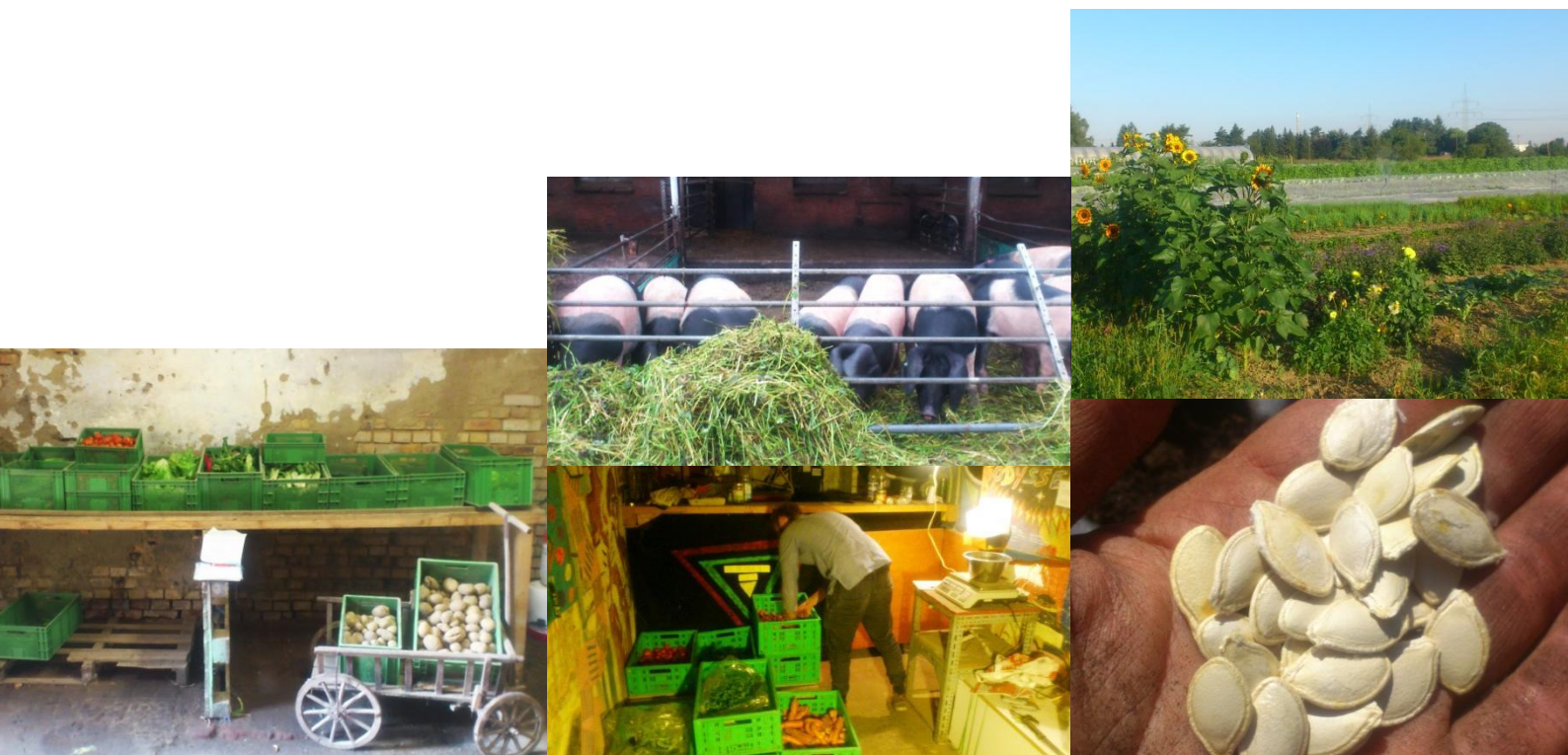


Exploring Characteristics and Practices of Community Supported Agriculture in Germany

Silja K. Heyland ◦ MSc Thesis



Exploring Characteristics and Practices of Community Supported Agriculture in Germany

You are what you eat.

(following A. Brillat-Savarin, 1826)

MSc Organic Agriculture, Sustainable Food Systems
Student number: 830305-336-120
Supervisor: Jessica Duncan

Rural Sociology Group
RSO-80436, 36 ECTS
September 2017

Content

Content.....	iii
Abbreviation.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Vignette – Visiting the Kattendorfer Hof.....	1
Introduction.....	4
Literature Review: Alternative Food Networks.....	6
Research case Solidarische Landwirtschaft [Community Based Agriculture].....	11
Urgenci.....	11
Solidarische Landwirtschaft [Solidarity Based Agriculture].....	12
Conceptual Framework.....	14
Research Question.....	18
Methodology.....	19
Analytic chapter.....	23
1. Member perspective.....	23
1.1 Member Level: Agency.....	23
1.2 Member Level: Socio-Cultural Structures.....	26
Social Practice 1: Sharing risks.....	29
Social Practice 2: Sharing knowledge.....	33
Social Practice 3: Building group identity.....	34
Social Practice 4: Developing autonomous farm structures.....	37
1.3 Member Level: Material Structure.....	40
Social Practice 5: Purchasing routines.....	41
1.4 Changes of food practices through membership.....	44
Social Practice 6: Adapting to locally produced food.....	46
Social Practice 7: Accepting Imperfection.....	46
2. Network perspective.....	47
2.1 National Level: Agency.....	47
2.2 National Level: Socio-Cultural Structure.....	48
2.3 National Level: Material Structure.....	55
3. Spreading of Alternative Food Practices.....	55
Discussion.....	57
Conclusion.....	60
Recommendation for further research.....	61
Reflection on the role as a researcher.....	61
References.....	63
Annex.....	68

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Three-Tiered framework	16
Figure 2: Field research area and specific sites in Germany	19

Table of Tables

Table 1: Differences between forms of AFNs	8
Table 2: Selected Solawis	20

Abbreviation

Abbreviation	
AFN	Alternative Food Network
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CoP	Community of Practice
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
Depot	Food storage place
FM	Farmer's Market
FS	Farm Shop
MLP	Multi-Level perspective
PA	Participatory Observation
SL	Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V. [<i>'solidary agriculture'</i>]
SNM	Strategic Niche Management
Solawi	Solidarische Landwirtschaft [<i>'solidary agriculture'</i>] member group

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Jessica Duncan. You guided me through this long process of the thesis development. You encouraged me over and over again to keep going in my research progress, structure my thoughts and put emphasis on every small achievement that brought me further to find my own path in the jungle of literature and research opportunities. Through my damaged health in the beginning of this research and the later parallel busyness of a full time internship this became a long time of supervision. I am extremely thankful that you never pushed too hard or threatened me to fail because of this delay. I learned from you a lot. Thank you so much.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Stefano Pascucci, who started to co-supervise me at the beginning of my research till the moment he left to another university. Your different perspective on the topic was a great addition.

This research would not exist without the trust, help and time of my interview partners. A big thank to: Solawi Rote Beete (specially for your support and trust during the *future thoughts* weekend), Solawi Dein Hof, Solawi Kattendorfer Hof, Solawi Buschberghof, Network Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Solawi Sterngartenodyssee, Solawi Freudenthal and Solawi Schinkeler Höfe.

Although I have not implemented the multiple interviews, conversation and (participatory) observations in this research I would still express a great appreciation to my interview partners of Slowfood Germany: Ursula H., Louise D., Sebastian W., Marie, Isabella, Kerstin L., Achim and all people who helped me from Slowfood Kiel, Slowfood Youth Hamburg, Slowfood Berlin, Recipepeople Berlin and Slowfood Leipzig.

Thank you to all my friends for the great hospitality during my data collection: Julia, Jenny, Jonas, Stella, Buzka and Dieter, Berit, Heidemarie, Beatrice, Solawi Rote Beete and Solawi Dein Hof. Many thanks to my friends, who supported me mentally, inspired me and made my time more enjoyable. A special thanks here to Christine, Maren and Micha, who gave me valuable academic and emotional support during the thesis time. But also to all others, who had an open ear for me at difficult times and made my life more beautiful with their thoughts and support. Thank you Federica and Dete, for your beautiful shelter and care, especially in the final phase of my thesis. Many thanks to my parents and Marcio supporting me from close by and far away over this entire time.

Abstract

As a counter development to the challenges of the mainstream food system diverse Alternative Food Networks (AFN) have been developed over the last two decades. From its most common AFNs, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) presents a radical vision for food production and consumption in so far as producers and consumers share farming risks, have a direct relationship and commit themselves to exchange farm products with a regular membership fee throughout the season. Diverse scholars (Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012) believe that radical AFNs show the greatest potential to influence a change of the current mainstream food system. This research looks at the social practices of members of member groups (Solawi), its German network Solidarische Landwirtschaft (SL) and the international network Urgenci. It investigates how these practices are developed and shared, and looks further at the relation between members and the national and international network to see their interaction in these practices. Through the lens of the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013) seven German Solawi groups have been analysed to investigate diverse social practices. This research shows how local members of Solawi groups interact in a direct relationship, establish trust and commitment and build a group identity among small groups. Solawi groups show a great diversity in their organizational structures and provide successful examples how food purchase can be differently organized. Still, its differences to the mainstream food system are sometimes not clear to non-Solawi members and are compared with a vegetable box scheme or an alternative business model.

Keywords: Alternative Food Networks, Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Community Supported Agriculture, Social Practice, Three-Tiered framework, Practise, Community, Identity

Vignette – Visiting the Kattendorfer Hof

While backpacking my way through data collection I called the Kattendorfer Hof farm, the Solawi (CSA member group) with the most members in Germany, to ask for an interview. Their response was right to the point: “next week Tuesday at 10am; this is the only possible time in the next two weeks”. I knew it was in the middle of the harvest time, and there is much to be done at the farms, but compared to other Solawis, I had contacted, this one seemed the one with the least options of alternative interview times.

Kattendorf is around 30km from the centre of Hamburg. The village is a bit complicated to reach by public transport. Even on weekdays the last 5km from Kaltenkirchen are too far in the countryside to have straight connections. At around 8 o'clock I arrive in Kaltenkirchen, only a few people walk slowly around the train station. When leaving the train I feel the first rain drops, buy a coffee, and start walking towards Kattendorf. I try to hitchhike, but there are only few cars on the way. The rain gets stronger towards the end of the town. Finally a car stops, and the driver takes me with him. He knows the farm and decides to make a small detour to bring me directly there. After a SMS to Mr M. about my earlier arrival I go around the farm. Everything is quiet, the rain has almost stopped. The farm buildings are in the middle of the village, close to the street, but seem still apart with all its bushes and trees around. The farm shop is in an old house, next to it is a big barn. The houses are relatively close together, but still with some open space. My way brings me to some lively Angeliter pigs squealing and eating fresh grass-clover cuttings. Except for this sounds there is not much more to hear. The smell of the cuttings dominates my senses. Seeing the clean pigs with straw and space so freely moving around, makes this perfect setting of the ideal world. In between the squeals I receive an answer from Mr M. to meet him, and the other workers, in a few minutes at the centre of the farm for the morning ceremony. I have still some time and while looking around I meet some trainees and volunteers smoking in a corner of one of the houses. I am a bit surprised to see so many young people smoking, especially in the surrounding of this farm that is orientated closely to the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. We introduce each other, chat a bit and go then together to the spot. Most, and especially the young workers, seem extremely tired, the head slightly hanging and slowly walking with a shuffle, with their unregularly, strong working clothes and boots. All gather in a circle, correcting the shape individually to have a really round circle, in the last moment a woman comes, with a wafting pinafore from one of the houses, to join our circle of around 15 people. One man (Mr M.), looks around to check if somebody is missing. These two last situations emphasized the importance of being present while exercising the following morning rituals together. Having experienced the characteristics and rituals of the Waldorfschool over my entire school time, it was not a complete surprise to me when some music papers were distributed and we sang *Sonne leuchte mir ins Herz hinein* [sun shine in my heart] in different voices. Right after Mr M. opens a small bible and reads a paragraph aloud. Some of the worker and trainees close their eyes and hold their hands like during a prayer (Mrs T. tells me later that this ritual is repeated every morning). The ceremony ends with a rather strait working meeting of what has to be done first, with the consideration of the wet weather condition, agreeing who needs help, and who of the trainees and volunteers can help whom. Already before the end of the briefing the woman, who came last, excuses herself and runs back to the kitchen. I go to the man I expect to be Mr M., introduce myself in approaching him in the formal way and wait, if he offers me the informal communication, as I had experienced at other *Solawi* farms, but he keeps the formal approach. While we are walking over the farm and into the

barn he is phoning, delegating work and working technics to other farmers in a rather decisive way, organizing some spare parts for a tractor. I am glad to see in that way more of the farm and also the interaction between the employees. Comparing this morning rituals and communication with the smaller Solawis I had visited earlier it seems to me rather a directive organization with little room of integrating thoughts of younger, less experienced worker.

At his office I see some piles of paper. During the interview the telephone interrupts us two times and an employee knocks on the door to discuss working time related issues. I feel grateful to get his time in all this work around him, but in the same time I have a soft, doubtful voice in my mind, if my questions are actually professional enough and justify his disruptions in the busiest farming time of the year. Towards the end of the interview I hear already from his voice, and shorter answers, that other things are waiting to get further attention.

Before leaving the farm I have a look into the farm shop. Mrs T. opens the farm shop for me. The interior is mainly wood, vegetables are in the centre. There is a vitrine with cheese and meat. Most of the perishable products are from the farm, additionally they have other organic products. Mrs T. explains that they try to have all available products in the shop every day. She tells me further, when Solawi members help with the harvest, they find it difficult to leave vegetables that do not confirm the unwritten market standards at the field. But the people who buy later from the farm shop do select the nice looking ones and leave the *second class* vegetables behind, so at the end they come back to the pig fodder. It seems there are differences in perception and behaviour. This reminds me of one of the advantages of Solawi that such unwritten market standards are there not in place, as customers take what they get. She describes how staffs have joined dinner; how the shop was used as a place to watch soccer games together with a beamer and a white cloth and about joined reading rounds of Rudolf Steiner literature. It seems the farm worker search for a joined living outside working hours and integrate different interests in it.

Next to the shop is a small, white moving truck with large advertisements of the Kattendorfer Hof. It seems almost new and I am surprised about such a modern truck at the farm. With the driver, I go back to Hamburg. We stop at the first Kattendorfer farm shop in Eimsbüttel and are warmly welcomed by the shop staff. The shop identifies their own farm products with a card, like at the Kattendorfer Hof itself there is a mixture of their own products and additional organic products. The fridge is a part of the shop. It has a big glass wall and is a walk-in, which invites you to have a closer look at the products while keeping them fresh at the same time. Next to it is a small table with the paper forms for members to note down the products they have taken. For the shopping it is seen like a receipt. At the counter every customer is addressed individually, often mixed with little chit chats. It reminds me of the stories of my parents about the small shops and individual customer-shop relation, like 50 years ago. I am welcomed to come back any time. We visit two more of these farm shops in other areas of Hamburg. The driver tells me that the last one was opened only half a year ago. Members of depots (food storage place) decided to pick up their products from the shop instead of the depot and the number of members has tripled since then. Our last stop is a depot in Wellingsbüttel. A square of relatively new houses with green plants around. A few kilometres before we reach the house, a woman calls the driver to know where he is. He tells me later that they have agreed to call always a few minutes before arrival to help with the unpacking. Within a few minutes a couple of helping hands join to move full boxes of bread, vegetables and dairy products into the cellar. It is only around two sqm big, there is a small fridge, shelves, a collection of neatly arranged knives, a construction for plastic foil, kitchen paper roles. Right next to the small room is a cycle

repair. People from the house tell me that this combination helps to meet each other when picking their food. While chatting with a woman she tells me that her son had also a school visit at the Kattendorfer Hof and it seems this visit had connected him to the farm. From that time onwards he refuses food not coming from the farm with: *“Eck, that doesn't taste, it is not from the farm”*. For the mother the main motivation to be a member is most of all that it is regional, transparent and also its political motivation of supporting a different food system.

Before the visit to the Kattendorfer Hof and their farm shops I had a very different view on Solawis. Rather small groups with farmers who seemed to be in the first place politically engaged and only secondly motivated by the business idea. Here, at the Kattendorfer Hof these different motivations interlink more and the different hierarchical levels between lead farmers and farmers and are stronger visible. Here the entire farm structure is somehow settled and developed, while the other farms seemed to be more in an experimental stage of finding their own structure and philosophy. What had surprised me was the feeling that consumers feel still part of the farm and member group of a member group, while I had expected that the group dynamics almost dissolve with around 700 harvest shares.

Introduction

Over the last two decades the food-sector in Europe has shown two contrary developments: food has become a global industrialized commodity; and at the same time, a variety of food networks have developed focussing on re-localization, embeddedness and value quality (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012). The dominating, industrialised food system is characterized by neoliberal ideologies that propose that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). The nation state sees its role in setting and preserving a regulatory framework to implement such practices (Harvey, 2005) and gives its citizens the individual responsibility of their wellbeing (McKeon, 2015). This framework causes multiple problems, which have a long lasting effect on the planet and human well-being, and are taken up by several alternative food networks (AFNs) to stimulate change in the food-sector. Key problems are perceived as *unsustainable production methods, price dumping of commodities, requested standardized appearance of food, separation between consumers and their food, and extensive food miles*.

In conventional or industrialized agriculture, there is an extensive use of chemical inputs to cultivate monocrops and avoid land fallows that enable restoration of soil life, biodiversity and its fertility (Letourneau, Deborah; van Bruggen, 2006). Industrialized agriculture is leading to soil and water degradation and contributes heavily to pollution of water, soil and air (Goodlass, Halberg and Verschuur, 2003; Van Eerd and Fong, 1998; Goodlass, Halberg and Verschuur, 2003; Kremen, Iles and Bacon, 2012; Dimitri *et al.*, 2012) through e.g. heavy leaching of fertilizers (Dimitri *et al.*, 2012). This system uses extensive amounts of water for irrigation and contributes strongly to the loss of biodiversity (Letourneau, Deborah; van Bruggen, 2006; Dimitri *et al.*, 2012). Big scale production “is greatly dependent on non-renewable resources and contributes in degrading ecological systems at local, regional and global levels, it can hardly be considered as sustainable in providing human needs in the long run” (Saifi and Drake, 2008, p.26).

Global food trade with reduced trade barriers enables import of low priced commodities (McKeon, 2015). Agricultural subsidies are mainly given to large firms (Watts, Ilbery and Maye, 2005) causing oversupply (McMichael, 2009; McKeon, 2015) and giving incentives for industries to convert these into processed food (Kremen, Iles and Bacon, 2012) export it underpriced (Friedmann and Mcnair, 2008; McMichael, 2009). The farm expansions of modern industrialized agriculture, to meet higher production volumes, brings with it a *zero-sum* situation by which its progress for single farms “can only be realized through the decline or disappearance of others”, which causes continuously competition and a *struggle for the future* (Renting and Van Der Ploeg, 2001, p. 86). The resulting cheap food prices have been linked to societal, health and environmental problems, which leads to the question on whose costs cheap food prices can be maintained (Lang, 2003), because externalities as soil, water and air pollution and degradation are not included in the final product price and will create enormous problems for future generations.

Much of the globally produced food is wasted through demanded market standardization at production and consumer side (McKeon, 2015; Priefer, Jörissen and Bräutigam, 2016). Fixed supply agreements induce farmers to overproduce to be able to meet volumes and comply to the set

market standards (Priefer, Jörissen and Bräutigam, 2016). Food itself becomes standardized in variety, form, colour and size (Wiskerke, 2009), as well as its availability, which can be seen in European supermarkets (e.g. apples or bananas). The standardization is also effecting local distinct consumption practices, and ignores social demands and dynamics at the local level (Murdoch and Miele, 1999; McKeon, 2015).

Food is transported around the world, which requires huge amounts of energy/fossil fuels. To enable a long shelf life additional additives are applied to keep commodities sound, but are often on the cost of their nutritious and fresh properties. Although food transportation is difficult to measure it is estimated that a product delivery requires 1,640 km and its entire life cycle 6,760 km, having various impacts for the environment and peoples life (Schnell, 2013).

However, food is not just a commodity, but its production and consumption characteristics are closely linked to political, historical, institutional (Tencati and Zsolnai, 2012; McKeon, 2015), cultural and social and regional issues (Murdoch and Miele, 1999; Tencati and Zsolnai, 2012; McKeon, 2015) that provide the potential to connect consumers and producers. In globalized food trade this relation becomes distant and local knowledge gets lost, as well as the relation towards seasonality and the importance of its nutritional value (Murdoch and Miele, 1999; McKeon, 2015).

In response to these problems describe, diverse solidarity groups and networks (e.g., Alternative Food Networks, Short Food Supply Chain, Local Food, Civic Food Networks) have been established by people (Goodman, 2004; Roep and Wiskerke, 2011; Alkon and Mares, 2012; Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012; Marsden and Franklin, 2013; Lagane, 2014). Murdoch and Miele, 1999; Tregear, 2011; Renting, Schermer and Rossi, 2012) to build new localised food relations. Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) are emerging at different places around the world (Whatmore, Stassart and Renting, 2003; Cembalo *et al.*, 2006; Roep and Wiskerke, 2011; Som Castellano, 2015) to stimulate change at local level. Yet these groups differ in their organization, in their activities and practices.

Structure of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to literature on AFNs by focusing on the practices of local member groups of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) / Solidarische Landwirtschaft (SL) in Germany. I proceed by giving an overview of the debates around emergence of AFNs, with the focus on the CSA concept, and identify the research gaps present in the debate. From there I introduce my research questions, explain the theory of Social Practices Theory to look at the social practices that a developed among members of SL groups. After having introduced the applied methods of this research, I present the analysis of my research case SL. Here I look at Agency, Material - Functional Structure and Social-Cultural Structure to explain the social practice of member groups. I further look at the relation between these member groups of SL, its national network SL and the international network Urgenci from a member perspective to see its influence and relation in the generation of social practices. In the discussion, my findings are brought together and reflected with the existing literature. Finally, I summarize my findings in the conclusion, reflect on my role as a researcher and give recommendation for future research.

Literature Review: Alternative Food Networks

This chapter provides an overview of the present research on Alternative Food Network (AFN). I will first introduce the concept of AFNs, illustrate the different forms of AFNs and present the strengths and opportunities that have been identified in the literature. Finally, I will introduce the research gaps that lead me to my research questions.

The concept of AFNs has been used by scholars since the second half of the 1990s (D'Amico, 2015). Definitions vary slightly from one author to another. Considering the diverse definitions AFNs can be described as concepts that emerge in “experimental spaces to develop novel practices of food provision that are more in tune with their values, norms, needs, and desires” (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206). They enable producers and consumers to be in direct, or close relationship (D'Amico, 2015) and develop systems that are economically viable to its producers and consumers, in making use of “ecologically sound production distribution systems” (Feenstra, 1997, p. 28). This results in the “reproduction and revaluation of local sources” and may cause a revaluation of high food quality (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206), territories and local traditions. General aims of AFNs are to cooperate under environmentally, economically and socially just conditions, taking traditional food characteristics into account and avoiding long distance transportation (Tregear, 2011; D'Amico, 2015). In having established such close relationships, producers and consumers may cooperate in sharing tasks of farming/gardening and food distribution. Depending on the specific territories, production traditions and food cultures, these groups differ in management and organization. In general, producers are in contact through internet, labels and/or face-to face interactions. This communication includes information about production methods, quality, cultural values and social beliefs (D'Amico, 2015).

Tregear (2011) investigated in her literature review on AFNs that scholars have often chosen three similar sets of AFN studies. The first one takes the perspective of political ecology and looks on how the food systems are positioned and shaped, and analyses further, how economic and political forces create inequalities and injustice in AFNs; in that way, they “counterweight to more idealistic positions on AFNs” (Tregear, 2011, p. 420). In the second set of perspectives, the *rural sociology or development perspective*, authors agree that AFNs may potentially re-address the “marginalizing and dehumanizing effect” of the mainstream food system (Tregear, 2011, p. 420). Studies in this field are mainly done at a micro-level by using concepts as trust, care, embeddedness and quality. Tregear (2011) identifies a third set of studies that conceptualize food systems or groups of actors working at regional or state level (meso-level). These studies follow often the convention or regulation theory to identify codes of practices within food system developments, as well as the development and application of competing bodies. This set of studies includes questions on collaboration and conflict between the different actors at meso-level (Tregear, 2011). Overall, she criticises (1) the usage of “unclear and inconsistent usage of key concepts and terms”, as the universal term of AFNs (Tregear, 2011, p. 423). Here the concept *alternative* varies in its interpretation. This generalization makes it difficult to progress knowledge; (2) conflating distinctive elements of AFNs with ambitious outcomes, actors' behaviour and food characteristics (e.g. that local food production automatically results in nutritious, healthy and safe food products); (3) insufficient investigation of the difficult dynamics between AFN actors when exchanging products; and (4) insufficient inclusion of consumers situated in AFNs (Tregear, 2011). Research perspectives of rural sociology may provide more insight when governance and network theory are incorporated. She argues that more knowledge could be gained

by researching “unfamiliar phenomena in familiar places and vice versa” (Tregear, 2011, p. 429).

When looking at European studies on AFN, D’Amico (2015) found that European scholars researched AFNs in affiliation with the CAP reform of late 1990s and early 2000s that focused on rural development in Europe. AFNs were understood as a form of escape from bulk product competition for family farms in offering high value products. For consumers, who have been scared by several food scares of the 90s, these groups/networks showed a new way to relate to producers and trust in quality and transparent food production (D’Amico, 2015).

AFNs provide spaces of socio-economic inclusion of marginalised actors within the domination of the mainstream food system, including medium- and small scale farmers, and consumers, irrespective their cultural or social-economic background (D’Amico, 2015). They appear as *corrective* forms of food provisioning from the conventional¹ food system (Som Castellano, 2015). Tregear (2011) points out that the term *local* can be understood either in geographical terms or by purchasing. At the same time *local* attaches often consumers’ perception of “natural and/or cultural features” (Tregear, 2011, p.421). In her literature review, Tregear (2011) found that scholars have conceptualized AFNs rather as what they are not as what they are. She sees strong variation in governance and organisation in the reality of food systems and sees it problematic to conceptualize all the different forms under one universal term. Evidence for this is the wide variety of solidarity groups and networks ranging from “Farmers’ Markets (FMs), buying groups, box schemes, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farm shops, territorial food chains and retailing co-operatives of consumers, producers, and workers” (D’Amico, 2015, p. 9).

The diverse forms of AFNs show different levels of consumer - producer engagement (D’Amico, 2015) (see also the overview in table1). The table below shows special characteristics of the mentioned forms of AFNs. There are definitely variations also within the different forms of AFNs when it comes to knowing the food origin at Farmers markets, Buying/Purchasing groups (indicated with +). Comparing the face-to-face contact between consumers and producers of farmers market and CSA groups there might be variations depending on the logistic systems. What is however special for the CSA system is the contact with farmers during farming days or joined gatherings. This face-to-face contact is generally missing at Buying/Purchasing groups (indicated with -). While looking at higher prices for products there is generally a guaranteed income in CSA member groups (indicated with ++) in comparison with the other two forms of AFNs. A business relation that is based on trust is specifically for CSA groups, and less likely included in the other two forms of AFNs. The same accounts for the activity of building a movement, which is fostered also through the CSA networks. What applies to all of them in general is a direct relationship between producers and consumers, that is reducing the distance food has to travel. Watts, Ilbery and Maye (2005) believe that generally there is a direct relation between producers and consumers, but when looking at farmers market, there is also the trade of additional products that are not produced on the own farm.

¹ *The conventional food system is understood as the dominant food system, that is market driven and primarily present in the northern hemisphere (mainly in Europe and North America).*

Table 1: Differences between forms of AFNs

	Farmers market	Buying/Purchasing groups	CSA
Face-to-face contact	+	-	+
Direct (trade) relation	(+)	+	+
Knowing food origin and production	(+)	+	++
Guaranteed income for producers	-	(+)	++
Stable and regular price for producer	-	-	++
Producers' ability to plan in advance	-	-	++
Shared decision making	-	(+)	+
Active consumer involvement	-	+	+
Short transportation	(+)	(+)	++
Business relation based on trust	-	-	++
Building a movement	-	-	+

(++ = strongly existing, + = existing, - = generally not existing)

Looking at the different characteristics of AFNs, which are distinct from the current mainstream food system, we see a strong distinction between the CSA concept, and the farmers market and buying/purchasing groups. Considering the definition of AFNs to be concepts that emerge in “experimental spaces to develop novel practices of food provision” (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206) we see the strongest distinction to the current food system in the characteristics of the CSA concept. This motivates me to focus on the CSA concept for this research.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

The origin of the direct partnership model of CSA networks is not clearly defined. A strong influence has come from the philosopher and agricultural cooperative leader Teruo Ichiraku from Japan during the 1970s. He warned consumers about the dangers of agricultural chemicals and promoted organic agriculture. A few years later, concerned housewives united with local farmers and developed the *teikei* [partnership] concept in which they agreed on quality of their food (cereals and vegetables) in return to payment and their own labour (Urgenci, 2016). In having the direct contact to the producers, trust could be build and consumers risks (of contaminated crops) and producers risks (of production failures) could be lowered. Almost simultaneously, CSA models developed in different European countries (e.g. Switzerland and Germany) (Hinrichs, 2000), and a few years later, in the 1980s, also in North America. Over the years, local networks of CSA have emerged, or are currently demerging, globally in all continents and are connected with the international network Urgenci (Urgenci, 2016).

An essential feature is the direct partnership and sharing of farming risks between the farmer(s) and his/her consumers through mutual agreements. That means, depending on the season (within the year, but also over the years), consumers receive many products or few. In most cases, members agree about a fixed monthly price at the start of the growing season, pay the amount throughout the year, and in return, receive seasonal food products on a weekly basis (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). Farming methods of CSAs are closely related to principles of agroecology. Although it has different definitions we can see it in the perspective of three different domains: (1) scientific discipline (the study of agro-ecosystem components interaction), (2) sustainable farming systems (optimising and

stabilising harvests), but commonly fulfilling the requirements of organic agriculture, and (3) building a agroecology movement (following the ideology of “food sovereignty and new, multifunctional roles for agriculture”) (Silici, 2014)). Both movements share the use of sustainable farming practices and the promotion of local food sovereignty through social relation between consumers, producers and the land. Throughout the movement emphasis is put on building community and autonomy, providing economic viability, and fostering education about agricultural realities and operation among members. On the basis of trust, farming risks are shared and farmers have more freedom in their choice of crop cultivation (that fits to the local condition and matches well within the cropping calendar) and in general the right of co-determination in decision making, which is not limited to market demands. The direct relation between producers and consumers results in trust and functions as a kind of guarantee system that reduces the need of global certification labels (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b). This lowers production costs and increases autonomy of own locally set quality standards.

CSA models differ, globally and within the same country, in their organizational set up as being an arrangement of farms, farmers market, not-for profit organizations and a group of farms etc. (Urgenci, 2016). Groups are diverse in their size (ranging from 5 to 3000 members), what kind of local challenges they tackle, the diversity of products and how and if products are delivered (Urgenci, 2016). CSA characteristics result in business relations that extend simple business relations (Schnell, 2013) and their producers are often innovative (Pascucci *et al.*, 2013). The spirit of innovation is also reflected in diverse payment systems, as some include regulations profiting low income families (Urgenci, 2016), include the solidarity payment system (every person pays an individual feasible amount), as well as additional projects in developing countries (e.g. Solidarity project in Sahel, Africa) (Urgenci, 2016). The engagement of consumers (e.g. regular help with farm activities, accounting, transportation, bureaucratic assignments of CSA networks etc.) varies between and within CSA groups. These various perceptions of engagement and face-to-face contact may result in different values and beliefs between producers and consumers (Feagan and Henderson, 2009), but they also influence the development of social practices among member groups. Feagan and Henderson (2009) mention cases, in which CSA members were primarily motivated to join CSA networks to obtain better food prices and CSA farmers experienced challenges to involve their members and build community. Other mentioned bottlenecks of CSA may be insufficient number of members to provide a living to the farmer(s), so that farmers have to search for additional channels to sell surplus goods (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). Hinrichs (2000, p. 300) believes that “the CSA share expresses the potential for de-commodified relations in the CSA and stands in marked contrast to the usual way of purchasing food, in spot exchanges, whether at farmers' markets or supermarkets”. This may however depend on the established bond between consumers and producers.

Strengths and opportunities of AFNs

Having introduced the concept of AFNs and the CSA concept it is essential to understand strengths and opportunities of AFNs in a wider context that are contrasting to the mainstream neoliberal food system. Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) have investigated the strategies, strengths and weaknesses of the mainstream food system in comparison to AFNs. The authors believe that knowing the strengths and weaknesses of corporates, provides the possibility to develop competitive strategies. This builds on the assumption that AFNs are generally driven by the search of alternative business models, which might be right for many AFNs, but in the case of CSA there is the primary

motivation of changing the food system based on own values and believes (Urgenci, 2016). Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) see that every system, so also the mainstream food system, has its strengths, but also vulnerabilities and weaknesses that give an opportunity for opening new spaces. Strengths of the globalized food system are its mass production through farmer's specialization, corporates access to capital due to immense turnover and reduced risks, which can be achieved through cross-investments in other sectors, as well as a profit oriented vision. When looking at AFNs they are often decentralized and require time to establish *authentic relationships* to become embedded in a community, which may be challenging, but hardly achievable by big corporates. This interpersonal *connectedness* strengthens *citizens*² to create new spaces, and strengthen and enlarge existing ones (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). Through this personalized relationships and sustainable production systems are developed between chain actors (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) believe that big corporates are challenged through its size and structure to react to signals of local, unique *niche* markets, but show effort to adjust to consumer trends and bind a big variety of customers, such as *hybrid consumer*, who buy artisanal and organic products next to additional mainstream products. With this motivation they have recently used the ideas of natural, traditional, and regional traceable food as marketing strategies to establish own-label brands (Schermer, 2014). Such adjustments imitate some of the characteristics of AFNs, but in the case of the CSA concept mutual agreements and relations among members extend such adaptations of big corporates by far. Schermer (2014, p.130) thinks that with the adaptation of regional, natural and traditional products retailers have "prevented a massive social movement towards new alternative consumer-producer relations". He believes that the "transformative power of social movements over the entire [current] third food regime should not be underestimated" and that its increased occurrence happens when "traditional structures are vanishing and social groups perceive this as a cultural loss" and counteract to it (Schermer, 2014, p. 130). This steady increase is also visible in the number of CSA initiatives in Germany, but also in other parts of the world. AFNs work as drivers to transform *food from nowhere*, not knowing where and how it is produced, to *food from here*, in which consumers can have a relation to the place and its cultivation, and can use other spaces to foster direct marketing between producers and consumers (Schermer, 2014). Such relations are built through the active engagement of producers and consumers; in the example of CSA through gatherings, helping with farm work or other administrative work. Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) support this view of Schermer (2014) and see alternative movements as a driving force to for the development of AFN groups and provide more room to enlarge them. Schermer (2014, p. 130) believes that "the future will need CSA and CSA-like initiatives that develop in the interstices of the system and remind the *builders* of their common core values to prevent total appropriation". The potential to transform the current food system by AFNs is shared by several authors (Goodman, 2004; Roep and Wiskerke, 2011; Alkon and Mares, 2012; Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012; Marsden and Franklin, 2013; Lagane, 2014). They see a potential in developing into a more ecological sound and community integrating place-based system that connect *agri-food-energy-water-ecology* to challenge the current neoliberal food system through *radical* AFNs (Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012). Renting, Schermer and Rossi (2012, p.304) warn that "instrumentalisation by the dominant regime should be seriously addressed". There is also concern by Tregear (2011) and Alkon and Mares (2012) in how far a food system transformation needs more

² This food citizenship is (1) characterized by active engagement in food provisioning and creation of AFNs, but may also develop into a close interaction between producers and consumers, and (2) being engaged in creating a change of "public opinion, culture, institutions and policies by communication, lobbying and political activism" (Renting, Schermer and Rossi, 2012, p. 300).

radical organizational structures, as in La Via Campesina and other grassroots movements, to create wider power and mobilization and to address policy intersections of local, national and global into a food system with “foundations of ecological production, community control, and the multiple meanings of justice” (Alkon and Mares, 2012, p. 358). These mentioned concern of diverse scholars show high expectations on the potential impact of AFNs in changing the current food system. At the same time it raises the questions of how these citizenships looks like in daily life and how it is materialized and practiced within member groups of AFNs. For my research I will focus on the members of member groups of the national network Solidarische Landwirtschaft (SL), the network itself and the international network Urgenci, to see how these different levels relate to another and how practices are built through their engagement. Both networks aim on contributing to a paradigm shift of the current food system and moving towards a diverse agricultural system, care for the environment and build local food sovereignty (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016; Urgenci, 2016). Through the establishment of the international network Urgenci and the German network SL, member groups of SL are part of a broader network, a *network of network*. The way how these member groups structure themselves and are influenced by their national or international network is influencing members’ activities and practices at local level. Duncan and Pascucci (2017, p. 332) argue that such development of broader networks provides “additional resources, stability, and opportunities for promoting regime-level change.” This may also stimulate or guide their member groups in specific directions or structural forms.

Tregears' (2011) recommendation on future research is an integrated viewpoint on the *politics of space and place* and the relational dynamics of different local actors. It shows the structures and motivations of member groups and their networks, and leads to new explanations in the research of AFNs. Another point that is insufficiently addressed by scientists is the analysis of “urban ecological transition and resident participation” (Lagane, 2014, p. 120). By focussing on CSA member groups and their networks (that aim on strengthening relation between (urban) consumers and producers) I address this identified research gap.

Research case Solidarische Landwirtschaft [Community Based Agriculture]

In this chapter I will give first a short introduction to the two networks involved in this research and from there I will look more closely on the social practices of members of member groups (Solawi), the relation between the members and their networks and how developed social practices are spread outside the Solawis.

Urgenci

Urgenci, the international network of CSA, has been formed in Aubangne, France, in 2004 (Hitchmen, 2014) with the aim:

to build a space for sharing, discussing and analysing the Community Supported Agriculture practices and strategies. Its leading activities consist in connecting initiatives, formalizing the CSA hand-on experiences and developing an appropriate advocacy work (Urgenci 2017).

Urgenci promotes family farming and targets further to achieve “local food sovereignty for each region and community worldwide (Urgenci, 2016). The network stresses to promote “all forms of partnership between producers and local consumers, all kinds of Community Supported Agriculture

initiatives” to overcome bottlenecks related to global intensive agriculture (Urgenci, 2016). It sees CSA initiative as “the most hopeful alternatives to the downward spiral”, being the only consumer-producer initiative that shares risks and benefits (Urgenci, 2016). Urgenci members agree on four central ideas:

1. Mutual Partnership including consumers and producers commitment of product exchange
2. Stimulating local economy
3. Promoting solidarity among actors (sharing risks and benefits, giving respect to nature, cultural heritage and health, paying fair wages)
4. *The producer/consumer tandem* by having direct contact and trust without hierarchical differences nor subordination (Urgenci, 2016).

In living these ideas mutual values of: *Fairness, Solidarity, Reciprocity* and *Independence* are promoted. With its work Urgenci wants “to develop overall coherence at and between local, regional, national and global levels of projects to emphasize the relevant contribution of Community Supported Agriculture to a sustainable and inclusive world” (Urgenci, 2016)³.

Urgenci sees itself as a social movement that is closely linked with the food sovereignty movement and the solidarity economy (Hitchmen, 2014). Every few years Urgenci’s General Assembly creates action points for the following 2-3 years. These vary from country to country, but most action points are the same. To fulfil these Urgenci uses its resources of: language, translation, network/coordination and know-how. Their activities range from: negotiation, contact funders, campaigning, translation, coordination, knowledge sharing, scientific research to fundraising (Urgenci, 2016).

Solidarische Landwirtschaft [Solidarity Based Agriculture]

At a national level Solidarische Landwirtschaft is a member of the international network Urgenci (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). The oldest German CSA has been established already in 1988 (*Buschberghof*), which was later rewarded by the German Ministry of Agriculture for successfully implementing a new economic system and resulting development (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b). For years the number of CSA initiatives stayed small, but from 2009 onwards the number has rapidly increased reaching in 2017 145 existing CSAs and additional 97 in operation (Solidarische Landwirtschaft, 2017). This reflects the growing interest of consumers and producers, but also media, politics and science in the topic of regional, small-scale agriculture. Its national network has been established only in 2011 with the aim of:

Bringing together citizens, small farmers, consumers, activists and concerned political actors at global level through an alternative economic approach called Local Solidarity-based Partnerships between Producers and Consumer (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b).

The network with its producer and consumer members agreed on eight principles in which farming together (on a voluntary basis) as producers and consumers means to them:

1. To share the risks and responsibilities of farming;
2. To organize economic processes on the basis of solidarity and mutual trust;
3. To agree on the standard according to which the farming is done (and the size of the farming

³ An additional list of 10 principles of the networks can be seen in annex.

operation) and on the costs of agricultural production, including an appropriate level of pay for the farmers and farm workers. All the costs are covered by the group of consumers;

4. To create a reliable relationship between the producers and the consumers, involving a long-term and binding commitment;
5. To create freedom from economic coercion (pressure) in agricultural production;
6. Leading to genuine food sovereignty;
7. It is beneficial for the health of soils, water bodies, plants, animals and people, and promotes their care and development
8. To promote a spirit of internationalism and understanding among nations (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b)

The Solidarische Landwirtschaft (SL) sees itself as a movement, but also as “an association of grassroots democratic organizations” (European CSA Research Group, 2016, p. 39). Its tasks are offering advice and support, bringing consumers and producers together, coordinating studies of scientists and politicians and providing them with information. Experiences are exchanged during national meetings twice a year. During this time the network council, which represents farms and individual members, is elected. At least half of the council representatives are individuals of farms. A coordination body is further elected by the council. This group of people organizes regular phone conferences (twice a month) to discuss requests and decisions. Most work of the network is based on voluntary engagement. The network officers do bigger tasks and are paid by membership contributions (European CSA Research Group, 2016). Based on the respondents of a European Research Group, organized by Urgenci, a central criteria of the definition of CSAs are for its members shared risks between consumers and farmers based on non-influential factors (as weather conditions). Additional mentioned criteria come close to the earlier definition of the Belgium research group The Census:

CSA is a direct partnership between a group of consumers and one or several producers whereby the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming activities are shared, through long-term formal or informal shared agreement. Generally operating on small-scale, CSAs aim at providing quality food produced in an agroecological way (European CSA Research Group, 2016).

The network aims to promote “regular meetings of the network and of regional groups to guarantee a horizontal exchange of experiences and support” (European CSA Research Group, 2016, p. 42). SL sees its impact in promoting local economy, giving people the access to care for land and *true food sovereignty*. Sharing costs, responsibilities, risks and harvest result in trust relationships between producers and consumers (European CSA Research Group, 2016). It links rural and urban areas and supports rural areas economically. In a time with constant closure of farms the network sees the creation of CSAs as a *new perspective* for farmers. To strengthen the CSA movement, it believes that CSAs need to further diversify their products and cooperate with other farms, which would not only provide more products, but join forces of single farms (European CSA Research Group, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

I selected the perspective of Social Practice theory to investigate the relation between members, their member groups and their networks. Here I focus on the social practices of Solawi members from the German CSA network SL. By applying the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013) I analyse the relation of its three different dimensions Agency, Material Structure and Socio-Cultural structure and how they connect with the national and international network. Looking at the motivation, values, beliefs, practices and relation of Solawi members gives insight in how food citizenship is materialized and practiced within member groups. It shows in how far such practices are similar or diverse to the practices within the current mainstream food system. Additionally, I look closer at the concepts of *practice*, *community* and *identity*, which are important in the analysis of members' interaction. Through understanding the meaning of these concepts members' thinking, feeling, norms and beliefs can be analysed to see how they build a group identity and create social practices.

Practice

The meaning of practice is diverse and varies from daily practices, over its application/use of ideas, beliefs, methods or theories to a repeated practice to acquire skills, activities or proficiency (Oxford University Press, 2017). Schatzki (2005) determines practices as *arrangements* of relation, identity and meaning, which is created through peoples' interaction and formation of networks. These *collective phenomena* "make participants co-exist and come together within specific projects and horizons of intelligibility. Interaction is thus an effect of practise" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 173). While practices can be practiced by an individual person, they are developed and applied also through the interaction within a group of different people. Such practices are not fixed, they "emerge, persist, shift and disappear [...] sustained or broken" (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012, p. 14). Schatzki (2005, p. 61) believes that "social order is established within practices", they are not just routines, but "organized human activities" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 471) that occur everywhere and make people relate to another or not, depending on their interaction. Group practices, make people relate to another, "to understand each other and to act in a recognizable way" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 88). This means that practices are performing community and sustain an identification within the group (Nicolini, 2012). Through practices people learn "how to act, how to speak (and what to say), but also how to feel, what to expect, and what things mean" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 5). This process of learning is stimulated through the practice components meaning, acquiring knowledge, experiences⁴ and social interaction. As such a practice is a *doing* that "gives structure and meaning to what people do. In this sense, *practice* is always social practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). People come together, interact, "exchange information and opinions and very directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine" (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). Through that they negotiate a common meaning, leading to shared practice.

Three-Tiered framework

A Social Practices approach analyses human's diverse motives and intentions that create and transform their own world. Crivits and Paredis (2013) describe the practice approach as a

⁴ Experiences can be understood "as an ongoing process or flow in which habits and routines are continually challenged and transformed", and not simply results of events or action (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012, p.5). In that way people develop experiences through following routines and developing practices.

heterogeneous perspective that considers the *everyday behaviour*. People, here described as *practice carrier*, are not rational in their behaviour, nor controlled by societal norms, behaviour and fixed values. Based on this understanding Reckwitz (2002) synthesizes the diverse perspective on practices and defines it as:

a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: 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).

To develop an applied practice approach, the Three-Tiered framework (see figure 1), Crivits and Paredis (2013) joined Reckwitz (2002) perspective of *practice* with the concept of *niche/regime* to analyse co-existence of consumption practices of food systems and a societal transformation of “more sustainable consumer practices” (Crivits and Paredis, 2013, p. 3). Incorporating the concept of *niche*⁵ and *regime*⁶ provides in their view the possibility to distinguish the consequences of the practices on the system (Crivits and Paredis, 2013). Here the perspective is taken from the Multi-Level perspective (MLP) where innovations can be investigated at three different levels: (1) *micro-level* in which radical novelties, like social networks that connect producers and consumers, develop in protected spaces/*niches*, (2) in the *meso-level* are webs of interlinked actors forming to socio-technical regimes that are strongly embedded in society and have a self-enforcing mechanism (Geels, 2005). The (3) *landscape* or *macro-level* perspective refers to factors of “wider exogenous environments” that impact socio-technical developments; such as climate change, cultural changes, globalisation (Geels, 2005, p. 648). Focussing here, with the Three-Tiered framework, at the perspective of the niche level enables understanding of alternative approaches, such as in CSA member groups, in which doing and saying things are different to the regime level (in this study different to the mainstream food system). In general “niches often represent loci of radical innovation” (Duncan and Pascucci, 2017, p. 332). In being radically different to the mainstream food system it is less likely that they are taken up or are conventionalized by the mainstream food system (Duncan and Pascucci, 2017). In so far they are less likely to stimulate an institutional change. Looking at the social practices of SL helps to understand the characteristics of SL and so far the societal transformation it is creating. While niche practices are different in their underlying “routines and habits, they are nonetheless able to co-exist with the dominant sets of interconnected routines of mainstream consumption practices” (Crivits and Paredis, 2013, p. 3), meaning that different food practices within the food system can co-exist (Crivits and Paredis, 2013).

The Three-Tiered framework builds on the sociological perspective of other scholars (e.g. Bourdieu and Giddens) considering that consumption and consumption practices develop out of a close relation between agency and structure. In the tiered *agency* ‘basic practice attitude’ is understood as the ability to maintain routinized practices and to develop routines. These routines may be

⁵ ‘Niches’ can be understood as spaces in which novelties develop. “Niche is originally often coined in studies of Strategic Niche Management (SNM) focusing on market implementation of technological niches”, but recently used to describe new technologies, rules, regulations, organizations etc. that contribute towards an increased sustainable system change (Crivits and Paredis, 2013, p.6).

⁶ With ‘regime’ Crivits and Paredis (2013) refer to a socio-technical regime perspective that looks at the “recursive relationship between the social and the technological” food system components and identifies areas in which structural transformation can take place towards alternative regimes (Pereira and Drimie, 2016, p. 3).

consumer’s attitude to agree on a membership at a CSA farm, exchanging their agreed activities and

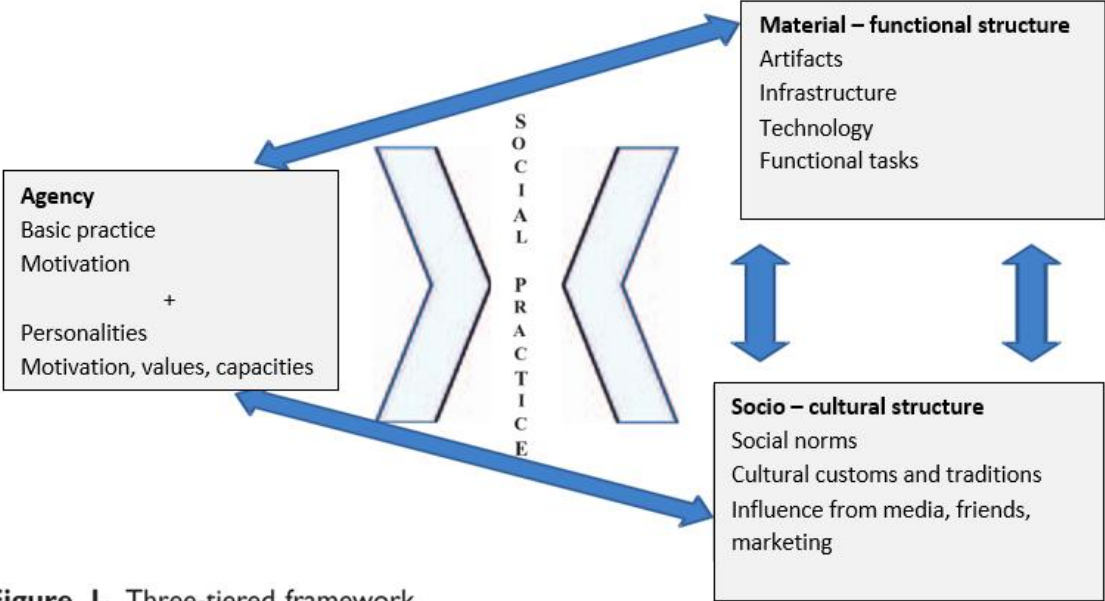


Figure 1. Three-tiered framework

Figure 1: Three-Tiered framework (Crivits and Paredis, 2013).

member fee with producer’s products. These practices are different to the mainstream food system therefore it is important to investigate members underlying motives, feelings and believes. The collaboration enables producers and farmers to predict sales, enables him/her to develop an efficient crop cultivation plan, buy inputs etc. Without that agency, the relation to the *material-functional structure* (e.g. the depot of the CSA initiative) loses its function for secure sales and relation of exchange between its members. Crivits and Paredis (2013) distinguish between the *material* and *immaterial* dimension of structure. While *material structures* describe “things, artefacts and infrastructures that are part of the practice”, as well as its *use* whose procedures lead to a certain social practice (Crivits and Paredis, 2013, p. 11) or how Reckwitz (2002, p. 257) phrases it: “bodily and mental routines”. *Immaterial structures/Socio-cultural structures* are at the other side beliefs and attitudes of humans/consumers that are shaped by “media, norms and beliefs, statuses, social groups, social roles and cultural customs”. Thus “not adhering to certain norms and values will hamper the reproduction of the practice” (Crivits and Paredis, 2013, p. 11). An example of *immaterial structures* is found for example in the solidarity with the farmer and routinized practice of engagement and communities that shape individuals through norms, beliefs, social groups, media etc.

Community

Similar to the concept of practice there are various ways in use to describe the term *community*. For this research and the Three-Tiered framework, with its socio-cultural structure, *community* is described as a group of people who share an interest, have shared customs and a common language. Such relation, are also called *Gemeinschaft*, and described traditionally a relation of family/kinship with face-to-face interactions and social bonds in social life (Nicolini, 2012). Here the term builds on the characteristics of direct economic relations, (re-establishing) trust and social bonds between different people (Wells and Gradwell, 2001). Authors see CSA initiatives as *community builders* (D’Amico, 2015; Feagan and Henderson, 2009; Watts, Ilbery and Maye, 2005), which are rather developed by individual member groups instead of CSA principles (D’Amico, 2015). They connect topics of food, land and nature (Hinrichs, 2000). In building community people create counter

developments to the mainstream industrial food system (which is distancing people, places and seasons and destabilizing community). In doing so they go beyond simple business relations (Feagan and Henderson, 2009).

Identity

The concept of *identity formation* developed in the 60s and entitles the processes of *exploration* and *commitment* (Klimstra et al., 2010). Here “*exploration* refers to the comparison of several alternatives in identity-defining domains, *commitment* denotes to the selection of certain alternatives and the engagement in relevant activities towards the implementation of these choices” (Klimstra et al., 2010, p. 192). Looking at the two processes of identity formation can help to identify members’ developed group identity. The earlier mentioned impacts from the current mainstream food system have vanished products’ regional character and as such its “uniqueness and identity” (Wiskerke, 2009, p. 370). This impacts also consumers “sense of belonging and identification” (Wiskerke, 2009, p. 370) to its place and its local food. Considering the potential radical nature of AFNs, like the CSA system, such identity between producers, consumers and the land may potentially change the characteristics of the current mainstream food system. Through this people can “overcome the individualized dimension” and become able to exchange meanings, values and share “the enjoyment of food production and consumption as social and identity-reinforcing activities”(Renting, Schermer and Rossi, 2012, p.300). Consequently, group identity goes along with sharing practices, which are practiced within the group. In social movements, like the CSA movement, the creation of a group identity is an essential part, because “becoming part of a movement entails fitting with that movement in corporeal as well as cognitive term” (Hayes-Conroy and Martin, 2010, p. 270). Through literature research (Jans, Postmes and van der Zee, 2012) have investigated that social bonds do not necessarily come from homogenous groups “diversity can actually foster social cohesion and communion” (Jans, Postmes and van der Zee, 2012, p. 1145). This may also be true for CSA member groups, consisting of diverse people and being established in diverse places.

When analysing social practices of SL members through the Three-Tiered framework it gives insight about members underlying routines of e.g. product delivery and exchange between CSA consumers and producers. Here, actors of networks experiment in niches and mutually adapt alternative systems and new practices (Smith, 2007). To identify these social practices of SL members it is essential to identify routinized behaviour of the members, by analysing individual and group activities, feelings, beliefs, motivations, customs and interaction, but also the engagement with the network.

Research Question

Having identified the problematic impacts of the current mainstream food system, and as a response to it the emergence of AFN, like the CSA system, I will come now to the research question of this research. Here I will address the (earlier in the *Literature Review* mentioned) research gaps identified by Tregear (2011), who motivates scholars to integrate viewpoints of *politics of space and place* and the relational dynamics of local actors, and to describe what AFNs are whether focussing on what they are not. Also, I will address the transition of urban ecology and its resident participation (Lagane, 2014), by focussing on CSA member groups and their network that are linking urban and rural areas. These member groups are often closely positioned around cities and as such they foster participation in food provisioning.

This research investigates the social practices of diverse members of member groups (Solawis) of SL and the relation between the member groups and the national network, and international network. For the analysis of my case study I will apply the lens of social practice and the application of the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013). This objective leads to the research question:

What are the social practices of members of local member groups of the Solidarische Landwirtschaft network and how do they relate to the activities of their network?

Sub questions

1. *How do the local member groups of Solidarische Landwirtschaft practice membership?*
2. *How do local member groups connect to the national and international network?*
3. *How do the local member groups of Solidarische Landwirtschaft spread their alternative food practices?*

Membership gives an official entry to become part of a group and be *recognized* as a member. As such it is part of a belonging to a group, being accountable for group related agreement and helps to raise interest (Nicolini, 2012); here being part of a Solawi. Membership is practised in formal and informal ways. The different approaches show how people relate to another.

Methodology

Two main reasons motivated me to select Germany for this research: (1) Being German myself I had the desire to know more about the German CSA movement, and its long-existing national network, and (2) speaking its language.

In this chapter I explain the diverse methods that I used for the data collection, including its preparation phase and field work, and the following analysis, to answer my research questions.

Preparation phase

The primary start of the research was an in depth desk study on the existing literature of AFNs, and specifically literature on SL. This gave a good understanding of the current trends and discussions and built on the structure of my analysis.

For my field data collection I made a selection of seven locations. The selection of places was mainly motivated through reaching a high diversity of Solawis. For the selection of diverse Solawis I considered the number of members, the time of existence, a remarkable engagement of members, its location (countryside and capital city) and additionally the national network (see also figure 2 with the different locations and table 2 with the characteristics of the individual Solawi).

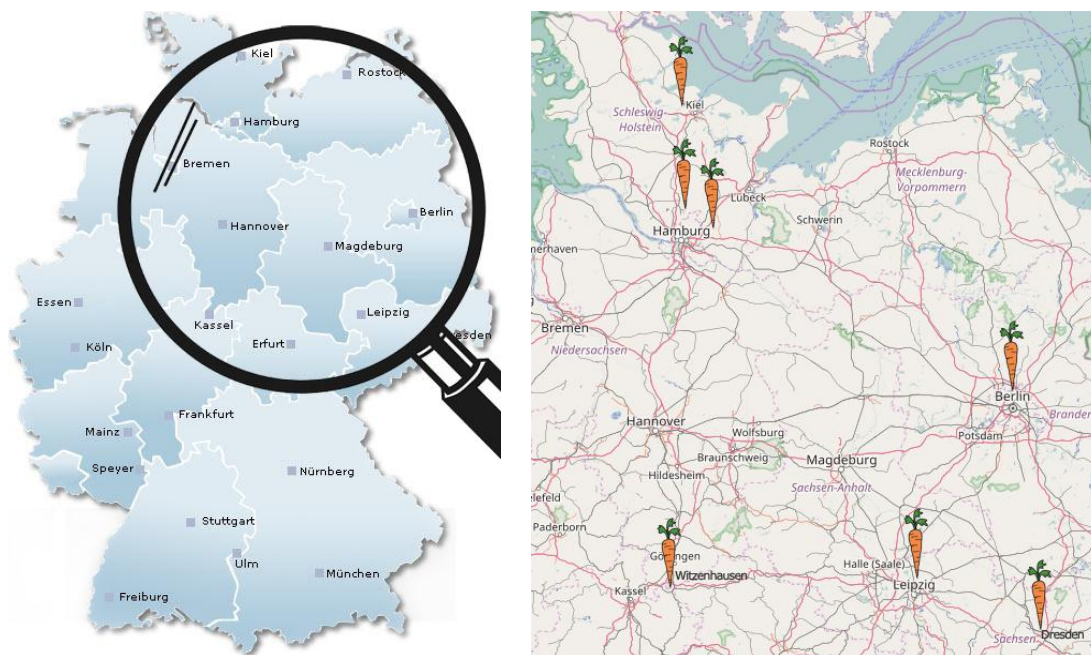


Figure 2: Field research area and specific sites in Germany

Field Work

The field work consists of 12 in depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which were done with members of all selected Solawis. Part of it is one interview with a person from the national network and one interview with an *expert*. Next to the semi-structured interviews I did participatory observations, field notes and diverse casual conversations (see also table 2).

The interviews were executed in German and varied in their duration between 45 min and one and a

half hours. During interviews I did often a validity check with data from literature and other interviews to ask for a reflection by the interviewees.

Table 2: Selected Solawis

	Location	Name	Speciality	Participatory observation
1	Kiel (Schinkel)	Schinkeler Höfe	Newly established (Oct'15), countryside, Full self-consumption, Group of individual farms	Yes (yes)
2	Hamburg (Kattendorf)	Kattendorfer Hof	Full self-consumption, 400 households/700 shares, since 18y	(yes)
3	Berlin	Sterngartenodyssee	Capital city	(yes)
4	Leipzig (Sehllis)	Rote Beete	Offers seminar week for public at location	yes
5	Dresden	Dein Hof	Organized member farm week	Yes (yes)
6	Hamburg/SL-H (Fulenhagen)	Buschberghof	Oldest Solawi (1988)	
7	Witzenhausen	Freudenthal	Developed through student project	

Table 2 gives an overview about the different Solawis that were analysed through this research. The right column indicates the farms at which participatory took place (next to interviews). At locations with (Yes) participatory observations were mainly done during food logistics.

Generally I contacted first the producer (group) by phone or mail, arranged a meeting and met them face-to-face at their farm. During these meetings I could come either directly in contact with members or got their contacts to meet them later in person. With one consumer member I could only arrange a phone interview, after having met shortly at the depot. After the first interviews with producers and consumers I realized that producers can give a better overview about the organizational structure of the Solawi and have mostly a better understanding than the consumers about the past development within the group. In almost all investigated Solawis producers had been part of the Solawi since the very beginning. Although some decisions are shared among members, producers do have the main decision making power, which may be closely related to the fact that they hire or own the land and are the experts in their working domain. As such producers are generally strongly engaged in meetings and decision making. I also realised that producers can often articulate much clearer their motivation to take part in the CSA movement and reflect on the changes it has for them and for the members (based on given feedback). This may have to do as well with the perceived risk a producer takes when changing his business away from the conventional market system to a democratic trust-based system as the CSA system. An additional aspect was also convenience of the interview location since producers' contact data was online available and I could arrange a fixed time and place in advance. With members I had sometimes the issue of not getting their contacts easily through the producers (because of confidentiality and producers' busyness) and when I contacted them some had just recently become members or were extremely busy. This motivated me to focus primarily on the interviews with the producers, but try to get at least in contact with one member of the Solawi. At one Solawi I had the possibility to speak with several members, which I found extremely interesting to see how far members would be different or similar in their motivations, values and beliefs.

Next to the interview with producers and consumers I interviewed a very engaged member of the

long established Solawi Buschberghof, who is often contacted by newly established members to speak about his experiences, and links different people together to exchange ideas and experiences (he was suggested to me by one interviewee). An interview with the national network was conducted to include the perspective of the network and investigate its activities, supporting structure and relation with members and the international network. I was only able to speak with one person of the network. This came through a primary hesitation of not having enough resources to do an interview and later time constraints made it impossible. Interviewees were asked for permission to record them for the analysis and to use their names in the research, but later changed by synonyms to respect their privacy. Additionally, I made notes to keep an overview of the content. Interviewees' (primarily producers) time constraints and unknown occurring events required from me to be flexible in my planning and to meet the producer (groups) at their farm.

I did participatory observations during farm work and transportation of farm products to the depots, to get a better understanding of the circumstances, see the interaction between people. Together with the interviews it was an important contribution to understand the dynamics of members' underlying motives, feelings and beliefs of their activities and practices. It gave me the possibility to have more exchange with the members, to build a relationship and to get a better understanding of the place specific characteristics. Part of such characteristics was the diversity of depots, the organization around the transportation and the interaction between the members. I participated in farm work between three days to one week, which gave good insights about the daily rhythms at the farms. One of these field visits was connected to a seminar about national and global food sovereignty and combined with field work at the farm of the Solawi Rote Beete. The event caught my attention because it was open to the public and gave the possibility to experience the life at the farm for a longer time and to be part of an overall discussion on the topic, together with the other seminar members. Later there was, at the same farm, a *future thoughts* gathering of the Solawi, at which I could do participatory observations for the entire time of two days. This gave me a thorough insight into the concerns, motivation and interaction of diverse (consumer and producer) members. Here, but also during other participatory observations and after interviews I used field notes to be able to reflect on my data. Such field notes I used later also to write the *vignette* being positioned at the beginning of this report. The vignette aims on pulling the reader into the research field and to get a feeling for the place of the research (Creswell, 2007).

I combined casual conversations with participatory observations to engage with consumer and producer members in a more informal way. These two research techniques are common in ethnographic research and help to investigate peoples' view on specific situations, how they relate to another, and how they see their own role (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Such chats helped me also to understand how similar or different the opinions and motivations of other producers or consumers of the same Solawi was (e.g. motivation to join the Solawi, the organization within the depot, concern, like product exchange, of interviewees etc.). Through the conversations I could also challenge my assumptions and observation that I had made at different places. As such these casual conversations have also made me a *multiplier* spreading individual techniques or characteristics from one Solawi to another. Such informal conversations were only around 3-5 min long and developed partly spontaneous when other members arrived spontaneously. Sometimes I used also prepared questions that I could ask e.g. while observing the dynamics during food purchase in a depot.

Analysis

All interviews were transcribed first in German. I started with codes of the Community of Practice (CoP) concept using three different perspectives *internal*, *network* and *external* and applied for each the codes *activity*, *knowledge* and *culture* and translated it into English. After having changed the concept back to the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013), I evaluated my codes again, executed the interviews and field notes, and changed the coding into two levels: The *member level* and the *network level*. Using the Three-Tiered framework it was important to clearly distinguish between the three different categories (*agency*, *socio-cultural structure* and *material structure*) of members of Solawis and the engagement of the network towards these three categories. Therefore I used the codes: For **agency**: *personal motivation and values*; for **material structure**: *artefact, infrastructure, functional task*; for **socio-cultural structure**: *Social norms, cultural customs, media influence, relation, communication, commitment, purchase routines, time, belief and changes*.

For *agency* I looked for the motivation of members to join the Solawi, the values members perceive with the concept of CSA, the individual effort or organization people put in organizing the food purchase or help at the farm. For data on *material structure* I looked on the different structures of the Solawis from an organizational point of view and on what kind of infrastructure they have. The *socio-cultural structure* was investigated by looking on the social norms of the Solawis (e.g. habits of members to meet also outside of depot tours, eat together etc.), the groups' written and unwritten rules of behaviour and traditions (e.g. celebrations, shared responsibilities, way of communication). I further looked at the commitments within the Solawis (e.g. perception and behaviour of the member fee system, commitment in case of failures), and the influence and interest of media, members' social surrounding, and the relation and exchange between the different Solawis. For the network level I investigated for *agency* which motivation and philosophy the network has and how it is structured to see its engagement with the Solawi members. For the *socio-cultural structure* I looked on the relation between the network and the Solawi groups, how they communicate, how the network is supporting its members with knowledge and other services, which activities are done by the network and how it relates to the international network Urgenci and external people (public affairs). For the *material structure* I investigated the location of the office, the functional use of the internet page and materials that are provided to its members (e.g. information flyer).

In a next step the corresponding notes of the codes, were written into the case description, by analysing them with the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013). Additionally I investigated my data for input that would correspond to the chosen concepts *community*, *identity*, *practice* and coded the parts accordingly. For the analysis I made use of the coded quotes of the interviewees to introduce the motivations that move people into such membership groups, the way how they see each other, and the world around them. I triangulated data of interviews, my own field notes and AFN literature to evaluate the outcome. Social practices are introduced in blue within the analysis to highlight them throughout the text.

Throughout the analysis I refer sometimes to *farmers*, *gardeners* or *producers*. The changes are chosen with the understanding that *gardeners* have smaller land areas and produce first of all vegetables and a few fruits, while *farmers* have a big piece of land and cultivate also grains and other staple food. When writing *producers* both, gardeners and farmers are considered.

Analytic chapter

In this chapter I will present social practices of members of Solawi groups that are distinct from the mainstream food system. In doing so I describe how members engage with another throughout the food production and distribution, and analyse through the lens of the Three-Tiered framework the occasions, in which such social practise become visible. I start with the analysis of the members of Solawi groups, and look further at the connection between members and the national and international network by applying also the Three-Tiered framework to the national network SL. As such, I briefly go into the organizational structure of the network, but concentrate on the engagement of members with the network. Finally I analyse how members spread their food practices among non-members. For this analysis I investigated seven different Solawi groups in Germany. I experienced a whole diversity of Solawi groups: from professional to amateur, from half a year existence to the oldest one of Germany, from offering only vegetables to a basic full self-sufficiency (bread, dairy, eggs, meat and vegetables) collection of farms, from the countryside to the capital, and from small ones to big ones. As such the collection of farms shows diverse examples of social practices in German Solawi groups.

1. Member perspective

At the member perspective the focus is put on how members of Solawi groups practice membership. The analysis is done through applying the three perspectives of the Three-Tiered framework: Agency, to look at the basic motivation and values of Solawi members, the social-cultural structure to look at the relation and interaction between members and the cultural customs and social norms they developed and finally the focus is put on the material structure to investigate the involved infrastructure and technology. Looking at these three perspectives gives insight about social practices of Solawi members and how far such practices are radical different from the mainstream food system.

1.1 Member Level: Agency

At *agency* members' basic motivation and the underlying values to join a Solawi group are in the focus. These motivations and values give insight about the ability of members to maintain routinized practices that are distinct from the mainstream food system. When looking at members' motivation to join a Solawi, there is a wide range "of idealists till to pragmatic people, who say: I get perfect food for an incredible cheap price; and that can't be denied" (S., Buschberghof, 13-09-16). But next to a rather product oriented motivation, there is the motivation of relating to the farm and a caring role: "I wanted to support the farm and liked to be part of such a community, which is directly supporting organic agriculture" (Caroline, Kattendorfer Hof, 24-08-16). This shows the interest in supporting organic agriculture and a specific farm, but also the interest of belonging to the Solawi and as such a group identity with the Solawi. This motivation confirms Wiskerkes (2009) finding of peoples' interest in finding a group identity and *sense of belonging* through the membership within AFNs, as in Solawi groups. The Solawi membership builds here on an identity between producers, consumers and the land. Part of this local focus and sense of belonging is also the motivation of establishing a social bond between members through the close distance and direct contact: "if it would be trans-regionally organized, it would have an entirely different character. Rather anonymously. Then people may come here less often and may help less on the farm and so on" (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). That this view is shared by several members, was shown at the Solawi Rote Beetes Future Weekend,

where members and gardeners reflected on their work, their situation, their understanding and personal demands with respect to their *Solawi*. It emphasizes the interest of local food production, that give the possibility of taking part in field work and developing relations to producers through direct contact. These short food miles, the direct engagement between producers and consumers, but also the voluntary work of members is in strong contrast to the nature of the mainstream food system.

Other members express a strong political voice in being motivated to build new alternative sustenance structures based on consensus decision making: “I do would say that the principles of SL have drawn more of my interest than simply organic vegetables” (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). With this motivation, the basic food purchase gets less importance, and interest is expressed in creating an institutional change through the concept of SL. Here principles of *creating a relation among producers and consumers, building food sovereignty, caring for environmental health, promoting solidarity* are in the focus of the members’ motivation. As such it is rather based on a more general interest of creating an institutional change, which is also advocated by the national and international network. That this underlying value of joining a Solawi group is not a single case, shows also the member survey of Solawi Schinkler Hof⁷, in which members were asked about their motivation to join the *Solawi*: “there was nobody who joins because of the healthy vegetables. They all wanted to have this alternative economy, the mutual, the social, all these aspects” (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). This commitment of members towards the principles of SL and Urgenci is in contrast to the observation of Feagan and Henderson (2009) in which the primary motivation between producers and consumers of Canadian CSAs varied and producers experienced challenges to involve their members and build community. It goes beyond the simple interest how and where food is produced. Still, many consumer members mention often that transparency around food production is their first motivation to join a Solawi (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This is also shared by Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16):

It was all about knowing where does the food come from, and how are the crops cultivated, who is producing the food? For us it was important that the animal farming was good, and not as one knows it from intensive livestock farming. And a lot has anyway changed with our diet. And here we could see: Where it comes from, how the carrots come in the soil, how they are harvested, how this entire process is. One can have an entire insight. In between there are farm days, where you can specially go into the dairy, or the nursery, or harvesting days where one can help harvesting or weeding [laughing]. For us it was also important that it is as close as possible, to keep travel time and its ways short.

Mixed with the interest in how and where the own food is produced is the interest in its production system and a curiosity to learn more about the production of food. At the same time there is the concern in having short transportation ways, which is mentioned also by other scholars (e.g. (Crivits and Paredis, 2013; D’Amico, 2015; Feenstra, 1997)).

When looking at producers’ motivation to join or establish a Solawi, there is the motivation of flat hierarchies among the producer (team) (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16; Kai, Rote Beete, 10-08-16), the desire of establishing a different way of producing food and with direct contact, not wasting food

⁷ *Schinkler Höfe is a long established community of three agricultural holdings and one artisanal business (a bakery). It is committed to work with organic agricultural production systems for more than 20 years and became a Solawi altogether with its four holdings, in 2015 (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16).*

and working with democratic processes between producers and consumers (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16; Kai, Rote Beete, 10-08-16; Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Alexandra, Dein Hof, 19-08-16). Producers show a clear understanding how distinct the CSA system is compared to the mainstream food system, which is shown here by Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16):

A piece of land serves nature and nature humans, plants and animals. That's the actual meaning and not to multiply economic wealth through any income returns [...] to increase the organic quality, one has to do organic agriculture here and not conventional agriculture [...] and that is a similar thing with the Solawi: That social and economic structures are created, which do not have to fulfil income return requests, but that have their real meaning, in this case to supply humans, the Solawisters, with food and sustain and develop useful corporate structures. With that one is not depending on food markets, rather create things, that are seen as important in a mutual manner. And the Solawisters bear the corporate structure, the development and all costs of the production with their financial contributions.

With this Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16) expresses a motivation towards the SL system that is far beyond basic food purchase or ordinary vegetable box systems, but includes a holistic view of developing and sustaining a relation between producers, consumers, the land and its animals. It addresses challenges from the mainstream food system, as the immediate focus on income returns without its long term perspective, and provides here possible alternatives through the CSA concept. All interviewed producers expressed their awareness that working with the concept of SL is engaging them in more than simply farming differently (e.g. more crop varieties, crop rotations etc.), but rather in being political engaged and creating new food relations: "I experience it [farming] as an incredible political thing, what we do here. It is simply policy" (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). This shows an awareness that the own activity and engagement in the Solawi has an impact on the local surrounding and as such an impact on the politics of its place. Producers articulate also an understanding of agriculture not being limited to the farmer and profit maximization, but as something *societal*: "There was always the idea to involve people more in agriculture and so we end up at Solidarity Based Agriculture [system]" (Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16). Already in 1986, with the Chernobyl catastrophe, the Buschberghof experienced consumer's sensitivity with regards to polluted food and its upcoming questions among the farmer collective:

'How would it continue, if we can't consume the milk? The costs are there, who carries it?' [...] It was about price design in general, and especially about financial backing. And out of that the idea developed, to find a group of people who cover the costs of production. With this, food does not need to be attached with a price, because the farmer is financially secured, and in addition, based on the solidarity principle, every person, no matter of its income, can afford the food [through a solidarity payment system⁸] (Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16).

Such thoughts express the challenges that producers may experience through external influences (in this case the pollution through the nuclear power station failure), in conventional agriculture. At the same time they raise the issue of inclusion of different income class and not being limited to well-equipped upper income classes. As such it provides the possibility of low income groups to be part in the Solawi group, which is questioned by Goodman (2004) and DuPuis and Goodman (2005). The authors see an existing *class diet* and question if consumers of low income can afford food from AFNs.

⁸ A solidarity payment system refers to an approach in which every person pays an individual feasible amount (see also Finance).

In conclusion of this *agency* section I can say that there are different motivations among Solawi members. Consumers emphasise for their membership motivation of being part of a group identity within a Solawi group and being engaged with its producers and the land. This engagement includes also helping with the farm work and creating a social bond through interaction. Some consumers are rather product oriented and value to get more transparency and insight in how food is produced; others are mainly motivated to create local institutional changes through their engagement and the creation of alternative economy by the Solawi groups. Producers are motivated to work with low hierarchies among producers (through the Solawi membership) and to create an alternative economic system that is based on solidary principles, environmentally friendly production systems and creating new food relations with consumers, the land and the animals. These motivations are distinct from practices within the mainstream food system. As such members show a motivation to move from mainstream market systems to an alternative system that establishes new food relations among the Solawi group.

1.2 Member Level: Socio-Cultural Structures

The *agency* perspective alone would not maintain social practices by itself, since practices are built through the interaction between people (Nicolini, 2012). Looking at the relation between members shows how people share knowledge, how they interact (Duncan and Pascucci, 2017) and how they relate to another (Nicolini, 2012). This is an important aspect in routinizing practices and as such essential for identifying social practices. After having identified the personal motivation and values of members, their underlying values and perception of the SL/CSA system, I will take a closer look at the socio-cultural perspective to identify social norms, cultural customs, commitment and the influence that members experience through their social environment, media and among the Solawi. These cultural norms include the commitment of membership, communication practices and the building of relationships among members, but also the exchange of products, their culture of decision making and the covering of production costs. The perspective of *socio-cultural structure* looks at social norms and cultural customs of Solawi groups that maintain the social practice through the interaction with *agency* and the *material structure*.

Membership practice

Some of the investigated Solawi groups were founded by members, others developed through the initiatives of producers. This shows that the initiative comes from consumers as well as from producers, which occurs also in other AFN systems (D'Amico, 2015), but not in the mainstream food system. To find new members, producers approach regular customers from their previous production systems (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16), have an information stand at a small summer festival (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16), through common friends and acquaintances (e.g. Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16), but also through the support of the national network (see also 2. *Network perspective – Membership*). This shows that Solawi groups use different ways to come in contact with new members, the biggest increase in members comes however through word-of-mouth recommendations. In such initial stages of Solawi groups, Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) is often contacted to speak about the long term experiences of Germany's oldest Solawi Buschberghof. He sees a big benefit of the SL concept in the fact that producers have the possibility "to farm under human welfare condition and not under market condition" (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16), which refers also to the motivation of Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16) to move with the SL system away from the mainstream market goals to reach income returns. Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) sees a

big success in the CSA/SL system that it provides new incentives for generation sequences to stay in agriculture. He refers here to examples he had seen, in which farmers could move away from extreme market challenges by joining/establishing a Solawi group. His following example shows how young farmers succeeded in trying the Solawi system in a place in which conventional market systems failed. Here a group of graduated organic agricultural students from Witzenhausen found an old farm that was locally known for its failures by previous farmers:

They looked what was possible and recognized the only thing that was possible at this location is Solidarische Landwirtschaft. Then they organized a gathering in the next town in Rothenburg an der Wümme. They expected 40 people, 80 came. They wanted to provide 60 harvest shares and already on that evening 50 people signed. The only foolish thing was that they had planned three other gatherings in other places, so they had to rewrite their concept because the demand was so high... and that in an environment where almost nobody lives (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16).

Here the interest of the young producers to start their own system met the interest of consumers in being engaged in Solawis and/or to consume local food. Through the CSA/SL system, agricultural production becomes more diverse to meet the demand of its consumers and as such its production system. At the same time higher returns go to the producers as it has no middle men in the supply chain (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). These advantages provide incentives that are not present in the mainstream food system.

Membership commitment

Being part of a Solawi group is an official procedure in signing membership agreements, but through social practices members develop also a *recognition* within the group and a group identity of being part of a group (Nicolini, 2012). Here it is clearly visible in its commitment towards agreed principles. Generally Solawi members are requested to become a member for one year. As such members experience the changes and seasons throughout the year and the CSA/SL system enables producers to plan their cultivation and expenses in advance (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). This means for consumers to adapt to a system in which food availability is based on the local climate and as such it shows extreme differences to the mainstream food system in winter time; in which crop varieties are mainly limited to its stored varieties. Producers show understanding that the adaption of shopping routines may be challenging for members:

It is uncomfortable. It does request some extra effort. You are not simply going somewhere, pay your stuff at the counter and go home whenever you want [...] you must admit to commitment. Today everything becomes more non-committal and in some cases it needs a lot of effort [...] it needs always time till habits reorient and change. I think that takes the biggest effort, that you could go back to your own habits after the first euphoria. Or, that you experience the quality to such extend that a return is impossible (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16).

Two of the seven investigated Solawi groups changed slightly their norms around the membership regulations to enable new members to try the Solawi system first for a short time and be able to leave again, when consumer feel that they cannot/would not adapt their daily life to the system: The Solawi Kattendorfer Hof and the Solawi Sterngartenodyssee asks for a three months cancelation period (Thilo, Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16; Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16) and the Solawi Kattendorfer Hof offers additionally a one month trial for new members (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). This may convince doubtful new members to try and experience the membership for a limited time and get used to an unknown system, but it is not in line with the principle four of SL "to

create a reliable relationship between the producers and the consumers, involving a long-term and binding commitment” (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b) and provides a risk to the Solawi group to cover costs and balance fluctuations. Both mentioned Solawi groups have many members and as such the impact on administration and overall cost flows may weigh less than in smaller Solawi groups. Generally it is up to the depots or a working group of members to organize the drop out of members and the move-up of the waiting list of new members. This individual organization may be also seen in the light of the perception “the more rules you have the more people you repel” (Thilo, Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16). This means that consumers can set internal rules to organize the number of members and as such they commit to the group. In general producers show understanding if members cancel their membership also within the year (when they experience unexpected situations as moving, changes in working conditions or family settings), and in such cases make use of the member waiting list or recruit new members differently (Charlotte, Rote Beete, 14-08-16; Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16; Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16). Since production costs are calculated in advance and are supposed to cover the costs of production, fluctuations provide a thread that the system cannot maintain with enough members who are willing to cover the costs. Looking at the current situation of the investigated Solawi groups this threat seems to be relatively low, but it is still perceived by the producers: It becomes visible when producers mention that their mutual group agreements are not binding by law, because they could not go to any court with it. While Kop van de *et al.* (2008) describe this commitment as an *equal* sharing of production risks, Kurt (Buschberghof, 12-09-16) questions, if this risk is really *equally* shared in practice, as members could decide from one moment to another to terminate their membership; although this might not be happening in reality. Looking however on consumers’ understanding of this mutual agreement a strong commitment can be seen:

For me that [commitment of paying the member fee throughout the year] is definitely a part of it. Once a year you decide about it and then it is clear. Surely you can resign, but you know you pay your part. That was also this year. Especially in the first years it was such a new decision in which you think about the entire year, financially, supportive, vegetable-wise... ‘Do I want that?’ (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16).

This shows a conscious decision making and a commitment to stick to agreements, even when personal circumstances change. At Solawi Buschberghof this commitment was experienced, once or twice in their 28th year’s history, in which families have further paid their monthly member fee without being able to receive their food in return due to changed circumstances (Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16). Other, similar examples of consumers commitment could be recalled by Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) and Karin (National Network, 20-09-16):

We had once, quite long ago, a bunt of wheat and then, when the wheat harvest fails, ‘how do you deal with this?’ We solved the problem by saying: ‘ok, we will additionally purchase it’. And in a way it becomes visible in the annual budget at the end of the year. That was no problem [among the members]. Another problem we had once was when a cow just dropped dead and nobody knew why. The renderer came, the public veterinarian detected salmonella, but did say that it might actually come from the renderer truck than from the cow itself, but that he can’t guarantee anything and he has to close the stable till things are clear. We could not supply milk, nor other dairy products and the milked milk was used for cheese and was kept aside. When we had ‘green light’ the cheese was alright. It went like that, and I was treasurer in that time, and there was nobody who called and said: sorry, now I have to buy all the dairy products and I can’t pay my promised contribution. For me that is THE applied ‘sharing of risks and responsibilities’ [from the SL principles] (Walter,

Buschberghof, 13-09-16).

At another Solawi hail had totally damaged a greenhouse of the farm and members had found ways to bear together the costs for a new greenhouse (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). All these examples show social norms of Solawis that bear challenges together. It shows that principles like the sharing of farming risks are agreed by Solawis and implemented in reality. In conventional market systems such risks could challenge the existence of (small) enterprises. Here, through the established close relationship between producers and consumers trust is established and the system of monthly membership fee and consumers commitment covers production failures.

In Dresden potential risks are experienced all year round at the Solawi Dein Hof: The Solawi is positioned right next to the river Elbe and could be flooded every moment of flood (as it was the last time in 2002): “that can come again. There is the spring high water and the autumn high water [...] strait forward that can mean in our case that the whole thing [Solawi] is under water” (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Despite such high risks the Solawi has the advantages of a good connection by public transport and its payable availability of land (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Considering the trade-offs of the location it shows a commitment of producers to invest in building humus/soil fertility despite the risk of losing all from one moment to another. From consumers perspective it shows a commitment to deal with this threat and as such to incorporate the agreed principle of *sharing risks and responsibilities of farming* (SL principle one) set by the network (see also *Social Practice 1* below). At the same time one has to question if members are fully aware about the potential threat, since initial plans to prepare a safety plan were not kept up by the members. As such the real commitment may become only visible at the moment the threat appears (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Nevertheless, the level of engagement of the Solawi group is high and shows already commitment in other areas as labour wages (see also *Finance*), so that their commitment in terms of flooding might be counted on.

Following Nicolinis (2012) characteristic of membership, we see on the mentioned examples how members committed themselves to be accountable for the production failures as a group. As such they lived the mutually agreed principles in their specific situation. This commitment exceeds the adaption to new food purchase organization. They show fundamental differences in the relation between producers and consumers of the mainstream food system. It is a commitment to mutually agreed norms of SL and CSA systems (Kop van de *et al.*, 2008).

Social Practice 1: Sharing risks

Solawi members show willingness to share farming risks with the producers (Agency). In doing so they commit to the principles of SL, keep a trust-relation among the Solawi, show sensitivity to potential, unforeseen financial challenges to producers and the producers can count on a fixed monthly member fee throughout the year (Socio-Cultural Structure). This is possible through the regular membership fee, and an existing farm/market garden infrastructure (Material-Structure). Through the meaning what external challenges can mean to producers production, the trust-relationship between producers and consumers and the mutual agreements to exchange farm products with regular membership fee that is covering production costs, farming risks are shared by the Solawi group.

Communication practices

There are different practices in the communication in each Solawi group. Looking at the different levels there is the level between the farm and their members, between the members (e.g. in the setting of a depot or farm shop - the example Solawi Kattendorfer Hof), between Solawis (e.g.

regional networks - see *National Level* analysis), between Solawis and the network, and partly also with the international network Urgenci. I will focus here on the communication between members – consumers and producers, to see how members interact with another and build social relation, being the base for social practices (Schatzki, 2005).

The communication among members is commonly rather informal, but in some cases the formal *Sie* approach (with the last name) is chosen as well. Communication is done over several levels. Generally Solawi groups have an internet page, with an internal part for sharing news, recipes, discussion, concerns etc., often a Facebook page and email and phone calls for additional coordination/questions, next to face-to-face communication. The latter is seen as most effective, because “with e-mails you don’t see emotions which leads easily to misunderstandings” (Alexandra, Dein Hof, 19-08-16).

The amount and variety of products is commonly communicated by e-mail and often additionally put into the depots. To level the different amounts of food over the year, farmers tend to give more in summer, with the idea it could be also preserved, and that there are fewer amounts and less varieties in winter (Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). At Solawi Buschberghof the rich harvest had led to a stage of (verbal) *protest* by its consumers, so that the Solawi group decided to create an ordering list, in which members can choose between the different available products, and send the list of products per depot a few days before their pick-up at the farm. Additionally, most farms prepare a *Harvest Letter* with some information (sometimes weekly, sometimes less frequently) about activities and news from the farm, which is sent by mail or distributed to the depots. Such information gives consumers an insight about the challenges and highlights that the producers face, or it explains the motivation of the product selection. This adds knowledge to consumers and builds on the relation among members.

Gatherings are generally at depot meetings (organized by the members) and regular Solawi group meetings (ranging between monthly, or every two to three months) to discuss concerns, developments and organizational issues within the group. Such regular gatherings strengthen the relation among members and provide possibilities to build a common culture through mutual exchange, which builds again on a group identity and a community building. Next to that there are festivals, mostly organized by the farm or in cooperation with members. Such festivals are sometimes connected to harvest (e.g. strawberry, potato, onion festivals), but also culturally customs like May festival, summer festival or thanksgiving. These festivals emphasize a regional character and build on a *belonging of space*, and as such they strengthen the group identity of the member group. Such occasions are partly also open for friends, but mainly for the Solawi members themselves. Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) sees these occasions as events with “active exchange, where one gets to know more about the farm and also the other members and in which we can exchange. And there are very different people at the farm, and that makes it so exciting [...] it is very harmonic when we meet together and an instant, nice, exchange”. This shows the importance of such occasions to strengthen the community, or what Nicolini (2012) describes as *Gemeinschaft* of the group and builds on a relation between the consumers and producers to create a common culture in the (heterogeneous) group.

Solawi members (consumers as well as producers) organize normally introduction days or occasions to meet and speak with new members. This can be on a weekly basis (e.g. Solawi Freudenthal), on a monthly basis (e.g. Solawi Schinkeler Höfe), at the farm itself every 2 months (e.g. Solawi

Kattendorfer Hof and Solawi Rote Beete). This shows that members start from the beginning with a personal relation towards new members, they get a sense of the *Gemeinschaft* of the Solawi group and introduce a group identity to the potential newcomers. These introduction days are partly organized by consumers, but mostly by the producers themselves. In many cases these are also the moments when new (potential) members can put their name on a waiting list, as most investigated Solawis reached their aimed size already. These full waiting lists illustrate the general interest of people in becoming part of such Solawi groups, which is already a long lasting raise in Germany (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Other occasions, where social norms become visible, are the move forward within the waiting list if existing members resign due to changes in private circumstances (e.g. moving, family setting etc.), and their harvest share needs to be replaced by new members (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16; Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16).

Building relations

The following three examples show how Solawi groups make efforts in building relation within the group: (1) To personalize the relation between members the Solawi Schinkler Höfe started an initiative to introduce each other at a piece of paper that was sent around by e-mail to all group members. Its contribution was voluntarily, but many members used the opportunity. (2) The same Solawi group had also prepared a small brochure with the essential organizational information for newcomers (Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). (3) Another way was chosen by the Solawi Dein Hof in Dresden in which members expressed the wish to experience the farm life and to get to know each other better. Gardeners and consumers organized a farm week with camping at the barn, working together and socializing. This had motivated them to repeat it together with additionally organized workshops on different topics to enlarge their knowledge and fields of discussion (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16) (see also *Social Practice 2* below). This is another example of a member group who started. All these examples show the effort of members to strengthen their relation and to build community within the Solawi group. They are in line with the above mentioned introduction days and build on an engagement and understanding among new members. This community building is a counter movement towards the individual and decentralised nature of the mainstream food system (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). As such these relations go beyond simple business relations among the Solawi group.

Another regular way of engagement between consumers and producers are farm working days, Producers appreciate consumers help with farm work, which is done either for specific days (e.g. *Mitmach-Mittwoch* [participating Wednesday] – e.g. Solawi Dein Hof, Solawi Freudenthal), or with an everyday invitation (Solawi Kattendorfer Hof). This contact strengthens their relation and connects the “countryside, the farmers and the consumers” (Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). In the case of Solawi Sterngartenodyssee members are even requested to help at its distribution and at the fields, but over the year this results only in a few days (see also *Depot*). During such farm work individuals or groups of members go to the different farms and help with the harvest, sorting, weeding and other farm work. During informal conversations in depots some members mentioned their challenge to combine farm work in their daily life. Producers often show understanding for it: “you feel very appreciated by members, and the other thing is that you give that back when you accept that people are simply bound in their life” (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). It shows that through the relation between consumers and producers both behave in a solidary manner, knowing the circumstances and daily challenges of each other. And it also shows that the farm work is mainly a voluntary task, and as such not a social norm (except at Solawi Sterngartenodyssee), but rather a

cultural custom of members. In the case of Solawi Rote Beete farm work shifted from a social norm of doing three days per year per member, to a voluntary task. This was done through mutual agreements among the Solawi group to give consumers more freedom in their planning. Members mentioned that they still continued to sign up (in the digital calendar) to participate in the farm work. As such it shifted into a cultural costume. That farm work includes not simply work, but more social attributes is expressed by Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16):

I think that you regain autonomy, that you learn to produce things yourself [...] overall lots of knowledge is given further. Not only during harvest, but also what is part of operational management" legal form, investment planning. I find it so nice here, that you get to know incidentally, while speaking in the field, something about Saxony's federal district laws and their land regulations; I find that really interesting. Like this I have many 'Aha-experiences'

Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16) expresses here a value of gaining knowledge about farming and farming related issues that consumers are normally not confronted with when purchasing within the mainstream food system. This shows that through the interaction with the producers during farm work consumers gain and exchange knowledge and insights in food production (see also *Social Practice 2* below). This strengthens relation between producers and consumers and builds on a group identity (see *Social Practice 3* below). Consumers build also a relation to their food as they know where and how it is produced. It also gives them an understanding what market standards mean for producers and how autonomous farm structures can be built. This shows that farm work is an essential part to understand the characteristics of producing food and build a personal relation with producers and the land. Farm work participation of members goes beyond the simple farm work, but reconnects producers, consumers and the countryside, as mentioned also earlier by Birgit (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). Feagan and Henderson (2009) see this exchange through the view of the concept *sharing*, in which producers and consumers build relationships and create a *community* – the CSA - in joint responsibility and organization. The authors point out that these concepts, *sharing* and *community*, distinguish themselves from the conventional food systems, as it lacks the possibility of direct interaction between producers and consumers.

Such relation building and knowledge sharing is perceived to be easier established in smaller groups. Some members and gardeners mention the concern that too big groups may counteract the shared group dynamic (e.g. Kai, Rote Beete, 10-08-16; Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Thilo, Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16). This group dynamic is related to being engaged in the group, but also the communication among each other. At the same time big groups, as well as small Solawi groups, consist of so many members that *knowing* each other becomes complicated Ludwig (Rote Beete, 21-08-16) and Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16) doubt if this precondition of knowing each other to be able to trust each other and behave in a solidary manner within the Solawi group, which is requested by some of their group members: "I think it is quite difficult to get to know 180 people personally" (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). At the same time some see the disadvantage that a rather anonym group of people might hesitate more to go alone to an unknown place with unknown people - e.g. when it comes to helping at the farm. At the same time she sees advantages of such rather big groups in the possibility to find the own place within the group (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). How far such group dynamics depends on the group size of the entire Solawi group or are predominantly important depot groups, seems to vary in members perception. Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) experiences a close relation within the depot group, but describes also the group dynamic and trust among members of the Solawi group (with 300 members) as very strong: "there is much that is based on trust and it is a togetherness, and not an against each other [...] trust is actually the topmost"

(Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16). This confirms the observation of Hinrichs (2000, p. 300) in which she describes the potential of CSA shares as a “potential for de-commodified relations” that are unlikely happening “in spot exchanges, whether at farmers' markets or supermarkets”; which is also seen by Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16):

The entire thing returns where it belongs to, namely to a totally personal level, to a personal, justified, acquired, and well-maintained mutual trust; and that is what it is all about. The point is: that the encounter is not defined by any formal rules, or kind of law or regulation, or insurance technical receive, rather the mutual story is an expression of a relation and indeed we sit together. We look at each other, talk together and try to develop it in such a way we all think it is right [...] surely it is first uncomfortable, we do have to talk a lot together, we have to meet, and that requires time, energy and so on. In that way it takes effort, but I have to say it is also a big fun. To regain control about own circumstances is very important.

Here Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16) refers to the importance of mutual trust, the relation among the members, knowing where food comes from, who produces it and how (mentioned also in the motivation of members - e.g. Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16), and through this the development of autonomy. Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) refers through such mutual development to the creation of “a long term relation between the people and the farming”. In so far it is a development of something new and individually valued (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). This *(re-)constructing alternative systems of food provisioning* is also identified by Renting, Schermer and Rossi (2012, p. 300) as a characteristic of alternative food networks. Some Solawi groups decided that their trust relationship and the existing transparency (e.g. through farm working days or festivals) makes a certification for organic/biodynamic cultivation practices unnecessary and started without or quit it (Kai, Rote Beete, 10-08-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16; European CSA Research Group 2016). This saves costs for the certification, but more importantly it illustrates the existing trust relationship among members. It shows that the de-commodified relations, mentioned by Hinrichs (2000, p. 300) create such social bonds, that external examination of organic production practices becomes unnecessary through the direct contact and relation. In other cases, as in the Solawi Buschberghof, there is a strong bond to the certification through their shared history (the farm took part in shaping the certification), the use of the organic certification allows them to receive a subsidy from the federal district and they use the certification to guarantee its organic production system by selling product surpluses to a vegetable box scheme (Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16). But Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) confirms also that for their members such certification scheme would be not needed. This example shows a different motivation behind the certification and underlines its needs only for external uses in which the direct relationship is not present.

Social Practice 2: Sharing knowledge

Members of Solawi groups are motivated to exchange (food production related) knowledge (Agency). This takes place through the engagement with other consumer and producer members and the network. Occasions for this knowledge exchange are farm work, gatherings, festivals, organized seminars (within the group, for the university or organized by the network), guiding tours, during food purchasing routines, the networks promotion of regional Solawi group gatherings, through the farms' harvest letter, internal digital communication (email, website etc.), but also through the interaction of non- Solawi group members. Additionally the SL network contributes to knowledge sharing by spreading information and experiences (through e.g. website, newsletter, publications, media, research, exchange with other networks, digital and direct communication) (Socio-Cultural Structure).

Needed and influencing infrastructures are the Solawi farm(s), the network institution and (social) media (Material Structure). Through the sharing of food and food production knowledge and experiences the idea of CSA/SL is promoted. At local level it contributes to a sense of belonging (Wiskerke, 2009) and incorporating seasonality in daily life.

Exchange

The exchange and relation within Solawi groups is not limited to the relation between producers and consumers, but generally also among other Solawi groups and non-Solawi farms, or other social groups that share common mind sets and activities. The built relationship enables farms to exchange products, but also knowledge and experiences. It provides possibilities to avoid money flows and develop food sovereignty among like-minded groups. Exchange between Solawis farms include: product exchange, inputs (e.g. manure) with harvest goods, the shared use of a location (e.g. a depot) or tools and machinery. In the case of Solawi Dein Hof there is cooperation with another Solawi group that has more land than needed and offered to cultivate a product for the other Solawi on the base of covering the production costs and receiving the harvest in return. This is one example in which mutual agreements and exchange strengthen the relation and avoid formal contracts of product exchange. Additionally, the Solawi group orders seedlings with another farm, and offers guiding tours for the Demeter education student groups (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). The student initiated Solawi Freudenthal cooperates such farm related products and locations, but also with the agricultural university in Witzenhausen. Here they provided places for internships, BSc and MSc thesis and offer an introductory course on the philosophy of SL. The university offers the Solawi group in exchange to cultivate their seedlings in their greenhouse. Through the relation with students and the university, knowledge, ideas and resources can be exchanged and build community among the different actors. Other cooperations of that Solawi group are guiding tours for the Gesellschaft für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [foundation for sustainable development] (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16). This is again an example in which knowledge and social practices are spread and a regional identity is shared with outsiders and as such the community aspect is introduced further. The Kattendorfer Hof extended the physical space of exchange and has a cooperation with a farm in South Spain from where they get olive oil and oranges, and close by a cooperation with a farm to get poultry and eggs, as well as bread from a bakery (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). In the case of the Solawi Rote Beete there is, in addition to product exchange, a strong connection with La Via Campesina and partly with O Maio, and occasionally, when the Solawi has enough vegetables, food is donated to small groups or activities that are in the mindset of the Solawi (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16).

Social Practice 3: Building group identity

Members show motivation to join Solawi groups (Agency). In doing so they take part in (the creation) of a Solawi group, join gatherings and festivals, follow social norms (e.g. purchase routines, a different payment system, shared decision making, exchanging information), they develop group customs (e.g. interaction within a group and between each other, organizing food purchase routines, engagement in farm activism, sharing recipes, building friendship) that result in social bonds and a building of community. Members create media interest (spreading the idea of SL/CSA) and promote the system further in their personal environment through word-of-mouth promotion. A strong contribution of the group identity comes also through the existence of the national network: It supports Solawi groups' interaction, information flows, national and international knowledge and experience exchange, and promoting the idea of SL/CSA in diverse media, organize gatherings,

seminars and promoting regional groups (Socio-Cultural Structure). The identity creation is also effected by the farm location, its produced food products, having a common name for the movement (SL/CSA), the existing infrastructure of the national and the international network and the developed alternative food purchase (Material-Structure). Through members' interest to interact with another, social bonds are developed leading to a Gemeinschaft of the group and as such a group identity is created.

Engagement of consumers

Within the Solawi group members are engaged in deliveries, decision-making or administrative and organisational tasks, but there is also the help to grow products at the farm, the exchange of recipes, investing money in the farm and so forth. Next to assigned people for the depots, Solawis have commonly working groups in which members work on specific topics and bring the discussion and agreements back to the entire Solawi groups. From the investigated Solawi groups, Solawi Kattendorfer Hof (currently the biggest Solawi in Germany with around 700 members (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16), is the only one without such groups, in comparison to a rather extensive list of the Schinkeler Höfe, where members (and sometimes in cooperation with gardeners) work on: Orchard development, identity, logistic, finance/administration, public affairs, *Dit un dat* [this and that – miscellaneous] and Facebook page (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). This shows a big range of activities in which consumers are involved and the level of responsibilities that are given to members. Taking over these tasks illustrated the trust that is given by producers and the entire Solawi group in the hands of individuals. These engagements help producers to save time and they strengthen the relation, and as such the community to build a group identity and a common culture. At the same time consumers gain knowledge and experience through their engagement.

Decision making

Decisions within the Solawi are generally consent decisions or basic democratic. Such decision making is depending on individuals' personality and rules of behaviour (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Which leads to the opinion that Solawi groups are also learning places of communication and interaction within groups of people (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). The Solawi *Rote Beete* took further action and organized moderation workshops to improve communication skills among members (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). This Solawi is also an example of engaging members intensely in the decision making and the overall development of the Solawi. Members are invited to discuss about the future of the Solawi, their wishes for further development and so forth. When looking at the Solawi Buschberghof, with its 28 years of existence, this demand of reforming the Solawi is not expressed: "all is there" - more than 50 different vegetable cultivars, different cheese and bread varieties, and meat (Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16). Own quality norms of products and farm conservation activities are based on participatory decision among the Solawi group as explained here by Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16):

we are also talking how cultivation is done, so the quality of the vegetables. With that you can consider the wishes and demands, discuss opinions and attain common quality norms that are independent from administrative bodies [...] we define our own standards and our own way of implementation here. And that is very positive that you reach a high level of autonomy.

This shows the lived SL principle three, the mutual agreement on farming standards (see *Social Practice 4* below). It also shows that the shared decision-making among the member group allows to invest in quality that is not limited to market regulations and gives a high level of autonomy to its

consumers and producers. Considering the high impact of market regulation and competition in conventional market systems, we see here a freedom of producers to diversify production and balance nutrients, in animal integrated systems to close the “farm organism, in which the herd becomes the centre and we create the cultivation around it” (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Such integrated systems are seen as unprofitable by *experts* of conventional market systems, but have proven successful in the long run for the environment (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Generally the domains of decision-making differ slightly between the different Solawi groups. It seems that newly established producer groups have an interest to engage consumers in more areas of decision making and to try out additional activities, while long established farms/Solawi groups concentrate the decision making to specific topics and go further in the established way. Still, participatory decision making is present in all Solawi groups, and the participatory structure of the network. Sharing decision making power shows a high level of trust and builds on the established personal relation among members. Giving space of learning to interact and communicate respectfully with another shows the interest in improving mutual relations and build stronger community with another. These actions are far from norms of the mainstream food system and support Feagan and Henderson (2009) perception that CSA groups build community among members and bring people together instead of distancing them.

Legal structure

The legal structure of Solawi groups determines the relation and commitment of members. It decides about ownership, reliability and decision making of members. As such it also influences the interaction, social bonds between producers and consumers and a resulting group identity. There is a repeated concern of members to choose the right legal form that fits to their local circumstances and values (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Legal forms are commonly written contracts that are kept simple. Its legal forms vary depending on participants’ interests, motivations and aims. Commonly there is a separation between ownership (of farm, land, equipment, machinery), agricultural practices and the member cooperation. Most often land is (part-)owned, (part-) rented by its farmer (group). The investigated Solawis of this research chose to work under the regulations of GbR [company constituted under civil law], GmbH [Limited Liability Company], as registered associations, cooperatives and a Betriebsgemeinschaft [economic community] with a Gemeinnütziger Trägerschaft [charity ownership]. This shows a great diversity in forms and reflects the different nature of Solawi groups. Reactions to this question raise several issues. There is the concern of private land ownership that “hindering self-organization” (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16), the issue of internal goals (set by the Solawi) which may not be met, and the concern that single people bear too much responsibility in certain legal forms. This motivated the Rote Beete to consider two legal forms: externally a GbR “with own principles” and internally a cooperative (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). When asking the Kattenforfer Hof about their legal structure and telling about other Solawi groups, which have chosen an association as a legal form, Manfred (Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16) gets surprised:

For god’s sake! The law of associations is something for collective projects, but not for economy. I want to say very clearly, we are entrepreneurs! We are agricultural entrepreneurs, also if we do Solidarische Landwirtschaft.

The reaction reflects the different relation producers have with land and ownership, how willing they are to try out new, unusual legal forms and their personal demand on security and a long term vision. At Solawi Buschberghof the farm is provided to a Betriebsgemeinschaft [economic community] and their only condition is to do “biodynamic economic activity” (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) explains further “in our by-law of the Betriebsgemeinschaft

[economic community] it says: 'We have no intention of income generation and if oversupply is reached it goes automatically as a donation to the Gemeinnützigen Träger [community provider]'. When a taxman came once to look at the economic activity of the Solawi group and saw these internal structure, he seemed completely overwhelmed with the fact that the Solawi group has no attention of making profit and after this there was no further attempt by the tax declaration to invest time in the Solawi (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) wonders about all the concern regarding legal forms by other Solawi groups: "you can organize yourself as a bunch of anarchists and we go well with this since a quarter of a decade" (see also *Social Practice 4* below). With this Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) emphasis the possibility to experiment new relations and legal forms that are distinct to the mainstream food system. Operating in a *niche* provides the possibility to challenge the mainstream food system to react to unusual forms of community, which is greatly shown by the example of Solawi Buschberghof. This variety of legal forms shows the diversity of organizational structures, motivations and requirements within the different member groups, being also encouraged by the network (Urgenci, 2016).

Social Practice 4: Developing autonomous farm structures

Member groups create autonomous farm structures through their relation and collaboration with another and are willing to try new approaches (Agency). This is shaped through exchanging ideas and values and developing a mutual philosophy within the group. Solawi groups agree on cultural customs (e.g. democratic and participatory communication, shared decision making, own quality standards) and social norms (e.g. purchase routines, a different payment system, shared decision making) through which they show commitment to their shared philosophy. Through these social bonds, a direct-trust relationship is developed. Additional exchange takes place with other Solawi groups and non-Solawi groups in which inputs, harvest, knowledge, experiences, land, equipment, products and labour are exchanged. Solawi members work voluntarily in working groups and individually, on activities of the group which saves costs, build social relation and trust among the group. The development of such autonomous structures is also supported through the network promoting regional Solawi group meetings and providing stimuli through knowledge and experience exchange (Socio-Cultural Structure). The existing infrastructure is given through access to land (for food production), the access of consumers to come to the farm, financial resources through the membership structure and access to communication structures (Material Structure).

Finance

Solawi member groups have an individual way to organize the financial issues with their members. Members pay an equal share per month throughout the year and with this cover the cost of production. The financial monthly member fees and transactions to the farms are either organized by a voluntary group of consumers (e.g. Solawi Schinkeler Höfe, Solawi Buschberghof, Solawi Dein Hof) or by the producers themselves (e.g. Solawi Kattendorfer Hof, which introduced even an extra payment system to avoid financial mistakes). Monthly prices are based on the production costs, which gives a security to the producers. Through the regular monthly payment producers can plan in advance their production schemes. Additionally, some Solawi groups work with a starting loan, in the case of Solawi Dein Hof with a loan of 200€, which is paid back when members resign from the Solawi (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Other Solawi groups, as the Kattendorfer Hof, developed additional finance schemes like to adopt a cow, or to buy more land through an established association [Genossenschaft], in which members and non-members are asked for collaboration (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16).

Producers who are newly engaged with the CSA system, express their surprise about the simple manner on agreeing about membership prices, which cover the costs of production, among members and their own contribution in terms of sharing tasks: “It was very unproblematic, everybody was somehow engaged, or there are always people that are taking initiative” (Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). Through the collaboration of work between producers and consumers costs can be lowered, and relations between producers and consumers are built. Throughout the Solawi groups especially producers report members’ concern about workers’ wages (e.g. Solawi Schinkeler Höfe, Solawi Buschberghof, Solawi Dein Hof). Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) reports this also from the Solawi Reiherhof in Stuttgart, where the gardener was totally surprised when members asked how he pays his employees: “And then they said that is impossible, we add another Euro per hour. And it was agreed again”. Being himself in the Solawi Buschberghof he also referred to own experiences in this respect, when the farmers presented their budget draft of the new year to their members:

We said: ‘sorry that’s impossible, the budget has to be substantially increased’ [...] and that just went through without bleating or grumbling. I mean in the last financial year €370,000 and it became now €30,000 more; yes that was possible (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16).

This confirms Hinrichs (2000, p.301) view that “CSA attempts to support farmers and farming more completely than conventional market arrangements often allow, costs must be covered, farmers deserve a living wage (as well as benefits)”. Through increasing the generally low labour prices in agriculture, producers have an incentive to work in agriculture. Since production prices are paid they do not create pressure on the producer by the market. This concern, to pay fair agricultural wages is part of the principle of Urgenci and the SL, and applied in the daily life of diverse Solawi groups. Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16), a member of the Buschberghof, mentioned also discussions on wages and their considerations of income gaps between *average* incomes and that of their farmers with regards to their working time. Although it seems that this is an overall trend among Solawi groups, it is not seen in all of them. The Freudenthal Solawi was initiated as a student project without any real starting capital. By now it has a remaining good team and become more ‘professional’. Still with its direct contact and exchange of the agricultural university Witzenhausen, the Solawi group consist of almost 50% students and shared flats members and experienced in 2015/2016 a fluctuation of around 40% between the years. Gardeners see that members’ priority is mainly on the content of their harvest share, and labour wages are more difficult to rise; although the team consist of trained and experienced gardeners. Still the clear goal for the coming season is to increase the wages with €2/hour for the coming season (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16). Johanna (Freudenthal, 21-09-16) sees that the existing low wages and an overall time constrains in growing seasons makes it difficult to invest time in public affairs and exchange with other initiatives/Solawi groups. From the investigated Solawi groups this is not the only one in which producers are paid the minimum wage, but there seems to be a trend from consumers and producers to discuss this issue and increase wages. Such behaviour is in line with SL principle three, to pay an appropriate wage to producers (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b) and goes beyond the *support* of the general agreement of regular payments regardless expected harvests or crop failures, or the bottleneck of not gaining sufficient income with the Solawi group to live from it, as investigated by Feagan and Henderson (2009). An alternative system with this respect is introduced by the Solawi Dein Hof: On a voluntary basis consumers can pay an extra price (which can be resigned at any moment in time) that goes directly to the producers (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). This shows consumers concern to address low wages by producers through an additional payment system. Not owning the land itself means for producers to face the same situation as any other worker when retiring. Although this extra payment

may not sum up into something big, it shows the concern of consumers to address the problem and finding alternative practices, and feeling social bonds to producers through an established group identity.

Repeatedly, especially producers speak about the motivation to disconnect food from its price and give back its real value (e.g. Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16; Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). This motive shows that there is not primarily the concern of finding a competitive advantage to the mainstream food system, but to see the concept of SL as a *Gemeinschaftsprojekt* [joint project] (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). Looking at the perception of Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) that AFNs can develop a competitive market strategy, is here only true as one aspect, but the driving motivation is rather to create a new joined food relation.

The earlier mentioned *Solidary payment system* is an alternative to the fixed membership fee: Producers introduce their estimation of the production costs for the coming year and this price is divided through the number of harvest shares as an orientation price. Based on the individual feasible amount members present (anonymous) their monthly contribution to cover these production costs. If the total amount does not meet the estimated costs, another *bidding round* needs to be organized (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). In such cases it can come to difficult situations among members, because members show different attitudes in presenting their feasible price. Having been a treasurer for many years, Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) sees the importance “to speak out as a treasurer and say: I find that all correct what people say. Everybody according to his own social capabilities. And then the discussion is over. This mutual trust is very, very important and a fragile plant, that can be destroyed, but it is very important that it is cared for”. With this he refers to the possible situation of mistrust among members if some have presented their maximum contribution already at the beginning and others see it more as a preferred payment, but could pay higher contributions based on their income or other expenditures. At Solawi Kattendorfer Hof members voted against the solidarity payment system with the fear of sharing too much responsibly with other members: “I had to acknowledge that” (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). This shows that such participatory financial systems are more difficult to implement in big Solawi groups. It also indicates that a trust-relationship is more difficult to build in big groups.

This solidarity payment system is the applied idea of the networks principle two, of a *Solidary design of economic processes* between members. It shows an inclusive and solidary behaviour of members and enables everybody to become a Solawi member regardless his income. As such it contradicts Ravenscroft *et al.*, (2012), Goodman (2004) and DuPuis and Goodman(2005) assumption that being part of a AFN is only possible to people from upper and middle income classes.

By looking at the perspective of the socio-cultural structure diverse engagements of membership could be identified. These engagements lead to social practices that are very different from the mainstream food system. The Solawi membership provides new incentives for farmers to stay in agriculture by moving away from the mainstream market challenges and build food relations with its consumers. Through the CSA/SL system, agricultural production becomes more diverse in its varieties and has a positive impact on the environment and long term soil fertility. The relation between consumers and producers is strengthened through mutual agreements that build social bonds between both and is resulting in a group identity within the Solawi group. Being a member of a

Solawi group, consumers are challenged in their common purchasing system and experience a new relation and belonging with the local place and its food. This is strengthened through interaction with producers and the group, and their engagement at the farm during farm work days, festivals and other gatherings. Through such occasions consumers and producers exchange knowledge and experiences and strengthen their *sense of belonging* (Wiskerke, 2009) and understanding for another. Consumer members have shown great commitment in situations of production failures. Like this they developed cultural customs that are very different to the mainstream food system. Members' communication practices are exercised through different media and face-to-face interactions and builds social relation among the group. Through the interactions e.g. through gatherings, festivals, *harvest letters*, farm work and digital communication cultural customs are developed. Social relations and group identity are strengthened through gatherings, traditional festivals and guiding new members into the group. This developed *Gemeinschaft* builds a relation through direct interactions among members (Nicolini, 2012) and develops into mutual trust. Through this social bonds and exchange community is being built (Feagan and Henderson, 2009) among the member group. The developments of the conventional food system have contributed to a destabilisation and individualism among the society (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). Here Solawi groups show counter developments as being places for learning how to communicate and interact within a group, to learn more about food production, to try out new business relations through unusual legal structures and to build community. Consumers and producers share decision in responding to their individual group demands, shared values and quality standards that are distinct from the mainstream food system. Through these mutual agreements producers have more freedom in their production practices and can build new autonomous systems in cooperation with their consumer members. Also in its financial structure Solawi groups have developed practices that are more inclusive, cover costs of production, show a concern to increase producers' wages and initiate additional funding systems. All these routinized practices are distinct from the mainstream food system and show changes at a local level. These social practices are practised through the membership. They develop through the underlying basic motivations and values of diverse actors and become established through the groups' cultural costumes and social norms. The following perspective on *material structure* gives insights about its existing infrastructure and functional task to practice membership in Solawi groups.

1.3 Member Level: Material Structure

At a material level the infrastructure, the used technology and the functional tasks of the Solawi group are analysed. The material structure leads to a certain social practice with its combination of agency (the basic motivation for the practice and its underlying values).

Transportation

Food products⁹ are commonly delivered to depots, picked up at the farm or sometimes self-harvested by its members/consumers (European CSA Research Group 2016). All investigated Solawi groups receive or organize a delivery to the depots. At Solawi Buschberghof, members have to organize the transportation by themselves and mostly in turn, and in small groups, use their private car. This means that cultural customs of the Solawi group require from consumers to have access to a

⁹ In other German CSAs farm produces can range from fruits, juice, meat, dairy, eggs, bread till honey, and most commonly vegetables (European CSA Research Group, 2016).

car, and in this way they may exclude members that are not able to organize a car on a regular basis to follow the routinized behaviour product pick up for the depot group. For one big group a small van is hired weekly, meaning that cultural customs require here to have a driving licence as a consumer. These pickups are the moment in which members meet some of the farmers, chat with other members and have a look at the farm (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16). While many Solawi groups have garages, cultural centres, or storage rooms, the group of Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) developed the cultural costume to combine the pick-up occasions with the possibility to interact with another and keep a close relation:

Our depot is very communicative. We are also friends with another and meet at birthdays and make BBQ. We have rather a frequent exchange. And Tuesday is always such a day at which I am looking forward to go [to the farm], next week it is time again, and the entire way from here [work] till coming home is around 3,5h that are passing, because one stays everywhere and chats how was the week, or what nicely happened [...] like that one sees the others also more and exchanges more, agree on times to meet and so on (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16).

This shows how these food relations give room to extend normal business relations and bring people together. The routinized behaviour to connecting purchasing routines with strengthen relations and creating social bonds between the depot group leads to the building of a community among the depot group and the farm, being the occasion for the contact. As such the functional use of picking up products. Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) indicates a relatively big time frame for the functional use of *product purchasing*, but which is at the same time much connected with the social event of gatherings. This and the earlier mentioned perception of Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16) with the farm work (see *Social Practice 5* below), confirms the perception of Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) in which the involved time is perceived rather as *social time* and may lower the challenge of adapting to a new, partly more time intensive purchasing system, the need of regular food preparation, and relying on time and management of the group. This and other examples of shared dinners among depot groups suggest also that “the enjoyment of food production and consumption [can be seen] as social and identity-reinforcing activities” (Renting, Schermer and Rossi, 2012, p.300).

Social Practice 5: Purchasing routines

Purchase Routines are organized by members (Agency), within the Socio-Cultural structure of (limited) pick-up times, the insight how and where the food is produced, the acceptance of unstable quantities and varieties of products throughout the year, an agreement around maintenance of the transportation and the depot and an interaction between producers and consumers during delivery or pick-up. There is the self-organization within the depot (e.g. agreements on exchanging food products, how to handle drop-outs of members, food left overs etc.) and the relation to the SL network and its movement, which provide experiences and knowledge to the Solawi group. Both perspectives are influenced through the existing Material Structure of the location for the depot, its interior, the transportation possibilities and agreements (by car, bike, foot), the information provided by the farm (e.g. harvest list). Its practice includes the organization and maintaining of the depot, taking responsibilities in the duties of the depot, organize the weekly pick-up, and share the harvest share with the other members.

Depot

The depot is the infrastructure for the Solawi group to organize the food purchase routines. It is a key practice across CSAs to pick up the food products (European CSA Research Group 2016). There is often one member/consumer assigned¹⁰ as a contact person for the internal organization (who is opening, cleaning and closing the place). Often Solawi groups have an additional person who is in contact with the producer (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16). This cultural custom of assigning one person as a contact person helps consumers and producers to organize communication efficiently, and keep contact with the depot group.

In general depots vary strongly in their location and the organization around it. In some depots members have a week to pick up their products; others have social norms of being only open for a few hours:

At 6pm the room is open and then everybody had to be there before 8pm. That is the end and what is left [vegetables] is given to everybody around [the depot has 20-25 shares] (Michael, Rote Beete, 14-08-16).

This shows that the purchase routines have to be arranged by members in a specific time frame; which could limit access for some people being occupied in this assigned time frame. Locations for depots are (locked) garage, basements or small empty places around (private) houses of members, shared flats offering some space at their entrance, organic shops providing a small assigned space within their store and so forth. In some cases depot groups have a close contact, and meet outside the depot e.g. to cook together (Anna, Schinkeler Höfe, 11-05-16; Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Karin, National Network, 20-09-16).

Observing interaction between members and between members and gardeners gives a rather informal, friendly impression. Many depots have a regular (monthly) meeting to discuss concerns and organization next to the meetings of the Solawi (Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Michael, Rote Beete, 14-08-16), which gives an indication for social bonds among members (see *Social Practice 5* above).



Picture: Farm shop Kattendorfer Hof - Hamburg



Picture: Dein Hof depot in a cultural center - Dresden

¹⁰ The assigned person is changing every year



Picture: Depot Dein Hof - Dresden



Picture: Depot Schinkeler Höfe - Kiel

In the case of the Solawi Sterngartenodyssee, the depot groups are not only based in Berlin/Potsdam, but also in Leipzig and Halle. With almost 240 members and 29 depots this is organized with one main transportation return from Berlin/Potsdam to Leipzig, and separately organized once to Halle and Leipzig. For the Berlin/Potsdam group the Solawi employs a person who organizes the entire ordering, driving and communication among the consumers and producers. Additionally, the Solawi group requests in turn all members to organize two people who help an entire day for the transportation (and partly harvest) and another person for half a day the day after for its distribution within the city (Thilo, Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16). Thilo (Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16) believes that this voluntary help can be requested, even if people have to take a holiday for it, as it is only in a two years shift. In practice he sees that it works out well. In comparison to the Solawi Schinkel Höfe, consumers pay more than the double for the transportation, as ways are also much longer.

This different organization of the food products changes the nature of close relation between producers and consumers. Its organizational set up is in contrast to most Solawi groups, which are rather locally based. Consequently community may be built around an active group of consumers, but not in corporation with the producers, as they are only in direct contact during the harvest. The rather structured social norm of engagement asks consumers to be committed to the shared work.

Farm shops

Food purchase routines are differently organized at Solawi Kattendorfer Hof. Next to depots, the Solawi group decided to develop *farm shops* in some districts of Hamburg (see also *Vignette*). As such the functional task of food pick-up changes its nature: Next to farm produced products, members can also buy additional organic products. At the same time every customer is welcomed to buy all products from the shop. Through the infrastructure of the shop members/consumers can pick up their products within *normal* shop opening hours. Because members can simple *take* the farm owned products, according to their share, they raise attention at ordinary customers and promote in that way interest for the SL concept. Because of their small member size per farm shop they still generate a personal atmosphere and have the advantage for members that they have regular opening hours and additional products (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Following Geels (2005, p. 690) perception of niches such farm shops can be understood as a competing technologies triggering “wider changes

in the sociotechnical regime” and showing steps of breaking out of the niches by developing systems that are more convenient for occupied people and as such easier adaptable. The rapidly increasing number of members in such farm shops seems an indication that consumers show interest in this combination of farm relation and rather normal shopping routines (except the payments). It remains unclear, if such hybrid systems relate consumers still in the same way with the farm as the self-organization of the depot does.

Part of the infrastructure is also the physical position of the Solawi. Without the connection by public transport members commonly come less frequently to the farm (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16), which impacts relation among members and the insight in production processes.

In conclusion the perspective of the material structure has shown that different social norms of organizing the food purchase influence consumers’ ability to join Solawi groups or depot groups. Depots are self-organized and as such their infrastructure, relation among members and the social norms vary greatly between the groups. Solawi groups show innovative approaches to attract new members and increase convenience among existing ones. Unclear remains how social norms and cultural customs around depots influence the relation between members – consumers and producers.

1.4 Changes of food practices through membership

I have always wondered which food practice changes members observe by themselves through participating in Solawi groups. Asking members about changes that have come through the membership gave different answers: While the changing purchase and interaction affected some people strongly in their routine, there were others who had been already engaged in purchasing within cooperatives or getting vegetable through box schemes and did not feel the change very much. For Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16) the additional learning, through the interaction with producers and members, is a valuable attribution of the SL system: “you don’t simply consume something where you don’t know where and how it is produced in the production chain”. These underlying motives (the interest to gain knowledge and build a relation with the producers) are part of a product purchase practice and develop through the interaction a relation to the place that Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) describe as a *conception of space*; both are distinct from the mainstream food system. She further explains how she sees vegetables differently in the supermarkets:

This vegetables from the supermarket do not appeal to me anymore [...] earlier ‘eco’ was this wizen apple and so on, and this is simply not the case [anymore]. These are super nice, fresh vegetables! [...] In winter I eat cabbage every day. Else I definitely would not do so [laughs]. I became totally ok with it. I do like that now. And generally to get a feeling for seasonality; that wasn’t a topic before (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16).

This shows that adapting to the different food purchase system (the Solawi group) shows not only changing practices in purchase, but also a routinized behaviour in adapting consumption to the locally embedded production system, and being aware and gaining knowledge of seasonality. Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) confirms the perception of Natalie (Rote Beete, 21-08-16), to have tasty and high quality food, through the feedback of her friends: “they also taste it and say: it tastes much more intensive, very different” (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16). Such differences in diet, and the adaption towards seasonal, locally produced food, are also reflected by Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) as one of the changes through the Solawi membership (see *Social Practice*

6 below). At the same time she observed that she became much more patient towards not fulfilled orders “earlier I would have said: my god that is impossible! When I order it, then it has to be there. But you become more relaxed” (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16). Here Marlene (Buschberghof, 25-08-16) shows a routinized behaviour in becoming tolerant to imperfections in product purchase organization practices. Although she needs to pick up her products from the farm (when it is her round in the group) and spends around 3,5h for that, she describes it in terms of a social event (as mentioned in *Transportation*) and confirms “I myself wouldn’t like to miss it [the membership] anymore and if we ever move we would search somewhere else for a farm” (Marlene, Buschberghof, 25-08-16) (see *Social Practice 7* below).

These changes in group identity and interrelation with the Solawi group was also observed by Manfred (Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16): members “who joined for two years’ experience changes in their demand“. This group identity is also observed among Solawi producers who came together through the existence of the network: “we grouped together and in that moment you realize, you are not alone, and we can support each other. That is very, very important” (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). The underlying motives for the demand may change slightly between members. From members Birgit (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16) hears that they recognize the food of their Solawi group “from the taste and don’t want anything else anymore“. But for her the personal level between the members – producers and consumers, is the strongest difference to the mainstream food system. Food characteristics and member relation seem to have an impact on the group identification process within the Solawi group and go far beyond normal market relations (see *Social Practice 6* below).

The perspective on agency, socio-cultural structure and material structure shows that the interactions between the different levels build social practices that are distinct from the mainstream food system. Members have different motivations to engage themselves in Solawi groups. Some are rather product oriented; others aim on contributing to a (local) institutional change. Looking at the socio-cultural perspective there are many activities in which members build a direct relation that is based on trust and mutual agreements. These social interactions build social relations among members and result in community development and a group identity. Members show routinized behaviour in engaging themselves in farm related work and adapting their routines and cultural customs accordingly. To implement these social practices members developed functional tasks and infrastructure for the product purchase – the material structure. The different investigated Solawi groups differ in how they organize the food deliveries and which kind of depot they choose. The analysis at member level has shown that membership is practised in a complex construct. Central is the active engagement of members to build community and how their relations develop into a group identity. They correspond to the understanding of (Nicolini, 2012) being closely related to the identity of belonging to a group and being recognized as such. Looking at the diverse social practices of member groups the distinction between practices of the conventional mainstream food system and the practices of Solawi groups can be clearly distinguished from another. Although membership is officially arranged, communication and relations are, as far as possible, informally leading to a close relation among members.

Social Practice 6: Adapting to locally produced food

Members of Solawi groups are willing to adapt their diet to locally and seasonally produced food and the relation towards it (Agency). Consumer members establish a relation between each other, with the producers and the land, show knowledge and interest in adapting to the offered products through the year, exchange recipes and information around the food items and become aware about local food traditions (Socio-Cultural Structure). This is possible through the existing farm/market garden, the local food and its logistics (car, bike, foot) (Material-Structure). It requires from consumers to try partly unknown food, adapt to local and seasonal food and to cope with irregular amounts and varieties of food between the seasons. To deal with seasonal oversupply, members conserve food, starting invention of recipes (e.g. pasta with cabbage) and exchange products among members which is leading to more interaction. They become sensitive to food quality and develop a relation to the food in knowing where food comes from and how it is produced. Producers do not have to comply to market food standards and demands and avoid food waste.

Social Practice 7: Accepting Imperfection

Members are willing to accept imperfection of products, purchase routines and new forms of engagement (Agency). This includes changes in food production (e.g. dealing with irregular amounts and varieties of food items over the year, having less varieties in winter), but also food items that do not meet conventional market regulations, are not packaged or portioned. Members communicate with another a lot and use democratic structures for decision making generally consent decisions are made to come to mutual agreements. In some cases ordered products may not come; out of various reasons, or consumers may not come to agreed gatherings or farm work. Having agreed to share farming risks, consumers are able to face unforeseen challenges together with the producers (Socio-Cultural Structures). Solawi groups agree on purchase routines that request members to follow social norms (e.g. fixed location or fixed times) (Material Structures). Members do not necessarily perceive these mentioned bottlenecks as challenges. They show adaption and tolerance and develop routinized behaviour around unusual practices. The research has shown that members develop cultural customs to combine e.g. time of product purchase or farm work with social time engaging with people/friends, learn more about agricultural production and the local environment. Less varieties of food items or unknown food seem to make people creative in cooking new dishes. As such it changes the perception of space through the established relation (Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002).

2. Network perspective

In this section I look more closely at the connection between local member groups and the national and the international network. Here a focus is set on the national network being in direct contact with the Solawi groups. Since this research is focussing on social practices of members of member groups this perspective on the national network is concentrating on the attributes that are essential for the relation between the network and the member groups. I will start with a short overview of the *agency* perspective of the network with its basic motivation, underlying philosophy and the structure of SL and look further on the *socio-cultural perspectives* with the engagement of members of Solawi groups, the relation to the international network Urgenci and its cultural environment. Finally I take the perspective of the *material structural* to illustrate the infrastructure and functional use of the network. These perspectives are important to see how both networks influence the social practices of the member groups. As such it becomes clear which role the network plays when developing social practices that are distinct from the mainstream food system.

2.1 National Level: Agency

Between 1988 – 2003 Germany had only three Solawi groups. With the establishment of the network the number increased rapidly (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16) to currently almost 250 Solawi groups (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b). This shows a rapid increase over the last years. Members see this rapid increase in relation with establishment of the network.

The network SL understands itself as a movement and a direct democratic organisation (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016). Manfred (Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16) explains the networks' philosophy as the following: The network "enables sustainable and organic agriculture that is diverse and looks at the demands of the people that it is nourishing, can react to it in the way of its local possibilities. A site adapted agriculture which is able to be in communication with its surrounding". Here the local and sustainable embeddedness of agriculture and its adaption to local needs of members is emphasised. Its basic motivation is to support and sustain peasant farming in which producers and consumers collaborate together and see agriculture as a societal responsibility. With its work, it wants to support a paradigm change of the mainstream food system in whole Germany, which is an ambition goal when looking at the strong position of conventional agriculture.

Organizational structure

Looking at the organizational structure of the network helps to understand who the network is and as such the nature of relation it has with its members. The networks' organizational structure is direct democratic and participatory, to give diverse people the possibility to become engaged and form the movement (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016a). This means the network is not looking for a homogenous member group. Solawi members (individuals, farms and organizations) have voting rights. If the farm decides to become a member of the network, its consumers are not automatically members of the network. This depends on the individual choices of the Solawi group members (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). NGOs and other people can become passive members. The networks' financial resources are member fees and donations. The membership fees are based on the solidarity payment system and set by the council (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016a), which underlines its inclusive approach to give also small Solawi groups and farms the possibility to join with a small budget.

The networks' council consists of one half delegates from farms and half from single members, with a maximum of 40 people delegated¹¹ (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b). This shows that the delegates consist of Solawi members and have a common interest and understanding. Although they do not share the same direct relation like within Solawi groups, they do develop a *Gemeinschaft* that builds community on a wider scale.

The perspective at *agency* has shown that there have been rapid increases of Solawi groups in the last years, which is presumed to be influenced through the establishment of the network. SL sees itself as a movement, direct democratic organization and society. It advocates peasant farming, sustainable production systems and to develop locally embedded food systems that are based on the demands of local people. Through its work the network wants to reach a paradigm shift of the current mainstream food system in Germany, which shows a strong believe that the system has a strong transformative potential and is meeting acceptance in wide fields of society. When looking at the organizational structure of the network it becomes clear that the networks' decision making is done by members – consumers and producers and as such it is steered by the practitioners themselves.

2.2 National Level: Socio-Cultural Structure

The *socio-cultural* perspective shows how the network relates with the Solawi groups, the international network and other actors, how it communicates, which support it provides to its members, which activities are done by the network and how they correspond with its philosophy.

Most producers of Solawi groups are official members of the network, but membership is not presupposed by the network to receive services and to be part of the movement. As such it is rather a financial support for the network. Often members get first help by the network and only later they become a member to support the network work further (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). This means that especially producers relate with the network and mention to be motivated to sustain this manner through their membership fee.

Communication

Contact between members and SL is kept through mail, the mailing list, phone conversations and face-to face interactions (e.g. during annual assemblies or other occasions) and partly through the newsletter. Spatial it is generally a rather distanced communication, but exchange is done at different levels. Its website provides a wide insight about the value of CSA to people and the environment, it gives guidance to start an own member group, informs about current developments of SL and CSA in general, gives an overview about the CSA history, executed research and publication and more. Weekly more than 10,000 people visit the homepage and around 5,500 people receive the monthly newsletter (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016a). This illustrates its interest among the society and its informative nature.

¹¹ *The council exist of: Höfeversammlung [Farm assembly] can send delegates (max 3) depending on their size. Out of the total max. 20 people are nominated to the be part of the council (for one year); Personversammlung [peoples' assembly] max. 20 nominated Solawi members (never more than farm assembly delegates) go as deligates are part of the council (for one year).*

Newly established Solawi groups can contact SL to become registered at its webpage and be further contacted by interested people. This is normally done on the basis of trust. The network investigates only occasionally, if new Solawi groups meet the philosophy of the movement or not (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This list of Solawi groups strengthens the community aspect and builds on a group identity between the members and the network. To avoid miss-use of the name, Manfred (Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16) raises the issue of developing a Solawi certification scheme, which is controlled by trained network employees. However, there is a general reluctance among other network members about this idea (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). "For the case of emergency" and to avoid attraction of political right-winged groups, which are attracted by local structures, there is a registered trademark on *Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Solawi* and *Sich die Ernte teilen* [to share the harvest] (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16). Considering the development of Solawi groups working without organic agricultural certification schemes, but on the level of direct contact and trust, a certification might change the overall relation between the Solawi groups and the network.

SL communicates to support a diversity of Solawi groups and gives Solawi groups the possibility to be named Solawi and still choose their individual structure. The investigated Solawi groups have shown a great diversity in their organization. The most different approach was probably chosen by the Solawi Sterngartenodyssee with its location in Berlin, Potsdam, Halle and Leipzig (with a distance of up to 190km between the cities). The two main organizers see their approach as a possible future model of Solawi groups and interpret the collaboration between farms on a wider spatial scale, then e.g. Schinkeler Höfe. Through the inclusion of several, each specialised farms, they see advantages in being able to grow tremendously in the number of member shares and balancing the individual demand and supply of farms through a high level in flexibility of their product choice (Thilo, Sterngartenodyssee, 19-09-16). Such systems are different to most other investigated Solawi groups, and show that the network tolerates such diverse organizational structures of Solawi groups. How far a frequent engagement can be maintained between members and the producer can be however questioned.

Exchanging knowledge

Members are supported by the network through sharing knowledge and experiences (see *communication* above) and linking Solawi groups with other Solawi groups who have similar organizational structures or locations to exchange experiences. Knowledge among SL and CSA issues is shared in diverse ways: The networks' internet page; the monthly newsletter *Freibrief* that informs about current development and achievements, upcoming activities, requests by members and the SL network etc.; members can receive information material to recruit new members; and there is the annual general assembly that is a place to meet and exchange. Additionally, the network organizes info days, other gatherings and the general assembly. This shows a big diversity in chosen communication channels that are used to share knowledge among members. It gives the possibility to build relations among Solawi groups and with the SL network. Over the last years these gatherings found so much interest among members and non-members, that there is commonly a waiting list above 120 existing registrations. Here members have priority before non-members. Such occasions are also used to link Solawi groups from one or neighbouring federal districts and stimulate as such the exchange among each other (see also *Regional groups*) (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). The strong demand to participate in gatherings shows the interest of members to engage with others.

Another occasion of engagement and sharing knowledge is a four days introductory course at the agricultural university in Witzenhausen. The *Studium Fundamentale* course works on the topic of CSA/SL and is organized by the network and the locally operating Solawi Freudenthal. Here Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) observed that over the last years there has been a shift in the pre-knowledge of the term of SL among students: “At the initial time [of the network] everybody was clear about the meaning of the term and it was something new [...] by now the term is known but one does not fully understand what is behind. It is rather categorized as a marketing model” (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This misunderstanding is experienced by different people. People compare it easily to a vegetable box scheme (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16):

There are people who think in certain structures and see it as a marketing concept. But damn, it is not! It is not a marketing concept, it is a concrete sustenance of people with food that they need, and on the other side it is continuation of the development of the farm and its people and not marketing (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16).

Such different understandings of the term *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* [solidarity based agriculture] illustrate the importance of the network and its member groups to spread knowledge on the meanings behind the term SL/CSA. Regularly the network and Solawi groups put afford in doing so through keeping contact with press, TV and the scientific field (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Through the offered introductory course on CSA/SL by the network and its closely positioned Solawi Freudenthal, the underlying values of the concept are strengthened. The work with the Solawi shows the close cooperation with the member group, building on a *Gemeinschaft* relation between the two.

Individual support by SL

The network offers knowledge and exchange generating activities and concrete consultancy service to its members (Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V., 2016b), which brings them in (direct) contact with another. SL members and non-members can use the support of the national network for free. As such its membership is rather informal. Following Schatzkis (2005) perception on practices such initial activities by the network make Solawi members relate to the network. Through their shared interest a common language is developed (Nicolini, 2012).

Next to knowledge exchange in a rather general term there is a *consultancy service*/individual support on specific questions from the Solawi groups. Such services are offered by the network to all people interested in starting a Solawi. That means members can contact the network and through a mailing list people can write their questions, which goes to a group of specialized people who can give advice. Through this questions can be answered by mail or people make a phone call (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). In the initial start of the Solawi Schinkeler Höfe its members made use of this service: Through an external sponsorship of the Solawi a new position in the network could be constructed and the Solawi group received help from an employed consult for their specific situation of having four different holdings: “That is a help, because there are simply people who have already experiences” (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). Generally, the first consultancy request is for free and further consultancy requests depend on the needed effort and how specific the questions are (or in how far the knowledge benefits all members), if these services are free, or if the *experts* want to have an allowance (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). Through its long term experiences the network has here also the function of linking new Solawi members with experienced members to exchange experiences (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). This guidance builds a relation between

Solawi members and the network, which supports the group identity process. It may also increase confidence among new Solawi members to find an own structure based on their philosophy with the help of the insights and experiences of established Solawi groups, as indicated also by Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16): “you have to see what matches, in which direction you want to move.” This shows the freedom that Solawi groups have to move into diverse directions within their organizational structure (see also *communication*). Especially producers express their value of being a member and supporting the work of the network through their membership fee. Some of these farms, like the Buschberghof and Kattendorfer Hof have been established already before the start of the network and took/take part in shaping its current structure and organization. These farms are actively involved in the network activities and take part in supporting other Solawi groups with their long term experiences.

Among members there are different opinions on how much time the network should dedicate to lobbying for political changes within the society. There are two contrary opinions among members: “There are people who say: you need to have your feet first on the ground and do something, because you can’t wait for the politicians. And then there are people, who think we need to start it top down” (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) believes that “political work needs to be financed differently” and not through the general member fee. This could be done by asking network members to distinguish if they want to support political work additionally or simply the structure of the network. Such system would support both member motivations, but may also lower the time for political work of the network and therefore lower the ability to raise awareness among the SL philosophy and its local impact. It raises the question of the importance to lobby for the SL/CSA system with politicians, or if local examples provide a change and reach more success and attention in society by providing good examples?

Regional group engagement

SL is motivated to stimulate the developments of regional groups, among Solawi groups of one or several neighbouring federal districts, to strengthen regional relations and exchange among Solawi groups (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; European CSA Research Group 2016). Regions that do not have a regional group yet, are approached by the network. At such occasions, different Solawi groups are brought together: “During the big network meetings we provide mostly an additional room so that the regional groups can meet [...] I had also the idea to invite annually for a telephone conference [to support this]” (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) sees that among the networks there is an active development and exchange, and “the more farms there are, the more likely they meet regional and discuss primarily their own topics”. This triggers also the question of how other regions deal with key questions around SL/CSA and these can be discussed again with the national network (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). The subscription to the networks mailing list is possible for everybody. Regional groups use these gatherings not only for discussions and knowledge exchange, but also for developing seed and seedling exchange, harvest exchange and more (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16): “The first seed producing initiatives exist. We developed that in the Regio-meeting in small groups [...] but we work mainly on the concept to do it bigger” (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16). Regional groups are seen as the middle part between members and the network. Such levels provide possibilities of exchange, gaining knowledge, building relation, and developing a group identity among a certain region. Being geographically close to another may also open the possibilities to see each other more easily and faster.

Through the regional groups the network aims on an information flow between the network and the regional groups, and the regional groups and the Solawi group members. Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) sees however, that due to a time constrains such information flows are not always working properly: “Who takes really the time to read something?” This touches upon a challenge that is known well in agriculture (see below).

Time constrains

Repeatedly members speak about time constrains to do public relation, recruit new members, get in contact with network activities, political work and more (e.g. Charlotte, Rote Beete, 14-08-16; Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16; Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). The network is aware of this challenge:

I think it is a general problem in agriculture, which many Solawis still have, that they are simply overworked and it is understandable that they take little time to inform themselves more. But the idea of Solawi is actually to set a budget volume to avoid such overwork in which you can't even inform yourself anymore [...] it is simply a crucial point to set the budget volume in a way that they have enough employees and are paid sufficiently (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16).

Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) sees here the budget planning as the driving force and potential solution to improve members' challenge of managing time. The limited time has consequences on members' ability for networking, exchange, non-farm activities (e.g. awareness raising) and gaining new knowledge. This is not simply the case only for producers, but also for consumers, who help with farm work or in working groups on diverse issues (Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16; Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Birgit, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16). In some cases the contact between members and the network is frequent at the beginning, but less after their establishment (e.g. Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Consequently this means that through the time constrains, Solawi group members have limited means to interact, relate and exchange with other Solawi groups and the network. Although the SL concept is created with the aim on balancing time constrains of producers, it is also affected by the societal demands and external factors.

Influences through the network

When asking members of Solawi groups about a possible influence or restriction from the national or international network I received surprising faces and incomprehension (e.g. Kurt, Buschberghof, 12-09-16; Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16; Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16). Members saw the network rather as a *stimulation* in creating something new (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16) and receiving support especially in the initial stage through the gathered knowledge, experiences and network (Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16): “The first meeting was important to answer questions like: *how to organize a CSA and how far engagement can reach* [among members]”, but also to get impulses from others, having a platform for exchange (on a politically, active level), info materials, building public relation and more (Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16).

This shows that social practices are primarily developed among the member groups through their direct interaction. It suggests that the network connects the groups, fosters exchange, unites a common voice and translates it to different stakeholders, but instead of steering the practices, it influences rather the formal organization around SL/CSA, which is in contrast to the theorization of Duncan and Pascucci (2017).

Relation to the international network Urgenci

Through the data collection it became clear that among Solawi groups there is very little knowledge on the international network Urgenci. While some know its existence, but do not see the need to be closely involved with another, many local members said, they had never heard about it.

The national network keeps contact with Urgenci over webpage, mail, skype, phone, and gets informed about their current activities through requesting specific information (e.g. for the the research project *Overview of Community Supported Agriculture in Europe*), which is mostly linked to a specific event. This contact is quite frequent. Additionally, both networks meet during Urgenci's international meetings (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This relation is not built between Urgenci and the Solawi groups. To understand this information gap Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) explains the first contact between members of Solawi groups and SL in the following way:

The first contact comes mostly from the farms towards us and the question is what is the standard information that they get? When I think about it, it is probably the case that we expect that most of them have read the website [laughs], and apparently, you can't expect that, but who have gone through it might have found the international part.

Additionally SL forwards regularly requests by Urgenci through mail to its members (some of these questions are also directly answered by the council) (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This shows that SL expects from Solawi members to see information about Urgenci through their provided digital information; like the internet page, mail or newsletter. This expected information channel seems to work not efficient enough. Reasons for this poor information flows and contact between Solawi group members and Urgenci are seen in their limited time (Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16; Manfred, Kattendorfer Hof, 23-08-16), the available finance to join their activities, a low(er) interest to become engaged at an international level (e.g. Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16) and the threshold of communicating in a foreign language (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Some people are interested to be engaged in the international development of CSA and others keep the focus rather at the development at local level (e.g. Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16; Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) and Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) see also here, at the local level, more effectiveness to develop the CSA movement further: It is "not so much that we would build an organizational top structure to work from there [...] for me Solidarische Landwirtschaft is always local and connected to one or more farms" (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Part of this little exchange between Solawi members and Urgenci might be also the understanding of the affiliation with the network. For Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) and Walter (Buschberghof, 13-09-16) it is first of all a network for national networks, despite the possibility to join as an individual or farm.

This shows that most SL members focus rather at the local developments. They see the international network rather as a policy influencing tool and an additional information and exchange platform, but with less priority. Although the international network has a function of exchanging experiences and knowledge; not only within Europe, but at an international scale, it is also done over the national network. Through the local interaction, a direct relation can be built. This is perceived as more effective and efficient and results in stronger social bonds. Looking at the group identity aspect there seems to be rather a group identity of the movement among the two networks, but a rather loose bound between the Solawi members and Urgenci.

International relations

Currently there is a frequent contact between SL and the Austrian CSAs to support their further developments based on the experiences gained within SL. Also with Switzerland there is direct exchange. Based on their common language the three countries used to have three-country Skype conversations. The reasons for the relation between these countries are seen in the fact that all three countries speak German: "It is just easier with the language to speak German together" (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). Also Luxemburg contacted SL more often since 2016, and organized already a conference about the CSA topic. But there is also interest from countries outside Europe: Somebody from Gambia and Mexico showed interest to develop the CSA system in their country and asked for information and experiences of the network. This direct contact between foreign countries and SL and CSA related requests are generally replied by Urgenci, but also by SL itself: "So it is somehow the case that they contact us internationally and we do what we can do" (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). This shows an informal relation between Urgenci and SL and does not follow any possible hierarchical norms. Reasons for the international interest sees Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) in the relatively structured way:

I think we are relatively structured here. It was also visible in the international work, that they are quite impressed how we manage it. With all our mistakes that we still have, and critical assess, but in comparison how things are somewhere else, we can be actually happy how we managed things [laughs]. Others are just dreaming about it" [others don't have national networks] (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16).

The interest of foreign people in receiving information and experiences from SL supports the special organization and engagement of SL and underlines the interest of (potential) CSA practitioners to exchange knowledge and experience to enlarge the CSA movement.

Other affords to promote CSA at an international scale have been taken by an European project in which SL worked closely with eastern European countries (like Czech Republic and Poland) to develop exchange of CSA experiences between the countries and strengthen the development of CSA groups at the local level (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16).

In conclusion this perspective on socio-cultural structures has shown that SL has an inclusive supporting structure and keeps frequent relations from a local to an international level. The network uses different forms and media to communicate knowledge exchange and experiences. The network and Solawi groups engage in clarifications around the partly blurred understandings of the CSA/SL concept through e.g. an introductory university course. Although there are legal structures (trademarks) in place, there is a rather informal communication and exchange with other Solawi/CSA members. Group identity is built through the promotion of the diverse Solawi groups at the SL website and direct relations, in person or virtual. Occasions of network meetings are used to bring Solawi group members from the same region together. These possibilities are taken up by Solawi members and are used for knowledge and experience exchange, general discussions around SL/CSA related topics, but also to organize seed/seedling exchange among Solawi groups. Time constrains limit the exchange of Solawi members with SL and Urgenci. While SL stays in frequent contact with Urgenci, there is generally little knowledge around Urgenci and foreign language, time constrains and a local focus on SL activities reduces the perceived need to engage with Urgenci. This shows that language issues illustrate still bottlenecks of frequent communications. Through the investigation on possible constrains by the network towards Solawi groups new insight could be gained that social practices are primarily built among Solawi groups and are not steered by the network. International

recognition of the structured and organized work of SL motivates (potential) CSA practitioners to request experiences and knowledge partly over Urgenci and partly directly by SL. As such it shows a rather informal relation between Urgenci and SL without hierarchical norms.

2.3 National Level: Material Structure

Through the perspective at the *material structure* at the national level a short overview is given on the existing infrastructure: the location and resources.

The office of SL is positioned in the middle of Germany. This is strategically practical for diverse gatherings, but also through the close distance of the (organic) agricultural university Witzenhausen potential for exchange and knowledge generation is given. Through the existence of an office diverse questions and stimuli can be gathered at a central point. Through a fixed place an identity is built by the network. Functional tools like the website or the newsletter promote this identity and give the network a visible face and functional importance. Additional functional tools are info materials that can be online ordered by Solawi groups. Members see these materials as useful; especially at the initial start of the Solawi group.

3. Spreading of Alternative Food Practices

The view on how Solawi member groups spread their alternative food practices is important to understand how social practices become visible in practice. At the same time it shows if food practices are corresponding with the shared philosophy of SL/CSA that is distinct from the mainstream food system. Especially when niches move out of the niche it becomes interesting how far their nature changes or how far a radical nature is sustained (Geels, 2005). Considering the rapid increase of Solawi groups over the last years this move is considerable, but not yet present.

The above identified diverse social practices of members of Solawi groups (Sharing Risks, Sharing Knowledge, Group Identity, Developing Autonomous Farm Structures, Purchase Routines, Adapting Locally Produced Food, and Accepting *Imperfection*) are different to the mainstream food system. By sharing these practices with people outside the niche these practices have the potential to cause attention and attract new members. Through the diversity of Solawi groups different potential consumers and producers are attracted. Such spreading of practices is stimulated through providing good examples of well-functioning Solawi groups (Karin, National Network, 20-09-16): “good examples have the strongest effect more than all words [...] and satisfied members are the best multipliers and that is surely the same with the farms and with agriculture”. This perception touches on the perception that SL may concentrate their activities rather on local structural support.

Spreading the knowledge about the existence of such well-functioning Solawi groups is done through the personal network of the members and SL, the communication through the network, but also scientists and media. Karin (National Network, 20-09-16) and Dirk (Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16) report from regular requests (at the network and directly at Solawi groups) by media (magazines, newspaper, TV, radio), but also scientists, to report about the Solawi/CSA movement and its Solawi groups. This means that the presence of the movement and its network is perceived by media and science (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Looking at the rapid increase of Solawi initiatives after the establishment of SL network (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16) we can expect that the network took

an important role in spreading knowledge and experiences among non-members. For this the network uses its internet page, the newsletter *Freibrief* [free letter], their work of public relations, gatherings that are also open to non-members, and their mentioned network and media connections. Among existing members the *regional groups* seem to be welcomed and taken up frequently and spread social practices of members among Solawi groups. Also the mentioned seed exchange among regional group members is a potential network to exchange and develop new social practices. In Saxony the regional groups are active discussing their own understanding of the concept SL, gardening topics, membership questions, how they can support each other and their understanding of *self-sufficiency* (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16; Kai, Rote Beete, 10-08-16; Laura, Dein Hof, 17-08-16), which leads to an exchange between the different Solawi groups. Other connections between Solawi farms exist with the example of Solawi Schinkler Höfe (four individual holdings as one Solawi group), or the organization of Solawi Sterngartenodyssee with its four different producers. The latter however without a direct exchange of gardeners/farmers, but its organizer (who organize the logistic and goods) keeps contact between the farms. Producers have often exchange with other (non-Solawi and Solawi) farms, to exchange inputs or harvest (Hans, Dein Hof, 17-08-16; Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16): “There is always the attempt to exchange and to have as few money flows as possible” (Johanna, Freudenthal, 21-09-16), but also through the contact and exchange with other political engaged groups, as Zapatista, Nyeleni, local house squatting groups, political summer camps etc., are SL/CSA insights spread among non-members. Additionally, there is often collaboration with their educational institution or farm, friends, family, business partners and so forth.

Other ways of getting familiar with the food practices are publications, Solawi group gatherings that are open to non-members, help with the farm work, guided (school) excursions, or by visiting the Kattendorfer Hof's farm shops, which are open to non-members and members, and in which non-members get directly confronted with the Solawi structure during their shopping (e.g. causing attention when members do not pay for the farm products). But also through the enthusiasm of members (about the quality of the products, the philosophy of the Solawi itself etc.) and the experienced group identity of members they share their experiences and insights with non-members, attracts potentially new members, and at the same time they spread the knowledge on their social practices (Caroline, Kattendorfer Hof, 24-08-16; Birgit, Schinkler Höfe, 08-09-16).

Bottlenecks can be seen in the wrong understanding of the philosophy of SL/CSA, as the assumption that vegetable box schemes are the same as the SL/CSA system or that it is simply an alternative marketing model (as mentioned earlier by (Natalie, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Karin, National Network, 20-09-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). Following the overall goal of the CSA movement to contribute to a shift of the current food paradigm, it is essential that its members have a strong group identity that unites them in their belief, since “high social identification corresponded with a greater willingness to act in concert with the group” (Jans, Postmes and Van der Zee, 2012, p. 1148). By sustaining this relation to the group and commit themselves to support the goals of the movement challenges (e.g. crop failures) can be overcome and as such the belief of the movement can be sustained.

Discussion

The intention of this research is to focus on the local level of CSA groups and to identify social practices of members of member groups (Solawis) of SL in Germany, and to investigate how the activities of the national and international network relate to the development of such social practices. Therefore I explored how local member groups of SL practice membership; how these local member groups relate to the national and international network; and how local member groups of SL spread their alternative food practices. For this I applied my findings, from seven different Solawis and two interviews with people being engaged in the work of SL, through the lens of the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013). The framework takes the Multi-Level Perspective and looks at the niche level to explore the nature of the innovation; here the social practices of members of Solawi groups. I looked at *agency*; the *socio-cultural structure* with the interaction between members, their surrounding and the network; and the *material structure* with its existing infrastructure and the functional use for members' practices. I investigated the characteristics of the social practices by applying the concepts of *practice, identity and community*. Looking at a diversity of Solawi groups, I aimed to identify different routinized practices leading to social practices. I further aimed to understand how the national network SL and international networks Urgenci are connected to members of Solawi groups, and how these social practices are related to the activities of its national and international network.

The research builds on identified research gaps, notably: (1) to combine viewpoints of *politics of space and place* and the relational dynamics of local actors (Tregear, 2011); (2) to describe what AFNs are whether focussing only on what they are not (Tregear, 2011); (3) to address the transition of urban ecology and its resident participation (Lagane, 2014).

Addressing these research gaps I start with (2), referring back to the previously introduced definition of AFNs (see *Literature Review*). Summarizing the diverse definitions of scholars, AFNs are defined as concepts that emerge in “experimental spaces to develop novel practices of food provision that are more in tune with their values, norms, needs, and desires” (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206). They enable producers and consumers to be in direct, or close relationship (D’Amico, 2015) and develop systems that are economically viable to its producers and consumers, in making use of “ecologically sound production distribution systems” (Feenstra, 1997, p. 28). This results in the “reproduction and revaluation of local sources” and may cause a revaluation of high food quality (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206), territories and local traditions.

Considering research gap (1), this research gives insights on social practices of members of Solawi groups. It looks on the relational dynamics of actors, their cultural customs and social norms within the member group and towards their individual networks, and investigates the relation to the national and international network. Through the lens of the Three-Tiered framework and the concepts of *practice, identity and community*, I could identify seven diverse social practices of members of Solawi groups: Sharing Risks, Sharing Knowledge, Building Group Identity, Developing Autonomous Farm Structures, Purchasing Routines, Adapting to Locally Produced Food, and Accepting *Imperfection* (see also more explanations at *membership perspective*). These social practices are presented throughout the text, and are oppositional to the mainstream food system. They suggest to be primarily developed among members of Solawi groups who have direct interaction with each other. When looking on the engagement of the national network it shows that

the network connects its members, supports their exchange, unites a common voice and translates these to different stakeholders, but instead of steering the practices, it influences rather the formal organization around SL/CSA. While the national network is in frequent contact with Urgenci, it is hardly perceived and known by members of Solawi groups and loses its importance on the potential influence of social practices of members of Solawi groups, which is in contrast to the theorization of Duncan and Pascucci (2017).

Looking at the organization and food production structures of Solawi farms it becomes visible that Solawi groups are very diverse in their locations, organizational structure, but also from their members themselves; which is also supported by the network (Urgenci, 2016). This would confirm also the perception of Jans, Postmes and van der Zee (2012) that diversity may promote social cohesion and community building. Solawi groups enhance “ecologically sound production distribution systems” (Feenstra, 1997, p. 28) and are more economically viable for its producers and consumers through their direct (business) relationship and social norms of exchanging food products with the monthly membership fee that gives producers the ability to plan in advance. Roep and Wiskerke's (2012, p. 206) perception that “novel practices of food provisioning” are developed in *experimental spaces* becomes here visible e.g. when looking at the cultural custom of a *solidarity payment system*. As such consumers get annually an overview about the total cost of production and an identification of the average costs per member share to cover production costs. Still, members are asked to suggest an individual feasible amount that they can pay per month throughout the year. This can be higher or lower than the identification cost. Important is only that the group covers the needed production costs (see *Member perspective - Finance*). This example shows the effort of Solawi members to detach a price from the food and give back its real product value (e.g. Dirk, Schinkeler Höfe, 08-09-16; Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16; Ludwig, Rote Beete, 21-08-16; Karin, National Network, 20-09-16). It also shows an inclusive nature, in which people from different income levels can join the group which is questioned by Ravenscroft *et al.*, (2012), Goodman (2004) and DuPuis and Goodman(2005). Looking at the principles of SL such practices are strongly encouraged by the network and show that the concept of SL is not simply an alternative business model, but the objective to cover costs of an overall sustainable agricultural system. It is an implemented idea to “supply people with food, that they need, and on the other side it is continuation of the development of the farm” (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16). This relates to the claims advanced by D’Amico (2015) that social bonds give communities back their control from the mainstream food system and create local and community-based systems.

This research has also shown that the underlying philosophy of CSA/SL is sometimes not clear to non-Solawi members and as such it is rather compared with a vegetable box scheme or alternative business model. Here the work of the network is essential to synchronize the understanding of the concept and promote its real philosophy to sustain the concept of CSA. The organization of Solawi groups shows a complex and innovative systems which builds strongly on trust, the establishment of personal relation among members and the creation of a group identity. This group identity is not only built among the Solawi group or depot group, but also towards the network and the international CSA movement itself. Since the relations are different at each level, it suggests also that the strength of group identity differs. The direct relation among members confirm Hinrichs (2000, p. 300) perception that the CSA (/SL) concept shows a “potential for de-commodified relations” among members and are extinct in the mainstream food system. Through building community among members they create a counter development to the mainstream industrial food system (which is

known for its distancing of consumers and producers, but also places and seasons, and destabilizes community) (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). The relation that is built through the Solawi groups, go beyond simple business relations and confirm this perception by Feagan and Henderson (2009). This relates to the research gap (3) looking at the urban ecology and its resident engagement in food production, since most consumers live in urban areas and producers on the outskirts of bigger towns/cities. Here the SL/CSA system invites consumer members to take part in the organization around food provisioning. The case study shows that members show motivation to gain knowledge about farming, and farming related issues, which are generally not connected to their daily life's of consumers, when purchasing within the mainstream food system. Solawi group members use different occasions to engage with another. Examples are the organization of product purchase, consumers helping with farm work and in working groups on specific farm related issues, interactions at gatherings, festivals, during network activities/meetings and in diverse channels of communication. These direct relations build community and a group identity among members. It builds on a relation to their food and its local place and confirms Wiskerkes' (2009) finding of peoples' interest in finding a group identity and *sense of belonging* through the membership within AFNs/Solawi groups. The "reproduction and revaluation of local sources" and members' agreement on the quality of food and its production (Roep and Wiskerke, 2012, p. 206), result in high quality food, autonomous structures with shared responsibility and supports the identification among the group and to its place. Members show routinized behaviour in adapting their consumption to the locally embedded production system, become aware and gain knowledge on seasonality and local food production. Through this experiences and knowledge members show more tolerance towards the imperfection of products and the organization around food purchase routines. It shows how the relation between producers and consumers make people more understandable to unforeseen challenges and supports the establishment of social practices.

Different scholars (Tregear, 2011; Alkon and Mares, 2012) theorize that a paradigm change of the mainstream food system requires more radical organizational structures. These are put in relation to the CSA system (mentioned above). At the same time it is the overall aim of the CSA movement to stimulate change of the current food paradigm. Asking members directly if such a change is happening through the diverse Solawi groups brought different reactions:

That is in a way our aim. We want to shift the entire agriculture of Germany towards CSA. I am sure that won't be possible, but we do give good examples and offer potential solutions [...] there are enough SL examples to show: It's possible differently (Walter, Buschberghof, 13-09-16).

While focussing here on successful examples that present potential solutions the overall goal seems to be rather an indicatory vision than a concrete mission. Michael (Rote Beete, 14-08-16) supports this doubts, but emphasis also the dynamic in which Solawi groups multiply:

I find it very important that it spreads further. How far that will go and if it really changes so much in the big scale, even if it doubles every year, these are societal per mil scales in which the SL is taking part; you have to be aware of that. But still it is one of the most dynamic social-economic projects that currently exist.

That the aimed paradigm shift is not only limited to activities and organizational structures, but to develop common understanding of the concept and a mental mind shift when promoting paradigm shift is highlighted by Karin (National Network, 20-09-16):

It is all about the process. Part of that is, that is clear what is behind the term, because if Solawi is done without a mental paradigm change you didn't really gain anything [...] I think

that examples, that really work out, have the strongest effect to evoke a paradigm change.

The different views seem to give not only an answer to the direct question, but illustrate the characteristic of Solawi groups in Germany: Showing diverse alternative ways of food provisioning and relating consumers, producers and the land, the importance of promoting a common voice and a mental shift together with the alternative food practices and its dynamic increase at the niche level, not only in Germany itself, but also international.

Drawing on the investigated social practices of this research with the lens of practice theory we can affirm that these developed practices are not fixed. They “emerge, persist, shift and disappear [...] sustained or broken” (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012, p. 14) and as such they are in constant change.

Conclusion

In response to diverse challenges of the current mainstream food system, diverse forms of AFNs have appeared (Goodman, 2004; Roep and Wiskerke, 2011; Alkon and Mares, 2012; Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012; Marsden and Franklin, 2013; Lagane, 2014) over the last two decades. Being implemented in protected niches, members of SL experiment and mutually adapt alternative systems and new practices (Smith, 2007). These protected niches present often *radical* innovations (Geels, 2005). Scholars see a great potential that AFNs, like CSAs can challenge the current mainstream food system and move towards socially and environmentally just food production systems (e.g. Spaargaren, Loeber and Oosterveer, 2012; Tregear, 2011; Alkon and Mares, 2012). Through the literature review it became clear that from the common AFNs, CSAs present a radical vision for food production and consumption in so far as producers and consumers share farming risks, they have a direct relationship and commit themselves to exchange farm products with a regular membership fee throughout the season. CSA is organized in member groups and has in Germany the national network SL and in France the international network Urgenci. Considering the overall goal of both networks to stimulate change in reaching a paradigm change of the mainstream food system, it is important to look at the social practices of its members and investigate, if these practices are different to the mainstream food system.

To understand how these social practices develop, I investigated the relation and interaction between members of Solawi groups and towards SL and Urgenci, following the research question *What are the social practices of members of local member groups of the Solidarische Landwirtschaft network and how do they relate to the activities of their network?* Through the analysis on the social practices of members of Solawi groups I could identify seven different social practices: Sharing Risks, Sharing Knowledge, Building Group Identity, Developing Autonomous Farm Structures, Purchasing Routines, Adapting to Locally Produced Food, and Accepting *Imperfection*. These social practices developed through the direct relation and interaction of members of Solawi groups, which are supported through the national network with its knowledge and experiences. They are primarily built among members of the Solawi groups and are built on the relation through direct interactions among member (Nicolini, 2012) and result in trust and identity formation. These qualities build community among members of Solawi groups, but also with established regional Solawi groups, the network and

its overall CSA movement. These social bonds differ in their intensity, and are greatly influenced by the engagement of their practitioners. They support knowledge sharing around SL/CSA and foster the development of new Solawi groups by showing examples of alternative food provisioning.

The overall motivation of SL and Urgenci to promote a system change is a very ambitious goal and may take more than the growth of more member groups. Still, the view on alternative social practices and how these practices are spread by their members suggest that small changes occur within the niche and affect the life and the mind set of their practitioners. The various ways how these practices are shared (see chapter 3) show that SL and CSA establish a strong position in their niche. It is increasingly recognized within the society and do influence the mainstream food system in showing alternative social and environmental systems.

Recommendation for further research

Reflecting on my research findings additional insights could be gained by applying the initially planned focus group discussions. Through this method the interaction between the Solawi group, producers and consumers could be more clearly observed. But also the participatory observations of network meetings, regional group meetings and annual Solawi group meetings, with its agreement on membership prices and festivals are potential occasions in which more insight can be generated.

Additionally, it might be interesting to gain more knowledge on the importance about the work of SL to do policy work at local, national and international level. This question has been raised within the network and may influence the decision of further investments of resources.

Moreover, more knowledge could be generated on the different dynamics in small and big groups. Although it was raised as a constrain by interviewees, it does seem that group dynamics of the network are influenced by the dynamics within depot groups.

Reflection on the role as a researcher

Being an MSc student in organic agriculture with the specialisation in sustainable food systems and my experiences of living in the country side and being engaged in own small scale vegetable and animal production may have influenced the view and understanding of this research. I felt often endowed to experience trust and openness of SL and Slowfood (SF) Germany members to share their thoughts and experiences with me. Through the participatory observations I could relate stronger with the interviewees and it gave me also the idea that I could express my appreciation for their time, hospitality and insight by helping them with their farm work. Some interviewees of Solawi groups/SL saw me as a multiplier when I exchanged practices or observations from other Solawi groups with them. They appreciated this exchange and may have influenced indirectly also the spreading of social practices.

To meet members of SL and SF asked from me to be flexible in my planning to be able to meet my interviewees. In some cases this became quite challenging, because I relied on public transport, interviewees were often in remote places and often SF and SL member groups had similar dates to meet as a group or organize events. In some cases I met SF and SL members at the same day and I felt every time that I would move between different worlds and mind sets. Sometimes these closely

positioned events challenged me to find time to reflect on my findings and experiences and be sensitive to my surrounding all the time. Other challenges occurred through budget constraints. During the time and around the time of my data collection there were several gatherings of the network or member groups (e.g. Urgenci meeting, Terra Madre), but the logistics and entrance fee was often exceeding my budget. Looking back on the time of data collection I realize also that I became too ambitious in wanting to speak with too many people. As such I ended up with more than 20 interviews (including the ones from SF). I have learned from that *sometimes less is more* and at the same time I am thankful that I could experience all these different insights I have gained from it.

This research was planned as an analysis of two case studies: SL and SF. Both networks have a national and international network, see themselves as grassroots organizations and have the overall aim to change the current neoliberal food system. During the data collection it became clear that the activities and organizational structure of members of SL and SF differ a lot. While I could meet and interview producers and consumers of SL and see its diversity of organizational structures I could mainly meet SF members of youth groups, *convivia* (local adult member groups) and retailers. My expectation was to be able to investigate stronger the connection between members and producers, but this was only possible to a very limited extent. I realized too late that SF focuses almost entirely on the awareness raising of not wasting food and marketing objectives to promote the enjoyment of good food and its natural purity by organizing events as disco soup and recommending restaurants. Not having a relation on the ground between consumers and food producers (at least in Germany), but rather on an abstract level, made it impossible to do an analysis of both and evaluating their different ways of stimulating change towards an alternative food system with my chosen methods.

Initially I had planned to include also focus group discussions with producers and consumers, with SL and SF, but already at the very beginning of my data collection it became clear that it is impossible to organize such methods during the harvest season in which time is the most limiting factor. During the time of my data analysis I decided to apply the Community of Practice (CoP) concept from Lave and Wenger (1991) to my data. The concept comes from learning theory and looks at the engagement of groups of people to identify local practices and interaction between members. It seems to fit well with the idea of SL, however, when analysing my data through the lens of CoP, I realized that while CoPs, have common interest in one field and meet to solve problems, build new relations and develop new ideas, there are different motivations and interests in member groups of SL. Some may see local food as the driving force to be a member and others are strongly engaged in building new food systems and give the food product less importance. As such there is a diversity of perceived motivations and challenges and no conformity as in CoP. Realising that, did strengthen my initial motivation to apply the Three-Tiered framework of Crivits and Paredis (2013) to my data. Still, analysing social practices through the lens of the Three-Tiered framework does show its limits. One of such examples is the social practice to create a group identity among the group. Looking on the material structure it seems doubtful that a farm building or place needs to be necessarily there, since a group identity can be also built without an existing material structure (e.g. when looking at the relation between the Solawi group members and their network or the overall CSA movement).

This research took much longer than planned or expected. It had challenged me in many ways coming into my life at a difficult moment in time and being often parallel to other things. Still, I have learned a lot through its progress and it helped me in taking decisions along the way.

References

- Alexandra (2016) 'Casual conversation, Solawi Dein Hof'. Dresden.
- Alkon, A. H. and Mares, T. M. (2012) 'Food sovereignty in US food movements: Radical visions and neoliberal constraints', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 29(3), pp. 347–359. doi: 10.1007/s10460-012-9356-z.
- Anna (2016) 'Casual conversation, Solawi Schinkeler Höfe'. Eckernförde.
- Birgit (2016) 'Interview Solawi Schinkeler Höfe'. Schinkel.
- Caroline (2016) 'Interview Solawi Kattendorfer Hof'. Hamburg.
- Cembalo, L. et al. (2006) "'Rationally Local": Consumer Participation in Alternative Food Chains', *Agribusiness*, 30(1), pp. 330–352. doi: 10.1002/agr.
- Charlotte (2016) 'Casual conversation, Solawi Rote Beete'. Sehlis.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Second Edi. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crivits, M. and Paredis, E. (2013) *Designing an explanatory practice framework: Local food systems as a case*, *Journal of Consumer Culture*. doi: 10.1177/1469540513484321.
- D'Amico, S. (2015) *Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Calabria: A Sociological Exploration of Interaction Dynamics*. Wageningen University. doi: t5518ec7e_001.
- Dimitri, C. et al. (2012) *Organic Farming for Health & Prosperity*. Available at: <http://ofrf.org/sites/ofrf.org/files/docs/pdf/HP-report-web.pdf>.
- Dirk (2016) 'Interview Solawi Schinkeler Höfe'. Schinkel.
- Duncan, J. and Pascucci, S. (2017) 'Mapping the Organisational Forms of Networks of Alternative Food Networks: Implications for Transition', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 57(3), pp. 316–339. doi: 10.1111/soru.12167.
- DuPuis, E. M. and Goodman, D. (2005) 'Should we go "home" to eat?: Toward a reflexive politics of localism', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21(3), pp. 359–371. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2005.05.011.
- Van Eerdt, M. M. and Fong, P. K. N. (1998) 'The monitoring of nitrogen surpluses from agriculture', *Environmental Pollution*, 102(SUPPL. 1), pp. 227–233. doi: 10.1016/S0269-7491(98)80037-7.
- European CSA Research Group (2016) *Community Supported Agriculture in Europe*. Edited by N. R. C6il. Urgenci.
- Feagan, R. and Henderson, A. (2009) 'Devon Acres CSA: Local struggles in a global food system', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26(3), pp. 203–217. doi: 10.1007/s10460-008-9154-9.
- Feenstra, G. W. (1997) 'Local food systems and sustainable communities', *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, 12(1), p. 28. doi: 10.1017/S0889189300007165.
- Friedmann, H. and Mcnair, A. (2008) 'Whose Rules Rule ? Contested Projects to Certify ' Local Production for Distant', 8(July), pp. 408–434.
- Geels, F. W. (2005) 'Processes and patterns in transitions and system innovations: Refining the co-evolutionary multi-level perspective', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 72(6 SPEC. ISS.), pp. 681–696. doi: 10.1016/j.techfore.2004.08.014.
- Goodlass, G., Halberg, N. and Verschuur, G. (2003) 'Input output accounting systems in the European community - An appraisal of their usefulness in raising awareness of environmental problems', *European Journal of Agronomy*, 20(1–2), pp. 17–24. doi: 10.1016/S1161-0301(03)00068-6.

- Goodman, D. (2004) 'Rural Europe Redux? Reflection on Alternative Agro-Food and Paradigm Change', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(1), pp. 3–16.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography, Principles in practice*. 3rd edn. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hans (2016) 'Interview Solawi Dein Hof'. Dresden.
- Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press. New York: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1177/009430610603500554.
- Hayes-Conroy, A. and Martin, D. G. (2010) 'Mobilising bodies: Visceral identification in the Slow Food movement', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35(2), pp. 269–281. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2009.00374.x.
- Hendrickson, M. K. and Heffernan, W. D. (2002) 'Opening spaces through relocalization: Locating potential resistance in the weaknesses of the global food system', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 42(4), p. 347–+. doi: 10.1111/1467-9523.00221.
- Hinrichs, C. C. (2000) 'Embeddedness and local food systems: Notes on two types of direct agricultural market', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16(3), pp. 295–303. doi: 10.1016/S0743-0167(99)00063-7.
- Hitchmen, J. (2014) 'Hitchman Working paper Urgenci'. Aubagne: Urgenci, pp. 1–13.
- Jans, L., Postmes, T. and Van der Zee, K. I. (2012) 'Sharing differences: The inductive route to social identity formation', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Elsevier Inc., 48(5), pp. 1145–1149. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2012.04.013.
- Johanna (2016) 'Interview Solawi Freudenthal'. Witzenhausen.
- Kai (2016) 'Interview Solawi Rote Beete'. Sehlis.
- Karin (2016) 'Interview national network'. Witzenhausen.
- Klimstra, T. a *et al.* (2010) 'Short-term fluctuations in identity: introducing a micro-level approach to identity formation.', *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 99(1), pp. 191–202. doi: 10.1037/a0019584.
- Kop van de, P. *et al.* (2008) 'Community Supported Agriculture: An alternative local food system', *LEISA Magazine* 24.1, pp. 32–34. doi: ileia.fourdigits.nl/magazines/global/towards-fairer-trade/community-supported-agriculture/at_download/article_pdf.
- Kremen, C., Iles, A. and Bacon, C. (2012) 'Ecology and Society: Diversified Farming Systems: An Agroecological, Systems-based Alternative to Modern Industrial Agriculture', 17(4). Available at: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss4/art44/>.
- Kurt (2016) 'Interview Solawi Buschberghof'. Fulenhagen.
- Lagane, J. (2014) 'When students run AMAPs: towards a French model of CSA', *Agriculture and Human Values*, (August 2014), pp. 133–141. doi: 10.1007/s10460-014-9534-2.
- Lang, T. (2003) 'Food Industrialisation and Food Power: Implications for Food Governance', *Development Policy Review*, 21(5–6), pp. 555–568. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8659.2003.00223.x.
- Laura (2016) 'Casual conversation, Solawi Dein Hof'. Dresden.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Letourneau, Deborah; van Bruggen, A. (2006) *Organic Agriculture, A Global Perspective*. Edited by J. Kristiansen, Paul; Taji, Acram; Reganold. Collingwood, Australia: CABI Publishing.

- Ludwig (2016) 'Interview Solawi Rote Beete'. Sehlis.
- Manfred (2016) 'Interview Solawi Kattendorfer Hof'. Kattendorf.
- Marlene (2016) 'Interview Solawi Buschberghof'. Hamburg.
- Marsden, T. and Franklin, A. (2013) 'Replacing neoliberalism: theoretical implications of the rise of local food movements', *Local Environment*, 18(5), pp. 636–641. doi: 10.1080/13549839.2013.797157.
- McKeon, N. (2015) *Food Security Governance - Empowering communities, regulating corporations, PhD Proposal*. London and New York: Routledge. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.
- McMichael, P. (2009) 'A food regime genealogy', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), pp. 139–169. doi: 10.1080/03066150902820354.
- Michael (2016) 'Interview Solawi Rote Beete'. Sehlis.
- Murdoch, J. and Miele, M. (1999) 'Back to Nature': Changing 'Worlds of Production' in the Food Sector', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 39(4), pp. 465–483. doi: 10.1111/1467-9523.00119.
- Natalie (2016) 'Interview Solawi Rote Beete'. Sehlis.
- Nicolini, D. (2012) *Practice Theory, Work and Organization*.
- Oxford University Press (2017) *Oxford Living dictionaries*. Available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practice> (Accessed: 20 July 2017).
- Pascucci, S. et al. (2013) 'Governance mechanisms in food community networks', *Italian Journal of Food Science*, 25(1), pp. 98–104.
- Pereira, L. and Drimie, S. (2016) 'Mapping Domains of Food Access and Consumption: a Conceptual Tool for Appreciating Multiple Perspectives within Food System Governance', *Global governance/politics, climate justice & agrarian/social justice: linkages and challenges, 4-5 February*, (February).
- Priefer, C., Jörissen, J. and Bräutigam, K. R. (2016) 'Food waste prevention in Europe - A cause-driven approach to identify the most relevant leverage points for action', *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*. Elsevier B.V., 109, pp. 155–165. doi: 10.1016/j.resconrec.2016.03.004.
- Ravenscroft, N. et al. (2012) 'Connecting communities through food: the theoretical foundations of community supported agriculture in the UK', 44(115). Available at: <http://www.cresc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/RavenscroftEtAlConnectingCommunitiesThroughFoodWP115.pdf>.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002) 'Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), pp. 243–263. doi: 10.1177/13684310222225432.
- Renting, H. and Van Der Ploeg, J. D. (2001) 'Reconnecting nature, farming and society: Environmental cooperatives in the Netherlands as institutional arrangements for creating coherence', *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 3(2), pp. 85–101. doi: 10.1002/jep.75.
- Renting, H., Schermer, M. and Rossi, A. (2012) 'Building Food Democracy : Exploring Civic Food Networks and Newly Emerging Forms of Food Citizenship', *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 19(3), pp. 289–307.
- Roep, D. and Wiskerke, J. S. C. (2011) 'Transitions in Production Practices', in *Reshaping the Foodscape: The Role of Alternative Food Networks*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 207–228.
- Roep, D. and Wiskerke, J. S. C. (2012) 'On Governance, Embedding and Marketing: Reflections on the Construction of Alternative Sustainable Food Networks', *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 25(2), pp. 205–221. doi: 10.1007/s10806-010-9286-y.

- Saifi, B. and Drake, L. (2008) 'A coevolutionary model for promoting agricultural sustainability', *Ecological Economics*, 65(1), pp. 24–34. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2007.11.008.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2005) 'Peripheral Vision: The Sites of Organizations', *Organization Studies*, 26(3), pp. 465–484. doi: 10.1177/0170840605050876.
- Schermer, M. (2014) 'From "Food from Nowhere" to "Food from Here:" changing producer-consumer relations in Austria', *Agriculture and Human Values*, pp. 121–132. doi: 10.1007/s10460-014-9529-z.
- Schnell, S. M. (2013) 'Food miles, local eating, and community supported agriculture: Putting local food in its place', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 30(4), pp. 615–628. doi: 10.1007/s10460-013-9436-8.
- Shove, E., Pantzar, M. and Watson, M. (2012) *The dynamics of social practice: Everyday life and how it changes*. London: Sage Publications.
- Silici, L. (2014) *Agroecology: What it is and what it has to offer*. London.
- Smith, A. (2007) 'Translating sustainabilities between green niches and socio-technical regimes', *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 19(4), pp. 427–450. doi: 10.1080/09537320701403334.
- Solidarische Landwirtschaft (2017) *Solawi Höfe & Initiativen*. Available at: <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/de/solawis-finden/solawi-hoefe-initiativen/> (Accessed: 1 August 2017).
- Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V. (2016a) *Eine Orientierung im Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Der Ariadne-Leitfaden*. Available at: https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/fileadmin/media/solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/pdf/Ariadne_Leitfaden_Netzwerk_2016.pdf.
- Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V. (2016b) *Startseite*. Available at: www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org (Accessed: 14 July 2016).
- Som Castellano, R. L. (2015) 'Alternative food networks and food provisioning as a gendered act', *Agriculture and Human Values*. Springer Netherlands, 32(3), pp. 461–474. doi: 10.1007/s10460-014-9562-y.
- Spaargaren, G., Loeber, A. and Oosterveer, P. (2012) 'Food Practices in Transition - Changing Food Consumption Chapter 13', in *Food Futures in the Making*. London and New York: Routledge Studies in Sustainability Transitions, pp. 312–337.
- Tencati, A. and Zsolnai, L. (2012) 'Collaborative Enterprise and Sustainability: The Case of Slow Food', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(3), pp. 345–354. doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-1178-1.
- Thilo (2016) 'Interview Solawi Sterngartenodyssee'. Berlin.
- Tregear, A. (2011) 'Progressing knowledge in alternative and local food networks: Critical reflections and a research agenda', *Journal of Rural Studies*. Elsevier Ltd, 27(4), pp. 419–430. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2011.06.003.
- Urgenci (2016) *Home*. Available at: <http://urgenci.net> (Accessed: 1 April 2016).
- Walter (2016) 'Interview Solawi Buschberghof'. Hamburg.
- Watts, D. C. H., Ilbery, B. and Maye, D. (2005) 'Making reconnections in agro-food geography : alternative aystems of aood provision', *Progress in Human Geography* 29, 1(29), pp. 22–40.
- Wells, B. L. and Gradwell, S. (2001) 'Gender and resource management: Community supported agriculture as caring-practice', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 18, pp. 107–119. doi: 10.1023/a:1007686617087.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Community of Practice – Learning, Meaning and Identity*. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Whatmore, S., Stassart, P. and Renting, H. (2003) 'What's alternative about alternative food networks?', *Environment and Planning A*, 35(3), pp. 389–391. doi: 10.1068/a3621.

Wiskerke, J. S. C. (2009) 'On Places Lost and Places Regained: Reflections on the Alternative Food Geography and Sustainable Regional Development', *International Planning Studies*, 14(4), pp. 369–387. doi: 10.1080/13563471003642803.

Annex

Urgenci Principles

Principle of mutual assistance

The essence of this partnership lies, not in trading itself, but in the friendly relationship between people. Therefore, both producers and consumers should help each other on the basis of mutual understanding: This relation should be established through the reflection of past experiences.

Principle of intended production. Producers should, through consultation with consumers, intend to produce the maximum amount and maximum variety of produce within the capacity of the farms.

Principle of accepting the produce

Consumers should accept all the produce that has been grown according to previous consultation between both groups, and their diet should depend as much as possible on this produce.

Principle of mutual concession in the price decision

In deciding the price of the produce, producers should take full account of savings in labor and cost, due to grading and packaging processes being curtailed, as well as of all their produce being accepted; and consumers should take into full account the benefit of getting fresh, safe, and tasty foods.

Principle of deepening friendly relationships

The continuous development of this partnership requires the deepening of friendly relationships between producers and consumers. This will be achieved only through maximizing contact between the partners.

Principle of self-distribution

On this principle, the transportation of produce should be carried out by either the producer's or consumer's groups, up to the latter's depots, without dependence on professional transporters.

Principle of democratic management

Both groups should avoid over-reliance upon limited number of leaders in their activities, and try to practice democratic management with responsibility shared by all. The particular conditions of the members' families should be taken into consideration on the principle of mutual assistance.

Principle of learning among each group

Both groups of producers and consumers should attach much importance to studying among themselves, and should try to keep their activities from ending only in the distribution of safe foods.

Principle of maintaining the appropriate group scale

The full practice of the matters written in the above articles will be difficult if the membership or the territory of these groups becomes too large. That is the reason why both of them should be kept to an appropriate size. The development of this movement in terms of membership should be promoted through increasing the number of groups and the collaboration among them.

Principle of steady development

In most cases, neither producers nor consumers will be able to enjoy such good conditions as mentioned above from the very beginning. Therefore, it is necessary for both of them to choose promising partners, even if their present situation is unsatisfactory, and to go ahead with the effort to advance in mutual cooperation.

(Urgenci 2016).