(Re) Shaping the South African Food System

A Case Study on Alternative Food System Actors and the Potential to Transform the South African Food System Towards More Inclusiveness

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Abstract

Conventional food systems have proven to exploit natural resources and deepen socio-economic disparities, with South Africa's youth suffering particularly from these effects due to the historic burden of structural inequalities. Alternative food systems (AFSs) have the potential to transform the conventional agri-food value chains into inclusive and more sustainable systems with the social inclusion of youth acting as a driving force. This thesis studies the processes of social inclusion in AFSs through a context-specific, qualitative case study of the non-profit organization ORIBI and its entrepreneurs. Semi-structured interviews were performed to determine perceived barriers of inclusion and collect primary data on ORIBI and the entrepreneur's initiatives. Social capital, collective action and institutional entrepreneurship were used as analytical tools to analyze if and how AFS actors in South Africa contribute to the social inclusion of youth in the food system. The AFS actors highlighted that deficient access to education, knowledge, financial resources and limited opportunities to access the AFS due to socio-economic challenges are key structural barriers that prevent social inclusion of youth in AFS in South Africa. This research exemplifies social inclusion processes that break these barriers by raising awareness, cultivating social network relationships, and providing employment opportunities, education and training. Building trust, promoting exchange and reciprocity, and reinforcing collaboration are identified as key levers to foster inclusiveness in AFSs in South Africa.

Keywords: Alternative food system, social inclusion, youth, social capital, collective action, South Africa

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Abbreviations

AFS	Alternative Food System
BBBEE	Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, Training
SAPEA	Science Advice for Policy by European Academies
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

Changing the way agricultural products are currently produced, processed, stored and distributed is imperative to create a more sustainable and equitable food system. The current food systems exploit essential natural resources such as water, air, and biodiversity and show, i.a., inequality and inequity in the distribution of production and supply. Considering these major challenges, it becomes evident that greater sustainability transitions are indispensable for the future (Béné et al., 2019; Fourat et al., 2020). Central to this thesis is the exploration of alternative food systems (AFSs) as they serve as a pathway for driving the food system transformation (El Bilali et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015). In particular, I investigate how AFSs can address social inclusion of youth to counteract prevailing dynamics of youth exclusion in the food system.

In a conventional agri-food system, unsustainable practices prevail, resulting in environmental, social and economic impacts such as vast greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, food insecurity, and barriers to entry for aspiring farmers (Copeland, 2022; Hebinck et al., 2021). Climate change, the growing global food demand and prevalent malnourishment further exacerbate these challenges (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) et al., 2022). Various social, economic, and political factors often violate the fundamental human right of access to adequate food, leading to inequity, inequality and a disconnect from local food products among others (Kent, 2005). Hence, the current food system perpetuates unjust structures that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups (Béné et al., 2019).

Socio-economic disparities, food insecurity, and environmental challenges persist in South Africa (FAO, ECA and AUC, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2022a; FAO et al., 2022). The constitutional right to access sufficient food is recognized by the government (Government of South Africa, n.d). However, in 2020, a quarter of the population experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, which was exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's food supply chains (Statistics South Africa, 2022a). In addition to food security, South Africa faces challenges related to high unemployment rates, rural and urban poverty, and post-apartheid effects that also affect the food system (Khalid Anser et al., 2021, Greenberg, 2017; Pereira et al., 2020). The monopolization of corporate power in the South African food system, which controls a substantial share of the food supply

chains, has contributed to a dualistic structure of the system since the abolition of apartheid (Greenberg, 2017; Pereira and Drimie, 2016). Furthermore, its food system is challenged by poor access to safe water, environmental difficulties such as droughts, and social disparities (Battersby, 2011; Igumbor et al., 2012; Greenberg, 2017; Pereira and Drimie, 2016).

Transforming the practices of the food system seems therefore crucial to achieving greater inclusiveness, ensuring equal and equitable benefits, while reducing global starvation and environmental harm (Copeland, 2022; Hebinck et al., 2021; Béné et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020). Young people show potential to drive positive change in the food systems. Investing in them and strengthening their participation in the agri-food system can improve, i.a., food security and employment opportunities in the country (Gliessman and Tittonell, 2015; Bagelman, 2018; Geza et al., 2022; Wittman et al., 2021). However, they often encounter barriers to participating in the food system's processes. Involving and employing youth in agri-food systems can be essential for developing and implementing more sustainable food systems. Therefore, it is vital to demonstrate to youth the available opportunities within these systems and how they can generate income through their participation for the future of food systems (Wittman et al., 2021).

Addressing social exclusion issues of youth in the South African food system call for a structural transformation (Greenberg, 2017; Pereira, 2014). AFSs can play a pivotal role in creating this change through, their commitment to sustainable food production, distribution and consumption by seeking to re-spatialize and re-socialize the value-chains (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Jarosz, 2008; Forssell and Lankoski, 2015, Matacena, 2016). Hence, the thesis aims to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in the South African food system. To approach the aim, the thesis is a study on processes of social inclusion in AFSs through a context-specific qualitative case study of the non-profit organization ORIBI and their entrepreneurs. ORIBI is an initiative, social impact incubator, and entrepreneurial network that supports social entrepreneurship in AFSs in South Africa (ORIBI, n.d.).

Processes of social inclusion in AFSs will be analyzed through this case of ORIBI. Semi-structured interviews with the AFS actors were conducted to provide empirical materials for the analysis and discussion of these processes. The thesis advocates for a development process from the conventional food system to AFS in South Africa. The analysis will explore how ORIBI and their AFS actors' practices as institutional entrepreneurs shape and rework social capital and collective action to develop a better understanding for if and how social inclusion of youth in the South African food system is potentially fostered. All the above is a relevant research process to explore contributions to reshaping the South African food

system towards more inclusiveness, due to the need for specific case studies that exemplify social inclusion processes for youth (Barzola et al., 2019; Blay-Palmer et al., 2018).

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The current food systems challenges encompass environmental degradation, unequal distribution of food resources, and the marginalization of vulnerable communities. These challenges require processes that attain social equity (Cleveland et al., 2015; Béné et al., 2019; Fourat et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019). The thesis recognizes the potential of young people to drive change in the food system (Glover and Sumberg, 2020; Bagelman, 2018; Wittman et al., 2021) and the need to address their barriers to participation in the South African food system to shape their inclusion. This is why the thesis aims to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa.

Hence, the case study of this thesis aims to answer the following main research question and its sub-questions:

In what ways do alternative food systems actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system?

I. What are common barriers to participation and inclusion in the development of alternative food systems in South Africa?
II. In what ways do alternative food system actors impact participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system?

The research questions posed in this thesis aim to shed light on the transformative potential of AFSs and their impact on the social inclusion of youth in the South African food system. Previous scholars have acknowledged the transformative potential of AFSs in environmental, economic and social sustainability (El Bilali et al., 2019; Forssell and Lankoski, 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Jarosz, 2008; Cleveland et al., 2015). However, the literature primarily focuses on their potential to challenge conventional food systems in general. To better understand how AFSs contribute to social inclusion, it is relevant to explore their ability to specifically address social exclusions.

Thus, through exploring the barriers to participation and inclusion in AFS development and the ways in which AFS actors may impact youth participation, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how AFSs can challenge the prevailing dynamics of exclusion and promote social equity within the South African food system.

1.2 Outline

The thesis begins with a background (2) that outlines the research problem and discusses the need for change in conventional food systems towards sustainability. It explores the characteristics and potential of AFS and examines this context in South Africa. In order to understand the role of South African AFS actors in promoting social inclusion of youth within the food system, the thesis further reviews relevant literature related to youth in AFSs. Subsequently, the theoretical considerations (3) form the basis for analyzing the empirical materials. Core concepts on social inclusion, social capital, collective action, and institutional entrepreneurship are brought together to understand how AFS actors contribute to greater youth participation and inclusion in the South African food system.

The subsequent chapter outlines the methodological approach (4) used to explore the contributions of AFS actors to youth inclusion in the South African food system. This involves the presentation of the context-specific qualitative case study of ORIBI and its entrepreneurs, primarily through individual semi-structured interviews, and the data collection process and analysis. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations. This is followed by the findings and discussion chapter (5) which presents the empirical materials from the interviews and analyzes processes of social inclusion in AFSs through the case of ORIBI. It discusses common barriers to participation and inclusion of youth, explores the impacts of AFS actors on youth participation in the South African food system, and analyzes how these social inclusion practices shape social capital and collective action to approach the overarching research question. The conclusion (6) summarizes the key findings of this research and provides a concluding outlook on the contributions of AFS actors to youth inclusion for further practices or research.

1.3 Limitations

Due to the structure and focus of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the study concentrates on a case study of ORIBI's entrepreneurs in South Africa. Thus, the empirical findings and perspectives are context-specific, limiting their generalizability to other cases of AFS actors. However, the strengths of a case study approach in this thesis include its ability to provide an in-depth analysis of this specific context to explore social inclusion processes in AFSs within the South African food system that can support researchers and practitioners with insights in similar contexts on a broader scale (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Moreover, the geographic scope of the research is limited to areas of Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa. The thesis therefore shows limitations in the number of initiatives and actors within the ORIBI network that can be analyzed which does not represent all AFS actors in the country. Thus, empirical findings,

analysis and discussion may not fully capture the diversity and potential of AFSs in other regions. However, the case study research contributes to an understanding of social inclusion of youth in this specific context, highlighting the perceptions and practices of the case AFS actors and therefore provides a grasp of how social inclusion processes could be relevant for future research in other regions.

Furthermore, the limited number of participants implies low variations of startups, small businesses and initiatives to build fundamental arguments around the collected data. In addition, the research provides a temporal snapshot of the context and does not track progress or changes over time. Similarly, this limited time scope of the master thesis contributed to the limited number of AFS actors that could be reached. It is further critical to acknowledge that this research's focus on youth inclusion restricts the exploration of other social dynamics within the AFSs in South Africa. By concentrating on AFS entrepreneurs and their practices and not considering the consumer, i.e., the demand side, the analysis may not encompass how initiatives materialize in positive outcomes or lack in this regard. Yet, through the research of the role AFS actors may play in promoting social inclusion and the exploration of their practices, this thesis still offers potential avenues for fostering youth participation within the South African food system.

2. Background

To provide an understanding of why an examination of the role of South African AFS actors in promoting social inclusion of youth within the South African food system is relevant, the subsequent chapter provides a background on the identified research problem. The chapter presents a literature review to provide a comprehensive understanding of the need for change in global food systems. The demand for sustainability transitions within the food systems subsequently leads to a presentation of characteristics and the potential of AFSs. Thereafter, the chapter explores these contexts in South Africa and concludes by reviewing the inclusion of youth in AFSs.

2.1 Conventional Food Systems and Required Change

A conventional food system not only exploits natural resources but also perpetuates inequality and inequity in production and distribution of food (Béné et al., 2019, Mui et al., 2021; Godfray et al., 2010; Tscharntke et al., 2012; Tutundjian et al., 2020). It has become imperative to acknowledge the need for transforming current agricultural practices to establish a more sustainable food system. This transformation should encompass not only environmental and economic aspects but also social dimensions that promote equity and inclusivity (Cleveland et al., 2015; Béné et al., 2019; Fourat et al., 2020).

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, a food system is "the sum of actors and interactions along the food value chain from input supply and production [...] to transportation, processing, retailing, wholesaling, and preparation of foods to consumption and disposal" (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2022). These value-adding activities supply consumers with, i.a., agricultural and fisheries products and "parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 1). The global food systems vary across intensively commercialized and large-scale systems to small-scale and subsistence systems. The unsustainable practices prevailing in conventional agri-food systems contribute to environmental degradation and negative impacts on society and economy through, e.g., significant greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, food insecurities, and barriers to entry for aspiring farmers (Copeland, 2022; Cleveland et al., 2015; Hebinck et al., 2021).

Freshwater scarcity, price inflation, human rights violations, poverty, combined with the acceleration of climate change, a rising global population and its growing food demand reinforce the need for transformative strategies that address these interconnected issues influencing global food systems (FAO et al., 2022; Godfray et al., 2010; Béné et al., 2019; Hebinck et al., 2021; SAPEA, 2020; Hughes et al., 2019).

The current food systems not only fail to satisfy the increasing demand for food but also neglect priorities such as nutritious diets, the equitable distribution of benefits, and reduction of global hunger and environmental harm (Béné et al., 2019; Godfray et al., 2010). Food security and poverty are pressing issues that paricularily threat the vulnerable populations in rural areas who are often dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods (Béné et al., 2019; Godfray et al., 2010; Mugambiwa & Tirivangasi, 2017). FAO et al. (2022) reported more than 820 million people globally affected by hunger in 2021, underlining the need to address future food access and availability. These conditions further demonstrate that the current food systems maintain, i.a., inequality and inequity in the distribution of food (Béné et al., 2019).

Access to sufficient and adequate food is a fundamental concern as it holds tremendous social, economic and cultural value. Food is not only a source of sustenance but also carries "social meaning associated with identity, pleasure or anxiety" (SAPEA, 2020, p.19). However, this basic human right is often impacted and violated by various social, economic and political factors (Kent, 2005; SAPEA, 2020). Inequality in the conventional food systems goes beyond food security and encompasses economic and social disparities, as well as the disconnect from local products due to increasing anonymization and commodification of food (Kent, 2005; Béné et al., 2019). Numerous studies indicate that capitalist-driven conventional food systems prioritize profits while neglecting local communities and small-scale farmers (Weis, 2010; Vincent & Feola, 2020). This behavior is incentivized by global market dynamics that fail to account for the true costs and negative externalities of food production, distribution and consumption, leading to the described environmental and social impact (Jones et al., 2010).

This background information supports the argument for alternative approaches in the food system that aim to address these challenges in the existing systems. Beyond environmental challenges, issues of social equity were reviewed. Hence, this chapter indicated how these challenges require processes that attain social equity and highlighted the need for a transformation in current practices, which potentially delivers greater inclusiveness through alternative approaches. For these reasons, the thesis examines AFSs and potential social inclusion processes.

2.2 Sustainability and Alternative Food Systems

Debates on effective strategies for sustainability transitions in food systems recommend adopting a thorough food systems approach in policies, that encompasses all components including distribution, consumption, and waste management (El Bilali et al., 2019). The objective is to create positive economic, environmental and social value for all stakeholders (Nguyen, 2018). Organic agriculture exemplifies the interconnectedness of these aspects by, e.g., improving soil quality, biodiversity, reducing pollution, and promoting rural development by creating employment opportunities in improved working conditions (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Food systems require, i.a., bottom-up approaches, local community solutions, stakeholder collaboration, and policy engagement to shaping sustainability transitions (Sandhu, 2021; Hoek et al., 2021; Eyhorn et al., 2019; Ruben et al., 2021). Policy interventions can stimulate "market demand for sustainable products [...] incentivizing incremental improvements [...] establishing legal requirements and industry norms" (Eyhorn et al., 2019, p. 253) that prohibit harmful practices (Eyhorn et al., 2019). More transition research should be conducted, as research gaps relate to social justice, equity, inclusion, and "sustainability transitions of agri-food systems in low- and middle-income countries" (Hebinck et al., 2021, p. 83), which is particularly required in the Global South (Andreoni et al., 2021).

Accelerating the development of a sustainable food system that overcomes social challenges in the conventional food system in South Africa is pivotal to this thesis (El Bilali et al., 2019; Swilling et al., 2016). More sustainable food systems could particularily help to counteract challenges related to social instability and food insecurity in the country. Reshaping the country's food systems towards more resilience, inclusiveness, and food security, without compromising productivity and the environment is a major concern (Greenberg, 2010). AFS initiatives "integrate the idea of "transition as a process or outcome" and are regarded as a food system transformation (El Bilali et al., 2019, p. 12). The thesis considers AFSs as being a crucial factor in building a sustainable food system by challenging and transforming the conventional food system (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020).

In contrast to the conventional food systems, AFSs aim for ecological, social, and environmental sustainability, emphasizing, i.a., spatial proximity among the system's actors, local and/or organic food production and consumption, reduced transportation distances, stakeholder livelihoods improvement, and innovative solutions (Fourat et al., 2020; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015; Solcum, 2007; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015). Social sustainability in AFSs is central to this thesis' aim and can be achieved by strong network relationships and a fair distribution of value-added and wages (Cleveland et al., 2015; Slocum, 2007; Fourat et al., 2020; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015; Brinkley, 2018).

AFSs prioritize decentralization, i.e. regional supply chains, and reducing intermediaries which exemplifies their appreciation of social relationships which deliver trust, enable collective action (within e.g., a community or initiative) and provide better access to food that meets dietary needs (Michel, 2020; Fourat et al., 2020; Brinkley, 2018; El Bilali et al., 2019). AFSs reflect societal values and norms, and can contribute to food sovereignty and social justice as they are commonly anchored in alternative values and/or practices, built through collaborative work of various actors and driven by socio-cultural values through the stated locality which fosters "regional and traditional food cultures and their diversity" (Fourat et al., 2020, p. 50; El Bilali et al., 2019; Fourat et al., 2020; Michel, 2020). Hereby, the notion of food sovereignty refers to the autonomy of people in, e.g., communities, to self-determine their food and agricultural policies (Beuchelt et al., 2012), which is a sharp contrast to conventional food systems (Weis, 2010).

Increasing bottom-up social innovation, and diversified farming systems driven by food sovereignty movements that enhance food security and decrease poverty, can facilitate sustainability transitions (Marchetti et al., 2020; Beuchelt et al., 2012; Schanbacher, 2010; Chappell et al., 2013; Wezel et al., 2020). Community mobilization, and promoting responsibility and trust among stakeholders is crucial to developing sustainable solutions (Marchetti et al., 2020). This relates to the overarching research question of exploring in what ways food systems actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

AFS actors can include local farmers, supported by, e.g., community agriculture and farmer's markets, educational initiatives, e.g., non-profits, focusing on agri-food topics, advocates for organic products, promoters of social justice and food security for marginalized groups, and social and food entrepreneurs that aim to create change in the conventional food systems (Slocum, 2007; Jarosz, 2008; Van der Gaast et al., 2022). In summary, AFSs commit to sustainable agricultural practices by seeking to re-spatialize and re-socialize the agri-food value chains (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Jarosz, 2008; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015, Slocum, 2007; Matacena, 2016).

The transformative potential of AFSs to address social, environmental and economic challenges in conventional food systems highlighted in this background, aligns with the aim and the research questions of this thesis. AFSs key features that are important for this thesis are proximity and social sustainability in regard to network relationships and trust-based small initiatives emphasizing food entrepreneurship and bottom-up innovation. All the above tightly connect to the thesis' focus and helps to understand how AFSs can potentially reshape the current food system to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa.

2.3 The South African Context

South Africa is confronted with complex environmental issues and food systems challenges, including high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable population. These challenges partially stem from socio-economic disparities, high unemployment rates, the lingering post-apartheid effects, rural and urban poverty, and social justice issues in the food system (Khalid Anser et al., 2021, Pereira et al., 2020; World Bank, 2018; FAO, ECA & AUC, 2021; Stats SA, 2022a; FAO et al., 2022; Greenberg, 2017).

The right to access sufficient food is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa from 1996 under chapter 2, section 27 (1)(b) (Government of South Africa, n.d.). However, despite this constitutional provision, South Africa still faces severe food insecurity, with almost 24% of the total population experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity in 2020 (Stats SA, 2022a). The unemployment rate among economically active individuals aged 15 to 64 years is over 32%, which does not include the almost 17 million people in this age group who are economically inactive. 3.4 million people from those are discouraged work seekers[1] and the remaining 13.4 million classified as "other NEA" (not economically active) (Stats SA, 2022b, p. 4). Additionally, the national unemployment rate among the Black African population remains higher than from other population groups (Stats SA, 2022b)

The informal sector[2], which comprises businesses such as township shops, street vendors, minibus drivers, and small household-led enterprises, accounts for 18.5% of total employment in South Africa (Davies & Thurlow, 2010; IMF, 2021; Stats SA, 2022b). The "off the books" activities do not contribute to the country's GDP, however, its significance in regard to improving food security, generating employment, and driving economic growth is recognized. Battersby et al. (2016) argues that it is imperative to increase support for these informal food traders and consumers in facing their challenges (Battersby et al., 2016).

The agricultural sector employs 5% of the total workforce in South Africa (Stats SA, 2022b). Some regions benefit from a relatively well-established food system, however, these regions fail to provide enough access to meet nutritional needs. This market environment has especially led to inadequate access to nutritious food, especially for low-income urban households which often change to unhealthy alternatives from supermarkets due to financial constraints and limited farming opportunities (Malatji, 2020; Drimie & McLachlan, 2013; Altman et al., 2009; Greenberg, 2017). Challenges in access to safe water and environmental conditions,

[1] Discouraged job seekers are classified as individuals outside the labor force that do not actively seek work even though they are eligible and in the working age (Agossou, n.d.).

[2] The informal sector is understood as the proportion of the economy that operates outside governamental taxation and regulation i.e. any unregulated business ventures. Value is created but is not formally registered and therefore (IMF, 2021).

such as droughts, further threaten the country's food system (Battersby, 2011; Igumbor et al., 2012).

The agricultural sector's structure reflects an unequal distribution of black and white farmers, perpetuating economic disparities shaped by enduring apartheid legacies. Large-scale commercial farming is predominantly controlled by white farmers, while most black African farmers engage in small-scale and subsistence agricultural practices. The food system is further dominated by a few large enterprises controlling the production and distribution of food products. The unequal distribution of land and decision-making power, and the concentration and vertical integration of the industry highlight the capitalistic and racial dynamics in the system (Greenberg, 2017; Pereira & Drimie, 2016). The political economy of food in South Africa is shaped by these multiple factors, where historical legacies of apartheid have had a lasting impact on the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the sector shows decreasing farm employment which also raises concerns about evictions and insufficient protection of the people involved at the farms. Labor exploitation is aggravated by the vulnerability of low-paid workers and the inequitable distribution of wages among gender disparities. Moreover, the country started to operate in other African countries with the purpose to attain, i.a., cheaper resources and favorable tax conditions (Bernstein, 2013).

Efforts to address post-apartheid political and colonial legacies and drive structural transformations in South Africa appears challenging. Current policies, including Broad-based Economic Empowerment[3] (BBBEE) deals, have not effectively directed transformations. This has resulted in decreased investments in agriculture and low-profit manufacturing, contributing to further job losses. The divide between industrial and macroeconomic policies, along with corruption issues in state-owned businesses, hinder overarching state interventions (Zalk, 2021). Therefore, promoting Black-African economic empowerment and inclusive development is vital to stimulating structural transformations in the South African food system. Addressing market barriers while understanding the presented power dynamics and the functioning of institutions appears essential for promising desired transformations wihtin new political settlements (Vilakazi and Bosiu, 2021; Mondliwa & Roberts, 2021).

Local governments in South Africa, despite lacking formal authorization to govern and transform the food system, are important for realizing urban development goals through "non-food related planning and policy decision[s]" (Battersby, 2017, p. 417). However, these decisions often jeopardize food and nutrition security, highlighting the need for a more inclusive food systems

[3] The South African government describes the BBBEE program as providing a "legislative framework for the transformation of South Africa's economy. The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act, [No. 53 of 2003], as amended, aims to advance economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of black people in the South African economy" (South African Government, n.d.).

(Battersby, 2017). Given the historical legacies of apartheid, the concentration of land ownership, labor exploitation and the capitalist dynamics of agribusiness, South African agriculture and its policies have struggled to make significant changes that benefit marginalized groups in society (Greenberg, 2017; Pereira, 2014). It is imperative to build pathways that promote empowerment and inclusivity (Zalk, 2021; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Bernstein, 2013; Mondliwa and Roberts, 2021).

AFSs can have roles to play in fostering such changes, by creating opportunities for marginalized groups, building sustainable economies, and strengthening connections within communities (El Bilali, et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015; Wittman et al., 2021; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015; Fourat et al., 2020). Structural transformations in South Africa are relevant to address social inclusion in the food system. These transitions should be supported by intentional and profound policies that aim to enhance social inclusion and to prevent reverting back to existing disparities (Goga & Mondilwa, 2021). Hereby, AFSs can support this change by providing community-driven bottom-up solutions that are intentionally built to address social inclusion. AFSs in South Africa emerge as responses to food security challenges, inequity and the impacts of climate change (Pereira et al., 2020; Siebert, 2020; Akinola et al., 2020, Haysom, 2016). Transformation labs, such as those developed in Cape Town, aim to attain an equitable food system by fostering collaboration among civil society stakeholders, academia and the private sector, which may lead to the co-development of innovative and transformative solutions within the food system (Pereira et al., 2020).

South African AFSs include networks such as community gardens, farmer's markets led by small-scale farmers, and non-profit organizations (Battersby, 2011; Pereira & Drimie, 2016). Some initiatives focus on indigenous food production, aiming to create a healthier and more sustainable food system (Akinola et al., 2020). Despite the growing attention, the AFS environment in South Africa requires increased funding and support (Pereira et al., 2020; Battersby, 2011, Siebert, 2020). Entrepreneurial practices that seek to respond to these challenges by, e.g., promoting proximity, can be crucial to contributing to such transformations in the South African food system (Van der Gaast et al., 2022; Viaggi et al., 2021; Samkange et al., 2021; Sinyolo & Mudhara, 2018).

There is a scarcity of literature focused on food entrepreneurship in South Africa. However, one study examines the effects of entrepreneurial skills on household food security among small-scale farmers in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) which represents a narrowed view but relates closest to this thesis' focus. Sinyolo and Mudhara (2018) indicate that entrepreneurship positively affects food security, as higher levels of entrepreneurship are linked to increased expenditures on food consumption. Hence, promoting entrepreneurship among smallholder farmers is argued as being essential for increasing food security and alleviating rural poverty.

Moreover, Samkange et al. (2021) argue that innovative food entrepreneurship can help to bridge the "development gap between privileged and marginalized communities" (Samkange et al., 2021, p. 4), and has the potential to foster sustainable development through creating jobs, income and reducing poverty and hunger in the country. Both studies argue for an increasing impact of entrepreneurial initiatives. Sinyolo and Mudhara (2018) highlight the importance of policymakers that should prioritize holistic programs, teaching, i.a., strategic planning and market opportunities for food entrepreneurship. Samkange et al. (2021) suggest increasing the contextual and integrative research to create a sustainable entrepreneurship development plan for the future potential in South Africa.

As a result of the conducted literature review, this thesis understands AFSs as more sustainable food systems. The previous sections additionally focused on justifying the decisions made to narrow the scope of this thesis. Accordingly, the following section reviews the social sustainability aspect in relation to the inclusion of youth in the food system.

2.4 Social Inclusion of Youth in AFSs

Previous scholars have acknowledged the transformative potential of AFSs as presented in the previous chapters. Scholars state that environmental, economic and social sustainability can be driven through AFSs, however they do not conduct enough studies in low-income regions (Mastronardi et al., 2019; Miralles et al., 2017; Barbera & Dagnes, 2016). Relevant for this study is to review literature on social inclusion in AFSs to identify if previous scholars conducted research on how AFSs specifically address social exclusions. It can be reviewed that studies exist that focus explicitly or implicitly on social inclusion (Veen, 2015; Poulsen, 2017; Fourat et al., 2020; Harper et al., 2016; Dyen & Sirieix, 2016). However, most of them examine social inclusion without providing granularity on different social groups and therefore lack the particular focus on youth.

The following two studies can be linked to what this thesis seeks to investigate. Harper et al. (2017) approach the issue of food justice in youth development and demonstrate the potential of AFSs in schools, e.g., to incorporate local food in the school canteen. They conducted a youth-led photovoice project that focused on social and self-awareness of young people. The research touches on the surface of how this impacts youth participation yet does not specify the potential of youth when included in the food system in general (Harper et al., 2016). Dyen and Sirieix (2016) approach this research environment by examining if local cooking classes may enable to fight social exclusion of people with disabilities. The study investigates group dynamics and explores the potential value-creation among participants. Thus, the presented studies offer parts of AFSs and participation and

inclusion that matches this thesis' aim. However, it is relevant to understand how these AFSs challenge social exclusion of youth to better understand how inclusion of youth in the food system can be achieved. Furthermore, studies on social inclusion and social sustainability in AFSs in developing and low-income countries tend to be overlooked in existing literature.

If a participatory approach in food system related knowledge production would be adopted, the food systems could improve their inclusiveness (Wittman et al., 2021), which encompasses fostering the social inclusion of youth. Youth show potential to drive positive change in the food systems and the investment in youth to strengthen their participation could improve food security and employment (Gliessman & Tittonell, 2015; Bagelman, 2018; Geza et al., 2022; Giuliani et al., 2017). Therefore, demonstrating to youth what opportunities are available in the agri-food systems and how they can generate income through their participation is vital for the future of food systems (Wittman et al., 2021). This particularly refers to more social and economic sustainability in the food systems in the Global South. The sector provides enough engagement and labor opportunities for the youth; however, they do not earn sufficient money to build adequate livelihoods. Therefore, the most prevailing challenges faced by the youth in the agricultural sector are, i.a., limited access to educational, capital and funding resources, agricultural land and market opportunities (Żmija et al., 2020, Wittman et al., 2021; Geza et al., 2022; Piselli et al., 2019). Due to insufficient access to natural and financial resources in the food industry, youth tend to migrate into urban areas or abroad (Glover & Sumberg, 2020; Wittman et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need to address these social and economic inequities for youth, which makes it imperative to increase policies, programs, and initiatives that target the reduction of South African youth NEET (not in employment, education or training) by creating participation opportunities in the food system (Wittman et al. 2021; UN, 2018). Chauke and Chinyakata (2020) particularly highlight the need to target increasing efforts to mitigate the adverse COVID-19 consequences for the South African youth. According to Chauke and Chinyakata (2020), this may involve intensifying e-learning resources, especially for marginalized youth and that the promotion of positive youth development is a key to enabling sustainable development within the country.

Geza et al. (2022) conducted a review of existing studies from nearly three decades to compile relevant barriers of youth in South Africa that seek employment in the sector. Some of the major obstacles include lack of access to financial and educational and knowledge resources. The study proposes numerous interventions to overcome these barriers and emphasize "entrepreneurship, by developing and facilitating training workshops, programs, and financial support for youth" (Geza et al., 2022, p.12). They further acknowledge the need to address the socio-economic barriers deriving from the socio-economic challenges South Africa is

facing, and to increase agricultural productivity with e.g., more investments in rural infrastructure. Promoting a positive and improved perception of agriculture in South Africa would likely encourage more young people to consider pursuing careers in the sector (Geza et al., 2022).

Żmija et al. (2020) proposes targeted policies for supporting innovative agricultural practices through youth in food systems. A common understanding is found that relates to the need to improve education around food system's related topics to ensure youth participation in food systems (Glover & Sumberg, 2020; Hess and Trexler, 2011; Barzola et al., 2019). Education hereby refers to providing and encouraging skills and knowledge in theoretical and practical aspects of the food systems, that is considered a prerequisite for youth to enter and/or create sustainable food systems (Glover & Sumberg, 2020, Wittman et al., 2021, Piselli et al., 2019). This can be understood as fostering youth contributions in the sustainability transformations of the food systems, i.e., the development of AFSs (Glover & Sumberg, 2020, Wittman et al., 2021; Piselli et al., 2019).

In summary, a few studies could be identified that underline youth engagement in food systems and their potential of contributing to sustainability transformations. Though, the number of studies specifically researching the issue of youth participation in AFSs is limited particularly in the South African context. It is therefore noticed that case specific studies on AFSs in South Africa and youth inclusion could create a meaningful impact to the future research environment.

3. Theoretical Considerations

The thesis aims to analyze processes of social inclusion in AFSs through the case of ORIBI. This chapter presents analytical tools that are used to understand, analyze and discuss the empirical materials. The objective is to analyze if and how AFS actors in South Africa contribute to the social inclusion of youth in the food system. The thesis argues for a development process, i.e., from the conventional food system to AFS in South Africa, and social capital and collective action are suggested as a potential pathway to elevate such processes (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). Hence, the analysis will explore how ORIBI and their AFS actors' practices as institutional entrepreneurs shape and rework social capital and collective action to ultimately develop a better understanding for if and how social inclusion of youth in the South African food system can be fostered. The thesis is grounded in a theoretical understanding of social inclusion, which is why the chapter begins by describing the relevant definition for approaching the aim.

3.1 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is based among others in equality and in creating an environment within the society that fosters equal opportunities and participation for people regardless of their background (Fourat 2020). Social inclusion can be regarded as a process that involves “full and engaged participation by all interested social actors, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural resources” which promotes respectful “interactions between different groups” and “mutual empowerment” (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68).

The thesis emphasizes marginalized groups in South Africa that tend to be excluded from the conventional food system. Marginalized groups are, e.g., people in communities, cultures and populations that experience social, political and/or economic exclusion due to their disadvantaged status in society. These exclusions may result from power imbalances in socioeconomic, geographic and personal, i.a., backgrounds (Vasas, 2005; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023; Jenson, 2000; Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). Social marginalization is understood as an exclusion from the participation in e.g., cultural life due to ethnicity, age, and gender. Economic marginalization is the exclusion from economic participation

which can be the lack of access to resources in education, and health to enable an adequate standard of living. Lastly, political marginalization refers to the exclusion in democratic decision-making processes which should focus on the needs of raised voices. These three types of marginalization are commonly intertwined i.e., if one is socially marginalized, they tend to be similarly economically and politically marginalized (Vasas, 2005; Jenson, 2000; Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). This is why this thesis understands marginalized groups as people that do not have access to resources such as education and employment to actively participate in societal settings. In particular, the thesis focus is on youth as part of the marginalized population in South Africa.

SDG 10 addresses the fact that society ought to develop equal access to resources regarding social and economic benefits. Underlying causes such as, i.a., poor education, healthcare and marginalization must be approached in order to foster sustainable development in respect to more inclusiveness (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 2016b; United Nations, 2018). This implies a society that acknowledges the importance of reducing the exclusion of marginalized groups. Considering the focus of this work, the thesis follows the United Nations (UN) understanding of social inclusion as "the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights" (DESA, 2016a, p. 17). The thesis understands participation as actively engaging (e.g., through collective action) and being involved in a system or a decision-making process (Ndekha et al., 2003). This respectively relates to the participation in the development of AFSs in South Africa.

In essence, social inclusion in this thesis is understood as contrary to excluding marginalized groups, improving resources and opportunities for disadvantaged people through e.g., promoting employment, education and training for the youth that are considered as NEET (UN, 2018). The thesis is based on the idea that AFSs not only promote economic and ecological sustainability but also social sustainability (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020, Brinkley, 2018). In this context, the thesis explores South African AFS actors and their role in encouraging social sustainability, contributing to the goal of improving social inclusion for youth in the food systems.

3.2 The Role of Social Capital and Collective Action

In this thesis, I combine theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu (1986), Ostrom (2000a; 2000b), Pretty and Ward's (2001), Coleman (1988), and Putman (2000; 1993) on social capital and collective action in order to provide an understanding of the benefits of social networks and the significance of institutions in shaping them, the role of trust and reciprocity, participation and resource mobilization in

strengthening social capital and promoting collective action. These perspectives serve as the analytical framework for the empirical materials of this case study on South African AFS actors and ORIBI. By combining the above, this thesis explores in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable youth participation and contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system. Furthermore, they assist in understanding and examining barriers to youth participation and the potential for strengthening social capital and collective action through institutional entrepreneurship, which will be introduced in the subsequent section. The analysis of the case study data, guided by these perspectives, will indicate if and how AFSs can impact youth inclusion to detail answers to the overarching research question of in what ways AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital refers to the benefits that people receive from their relationships and connections with others i.e., their social networks. These benefits can include, i.a., access to different resources, trust, and shared values. Being part of a social group therefore provides advantages as it increases the likelihood of accessing opportunities and resources, enabling the leveraging of social capital to achieve objectives in social inclusion. The issue of resource access through social capital in this sense is used to examine the AFS actor's practices regarding their ability of providing opportunities for youth to overcome common barriers to participation and inclusion in the development of AFS in South Africa. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes that social capital depends on the quantity and quality of connections, which can also increase economic and cultural capital. Therefore, training skills in these social interactions can help sustain social capital. The AFS actors' skills for training social interactions can be analyzed in relation to their ability to support social capital creation, contributing to the aim of analyzing how AFSs impact participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

In addition to Bourdieu's insights, Putman's idea on civic engagement can enhance the theoretical understanding of social capital and its connection to collective action. Putman (2000) defines civic engagement, i.a., as the participation of citizens in their social system, through social activities such as voting. Putman (1993) also refers to social capital as characterizing organizations such as networks of trust that foster collaborative action. Thus, the thesis shares Putman's perspective and understands civic engagement as the participation of youth and connects it to the capacity to mobilize collective activities. Putman (2000) states that when civic engagement decreases, it leads to a weakening of social capital and collective action. As a result, he proposes to leverage civic engagement, i.e., participation, that can strengthen social capital and encourage collective action. Hence, the idea of participation helps to analyze how AFS actors in South Africa foster the youth participation in their initiatives which could be providing them with an active voice

in management and organization or other decision-making processes of the initiatives. Putman's (1993) social capital is used to understand how the actors' initiatives may be based on networks of trust and how this foundation may influence the ability to drive collaborative activities.

In order to understand how knowledge can be impacted within and across AFSs initiatives to increase positive interaction and therefore quality of information exchange and education for youth in AFSs, Elinor Ostrom's (2000a) notion of social capital complements the prior stated understandings. She perceives social capital as "the shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules, and expectations about patterns of interactions that groups of individuals bring to a recurrent activity" (Ostrom, 2000a, p. 176). The purpose of Ostrom's (2000a) understanding is supplemented by Coleman (1988) and Putman (2000) who help to identify the type of social capital that may or may not be created or fostered among or across youth, AFS actors and their initiatives. This helps to pinpoint how processes of social inclusion for youth are fostered and if the creation and promotion of strong social networks is accessible for youth. The two types of social capital can be understood as social capital within/among a group, i.e., (horizontally tied) bonding social capital, and social capital between groups, i.e., (vertically tied) bridging social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putman, 2000).

Similar to Putman's (1993) notion of trust and networks in organizations, Pretty and Ward (2001) highlight relations of trust as one of their four identified central aspects of social capital. The additional three assets that describe and build social capital presented are reciprocity and exchanges; common rules, norms and sanctions; connectedness, networks and groups. This thesis adopts these four aspects by Pretty and Ward (2001) and understands the above according to their assumptions. There are two identified types of trust: "the trust we have in individuals whom we know; and the trust we have in those we do not know, but which arises because of our confidence in a known social structure. Trust takes time to build but is easily broken [...] and when a society is pervaded by distrust, cooperative arrangements are unlikely to emerge" (Pretty & Ward, 2001, p. 211). This statement highlights that good cooperation is only possible if it is built on trust among people, which can be catalyzed by institutions (Ostrom, 2000a; 2000b).

If trust is an essential factor for enabling valuable cooperation, it is important for this study to analyze the ability of AFS actors to foster this trust in their initiatives or even across initiatives. Hence, how AFSs in South Africa may impact collective activities with and among youth through their initiatives. Trust may also play an essential role in the common barriers for youth participation in the development of AFSs. Furthermore, reciprocity and exchange presumably increase trust while norms "give individuals the confidence to invest in collective or group activities, knowing that others will do so too" (Pretty & Ward, 2001, p. 211). Finally, connectedness is an essential aspect of social capital that has five different elements

according to Pretty and Ward (2001): strong local connections, horizontal connections between local groups, vertical connections between local groups and external agencies, horizontal connections between external agencies, and strong connections between individuals within external agencies.

The study provides an analysis of the actors' practices in relation to their ability to exchange and reciprocate knowledge with youth which would foster participation and social capital of the youth. It further analyzes if processes in AFS create norms which may further nourish trust ultimately helping to effectively and actively cooperate. These two aspects of social capital align with Ostrom's (2000a) understanding of shared knowledge and norms. Moreover, to analyze how the connectedness of social capital in the AFS initiatives appears, i.e., for instance through strong local and/or external connections, helps to detail answers to how the AFSs impact participation and inclusion of youth and their potential to create cross-group connections for youth.

Putman (2000), Dasgupta and Serageldin (1999) Ostrom (2000a; 2000b) and the presented aspects on social capital indicate that social capital facilitates collective action. Collective action, as demonstrated by various scholars, is essential for transformative change in societies facing structural challenges (Hassanein, 2003; Sage et al., 2021; Ratner, 2014; Garretón, 2002; Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022). It challenges the existing structures and enables the emergence of new forms of action, thus revealing the potential to address different complex issues in a country (Garretón, 2002). Collective actions can challenge power inequities, shift resource access and management and generally enhance communication to attain such transformative outcomes (Ratner et al., 2014). Moreover, collective action also contributes to addressing sustainability challenges (Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022) and appears relevant in processes of re-politicizing food systems (Sage et al., 2021). Collective action can further elevate transformative change in the conventional agri-food system by, e.g., contesting food commodification (Hassanein, 2003). In this matter, collective action among and across groups can enable the shaping of such transitions and foster greater social democracy in such systems (Garretón, 2002). Given the structural conditions in South Africa, collective actions may significantly contribute to transformative changes in the conventional and dominant food system, which consequently can lead to, i.a., greater AFSs developments, necessary to address presented societal, social and environmental challenges (Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022; Ratner et al., 2014; Sage et al., 2021; Hassanein, 2003). Hence, collective action is important to consider in this thesis as it helps to understand social inclusion processes in AFSs and to indicate if these may also contribute to challenging and changing existing social exclusion dynamics in the conventional food system in South Africa.

All the above makes it vital for the thesis' analytical understanding to stress social capital and collective action when analyzing AFSs and if or how they

potentially foster social inclusion of youth. The combination of social capital and collective action within the analysis allows a more fundamental identification of essential aspects that impact youth participation in the case of AFSs in South Africa.

The thesis therefore connects to Ostrom's (2000b) perspective to further describe collective action, as she offers a link between social norms and the role of institutions in facilitating collective action. Ostrom's (2000b) understanding of "self-organized" institutions, which are based on shared and perceived trust among members of these institutions, as well as their respective roles of responsibility. Ostrom (2000b) helps to understand how collective action can be self-organized, i.e., how or what mechanisms enable dynamic and "successful" collective action among youth which also fosters them to take responsibility over common resources. Hence, this is used to analyze the practices of AFSs in this study in order to analyze if and how effective AFSs shape these dynamics to ultimately impact social inclusion of youth through collective action. According to Ostrom (2000b), collective action includes the mobilization of shared beliefs and behavior into coordinated action. She further indicates that institutions encourage and accelerate information exchange and cooperation among people. Ostrom's concept of self-organized institutions further indicates that collaborative action is fostered through individuals collectively governing common resources. Putman (2000) refers to social norms as being essential to establishing and supporting trust which allows increasing levels of civic engagement and collective action. Similarly, Ostrom (2000b) emphasizes trust as an important driver for collective action.

Taking these perspectives mutually into account, it can be argued that the combination of shared beliefs and norms, knowledge exchange, collective activities, institutional arrangements and social norms set the foundation for examining the dynamics of social capital and collective action in AFSs in South Africa. The analysis of common barriers to participation and inclusion of youth in the development of AFSs may reveal how youth would therefore be excluded from valuable social capital and collective action. Furthermore, the analysis of social inclusion processes will reveal their impact on youth participation. With the help of the provided frame, this will show if and how social capital is shaped and collective action mobilized, and if trust is reinforced and resources pooled to ultimately develop a better understanding for if and how social inclusion of youth is fostered in the South African food system.

3.3 Institutional Entrepreneurship

Institutional entrepreneurship in this thesis is connected to activities of ORIBI and their entrepreneurs that create impact through their actions and ambition to shape the conventional food system in South Africa. It can be studied if ORIBI and the

AFS actors' activities leverage one of the two key concepts of institutional entrepreneurship by Fligstein (2001). These actions could either link to social movement entrepreneurship, implying the mobilization of collaborative action to change norms and practices or disruptive innovation by offering new products and services in the system that challenge existing institutional arrangements (Fligstein, 2001). Moreover, it is worth highlighting that social capital alone may not be sufficient to facilitate collective action and that institutions, i.e., institutional entrepreneurs, provide a strong framework for this to sustain (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

According to Coleman (1988), actors who are part of highly obligated social structures face more available social capital. Coleman and his theory of social capital refers to high levels of obligation understood as people in social structures that feel strongly compelled to live up to commitments to other actors of a social network, e.g., family and friends (Coleman, 1988). Fligstein (1997) refers to this notion as the "idea that some social actors are better at producing desired social outcomes than are others" (Fligstein, 1997, p. 398) as being one of the core concepts of institutional entrepreneurship. Institutional entrepreneurship as an analytical tool in this thesis follows Fligstein's (2001) perspectives. He describes institutional entrepreneurship as a process by which actors seek to modify existing or creating new institutional systems which targets the generation of new opportunities for social and economic development. Fligstein (2001) argues that institutional entrepreneurs mobilize resources in the form of collaborative action. Thus, institutional entrepreneurship can be related to AFS activities if they seek to create new ways of producing, processing, distributing and consuming food products in contrast to the conventional food system. Institutional entrepreneurs therefore often challenge the status quo which implies leveraging disparate resources such as knowledge, skills and social networks. While institutional entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in generating change, existing institutional frames as well as the actors involved can limit the positive success of actions (Fligstein, 2001). Hence, the success of institutional change depends on the actor's capability to rise above prevalent arrangements and to reach anticipated results (Fligstein, 1997).

The notion of institutional entrepreneurship can be used to analyze how ORIBI, and its entrepreneurs seek to address prevailing social exclusion dynamics in the conventional food system. By analyzing their potential in rising above existing arrangements that affect the anticipated change, it is possible to understand their role in reshaping these dynamics to support social inclusion development in the food system.

4. Methodology

The aim is to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in the South African food system. The subsequent chapter presents the methodological approach that this thesis applies to attain this aim by conducting a study on processes of social inclusion in AFSs through a case study of ORIBI and their entrepreneurs. The chapter presents the approach to knowledge production, through describing the methods that were used to collect the empirical material. To answer the research questions to this thesis, a context-specific qualitative case study is conducted.

The thesis is based on individual semi-structured interviews that build the premise for producing the empirical material that will be analyzed in the chapters that follow. The analysis and discussion of the case study's primary interview data will explore how AFS actors' practices shape social capital and collective action to ultimately develop a better understanding for if and how social inclusion of youth in the South African food system is fostered. Thus, the qualitative data collected will help to answer the research questions on common barriers to participation and inclusion and how AFS impact the youth participation in the South African food system through the following methodology. The chapter concludes by revealing ethical considerations and the positionality of the researcher as well as the analytical strategy to this thesis.

4.1 The Case Study

A context-specific qualitative case study is a research method that focuses on exploring a specific context and aims to describe and interpret the case and research specific environment. The researcher seeks to perform an in-depth analysis of a case (Creswell, 2014). The benefits of case study research include the ability to offer such in-depth and detailed insights into the case and its environment, as well as it enables the generation of practical knowledge to the respective contexts. This can effectively contribute to developing theories and generating and testing hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2004). Despite the limitations of this research design, including potential researcher biases and limited generalizability in single or individual cases, integrated case study research that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches can be particularly relevant in social science (Flyvbjerg, 2004). The

following will highlight why ORIBI, and its entrepreneurs are a relevant case to study.

ORIBI was identified as an actor aiming to sustainably transform the food ecosystem and provided the possibility to conduct a case study in a specific context in South Africa. Sustainable food systems, i.e., AFSs could help to counteract challenges related to social exclusion and food insecurity in the country. ORIBI is a non-profit organization based in Cape Town which focuses on entrepreneurship in South Africa. ORIBI is a member of the Groupe SOS, a global network of social incubators and accelerators. Groupe SOS is a social enterprise that aims to improve the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups in society as well as for their future generations. The objective of Groupe SOS is to tackle societal, social and environmental challenges with particular focus on prevalent forms of exclusion and to assist other organizations in preserving employment (Pulse Groupe SOS, 2021). ORIBI is a local initiative and social impact incubator established in 2018 in South Africa. It strives to facilitate social entrepreneurship and to create an environment of collaboration for accelerating positive impact in South Africa (ORIBI, n.d.).

ORIBI can be described as a social enterprise supporting social entrepreneurs that both pursue missions that create social and/or environmental value (Peredo and McLean, 2006). Social enterprises and social entrepreneurs seek to address challenges, i.a., such as poverty, unemployment, climate change, and food insecurity (Onyemaechi et al., 2021). The overarching purpose and goal of ORIBI is stated as "bridging the gaps in the world's most unequal country" (ORIBI, n.d.). Keeping this in mind, ORIBI seeks to create a positive impact on "social, economic and environmental wellbeing" (ORIBI, n.d.) that appears necessary to build a more sustainable South African economy. ORIBI, their financial and operational partners, such as the French Development Agency, consider these issues in the South African food system as imperative to address Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Pulse Groupe SOS, 2021; ORIBI, n.d.). To ensure the alignment with ORIBI and its operating environment, an understanding of social inclusion processes was previously presented through the UN (DESA, 2016a) as an overarching theme in this thesis.

ORIBI aims to fight high levels of food insecurity and unemployment in South Africa with social entrepreneurship. This corresponded to my motivation to investigate AFS in this context. Given the country's specific context of socio-economic issues, ORIBI appeared as a suitable setting for investigating how food systems can be reshaped and in what ways AFSs could contribute to promoting greater social inclusion in the country through their processes. Due to time constraints, the research required to narrow its focus on social inclusion aspects. Consequently, the attention turned to youth as one population group in South Africa that often faces limited opportunities, such as access to education, among others to enter the food system (Wittman et al., 2021).

Youth's potential to contribute to the development of sustainability in food systems was previously stated as well as that their engagement in the South African food systems lack substantial studies. Furthermore, ORIBI appeared suitable for this study since their entrepreneurs come from completely different backgrounds and are sometimes still at the age of youth. In line with the South African policy context, the thesis defines youth in South Africa as people between 15 and 34 years despite the commonly used definitions by the UN which defines youth between the age of 15 and 24 (National Youth Policy, 2015; UN, n.d.; Wittman et al., 2021). This is due to the experienced history of South Africa which a reasonable statement of the National Youth Commission (NYC) Act of 1996 accordingly published: "The essence of these was that many of the older youth, most of whom were disadvantaged by their role in the struggle against apartheid, needed to be included in the youth development initiative" (Enaifoghe & Dlamini, 2021, p. 215; Van Der Byl, 2014, p. 3). According to the 2022 conducted labor force survey by Statistics South Africa, approximately 43% of all youth between 15 and 34 years in South Africa are NEET (Stats SA, 2022b).

ORIBI aims, i.a., to foster the development of an inclusive economy that crosses boundaries and connects informal and formal settings (ORIBI, n.d.), addressing the needs of some of the approximately 18 percent of youth aged between 15 and 34 in South Africa that are engaged in the informal economies (Öhlmann, 2022). ORIBI states that it seeks to encourage and assist entrepreneurs in South Africa that counteract these local contexts by developing solutions for improving social and economic participation, reaching socio-economic and ecological goals. This seeks to support solutions arising from the still "untapped" market environment of high potential (ORIBI, 2023). This purpose of improving participation connects to the study's aim, which is to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable, i.e., improving, the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa. Hence, this connects, i.a., to the sub question of exploring the ways AFS actors impact participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system and therefore is part of the avenue that approaches the overarching research question of exploring ways AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

One of ORIBI's flagship programs is the Food System Incubation Program. This program supports social entrepreneurs in developing innovative solutions to food insecurity and rising unemployment in South Africa. ORIBI further encompasses a gender strategy in partnership with Value 4 Women which targets a major improvement of gender integration in their programs encouraging inclusive cultures and practices with entrepreneurs. ORIBIs impact incubator seeks to support a collaborative food system that focuses on access, inclusion and equity by promoting social entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurs of ORIBI seek to e.g., focus on equity of women in business or reducing food insecurity and unemployment through their

initiatives. ORIBI aims to tackle such systemic issues in South Africa (Pulse Groupe SOS 2021; Pulse Groupe SOS, 2020) and it is important to acknowledge that dynamics internal to ORIBI are embedded in the structural conditions of the country that were presented in the background. All the above makes ORIBI and its entrepreneurs in South Africa a suitable case study to explore social inclusion processes in AFSs.

ORIBI can be considered as an AFS actor since they aim to transform the conventional food system through social entrepreneurship, collaboration and addressing economic, and environmental challenges in the country. Its various initiatives thereby foster, i.a., local and organic production (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Forssell and Lankoski, 2015). Further, it established the Food System Incubation Program that aims to develop and strengthen AFSs in South Africa. It exclusively collaborates with AFS actors and has designed the program curriculum to address the needs of AFS actors. The discussion section will introduce the associated initiatives of these AFS actors and describe how these are "alternative" (AFS) in relation to the conventional food system in South Africa.

All the above shows why ORIBI and its entrepreneurs are a relevant case to study. It enables a critical examination of social inclusion processes in AFSs through the case of ORIBI because of their emphasis on achieving related goals through their practices.

4.2 Data Collection

This subchapter details the methods used to collect data for this study on social inclusion processes in AFSs through the case study of ORIBI.

4.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The methodology adopted for this case study is a qualitative research design which employs individual semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. Silverman (2011) argues "one of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to access directly what happens in the world" (Silverman, 2011, p. 169). Numerous scholars have highlighted further benefits of semi-structured interviews in comparable contexts (Poulsen, 2017; Peyton et al., 2015; De Bruin, 2018; Guerrero Lara et al., 2019; Galletta, 2013; Mottiar et al., 2018). Based on these perspectives, semi-structured interviews were chosen as a suitable method to gain insights on how AFS actors in the South African context contribute to social inclusion of youth in the food system. Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between structured and unstructured interviews with the use of well-prepared interview guides that often show both close and open-ended questions.

The study environment of ORIBI led to the decision of conducting such semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to enable semi-directed conversations with AFS actors. This method has allowed me to develop a natural flow in conversations with the participants while maintaining focus and consistency on questions of a prepared guide across the interviews. This method permitted an in-depth exploration of these prepared questions during the interviews to serve the aim of the thesis and contribute to collecting material that helps to answer the research questions. In order to accommodate potential diversions during the interview process, I utilized open-ended questions that allowed for flexibility in their expressions. This approach enabled a shift in focus if the interviewee started discussing topics that might not have been directly linked to the thesis aim. These discussions created additional open conversation points that could be revisited and further explored at a later stage, adding value to the overall research. I also used follow-up questions to help bring the focus back to the essential topics and to deepen the interviewees' responses in these cases which is a suitable way of ensuring valuable primary data (Bryman, 2016; Kanazawa, 2018a). They allowed me to have the anticipated flexibility that I aimed for in order to understand the complexity of the respective contexts of every AFS actor interviewed. These open-ended questions with the possibility to pose follow-ups offered me to touch not only the surface of what the interviewees contributed, but also allowed me to understand deeper perspectives, perceptions and attitudes on the issues emerged during the conversations.

If the interviewee was motivated to keep communicating after the official time and questions planned for the semi-structured interviews, some of the conversations were twice as long as the interview guide predefined. The following subchapter will detail the data collection and further explain why and how I generated useful data from the conversations to get insights into the ways AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

4.2.2 Process

Six participants could be reached for the conduction of semi-structured interviews via Zoom or phone, which was eventually due to their geographical dispersion. I visited ORIBI in Cape Town to curate a list of interviewees that have been part of ORIBI and/or its incubation program. The list of potential interviewees was similarly the result of a background research on ORIBIs operating surroundings. This has been done by studying websites and reports as well as by making use of the snowball effect through employees and sending out emails to contact potentially missing but suitable interviewees.

Some of the potential interviewees could be contacted with established introductions by the interviewer via email that included both interviewer and director or communication manager of the organization. Thereby, higher response

chances were generated for the first outreach. Additional participants could be identified and reached via LinkedIn. It was aimed at finding participants that created their own initiatives in the AFS environment in South Africa. This was a decision that I made to get deeper insights from AFS actors. If the first outreach was successful, further details were discussed via WhatsApp or email. Four of the participants were founders of initiatives in the South African AFS who created their startups out of the different backgrounds they had. One of the interviewees is the co-founder of an initiative and another a curator of an organization (please find the listed interviewees, their roles, fictitious names and interview dates in Appendix 1). I aimed to understand how they entered the field of AFS which would give me an additional insight into the AFS environment in South Africa. This further served to identify barriers of entering and participating in the AFS in South Africa that the interviewees experienced. Those being at youth age could particularly help to answer one of the sub questions of this thesis that relates to the common barriers to participation and inclusion of youth in the development of AFS in South Africa. Thus, this also helped to explore the ways how food systems can be reshaped to enable youth participation with the aim to contribute to social inclusion in the South African food system.

Ahead of the semi-structured interviews, an appropriate preparation for the execution was performed to ensure the generation of valuable and useful data. The preparation was done by following major steps for collecting data via interviews according to Kanazawa (2018a). Hence, the preparation consisted of developing a detailed interview guide which aimed to gather answers to open-ended questions that ensure the possibility of posing follow-up questions for the prior presented reasons. All these questions derived from an in-depth analysis of the thesis' research environment and were reviewed by ORIBI prior to the execution. The interview guide was subsequently tailored to each one of the individual respondents and their respective settings. Consideration was also given to the order in which the questions were posed that were characterized by an overlapping of initial open-ended questions, intermediate and ending questions which was inspired by Bryman (2016). This served as a suitable way to collect the data in an environment that did not pressure the interviewees into answering critical questions at the beginning without having had the opportunity to get an idea how these questions may have incrementally emerged. This way, the interviewees were often able to align their answers with their line of thoughts. This was needed to further detail answers to the research questions on the ways AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth.

During the interviews, the participants were asked a variety of questions related to their participation in the food system in South Africa. The questions were posed one at a time and in sequence (Kanazawa, 2018a) to keep them straightforward to answer. Firstly, they had the opportunity to introduce themselves and an explanation of what they do for the reasons presented. The interview guide

included, i.a., questions about potential barriers to participation, observations on changes in youth participation, the impact of AFS initiatives on inclusion, examples of effective AFS and whether their initiative actively targets youth inclusion and how they approach this contribution. Participants were asked to share their ideas or dreams for the future of the South African food system and inclusiveness at the very end of the interview. All the above were posed to detail answers to the research questions of this thesis related to how AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

The number of interviews could not be extended because not all initiatives could be reached. The limited number of participants implies low variations of startups, small businesses and initiatives to build fundamental arguments around the collected data. However, this did not impact the quality of primary data generated through the interviews. Therefore, potential gaps in the data could emerge in terms of the variety and scope of AFS in South Africa. Hence, this study may solely serve as an example to how research on social inclusion practices in AFSs can be conducted through a case study but can nevertheless give important insights into youth inclusion and AFSs (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

4.2.3 Data Analysis

To produce valuable data from the semi-structured interviews, I decided to audio record all conversations to also ensure no information was lost. After conducting the interviews, I immediately checked the quality of the recordings. These audio files were then transcribed completely for accurate and readable primary data with "Transkriptor". While reviewing the text instead of the audio, I could identify recurring themes and patterns in the data, as recommended by Kanazawa (2018a).

Once I familiarized myself with the data through the transcriptions and noted potential patterns, I chose thematic analysis as the core approach, which helped to identify recurring themes in the interview data based on the relevance to my research questions. This approach allowed for a more structured interpretation of the findings thereafter. I began with initial coding while reviewing the transcripts that I highlighted next to the respective paragraphs of text. Subsequently, I identified themes deductively guided by their relevance to my research question. Using this approach, I organized the text in a manner that would facilitate the analysis of the findings. The initial codes therefore merged into explicit and implicit themes as suggested by Säfsten and Gustavsson (2020) that were sorted as, i.a., barrier, social inclusion process, impact, participation, bridging and/or bonding social capital, social network collective action, and institutional entrepreneurship.

After this processing of the data, my aim was to make sense of the empirical material and to understand what the data revealed in relation to my research questions. Connecting the themes allowed me to effectively structure the information and helped me to reduce the amount of interview data into the most

useful bundles for the subsequent analysis. It provided me with a basis on which I could adjust the level of detail for the analysis which also considered the theoretical framework and analytical tools of social capital and collective action employed. Among others, the purpose of the presented methodology is to identify potential coherences in the data to create context-specific rationales in the analysis and discussion of the thesis' findings. The presented methodological approach strives to enable sense-making of the insights on how AFS actors contribute to social inclusion of youth, what barriers youth encounter to participate in the development of AFS in South Africa and how the actors impact this youth participation in the food system to develop a better understanding for if and how social inclusion of youth in the South African food system is fostered.

4.3 Ethics and The Researcher's Positionality

The presentation of sustainability related issues, such as food system transformation and the research topic of this thesis, is highly dependent on how and by whom the narrative is constructed. This makes it particularly important to be aware of the positionality and individual judgment, as sustainability related issues may vary in perception depending on the individual (Feindt & Netherwood, 2011). The ability to create awareness and sensitivity to one's own positionality as a researcher is a crucial part of qualitative research. It is significant to understand that positionality changes with time and context (Holmes, 2020). Holmes (2020) argues that the researcher's position is unique, influenced by experiences and beliefs, thus shaping the way research is conducted, understood and interpreted. To reflect on my positionality is therefore meaningful to foster a neutral view of the issues which are being researched and to incorporate transparency and ethics in this work.

Principles of conducting ethical research include conducting it "carefully, thoroughly, and evenhandedly" (Kanazawa, 2018b, p. 338). Being open-minded, transparent and honest are key attributes in ethically conducted research and its analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. Maintaining confidentiality of information about "participants" in a project is imperative and all data that is collected throughout the process of qualitative data collection shall ensure that e.g., names of participants cannot be associated with the information that is revealed in the research (Kanazawa, 2018b). As disclosed via email beforehand, the interviews for this case study began by introducing the purpose and format of the interview and thesis research as well as ensuring confidentiality (Kanazawa, 2018a). A confidential agreement was verbally communicated and approved at the beginning of the interview whilst contact details of the interviewer and organizational representative were provided. However, the participants were enabled to withdraw their voices from the study if they would request. This was followed by stating the estimated length and highlighting the room for raising doubts or questions that the

participants may develop during the process of interviewing. The length of the interviews varied depending on the interest and engagement that was shown by the interviewees. The anticipated length that was communicated beforehand and was necessary to answer the questions was approximately 35 minutes. However, some interviews were prolonged to an hour as soon as the conversation had reached the end of the questions for this research, but interest in, e.g., the field of study and living environment had arisen afterwards. Thus, I tried to create a nurturing atmosphere in which the participants could share their insights without hesitating to communicate uncertainty and discomfort.

Prior to proceeding to the prepared interview questions, consent was asked for the recording of the conversation. Depending on the situation and the location of the interviewee, this was either be done by Zoom recordings or a phone voice recording App. In order to protect the identity of the interviewees in this case study, the names presented in the findings, analysis and discussion are fictitious. However, each name refers to an individual. Considering all the above, the collection of data for this research was conducted with full consent with all stakeholders involved. According to Kanazawa (2018b, p. 348) "the research process is not only about obtaining new knowledge. It is about obtaining it in socially acceptable ways." This thesis emphasizes this rationale by performing the presented steps for ethical research and highly values kindness while conducting this research.

The choice of the thematic environment to this thesis is intrinsically motivated because of personal and professional experiences and chosen pathways in life. Both have been influenced by the opportunity to learn and grow in international development contexts, which is complemented by the interdisciplinary professional and educational background that I could acquire. I consider myself a social constructivist (Creswell, 2014) as connected to someone who seeks to understand the world around specific contexts, in particular the perspectives and perceptions of people in diverse rural settings.

I am aware of my positionality in this specific research and how this may shape the way I interpret the empirical findings of this case study. I acknowledge Roulston's (2010, p. 218) statement as from my perspective "the interview is a social setting in which data are co-constructed". I appreciate the data for the analysis and discussion generated during semi-structured interviews with South African AFS actors. I treasure their honest engagement and the tremendous value they produce to the quality of this research. The mutual sense-making of interviewee and interviewer (Roulston, 2010) that is generated throughout the process of collecting this primary data, is an essential principle that I emphasize. This was mainly due to the atmosphere of open discussion during the interviews, which also allowed participants to elaborate on issues or express thoughts that may have arisen from the questions asked. In this way, uncertainties in the wording or issues and thoughts of the interviewees could be discussed and clarified together.

I have gained invaluable professional experience before this research in Rwanda, South Africa, and Mexico which shaped the somewhat emotional attachment to this research topic. Collaborating in cross functional teams with different stakeholders that included government and development agencies, equipped me, i.a., with the social skills to responsibly conduct this type of case study. My enthusiasm for attaining more social equity that focuses on people and not profit, especially in socio-ecological settings, paired with my commitment to co-creating sustainable futures, makes me particularly excited about this case study on AFSs in South Africa. I am passionate about scaling positive impact and all the above influenced the tailored research on AFS actors and their contribution to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system. It combines the challenging thematic environment of increasing access to essential basic needs such as food with the creation of impact in regard to providing access to resources in education and finances for marginalized groups in society. My positionality may therefore have shaped this study, as it is influenced by these experiences and an emotional attachment to the area of research. This may have influenced the follow-up questions and the selection of guiding interview questions. The lens may further have tended to highlight certain aspects of the data more than others. I have therefore made a conscious effort to maintain a balance in the interpretation process for the analysis and discussion of the generated data.

The foregoing indicates how challenging but important it may be for the researcher to keep this positionality in view whilst collecting, processing, analyzing and discussing the data for this case study. During the interviews, care was taken to be kind and to minimize the disclosure of potential personal attachments (Kanazawa, 2018a). In summary, to be aware of one's positionality throughout the process is valuable and advantageous to enhance a profound and "socially acceptable" (Kanazawa, 2018b) understanding of this research field.

5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the empirical materials produced during the interviews that seek to form answers to the research questions. Thus, the subsequent sections analyze processes of social inclusion in AFSs through the case of ORIBI and makes use of the analytical tools of social capital, collective action and institutional entrepreneurship to build arguments. It is important to point out that ORIBI and the following AFS actors and their initiatives work within the structural issues presented in the background.

As stated, to preserve the identities of the interviewees, the names used in this chapter are fictitious but refer to each individual. This similarly implies that the names of their initiatives are not specifically stated and referred to as the person's initiative to maintain clarity. Section 5.1 presents an introduction to the AFS actors and their initiatives on the basis of the collected data. 5.2 presents the empirics and analysis of common barriers to participation and inclusion in the development of alternative food systems in South Africa. Section 5.3 presents and discusses empirical findings related to how the AFS actors impact participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system. 5.2 and 5.3 provide an in-depth view of the ways social processes shape social capital, collective action and ultimately aim to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa.

5.1 Introduction to the AFS Actors and their Initiatives

ORIBI, as described in 4.1, is a non-profit organization aiming to foster social entrepreneurship by providing knowledge and creating networks for AFS actors. This section introduces six AFS actors and initiatives that are part of ORIBI's network and that were interviewed for this case study. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to introduce themselves and their initiatives. This section therefore provides an essential baseline for the further course of understanding their role in contributing to the provision of useful primary data for this thesis.

Nomkhosi introduced herself as the curator of a youth organization based in Pretoria. The surroundings of the youth organization are shaped by the "high level of youth unemployment and disparities between have and have-nots" (Nomkhosi,

interview, March 22, 2023). Her project in food focuses on climate change, urban development, and reducing food insecurity. As part of the Economic World Forums Global Shapers network, the organization's mission is to inspire young people to build change in their personal environments. The initiative is not only based in South Africa, but has further locations across the world, mainly based in larger cities. Nomkhosi is currently part of a food systems project, which addresses climate change effects on food security for marginalized communities in the country. She emphasized that she wants "to support them in building a local green economy and careers within it" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). Nomkhosi's initiative aligns with various key characteristics of AFSs as it addresses the above-mentioned critical issues. In particular, through their food systems project, the initiative seeks to promote a local green economy and provides support to marginalized communities in creating sustainable food systems that mitigate the effects of climate change on food security. By emphasizing local food production and food sovereignty for these communities, Nomkhosi's initiative presents an alternative to conventional agri-food processes and offers a pathway that diverges from these dominant systems in South Africa (Cleveland et al., 2015; Beuchelt et al., 2012; Slocum, 2007; Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

Sipho is the founder of a food delivery service that offers traditional African cuisine from local restaurants and locally grown food produces in the township to people living within the township. He grew up in KZN and studied mechanical engineering in Cape Town but has quit to work in customer care jobs. Sipho had a strong interest in technology and was passionate about "creating something new" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). He frequently visited a friend in Nyanga, a township in Cape Town, where he observed the bustling township life and saw how difficult it was to get food from the overcrowded local eateries. This experience gave him the idea to his first version of the initiative, which was to create a table booking system where customers could pick their meals up as soon as it was ready. As time went by, he refined his idea, realizing the potential of a food delivery service that would bring local cuisine and locally grown food produce to people's homes. He argued that most people think that the township population cannot afford such services and he highlighted the existing safety concerns, such as criminal attacks, that prevent established services from operating in these areas by stating, "there is a reason why uber eats do not do the delivery". Sipho was motivated to pursue his idea after conversations with multiple restaurant owners who saw the value of his initiative (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023).

Sipho's initiative is part of the AFSs in South Africa as it is characterized by spatial proximity, i.e., locality and reduced physical distances, that also refer to the regional approach in supplying food produce and products thereby reducing the need for intermediaries (Fourat et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019). He positions his business in the distribution part of the food value chain while producing local value

to the township area and its population through extending the customer range of township restaurants by providing the delivery to areas that are not close enough for walking distances. Thereby, he seems to improve the network relationships between restaurants and potential customers as he stated, “next day, they [two friends living at the outskirts of Nyanga] wanted food, so we could provide it to them. They cannot do the walks for this” (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023).

The creation of good social networks is one of the main social sustainability aspects in AFSs but can also be linked to strengthening bridging social capital in this scenario (Putman, 2000; Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015). Furthermore, his business appears to value trust, as aimed for in AFSs, but also because he emphasized “it is the talking you know” (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023) as giving him the opportunity to extend his outreach. This “talking” creates an increasing social network of restaurant owners, local smallholders, the restaurant’s and Sipho’s customers, that is built on trusting the word of others that “we do not know” which is a major aspect of social capital (Pretty & Ward, 2001, p.211; Putman, 1993).

Sibongile is a 35-year-old entrepreneur based in a district in Johannesburg that is characterized by its high level of inequality, where solely a highway separates mansions with pools from shack dwellers. Since 2018, she has been running a business that is “a link between small scale farmers who grow organically and households in Johannesburg” (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). Sibongile started her business with the ambition to provide food and nutrition, particularly for people with lifestyle diseases. Though, she realized that it was challenging for her to talk effectively about food and its nutrition without being a doctor or a dietician which made her shifting focus to educating people on the relationships between food and lifestyle diseases. She explained that during COVID-19, people appeared more conscious about food choices and were more interested in buying organic produce as this might support their health. Her current customers place their orders at an online platform, and she seeks to foster access to “healthy and sustainably grown food” (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). Sibongile’s initiative exemplifies principles of AFSs by establishing a direct link between small-scale organic farmers and households in Johannesburg. She therefore situates the business in an intermediary position in the food value chain which is characterized by the proximity of farmers and consumers. In addition to fostering locality, she pulls organic produce in the focus. These attributes show her initiative’s alternative to the conventional food value chains and their processes while she creates this change as a social and food entrepreneur (Fourat et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015; Van der Gaast et al., 2022).

Murendeni created an initiative in Cape Town that showcases African cuisine and the stories of the people that prepare it. Cape Town is a famous tourist destination, which led to the city center focusing on international cuisine for its

international clientele. He aims to break down cultural prejudices through food and addresses the challenges of small African food businesses which are scarce in the city due to the lack of affordable trading spaces. This would make it particularly difficult for the local businesses to survive. Murendeni and his business partner created a culinary journey through Cape Town that dives into cuisines from Southern, Eastern and Western African food cultures that according to him "is not celebrated enough" (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023). Murendeni's initiative can be considered as an alternative to the conventional food system as it puts emphasis on cultural diversity and appreciation, "food identity" as he explained, which can be connected to food sovereignty. He promotes local and traditional food cultures and offers a platform for small African food businesses in Cape Town to "get celebrated" (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023) as he supports them to participate which shows his focus on social sustainability aspects of AFSs which also emphasizes community development (Fourat et al., 2020; Cleveland et al., 2015; El Bilali et al., 2019).

Ayanda is a 32-year-old co-founder of a startup that connects buyers, growers, and transporters of food and agricultural products in KZN and Cape Town. She is originally from KZN and moved to Johannesburg two years ago to join the initiative. Ayanda was interested in soil health and how African farmers, particularly small-scale farmers, can improve or maintain their soil health status. According to her, Africa has the highest percentage of degraded soil globally, resulting in the lowest yields of most cereals in the world. She wants to empower indigenous peoples and farmers to produce better and with digital tools in climate observation and finances. Ayanda appreciated working in various research institutions, including the water governance sector and once worked for the Stockholm International Water Institutes. Her background in research along with her passion for agriculture and problem-solving, have been essential to her work within the startup, in which she controls operations, planning, budgeting, forecasting and fundraising as the Chief Operating Officer. She aims to create a department for Research and Development at the startup to conduct more research in the future (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). Ayanda's startup presents an alternative to the conventional food systems processes through emphasizing local proximity by closely connecting the actors in a shorter value chain. She further highlights research and innovation development within the business and therefore demonstrates ambition to contribute to the transformation of conventional agri-food systems (Fourat et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019; Cleveland et al., 2015; Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023).

Boitshepo introduces herself as the founder of an initiative that aims to address the challenges of climate change and its impacts on the food system. She grew up in KZN, where she witnessed increasing extreme weather events, in particular floods, increasingly destroying crops. She did an undergrad in environmental

management with a focus on conservation and waste management and is now promoting organic hydroponics. She further communicated that she has worked on "indigenous and alien spaces, wetlands management and recycling" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). Her interest in hydroponics emerged from the need to find solutions for people living in townships that have limited space for planting due to adverse property development and who face additional challenges in the provision of nutritious food. She elaborated on hydroponics and highlighted that it enables the plant growth without soil and nutrient rich water instead. Boitshepo's initiative seeks to promote hydroponics as a viable solution to issues related to limited space, water scarcity and climate change (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). Boitshepo can be identified as an AFS actor as she promotes organic hydroponics as an environmentally friendly solution that mitigates resource use such as water and harmful fertilizers while providing an alternative food production and supply suitable for limited space and land for farming practices. These can be used to create locality and proximity between producers and consumers, or even support consumers in becoming their own food producers as she explained. She particularly focuses on township communities where food insecurities are pressing issues and empowers them to grow their own food which in turn increases local food security. She therefore shows ambition to promote sustainable agricultural practices while addressing social equity issues of food distribution all of which are key characteristics of AFSs (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019; Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023).

5.2 The Notion of Barriers to Participation of Youth

During the interviews with ORIBIs entrepreneurs, multiple barriers for youth to participate in the development of AFSs in South Africa were discussed. The analysis aims to evaluate these barriers by examining existing literature and further provides an in-depth view of the ways social processes in AFSs shape social capital, collective action, ultimately exploring in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa.

Most of the stressed barriers related to the overarching issue of deficient access to opportunities and resources in general. The AFS actors particularly emphasized the lack of access to education, information and financial resources that prevent youth from entering or participating. Further highlighted barriers were a general lack of digital infrastructure, awareness and challenges related to navigating regulatory frameworks. Systemic barriers around race, gender and class were furtherly claimed as major challenges in South African that would also affect the food system. The core of empirics that enabled detailing answers to the first sub question of this thesis revealed that all entrepreneurs shared the belief that access

to financials, and education (i.e., information) were most significant challenges that prevent the South African youth from participating in the South African AFS.

One theme that explicitly became a subject in the interviews and therefore appeared as one of the key barriers to participation and inclusion, was access to financial resources such as capital and funding. This is not only a barrier that is encountered by the South African youth that may seek to enter the food system, but also by some of the ORIBI entrepreneurs themselves. This challenge was explicitly highlighted by most of the interviewees. The financial barrier often results in limited ability to scale businesses, create lasting impact or to receive the needed support for building initiatives from the ground as considering the youth (Wittman et al., 2021; Onyemaechi et al., 2021).

Sipho was one who argued that barriers to participation primarily relate to access to information and funding. He drew attention to the link of these two barriers and their interdependency, stating that:

> "Without access to information, it is difficult to get anything [...] no bank wouldn't even give you 10 RAND [...] you need to do great sacrifices to get this" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023).

He further revealed that when he was younger and even after running a business for five years, funding remained a significant challenge. He argued this is "not like in Silicon Valley. Over here, you basically qualify for funding by the time you don't need funding" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). This statement highlights how Sipho values financial resources at the right time and place in order to access the AFSs, thus he explicitly underlines the financial exclusion of youth and the weakness of financial institutions to effectively administrate their decision-making power.

The lack of accessing information will be understood as the lack of education for the further course of this discussion. Sipho builds an argument related to limited access to funding which is likely to hinder youth from accessing education. This argumentation is supported by studies that emphasize the importance of funding for viable access to educational institutions for the young South African population (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Walton, 2011). The barrier of lacking education and information was explicitly themed throughout the different interviews which makes it an essential barrier for youth to participate in the development of South African AFS. When Nomkhosi identified the lack of access to information (education) she explained:

> "The most part of communities that we work with do not have consistent connection to the internet because of the cost of data. [The rural schools have] no money to afford technologies, like smartphones and laptops available for any kind of training with these techs" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

She stated that the missing digital infrastructure would make it even more difficult to be equipped with knowledge to potentially "be interested to enter" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023) such AFSs. Hence, she particularly highlighted the lack of education and awareness about entrepreneurial opportunities and emphasized that young people in South Africa would not know about the potential career paths in AFSs. Sibongile mentioned a similar barrier as Nomkhosi that related to the lack of the digital infrastructure in rural areas while also highlighting the lack of access to "basic amenities such as electricity and running water" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023) that further prevent the engagement in any farming practices.

She shared this view with Boitshepo, who referred to the lack of education as she revealed that this includes herself as she was not aware of the potential opportunities of getting involved in AFSs when she was younger. According to her, what young South Africans get taught:

> "Or what they see on TV is that you can either be a doctor or you can be a police or an engineer [...] it was a coincidence that I fell in love with a degree in environmental management, I did not even know that such a degree exists" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19).

Ayanda's perspective corresponds to Nomkhosi and Boitshepo, as she argued that many young people therefore lack "role models and connections" in the industry to learn how to potentially start this type of career which implicitly shows how social networks for youth are missing (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). These social networks would also be lacking without digital platforms due to insufficient infrastructure that Sibongile expressed. This can prevent young South Africans from exchanging and reciprocating information (Pretty & Ward, 2001) that could be useful to increase their social network relationships through bridging and bonding social capital, and potentially lead to increasing interest and participation in the system.

Sibongile further identified the lack of knowledge and skills transfer as a major barrier to the participation of youth. According to her, an issue is that the older generations of farmers face difficulties in transferring their knowledge to the youth, by stating "there is a disconnect between skills and the young people who are trying to get into the system" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). These barriers related to lack of education (information) and knowledge as well as access to technology or digital infrastructure that were raised by the interviewees in the AFS-specific context, are aligned with general barriers for the productive engagement of youth in agriculture stressed by Wittman et al. (2021). Another fact in this regard is that schools in disadvantaged, mostly rural areas experience a lack of remote learning technologies which created a gap between rural and urban youth in their

access to educational resources, particularily during COVID-19 (Chauke & Chinyakata, 2020).

If the lens of social capital and collective action is used to better understand these barriers, the missing access to educational and financial resources could be influenced by the lack of relevant social networks. It can be argued that the absence of digital infrastructure and educational institutions could, i.a., prevent the youth from having the opportunity to connect among and across groups. This connectedness and (horizontally tied) bonding and (vertically tied) bridging social capital as well as the ability to share and reciprocate information or knowledge is therefore less possible to access (Pretty & Ward, 2011; Coleman, 2000; Putman, 2000). Institutions can be noticed as platforms that foster horizontal local connections, i.e., local-local connections in the aspect of connectedness essentially shaping social capital according to Pretty and Ward (2011). To complement the interviewee's perspectives on these barriers, Wittman et al. (2021) indicate an additional barrier which refers to the lack of youth representation in worker's unions or producer's organizations in the food system. This barrier was not explicitly themed during the interviews; however, it was implicitly expressed:

> "So it would be what takes us back, you know, to the missing involvement [...] I think there could be a will from the government or the local municipality to bring youth into farming on this land [...] having something to say" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023).

Sibongile implicitly built her argument on the missing involvement on the producers' side and that youth should have "something to say" when it comes to their involvement which could also be seen as having a voice in producer's organizations in the food system. To have a saying in decisions around farm processes and that their voices are being protected in this network. This would create social relationships and connections across different producers but also among the farmers practicing on the same land. Hence, the creation of social capital in this sense would also foster trust and particularly lead to collaboration. Collective activities within such organized groups, i.e., for instance the producer's or worker's organization, would further foster trust created with people who the youth would "not know" (Pretty & Ward, 2011, p. 211; Putman, 2000; Ostrom, 2000b). This would provide youth not only with the voice, but with the ability to actively participate in collective dynamics among each other which also stimulates their sense of responsibility over shared resources and knowledge and the associated power as well as their trust may create the confidence (Ostrom, 2000b) to raise perceived issues in the conventional food system.

Without strengthening social capital through institutions that foster network connections, norms, relationships, trust, reciprocity and information exchange, cooperation and these collective activities among and across youth would be

lacking (Ostrom, 2000b; Pretty and Ward, 2011; Putman, 2000). This could be analyzed with Boitshepo's statement that implicitly addressed these issues:

> "It was a coincidence that I fell in love with a degree in environmental management, I did not even know that such a degree exists [...] all these people, if they knew better about it or they knew that such things exist [...] how it would make the life of someone involved better [...] and they would come up with solutions" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19).

The lack of awareness and education about entrepreneurial opportunities, as it was identified in the interviews, could limit the development of collective action as Biotshepo argued this environment could lead youth to "come up with solutions" as she was talking about schools. It can be implied that not only institutions, but also institutional entrepreneurs allow the mobilization of these invaluable resources and can direct them into coordinated action (Fligstein, 2001; Ostrom, 2000b; Putman, 2000). Thus, a lack of accessing social capital through the absence of educational institutions indicates a lack of collective activities which could in fact enable and result in a first step to actively challenge (Fligstein, 2001) the South African food system. Thus, facilitating a system's change or a sustainability transformations through collective action in the conventional food system over time despite various structural conditions in the country (Putman, 2000, Sage et al., 2021; Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022; Dasgupta & Serageldin, 1999; Garretón, 2002; Ostrom, 2000a; 2000b, El Bilali et al., 2019; Greenberg, 2010; Battersby, 2017).

Murendeni claimed the current South African food system would be:

> "Unjust, unsafe, and unsustainable with a small minority owning the majority of the wealth and dictating who runs the food system" (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023).

He further stated that regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic processes, such as receiving permits and licenses, would make it even more difficult for small food businesses and food entrepreneurs to enter the field. It can be stated that these bureaucratic processes may also influence the ability of youth to access financial support as they simultaneously exacerbate their ability to build bridging social capital (Putman, 2000; Coleman, 1988). Murendeni also stressed rapid gentrification in Cape Town as a major barrier of participation. Influenced by the prospect of his business, he argued that this gentrification makes it difficult for food vendors to afford rents and find affordable trading spaces in the city center. He specified that especially young African immigrants and refugees are affected by this condition as well as small-scale food businesses that are not "enough supported by the system" which is characterized by "gaps and lack of protection" (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023). Gentrification particularly occurs in the urban areas of Johannesburg and Cape Town where the interviewed AFS actors operate and limits the mentioned access to affordable trading spaces for small food businesses (Ah

Goo, 2018; Teppo & Millstein, 2015; Lees, 2014). This development can result in the decreasing ability of networking and bridging social capital, e.g., across entrepreneurial young street food vendors and consumers.

Both Ayanda and Murendeni, referred to legislation issues in race, gender and class that would be still long-term effects of the apartheid. Ayanda highlighted:

> "Even if a young black female would have access to land for agricultural practices, they might not have access to the best type of land" (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023).

This statement relates to the previously described structure of the South African food system which is dominated by, mostly white, large-scale commercial farmers and corporations that have decision-making power, while most black farmers practice small-scale and subsistence agriculture (Greenberg, 2017; Pereira & Drimie, 2016). This structure and the perception that Ayanda expressed lead to an imbalance in the food system that is also characterized by different amounts of valuable social capital. It can be argued that the strong social relationships forming the large corporations facilitate further strong network building through their constant collective activities along the food value chain. Apart from this general observation, Ayanda implicitly expressed issues of trust. She emphasized "best type of land"; thus, she implicitly makes an argument that relates to a lack of trust in the network of people that can make these decisions on land distribution. This exemplifies how the trust that individuals invest in such bodies can easily break, creating distrust across groups (Pretty & Ward, 2001). This means that even if bridging social capital would be present between, e.g., decision-makers and respective landowners or future farmers, it does not necessarily mean that these vertical ties are strong. Consequently, building a social network on such weak ties can easily break.

In the 1990s, South Africa introduced land reforms to counteract such injustices caused by the apartheid. However, this led to politics taking precedence over economic ownership which resulted in the development of even more corporate power in the food system. Restructuring processes, such as privatization of the sector and these reforms did not drive the unjust system into more inclusiveness (Greenberg, 2013). Ayanda argued that the government introduced a policy that should pull corporations to attempt the inclusion of youth and black Africans to enter their value chains. She stated it as a "transformational process" that is happening in her country's food system and she might have had these land reforms in mind (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). This relates to Greenberg (2013), who claims that despite the attempt of the government to include a minority of small-scale black farmers into the corporate value chains, the private control was strengthened, and the support of black farmers remained deficient. All the above further correlates with Murendeni's statement on the South African food system as being "unjust [...] and unsustainable". The situation continues to affect and exclude

marginalized people who were dispossessed during the apartheid which highlights how the system is still inequitable while South African agriculture and policies appear to have failed to bring significant changes to counteract these structural conditions (Greenberg, 2017, 2013; Pereira, 2014).

Sipho stressed the issue of corruption in the country and argued that "even if funding could be approved for the youth [...] it may be misused […] those fundings fail to corruption" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023) and would not fully reach the applicant. Corruption is a multifaceted and structural challenge that appears to cause significant ethical and socio-economic concerns in the country (Zalk, 2021; Sebake, 2020; Mantzaris, 2016). Sebake (2020) claims corruption in South Africa as a violation of human rights and dignity while highlighting the issue of the embezzlement of public funds originally designed to improve public infrastructure, such as hospitals. Sebake (2020) suggests straightforward policy shifts that help to hamper further corruption in the country. Olabiyi (2022) examines the impacts of bureaucratic corruption on the ability of households to access food in Sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa, and revealed that this type of corruption provokes household food insecurity and that government institutions would contribute to this problem. Olabiyi (2022) proposes to find new ways of how these institutions serve the public's needs. Mudau (2022) discusses food parcel corruption during the COVID-19 lockdowns in South Africa. According to Mudau (2022), the lockdowns led to exacerbate food insecurities, particularly for marginalized groups who were unable to access nutritious food because they lost their employment and incomes to afford food. Moreover, the informal food market was weakened and could not provide enough food. The government therefore started to distribute food parcels in large amounts, it did not reach the rural vulnerable population. It was rather dedicated "towards feeding 'deserving' people" (Mudau, 2022, p. 4).

Elements of these types of corruption in the food system are implicitly found in Nomkhosi's words expressing:

> "We have to be modern in the approaches that we are creating because we have to grapple with climate change but we also have to grapple with, you know, corruption in our government. All of those things are then additional factors that we have to consider [...] how to nurture it in such a way that it creates for them [the rural disadvantaged households] the food that they need [...] and also that its longevity is sustained" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

She builds an argument around the need to foster more AFSs to improve food security for rural households, though she raises the issue of corruption as an essential barrier to take into consideration when creating these "modern" approaches (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

These corruption issues can similarly be related to distrust issues towards decision-making institutions as linked to the distribution of "the best type of land**"** raised by Ayanda as well as the consequential weakened vertical social capital ties

that tend to more easily break through these issues and lead to the reinforcement of distrust in a weak network. Sipho's expression of "corruption is a mess [...] young people here do not relate to the government in this sense [...] you have to have good people around you" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023), further implicitly addresses this disconnect between the government and the youth.

The problem of corruption in the South African food system may create a gap of trust between youth and the government. The type of trust that is hereby violated is the trust "that we have in those we do not know" (Pretty & Ward, 2001, p. 211) which influences the ability to cooperate. If youth do not have a sense of belonging in the system and do not trust the government and its institutions due to corruption, this results in concerns related to the inability and disinterest to connect and engage with these institutions. Hence, governmental institutions themselves appear less of a network characterized by great social capital and collective activities, appearing relevant to be part of. Neither is strong bridging social capital built between youth and the government. The lack of the vertical connection between the local youth and the external governmental agencies would hereby lead to missing out on essential aspects of valuable social capital (Putman, 1993, 2000; Coleman, 2000; Ostrom, 2000b; Pretty & Ward, 2001). This could result in youth remaining unconfident to collaborate (Pretty & Ward, 2001; Ostrom, 200b) with governmental institutions, as Sipho implicitly expressed "young people here do not relate to the government in this sense" which could lead to the youth potentially not having the interest or are not able to express their voices and lack collective actions for the creation of transformative change for a more socially sustainable food system in South Africa (Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022; Sage et al., 2021; Hassanein, 2003).

The interviewees Sipho and Boitshepo highlighted additional barriers that related to socio-economic challenges in the system such as high poverty and unemployment rates of youth which keep them from accessing discussed resources to participate in the South African AFS. Both interviewees mentioned COVID-19 as a driver for the deterioration of these circumstances. Literature on the impacts of COVID-19 on the unemployment and poverty rates in South Africa have forecasted such effects (Broadbent et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2020). Nomkhosi, Ayanda, and Boitshepo particularly highlighted some of the structural, socio-economic challenges. Nomkhosi expressed that youth are interested in the food system, however, these challenges in the country keep them from being able to participate. She raised issues of household food insecurity and poverty interdependencies and domestic violence as she said:

> "It's not for lack of interest, it's just that they've seen so many challenges. So, in addition, in the South African landscape, there's a lot of domestic violence that a lot of these kids are experiencing in their homes in addition to poverty. And then the additional complexities that poverty creates [...] also figuring out how they're going to get food. And many of them are orphans. Many of them are living with grandparents who are living on a very small income.

> And it's not just one child in the household, there is many, four at a time and, you know, all living in very confined spaces. So, there's a lot of challenges that they are facing that also affect their education and thereby affect how easily or how much they can participate in programs like this [AFS initiatives]" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

There is an understanding of the interdependencies of these challenges. As she stated that low-income families with several children who live in small spaces may have an intense social network consisting of mostly bonding social capital if, e.g., the family lives with grandparents and this household would be considered as one social network. Even though there might be a lot of these local connections among the family, this does not necessarily mean that the network is strong as she highlighted the issue of "domestic violence" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023) as connected to these living conditions. Trust plays a crucial factor in this scenario, which is broken if violence occurs in some of the households. Since trust among people in social relationships, i.e., here the family relations, is an essential aspect of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Pretty & Ward, 2001; Putman, 1993), these conditions cause this presumably network of weaker horizontal ties among the family members. Thus, weakening bonding social capital and therefore the entire social network of this household. It is the type of trust that we should "have in individuals whom we know" (Pretty & Ward, 2001, p. 211) that may not even have been fundamentally built throughout the lives of the youth in the face of these challenges.

If social capital plays a further analytical role in understanding the mentioned barrier of poverty for youth participation in AFSs, it may also show how social capital can influence poverty alleviation. This is implicitly indicated when Nomkhosi concluded her statement with "that also affects their education and thereby affects how easily or how much they can participate in programs like this [AFS initiatives]" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). She points towards the lack of education and appears to imply that access to education may help to escape the poor conditions in households. She implicitly indicates that fostering bridging social capital, through the access to an educational environment for youth in these conditions, could help to alleviate poverty. It however seems as if there needs to be more support by an external player to enable this step as she expressed "it is kind of giving them the language and the understanding of what's happening to them and what they can do about it" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). She refers to her youth organization which currently runs a food systems project and could shape the missing strong network of trust for youth (Putman, 1993) in this scenario.

Nomkhosi implicitly aims to increase the diversity of the youth' social capital, i.e., bonding (family) and bridging (youth organization and educational institution), to also enable their participation in "programs like this [AFS initiatives]". It could be argued that one type of social capital can influence the other. In this scenario this

could mean that bridging social capital, i.e., the vertical connection between local youth and external agencies (Pretty & Ward, 2001), i.e., youth organization and educational institution, lead to strengthening bonding social capital. It is the combination of both, that instead of remaining to the household's weak ties among the family members, youth would then be able to cultivate stronger ties among each other in these organizations. Hence, the creation of these vertical ties, i.e., bridging social capital, through the participation "in programs like this [AFS initiatives]", could lead to the leverage of crucial bonding social capital and collective activities. Thus, this may also impact the potential to elevate the positive development processes (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) for the inclusion of youth in the South African food system through improving the terms of participation and access to resources (DESA, 2016) which not only are educational nature, but also resources to social networks that successively increases crucial social capital types and therefore provides essential benefits (Bourdieu, 1986) for youth to access.

The lack of education impacts the poverty rates in South Africa (Botha, 2010), and educational institutions can foster an awareness of youth about the necessity to change their sometimes impoverished condition by showing them employment opportunities and this consequently could stimulate their interest in challenging the current food system (Shiff, 2008; Koc, 2016). However, the creation of social capital and collective action in these institutions appears to depend on the quality of their "internal coherence, credibility, and competence and on their external accountability to civil society" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 234) which makes it imperative to leverage effective social capital in efficient ways to optimize the anticipated development outcomes. These dynamics could be observed as Sibongile implicitly argues for that by stating "describing how the kids may enter such things [AFSs], would really show the benefit education can do" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023).

Further Boitshepo explicitly raised the issue of "good education" and implicitly refers to good social capital dynamics that facilitate collective action as she further explained "showing them what is important to do but also being true about it [...] encourage this collaboration" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). She therefore indicates the necessity of educational institutions to be transparent and honest in presenting their competencies to "encourage" social capital and collective action in these institutions.

The mentioned barrier of unemployment is understood as youth NEET for the further course of this discussion. As previously stated, in the 2022 conducted labor force survey, 43% of all youth aged 15-34 years were NEET (Stats SA, 2022b). The emphasis on the central barrier of lacking education (information) and the high unemployment rate as shown in NEET among the South African youth, keep them from accessing opportunities in the food sector or its alternatives. If the lack of education decreases, i.e., more education access for the youth, then unemployment

will likely decrease. This is also implicitly expressed by Nomkhosi as she stated, “education is essential you know, it gives you a direction [...] it can lead you the way into agriculture” (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). This is a possible understanding of the positive correlation (Ashenfelter & Ham, 1979). With her comment, she also implicitly argued that education and employment positively correlate. If the lens of social capital and collective action are used to better understand this correlation, it can be argued that social capital among youth and across groups, i.e., youth and institution, hence bonding and bridging social capital, can be leveraged if “good education” as before stated is performed. As Nomkhosi emphasized “it gives you a direction [...] it can lead you the way into agriculture”, she expresses the potential of education in accessing employment opportunities in agriculture, i.e., the South African food system. Thus, the leverage of this diverse social capital “encourage[s] this collaboration” (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023) as Boitshepo indicated. Consequently, with more access to education, more access to employment in the food system is likely, thus, the amount of youth NEET could decrease.

As discussed in this subchapter, the collected common barriers to youth participation in the development of AFSs in South Africa tend to hinder the accessibility of social capital and collective action. This was mostly implicitly expressed as e.g., in “there's a lot of challenges that they are facing that also affect their education and thereby affect how easily or how much they can participate in programs like this [AFS initiatives]” (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

In summary, the interviewees shared the belief that access to financials (e.g., funding), information, and education were most significant challenges that prevent the South African youth from participating in the South African AFS. All these barriers appear as if the current South African food system tends to exclude youth. This has primarily been demonstrated by the exploration of the barriers’ impact on youth’ social capital and collective activities. This aligns with the presented rationale in the background to this case study which resulted in a need for a sustainability transformation in the food system to foster the development of a more equitable food system in South Africa (Greenberg, 2010, 2017, 2013; El Bilali et al., 2019, Ndekha et al., 2003; Battersby, 2017; Vasas, 2005; Jenson, 2000; Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018, Ndekha et al., 2003; Pereira & Drimie, 2016; Mudau, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2022; Swilling et al., 2016). The interviews indicated that youth and AFS actors hereby find themselves embedded within the structural conditions in the country presented in the background that are related to historical apartheid legacies and effects, concentration of land ownership and the capitalistic dynamics in the sector that show influence in these barriers (Zalk, 2021; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Bernstein, 2013; Mondliwa & Roberts, 2021). These may also lead to a deceleration of potential transformative change in the South African food system.

The next section of this thesis continues to analyze a more inclusive food system that does not exclude youth (UN, 2018) and instead improves the access to presented resources, i.e., identified barriers. It emphasizes on social processes in AFS that may or may not support the "engaged participation by all interested social actors [...]", therefore promoting respectful "interactions between different groups" and "mutual empowerment" (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68).

5.3 The Impacts of AFSs in South Africa

The following chapter will present and discuss empirical findings related to how ORIBI and its entrepreneurs impact youth participation and inclusion in the South African food system. Hence, the study further seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of in what ways AFS can challenge the prevailing dynamics of exclusion and promote youth' social inclusion in the South African food system. It will provide an in-depth view of the ways social processes shape social capital, collective action and ultimately aim to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth, contributing to social inclusion in South Africa. While detailing further answers to the research questions, the discussion will indicate how social capital and collective action may be strengthened through these institutional entrepreneurs.

5.3.1 Perceived Changes of Youth in South African AFSs

According to most of the interviews, the AFS actors appear as being positive about the prospects of youth inclusion in the future AFS in South Africa. All of them highlighted their motivation to increasingly build a more inclusive food system and hope for receiving more and consistent support from other stakeholders in the system. The majority of the interviewed AFS actors have perceived change in the entrepreneurial environment in South Africa even if they were perceived as very slow.

Sipho raised that one of the COVID-19 "by-products" is the loss of employment and increasing poverty rates which "forced people into entrepreneurship". According to him the increase in youth participation in the AFS "might not be because of an increase of interest but a mechanism of survival" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023), which illustrates the dire context the entrepreneurs and initiatives operate in. This could have a negative impact on social capital creation in this network as some actors in the ecosystem may prioritize their own interests due to the focus on "survival", potentially undermining collective efforts, resources and goals to challenge the dynamics in the conventional food system in South Africa as institutional entrepreneurs (Fligstein, 2001).

Another noteworthy comment was made by Ayanda who thinks that the interest in entering the AFS comes from the urbanized segment. According to her, the urban youth are more interested and may increasingly participate in such developments while the rural youth do not have incentives to enter the system. This, she explained, is because “they look at their parents who are normally poor farmers" (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). During her work in the food value chain, Ayanda observed that more retailers would increasingly seek to buy locally which would provide the opportunity for youth and black Africans to participate in the agri-food value chains. She further noticed an increase in the number of youth-led initiatives in her surroundings. There is an understanding of positive prospects, however, youth require more support than currently provided, as she mentioned “the enabling environment is there, there is progress and there is interest and opportunity, but it lacks infrastructure to support youth” (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023).

Literature on entrepreneurs anticipating a greener economy could be identified (Mukonza, 2020; Maziriri et al., 2019), though not if these changes specifically happen in the South African food system. A worth mentioning side note is that Maziriri et al. (2019) examines how entrepreneurial women can support the development of a greener economy who are still a minority in entrepreneurial work according to Meyer (2019). Women in natural resource management settings for instance furtherly show stronger norms of reciprocity and stronger abilities of collective action (Westermann et al., 2005). Their contribution evidently fosters positive collaboration among members of groups which also transpires through young female entrepreneurs as indicated by some of the AFS actors of this case study.

It appears as despite the barriers that the South African youth confront, there is increasing participation perceived. Boitshepo and her initiative in hydroponic farming, have experienced “motivated youth” that seek to be involved as “a great number of youths is excited and willingly volunteers to be part of the program” (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). The ambition to further support youth in AFSs appears strong through e.g., Boitshepo who stated, “it's still a long journey, but I want to reach more youth through these programs”. She talked about her high school program teaching about food systems that will be further described in the subsequent section. However, how these AFS actors and their initiatives build social networks and rework social capital and/or collective action remains to be revealed.

5.3.2 Social Inclusion Processes

The entrepreneurs are convinced that AFS initiatives can create awareness and actively promote the development of more sustainable food systems if youth can access this opportunity to engage. The interviewees of this case study emphasized the importance of youth in their initiatives and/or the necessity of including them

in the future. Social inclusion processes for youth participation in the system could be identified as related to different ambitions. Most of the practices can be connected to some of the presented barriers that youth encounter and therefore relate to, e.g., access to education and information by establishing programs at schools to educate the youth about opportunities for career paths in AFSs or climate related issues in agriculture. Some actors therefore seek to create increasing awareness and incentives for youth to enter the AFSs. All the interviewed entrepreneurs shared evidence that they care for their social impact and thus their contribution to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system. These contributions will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

This particularly highlights their activities as linked to social movement entrepreneurship activities. Fligstein (2001) links institutional entrepreneurs to implying the mobilization of collective action to change prevailing norms. This is for instance implicitly expressed through Nomkhosi. She highlighted "collaboration I think is inclusionary practices you know, getting youth to talk and commit [...] to be able to change the situation here" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023) as she mentioned this in relation to the youth organization and its food system project which also seeks to address challenges of environmental issues in the current system.

Talking about the youth organization, Nomkhosi highlighted:

> "The motivation for us had always been to drive opportunities, to create access for one of these learners [...] support them in defining their own futures" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

Emphasizing this, Nomkhosi particularly hopes to provide the youth with the opportunity to overcome barriers related to lack of education and information through teaching them, i.a., about potential career paths ahead. According to her, the food security project of the youth organization serves a "larger purpose and goes beyond fighting against an urgent need" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023), she referred to improving food security. The project, she further explained, is particularly focused on educating and creating awareness about "climate change and food sovereignty", as well as "empowering the youth to contribute towards solving these issues". Besides, she further believes that indigenous knowledge systems need to be "harnessed better because technological solutions are not always the best to address environmental issues in the [food] system" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). She implicitly argues that knowledge and information reciprocity and exchange (Pretty & Ward, 2001) across groups, i.e., indigenous peoples and youth, are valued higher than the support of technologies in these settings. She implicitly promotes bridging social capital between these social groups in order to address environmental issues in the food system more effectively.

Besides the characteristics of AFSs that become visible here, this also aligns with the characteristics of food sovereignty that is often addressed by AFSs. Social values are highlighted, and they therefore contribute to more social justice in the food system (El Bilali et al., 2019). Murendeni similarly emphasized his business as treasuring food identity through "teaching about a sense of belonging and community [value]" which aligns with food sovereignty demonstrated in Nomkhosi's case. In providing youth with this awareness and knowledge of food sovereignty, they could learn how to contribute to increasing food security in the country (Beuchelt et al., 2012). This becomes implicitly visible when Nomkhosi expressed:

> "Giving young people also the language to understand what is going on with the situation regarding food security in the country [...] that they appreciate what they can get or not [...] and that maybe gets them to change what is going on here at the sustainable side" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

Nomkhosi implicitly relates to her mentioned food sovereignty aspect as she combines it to being more aware and decisive of the value of e.g., organic food, i.e., "sustainable side", bringing issues such as food availability as a security aspect into the focus. Therefore, Nomkhosi and her initiative empower youth to indirectly influence the ability to create action in facing some of the prevailing challenges in the South African economy and food system. Nomkhosi shows youth what opportunities are out there and how they can be used and leveraged to generate income. This is how they stimulate the interest of youth to participate in the AFS in various ways. These are all focal aspects in the creation of more inclusive food systems (Wittman et al., 2021). However, the lens of the theoretical frame can help to understand how these practices of Nomkhosi work with social capital to facilitate what she explicitly called "collaboration [...] inclusionary practices". The organization itself already stands for a social network that is characterized through information reciprocity which is an essential aspect of social capital (Pretty and Ward, 2001). This can be analysed with her comment:

> "I believe, you know, in the co-creation of a greener South Africa [...] codesigning solutions with them and giving them the understanding of what we are wanting to bring and also what they can then contribute to the solutions that we're creating. So, it's codesign with the people that we want to work with" and as she pulls her motivation to "drive opportunities [...] support them [youth] in defining their own futures" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

Nomkhosi's expression on "codesigning" implicitly shows how she emphasizes information exchange and reciprocity (Pretty & Ward, 2001). The "codesigning" hereby refers to reworking bridging social capital or the vertically tied group of youth and their mentors or teachers in practical and theoretical lessons on climate

change, food security and agriculture. Apart from this, bonding social capital among the youth is particularly leveraged by “inclusionary practices” and collective activities as she talked about the way students help other students to facilitate a curriculum specific to the context of the community they are working with in their city. They provide employment opportunities and have hired other students and graduates who have environmental qualifications and let them mainly run the food program. They have a food garden and a food farm which were established in the schools that they are working in. The diversity of social capital that can be fostered through these processes' influences “successful” collective action among the youth as it also gives the ones running the program the power and associated responsibility (Ostrom, 2000b) over the pooled resources of e.g., knowledge production, i.e., decisions on “what will be taught and when” (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). Hence, this creates a collective action that is self-organized (Ostrom, 2000b), enabled by these social dynamics of the social network of youth attending the program and youth running it.

This social process further shows a social relationship built on trust as the organization believes in the capability of the young people running the program, Nomkhosi emphasized “that we support these learners to develop their skills with confidence” (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023). She hereby implicitly connects to trust which is increased by exchange and reciprocity (Pretty & Ward, 2001). This trust may therefore also nurture the cooperation among youth and organization as she explicitly expressed “with confidence”. This may indicate that youth running the program also receive such words, resulting in them to see trust in themselves as a valuable resource. In addition to social capital which seems to be leveraged in these scenarios, coordinated action behavior (Ostrom, 2000b) happens during the teaching sessions, as this includes the active participation of both groups attending as Nomkhosi shows in “they can raise questions all the time, we want this” (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

During the interview, she appears to know a way on how youth participation could be increased in the development of more sustainable food systems in South Africa and indicated how collaboration within this network is encouraged to provide youth with the “necessary language to understand and act on the system's challenges in the country”. This may indicate how change in the food system could happen through collective action in the long run (Sage et al., 2021; Hassanein, 2003). Nomkhosi frequently implicitly called these social processes as giving the “language” to the youth as highlighted through this discussion. In light of the presented analysis of empirical material, Nomkhosi and her initiative seem to contribute to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system by fostering “engaged participation” while promoting respectful “interactions between different groups” and showing “mutual empowerment” (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68) among youth happening in self-organizing dynamics (Ostrom, 2000b). Hence, it

counteracts social exclusion dynamics in the system that have been subject to the previous section. The organization may foster future AFS actors that challenge the conventional food system who aim to define their futures within it (Putman, 2000; Fligstein, 2001; Wittman et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2020).

It appears as if awareness, education and information exchange are crucial impacts on youth participation and inclusion. Nomkhosi and her initiative seem to serve as a catalyst for challenging the current status which relates to Fligstein (2001), and she seems to foster future actors in AFS as she emphasized on their motivation to "drive opportunities [...] support them [youth] in defining their own futures" but also on social inclusion processes in presented programs that enable youth to actively take part in the development of AFS through "what will be taught and when" and as she furtherly explained:

> "Our perspective has been that we are responding to an immediate need, which is food security. So essentially the food that is grown on the farms feeds directly into the feeding scheme [...] that most of the learners get their main meal from school. And so we then are kind of approaching it in that aspect that by meeting an immediate need, we then incentivize their participation in the rest of the program through the food farm" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

The organization's contribution therefore seems to be twofold. It engages in food related security issues by responding to the need to provide more available and accessible food for the youth and it "incentivize[s]" the youth to stay engaged in AFS related actions by offering these resources. This practice creates common resources to govern and can increase the youth' sense of responsibility over these resources (Ostrom, 2000b) in the food garden. This can lead to the leverage of bonding social capital through collective engagement and can challenge exclusionary tenets of private ownership. The presented social processes that seem to occur in Nomkhosi's initiative elevate youth participation in the system as she also seems to promote "interactions between different groups" through a process that involves "engaged participation" (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68). Hence, demonstrating one way of contributing to social inclusion of youth in the South African food system.

Sipho actively encourage the township youth to get involved in the delivery business and generally claims his business is "sustainable". He explained that "the youth are out there, getting their licenses to drive but they cannot afford their own scooters" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). This is the reason why his business attempts to get the township youth involved by purchasing scooters for them while they pay them off by working. He highlights that there is a sense of "pride and dignity when they work for this" which could keep them "motivated" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). He seems to refer to the motivation deriving from this financial incentive which in turn would then let them stay engaged. Moreover, the

business benefits from having people involved who “know the areas of delivery best” and have the “energy needed for this job” (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). The incentive that Sipho gives the youth to start and keep participating in this initiative can be linked to creating norms of responsibility (Ostrom, 2000a; 2000b) which is an essential aspect of social capital. As he expressed that one of the reasons why he also includes them is because they “know the areas of delivery best”, he implicitly shows that he values trust in his employees’ abilities. This cultivates bridging social capital between Sipho as founder and the youth as employees. However, if his business is seen as one social network, then bonding social capital may be the type increasingly cultivated. In addition, it is worth highlighting that he focuses on the empowerment of youth growing up in informal settings in South Africa, areas where access to education, finances and employment is particularly limited. Sipho expressed this in “there is a lot of talent out there” among the youth in these areas and that empowering them through bottom-up solutions such as more programs and initiatives could bring even more possibilities to overcome presented barriers.

As Fligstein (1997) relates to institutional entrepreneurship, the success of change depends on the actor’s capability to rise above arrangements. Almost all entrepreneurs rise above their original purposes that their initiatives had. On the example of Sipo one can sense how he produces social outcomes above his anticipated aim to provide the township inhabitants with food (Fligstein, 1997). He not only fosters youth participation and employment in the South African AFS, thereby contributing to the reduction of the amount of youth NEET, but also pilots another business model to empower women in the townships of Cape Town. He argues that home kitchens run by unemployed women are more prevalent than restaurants in the township. Sipho and his initiative are now offering a bootcamp for these “mothers” on how to run a business and assist them with cash advances to purchase their first stock of necessary ingredients. Thereafter, they shall be able to sell their food on the organization’s App. Sipho hopes to “scale” this solution nationally (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023).

This new project would elevate social capital for women. In terms of vertical ties that enable a creation of “new” social network relationships which may be fostered through these bootcamps. In the case of Sipho training himself, it can be argued that he creates a local-external connection. Furthermore, these bootcamps presumably cultivate bonding social capital among women that started out as vertical ties at first sight. In other words, Sipho may bring these women “together in these bootcamps”, who may not have known each other before, but then start getting to know each other, which leads to leveraging bonding social capital while fostering collective activities in the long run. This may even lead to more information and knowledge exchanges in the future as he stated “scal[ing]” this solution nationally, potentially scaling these presented social dynamics.

Considering this analysis of these emerging new social network relationships, Sipho fosters the inclusion of Black African women who are still the most vulnerable population group in regard to unemployment (Stats SA, 2022b). This does not relate solely to youth, but to young females and however, showcases the spirit and ambition of such AFS actors to rise above their business models as related to institutional entrepreneurship and create new ways of fostering social sustainability transformations in the food system (Fligstein, 1997).

Apart from Sipho's contribution to social inclusion as he fosters "engaged participation" for the youth involved in his business by employing them as drivers and particularly the "mutual empowerment" (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68) of women that is presumably happening in his new initiative, he contributes to social sustainability in the South African food system by counteracting some of the social exclusions of youth and Black African women embedded in structural issues of historical apartheid legacy effects in the country (Bernstein, 2013; Zalk, 2021). He provides them with access to finances and resources in social network building as discussed in the previous paragraphs. However, it may be valuable to explore the impacts of his social inclusion processes on a longer basis to capture how his support in relation to the supply of a social network in this case can influence and potentially elevate a greater development process in the township that goes beyond the ones presented. While Sipho's initiative purchases scooters for the township youth, allowing them to pay them off through work is a social inclusion practice that fosters youth participation in the AFS. It could be worthwhile to evaluate how this employment opportunity could offer access to broader skills development which could be valuable for their employability beyond Sipho's business. By developing the project with township "mothers", he increases his impact on this employability factor as he actively fosters skills development of the women by offering the bootcamps. Thus, it may be relevant to analyze these social inclusion dynamics in the future.

Sibongile connects small-scale farmers who grow organic produce with households and retailers in Johannesburg. She could observe that "most of the young people in South Africa do not prioritize food grown sustainably and they are used to finding everything they need in a supermarket" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). This is why she focuses on creating awareness about organically grown food and the issues of climate change on the food system as she realized that it is essential to build an educational element to her business model. She explicitly expressed "I realized I need to teach that to people". She added "not that I know a lot, but I need to sort of pass on information" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023) as she started writing an online blog once a week for three years to increase the sale of her organic produce while educating people on related topics and helping them to understand the benefits of the food. This was working until she experienced

a “burnout stage and felt demotivated to continue”. She needed to stop pursuing this journey.

However, her attempt to educate people online indicates her ambition to create a new social network that is characterized by social capital based on reciprocity and exchange as well as different ways of connecting across groups. When the blog “took off”, she could foster “dialogues around organic food and related topics with others” (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023) which would presumably cultivate social capital in this newly created online network, hence bonding social capital among this group through exchange of information and knowledge around food. She rose above her initial operational environment (Fligstein, 1997) and connected with other young females online who were interested in her work with organic products and transferred knowledge which helps to overcome a barrier of disconnect between knowledgeable people and young South Africans and simultaneously strengthens social capital and collective action across different groups. Sibongile has also the ambition to provide fair wages as this is a fundamental aspect of fairness that is a characteristic of the organic food sector (Kröger & Schäfer, 2014). This further highlights how an entrepreneur attempts to stress multiple aspects of social sustainability in the food system at the same time while fostering network relationships. All the above are essential characteristics of AFSs (Cleveland et al., 2015; Slocum, 2007; Fourat et al., 2020; Forssell and Lankoski, 2015; Brinkley, 2018) that however do not always need to be simultaneously achieved which may have prevented Sibongile from stepping into a burnout condition. In general, her business further strongly connects with characteristics of AFSs in supporting the production of organic food and providing spatial proximity (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020; Forssell & Lankoski, 2015). All the above are vital points in stimulating transformative change in the current South African food system.

Murendeni ensures that the salaries among the people involved in his business are fair and therefore also contributes to the creation of more socially sustainable food systems such as Sibongile. This can also be an incentive for youth to get engaged within the business (Wittman et al., 2021). He further contributes to youth participation and inclusion in the AFS by employing a business partner that is a young South African who now runs the experience. As he stated “this [business] suddenly created a huge interest”, his business partner who grew up in one of the townships surrounding Cape Town took over the main execution of the tours. With his initiative, Murendeni fostered the participation of a young South African who now supports the business and tells his story first-hand, counteracting the marginalization and exclusion of youth coming from underprivileged households. He further employs a young Senegalese who once flew from Touba and “now makes a significant amount of money” by participating (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023). He provides these young people with access to financial resources,

as he offers them “fair salaries” (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023), and employment, contributing to the reduction of the amount of youth NEET in South Africa. He offers them access to the necessary social capital by entering this business network which is mostly characterized by collective activities among the initiative's employees and external visitors.

Ayanda’s intermediary business connects farmers and consumers and showcases the importance of spatial proximity in AFS (Cleveland et al., 2015; Fourat et al., 2020). This strengthens bridging social capital among the food value chain and their stakeholders. Her startup is almost completely run by young South Africans as she expressed “youth is a big part of our brand” (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023) and they strive to increase engagement by being active on social media channels. They seek to promote agriculture as a viable career option. She hereby creates a network that fosters information exchange online across new groups of youth and offline among the youth involved in the business. She therefore builds a baseline for facilitating collective activities among them, as she implicitly expressed in “they could communicate [...] they could talk, you know, and then meet if they like” (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). She fosters network relationships between young farmers and established retailers which bridges knowledge gaps and provides access to bridging and bonding social capital. This allows young South African farmers to access the value-food network that Ayanda is part of. She creates this environment of reciprocity in social relationships of trust that also foster taking responsibility for members of this network. This becomes visible as she explicitly introduced her business as “this business is about relationships, right? And relationships are built on reputation and trust [...] all of us need to be honest in what they do and for what” (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023) and therefore indicates how strong this social network appears to be for her, the employees and the customers. Ayanda further assists greater corporations in the South African agri-food value chains to include black and young farmers in their chains as the interest and demand increases in local sourcing. This is similarly an example that proves some of the land reform-initiated effects previously mentioned (Greenberg, 2013; Pereira & Drimie, 2016). Her business is now able to provide funding to some small-scale young farmers and therefore contributes to overcoming barriers of finances for youth to participate in the AFS development. As she highlighted the need for “mentorship” (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023) and support networks as an important factor in supporting youth participation, she relates to one of the core themes on youth engagement in the conventional food systems (Wittman et al., 2021).

To conclude, Ayanda seems to provide a “vehicle” for youth and offer them engagement possibilities, further fostered through social media collective activities. Similar to the other presented AFS actors, Ayanda proves Fligstein’s (1997) argument on institutional entrepreneurs, that some social actors are creating better

social outcomes than others. This is due to her expressed ambition to build a research and development division in her business that is dedicated to "reach the rural youth and educate them of improved ways of farming" (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023). However, while Ayandas initiative seems to foster social network relationships between young farmers and retailers, it could be effective to analyze emerging power dynamics in this network at a later stage. This could help to further analyze the extent of her impact on the participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system and review how bridging and bonding social capital can elevate a development process for the youth in the long run (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Boitshepo drew the attention to the effects of climate change on agriculture and is convinced of the significance of taking actions in convincing more people of her organic hydroponic initiative in order to adapt to these issues. She expressed it as "inspiring people to adapt" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). During the interview she frequently pointed out the hope to inspire more people to adopt this innovative approach to farming and how her approach to this supports the participation of youth. This is because she provides information and training for communities, particularly through her established high school program where:

> "They teach grade 10 and 11 on the organic roots of hydroponics, what they are, how they work and how they are a solution to many climate change issues […] reusing and recycling to align with the SDGs" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023).

Boitshepo emphasized the importance of accessing basic education for young people during the interview. She contributes to overcoming barriers of information by showing presence in high schools and therefore similarly contributes to the possibility of creating incentives for youth to engage and cooperate. As the presence in high schools may foster the children to connect on a local-external level, bridging social capital could be cultivated through her practices while collective activities in the program are likely to take place. All of which could foster change in the food system in the long run as it begins with incentives and awareness as soon as children can enter educational institutions and grow into these essential topics in their surroundings. She implicitly expressed this issue during the interview with:

> "So I think for me, if such topics are introduced at early stages, like the minutes you start going to school, they slowly or gradually would include those topics, then we could have a lot of impacts because for example there's so many people who including myself as well [...] you wouldn't know there's a career in the environmental field. You wouldn't know there is really a career in the agricultural sector" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023).

Since she has an additional job in the field of environmental conservation in which she strives to "create more awareness around these issues" and as this is the

job that finances her livelihood, she demonstrates her strong willingness to change and challenge the existing conventional food system in South Africa as institutional entrepreneurs (Fligstein, 2001) tend to aim towards. With this workload, she realized that "marketing on social media and spreading the word on these channels" is difficult to pursue. However, the willingness to advance her skills and to support her overall mission on "building more sustainable food systems" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023) is visible.

At first glance ORIBI appears to allow the building of a strong social network between entrepreneurs, other members and external institutions. This is not only because they tend to promote collaboration among entrepreneurs but also because they seem to foster social inclusion processes, access to new networks and financial support through building bridges between members, i.e., entrepreneurs, and external development agencies. Sipho implicitly highlighted this potential for building local-external connections within ORIBI's accelerator program through group work, matching with fellow entrepreneurs, and mentioning his successful secured funding through ORIBIs partners at the Industrial Development Corporation. He said, "we did work in teams on how to improve our businesses [...] I met a lot of cool people, it's been a good thing. They helped me out with this, you know, I received funding afterwards" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). This implicitly indicates their efforts to foster an interconnected and collaborative environment, while bridging social capital in vertical connections with external agencies, i.e., fostering local-external connectedness (Coleman, 1988; Putman, 2000; Pretty & Ward, 2001). Thus, through their mentoring sessions, they appear to provide and cultivate social capital to be built among the members and with their mentors as Sipho implicitly refers to bonding social capital that is created among the AFS actors in "I met a lot of cool people, it's been a good thing. They [mentors] helped me out with this" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). Whilst Nomkhosi reinforced this impression as she mentioned "this [collaboration] helped me to rethink social entrepreneurship [...] meeting others who have the same issues. To talk about our practices" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

The network's activities (ORIBI and entrepreneurs) can be understood as practices of collective action that are facilitated through their ability to build and leverage social capital. Triggered by ORIBI's mentorship and workshops, the ways the actors build and run their initiatives converge in collaboration. "[The mentorship] helped me navigate the environment [ecosystem] in the next steps", explained Sipho, "why don't I work with the people here instead of doing it all by myself, you know, it just made sense" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). As a result of the program, Sipho started a continuous dialogue with one of the other entrepreneurs (not interviewed) to leverage his knowledge and global experience: "I can still learn so much from her, [...], I can use that knowledge, you know, to create more impact in the future" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). This

continuous dialogue and knowledge exchange between them indicates the outcomes of ORIBIs programs, as an institution that encourages information exchange and cooperation among people, i.e. fostering collective action and sharing knowledge (Ostrom, 2000a; 2000b, Pretty & Ward, 2001, Putman, 1993) which could lead to transformative changes in the South African food system in the face of the structural issues in the country (Hassanein, 2003; Sage et al., 2021; Ratner, 2014; Garretón, 2002; Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022).

Even though ORIBI and its entrepreneurs reveal, i.a., signs of "positive" network outcomes considering social capital and collective action building, it could be valuable to analyze what other contributions, i.e., besides what the theoretical frame could identify, enable to elevate social inclusion processes for youth participation in the South African food system. As a result of the presented discussion deriving from the collected empirical materials and considering the forgoing background information surrounding the research questions and aim of this thesis, it can be argued that ORIBI and its entrepreneurs may be part of a social movement, implying the mobilization of collaborative actions to change current social exclusion practices of youth (Fligstein, 2001) in the South African food system. Hence, fostering the development of more socially sustainable food systems in South Africa.

The presented discussion focused on social inclusion processes in AFS through a case study of AFS actors in South Africa and if or how they may strengthen social capital and collective activities for, among and across youth and their network to foster such social development processes. This discussion demonstrated that AFS actors showcase social inclusion processes that aim to transform the South African food system towards more inclusiveness. However, presented critical reflections on the processes identified through this case study emphasized the need to evaluate these impacts on a greater and longer scale. Moreover, there is no indication that ORIBIs network and the AFS actors' initiatives are the most efficient or most effective way of fostering social inclusion of youth in the South African food system. Further it is questionable whether the AFS actors' initiatives' social inclusion practices are scalable due to the analysis that relied on personal/social interaction.

5.3.3 Future Impact Scenarios in South Africa

The AFS actors indicated possible measures and future ambitions. This section contributes to the aim to explore in what ways food systems can be reshaped to enable the participation of youth in South Africa by presenting potential next contributions and future pathways to social inclusion in the South African food system by the AFS actors.

According to all conversations, the AFS actors appear as being positive about the prospects of youth inclusion in the future AFS in South Africa. However, the

need to create more awareness, improving education as well as governmental support of financial resources, i.a., are indicated as important to potentially overcome some of the analyzed common barriers on youth participation and inclusion in the development of AFS in South Africa. The interviewees were able to express how they would like to see changes happening.

Sibongile suggested implementing local government food policies and having discussions with relevant stakeholders to overcome the knowledge and financial barriers. "A lot of talking should be made" by all actors in the system "to potentially overcome such issues" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). Moreover, she proposed local municipalities subsidize some elements of the farms and "support the knowledge and experience of farmers on how to run it" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). This could potentially bridge the disconnect between older generations' knowledge and the youth as she expressed this issue before. Owing to her business, Sibongile particularly emphasized the knowledge of organically grown food. As she would like to keep on acting more around these issues, she complained that "because the market is very small, you just get caught up in trying to keep the business afloat and you are not able to talk about how to support more inclusiveness in the value chain" (Sibongile, interview, March 28, 2023). It can be stressed that local governments in developing countries particularly need to foster food policies to regulate and stimulate such changes (Delgado & Siamwalla, 2018) and that this may influence the ability to elevate collective action to foster further transformative despite structural conditions in a country (Zalk, 2021; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Bernstein, 2013; Mondliwa & Roberts, 2021; Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022; Ratner et al., 2014; Sage et al., 2021; Hassanein, 2003).

Murendeni asks for more support and regulatory measures for grassroots economic and agricultural development initiatives, including small-scale farmers and food vendors, to address the economic inequality in the South African food system. He further expressed: "Why is it for a young Senegalese coffee entrepreneur so incredibly expensive and difficult to make a living out of his business in South Africa, but not for a big company that is shipping around the world" (Murendeni, interview, April 11, 2023). Ayanda's and Murendi's highlighted legislation barriers as effects of the apartheid align with previous research (Greenberg, 2017, 2013; Pereira, 2014; Zalk, 2021; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Bernstein, 2013; Mondliwa & Roberts, 2021). Both therefore hope for more regulating efforts of the government which can be considered as vital issues to create transformative changes in the long-term implications of apartheid not only related to the food system (Cotula, 2013; Pereira & Drimie, 2016; Motala, 2020). Studies found evidence in the correlation of increasing participation through increasing social protection in African agricultural systems which can be achieved through effective policies (Khalid Anser et al., 2021). Furthermore, food policies and the governance of food system related issues of inequality, i.a., can further

weaken if participation is lacking or insufficiently fostered. Participation therefore contributes to a "just governance" of food system transitions (Huttunen et al., 2022). This similarly applies to the need of increasing youth participation in food systems. Considering Gregory's (2000) understanding, youth participation is especially important because it promotes fairness, may prevent resistance or opposition to future decisions in the food system, benefits from the knowledge expertise of young people and may increase the support and understanding for decisions made by e.g., local municipalities and governments regarding food policies in the future. It appears that such sustainability transitions must happen within intentional and profound policies that would aim to strongly enhance social inclusion in the country (Goga & Mondilwa, 2021) to ultimately diminish social exclusion processes.

The government for instance may also draw attention to land grabbing issues in South Africa that suit the provision of food or biofuel production for foreign nations which is a general challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa (Cotula, 2013, Tscharntke et al., 2012). This was raised by Biotshepo as she talked about the "issue of not having enough space for what we actually need [...] or the things we could grow for our own needs, you know, land is often also taken by international corporates that plant biofuel crops for themselves" (Boitshepo, interview, April 19, 2023). She came back to hydroponics as a solution to space issues, but on a household level. Though the scope of this thesis does not allow further detailing this issue. Murendeni also expressed the motivation to promote gender equality, particularly by fostering small-scale female food entrepreneurship which demonstrates his ambition to further contribute to social sustainability in the food system. Sipho shared that a bottom-up approach is the best to empower youth and to enable their participation while fighting the high unemployment rates, he stated:

> "I think there are tools, especially governments, youth development, but anyway, unemployment is at such a high rate, I think solving this bottom-up might be a better solution to like, push them for empowerment, let's get them going, start programs. That for me would make a massive difference in the economy and just empowerment" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023).

He came back to his stated barrier for the youth to participate in AFSs which related to the access to funding and information. He particularly referred to young people living in the townships that need to receive this access since he saw them having the greatest entrepreneurial ideas. He believes the township youth have tremendous talent and potential and demonstrated his enthusiasm by stating: "When I am around in the township, it is so amazing and inspiring, so sourceful the youth there [...] someone has to pick up on this talent and really give information and funding then this could go way far" (Sipho, interview, March 23, 2023). He proposed increasing the number of programs and youth development organizations

as well as governmental support in providing opportunities to overcome the barriers that young South Africans, especially in the township areas, appear to face. What he is implicitly referring to is the opportunity for them to access social capital through providing them with support organizations, such as Nomkhosis youth organizations which is currently working on the food security program. Sipho referred to "someone" as there needs to be an external agency that connects youth with them and others which would mean the creation of new vertical ties (local-external) and bridging new social capital. As he explicitly mentioned "information" he refers to knowledge, information exchange and reciprocity that may help this development process (Pretty & Ward, 2001). Hence, Nomkhosi initiative seems to exemplify such an organization that promotes environments that foster the empowerment of youth and their access to opportunities in employment in the South African food system.

In summary, the interviewed entrepreneurs believe that awareness, knowledge and education access should be increased in the future. This may be achieved through strengthening existing educational structures or creating new ones, providing programs and offering such educational environments that foster the development of horizontal and vertical ties to form social networks of diverse social capital and collective actions. The South African youth need to be aware of the opportunities as Nomkhosi implicitly pointed out in other words: "giving them (youth) the language [...] showing them what they can do to navigate challenges in the food system" (Nomkhosi, interview, March 22, 2023).

Thus, policies and initiatives should be leveraged and rooted in principles of equity to support the participation and engagement of youth in the food system. Therefore, resources such as information, awareness and finances require more attention to approaching the objective of increasing social inclusion of youth in the food system while ensuring tailored and context-specific policies (Wittman et al., 2021; Delgado & Siamwalla, 2018). There are still pressing challenges to overcome in the South African food system that hinder youth participation. Though overall, entrepreneurs in the South African AFS and the presented discussion harmonized with the expression of Ayanda, "the enabling environment is there" (Ayanda, interview, April 19, 2023), which can be linked to transformative social processes where entrepreneurs show how the development of more socially sustainable food systems in the future of South Africa could potentially be elevated.

6. Conclusion

This section summarizes the key findings of the thesis and provides an outlook into future implications and potential areas of further research.

6.1 Key Findings

The thesis has explored the potential of AFSs in driving social sustainability and addressing challenges in the South African food system. Previous research has highlighted the transformative potential of AFSs in various contexts and related to sustainability aspects (Mastronardi et al., 2019; Miralles et al., 2017; Barbera & Dagnes, 2016). Scholars appear to address social inclusion aspects, explicitly or implicitly in AFSs with limited focus that has been given to low-income regions (Veen, 2015; Poulsen, 2017; Fourat et al., 2020; Harper et al., 2016; Dyen & Sirieix, 2016) and no focus on the specific impact of AFSs on youth participation and inclusion. To address this gap, this thesis used concepts of social inclusion to analyze AFSs in the South African context in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of how AFSs can challenge the prevailing dynamics of exclusion and promote social equity within the South African food system. While previous research identified the potential of youth in contributing to sustainable practices in the food system (Żmija et al., 2020; Gliessman & Tittonell, 2015; Giuliani et al., 2017), this study showcased ways of how AFSs can address social exclusions of youth in the context of South Africa.

The thesis' case study has analyzed and discussed multiple common barriers that hinder youth from participating in the development of AFSs in South Africa. Particularly stressed barriers were deficient access to education, knowledge, financial resources and limited opportunities to access the AFS due to socio-economic challenges, such as high numbers of youth NEET. This indicates that findings of previous research in the field of South African conventional food systems can potentially be applied in the context of South African AFS, as researchers similarly highlighted limited access to education, financial resources, and market opportunities (Geza et al., 2022; Wittman et al., 2021), exacerbated by socio-economic disparities in the country (Geza et al., 2022).

The thesis highlighted the need for the South African food system to be more inclusive, particularly by promoting social inclusion of youth and fostering access

to resources in social networks and finances. Identified key levers to address the barriers and foster more inclusiveness in AFSs in South Africa are building trust in social networks, e.g., through educational institutions and organizations for youth, that can leverage diverse social capital, i.e., bonding among and bridging across youth, institutions and other social actors in the ecosystem, as well as reinforcing collaboration.

ORIBI and its entrepreneurs' initiatives discussed in this research exemplify social inclusion processes, encouraging youth participation in the AFS that supports the development of more socially sustainable food systems in South Africa. Such processes were, i.a., identified in raising awareness, cultivating social network relationships of trust, exchange and reciprocity, providing employment opportunities, education and training. These practices indicate how dynamics of social capital and collective actions could potentially be reworked through institutional entrepreneurship to contribute to youth participation and inclusion. Hereby, it is important to emphasize that the AFSs actors highlighted the wider structural conditions of the country that are related to historical apartheid legacies' effects, concentration of land ownership, exploitation of labor and overall capitalistic dynamics which influence the transformative potential in the food system, which aligns with previous research of food system transformation in South Africa (Zalk, 2021; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Bernstein, 2013; Mondliwa & Roberts, 2021).

ORIBI plays a role in facilitating the collaboration among entrepreneurs, members and external groups that nurtures bonding and bridging social capital which can potentially result in funding opportunities and social relationships beyond this point in time. The discussion revealed that ORIBI and their entrepreneurs hold potential in counteracting the social exclusion of youth in the South African food system by reworking social capital and collective actions in their practices which can lead to elevating social development processes and foster transformative change in the conventional food system in the face of the structural conditions. Thereby, this thesis identifies the need for social inclusion processes to facilitate collective actions that can enable potential transformative changes in the food system, substantiating previous research on the transformative power of collective action (Hassanein, 2003; Sage et al., 2021; Ratner, 2014; Garretón, 2002; Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022).

In light of Flyvbjerg's perspective on case study research, it appears important to reflect on this particular case study approach. Through exploring ORIBI and its entrepreneurs as an in-depth qualitative and context-specific case study, numerous insights into the potential of AFSs and their role in driving food systems transformations and the social inclusion of youth in the South African food system were provided. This has offered "practical knowledge" (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 117) specific to the South African context. However, it is essential to acknowledge that

the findings from this case study cannot be generalized to all contexts which emphasize the need for future research. These may also follow integrated approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative methods, as suggested by Flyvbjerg (2004), to enhance the understanding of AFSs and food system transformations on a broader scale.

6.2 Outlook

It can be recommended to evaluate the impacts of ORIBI and their entrepreneurs more in-depth by using additional tools, as social capital, collective action and institutional entrepreneurship alone cannot capture all forces in these complex systems. While the presented initiatives have shown potential in making a difference for the participation and inclusion of youth in the South African food system, taking a leap on confronting broader systemic issues in this system seems indispensable. This means fostering the broader development objective on social inclusion as "the process of improving the terms of participation [...] enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights" (DESA, 2016a, p. 17) and as a process of "full and engaged participation by all [...] regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural resources" to promote increasing respectful "interactions between different groups" and "mutual empowerment" (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002, p. 68) in the South African food system.

The analysis revealed that access to awareness and education play vital roles in fostering inclusionary dynamics in the South African food system which may counteract social exclusions. However, it was not possible to explore the AFSs' quality and relevance of the information provided to the youth. Further analytical efforts could therefore involve the exploration of long-term sustainability of their social processes, activities and provided support. It is recommended to conduct additional research on the improvement of the entrepreneurs' practices and the long-term outcomes, i.e., the responsiveness to such social inclusion processes. Research that would be conducted over a longer time scale could hereby explore the quality and relevance of the provided information to youth, estimate the scaling possibilities of these social inclusion processes and assess whether some practices may be stronger than others or by time in performance. Impacts that these could have on future employability and the general development of the youth' competencies could similarly be recommendable to enhance this knowledge.

Moreover, the impact could be analyzed in more quantifiable terms to capture the actors' and initiatives' "true impact". These impact measurement efforts could use tools such as randomized control trials, an experimental form of impact measurement to provide granular measures (White et al., 2014).

A theory of change framework could further seek to understand how AFSs can be reshaped with the aim to e.g., create a roadmap for better evaluation and

implementation based on a chain of causations related to social inclusion processes that strive to change the current food system in South Africa. Additionally, the study could be improved by expanding the geographical scope to incorporate e.g., rural areas and through e.g., comparing the value chains of AFSs with conventional systems, focusing on metrics such as costs, supply chain resilience and particularly environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors.

Lastly, this research's focus on youth inclusion restricted the exploration of other social dynamics within the AFSs in South Africa. Further ethnographic research, social network and stakeholder analysis is needed to observe these dynamics. Considering the diverse perspectives, e.g., youth, mentors, and support team, could hereby help to explore the heterogeneity of successful social inclusion processes in this organization. The perspective of users and consumers can further enrich the understanding of barriers and impact of social inclusion since this thesis mainly focused on ORIBI's internal dynamics.

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Popular Science Summary

Traditional food systems have been proven to exploit nature and widen the gap between the rich and the poor. In South Africa, alternative food systems (AFSs) offer a solution to transform traditional food production and distribution, letting the entire society participate. This research focuses on processes of social inclusion, i.e., participation and engagement, in AFSs through the case of the non-profit organization ORIBI and its entrepreneurs. It highlights barriers preventing young people in South Africa from participating in AFSs, such as limited access to education, knowledge, and financial means. The study analyzed and discussed ways of participation and engagement processes that can help to overcome such barriers and empower young people to actively contribute to a food system in South Africa that is equal and just for all participants. By raising awareness around these issues, fostering social connections, and providing employment and education opportunities, AFSs actors can provide young people with the necessary support for breaking these limitations.

The case study of ORIBI indicated the positive impact of social inclusion processes in their practices in addressing social exclusions faced by young South Africans. Through these processes, collaboration can be nurtured, and social networks built which open doors to lasting relationships and arising opportunities in e.g., funding. The study emphasized the transformative power of social inclusion processes and collective actions in driving change within the South African food system despite the structural challenges the country has to face related to e.g., apartheid effects. By supporting AFSs and social inclusion practices, it is possible to empower the South African youth and create inclusive and more sustainable food systems that fairly distribute benefits.

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Appendix 1

Interviewees listed by Name, Role and Interview Date.

Name	**Role**	**Date**
Nomkhosi	Curator	March 22, 2023
Sipho	Founder	March 23, 2023
Sibongile	Founder	March 28, 2023
Murendeni	Founder	April 11, 2023
Ayanda	Co-Founder	April 19, 2023
Boitshepo	Founder	April 19, 2023

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