



Bridging the Gap Between Food Production and Consumption

– How Alternative Food Networks Forage the Berlin Foodscape

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Abstract

Venturing into bridging the gap between food production and consumption, metropolitan Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) are increasingly gaining momentum in the Global North. Nevertheless, people interested and participating in these initiatives form a rather homogenous group of highly educated and better-off consumers. The aim of the study was to depict four different AFNs in the German capital city Berlin and to propose solutions to make AFNs and quality local food accessible to marginalised fringes of the population – especially low-income people – creating a sustainable food system in the Berlin area. Starting with a literature review about participation and inclusion in AFNs as well as concepts often referred to by AFNs such as food democracy, food justice, and food sovereignty, an overview is given about the academic landscape of AFNs. Taking the example of organisations intending to bring food production and food consumption closer to each other, their common jargon and their objectives were then analysed, preceding semi-structured interviews with representatives from these organisations. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of intermediary organisations, aiming at creating a sustainable foodscape in Berlin. The results from the interviews were coded and organised in themes, allowing to answer the research questions regarding drivers and hurdles for participation in AFNs and possible solutions for policy makers to foster a sustainable and inclusive foodscape in Berlin through adapted urban food policies. Four drivers for participation in AFNs could be provided by the research, along with hurdles and associated solutions for urban food policies to support AFNs in their inclusion strategies. The thesis indicates that inclusion cannot be achieved by the AFNs alone, but that substantial support from urban policies and societal framework change must materialise in order for more low-income citizens to access AFNs and local quality food.

Keywords: Alternative Food Networks, Foodscape, Inclusion, Local Food, Participation, Sustainable Food Systems, Urban Food Policy

Kort sammanfattning på svenska

Alternativa livsmedelsnätverk (ALN – såsom REKO ringar, Bondens Marknad, prenumeration på grönsakslådor) blir betydligt större och populärare år för år. Även om dessa hållbara sätt att försörja sig med hållbart odlade och hanterade matvaror är lovande, får enbart rikare, högutbildade personer tillträde till dem, på grund av finansiella resurser men också kunskap om hälsosam, miljövänlig och schysst mat. Syftet med studien var att beskriva fyra olika alternativa livsmedelsnätverk i den tyska huvudstaden Berlin och att föreslå lösningar för att möjliggöra tillgång till dessa för marginaliserade befolkningsgrupper (särskilt låginkomsttagare) och skapa ett hållbart livsmedelssystem i Berlinområdet. Forskningen, som bestod av en tematisk dokumentanalys samt sex intervjuer, visade fyra drivkrafter för deltagande i ALN, tillsammans med hinder och tillhörande lösningar, för en urban livsmedelspolitik som stödjer ALN i deras inkluderingsstrategier. Uppsatsen visar att inkludering inte kan uppnås enbart av ALN, utan att ett betydande stöd från statspolitiken och en förändring av samhällsramen måste komma till stånd för att fler låginkomsttagare ska få tillgång till ALN och livsmedel med hög kvalitet.

Nyckelord: Alternativa Livsmedelsnätverk, Deltagande, Foodscape, Hållbara Livsmedelssystem, Inkludering, Livsmedelsstadspolitik, Lokal Mat

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The time has come to reclaim the stolen harvest and celebrate the growing and giving of good food as the highest gift and the most revolutionary act.

– Vandana Shiva

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Abbreviations

AFN	Alternative Food Network
BFS	Berlin Food Strategy
BFPC	Berlin Food Policy Council
BSJCPA	Berlin Senate Administration for Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-discrimination
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DGE	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung (German Nutrition Association)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FH	Food Hub
MSC	Mainstream Supply Chain
SFSC	Short Food Supply Chain

1. Introduction

‘One has to choose their battle’ – this phrase by Tom O’Kane, farmer running a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm in Wales, remains stuck in my mind as I write this thesis. It was the answer to a question of mine about the inclusion of socially marginalised people in his CSA, during an online podium discussion at a congress focusing on food systems change, in March 2021. No matter how much one tries to think holistically and to take everything and everyone into account, the conclusion ineluctably seems to be that systematic issues cannot be addressed by one single person nor a single project. But what if Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) were scaled up? Could they fulfil their ecological, economic, and social promises, if multiplied and thus generating sustainable foodscapes? What would it take to get there? This study explores these questions with a case study in Berlin.

Our global food system has considerable impacts on various aspects of life on Earth. From seed production to food waste, human, natural, animal, and technical resources are needed to provide people with food. Moreover, the involvement of many different actors is crucial for the well-functioning of at times complex food value chains. The world is interconnected – a food item purchased in one country can have a direct impact on people in another one, where that very food item was produced. As the sociologists Becker and Pessin put it, *‘The World is an ensemble of people who do things together’* (Becker and Pessin, 2017, p. 97). This simple phrase puts in a nutshell everything that the field of food systems entails. In its simplicity, this sociologist way of describing the world covers all aspects of food systems. Food is not just nutrients, molecules nor a commodity. Food is the fruit of a myriad of different connections and processes – both natural and man-made, that all occurred prior to humans having an edible item in front of them (Guptill et al., 2017).

Access to food is a necessity, there is no doubt about it, but access to good food is, so far, a luxury. Starting from the simple fact that humans usually find necessary nutrients and energy to survive in food, humans are all part of the food system and influence on it. Some sow seeds, some save them, some plant salad grains all year long in indoor vertical farms, some fish from small barks while others do so from big commercial fishing boats, some cook meals for school pupils on a daily basis, some prepare meals for incarcerated people, while others produce biogas from food leftover. Food is also central to communal life and is a highly personal matter (Sandler, 2015), the way food is addressed and understood

can take an unlimited number of forms. The current discourse, moving from talking about agri-food chains to use the term food systems is a sign of this complexity (in works by Morgan and Sonnino, 2010, Nguyen, 2018, Vonthron et al., 2020). Food is increasingly considered holistically, in its entire complexity. From policy makers to bakers, all human beings are part of this system, and changes to one part of food systems can have consequences on other parts of it (Guptill et al., 2016).

On the one hand, the industrialised and extractive economy increases the idea that food is a necessity considered as a commodity and extracts money from what was previously considered as commons (Vivero-Pol, 2017). On the other hand, initiatives are sprouting to give the power over food back to the people, to reconnect citizens with the production of food, which in turn can change their attitude towards food, may it be its purchase, its growing, its storing or its preparation (Graziano and Forno, 2012). This draws back on theories of empowerment, where certain consumption patterns are perceived as self-expression and a way to show resistance to hegemonic systems (Beck et al., 2013).

At the European level, policies influencing food systems have not developed in a homogenous way and can at times be contradictory. A first example is anti-obesity campaigns existing along with policies allowing unhealthy food items (highly salted snacks e.g.) to be produced, traded, and sold at a very low price (De Schutter et al., 2019). The second one is premiums for young farmers to settle down with their farm, while farm subsidies drive land prices up (ibid.). Many alternative initiatives are blooming, but mainly on a small-scale or in an urban setting, which does not allow funding by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), dedicated to bettering conditions in rural areas and mainly supporting larger farms. 80% of the CAP subsidies go to 20% of the farms, as financial support is primarily bound to farm size; the more hectares the farm, the higher the subsidies (BUND, 2018). Many voices have raised to try to find ways to support local food initiatives, that have proved to be very auspicious (ibid.).

Current global food systems create a distance between the producer and the consumer (see figure 1). Good but also information flows do not reach the different involved actors directly. In the Global North, in Germany for example, a vast majority of consumers buy their food at the supermarket. More so, that supermarket is highly likely to be part of one of the five most influential retail groups, covering about 76% of food retail in Germany in 2020 (LPV GmbH, 2020a).



Figure 1: Simplified global food system representation, illustrating the steps separating the producers (production) from the consumers (consumption), both in term of goods and information.

(created by the author of the thesis)

Concerns about global, monopolised food systems, ‘*arise from the belief that aspects of the system or its impacts either undermine important values or violate ethical principles*’ (Sandler, 2015, p. 20). In that lineage, consumer and producer groups have increasingly taken a stand against the monopolisation of food and are forming so-called ‘alternative food networks’ (AFNs). In other words, they create alternatives to the global food system.

These alternative innovations can take different forms. Some innovate in product development (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 2020), others organise new food distribution channels. These are alternatives in the sense that they offer a different shopping experience to conventional retail stores. Innovations can bring about change on a broader scale, but only if linked to external, institutional parameters (Schot and Geels, 2008) and if consumer and cultural processes are taken into account in their potential to mediate between various key groups (Mylan et al., 2019). But what differs (or should differ) drastically between AFNs and mainstream supply chains (MSCs) is the level of involvement of human actors, amongst which consumers, in the designing and implementation of these parallel food streams (Venn et al., 2006).

While some argue that policies alone must tackle these issues, others stipulate that all citizens have a role to play in anchoring this transformation (MUFPP, 2015; Rundgren, 2016). AFNs tend to have a democratic way of making decisions and organising themselves, besides being highly dynamic (Clapp, 2012).

1.1. Introduction about Alternative Food Networks

In an urban setting, the issue of the provenance of food raises the following questions: How can one ensure where food is coming from? How has a food item been produced, transformed, traded, distributed? In a time where a growing part of the European population is demanding more sustainable food, AFNs are gaining momentum; in addition to providing security concerning the origin of food, these networks, taking the form of movements, organisations or initiatives, require a closer connection to each step required before a food item can be held in one's hands.

'The underlying idea is that consumption is a political act: by eating differently, people can change the food market and the living conditions of all those who are involved.'
(Barbera and Dagnes, 2016, p. 325)

This quote by Barbera and Dagnes could be the leitmotif for AFNs and other alternative consumption efforts. By consuming differently, the world is thought to change. Keeping in mind food systems being responsible for 34% of overall greenhouse gas emissions (Crippa et al., 2021), one out of five deaths being linked to diet-related diseases (Afshin et al., 2019), and most of the world's poor people being active in agriculture (Arsenault, 2015), re-thinking them seem to be a solution to many threats of our time.

AFNs and the food they offer have gained momentum lately. A recent study by the University of Göttingen has shown that people living in Germany paid greater attention to the regionality of food, health aspects, and animal welfare than before the COVID-19 pandemic (Busch et al., 2021). Increased interest in organic food can be perceived as well, with the organic industry having seen its sales rise; 22% more profit was made by the organic retail sector in 2020 than in 2019 (BÖLW, 2021). As consumers stay at home/in their region more than usual, the awareness of the freedom of movement might have been translated into the choice of regional and organic produce. Due to the pandemic, the awareness for sustainability and healthy eating has increased significantly (BNN e.V., 2021). The time spent on leisure activities outside homes has been reduced, hence the increased time spent on cooking meals at home and preparing shopping lists. Other reasons are the economic constraints and reduced income. Consumers have adopted a back-to-basics approach to food with more home cooking and baking (Vittuari et al., 2021).

These trends could very well continue even after the pandemic. In the USA for example, more than a third of the respondents of a survey focusing on newly adopted habits to hold onto after the pandemic said they wanted to keep on cooking homemade meals and support local producers (AMC Global, 2021). In Germany, similar trends can be observed: in April 2020, 38% of the population wanted to increase their purchase of local produce and 32% said they were planning on cooking more meals at home than before the pandemic (LPV GmbH,

2020b). Moreover, in a study conducted in 2020, 82% of the German population considered regional food as one of the solutions to feed the growing world population (BMEL, 2020).

It is thus of little surprise that AFNs, in their promise to link consumers with producers more directly and to give little power to intermediaries, are gaining momentum (Darrot et al., 2020). Especially in times of physical distancing, the need to replace placeless and faceless food with food from the region (conversely to ‘food from nowhere’, as found in conventional retail stores) is increasing, AFNs have even proven to reassure people when exposed to shocks, due to their high adaptability (ibid.; Clapp, 2012). This can be explained by the multiple forms of AFNs, having various functioning and organisational models, evolving dynamically (Sandler, 2015). German retailers proposing food in an alternative way to MSCs have seen their sales rise by 35% in 2020. Likewise, direct marketers reported back a sales rise of 30% (BÖLW, 2021).

Through AFNs, placeless and faceless food is replaced by food that has a traceable history due to the limited number of hands that particular item has gone through before reaching the consumer (Goodman and Goodman, 2009). Despite their promise to mend food systems from multiple flaws, both for the planet and for the people, some parts of the population might feel left aside, as described in the next subchapter.

1.2. Critique against Alternative Food Networks

Despite the auspicious benefits of AFNs, they have, ‘*come under critical scrutiny from geographers and others as a narrow and weakly politicized expression of middle- and upper-class angst*’ (Goodman and Goodman, 2009, p. 1). A decade did not change much to that, Blake et al. expressed similar thinking in 2018, taking the example of local labels being a purely neo-liberal act. Sandler (2015) presented arguments from groups criticising AFNs for their lack of coherence between ideology and action and finding traits similar to colonialism and ethnicism, where exotic food is for example perceived as strange and undesirable, and where money is spent on oneself instead of on common causes.

Members of marginalised groups (with a migration background and/or limited financial means) have heavily criticised the fact that AFNs are not accessible to all, due to their better-off target groups and higher prices than conventional, mainstream food retail stores. Members of AFNs might even despise consumers for their non-ethical food shopping practices, creating stigmas amongst different social groups (Hodgins and Fraser, 2018).

Another example of the exclusivity of AFNs is advertisement. In cities, and more so in high-income countries, advertisements for organic and regional food (also largely promoted by AFNs) often depict white farmers, thus targeting a white,

middle-class consumer group (Blake et al., 2018); while tea, coffee, chocolate and avocado advertisements for fair trade brands show black field workers and call for compassion, relegating them to an ‘aid receiver’ position, with little agency (Beck et al., 2013; Goodman and Goodman, 2009; Langen et al., 2013). People with a migration background can thus not feel targeted and even excluded from these value-added foods.

Even though food is fundamental and common to all human beings, it can also divide, especially in societies and systems where food is considered as a commodity, for which financial resources have to be available for the one who wants to choose what to consume. As Bruce put it,

‘Viewing food merely as a commodity in a supply chain profoundly misses the deep cultural embedding and local sensitivities of how human beings produce, prepare and consume food.’
(Bruce, 2013, p. 431)

Food is not just about the food item on a plate, it is containing e.g., the traditions that led to cook food a certain way, the resources allocated to food purchasing and consuming, and personal taste.

A study conducted in 2018 showed that people living in Germany with unemployment benefits could not meet the dietary guidelines set by the German Nutrition Society (Preuß, 2018). The guidelines do not specify any quality nor standard requirements for the food purchased, which suggests middle-range brands (Aust, 2020). This raises the question of inclusivity of AFNs, which are often known to offer food that is more expensive than the one proposed in conventional retail locations, as well as less convenient to prepare, implying that time spent on cooking food and thinking about food is higher (Fourat et al., 2020). This implies more time allocated to household tasks and suggests a higher knowledge in food preparation.

Inequalities within AFNs can arise from the social position of the participants themselves, enabling them or not to understand written information for example (ibid.). Participation in AFNs depends more on personal resources and social environment rather than on motivation (Gaudet and Turcotte, 2013). Moreover, when financial resources are missing, little time and energy tend to be allocated to the food topic (Augustin, 2020).

Nonetheless, some AFNs seem to take up the challenge and are committed to enabling the purchase of organic, regional, and fair food for all. This thesis took a closer look at four distinctive AFN organisations in the Berlin area and at two organisations aiming to better its food landscape on a policy level. How the initiatives and the organisations can join ends and enable a larger number of the population to access good, sustainable food is discussed in the following chapters. The benefits of AFNs for a broader range of social strata are displayed in this

thesis, as well as ways for AFNs to include more social groups in their decision-making and suggestions for policy makers to support these kinds of networks.

2. Aim and Research Questions

The present study comparatively examines four different alternative food supply chains in the Berlin metropolitan region. Their mission, vision, way of functioning and strategy to include various social strata amongst their customers were described and critically analysed. In order to do so, a thematic content analysis from their websites was undertaken, and interviews with both experts involved in these alternatives and people acting on a policy level were conducted. Getting a deeper understanding of how the ends of activism and politics may converge was aimed at.

Data gathered from website analysis and interviews was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What drives and hinders participation in four different Alternative Food Networks in Berlin?
2. How can urban policies support inclusion solutions in Alternative Food Networks in the specific case of Berlin?

Based on the answers to these two questions, retrieved from a literature review, an analysis of the networks' website and the transcripts of conducted interviews, suggestions for municipal urban policies to step up AFNs, if beneficial, and enable a broad range of social groups to benefit from were gradually formulated in the following chapters of the thesis, and finally articulated in the conclusion part of this work. In this study the perception of Berlin as a foodscape was explored, based on following definition:

‘The foodscape view reveals or hides those ecologies that encompass all points from farm to fork and belly and beyond.’ (Blake et al., 2018, p. 32)

The Berlin city and land foodscape was therefore conceived of all material, economic and social flows that contribute to food on citizens' plates or hands. A suggestion for the perception of the Berlin foodscape to include a broader range of actors in AFNs was thus given at the end of this thesis (see subchapter 3.1. for an expanded definition of foodscape).

3. Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this thesis are presented. Starting with a listing of various concepts proven to link to participation, a better understanding of participation when it comes to AFNs is provided. The idea of cities as Foodscapes is then depicted. Definitions closely related to AFNs and their applications are given in the latter part of this chapter. The data retrieved within this project was analysed through the lens of these concepts and other definitions.

3.1. Cities as Foodscapes

While certain scholars focus on the food item, its physical appearance, when using the term ‘foodscape’ (Sobal and Wasink, 2007), the term foodscape is in this thesis referring to how, ‘*food landscapes are shaped, influenced, transformed by social practices (shopping, cooking, eating), by political and legal institutions, by economic decisions, and by relations of power within food systems*’ (Vonthron et al., 2020, p.16), which can be perceived as an expanded definition of the shorter one by Blake et al. given in the previous subchapter. The offer of food products can be a feature comprehended in the description of a foodscape. It can have a big influence on the food choice of school pupils e.g. (Seliske et al., 2013). In this thesis, the term foodscape is used as a synonym for food environment, comprising all the elements that can influence the production, the selling, the purchase, the consumption and the disposal of a certain food item.

Unjust foodscapes are not only found in rural areas. One might think about ‘food desert’ – as in areas with no access to ‘*fresh, healthy, and affordable food*’ (USDA, n.d.) – when hearing the words ‘unjust foodscapes’. Affordability of high-quality nutritional food is yet not the only way to design injustice (Sandler, 2015). Access, safety and health factors initially come into play for ‘food security’ (Agarwal, 2014), food justice goes further, including and systematic repression of the poorest and most marginalised.

According to Kropp and Stinner (2018), the urban context is suitable for transformation, this sphere being heterogenous on its own, and prone to disruption. This is where seeds for transformation are sown, the Berlin foodscape is thus chosen for analysing the structure of a few AFNs.

3.2. Concepts Related to Participation and Inclusion

When discussing food movements and ways to access good food, the terms food justice, food sovereignty, and food democracy are often discussed. An overview of these terms is given in the next sections, with links to their relevance for AFNs.

3.2.1. Food Justice

‘Overall, the concept of food justice encapsulates a variety of issues associated with how and to whom the burdens and benefits of the global food system are distributed. As with other concerns about the system, these issues are not taken to be accidental side effects. Instead, they are thought to arise from fundamental features of the system – i.e. the drive to lower prices, the power of large actors, and the imperative to maximize efficiency and externalize costs wherever and whenever possible.’ (Sandler, 2015, p. 27)

This quote by Sandler demonstrates the systemic revolt pledged for by food justice movements. Taking this explanation, all examples in this thesis fall into this category of movements aiming at more equitable and just food systems. Even though the economic factor mainly influences food decision amongst marginalised people (Darrot et al., 2020), putting the right price on food tags would mean an evening out of other basic commodity prices, such as housing costs, insurance prices, public transportation costs etc.

The case studies described in this thesis can be placed in the lineage of the overarching category ‘food justice’, where bottom-up and programmatic solutions are taking place (Blake et al., 2018). ‘*Food justice is both social intervention and political activism*’ (ibid., p. 490), which implies direct relief for socially marginalised people and a structural change through politics. Food justice movements arise from the fact that everyone eats, but that injustice exists in the amount and quality of food accessible for all (ibid.).

The food justice movement refers to organisations, activists, and initiatives that work on reducing injustice in the global food system, using food as a means for addressing unjust inequalities more generally (Sandler, 2015). It is to be noted here that food redistributing systems such as food banks are not perceived as tools for food justice, as they might very well provide care and at times enables survival but are a mere sign of the abundance and dichotomy our Western life entails (Blake et al., 2018). Similarly to food sovereignty movements, food justice movements are bottom-up movements and build up resistance and resilience, without being globally connected and aiming at a global change (ibid.). Small initiatives in different places around the world mobilise with the aim to resist from the ground.

3.2.2. Food Sovereignty

The notion of food sovereignty, as the, *‘rights of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant’* (La Via Campesina, 2003), has its roots in a farmers’ movement and adopts a production approach to the food security issue. Nonetheless, it encompasses much more than mere self-sufficiency. A few years later, the Nyéléni convention incorporated more than just food production for the definition of food sovereignty, by going beyond that first definition: *‘[It] implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations’* (Nyéléni, 2007, p.1). Issues of inequality and oppression stand out here, the aim of food sovereignty movements is to limit the power of middlemen and to gain back rights over land and seeds for example, which are assets for growing food (Blake et al., 2018).

The keyword ‘collective ownership’ often arises in discussions related to food sovereignty, but private ownership, if shared and made available to a bigger group of people can work very well as well (Agarwal, 2014). Cooperatives and food hubs, as described further in chapter 4.2.2., are examples of this.

In a globalised world, being completely self-sufficient seems utopian for many, more so in the Western parts of the world. Consumers have long adapted to foreign ingredients for classic treats; think about the Swedish cinnamon roll with its key exotic ingredient for example, or about Swiss chocolate with more than half the ingredients not growing in Switzerland. This is where food democracy comes into play, at the intersection of food security and food sovereignty.

3.2.3. Food Democracy

Food democracy movements intend to bridge the gap between food production and food consumption thanks to democratic processes. The term food democracy refers to, *‘the idea of public decision-making and increased access and collective benefit from the food system as a whole’* (Levkoe, 2006, p. 91).

It encompasses thus (for example and not exclusively) production, preparation, selling, and consumption of food. Food democracy can be perceived as a term for all movements contributing to the creation of alternatives to the hegemonic global food system. Food democracy movements can for example train knowledge and develop skills for people to act on various political levels, or be formed by grassroots movements literally growing food and proposing a programmatic paradigm change (Blake et al., 2018). AFNs are understood as part of the food democracy movement.

‘At the core of food democracy, then, is the idea that all people participate actively and meaningfully in shaping food systems. [It is about] citizens determining agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally and globally.’

(Hassanein, 2008, p. 289)

In the food democracy discourse, eating is perceived as a political act, where a mere bite of carrot cake is directly linked to the coop where hens laid eggs and to the field where the processed carrots grew. Citizens should not remain passive spectators on the sidelines. Food democracy literature tend to replace the term consumer with the word ‘citizen’, giving consumers agency over food and what they eat. There are two sides to the citizenship coin, one giving citizens rights, the other implying duties. As a citizen, one is responsible for actions impacting others and the environment they share with others (Kallhoff, 2013).

3.3. Disentangling Concepts

3.3.1. Alternative Food Networks or Initiatives?

For an easier reading flow, AFNs and alternative food initiatives are being used as synonyms in this thesis, even though their definitions slightly differ. Alternative food initiatives can be defined as organisations that address alternative food systems issues and practices (Allen et al., 2003).

A definition of AFNs by Barbera and Dagnes (2016, p.325) is following: *‘a comprehensive body of practices related to food provisioning which are different from the mainstream food systems.’* Apart from their parallelism to MSCs, AFNs can also be depicted as offering proximity between consumption and production, proximity that can take a spatial, economic or social form (Barbera and Dagnes, 2016).

Nonetheless, locally produced food is not forcedly synonym of component of an alternative network. Many retailers work in cooperation with regional producers, but who crop big fields and are able to meet the demand of supermarkets regarding quality and quantity of food, delivered at a specific time. Yet, in a globalised food system, going local at the supermarket can be part of going alternative (Clapp, 2012). However, local food does not imply quality food per se; Hinrichs (2003, p.44) speaks about the *‘perilous trap’* of local food. Therefore, this thesis focuses on quality local food networks in Berlin (see subchapter 3.3.3. for an expanded explanation).

The term AFN is opted for when defining any channel that enables consumers to access food that is not through a conventional supermarket (see further explanation under 5.1.). Grounding in the definitions mentioned above, the term AFN is utilised throughout the thesis, but can as well refer to Alternative Food

Initiative. Furthermore, a movement can be situated a step further and refers to the aggregation of various initiatives and networks working in the same direction, creating a movement of change; the term movement suggests transformation on a bigger scale (Sage et al., 2021).

The author of the study assumes that AFNs are networks in the sense that customers and organisers do not simply buy or sell products; they form part of a community, of a network.

3.3.2. Local and Regional Food

A distinction between local and regional is not made in this thesis, the words are used as synonyms. These terms are not protected, as there is no legal definition for foods that are local or regional. Regional food has also previously been chosen to designate food that does not require an extensive system to reach the consumer (Matson et al., 2013). According to this view of regional food, all food items that reach the consumer without having passed through multiple hands and traded between one or two intermediaries can be considered as regional.

The European Union has three different geographical indications that can be utilised to indicate regionality. All three have specific requirements to be fulfilled in order to be placed onto a product. These are the **protected designation of origin** – all production steps take place in a specific region, **the protected geographical indication** – at least one of the production, processing, and preparation stages take place in a specific region, and the **geographical indication** – only valid for alcoholic beverages, where at least one step takes place in a specific region. There's no label for the origin of the raw material e.g. (European Commission, n.d.). It becomes clear that the consumer can rapidly be disillusioned when discovering the meaning of these different labels, hoping for more 'local' food with regional food. Regional food happen to be highly dependent on the organisation, the company, or the person that utilise that term.

The Berlin region (surrounded by the federal state of Brandenburg) has at least eight labels that showcase the provenance of food items (Stefanovic et al., 2016). Local and regional food appears on many fronts. While politics design strategies to relocate urban food systems (like the Berlin Food Strategy in this thesis), international organisations such as the FAO is urging to strengthen local food systems, both in the Global North and in the Global South, as a response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems (FAO, 2020).

In this thesis, local and regional food signifies food that has been produced in Berlin or in its surrounding state, Brandenburg. Leaning on the flexible definition of Matson et al. (2013), imported food that is sold via a short food supply chain (SFSC) are placed at the same appreciation level as local food.

3.3.3. What is Good Food?

Many studies and researchers omit to explicitly define ‘good food’ when utilising that term, making the quest for a definition a tedious task. Moreover, there is no definition of good food that can be agreed upon with unanimity, food habits and preferences being as personal as each individual’s DNA. Good food can be considered as authentic food that fulfils nutritional needs (Siipi, 2013), or as food items that are affordable, with a high nutritious and safe quality, and in accordance with culture and traditions from a certain environment (Blake et al., 2018).

Taking a traditional food security perspective, food would only be good when its access, its availability and its health benefits are positive. Taking a Triple Bottom Line Perspective, a sustainable food item for a company would be qualified as good if its production would not harm the planet, the people nor compromise profit-making (Elkington, 1994).

Kallio (2013) argues that the theory of ‘good food’ usually leans on strong criticism of the capitalistic system and hegemonic market power. Good food is thus defined here essentially in opposition to industrial standardised food. This is the array in which this thesis moves; AFNs ideological stand criticising the global food system, even though there is no such thing as a unique definition of good food. Good food will be utilised as a synonym for local quality food, with the specificities that ‘local’ imply, according to section 3.3.2.

3.3.4. Sustainability in Food Systems

Sustainable food is a term that many scholars debate upon. What might seem sustainable for a farmer will not be perceived as sustainable by a consumer, not by a food processor. Taking the definition of sustainable development by the Brundtlandt Commission in 1987, ‘*development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*’, it can be said that sustainable food is to follow the same patterns, throughout its journey between the different elements of food systems, that encompass a plethora of steps.

Within the concept of a food system lies the assumption that any change occurring in one sector of the food system can have consequences in another one, as a system the mere aggregation of many different parts and thus to be seen in its complexity (Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, a food system approach is needed when tackling the sustainable food debate, the goal of the one party potentially interfering with the goal of the other.

Discourse about sustainability tends to focus on the environmental and economic part of the definitions. As Goodman and Goodman said,

‘The ethical standing of organic AFNs and SAMs [Sustainable Agriculture Movements] arises from their embeddedness in sustainable ecologies and not, as in the case of Fair Trade, in moral economies of social justice.’

(Goodman and Goodman, 2009, p. 7)

According to Kessari et al., 2020, one of three factors assuring AFN sustainability is collective governance, along with mutual help and cooptation. In order to promote change and ignite a transition towards sustainable food systems, cooperation is crucial.

In this thesis, the concept of a sustainable food system grounds in the belief that,

‘food system needs to be reshaped to be more productive, more inclusive of poor and marginalised populations, environmentally sustainable and resilient, and able to deliver healthy and nutritious diets to all.’

(Nguyen, 2018, p. 1)

The notion of access to sustainable food for ‘all’ and what this simple yet complex adverb means is crucial in this thesis. AFNs, in their promise to compete with MSCs with important market power, often neglect the marginalised ones.

4. Overview of the Food Scene in Berlin

This chapter provides an overview about the alternative food scene in Berlin. Putting that specific foodscape into perspective, a picture of the broader German food retail sector as well as trends amongst consumers is given first. Thereafter, the four case studies selected for this thesis are presented in more detail, along with the presentation of the two structural organisations interviewed for this project.

4.1. German Food Retail Sector

When entering a supermarket in Western Europe, one never asks themselves if they will find a product that is out of season in that specific place. The offer is approximately the same all year round, thanks to sophisticated logistic chains and international trade (Clapp, 2012). This leads to the assumption that many countries are self-sufficient, but it is not the case for Germany for example. In 2018, the German market was only self-sufficient for meat, milk, potatoes, and sugar (BLE, 2018). Participating in global trade implies leaving a self-sufficiency paradigm aside. This can partially be explained by the monopoly of big retail companies, working internationally with various cooperation partners. Germany's food retail sector is driven by a few companies. In 2020, the five biggest retail companies occupied 75.6% of the food retail sector (LPV GmbH, 2020a).

In Germany, food added up to 14% of household expenditure in 2019 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020). This is a relatively small expenditure in comparison with other European countries such as Lithuania for example, where food expenditure accounts for 27% of household expenses. To put that number in perspective, the European average is 13% (European Commission, 2020), and the Swedish about 12% (Brink, 2019).

A study conducted in 2008 demonstrated that German consumers opting for organic supermarkets had a higher income and a more advanced educational background than those doing their grocery shopping in conventional food retail stores (Wannemacher and Kuhnert, 2009). Differences in social groups can also lead to differentiated consumption patterns. This has also been studied in a smaller case study by the Berlin Food Policy Council (BFPC), where people with a migration background were interviewed regarding their food shopping (and

eating) habits. Only a minority of them mentioned purchasing food from a farmer's market or a CSA (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2020).

Instead of analysing expenditure of poor households, a study by Aust was conducted to see whether the Hartz IV amount – the minimum living wage received from the German state, so-called unemployment assistance – was high enough to obtain food that would reach the minimum standard of the German Nutrition Association (DGE). Unemployed people are thought to receive assistance of EUR 446 a month in 2021. Within this budget, EUR 154.78 are assigned to the purchase of food items (Piekarz, 2021). The study found out that these EUR 154.76 allocated by the German State were not enough to buy food items meeting the nutritional requirements of the DGE (Aust, 2020). This opens the question of the access to AFNs for marginalised people, already not able to meet nutritional needs in MSCs.

4.2. Berlin Food Scene – a Selection

Berlin has a diverse foodscape, especially in districts where the cultural mix is high, such as Mitte, Neukölln and Kreuzberg (Bömermann, 2010). Besides Turkish supermarkets, one can find stalls selling freshly pressed orange juice, right opposite a conventional supermarket from the most influential retailers. What oftentimes is a tourist attraction is a weekly routine for others; the 'Turkish weekly markets' attract both passerby's and people living in the city, doing their grocery shopping. In 2019, 35% of the Berlin population had a migration background – with at least one parent born without German citizenship (Statista, 2020). According to the Federal Statistical Office, 45% of the Berlin households with a migration background had an overall income smaller than EUR 1.300, against 35% for households without migration background in 2011 (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2011).

4.2.1. Berlin Alternative Foodscape

'Essen ist politisch' – 'Eating is a political act' – expressed with a play of words in German as the word for food and eating is the same, grounds in the lineage of Kallhoff (2013). Kallhoff stipulates that citizens, as part of the worldwide human political community are responsible for designing the world they live in through (more or less) deliberate choices. 'Essen' includes both the act of eating and food systems in their complexity in one single word.

This phrase is the slogan of a big rally taking place in January every year since 2011, where a multitude of actors from various sectors call for better food for the planet and the people (Richartz, 2020a). Their first claim is to prevent the disappearance of small-scale farms, and to enable a clean, fair, and modern agriculture that provides good food for all (Richartz, 2020b), urging one to, *'vote with what you eat'* (Richartz, 2020c).

A study with the aim to uncover the topic of participation in these rallies was conducted in 2020 by researchers from the Free University of Berlin. It revealed that most demonstration participants had an academic background (67.2% of the interviewees) and that 44.7% of them had a monthly income between EUR 2.000 and EUR 4.000 (Meinecke et al., 2021), which ranges them as middle-class (Niehues, 2017). Only 13.2% of the rally participants had a migration background (Meinecke et al., 2021). These features back up the assumption that members of AFNs in Germany do not provide a representative picture of the German population.

The German capital Berlin can be considered as a hub for AFNs. According to the website *ernährungimwandel.de*, which has the goal to connect initiatives aiming to transform food systems into more sustainable ones, Berlin and its surroundings have the biggest proportion of initiatives compared to other big German cities such as Cologne or Hamburg (NAHhaft e.V., n.d.)

The networks described in the following subsections are designed to grow and strive in parallel to conventional supermarket chains. The way many AFNs function is through reconnecting citizens with food production and with a democratic system, where decisions are made jointly by all people involved in the process (Clapp, 2012). This thesis aims at finding pathways for municipality policy makers to adopt certain ways of managing food networks and to potentially adopt them on a bigger scale.

Although in a discontinuous way, policies have supported AFNs in Berlin. Projects are funded over a restricted amount of time, the creation of networks, cooperation and the achievement of common goals are aimed at by the Berlin State, such as the *Berliner Ernährungsstrategie* (translated to Berlin Food Strategy – BFS – in this thesis). This food and nutrition strategy by the Berlin State wants to include more regionality, sustainability and fairness with a strong emphasis on access to healthy and nutritious food. Eight action tracks have been designed, ranging from *Public meals as an example* to *More transparency for consumers* (see more detailed information under chapter 4.3.1.). All networks chosen for this thesis could relate to at least one of the actions tracks. Table 1 gathers the most relevant information about the four selected AFNs.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the four selected AFN initiatives

	Type of AFN	Number of people benefitting from it	Product offer	Marketing channels	Contact between producers and consumers
Marktschwärmer (GmbH)	Producer-Consumer Community (Food Assembly)	153.583 members in Germany (April 2021)	Regional produce + high quality imported fine foods	Online platform + physical delivery point	at the delivery point, on platform, on blog articles
Ökomarkt Kollwitzplatz	Farmers' Market	<i>no data</i>	Full assortment of organic produce	Direct marketing	at the selling point – none
plantAge	Community Supported Agriculture	700 members 650 boxes a week	Vegetables + high quality imported fine foods	Delivery points	on the farm, via newsletter, social media platforms
SuperCoop	Food Hub	600 signed up	Full, sustainable assortment	Food store	none

4.2.2. SuperCoop – Food Hub

Food hubs (FHs) incorporate many features claimed by AFNs scholars. The idea lying behind FHs is collective work. People participating in these FHs are active members; their membership obliges them to carry out a monthly amount of work hours. The literature around cooperatives concentrates on producer cooperatives, and less on consumer cooperatives (Venn et al., 2006).

Based on the definition of Matson et al. (2013), the term FH refers to organisations coordinating the marketing of food for value-laden products (such as organic, fairly traded and local food) in this thesis.

The case study chosen for this thesis is the Berliner *SuperCoop*, that was still in its planning days when editing. This organisation is perceived as a hybrid between a cooperative and a FH, as features from both organisational structures can be found in the analysed FH. These FHs are so-called ‘cooperative structured food hubs’ with consumer members (Matson et al., 2013). Members participate in FHs as an act of social sharing, with the hope to influence the real word with their food purchasing acts (Lombardi et al., 2015). This thesis opts for the term food hub when referring to *SuperCoop* from this point on.

Promoted Advantages

The FH argues to, ‘*connect members amongst themselves [...], (to) propose good, healthy and fairly produced food and consumer goods [...] [and to] enable consumers to co-design food systems through cooperation, participation and transparency*’ (SuperCoop Berlin eG, 2020, p.1). Moreover, democratic processes are at the core of the cooperative, where social class, nationality, religion and sexual orientation of members do not play a role (SuperCoop Berlin eG, 2020).

Through transparent processes and active participation in the FH, consumers gain knowledge about food items themselves and about the complexity lying behind food on supermarket shelves. By working together, members tie connections with each other and learn how to appreciate food in a different way.

4.2.3. Marktschwärmer – The Food Assembly

Producer-consumer communities align with the aim of AFNs,

‘re-embed[ing] and re-socialize[ing] food provisioning in local ecologies and communities [...] “re-connecting“ with consumers through new markets of quality local produce’ (Goodman and Goodman, 2009, p. 8)

The concept of quality is at the heart of food assemblies, where small-scale farms can market their produce as superior quality.

‘La Ruche qui dit Oui !’ (‘the yes-saying hive’ in French) was founded in 2010 in Paris by four friends who wanted to bring back the food market culture to the heart of the French capital (De Bernardi and Tirabeni, 2018). Its German pendant *Marktschwärmer* (that literally translates to ‘market enthusiast’ or ‘hawk moth market’, playing with the original French name) was set up in 2014.

The concept lies intrinsically in connecting producers and consumers together, on bridging the gap between rural areas and urban settings. Once a week, pre-ordered food items are delivered at a set place and at a set time, where consumers are introduced to producers (and vice-versa) in a friendly atmosphere. These collecting spots are called *Schwärmereien* (Food Assemblies in English, but literally translating to ‘hive’).

Over 153.583 members are spread across Germany, and 2.000 small-scale farms (Equanum, 2021a), sell (part of) their production via this marketing channel, resembling a hybrid form of an online-marketing platform and a farmer’s market (Lombardi et al., 2015). In Berlin, 28 Food Assemblies exist in March 2021 (Equanum, 2021b), against 131 Germany wide (Equanum, 2021 a).

Promoted Advantages

An emphasis is put on **transparency** and **fairness** for both the producers and the consumers, also referred to as members of the Food Assembly (FA) community. Out of a purchase of EUR 100, EUR 10 goes to the FA support team, EUR 8.35 to the initiator of the FA and the remaining EUR 81.65 go directly to the producer (Equanum, 2021c). This is a major difference to the overall price gap reigning of the conventional market, where potato producers for example only got an average of 17% of the consumer price for their produce in August 2020 (Deutscher Bauernverband, 2021). In 2018, only 21% of overall consumer food expenditure was directed at the producers, the rest being dispatched among actors of the agri-food chain (Thünen-Institut, 2018). **Short food supply chains** are also promoted

as being a big advantage for FAs, with no middleman advantage, except for the FA itself.

The FA also promotes a **socio-ecological transformation**, where **regionality** plays a crucial role (Equanum, 2021a). The distance between assemblies and producers is 40 km on average (ibid.).

4.2.4. Ökomarkt am Kollwitzplatz – Organic Market

In 2018, about a third of all German consumers stipulated occasionally going to weekly markets (Handelsverband Deutschland, 2018), whereas only 14% of the total turnover from the organic food sector originated in the vaguely defined sector of ‘others’, comprising besides weekly markets bakeries, butchers and petrol station e.g. (Rumscheidt, 2020). This is a rather small portion of the market; consumers tend to prefer going to a supermarket where they know what to find to reasonable prices (Respondent Organic Market). *Supermarketisation* is a key word here, that defines the gradually swallowing of supermarket chains in detriment to smaller structures, as part of the Corporate Food Regime, as named by scholars such as McMichael (2014) for example.

The farmers’ market chosen for this thesis has been arranged by a nature conservation association since 1997. It was initiated by this association and a few residents of the area, who wanted to have access to fresh and organic produce without having to go to the countryside. *‘The wall had just fell and residents of former East Berlin felt they also wanted their own organic market’* – as one already existed in former West Berlin (Respondent Organic Market).

The stalls are occupied by regional farmers, food retailers, pastry chefs, handicraft artists with a common feature: their produce is organic and/or fairly traded. The nature conservation association also tries to promote sustainable eating and responsible handling with nature and natural resources. The idea behind the market is that it also offers a space where people can do their grocery shopping, buy something to munch on, and start conversations with other consumers and the farmers/retailers themselves (Respondent Organic Market).

Promoted Advantages

The market promotes a place where **food meets people**, where everyone is invited to stay longer than just for doing their grocery shopping. The food proposed is **organic, fairly traded**, and sold by people who know their produce.

The environmental component is strongly advocated for by all initiatives offered by the nature conservation association. The association pursues the main aim to green society, for the wealth of both nature and people. Through various activities, citizens are made aware of the importance of **nature conservation** and

respectful behaviour towards nature and natural resources (Grüne Liga, 2017).

Individuals and legal entities can become members of the association, starting with a fee of EUR 50 a year. Besides membership fees, the association gathers money from the market stall location, project grants and voluntary donations. Workshop and expertise can be offered for free or against a small fee, depending on the contracting authority.

4.2.5. PlantAge – Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a generic term designating forms of producing and accessing food where both the production and consumption sides share the risks (and rewards) affiliated to food production (Gorman, 2018). They intend to create a close relationship between those who grow and those who purchase food (Cone and Myrhe, 2000). Customers are commonly related to as shareholders, members, and are thus much more than mere recipients of food. The production and the consumption sides can meet at multiple occasions, for example when deciding about the next growing seasons or during joint gardening or harvesting days (plantAge eG, 2020a).

The CSA interviewed for this thesis (the term CSA will refer to *PlantAge* from this point on) was founded in 2019 by two (at the time) students, who were living in Berlin and unsuccessfully looking for vegan fruits and vegetables. For practitioners of vegan food production, no animal matter is to be utilised to grow crops (in form of dung, horn flour or slaughter by-products e.g.). Instead, plant-based fertiliser is spread on fields; crop rotation plays an important role, permitting nutrients to be stored naturally in the soil and then delivered to plants when the next growing season comes, as well as clover coverage e.g. This way of producing arise from high ethical and environmental concerns (Förderkreis Biozyklisch-Veganer Anbau e.V., 2021).

The CSA is located approximately 100 km East of Berlin, and is providing 650 boxes per week, exclusively filled with produce from its lands. Apples from neighbouring farmers and orchards are included in the box from time to time (Respondent CSA).

By becoming a member of the CSA and paying a fee of EUR 150, a person becomes part-owner of the CSA and thus inherits rights such as participation in the yearly general assembly or lecture of its protocol, but also obligations such as representation of the cooperative's interests (plantAge eG, 2020b). The monthly fee for receiving food boxes amounts up to EUR 79.

Promoted Advantages

The advantages promoted by the CSA on their website are manifold and classified between societal and personal advantages. An emphasis is made on **environmental and biodiversity protection** for the general advantages, and on **health and participation aspects** on the personal side. **Transparency** also sticks out of the website analysis (plantAge eG, 2020a).

A multiplication effect is also named on the CSA's website. *'The more people engage in the CSA, the stronger PlantAge can grow and create momentum for societal transformation'* (plantAge eG, 2020a), calling for joined forces to transform the (food) system.

4.3. Berlin Food Policy

Functioning as a link between these initiatives and the policy level are so-called policy councils and State strategies, that work towards bridging the gap between civil society voices and political discussions and decisions, with the aim to increase food sustainability for Berlin and its inhabitants.

4.3.1. Berlin Food Strategy

The BFS was signed by all Senate departments and is thought to work as a guideline for all of their schemes, as the Strategy touches upon multiple sectors. Food policies generally touch upon more than direct food production and consumption. As food systems, food policies entail and tend to influence many dimensions of both the private and the public sectors (Candel and Pereira, 2017). In this sense, they are 'wicked', as the various actors concerned by them might have varying views and priorities (ibid.). Nonetheless, many cities around the world develop food strategies, aiming to adopt coherent policies both for the rural and the urban population, with sustainability as a starting point (FAO, RUAF and WLU, 2018).

Launched in summer 2019, the BFS has the aim to promote a future-oriented, sustainable, and regionally inclined food system for the city of Berlin. A strong emphasis is put on healthy, nutritious and organic food. Eight action tracks have been designed for the strategy; (1) Public meals as a role model, (2) Support for regional value chains, (3) Support innovation for a future-proof food system, (4) Lively and productive neighbourhoods, (5) Food education, (6) Avoid food loss—reduce food waste, (7) Public administrations as an example, and (8) More transparency for consumers (translated and adapted from BSJCPA, n.d.).

All organisations touched upon in this thesis could align with the BFS, as each either handles directly with food and/or organises debates about food systems in Berlin. They could thus apply for funding for contributing to the sustainable development of the Berlin foodscape.

A major project supported by the Strategy and the Berlin Senate Department for Justice, Consumer Protection and Antidiscrimination (BSJCPA) is the ‘Kantine Zukunft’ (future canteen in English), where canteen staff is trained to cook tasty, healthy and environmentally friendly meals (Speiseräume, n.d.). The foci lie on the offer, the raw products, the cooking per se, and teamwork, forming a holistic approach to cooking in communal catering, and has already been taken as example when describing future canteen approaches (Rehaag, 2021).

4.3.2. Berlin Food Policy Council

Food policy councils have gained importance in the last decade. The first one was founded in Toronto in Tennessee, USA, in 1981 (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000). Food policy councils, *‘try to monitor their city’s food system and work to mend various rips and tears in that system. Most of them pursue the goals of a more equitable, effective, and ecologically sustainable food system’* (ibid., p. 122). The underlying concern that food systems are to repair is clearly stated in this quote.

The importance of food policy councils is also mentioned by the FAO, especially in times of crisis. These councils, in integrating food systems into urban policies, can help to quickly define and implement generalised action between various actors to support most vulnerable people (FAO, 2020). Food policy councils arise from the need to integrate food system aspects into a unified urban policy (Candel and Pereira, 2017).

The BFPC was created in 2016, and groups a bundle of various actors who want a better food system in Berlin. It works as a tool for common claims from civil society actors to be heard by policy makers and has the role of, *‘active promotion of a sustainable transformation of the food system in the region’* (Ernährungsrat Berlin, n.d.a). One of the major tasks of the BFPC is to remind the Berlin State of its commitment to contribute to a sustainable food system within the city of Berlin and beyond, by signing the ‘Milan Urban Food Policy Pact’ (MUFPP) in 2015. A few action tracks of the MUFPP clearly state social inclusion and the development of inclusive solutions to enable secure access to good food regardless of financial resources (MUFPP, 2015).

The BFPC brings together local and regional actors and initiatives who are willing to be part of this transformative process. Common goals and strategies are developed by participating actors, that range from food activists to urban gardeners and local gastronomy representatives. Political activities and actions are decided upon jointly, and a close collaboration is taking place on both Senate and district level. The BFPC is presided by a board, amongst which two members represent the organisation, two women at the time this thesis was written. The

board is elected for a duration of two years by members of the organisation (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2016). A speakers' board is elected for a period of four years, with the aim to advocate for the BFPC externally and to guide the Council's work internally (Ernährungsrat Berlin, n.d.b). Citizens are welcome to assist events and the work of the Council when it best suits them.

Eight aims are listed on the BFPC website; (1) support for regional agriculture, with an emphasis on job security and development prospects for producers, (2) environmental protection throughout the entire food value chain, (3) diversity in all dimensions of food systems, (4) guarantee of fair prices for all actors involved, (5) prioritisation of local (vs. global) structures, (6) support of vocational training tackling issues of food justice and food sustainability, (7) support of a socially just food system globally, and (8) maintenance of public decision-making processes (adapted from Ernährungsrat Berlin, n.d.a). Moreover, within all these aims is the importance of knowledge throughout and about food systems stressed.

Out of the eight aims, all tackle (in)directly the topic of this thesis. In all aims, glimpses of food justice, democracy and sovereignty can be perceived. Transparency and freedom of choice are core elements, and access to good food should not be prevented by income, gender, education, skin colour, religion nor cultural background (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2017).

In its list of demands to the BSJCPA, the BFPC asks for more transparency, communication and citizen participation within the BFS, at that time still in process (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2018).

The BFPC leads a project called 'Alle an einen Tisch!', which can be translated to 'Let's meet around the table!'. The German accusative form, introducing movement, is understood as an invitation to get together around a table. The aim of this project is to understand what people with a migration background think about the food offer in Berlin and to hear what their ideas and wishes are, in order to include them in policy making processes. Indeed, marginalised people are often left out of decisional processes (Nguyen, 2018).

One activity within this project is the organisation of cooking sessions, where non-German dishes are prepared with seasonal, regional ingredients, both by people from migration and non-migration background. The second activity is the creation of a community garden in the premises of a centre for migrants. Discussions are initiated in order to understand how people with a migration background and marginalised people eat, cook and buy food, as well as what their claims relating to food systems are.

5. Methods

In scientific research, a method is an explanation of why, how, where, and when data is compiled, as well as the approach adopted to write up findings from data and to disseminate them (Bryman, 2016). The following subchapters explore the methods developed and applied for this thesis, introducing the case studies as well as the systematic approach to retrieve and analyse compiled data.

This thesis adopts a method that follows the legacy of the Grounded Theory (Bryman, 2016). Grounded theory methodology was used to explore the deeper meaning of AFNs for their participants and organisers, in order to better understand how AFNs may scale up, reconnect food producers with food consumers and contribute to a democratisation of the Berlin foodscape (Tam, 2014). This thesis has an explorative character and follows an inductive approach. Instead of analysing the case studies based on a certain theory, various aspects of AFNs found in the literature were compared to the outcomes of the interviews with the representatives of AFNs in Berlin and actors at a policy level (Bryman, 2016). Following this method, the claimed benefits of AFNs regarding participation and inclusion were analysed, pursuing the aim to identify recommendations for policy makers to increase inclusion in the building of sustainable food systems.

To obtain relevant literature, the key words linked to the concepts of AFNs were looked up with one main search engine: Google Scholar. These were utilised as they are listed below in table 2 in multiple combinations, utilising **&**, **“ ”**, *****, **AND** and **OR**. Literature was searched for in English, German, French and Swedish, and then screened through in order to define whether the scientific papers were relevant or not.

Table 2: Keywords utilised for literature search

Keywords for Research		
Alternative Food Networks/Initiatives	Food Democracy	Food Sovereignty
Local Food	Urban Foodscapes	Food Justice
Food Elitism	Citizen Participation	Food Hubs

The retrieved data (text from websites and interviews) was analysed using a thematical content analysis, with the aim to answer the formulated research questions, in this specific case; defining the motives for participating in AFNs in Berlin and pointing out opportunities for urban food policies to step up AFNs, in

order to facilitate their access to a larger range of the Berlin population (and beyond). The detailed analysis procedure is explained under subchapter 5.3.

The research design is both cross-sectional as well as comparative, as data were collected from different case studies and then compared against each other (Bryman, 2016).

5.1. Introduction to the Case Studies

Based on previous studies conducted about AFNs, four initiative forms were selected, representing different ways of connecting food producers with food consumers, thereby forming a certain foodscape for the specific city area and for the actors involved. The networks were known by the author of the study prior to the start of the project, and the choice fell on these as previous contact was already existing with two of them (*Marktschwärmer* and *SuperCoop*), and the author of the study had already purchased food several times on the *Ökomarkt Kollwitzplatz*, and *PlantAge* was highly present on social media and caught the author's attention. The initiatives are listed with their specific form in table 3.

For an easier reading flow, the excerpts from the interviews with the four AFNs are referred to as follows: *Marktschwärmer* – Food Assembly (Respondent FA), *Ökomarkt Kollwitzplatz* – Organic Market (Respondent Organic Market), *PlantAge* – CSA (Respondent CSA), *SuperCoop* – Food Hub (Respondent FH). The interviews with representatives of the BFPC and the BFS are similarly referred to as: BFPC (Respondent BFPC) and BFS (Respondent BFS). Apart from respondent FA, all respondents were female. In the written text, interviewee and representative will be used as synonyms to respondent.

Based on reoccurring topics found in investigated literature, the four initiatives were selected as they can be defined as AFNs, following these characteristics defined by AFN scholars:

- ‘*new institutional form, **parallel to mainstream channels***’ (Goodman and Goodman, 2009, p. 2)
- ‘***re-embed food within society** in order to enhance its role in providing nourishment and cultural significance*’ (Clapp, 2012, p. 167)
- ‘*attempt to **reconfigure the relationships between producers and consumers** with regard to food and to offer different market relations*’ (Kessari et al., 2020, p. 1418)

In the four initiatives selected, food (1) is not to be purchased in a supermarket (*parallel to mainstream channels*), (2) is gaining importance within society as placed in a different marketing channel and offering food a multi-faceted scene and meaning (*re-embed food in society*), and (3) is sketching new forms of relationships between production and consumption (*reconfigure the relationships between producers and consumers*). Opposition

to MSCs, educational aim and cognitive attachment between food production and consumption assembles the four initiatives selected.

The two other interview partners are working for (1) an intermediate organisation, the BFPC, linking consumers with producers in an indirect way, by engaging discussions with both civil society and political leaders, and (2) the State of Berlin, more precisely the BSJCPA and in charge of the BFS, setting common sustainability goals for the Berlin foodscape. Both the BFPC and the BSJCPA are believed to stand for similar aims to the ones discussed in the previous paragraph. Table 3 summarises the main characteristics of the interviewed organisations.

Table 3: Main characteristics of the interviewed organisations

	Type of organisation	Kinds of foods	Focus
	Role of the interviewee		
Marktschwärmer (GmbH) Respondent FA	Producer-Consumer Community (Food Assembly) Director	Full assortment, Regional Foods	Marketing channel
Ökomarkt Kollwitzplatz (organised by Grüne Liga e.V.) Respondent Organic Market	Farmers' Market Market organiser	Organic Foods	Marketing channel
PlantAge (eG) Respondent CSA	Community Supported Agriculture Founding Member & Board member	Organic, vegan, and regional fruits and vegetables	Production and retailing
SuperCoop (eG) Respondent FH	Food Hub Board Member	Full assortment	Marketing Channel
Berliner Ernährungsrat Respondent BFPC	Berlin Food Policy Council Project Leader 'Alle an einen Tisch'	(indirectly) all	Civil society voice
Senatsverwaltung für Verbraucherschutz Respondent BFS	Berlin Senate Department for Consumer Protection Berlin Food Strategy representative	(indirectly) all	Common Berlin Food Strategy

5.2. Retrieving of Data

Data from the four initiatives selected was gathered by browsing through their websites, all falling under the broader category of AFNs, as explained in the former subchapter. The data gathered online is composed of the legal and organisational form of the initiative, of its mission, its vision, its target group(s)/customers and its way of positioning itself as an AFN. The statuses of all organisations can be looked at by anyone desiring to do so (BMJV, 2016) and are often made publicly available online. Their statuses were used in the thesis as

content, as they entail not only the legal form of these organisations, but also their mission and purpose.

In order to retrieve information about (food) system change and consumer participation in the initiatives, interviews were conducted, also enabling to ask further details that would not appear clearly on their websites. Semi-structured interviews were carried out based on a set of prepared questions with an open end, which allows the interviewer to ask further questions if needed (Bryman, 2016). To extract information from people active on a managerial level in these four initiatives, four semi-structured interviews were conducted (see Appendix A, B and C for the questions).

Two other semi-structured interviews with the BFPC and with the Berlin Senate – in charge of the BFS – were undertaken in pursuance of the coverage of the opportunities for AFNs to scale up onto a more political and systemic level, that would enable easier access to these for a broader number of people. These interviews give a close-to-reality picture of the Berlin alternative food scene from an organisational perspective and lay the groundwork for both the analysis and the discussion parts.

Interviewees were primarily contacted via mail, and then via phone, which proved to be efficient for those who had not responded to the request via mail. All organisations responded positively to the interview request. A datasheet explaining how the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) manages data, which data was recorded, and stating their anonymisation was provided prior to the interviews (see Appendix D). On top of that, a verbal approval was gained a few seconds before recording the interview. The interviews were designed to last for approximately 45 minutes.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews took place online via the digital video conferencing tool *Zoom* between the 9th of April and the 5th of May 2021. Their duration ranged between 18 minutes and one hour and 12 minutes, with an average of 52 minutes. Due to a tight schedule, the interview with the CSA *PlantAge* was significantly shorter than the others. As the time constraints was known by the interviewer, the most relevant questions could still be asked, but there was little space for deepening.

Conducting interviews online comes along with both positive and negative consequences. Whereas interviewing via an online tool allows for example flexibility in the scheduling of the interview and direct recording of the dialogue, it can also create a certain emotional distance between the interviewee and the interviewer (Bryman, 2016). A few icebreaking questions were thus asked, creating a friendly atmosphere during the interviews (see Appendix A, B and C). All interviewees were accustomed to online videoconferencing.

Apart from the interview with a representative of *SuperCoop*, all interviews were conducted in German and then transcribed with the online service provider

HappyScribe, which was also used to translate the interviews into English. Mismatches between interviewee statements and scripts might differ slightly due to lack of attention and language subtleties, translated with difficulty (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, both transcripts were gone over several times to find potential mistakes or mismatches.

After the interviews, data from the organisations' online available material was retrieved once more when needed, with the aim to fill knowledge and understanding gaps.

5.3. Analysis of Data

The data gathered from the organisations' websites provided an understanding of their aim and a general overview of their structure. These findings were summarised and organised in tables (see table 3).

The data collected thanks to the interviews was analysed using a coding system, with the help of the software *MAXQDA*. Coding aims at making themes emerge from texts and give a structure to answer the research questions, as well as providing substance for further discussion and reflection (Kempster and Cope, 2010). This approach adopts a thematic analysis approach, where codes and themes are merging into each other (Bryman, 2016). The themes that emerged out of the content analysis were then structured into different sections and subsections, as mirrored in the results chapter. These themes were the most recurrent ones but also the ones that would help answering the research questions. Figure 2 gives an overview of the software interface. The results from the coding are mirrored in the results and analysis chapters (chapter 6).

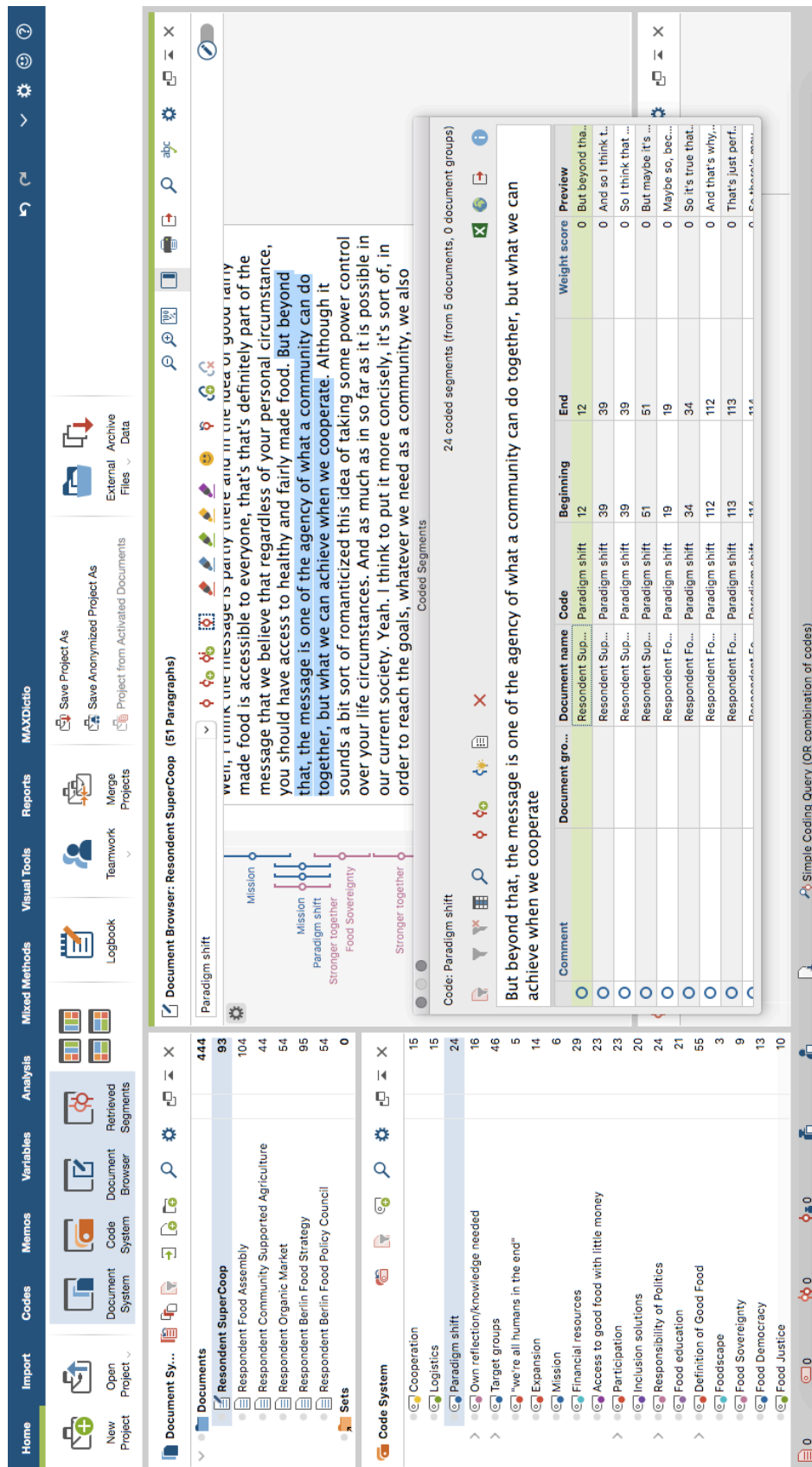


Figure 2: Screenshot representing the interface of the coding software MAXQDA, with code examples at the bottom left corner.

6. Results and Analysis

In this chapter, results from the website analysis and from the interviews are presented and categorised according to the topics that emanated from the coding exercise with the program MAXQDA. The topics are listed based on their ability to help answering the research questions. The key findings are summarised in table 4.

Table 4: Summary of key findings

	Kind of AFN	Selection of Benefits		Consumer/Citizen Participation	Vision/Mission	Core Values	Target Consumer Group	Aims (to Expand)
Marktschwärmer (GmbH) Respondent FA	Producer-Consumer Community (Food Assembly)	Producers	Consumers	Direct dialogue between production & consumption + Purchasing power	Increase regional food availability	Regionality Fair prices Small structures	Not defined All ages, well-off	More assemblies + larger educational offer
		Fair prices for producers Contact between production and consumption	Good products for consumers					
Ökomarkt (Grüne Liga e.V.) Respondent Organic Market	Farmer's Market	Own price setting	Fresh produce	Direct dialogue between production + consumption Purchasing power	Increase organic food availability Social cohesion	Environment protection + Social cohesion	Not defined All ages, neighbourhood, better off	(not asked)
		Contact between production and consumption						
PlantAge (eG) Respondent CSA	Community Supported Agriculture	Joint risks of farming	Understanding of food origin + Participation + Transparency	Cooperative, shared risks, take on decision-making + Personal involvement possible	Stop harm to people, planet, animals	Vegan production methods + No harm (to people, planet, animals)	Not defined All ages, interested people	More boxes + higher diversity of crops
		Joint efforts to obtain fresh and local produce – joint risks						
Super Coop (eG) Respondent FH	Food Cooperative	Fair prices	Good food at fair prices	Cooperative, shared risks for retailer + consumers + Purchasing power + Involvement an asset	Access to good food at affordable prices	Fairly traded food + Social, environmental and economical sustainability + participation/joint efforts	Not defined All ages, neighbourhood	More members + bigger supermarket + more community events
		Fair prices across food systems						
Berliner Ernährungsrat Respondent BFPC	Berlin Food Policy Council	Voice heard + more interest from consumers	Voice heard	Invitation to discussions, all welcome to participate	Good, fair, healthy food for all	Active promotion of a sustainable transformation of the food system in the region	All Berlin citizens & actors involved in the food system	Claims heard & integrated in the BFS
		Coordinated action for a systematic food system change						
Senatsverwaltung Respondent BFS	Senate	Coordinated action for better food for all		Not directly, but target group is all citizens	Coordinated, sustainable Berlin food system/foodscape	Regionality, organic food, equity	All Berlin citizens & actors involved in the food system	Strategy followed by all organisations

6.1. Target Groups

None of the interviewed AFNs had a comprehensive picture of their members or customers. Nonetheless, assumptions can be made about the customers group they involved.

The FA could give a good overview of who the assembly organisers were and assumed that these organisers reflected the clientele of a particular FA, *‘We have a very good picture of who these hosts are, of the people who organise the assemblies. They are often a reflection of the people who buy or market through us as producers’* (Respondent FA). According to the FA interviewee, all age groups are represented, from retired people to students who want to consume differently and not purchase food through MSCs. When the question about members income was raised, the FA interviewee said, *‘We haven’t surveyed (customers income) because when we do a survey, we tend to ask “what do you want? What do you lack?”’. But asking about income, we’ve never done that. And I don’t know if we will’* (Respondent FA). The aim of the company, to adapt their offer to the needs of the customers is reflected here. The question is rather what do the customers want, how can their needs be fulfilled, and not who these customers are.

The CSA could not answer the customer income question either. The interviewee still mentioned the will to participate in a solidarity-based project, to eat vegan food and the convenience of having a delivery station close to their homes as assets for participating in the CSA. The possibility to pay by instalments, found on their website, can also be a sign that the target group should not be reserved for better-off consumers.

Even if the FH was in its launching phase at the time the study was conducted, the interviewee assumed that people interested in the project are not only well-off. A sign for the steady existing demand for paying by instalments, meaning that some interested people could not afford to pay the membership fee at once.

The clientele of the organic market could not be clearly defined either. It can be expected that frequent customers are better-off, as the product prices are perceived as being ‘too high’ for many customers using the Google recension system. The customers are thought to be from the neighbourhood, but some even come from further away, *‘People still come to some of our traders from all over the city. You can get that from conversations sometimes. People from Neukölln come to buy from our farmers because they appreciate the quality’* (Respondent Organic Market).

The intermediate organisations, especially the BFPC and its project ‘Alle an einen Tisch’, remarked that people interested and accessing AFNs are better-off and not marginalised people. *‘It is true that there is relatively little diversity in the Food*

Policy Council Berlin, [...] It is generally the case, also in other food councils, that the topic of participation and diversity is relatively rudimentarily anchored there. So, of course, one could wish that there were more people represented who come from more diverse contexts' (Respondent BFPC). Moreover, the BFPC interviewee mentioned the groups of homeless and elder people as an important target group to think about when tackling inclusion.

The Senate interviewee noticed that, *'So, one has to agree that inclusion is not thought through in the strategy, unfortunately, but it's not a lack of ignorance. It's just, again, a big issue of how much capacity we actually have?'* (Respondent BFS). Even though the BFS is supposed to be inclusive and reach all citizen groups, some are left apart.

The clientele of the AFNs appears to be mixed, even though no accurate data could be retrieved by the interviews. The fact that both the BFS and the BFPC admitted that the inclusion topic was neglected leads to the assumption that AFNs do not target all citizen groups.

6.2. Motivations for Participating in Alternative Food Networks

6.2.1. Access to Better Food

The primary reason justifying the existence of the four interviewed AFNs in Berlin was access to good food, which was argued to be difficult in normal supermarkets. The organic market on Kollwitzplatz was established in the early 1990's, when a few people from the neighbourhood and the Grüne Liga joined forces to start their own organic market. The former western part of Berlin had its organic market on Winterfeldtplatz (Respondent Organic Market).

The vegan CSA was founded after their initiators, who had lived in Berlin a few years, started being concerned about the origin of their vegetables. Being vegan, they struggled to find items that had been produced in a vegan way as well (Respondent CSA).

The FA was launched to reconnect producers and consumers, as traditional weekly markets tend to disappear in Europe. The platform offers a place for consumers to access quality regional produce, with the insurance that very few hands (mostly only the farmers' ones) have touched that specific product.

Both the BFS and the BFPC were launched with similar thoughts. The BFPC had the goal of *'achieving ecologically sustainable and socially just food in Berlin'* (Respondent BFPC), whereas the BFS had the aim, *'to create a sustainable food*

system in Berlin [with] more organic, more regional, more seasonal, more fair-trade products' (Respondent BFS).

These claims suggest that food purchased in MSCs is not seasonal, regional organic nor fairly traded, and that AFNs can help accessing that kind of food.

6.2.2. Solidarity

Solidarity with the producers is a feature that stood out of most interviews. FA members seemed to hold this topic especially dear. The marketing platform supports small-scale farmers in marketing their produce to urban dwellers directly in cities, amidst a highly saturated market, which emphasises the supportive form of the FA. Nonetheless, the FA acts as an intermediary and, *'should not be utilised by someone who believes in self-management'* (Respondent FA).

Sharing the risks was a common feature for two interviewed networks. Both the CSA and the FH are organised around a solidarity principle, where members of the organisations all share the risk of the venture. A reason for consumers to participate in CSAs was that solidarity feature itself.

6.2.3. Organic vs Conventional food

Even though a larger proportion of the food offered by the four AFNs selected for the case studies is organic, food grown conventionally can also be purchased there. Price was found to be a major hurdle when it comes to organic food, as the FH interviewee mentioned, *'We will not only offer organic products, but also include conventional ones when the price difference is too big basically. Thus making sure that everyone can afford to shop, of course.'* (Respondent FH).

A point raised by the FA representative was the high certification costs to become certified organic, that many small-scale farms cannot afford, even though they might have practices that could be considered as organic or deserving an animal welfare label, *'Especially if you look at the really small farms, even the livestock farmers who are not certified organic, they have about 15 pigs and they are out there all the time playing in the dirt. So they're totally fine, but they don't have an organic seal because it's just super expensive in some cases.'* (Respondent FA). Nonetheless, about 40% of all food marketed via the FA is certified organic, according to the FA interviewee.

The food items sold on the organic market selected for this case study are all certified organic. *'We see ourselves as a pure organic market'* (Respondent Organic Market), organic produce making the uniqueness of this market. The same applied for the CSA. All food items produced on the farm are certified organic.

The BFS puts a strong emphasis on organic food. According to the interviewee, 50% of all school food in Berlin is prepared with organic ingredients. Pre-COVID-19, 190'000 meals were served to primary school kids each day. The interviewee acknowledged that the price of organic and regional food is a hurdle for consumers to buy these kinds of food. In its strategy, the Senate has a special action track for the development of regional food chains, where the percentage of conventional products is to be set higher than organic ones.

The BFPC interviewee was well-aware of the benefits of organic and regional food and advocates for more of these kinds of food in Berlin. Nonetheless, the high prices of organic food cannot be afforded by households with a smaller budget, this is why the BFPC supports the idea of a systemic change.

6.2.4. Regional Food

Regional food plays an important role for the six interviewees and their organisation. '*With the fresh products particularly, we want to work with regional farmers*' (Respondent FH); The FH was planning to sell regional fruits and vegetables.

The whole concept of the FA is to provide urban dwellers with food products from the region. A virtual barrier had previously been set on the online platform; the longest distance between a farm and a FA was 150 km. Despite this barrier, the average distance is 40 km in and around Berlin. Imported products such as olive oil and oranges from small farms and processing units in the Southern part of Europe can be found on the online platform as well.

Even though non-regional products can be found at the organic market, the initial concept was to bring local, organic produce to the city centre. The oldest stall of the market has been part of the market for more than 30 years and offers foods from a farm in Brandenburg.

For the CSA, marketing their own products and sometimes adding a few apples from neighbouring farms into their boxes, regionality is definitively a golden rule, as it is both for the BFS and the BFPC. Both the strategy and the council intend to increase awareness, production, and consumption of regional foods amongst Berlin citizens.

6.2.5. Sense of Belonging

The desire to participate in AFNs due to a sense of belonging could be revealed by the six interviews. Eating and purchasing food coming from AFNs create bonds, not only between producers and consumers, but also amongst consumers themselves and between all people involved in the marketing of the food items.

The CSA, from their participation form onwards, seeks to bring together people who believe in a vegan lifestyle. Days where members can come and help out on the farm can also increase social coherence.

The FHs' organisational structure is all about participation and activities within a community. Members strive for the same passion: fair and transparent food. This can bring together people from diverse educational and social backgrounds, as passion for food is not reserved to a certain type of individuals. *'I think also this is connected to the feeling of disconnect from others, maybe feeling alone in trying to make this effort. It doesn't feel like you can make much of a difference either. I think when you're with a group trying to do it, it increases your sense of sort of agency, and is somehow empowering'* (Respondent FH). Some might have been attracted to the concept of FHs as it enables people to come together and to work jointly towards the same goal. *'[...] it's the idea that each of us working in the supermarket increases our connection not only in a sense of ownership, not only to the to the market itself, but also to the connection with other members in this community'* (Respondent FH).

The organiser of the organic market clearly stated that, *'we also cultivate our cosy charm and say that we actually want quality of stay and try to offer that'* (Respondent Organic Market). Food shopping at the market is not just about purchasing food, it is also about exchanging a few words and enjoying the nice setting of the market, with something to munch on or to sip.

The idea lying behind purchasing food in a FA is twofold. (1) It eases the logistics for the producers, who only need to drive their items to one specific place instead of delivering them directly at the consumers home, and (2) it increases the contact between actors playing a role in the food assemblies (the producers, the consumers, the middleperson; all three being making up the assembly. As assemblies sprout throughout the city, the sense of doing something for the neighbourhood is of great importance as well (Respondent FA).

As both the BFS and the BFPC have a less hands-on mission and are not providing food to citizens per se, the sense of belonging does not stand out as much as for the AFNs analysed in this thesis.

6.2.6. Health Aspects

Reasons to participate in AFNs were found to relate to a more holistic approach to health, that goes through food. *'When people have children or maybe turn 30 and have been out of university for a few years or so, they start to look at good food a bit more and at some point, come to the conclusion that there's more to it than Rewe or Aldi'* (Respondent FA – Rewe and Aldi being MSCs). The reason for starting the organic market was to be able to, *'buy fresh organic food in the city*

and not have to go to the countryside for it (Respondent Organic Market), with an emphasis on good, clean products.

The message of the FH lies, *‘in the belief that regardless of your personal circumstance, you should have access to healthy and fairly produced food’* (Respondent FH). Health appeared to be a basic right, just as the BFPC advocates for clean and equitable food for all.

The initiators of the CSA believed in a vegan production mode, that is not harmful, neither for the planet nor for consumers’ health.

6.2.7. Form of the Initiative

It appeared that the organisational model of an AFN can have an influence on participation of consumers and co-workers. Both the CSA and the FH are registered cooperatives. As they have a cooperative system, members are co-owners and members at the same time, who commit themselves to share the risks associated with the venture (Respondents CSA and FH). The FA is a private limited company and works according to a different system. The FA interviewee put it clearly, *‘At the end of the day, we are an organisation that runs a platform. We always say that openly, so if you really want to support a completely self-managed solidarity, following a self-sustaining principle, then you have to go somewhere else’* (Respondent FA). As the FA is profit-driven, less space is given to the consumers themselves as actors.

The organisers of the organic market, a registered nature conservation association, try on the one side to educate market strollers and passer-by’s about climate change and various sustainability-related topics. On the other side, reaching out to other consumers for the organic market did not appear to be a priority according to the interviewee.

The BFS representative stated not to seek explicitly any contact with the private sector. Emanating from a government body, the strategy primarily targets the public sector and funds organisations that are not business oriented. In the same lineage, the BFPC gives agency to civil society actors, and does not engage in discussions with representatives from the private sector.

6.3. Mention of Mainstream Supply Chains

All networks interviewed mentioned MSCs in their answers, clearly distancing themselves from conventional marketing channels.

The FA interviewee mentioned the monopolisation of big retail chains, leading to a high unpredictability in price and demand evolution. The interest increase in

marketing regional, small-scale produce was something the interviewee strongly believed in and wanted to utilise for the FA.

The representative of the FH said that the prices would not (fully) compete with discounter prices. As the interviewed person was not in charge of price fixing, no further details could be provided.

The CSA representative only mentioned MSCs when asked about a personal tip on how to get fresh, good food items without having big financial means. Organic supermarkets offering a vast variety of fresh products, if chosen carefully, the prices would not be that high. Similarly, the representative of the organic market merely mentioned organic supermarkets as the ‘next step’ for some producers, using the organic market as a testing bed for their products.

On a more political level, the BFPC respondent clearly stated that, *‘The Berlin Food Policy Council does not share the view that the supermarket chains such as Aldi are the solution of the problem.’* (Respondent BFPC). Nonetheless, the target group of the specific project *Alle an einen Tisch* (people newly arrived in Germany), *‘[is] here now and because of the restricted money they have to buy mostly at Aldi or Lidl.’* (Respondent BFPC). Restricted financial resources can determine access to food from AFNs.

The Senate did not mention MSCs but stated that the BFS was not in touch with the private sector when asked about cooperation.

6.4. Grounding in Concepts

The concepts of food justice, sovereignty, and democracy were reflected in some features of the selected AFNs. While all networks adopt features from all movements, not all fully match with the concepts entirely.

The CSA was established out of the difficulty to find vegan grown food in the German capital city. As the founders could not find what they wanted but strongly believed in biocyclic processes, they decided to start their own farm. For them, a non-exploitative way of producing food was important (Respondent CSA). In order to obtain the food they wanted, they opted for a method that can be linked to food sovereignty, deciding themselves what they would plant and according to what principles the crops would grow. The organic market started out of the initiative of neighbourhood inhabitants and the Grüne Liga. This can also be reconnected to concepts of food sovereignty, where people can decide what, when and where they obtain food.

When asked about the concepts, the FA interviewee mentioned that *‘I think we're 95 percent on the spectrum of creating super monopolistic independence relationships’* (Respondent FA). Moreover, the principle of the FA, being an open

platform where anybody can get involved and try to open an assembly, is linked to a form of food sovereignty. Supporting the small-scale farmers was also perceived as a food justice form, enabling them to pursue their work.

The FH representative fully agreed when asked if the FH was aligning with the concepts of food sovereignty. According to her, *‘Although it sounds a bit sort of romanticised this idea it taking some power control over your life circumstances’* (Respondent FH). The three concepts all-together would be their *‘guiding stars’* she added, still being cautious about her wording, as the FH was not open by the time of the interview, *‘But how much we achieve is yet to be seen, I would say’*. (Respondent FH). In the aim of the FH to enable people to co-design food systems, all assets seem to be present to reach these loadstars.

The principles of the BFPC were thought to be embedded in a food democracy practice, where civil society actors are to raise their voice to politics, toward food policy change. The project *‘Alle an einen Tisch’* takes this mission even further, engaging conversation with people usually excluded from political discourses. *‘It is about asking people about their perspectives and demands on Berlin's food system who are not normally part of it. It's about making the voices of marginalised target groups public, heard and visible in our lobbying work.’* (Respondent BFPC)

The BFS, targeting Berlin inhabitants at large, are moving in the field of food justice, where all citizens should have access to adequate food, regardless of their social background.

6.5. Hurdles in Scaling up Alternative Food Networks

6.5.1. Consumer Prices

A clear commonality of the AFNs is the higher consumer price compared to MSCs. The FH, still in its early days, could not give a clear answer about the price range, but organic products would be cheaper than the ones bought in an organic supermarket. Similarly, the organic market did not give any numbers but mentioned online reviews of the market, most of them deploring the high prices found on the market.

Both the CSA and the FH are offering the possibility to pay the membership fee by instalments, for less well-off people to join their cooperative.

The BFPC representative alluded to an anecdote from a cooking class organised in a community accommodation, where the discussion revolved around cooking with or without meat. A participant had said that, *‘If you don't have much of a budget, meat is great. It's cheaper than vegetables’*, to which the interviewee

added: *'And you're right. Cheap meat is of course cheaper than vegetables. It's terrible, but it's true'* (Respondent BFPC). Similarly, the legitimacy of the high organic market prices was backed up by the organic market interviewee, turning the question around and arguing that conventional products were too cheap. The solutions to achieve a paradigm change are discussed further in the discussion chapter.

6.5.2. Alternative Food Networks' Financial Resources

All AFNs interviewed for this thesis are, to a more or less large extent, profit-driven. While all ground in a will to propose food marketing channels and/or production methods that are not part of the MSCs, they all need to survive financially, as resources utilised have to be paid for.

The FH still in its early stages, its representative lifted the topic on mentoring and funding more frequently than the others. A problem raised by the interviewee was the difficulty to get 'angel investors' (people investing in a small company or a start-up) interested in supporting a cooperative. No dividends come out of the sales; the profit made is directly re-invested in the cooperative.

The BFS interviewee noted the (at times) short lifespan of initiatives raising awareness about food and connecting producers with school caterers, only really functioning during a funding period. *'We regret that when the project funding periods are over and we can't make any further funding, then you [don't know] whether the actors will continue it anyway'* (Respondent BFS). The financial aspect is not to be left aside, as financial resources are the ones steering most ventures.

6.5.3. Access to Land and other Resources

The CSA interviewee mentioned the long struggle that accessing land had been. Finding farmers and gardeners willing to engage in the project was not found to be easy either. *'I believe that the process of founding a [CSA] is still quite difficult, especially working with farmers. We definitely noticed that it was very difficult to find land or farmers with whom we could cooperate'* (Respondent CSA).

The FH representative emphasised the importance of gaining interest amongst citizens in becoming a member, as the whole structure of the cooperative lies in getting people interested in the project and jointly contribute to it. When members start a full-time job, get children or go back to studying, the time issue can become problematic.

The Food Assembly respondent also mentioned the human resource factor as an important one. Delivering multiple selling points becomes difficult when the production gets bigger. It can then become easier to turn to wholesalers. *'For*

them (the larger scale farms), the Food Assembly is usually no longer lucrative, because we are very small-scale. You have to do a lot yourself as a producer, but in return, you keep a lot of the product price' (Respondent FA)

Merging both time and human constraints, the Senate interviewee deplored the fact that only one and a half position was in charge of the strategy at the BSJCPA. By June 2021, a new position was to be opened to push the BFS forward.

6.5.4. Cultural and Personal Freedom

The crucial topic of personal freedom was summed up by the Senate interviewee, *'But of course it is very difficult to tell people what they eat at home and how they buy.'* (Respondent BFS). According to them, even though the offer is there, there's no obligation to buy a certain food item. An anecdote was then mentioned, illustrating the obstacles existing when trying to change school meals. In 2013, the Green party proposed to introduce a meat-free day, so-called 'Veggie Day', in all school canteens. This proposal was met with fierce opposition from all fronts, accusing the party of an 'eco-dictatorship'.

The BFPC interviewee named an anecdote from one of their cooking events in a shared community accommodation, where the lack of knowledge clearly led to a reluctance to try out food: *'People didn't eat that because they didn't know it. It was great food, like classic October food. The best you can get actually [...] but people didn't know the vegetables and didn't eat it.'* (Respondent BFPC). Therefore, the BFPC puts an emphasis on educating citizens about the benefits of regional, seasonal and healthy cooking, but is well-aware of cultural barriers that can prevent people from adopting new cooking habits.

'When we consider income and all the different aspects of our society that make it difficult for a person [to access good food], you know, considering race, culture, language, sexuality, religion, all these different layers of our identity also contribute to how much access we have to certain options, including our food' (Respondent FH). The FH interviewee put many components together and indicated an understanding of barriers to access food, embedded in a broader picture.

6.5.5. Logistics

The topic of logistics was touched upon during all interviews, except during the one with the BFPC. According to the organic market interviewee, better logistics would lead to lower prices. If every small-scale farmer was to drive to town to sell its produce, the economic gain would not be high enough. The FA was mentioned as a solution for farmers to get together and to sell their produce jointly. The FA interviewee recounted about farmers setting up their assembly, to increase their sales and the ones of the farmers in the surrounding area. Similarly, small

producers get organised and pick up produce from neighbouring farms if they deliver the same assembly.

Logistics was raised by the interview in charge of the BFS as well. A major issue in communal catering is the provenance of food. In order to supply kitchens cooking for a high number of people a day, the number of AFNs involved would have to be high. *‘Especially if you want to support smaller players, then, of course, the question is always; if they don't want to have a middleman, because they take too much money, how do the products then come to the one who process them?’* (Respondent BFS).

A common feature of the CSA and the FA is the fact that the food is delivered at a specific location, easing the logistics for the producers.

It is to be noted here that AFNs in an urban setting, bridging the gap between consumption and production, cities and countryside, also lessen the effort needed in order to get food directly from the producer. The logistics happens prior to the consumer.

The decision for the FH to work with wholesalers was explained by the logistic, *‘as [...] it doesn't make sense to have different trucks coming in all day and making deliveries’*, but also by a will to keep lower prices, *‘then, on the other hand, it's about the prices and keeping them affordable for the community’* (Respondent FH).

6.5.6. Food Environment

The question of food environments was raised by the BFS interviewee: *‘There are [...] extensive studies, which simply prove that specifically in areas where people with a lower education degree and less money live, the offer of unhealthy food is clearly much more abundant than in bourgeois areas’* (Respondent BFS). The offer of cheap, fast, and highly salted or fatty foods is more abundant in areas where people have fewer financial means.

6.6. Stronger Together

The issue of cooperation emerged as a staple for understanding the importance of AFNs in the case studies. All interviewees sensed that their organisation was part of a food system, where collaboration and cooperation is needed for joint solutions.

Due to their organisational forms, the CSA and the FH put a strong emphasis on joint risk and shared labour. This can unite people and give them back a sense of agency, as put by the FH, *‘I think [...] this also is connected to the feeling of disconnect from others feeling maybe alone in trying to make this effort. It doesn't feel like you can make much of a difference either. I think when you're with a*

group trying to create change it increases your sense of sort of agency and [is] somehow empowering. So that's the other sort of thing we see, like people wanting to connect with our neighbours and do something together' (Respondent FH).

The concept of the FA entirely relies on the ability of food assembly organisers to structure their work, to be in touch with both producers and consumers, to motivate people to join their assemblies, and to create a familiar atmosphere at the delivery days. *'[...] we really need people who are also idealistically motivated, i.e. who have a combination of organisational skills, a bit of an economic mindset, but above all this personal motivation to do something good for the neighbourhood'* (Respondent FA). The sense of both personal and self-less motivation stands out here. Moreover, a wish to see different AFNs come together to create momentum for change was raised as well: *'I hope that other concepts will join in, I don't know, market halls, weekly markets, whatever, in order to perhaps offer mixed options'* (Respondent FA).

Collaboration was also mentioned as an anecdote by the organic market, taking the example of organic bakers in Berlin, jointly ordering and setting prices with regional mills, both for their own security but also for that of the processing units.

For their advancement, the eight action tracks formulated by the BFS imply cooperation between all actors in the Berlin food system. *'The nutrition strategy also states that this is not a project that can be carried out by the administration alone, but that all actors [...] must work together to create a more sustainable nutrition system for the region of Berlin and Brandenburg'* (Respondent BFS). Furthermore, the BFS is *'about bringing together the players along the value chain, i.e. the producer, the processor, the caterer, the school'* (Respondent BFS).

In its aim to include all kinds of social groups into political discussions, the BFPC clearly has a role of bringing people together and of advocating for civil society, elevating their voices onto a whole new level.

6.7. Social Inclusion Solutions

When asked about ways to include financially insecure groups into (their) AFNs, the interviewers all mentioned the need for a structural change, led by politics, as described under section 6.9.

6.7.1. Reaching out to More Citizens

Choosing the right communication channel and the right communication tools were suggested as ways to target different groups of people. *'When you identify with the voice that's speaking, then you also are going to come to the project. And conversely, if you don't know, then it's more—Hmm not sure that's for me'*

(Respondent FH). Adapted communication platforms are to be chosen wisely, physical gatherings usually working best for marginalised (and other not-interested) people. These had not been allowed the year preceding the writing of this thesis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital communication tends to gather already interested people, who only dedicate a few minutes of their time to look up and/or read information they're already interested in. *'It is only possible through contact work and cooperation, joint events. Then we get in touch with people and then we can inspire them for our work'* (Respondent BFPC). Being in the same room, seeing the same objects, smelling the same odours was perceived as enabling deeper understanding and better communication.

'The ones who have more diverse backgrounds are the ones that we explicitly address, that we get in touch with through our project 'All at one table'. For example, a public discussion is planned for this year, where we want to explicitly invite activists from the food and climate movement who have a migration background, with whom we want to enter into conversation' (Respondent BFPC). The BFPC actively seeks to get in touch with marginalised groups. As mentioned under 4.3.2., the BFPC leads a project translating into 'Let's meet around the table!'. In organising cooking and discussion events, the voice of marginalised people can be captured, and their claims can be included in policy making process. Still, not all board members nor spokespersons of the BFPC are agreeing on this kind of project, as added by the BFPC representative.

The CSA and the FH are offering the possibility to pay with instalments and were jointly looking for solutions for those who would not afford to pay the entry and membership fee. As one share belongs to the person who has paid it, giving money to someone else remains in a grey zone, yet to be defined (Respondent FH).

6.7.2. Communal Locations

A common feature of the AFNs analysed for this thesis and the projects suggested by the experts is the idea that food is retrieved not only from a supermarket, but from a place with a history and people behind. The face- & placeless supermarket is supplanted by a venue where people interact with each other, where more than just purchasing food is happening.

FAs welcome customers to pick up their ordered food items at a particular place. It happens that the producers themselves attend the deliveries as well. On the organic market, people are welcome to stay longer than just for the duration of their food shopping. The members of the CSA collect their weekly boxes at a picking point located in a spot with social activities, whereas members of the FH, with their binding membership requiring a monthly 3-hours long shift, forcedly get together and meet with like-minded people.

‘Food points’ were mentioned by the organic market, BFPC, and BFS respondents as locations where food meets culture, directly in neighbourhoods. These food points are encouraged by the BFS and the BFPC, as they bring together people around food. *‘These can be turnaround places for CSAs or just provide room for neighbourhood cooking, food education activities, or redistributing rescued food. Basically, anything that you can do with nutrition and food. Creating a connection between rural and urban’* (Respondent BFS). One of the tasks of the Senate is to create a framework to set up such food points. *‘We see this project or this idea with the food points as an answer to how people with less money can get access to good and healthy food’* (Respondent BFS).

Schools, with food as a central component of both human interaction and school material, appear to be another space to ignite the transformation. Public meals were identified as having a great potential to reach out to a larger public and to enable access to good food for all. Regardless of the social background, school kids get a free meal every day (Respondents BFS and BFPC).

6.7.3. Education

In order to increase awareness about the added value of eating organic produce, the BSJCPA was, *‘planning a major campaign to inform consumers about the added value of organic regional products and why some of them are more expensive’* (Respondent BFS). Creating awareness about the importance of food for both human and planetary health was also a priority for the BFPC, *‘Food education is also something that I think is criminally neglected in schools’* (Respondent BFPC).

Schools were mentioned to be the perfect place to ignite interest and appreciation for food and agriculture. *‘I do believe that we can achieve a great deal if we continue to expand things in the area of communal catering’* (Respondent BFS). Communal catering would reach out to all children, regardless of their social background. The Senate had had several weekly campaigns, where caterers are asked to use organic, regional food, *‘the school caterers use organic regional products and make this clear in their menus, which are then also displayed in the schools, and educators and teachers receive educational materials so that they can teach about these products using the example of the food that is offered to the children every day’* (Respondent BFS). Canteen food is to be combined with other school subjects, so pupils can connect science, literature, and arts with food and thus increase their willingness to pay attention to what they eat.

Besides their information stall on the weekly organic market, the market interviewee mentioned school gardens and sustainable city walks, taking participants to various places that have a direct link with food production or consumption. These activities can raise awareness about the central place of food systems, even in an urban setting.

In the communication work of the FA, an effort is put on telling farmers' stories, for the consumers to get an understanding of their work and their living conditions. Trips for kids were planned during summer 2020, but they all had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *'Something like that would be great, or just this principle of visiting farms or telling the stories of farmers. These are all things that we are trying to emphasise more and more in our communication'* (Respondent FA).

6.8. Paradigm Shift

Whereas certain habits can be changed with a certain framework, applied to various sectors in life, routines and mindset are difficult to modify, even though the need for a paradigm shift seems to be approved by all interviewees. The focus of organisations handling with food from the one way or the other should lie on accessing good food, and not on merely making money, priorities should change.

A new understanding of food prices was mentioned as key for transformation. *'[The] perception that it's not too expensive, but that the others (goods) are too cheap, is of course a structural thing'* (Respondent Organic Market), underscoring the importance of structural change. In the same line, thinking about prices in a reverse way would be helpful: *'organic food will always be more expensive than conventional products and the question is perhaps more the other way round: why are conventional products so cheap?'* (Respondent Organic Market).

Expenditures on non-food items should be reconsidered, argued the Food Assembly representative. The idea that, *'cheap food or spending little money really is a good thing and you thereby save money for other things, for example, for the big flat screen TV'* (Respondent FA) is to be changed. In the same lineage, the representative of the organic market condemned the (cliché) German mentality that *'stinginess is cool'* (Respondent Organic Market). Appreciation of food and of all the steps that hide behind a food item would be welcomed by all interviewees.

For the structural framework not to focus on money-making, the current system would need to change, as posited by the FH interviewee; *'I think that's something we can't really escape in our current system'* (Respondent FH).

6.9. Role of Politics

Subsidies going to large farms, following the current CAP, were perceived as an important barrier for small-scale, regional farmers to survive in secure conditions.

'It is simply very obvious that other priorities are set than the support of small farmers or processing companies, which are simply very poorly supported in comparison with the large agricultural companies. They are almost left alone' (Respondent FA). According to him, small-scale agriculture and AFNs are left outside big financial support schemes. Coming back to consumers and referring to a publicity campaign showcasing the German agriculture minister, saying that they are the ones who decide what they eat, rejecting any responsibility of big concerns or politics in people's daily choices, the Food Assembly representative stated that, *'to tell the uninformed consumer that it's their fault is almost vicious'* (Respondent FA). The politics would be to take action and to change the framework.

The interviewee from the CSA mentioned the need for politics to recognise the importance of bringing together food producers and food consumers and to support solidarity-based initiatives. Reframing the agricultural sector to make it more attractive to people is needed as well, *'bring people who work in agriculture and people who want to have solidarity vegetables or solidarity products even closer together. Because that is often, I think, a bit difficult. And I think that solidarity-based concepts have been totally underrepresented in the political context so far'* (Respondent CSA).

Little demand to policy makers came from the organic market interviewee. There, solutions for better marketing opportunities for AFNs are thought to arise from AFNs themselves. Better logistics and groupings of bakers were for example named.

Demands for political actions from the FH ground in financial support. In order for policy makers to really support (AFNs) they would *'creat(e) more funding for these projects, which exists, but (are) still very hard to access because the funding [...] depends on your ability to make a big profit and to make money for investors'* (Respondent FH). This can be related to the early stage of the FH, whose supermarket was to open in summer 2021.

The belief of the Senate in creating a common ground for coherent action towards sustainable food systems is crystal clear, and the following quote puts this point in perspective: *'But of course it is very difficult to tell people what they eat at home and how they buy. And that's why, from my point of view, it's really important to create the framework conditions'* (Respondent BFS). The ice is thin when it comes to modifying habits without interfering too much with personal preferences and freedom. This is where the idea of 'effortless sustainability' comes into play: *'We need framework conditions that simply make it easier for people to choose the more sustainable path [...] And that must be the easiest way, and that must not be made more difficult'* (Respondent BFS).

An increase of the sturdiness of social security webs was mentioned by the BFPC interview. A larger amount of money dedicated to food expenditure '*would be a clear position and demand to [politics]*' (Respondent BFPC).

7. Discussion

After having highlighted the themes and most relevant outcomes of the interviews conducted with the four networks and the two projects aiming to increase the access to good food amongst urban dwellers, the aim and research questions of the thesis are discussed in the following chapter, drawing back on elements and concepts found in literature. The first part focuses on the question aiming to define the drivers fuelling AFNs. As hurdles are closely linked to solutions, these are sketched out in the second subchapter, followed by suggestions for urban food policies to support and increase access to AFNs.

7.1. Alternative Food Network Drivers and Hurdles

According to Goodman and Goodman (2009), AFNs are firstly food marketing channels that thrive parallel to MSCs. Secondly, AFNs, in re-embedding food within all societal actors, contribute to both physical and cultural nourishment (Clapp, 2012). Thirdly, AFNs design new relationships between producers and consumers (Kessari et al., 2020). These three points were found to fit the four AFNs chosen for this thesis. All exist parallel to MSCs and sell products via channels that are not mainstream supermarkets. The notions of education and knowledge around the value of food found unanimity amongst all six interviews. Awareness about food and agriculture can do wonders, modifying consumption habits and putting food and all the processes embedded onto a higher value scale. Re-connection with food goes through a re-connection between food producers and food consumers, by shortening the food value chain, whereby the understanding between and amongst both parts augments. All three points by Goodman and Goodman, Clapp and Kessari et al. converge and can be utilised when referring to and putting the four selected AFNs into perspective.

The drivers for participations found with the content analysis, and organised with the software MAXQDA, can be recognised in table 5.

Table 5: Drivers for participation in AFNs

Identified participation motives	Illustrative quote
Access to Quality Food	<i>People from Neukölln come to buy from our farmers because they appreciate the quality (Respondent Organic Market)</i>
Not mainstream	<i>The Berlin Food Policy Council does not share the view that the supermarket chains such as Aldi are the solution of the problem (Respondent BFPC)</i>
Sense of belonging	<i>It's the idea that each of us working in the supermarket increases our connection not only in a sense of ownership, not only to the market itself, but also to the connection with other members in this community (Respondent FH)</i>
Will to change	<i>We lived in Berlin at the time and wanted to have organic vegan vegetables, which didn't exist in Berlin (Respondent CSA)</i>

The first driver identified for participating in AFNs is **access to quality food**, mirroring previous research (Clapp, 2012; Blake et al., 2018). All AFN interviewees mentioned that food offered by their organisation had an intrinsic added value, that could not be offered by MSCs. The most salient example is the CSA, growing food following vegan principles and only sourcing a few food items from neighbouring farms if for example a few extra apples are needed for the weekly boxes. The FA works with the principle of local food produced by small-scale farmers, whereas the organic market exclusively offers organic products. The FH is the only one to slightly differ on this point. Even though the food sold will mainly be local and organic once the supermarket opens, all kinds of products will be found there, to enable its access to a greater number of people. The singularity and added value of the FH is the cooperative structure and transparency of the supermarket, where all decisions are made jointly and members are an inherent part of the structure, as they also act as workers.

Out of all interviews with the four AFN representatives, a strong wish to **act differently**, not following business-as-usual rules, could be perceived. This aligns with AFN definitions describing organisations that aim to change existing structures (Barbera and Dagnes, 2016; Darrot et al., 2020; Goodman and Goodman, 2009). All four networks were established out of a desire to create a food purchasing structure that would not be part of the MSCs, leaving more room for connections between the various actors in that voluntarily smaller and more tangible food system. For the FA, for example, better prices for the producers are a real gain of this SFSC. The CSA can offer food that is not available in a conventional shop, whereas the organic market enables consumers and producers to get together and engage in conversations about food products themselves. The FH allows its members a sneak peek behind the scenes, offering a hands-on experience of all the logistics and organisation existing behind full supermarket shelves.

Solidarity with the planet, the people and other living beings could also be sensed through the responses of the four AFN interviews. Together with consumers, the FA wants to help small-scale farmers to survive next to larger-scale, heavier subsidised farms. Members of the CSA support an agriculture that works close to and with nature, without using any animal input, while FH members help to promote transparency in food marketing, for fair prices across the food system. The organic market, organised by a nature conservation organisation, offers a setting where consumers desiring high quality organic produce can find a full assortment in a pleasant environment. Even though food prices are higher than in MSCs, the consumer is willing to pay more, due to the added value of the food offered and the organisation offering it. Consumers and producers coming together appeared to increase the **sense of belonging** for all involved actors. Knowing the different actors seemed to strengthen the feeling of doing something good and of contributing to a positive change in society. Especially the representative of the FH emphasised the joy of working towards a good cause, the ownership feature likely to increase this feeling of power when the food purchased has a story. This participation drive matches retrieved literature accusing AFNs of being elitist and formed by a homogenous group of people (Blake et al., 2018; Hodgins and Fraser, 2018). People tend to join AFNs as they feel attracted to a place where people have similar thoughts. However, the will to change certain system features can also aggregate people, no matter what social group they belong to. As Kessari et al. (2020) propose, cooperation can animate and support change.

Lastly, a desire to **change food systems** in the way they are operated stood out of all interviews, concordantly with previous AFN studies such as the ones by Blake et al. (2018) referring to these movements as revolts. The two intermediary organisations interviewed entirely embody the will for change. The BFPC was established with the aim to transform the food system in Berlin. Equivalently, the BFS was created to create a common ground for initiatives and a line of vision for organisations working with food and communal catering. More transparency within food systems is wanted by all six interviewees, moving from the face- & placeless to the local and the transparent. The four AFNs modify their small food ecosystem and act in parallel to the rest of the food system.

Concepts linked to participation, food justice, food democracy, and food sovereignty were found to be crucial in the literature review. While some analysed AFNs proved to align with some of these concepts, others declared that their organisation aimed at similar goals to the ones stated in the previous phrase.

On a city-scale, the BFPC pledges for a food system that would entail all these three features, and its representative saw the biggest hurdle in the achievement of food democracy. This is why the BFPC is taking the lead, enabling all citizens to co-design the way the food system looks like in Berlin. More transparency, communication, and citizen participation are asked for. The BFS, in its aim to create a future-proof food system in Berlin, did not seem to adopt the visions of

food justice, sovereignty, and democracy in their complexity. The eighth action track of the strategy, ‘More transparency for consumers’, is the closest one to food sovereignty; consumers should have access to information regarding the food they eat and have full control over what they decide to eat and to purchase. In increasing the offer of quality food in school and communal catering (action track 1), access to these kinds of food for school kids with different social backgrounds, coupled with education offers, is likely to increase.

Furthermore, the four participation drivers align with the three food movement concepts. These drivers prove a will to establish food systems where more understanding between actors, more community feeling, and quality food are substantial. The will to access good food and to know where food comes from has close ties with food sovereignty. Close connection and sense of belonging to a community are akin to transparency in food system and thus to food democracy, where processes can be followed by the consumers, more so within the FH and the CSA (due to their cooperative form). As mentioned previously, in their questioning of hegemonic globalised food systems, the AFNs align with the food justice movement. The question remains open about the extent to which the AFNs achieve their goals, follow their guiding stars, and contribute to more justice, sovereignty, and democracy within the Berlin foodscape. Nonetheless, even if not stated explicitly, common action increasing the availability of quality food on a city level can be coupled to the discussed concepts. Levers of change are discussed more amply in the following section.

7.2. Levers of Change

Whereas the previous subchapter focused on the AFNs and the reasons lying behind participation in them, this subchapter aims at taking a more holistic perspective and looking at issues related to participation and inclusion in AFNs on the broader political and societal level. As important as the reasons for participating in AFNs are the hurdles to accessing these. Only when hurdles are known can solutions be provided. Therefore, hurdles and levers of change amalgamate in this subchapter.

Even though the interviews were not conducted with consumer groups, it can be assumed that **high prices** hinder marginalised people to purchase food from AFNs, just as multiple scholars advance (Beck et al., 2013; Darrot et al., 2020 e.g.). Even though the AFNs representatives interviewed mentioned aims going beyond good working conditions, fair prices for farmers, and healthy food, they all work for organisations that survive thanks to financial input. The major drive of the organisations is the **sale of products**. This point has previously been advanced by Hodgins and Fraser (2018) for example. What differs amongst them is the way profit is being utilised. While market stall vendors keep the profit themselves and FA organisers as well, the FH and CSA board reinvest financial

surplus into the cooperative, enabling logistics improvement or food range expansion for example. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is not relevant for the AFNs to know what their target group is but rather what they want, as the important matter is to get people interested in purchasing food via their marketing channels.

All AFNs and intermediary organisation representatives agreed on the fact that prices for quality local product were too high for an average consumer, not convinced of the importance of quality food nor in possession of a wealthy wallet. This factor hinders access to AFNs, as signalled in the introduction chapter.

Moreover, the **time factor** appeared to be important for participation in AFNs (Darrot et al, 2020). Out of the four initiatives selected in this thesis, two mainly sell raw, unprocessed products (the organic market and the CSA), implying more time processing the food at home for the end-consumer, but also interest in and knowledge about cooking. The FH stated the will to offer packaged food as well, and the FA proposes e.g. cheese or preserves, processed by the farms themselves. It is here to be noted that processing units were only mentioned by the organic market representative when bringing up the topic of organic bakers having contracts with local mills. Both time and price factors are hurdles to access AFNs. For more consumers to opt for more expensive and time-consuming foods and cooking methods, as few points are discussed hereafter, and are summarised in table 6.

Table 6: Levers of change for AFNs to reach more citizens

Identified levers of change to broaden access to AFNs	Illustrative quote
Food points	<i>We see this project or this idea with the food points as an answer to how people with less money can get good and healthy food (Respondent BFS)</i>
Food education	<i>Something like that would be great or just this principle of visiting farms or telling the stories of farmers. These are all things that we are trying to emphasize more and more in our communication (Respondent FA)</i>
Political and structural support	<i>I mean, if the structure were more supportive, I'm sure there would be a lot more projects like this (Respondent FH)</i>
Logistics	<i>I think that is a field where there is still a lot of room to achieve a better price for consumers in the end. If the logistics and thus the logistics costs can of course be reduced (Respondent Organic Market)</i>
Paradigm shift	<i>People didn't eat that because they didn't know it (Respondent BFPC)</i>

The concept of **food points** was alluded to both by the BFPC and the BFS representatives. The organic market representative also referred to them. Given the status of the market organisation (a well-connected nature conservation

organisation), its voice can count as an intermediary organisation as well. These food points, explicitly supported by the BFS in its fourth actions track ('Lively and productive neighbourhoods'), are supported by politics, and contribute to a coalescence point between various actors in the food system. Citizens can assist cooking classes, share their best recipes, collect food from a CSA or simply discuss with other passers-bys, communication and conviviality also being an important feature of AFNs, as seen in the previous chapter under 'Sense of Belonging' (chapter 6.2.5.) and 'Solidarity' (chapter 6.2.2.). Political support of their creation in all neighbourhoods is a step towards more (discussion about) quality food.

Still, the creation of such rallying points is not enough for citizens to critically think about food systems, as advanced by scholars such as Blake et al. (2018) or Wannemacher and Kuhnert (2009). **Food education** was mentioned by all interviewees as crucial for a food system transformation. If more knowledge was spread in society about food systems and the interlinkages between food offer, food consumption, and both planetary and human health were understood, AFNs might have greater success amongst all social groups. Politics, in its educational role, stands a high chance of success if schools were perceived with their potential to group many subjects around the topic of food. Sustainable food catering would go along with classes deepening the role of food in a historical, geographical, biological, or even physical education context. Mandatory food economics and preparation classes could for example become compulsory. Moreover, AFNs can themselves contribute to knowledge spreading among other target groups than school children. If financially supported in their campaigns to raise awareness and share small-scale farmers' stories, both in the Global North and the Global South, AFNs could have a big impact on raising issues related to farming and consumption of healthy foods for a healthy planet. The area of food education conforms to Kallhoff's (2013) claim that if citizens had agency to change the world around them, change would be ignited by understanding.

An overarching solution for politics to support AFNs would be to **redirect support** to smaller agricultural structures, introducing subsidies according to the kind and not the quantity of food produced. Small-scale farms, producing food in accordance with social and environmental principles and acting in the vein of food sovereignty, justice and democracy often lack financial resources to fully achieve their aim (Hodgins and Fraser, 2018). An easier access to land and a bigger interest in the agricultural topics are to be aimed for, for an easier start in farming life with more interested and motivated people. Information plays an important role here as well.

The topic of **logistics** appeared to be relevant as well, coordinated action is important on all fronts. Small-scale farmers get together to start a FA or to take care of assembly deliveries. The FA representative also stated the importance of alliances and of groupings working towards a similar aim for AFNs to gain

momentum. The BFS was well-aware of that topic, acknowledging that this was a major issue when opting for food coming from AFNs. Many small farms might provide enough food for all school canteens in Berlin, but the problem is how to transport all produce into the city. Cooperation between actors for fluid logistics is an asset.

Political parties with a mission to provide people with quality instead of quantity and recognising the need to include more social groups in discussions have to be elected. The need for a **paradigm shift** was agreed upon by all six interviewees, leaning on most conclusions of AFN papers. Individual action does matter, but the overall political and food system structure needs to change at the same time as mindsets. While grassroots initiatives can battle their way through, incentives and guidelines can be set up from above. Going away from an extractive economy to an economy of shared value can be the way to take and implies a redirection of human activities.

8. Conclusion

Starting with an overview of AFNs, their claimed benefits but also critiques regarding their target groups and functioning were sketched, which led to the aim and research question of this thesis. Thereafter, a literature review highlighted concepts used when discussing AFNs. An aperçu of Berlin as a city, with an emphasis on marginalised groups was provided. The case studies were briefly introduced, followed by a method chapter where the research process was explained. The results retrieved from interviews and website analysis were listed in the subsequent chapter, and then discussed in the precedent chapter. This concluding chapter aims at giving an answer to the research questions as well as proposing paths for further research. The limitations of the study are outlined in the last subchapter of this thesis.

The aim of the thesis was to understand how four different AFNs in and around Berlin were structured, to find out what drives and hinders participation in AFNs and what urban food policies can do in order to enable more people to benefit from AFN advantages. Following research questions were to be answered:

1. What drives and hinders participation in four different Alternative Food Networks in Berlin?
2. How can urban policies support inclusion solutions in Alternative Food Networks the specific case of Berlin?

The drivers to participation in AFNs can be found in the previous chapter, in table 5. While solutions are responses to problems, these are not listed as such but can be deducted from the solutions to support AFNs (see table 6).

The four main participation drivers in AFNs in Berlin found are **access to quality food, not mainstream, sense of belonging** and **will to change**. The interview respondents all stressed the fact that their organisations are proposing food in an unconventional way, bringing together more than just food items, creating something special with their customers or members. Knowledge about current global food systems, their effect on people and the planet leads to motivation to act differently.

Even though solutions to accessing quality local food are existing in Berlin, AFNs as marketing channels are not exploited by all citizens. The biggest hurdles for participation in AFNs was identified to be the **high prices** of products.

Knowledge about the importance of paying attention to the origin and the production of food was also found to hinder access to AFNs. **Time** can also hinder participating in AFNs, as the products are usually raw products, that necessitate longer processing time than ready-made meals for example. Time invested in a cooperative can also put certain people back.

In order for AFNs to a higher diversity of social groups as their members or customers, several levers of change were identified. **Knowledge** increase about the importance of quality food amongst the Berlin population was determined to be a change ignition. Knowledge can be spread in various ways, the most absolute being at school. Coupling food offer with specific educational material stands out as being the most effective solution. Knowledge can also be spread thanks to social media and articles featuring small-scale farmers for example. The establishment of **food points** in neighbourhoods, where people gather around the topic of food is another promising idea.

On a more political and structural side, financial support was found to be crucial for all AFNs. **Access to resources** such as land, credits, manpower were found to be problematic. If coupled with education, more people might become interested in starting an AFNs, as the way would be paved for that. The European CAP was mentioned a few times as a major reason for an increase in large-scale farming, with ideology far away from the one of the AFNs, that truly bridge the gap between production and consumption with agricultural practices beneficial for both the planet and the people. In the same vein, an adaptation of the minimum living wage by the German government is to be adapted to the needs of a population increasingly asking for highly nutritional and quality food.

The limits to participation appear to be universal and not only adaptable to the city of Berlin. Despite the limited number of AFNs interviewed for this thesis, their diversity and the findings connecting to previous research, a few generalisations can be made. For hegemonic systems to quake, multiple alternatives need to take shape. Multiplication of AFNs – especially with a cooperative way of functioning – stands out to be a solution for more people to be made aware of them and to gain interest in their participation. But all in all, this thesis advances the idea that for AFNs to include more people, the political and structural framework has to change. In a system where profit is put before people and the planet, small initiatives aiming at bettering their own food systems encounter major difficulties. The need for a systematic change, in Berlin and beyond, prioritising health and food as a commons is to be achieved. AFNs alone do not have the agency to transform a foodscape on their own; for citizens to opt for ‘good food’, the right choices need to become more accessible and (financially and logistically) effortlessly attainable. For AFNs to not only forage but actually forge the Berlin foodscape, policy makers and civil society actors need to stand up jointly for more food justice, democracy, and sovereignty, allowing citizens to

dispose of keys, resources and opportunities to make informed decision food-wise.

8.1. Thesis Limitations

Due to the explorative character of the thesis, intending to find answers to research questions on the ground, little grounding in theories might be perceived. Explorative research can lead to weak, non-justified reasoning and too much room for the author's own interpretation. Nonetheless, the concepts and definitions provided in the first parts of the thesis were used as lenses through which the gathered data could be explored.

Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility but can also induce inaccuracy. The interviews were conducted in the form of a conversation, where some questions might have been omitted due to inadequacy with the turn the conversation had taken or the willingness of interviewees to expand on some points. Survey questionnaires followed by semi-constructed interviews to deepen the understanding of certain answers can be a solution to avoid these inaccuracies.

Even though the focus of the study is participation and inclusion of citizens in AFNs, interviews were only performed with representatives from AFNs and two people acting on a political level. Due to time constraints, no interviews were conducted with participants and non-participants in AFNs. This could be a suggestion for further research, that would control if citizen perception matches with the research findings about drivers and hurdles for marginalised people participation in AFNs. This way, a study talking 'with' and not 'about' marginalised people would be achieved, breaking the circle of top-down research, and including diverse voices in research processed. Furthermore, applying a sturdy theory of change to the propositions to scale up and support AFNs would be necessary to probe their reliability. It would also be of value to see if the findings match reality in other contexts (may it be with different AFNs or in a distinct city).

Despite the overall weak focus on the agricultural side of food systems in this thesis, more attention was paid to land farming, whereas the fishing industry is of major importance for food security as well. This is explained by the fact that Berlin does not border any lake nor sea, and that the study focused primarily on AFNs that chiefly offer quality local food.

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Appendix

A. Interview Questions – Alternative Food Networks

Interviewee as a person and as an employee

- Please introduce yourself briefly, how did you end up at xx?
 - What topics/activities are you engaging with?
 - What does your typical workday look like?

Alternative Food Network - xx

- When, why, how and by whom was xx founded?
- How would you describe xx? What are you doing, what are you standing for?
 - What message are you trying to convey?
 - How is xx structured? (*membership, board etc.*)
- Are you supported by state grants/funds?

Inclusion and participation

- Who are the consumers of xx? What is the target group of xx?
 - Are there any plans to reach out to other groups? If yes, what are the hurdles to do so?
- How are consumers/members involved in the structure of xx?
 - Do consumers/members have the possibility to influence the offer/the decision structure?
- How is xx implemented in the region? Do you have plans to expand this implementation? Do you cooperate with big entities? (*canteens e.g.*)
- Are their plans to expand or to multiply xx? Where is xx in 10 years?
 - What could policy makers do to support xx?

Berlin Food Strategy—other political strategies

- Have you ever heard of the Berlin Food Strategy? If so, does xx cooperate with the Senate/with other food movements?
- What has to happen on a political level in order to support initiatives such as xx?
 - And to enable more people to access good, regional, and organic food?

Concepts, vision

- Are you familiar with concepts such as ‘food justice’, ‘food democracy’, and ‘food sovereignty’? (*explain if not familiar*)
- Is xx aligning with these concepts? If not, what is xx building upon?

Personal and pragmatic rounding up

- What does good food mean to you?
- What is your personal advice for someone with restricted financial means but still willing to consume socially and environmentally food?

B. Interview Questions – Senate-Berlin Food Strategy

Interviewee as a person and as an employee

- Please introduce yourself briefly, how did you end up at the Senate?
 - What does your typical workday look like?
 - What are you exactly working with?

Senate

- Could you please give a brief overview about the Senate/the Department for Consumer Protection (V)? How is it structured; how many people are involved in that department?
 - What are the main responsibilities of the department V?
 - How are the citizens concretely involved in the work of the Senate?

Berlin Food Strategy

- When, why, how and by whom was the BFS launched?
 - What are the aims of the strategy?
 - How is the strategy implemented? What structure does this implementation take?
 - How does civil society as a whole profit from it?
- What role do AFNs have in the strategy? Does the Senate support them? (*give examples if not known*)

Inclusion and Participation

- How is the topic of inclusion embedded in Senate work, especially when it comes to the topic of food?
 - Are there groups of people, whose wishes and claims aren't (yet) considered?
 - How close are departments working together? (*for example, department V with department VI—the department for equality—against discrimination*)
- What tools could bring the topic of inclusion and participation further? What is needed for more people to eat healthy, organic and socially just food?

Concepts, Vision

- Are you familiar with concepts such as 'food justice', 'food democracy', and 'food sovereignty'? (*explain if not familiar*)

Personal and pragmatic rounding up

- What does good food mean to you?
- What is your personal advice for someone with restricted financial means but still willing to consume socially and environmentally food?

C. Interview Questions – Berlin Food Policy Council

Interviewee as a person and as an employee

- Please introduce yourself briefly, how did you end up at the BFPC?
 - What does your typical workday look like?
 - What are you exactly working with?

Berlin Food Policy Council

- Please briefly describe the BFPC, what is it and what does it work with?
 - When, why, how and by whom was it founded? How is the BFPC financed?
 - Who is part of the BFPC? What does the decision structure look like?
 - What is the main goal of the BFPC? How does the BFPC act between citizens and policy makers?
 - What role do AFNs play for the BFPC? Are they to be supported?

Inclusion and Participation

- What is the target group of the BFPC? Who contributes to/participate in the BFPC? How could this target group increase?
- What do the different actors in the food sector want in Berlin? Are there similarities/common traits?
 - What are the trends in Berlin when it comes to food movements?
 - What does the BFPC undertake in order to engage various actors in discussions?

Concepts, Vision

- Are you familiar with concepts such as ‘food justice’, ‘food democracy’, and ‘food sovereignty’? (*explain if not familiar*)
 - Is the BFPC aligning with these concepts? If not, what is it building upon?
- What are your demands to policy makers for a better work, for change in the food system?

Personal and Pragmatic Rounding up

- What is your personal advice for someone with restricted financial means but still willing to consume socially and environmentally food?

D. Data Processing Information

Written information for interviewees

– Processing of personal data in independent projects

When you take part in the independent project '*Democratising the gap between food production and consumption – How Alternative Food Networks forage foodscapes*', SLU will process your personal data. Participating in the data gathering process is voluntary. The purpose of this document is to give you the information you need about gathered information.

You can withdraw your oral consent at any time, and you do not have to justify this. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) is responsible for the processing of your personal data. The SLU data protection officer can be contacted at dataskydd@slu.se or by phone, 018-67 20 90. Your contacts for this project are:

- Magdalena Knobel, mak10010@stud.slu.se (student conducting the thesis)
- Alexandre Dubois, alexandre.dubois@slu.se (thesis supervisor)
- Ingrid Sarlöv Herlin, ingrid.sarlov-herlin@slu.se (thesis examiner)

I (Magdalena Knobel) will collect the following data about you: first- and last name, organization name, audio and text from the interview session and email address.

Unless discussed differently, your name and organisation name will be made anonymous for the thesis.

The purpose of processing of your personal data is for the SLU student to carry out their independent project using a scientifically correct method, thereby contributing to research within the field of alternative food networks and their opportunities to scale up and create sustainable foodscapes.

You can find more information on how SLU processes personal data and about your rights as a data subject at www.slu.se/personal-data. SLU complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

E. Popular Scientific Summary

How can quality local food become made accessible for all?

Opting for healthy sustainable food in order to save the planet and its inhabitants is both a real urgency and a growing trend. Meat-free sausages are created, recipes turning seasonal vegetables into exotic dishes created, artisanal cheese from regional small-scale farmers is advertised, fairly produced tomatoes or chocolate can be found on every supermarket shelf. We are daily exposed to images of food that would fulfil our human needs while contributing to the greater good. Still, purchasing quality food remains a true elite movement.

Even though access to quality food is as a human right, very few people actually have the financial means nor the required knowledge to purchase and then process food from so-called Alternative Food Networks. These are for example farmers' markets, food cooperatives, box schemes, and community supported agriculture, that are often said to promote food justice, food democracy and food sovereignty amongst citizens. These food marketing channels remain largely reserved for people with both a high income and a high education level, especially in rich countries. And this even though they are very promising in the way they handle food and think about all the steps that were required before selling a food item to a consumer. For more people to access local quality food, a systematic change is needed, where food is given back its real value and a re-thinking of food systems occurs.

In this thesis, I focused on the city of Berlin, known for its high cultural diversity. I interviewed representatives from four different alternative food networks in order to get an understanding of what make people to choose or not to choose food from these alternatives. I also interviewed two people working on a more political level and intending to create sustainable food systems on a city scale, to get a deeper sense of what hinders participation and inclusion in alternative food networks, thereby access to good quality food.

My main findings align with existing literature and suggests that the existing economical and societal system in Berlin and beyond does not favour alternative food networks to improve inclusion and participation of marginalised people. Too little political attention is given to the importance of supporting diverse food marketing channels, that are known to propose better working conditions, a transparent organisation as well as to offer high quality food. While farmers struggle to survive due to a monopolistic system encouraging big structures, most consumers cannot join ends and are thus constrained to buy cheap food, produced in dubious conditions. A re-adjustment of food prices, subsidies directed at increasing diversity both on fields, in the food retail sector and amongst consumers is highly recommended. School, communal catering and learning spaces can play a crucial role here. Knowledge about food can be a turning point for more people to get interested in issues related to food, that touch upon many other sectors.

Alternative food networks alone cannot encourage inclusion and participation in their movements, they need full governmental and societal support.

Every single bite counts!