Values of "alternative food initiatives" as expressions of "embeddedness": A comparative analysis in different national contexts

Paper first received: 17 November 2024; Accepted: 08 August2025; Published in final form: 23 August 2025
https://doi.org/10.48416/ijsaf.v31i2.677

Rike STOTTEN,[1] Anna-Maria BRUNNER,[2] Nora Katharina FALTMANN,[1] Paul FRONING,[1] Michaela PIXOVÁ,[3,4] and Christina PLANK[3]

Abstract

Values are essential leverage points in the pursuit of sustainability transformations, especially within food systems. In agrifood studies, they are often linked to various forms of alterity relating to food and food systems, which we broadly conceptualize as "alternative food initiatives" (AFIs). This paper explores the role of values within AFIs by enriching Holloway et al.'s (2007) heuristic analytical framework with the concept of "embeddedness" to offer a comparative analysis of how AFIs reconfigure food production, distribution, and consumption through values-based practices. The paper's analysis focuses on four key dimensions of embeddedness: social, economic, ecological, and spatial. Examining nine case studies across three countries (Switzerland, Czechia, and Argentina) using a qualitative approach, we find that values are neither universal nor neutral; instead, they are shaped by local contexts, influenced by power dynamics, institutional settings, and cultural norms. The paper further finds that the contributions and impacts of values are more diverse than binary understandings of "alternativeness" would suggest, underlining the importance of values for transformations toward sustainable food systems. This research contributes to agrifood studies by illuminating the role of values as leverage points for sustainability, underscoring the importance of contextualized, value-driven approaches in advancing food system transformation.

[1] Department of Sociology, Universitätsstrasse 15, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria
[2] Department of Geography, Innrain 52f, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria
[3] Institute of Development Research, BOKU University, Peter-Jordan-Straße 76/I, 1190 Vienna, Austria
[4] Institute of Ethnology and Central European and Balcan Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czechia

Corresponding author: Rike Stotten, rike.stotten@uibk.ac.at

Biographical notes

Rike Stotten is associate professor at the Institute of Sociology and head of the working group Rural Sociology. Her research and teaching focuses thematically on Rural Sociology and Agro-Food Studies and spatially on mountain areas.

Anna-Maria Brunner is a PhD candidate in Geography at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. In her work, she explores local endeavors toward food system transformation in the Argentinian context from a Political Ecology perspective, with particular emphasis on agroecological approaches.

Nora Katharina Faltmann is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology, University of Innsbruck. With a background in development studies, she works on social science perspectives on food, including food access, sustainability, and human-animal relations.

Paul Froning is a research associate with a Masters degree in Environmental Management of Mountain Areas from the Universities of Innsbruck and Bolzano. In his work he focuses on territorial agrifood systems and sustainable regional development especially in mountain farming settings.

Michaela Pixová is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Development Research at BOKU University with a PhD in human geography. Her research is focused on social-ecological transformation, political ecology, critical urban theory and social movements.

Christina Plank is a political scientist at the Institute of Development Research at BOKU University. Her research and teaching center on state theory, political ecology, and social-ecological transformations with a focus on critical agrarian studies.

Acknowledgments
The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for their valuable feedback and the participants of all case studies for their contributions. This research was funded in whole or in part by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) 10.55776/ZK6. For open access purposes, the author has applied a CC BY public copyright license to any author-accepted manuscript version arising from this submission.

Introduction

Scholarship on sustainability transformation concurs that values represent a fundamental leverage point and that more research on their role is needed (Abson et al., 2017; Horcea-Milcu, 2022). Sustainability transformation is imperative to address the challenges faced by food systems in Europe and beyond, which stem not only from the adverse effects of industrialized agriculture but also from factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, the climate emergency, and the war in Ukraine, which have led to associated challenges in energy and a global nutrition crisis (cf. Clapp and Moseley, 2020; Gliessman, 2022).

From the vantage point of agrifood studies, "alternative food initiatives" (AFIs) actively challenge corporate influence on the food system, with the aim of valorizing "good food" (Goodman et al., 2013). This valorization is enacted through various means, including the establishment of standards and labels (Loconto and Arnold, 2022) as well as the formation of AFIs like food cooperatives or community-supported agriculture. The latter prioritizes values distinct from those prioritized by agro-industrial farming, such as solidarity, animal welfare, and nature conservation (Plank et al., 2020). Additionally, these initiatives advocate for democratic control over both the production and consumption of food by establishing innovative networks of different actors (Desmarais et al., 2017; Ermann et al., 2018). Within these networks, values such as democracy, solidarity, and environmental sustainability play pivotal roles in challenging corporate power dynamics (Plank et al., 2024).

Despite their importance, the values guiding AFIs remain empirically underexplored, and there is a lack of comprehensive theoretical scrutiny in this area (Loconto and Arnold, 2022; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019). Misleh (2022) emphasizes the importance of an analysis that explores the impact of values on shaping economic practices and their normative influence on advancing social justice objectives. While existing scholarly work on values often relies on individual case studies (e.g. Kallio, 2020; Varga, 2015) our contribution seeks to identify the values of AFIs across three different case study countries, with the aim of providing comprehensive empirical insights. Moreover, our contribution aims to overcome the "impasse" associated with a binary understanding of alternativeness (Misleh, 2022) by embracing multifaceted perspectives through identifying different understandings of the values inherent in AFIs. Furthermore, adopting a comprehensive perspective on values, going beyond only economic value, enables us to pinpoint crucial leverage points in the transformation toward sustainable food systems.

Alterity of Alternative Food Initiatives

Agrifood debates tend to distinguish between alternative and conventional food systems (Beus and Dunlap, 1990; Holloway et al., 2007). However, this dichotomization brings forward underlying theoretical tensions that shape diverging understandings of the content and origin of alterity (Blumberg et al., 2020). In a wider context, "alternative" refers to the opposite of the dominant globalized, corporately shaped agro-industrial food system that is manifested through an array of different practices and social-ecological arrangements, regardless of whether they overtly challenge capital (Whatmore and Thorne, 2004). Blumberg et al. (2020) propose two essential dimensions of alterity. Firstly, there is a deliberate shift toward examining practices and networks that diverge from corporately shaped agrifood systems. Secondly, though less explicitly stated, there is a shift away from agrarian political economy, with its structuralist and macro-level focus: instead, the analytical lens is widened to include more plural and nuanced understandings of food systems.

This broader analytical orientation, which is central to current debates in food regime theory, is reflected in Stotten's (2024) argument that the coexistence and overlap of so-called "food from nowhere," "food from somewhere," and "food from here" sub-regimes reveal increasing interdependencies and hybridization within contemporary food systems. Theoretically, Misleh (2022) points out the impasse of alterity that exists even within alternative food network debates, where scholars either view alternative food networks as embedded, value-driven alternatives to the mainstream food system or dismiss them as simply another extension of

neoliberal market forces. To overcome this binary perspective, she proposes a Polanyian "dialectical relational" perspective that recognizes alternative food networks as simultaneously market-based and value-laden. Therein, she underscores the need for a "more open-ended, nuanced, and plural understanding" (1041).

Relying on Watts, Ilbery, and Maye's (2016) differentiation between alternative food (e.g., organic, vegan, local food labels) and alternative networks (e.g., direct marketing, community-supported agriculture, fair trade), Rosol (2020) proposes an updated clustering of alternative food systems that encompasses alternative economies (e.g., food sharing, solidarity economy, social enterprises). Central to alternative networks and alternative economies is the fact that such approaches challenge the capitalist binary distinction between active producers and passive consumers, striving for cooperation that confronts the conventional mainstream food system (Schermer, 2015). Both approaches question the standardized and commodified mode of food supply (Renting et al., 2012) and seek local, healthy, and transparent supply networks that also embody the principle of solidarity (Smith et al., 2010). Corporations and financial investors have long ridiculed this trend; however, today, the incorporation of alternative food, such as organic or vegan food, by many retailers, processors, and farms has led to its conventionalization (Rosol, 2020). To include a broad perspective, in this paper, we refer to alternative food, alternative networks, and alternative economies as AFIs.

AFIs are characterized by a departure from traditional, large-scale, and centralized food production and distribution methods (Goodman, 2002). Instead, they often emphasize local and sustainable practices, prioritize social and environmental concerns, and seek to create direct connections between producers and consumers. The term "alternative" reflects a desire to offer choices beyond dominant, industrialized food systems, with the aim of promoting more ethical, sustainable, and community-oriented approaches to food production and consumption (Maye, 2013). More broadly, the term AFI refers to systems or networks of alternative food-related activities, organizations, and relationships that operate outside or alongside mainstream, industrialized food systems. In practice, AFIs take the form of farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA), food cooperatives, direct farmer-to-consumer sales, and other initiatives that prioritize ethical, environmentally friendly, and community-oriented approaches to food (Rosol, 2020; Rosol and Barbosa, 2021). Beyond such manifestations, more established approaches, such as cooperatives—for example, in mountain farming (Froning and Stotten, under review; Moschitz and Oehen, 2020) wine production (Da Rocha Oliveira Teixeira et al., 2023) or home and allotment gardening (Jehlička and Daněk, 2017; Pixová and Plank, 2024, 2025) correspond to the characteristics of AFIs.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that "alternative" does not necessarily imply a complete replacement of mainstream systems but rather a complementary and transformative approach (Forssell and Lankoski, 2015). The extent to which AFIs are considered "alternative" can vary widely, depending on several factors (Whatmore et al., 2003) such as scale and localization, production practices, producer-consumer relations, social and ethical concerns, diversity of products, and community engagement. We elaborate on this below.

Regarding scale and localization, AFIs often prioritize local and small-scale production and distribution. The extent to which they operate at a local or regional level, minimizing reliance on long-distance transportation and industrial-scale agriculture, contributes to their alternativeness (Watts et al., 2016). In terms of production practices, the emphasis on sustainable and environmentally friendly production practices, such as organic farming or agroecological methods, adds to the degree of alternativeness (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019). AFIs may focus on minimizing the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers while promoting biodiversity and soil health (Forssell and Lankoski, 2015). Most often, AFIs involve direct relationships between producers and consumers. This direct interaction enhances transparency, provides consumers with greater knowledge about the origin of their food, and often supports fairer and more transparent pricing for producers (Holloway et al., 2006; Renting et al., 2012; Sage, 2003) contributing to the alternative nature of these networks. To respect social and ethical principles, AFIs often prioritize social justice, fair labor practices, and ethical treatment of animals. The inclusion of such aspects in an alternative network's principles (Miralles et al., 2017; Tregear, 2011)

contributes to its alternativeness.

Regarding the diversity of products, the range of products offered in AFIs (Watts et al., 2016) can also influence their alternativeness: AFIs that provide a variety of local and culturally relevant foods, including heirloom varieties and traditional products, contribute to a more diverse food system. In terms of community engagement, AFIs that actively involve and engage local communities in decision-making processes (Feenstra, 1997), support local economies (Renting et al., 2003), and foster a sense of community ownership can be said to embody a higher degree of alternativeness. To better understand the "alternativeness" in AFIs, it is essential to explore the underlying values that shape these initiatives and influence their practices.

Values as a Conceptual Frame

The concept of value has deep philosophical and sociological roots (Martin and Lembo, 2020), with early scholars like Joas (1997) and Spates (1983) emphasizing its foundational role in meaning-making and its early sociological articulation by Thomas and Znaniecki (1921 in Spates, 1983) as empirically accessible and action-oriented (Spates, 1983: 29). In sociology, a value is defined as "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of actions" (Kluckhohn, 1951: 395). Accordingly, in relation to food systems, values direct attention to and influence how people evaluate the different consequences of food production, distribution, and consumption (Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013). This is in line with the perspective of the anthropologist Graeber (2001), who argues that value extends beyond economic terms: values reflect meanings that are constructed through social action and are defined by what people deem is worth pursuing. Similarly, Mauss (1967) emphasizes the relational and reciprocal nature of value, challenging its reduction to purely economic terms and situating it within broader social and moral contexts. Appadurai (1986) further highlights the shifting cultural meanings of commodities, showing how food products gain value that goes beyond their price.

From a geographical perspective, Gibson-Graham (2006) proposes a feminist and post-capitalist theory of diverse economies, in which value is not inherently tied to capitalist logics but arises through situated practices and ethical commitments. This approach offers tools to explore alternative valuations in agrifood networks, where value is co-constructed through social, cultural, and environmental practices, rather than being dictated solely by market mechanisms. Sayer (2000) further contributes to this discourse by highlighting the moral dimensions of economic relations, arguing that economic practices are always embedded in social norms, moral judgments, and cultural meanings. Sayer's notion of a "tacit lay morality" underscores how values are not only reflected in economic actions but also in the symbolic and social meanings attached to commodities and practices.

For AFIs, the distinction between economic value and non-economic values is critical. As Sayer (2003) notes, value is often re-conceptualized in alternative economies to emphasize use value over exchange value, focusing on the satisfaction of basic human needs, the development of skills, and the cultivation of relationships. In this context, money and commodities are redefined, acquiring social and cultural meanings that transcend their monetary worth (Baudrillard, 1981). These practices align with Gibson-Graham's (2006) vision of diverse economies, where value is co-created through collective action and ethical engagement, challenging the dominant economizing logic of capitalist systems.

Within agrifood studies, research has investigated values within value chains (Forney and Häberli, 2017; Mattozzi and Piccioni, 2012) and has revealed the different value constructions for specific products (Heuts and Mol, 2013) and of and between food producers and consumers (Plank et al., 2020). The formation of values is a continuous process in which people actively (although not necessarily reflectively) participate and that is shaped through different practices (Kallio, 2020). Scholars have argued that food values are mostly relational, pertaining to relational qualities such as fairness or relations to nature, whereas values seen as

inherent in food as an object, such as "quality" food, are less central (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025; Stotten, 2024; Varga, 2019).

Regarding values in AFIs, Faltmann and Stotten (2025) propose clustering analysis of values along the different forms of embeddedness, including social, spatial, ecological, and economic embeddedness. The concept of embeddedness, introduced by Polanyi (1978), refers to how economic activities are intertwined with broader social and institutional contexts (Penker, 2006). While conventional food systems are often embedded in macro contexts (Penker, 2006), AFIs are characterized by a greater diversity of values expressed in diverse forms of embeddedness (Feagan and Morris, 2009). In detail, the respective embeddedness characteristics (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025) refer to diverse sets of values:

- Social embeddedness: This refers to the interrogation of economic models within socio-cultural contexts (Fourat et al., 2020), emphasizing interpersonal ties, social networks, and community-based values. Key values relating to social embeddedness include trust, participation, reciprocity, community, tradition, and solidarity (Feagan and Morris, 2009; Fourat et al., 2020). Social embeddedness focuses on restoring community and institutional values, building direct relationships between producers and consumers, and ensuring equity and fairness in food systems (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025).
- Economic embeddedness: This refers to embedding economic relations within local and equitable contexts. It emphasizes supporting local economies, the fair distribution of profits along value chains, and de-commodification practices (Brinkley, 2018; Rosol, 2020). Key values relating to economic embeddedness include economic support for local economies, resilience and financial viability of farms, fair pricing, and the equitable distribution of economic value (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025).
- Ecological embeddedness: This dimension highlights environmentally friendly practices and ecologically sustainable farming. It involves eco-labels, organic agriculture, agroecology, and reduced food miles (Feagan and Morris, 2009; Penker, 2006). Key values relating to ecological embeddedness include environmental sustainability, biodiversity, health (both personal and environmental), and ethical considerations in regard to nature and animals (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025). Ecological embeddedness emphasizes producing food in ways that respect and protect the environment.
- Spatial embeddedness: This notion focuses on the integration of food systems within specific territorial or local contexts (Penker, 2006). It includes direct links between producers and consumers, the value of food freshness via short supply chains, and supporting local agriculture (Feagan and Morris, 2009). Key values relating to spatial embeddedness include spatial proximity, local identity, rural revitalization, and the appreciation of specific places or terroir. Spatial embeddedness stresses the importance of local agriculture in maintaining rural ways of life and connecting urban dwellers with rural food production (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025).

Methodology

Building on the conceptual perspective outlined above, our research aims to identify distinct sets of values within diverse food system contexts. This connects to a broader objective highlighted by several scholars—namely, the proposition that values can act as leverage points for sustainability transformations in food systems. By contributing empirical insights to this debate, our research emphasizes the diversity of value orientations and their relevance for food system change.

In our study, in line with Rosol (2020), we understand AFIs as encompassing alternative food, alternative networks, and alternative economies, while also including more established, traditional approaches to food production, processing, and consumption. Our empirical case study-based research is organized around the heuristic analytical fields elaborated from Holloway et al. (2007) (see Table 1). These fields serve as a framework for structuring a description of how specific examples of food production-consumption are organized (see Appendix). In order to also explore and understand the comprehensive values that guide AFIs'

actions, we enriched the methodological framework by adding the analytical fields of shared values among producers-processors-consumers, organized along the different forms of embeddedness presented above.

Table 11: Heuristic Analytical Fields

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes
Motivation for participation of producer—processor—consumer	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure
Constitution of individual and group identities of initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Social embeddedness, economic embeddedness, ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness

Source: Elaborated from Holloway et al., 2007

Case Studies

In our analysis, we focus on AFIs in Switzerland, Czechia, and Argentina, which we examined in our research project Exploring Values-Based Modes of Production and Consumption in the Corporate Food Regime. These countries play different roles in the global food context. Switzerland is characterized by small-scale producers and, not least because of its mountainous less-favored areas, food production is directed less toward export. In Czechia, large-scale farms dominate production, targeted at export (Eurostat, 2018). Argentina has chosen the path of re-primarization of its economy through large-scale exports of agricultural goods (e.g., soy) as an important national economic strategy (Dorn and Hafner, 2018). Below, we present the case study countries and introduce our respective case studies, some of which are embedded in broader empirical settings (see the respective publications).

Switzerland

With a surface area of 41,285 km² and a population of 8.7 million (2021), Switzerland is a densely populated but small country. It has a direct democratic system and is located in central Europe. Swiss agriculture has undergone a structural transformation over the past few decades: the number of farms dropped from nearly 61,000 in 2008 to approximately 51,000 in 2018, with an expansion of farm size from 17.4 hectares to 20.5

hectares in the same period (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020). Agriculture is predominantly based on small-scale family farming (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2017b), with a long tradition of organic farming (Willer and Schmid, 2016). Mountain regions have a higher share of organically farmed land (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2017a). Since the 1990s, the Swiss Constitution (Article 104) has incorporated the goal of applying multifunctional agriculture. The direct democratic system allows citizens to participate in shaping the food system. There is a long tradition of AFIs in Switzerland, with *Les Jardins de Cocagne*, established in 1978, being one of the world's first CSA initiatives (Scherer and Rist, 2017).

In Switzerland, we investigated three case studies (see Table 2). The first focuses on a remote rural mountain valley, *Valposchiavo*, which has positioned itself as an organic region (Froning and Stotten, 2024; Stotten and Froning, 2023) a regional development approach that relies on the values of organic agriculture to strengthen territorial agro-food systems (Belliggiano et al., 2020). The second case study examines the mountain dairy cooperative *Latteria Breggailia* (Froning and Stotten, under review) which operates within small-scale farming structures but engages with large-scale intermediaries and retailers within the macro food system. The third case study involves a mountain CSA (Steinegger and Faltmann, 2025) where the producers are located in a mountainous area and the consumers are based in a distant urban agglomeration.

Czechia

Czech agriculture has a dual farm structure, i.e., it is dominated by large agricultural enterprises and supplemented by small- to mid-scale private farmers (Sarris, 1999; Špička et al., 2020) As a result of the fact that Czechoslovakia, during the period of socialism, had a centrally planned economy and instituted agricultural collectivization (Rychlík, 2019) Czechia today has the largest agricultural holdings in the European Union (Eurostat, 2018): over 90% of farms cultivate more than 50 hectares. Since joining the European Union in 2004, national agricultural policies have been shaped by the Common Agricultural policy. However, there exists a strong legacy of self-provisioning food systems, which is typical for Central and Eastern Europe (Smith and Jehlička, 2013). With the transformation to a capitalist market system, Czechia has also been a core country for international retail chains, bringing international goods to Czech consumers (Smith and Jehlička, 2007; Smutná et al., 2024). Lately, however, Czech consumers' awareness of healthy and fresh food has increased, giving birth to different forms of AFIs, like farmers' markets, community gardens, CSA initiatives, and others (Pixová and Plank, 2024; Smutná et al., 2024; Trenouht and Sovová, 2025).

In Czechia, we examined three case studies (see Table 2). The first focuses on nine CSAs in the capital region of Prague (Nováčková et al., under review). The second explores allotment gardens within the Prague area (Pixová and Plank, 2025) while the third investigates a food cooperative, *Obživa*, where food supply is organized collectively, providing an example of an urban AFI in Czechia (Pixová and Plank, 2024).

Argentina

Today, Argentina is a major extractor and exporter of resources (Hafner et al., 2016), ranking among the highest globally in biotech crop production (ISAAA, 2019), with intensive application of agrochemicals. The soy sector stands out in this regard, accounting for 28.1% of the country's total exports, making it Argentina's top export sector in 2022 (INDEC, 2023). Argentina also has the world's second-largest amount of land under certified organic production, with over 3 million hectares dedicated to organic farming, primarily for export (Fuchshofen et al., 2017). Besides these major export-oriented sectors, the country has a rich tradition of small-scale family farming, which is the cornerstone of Argentina's internal food supply (accounting for approximately 80% of that supply) (Feito, 2020). Over the past decade, agroecology has gained significant ground in food production for domestic supply: by putting forward a socially and environmentally transformative agenda, it has emerged as an alternative to the hegemonic food system (Sarandon and Marasas, 2017).

Three case studies (see Table 2) were thoroughly investigated in Argentina. The first is the *Colectivo agroecológico del Valle Inferior*, an agroecological collective of producers, distributors, and consumers (Brunner, forthcoming).

The second focuses on *Huerta Ecológica Santa Elena*, an agroecological farm that operates a CSA/subscription membership scheme and maintains an experimental field in collaboration with the National University of La Plata (Brunner, 2022; Glenza et al., 2020). The third case study is *El Almacén Andante*, a solidarity-based food distribution cooperative that operates according to the principles of the social and solidary economy, selling agroecologically produced food to urban populations.

Methods

Within our project frame, the selected AFIs were investigated by applying a set of qualitative methods used in social empirical research (see Table 2), such as expert interviews (Bogner et al., 2009), semi-structured interviews (Misoch, 2015), participant observation (Gobo and Molle, 2017), informal interviews (Swain and King, 2022), collective mapping (Diez Tetamanti, 2018), photovoice (Beilin, 2005), walk- and work-alongs (a specific form of participant observation that combines informal and/or semi-structured interviews) (Wadel, 2015) and Q methodology (McKeown and Dan, 2013). Each case study is examined along the heuristic analytical fields (see the Appendix, which contains one table per case study).

Table 2: Methodology per Case Study

Case study	Methods applied and data generated	Number
C1: Organic region (CH)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	6
	Secondary interview analysis, transcripts	1
	Video interview analysis, transcripts	13
	Informal interviews, thick descriptions	3
C2: Mountain dairy cooperative (CH)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	4
	Participant observation, thick descriptions	2 settings, 2 days each
	Informal interviews, thick descriptions	2
C3: Mountain CSA (CH)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	6
	Participant observation during CSA assemblies, thick descriptions	2 settings, 2 half-days
	Participant observation (work-along) on two participating farms, thick descriptions	2 weeks; 2 days
	Informal interviews	15
C4: Urban CSAs (CZ)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	12
	Q method, transcripts	1
C5: Allotment gardens (CZ)	Semi-structured interviews (partly group interviews), transcripts	3
	Short informal interviews conducted during field visits, thick descriptions	2
C6: Food coop within urban AFIs (CZ)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	1
	Informal interviews, thick descriptions	4
	Q method, transcripts	1
C7: Agroecological producer–commercialization–consumer collective (ARG)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	6
	Participant observation (walk- and work-alongs), including photos and videos, thick description	5 weeks
	Q methodology, transcripts	2 sets
	Photovoice, follow-up interviews, classification of photos for quantitative analysis, transcripts for qualitative analysis	15 participants
	Collective mapping workshop, classification for quantitative analysis, transcripts of group discussions and of internal presentation of final results	1 day (2 maps created)

C8: Agroecological farm with CSA/subscription membership scheme and university experimental field (ARG)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	3
	Participant observation (walk- and work-along), including photos and videos, thick descriptions	2 weeks
	Net-Mapping, transcripts, visualization	1
	Informal interviews, thick descriptions	6
	Q methodology, transcripts	2 sets
C9: Solidarity-based food distribution cooperative (ARG)	Semi-structured interviews, transcripts	2
	Participant observation (walk- and work-alongs), thick descriptions	1 month
	Q Methodology, transcripts	1
	Focus group discussions	3 half-day workshops

Results and Discussion

The comparison of the AFI case studies from Switzerland, Czechia, and Argentina reveals distinct yet overlapping sets of values within different food systems. Each case provides a unique lens for looking at how social, economic, ecological, and spatial embeddedness shape and are shaped by values in diverse contexts. By organizing the analysis around forms of embeddedness, we gain a deeper understanding of how the values underlying each case shape food systems across different contexts.

Social Embeddedness: Varied Expressions of Solidarity and Community

Social embeddedness—understood as the embeddedness of economic models in social ties, trust, and cooperation—is a prominent theme in all cases, although it takes distinct forms depending on the context. Switzerland's mountain CSA (C3) and Argentina's agroecological initiatives (C7 and C8) demonstrate strong social embeddedness through direct relationships between producers and consumers. Fourat et al. (2020) argue that this dynamic fosters equality and promotes social inclusion. In these contexts, consumers are not just passive recipients of goods; they are active participants in the food system. For example, in the Swiss CSA (C3), members directly interact with farmers through work stays, building trust and transparency. Similarly, in Argentina, collectively organized agroecological farmers' markets (C7) serve as social events, fostering community interaction through music and personal connections, embodying the value of conviviality (Fourat et al., 2020; Stephens and Barbier, 2021). Additionally, social embeddedness in Argentina (C7, C8, and C9) is more deeply intertwined with community activism and social justice (this has been discussed, for example, by Bauermeister, 2016; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2013; Wahren and Guerreiro, 2014), as seen in the collective efforts to make agroecological produce accessible to all socio-economic groups.

In the Argentine context, social embeddedness is closely tied to trust. In the case studies reviewed (C7, C8, and C9), since there is no formal or institutional certification system for production according to agroecological principles, trust between producers, intermediaries (as in C9), and consumers becomes essential (cf. Bezner Kerr et al., 2022) Direct interactions at farmers' markets and other direct marketing approaches help build this trust, as does the "open door" principle practiced by the analyzed producers (C7 and C8) and, in the same logic, the farm visits organized by the solidarity-based food distribution cooperative (C9). Applying this principle involves inviting consumers to visit the farms and witness firsthand how their food is produced, strengthening transparency and connection in the production process.

The Swiss organic region initiative (C1) is socially embedded as it is based on a network of diverse local stakeholders that actively integrates the local population: for instance, through the use of a participative digital map in schools. This, in turn, fosters strong public support and a sense of identification among the local population—an essential foundation for the valley's broader territorial development strategy (Froning and

Stotten, 2024). Social embeddedness can play a central role in Czech allotment gardens (C4), where some gardeners experience village-like social relations, helping one another and maintaining close bonds. Here, interpersonal ties (cf. Dobson et al., 2021; Pixová and Plank, 2025; Veen and Eiter, 2018) motivate participants to actively participate in the AFI. In contrast, the Czech cooperative food shop (C6) shows a relatively low degree of social embeddedness, as many members are primarily interested in picking up food without participating in community activities.

Economic Embeddedness: Different Approaches to Fairness and Sustainability

Economic embeddedness, referring to embedding economic relations within local and equitable contexts, varies significantly across the case studies. In Switzerland (C1 and C2), economic embeddedness is closely linked to sustaining resilient local livelihoods (cf. Daugstad, 2019), with territorial organic certification schemes and local production contributing to the economic viability of mountain communities. Here, a market-based approach is often applied, where consumers are willing to pay for high-quality products that support local economies and preserve traditional farming practices. This is in line with Delicato et al. (2019), who state that short food chains tend to exhibit features that consumers increasingly value and are willing to pay for (cf. Christensen et al., 2015; Mazzocchi and Sali, 2022). In the case of the Swiss CSA (C3), the value of economically sustaining local livelihoods is not maintained through market mechanisms but rather through the economic solidarity concept inherent in CSAs, in which membership fees divide economic risk, regardless of yield.

Argentina's initiatives (C7, C8, and C9) approach economic embeddedness from a more activist standpoint, emphasizing fair prices for both producers and consumers. This finding echoes Borghoff and Teixeiras's (2021) argumentation regarding food movements in the Global South that strive for social justice within agrifood systems. The focus on eliminating intermediaries and hosting farmers' markets in economically disadvantaged areas (C7) reflects a broader effort to make agroecological produce economically accessible to all, which brings forward the issue of inequality, which is under-researched in the context of alternative food consumption (see, for an exception, Paddock, 2017). Nevertheless, economic and financial challenges remain a central obstacle to the Argentinian AFIs, particularly against the backdrop of recurring economic crises in Argentina.

Economic challenges are also pronounced in the Czech initiatives, particularly in the CSA and food cooperative models. This aspect might be related to factors rooted in Czechia's socialist past and post-socialist development on the semi-periphery of the European economy, which have resulted in the dominance of agribusinesses and primary production of cash crops, overpriced organic food, and consumers' lower purchasing power. Lower societal interest in food origins and individualism, on the one hand, combined with the widespread practice of food self-provisioning, on the other, contribute to consumers' reduced capacity to stand in solidarity with farmers and their tendency to abandon CSAs during times of financial hardship, underlining the importance of the historical context of food systems. The struggles (C4) with seasonality, crop diversity, and resource limitations highlight the fragility of economic embeddedness in some regions, particularly when broader economic systems are not aligned with sustainable local practices. Such struggles—for example, relating to seasonality—have already been identified by Blancaneaux (2022), who highlights that production and consumption of out-of-season products align with current market-driven logic. Here, economic embeddedness conflicts with spatial embeddedness.

Ecological Embeddedness

Ecological embeddedness emphasizes the ecological interconnections between food systems and the environment, particularly through the adoption of organic, sustainable, and agroecological farming practices. In systems like the Swiss organic region (C1) and the mountain cheese cooperative (C2), ecological embeddedness is embodied through the use of territorial labels, which serve as key indicators of sustainable farming. These labels represent the certification of ecological embeddedness aspects (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025) and do not constitute a value in and of themselves. However, labeling can be considered as an institutionalization, or

standardization, of such underlying environmental values, which, in fact, reflects a process of "green capitalism" (cf. Friedmann, 2005, 2016; Stotten, 2024). Such labels evaluate the environmental impact of food production (cf. Meier et al., 2015), helping to foster consumer awareness and choices rooted in ecological integrity (cf. Thøgersen et al., 2019). Further, ecological embeddedness in both cases (C1 and C2) becomes evident in the long-lasting and well-established organic production systems, as well as the high share of organic farms in general. In the case of the Swiss CSA (C3), ecological embeddedness is expressed through cooperation with organic farms, the practice of transhumance as a traditional form of farming that aligns with seasonal rhythms, and attentiveness to the welfare of goats, including by considering their need for movement, diverse grazing, and rumination (cf. Donati, 2022).

Similarly, ecological embeddedness plays a vital role in all three Argentinian case studies, particularly the agroecological collective (C7) and the agroecological farm with CSA (C8), where environmentally friendly approaches, such as agroecology, are central. In these cases, farming practices are grounded in ancestral knowledge that prioritizes socio-environmental well-being, based on Indigenous ontologies that frame land and human bodies as one inseparable territory that needs to be taken care of. The preservation of biodiversity (cf. Wezel et al., 2016) and responsible land use are inherent aspects of these practices and worldviews. The farm's location within a biosphere reserve (C8) highlights how ecological embeddedness can intersect with spatial embeddedness, as production is closely linked to the surrounding landscape, reflecting a deep connection with the local environment and a commitment to its protection and enhancement. However, ecological embeddedness, here seen in agroecological farming, is closely tied to economic factors, as chemical fertilizers and pesticides remain too costly for peasants, especially during economic crises. Ecological embeddedness thus stems from both the belief that agroecology is the most adequate form of production, as it upholds ancestral practices that are in harmony with the living, and from actual needs, given soil exhaustion due to agribusiness, the high costs of imported chemical fertilizers, and the health risks of fumigation.

In addition, coordinators, farmers, experts, and consumers in the CSAs in Prague (C4) embody ecological embeddedness through their relationship with the environment and its protection. They are deeply aware of the connection between human actions and ecosystems and share a commitment to sustainable practices, such as regenerative soil management, which produces healthier crops and preserves soil health for future generations. Farmers, in particular, see themselves as stewards of the land, cultivating a strong bond with the environment and actively caring for the soil and the landscape in order to protect its natural beauty (Nováčková et al., under review). Ecological embeddedness is somewhat more diversified among allotment gardeners (C5), some of whom also use chemicals to protect their plants, and among the members of the food cooperative *Obživa* (C6), who have different preferences and opinions regarding prioritizing organic origins and the distance products come from.

Spatial Embeddedness

Spatial embeddedness emphasizes the relationship between food production and specific geographic locations, highlighting the importance of geography, landscape, and spatial proximity. It reflects how food systems are intertwined with their local environments and contribute to regional identities. In one form, spatial embeddedness is made evident through locality labels, which connect food products to their regional origin, as in the Swiss organic region and dairy cooperative (C1 & C2). Even though such labels do not represent a value in and of themselves, they relate closely to values around spatial embeddedness, such as local food sourcing and specific places, or terroir (Faltmann and Stotten, 2025). For the investigated cases (C1 and C2), social embeddedness underscores how valuable it is to look at food production as rooted in a particular local territory (cf. Lamine et al., 2019), reinforcing the link between food and the surrounding environment, as captured in the term terroir (Leedon et al., 2021). Similarly, the Swiss mountain CSA (C3) exemplifies spatial embeddedness by supporting mountain farming practices that are adapted to the unique ecological and geographical characteristics of the mountainous terrain, thus integrating food production in its spatial context.

In Argentina, the agroecological farm with CSA (C8) exemplifies spatial embeddedness through its strategic location in a peri-urban area within a biosphere reserve. This setting highlights the farm's critical role in defending territorial resources, keeping the environmental impact to a minimum, and producing local food amidst the pressures of urbanization. The farm's practices are thus deeply intertwined with the unique geographic and environmental context of the reserve, reinforcing its position as a model of place-based agriculture. The urbanization pressures facing peri-urban farms underscore the importance of building alliances and diversifying practices to meet local territorial needs, often through multifunctional agricultural approaches that enhance spatial embeddedness (cf. Zasada, 2011). Reflecting these dynamics, the case study farm (C8) began hosting social events centered on alternative food systems in collaboration with the University of La Plata (ARG) and established an experimental field for the purpose of on-site scientific research. These practices not only strengthened the farm's ties to the community (social embeddedness) but also justified and consolidated its strategic location on the urban fringes of Buenos Aires and La Plata (ARG), supporting the farm in defending itself from being expelled from the territory (in favour of urban development). In the case of the agroecological collective (C7), spatial embeddedness occurs through the spatial proximity of farmers and consumers, which is emphasized as a crucial aspect in the pursuit of food sovereignty even as it is constantly threatened by the advance of conventional, speculative agricultural businesses.

The Czech allotment gardens (C5) further illustrate spatial embeddedness through the gardeners' deep attachment to their plots and the urban green spaces they cultivate. This spatial connection extends beyond food production to encompass a strong sense of place and community, reflecting how urban green spaces contribute to both personal and collective identities in an urban setting. However, allotment gardeners' spatial embeddedness is also threatened by urbanization and by a lack of support from local authorities, which are constantly searching for "higher-value" use of municipal land (Pixová and Plank, 2024, 2025). Spatial embeddedness is thus highly dependent on AFIs' formal relationship to land. Spatial embeddedness is, for example, limited for one of the examined CSAs (C4) that is based in a community garden, with only a short-term lease given by the Prague municipality (cf. Pixová and Plank, 2024). The food cooperative *Obživa* (C6) also underscores the growing unaffordability and precarious availability of urban spaces for non-commercial activities. As a result, AFIs often face challenges in securing conveniently located urban spaces for long-term leases, which are essential for stable food distribution and fostering spatially embedded communities.

In Switzerland's organic region and mountain CSA (C1 and C3), spatial embeddedness is linked to locality, emphasizing the importance of preserving local traditional agricultural practices and supporting mountain farming in less favored farming conditions. The Swiss CSA model (C3) in particular reinforces spatial embeddedness by fostering close relationships between farmers and consumers, often through direct involvement in farm activities, such as work stays and experiential proximity (Steinegger and Faltmann, 2025). By contrast, in Argentina (C7 and C8), spatial embeddedness is tied to defending local food production in peri-urban areas, where agroecological practices serve not only environmental but also territorial goals. This focus on the territory reflects broader struggles over land use and access in Argentina (Brent, 2018; Moura et al., 2024; Wahren, 2021), framing agroecology as a means to deterritorialize agribusiness (Balmaceda and Deon, 2023) and simultaneously territorialize food sovereignty. This demonstrates how spatial embeddedness can carry different political and social connotations depending on the region.

Conclusions

Holloway et al.'s (2007) heuristic framework has proven valuable in capturing the multi-layered and localized expressions of "alternativeness" that characterize AFIs. Our extension of this framework, conceptualized through different forms of embeddedness, has further helped to reveal the subtle, context-specific values within food systems. The examination of values clustered along different forms of embeddedness across AFIs reveals how alternative food systems create complex, interdependent relationships between people, places,

and practices. This approach builds on the theoretical perspective that values are not merely economic but are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and moral frameworks, as argued by Graeber (2001) and Appadurai (1986).

From a sociological perspective, values are understood as conceptions of the desirable that guide actions and decisions, shaping what individuals and groups consider worth pursuing (Kluckhohn, 1951). This study demonstrates how AFIs embody such desirable values, including solidarity, sustainability, and community engagement, which challenge dominant corporately governed food systems. These values align with Gibson-Graham's (2006) vision of diverse economies, where ethical and collective practices redefine economic relations. Furthermore, the findings resonate with Misleh's (2022) critique of the binary view of alternativeness, which either positions AFIs as value-driven alternatives or dismisses them as extensions of neoliberalism. Instead, this study adopts Misleh's Polanyian "dialectical relational" perspective, recognizing AFIs as simultaneously market-based and value-laden, thus offering a more nuanced and open-ended understanding of alternativeness.

Looking ahead, further research is needed to broaden our understanding of values in food systems beyond AFIs, which would allow for a more comprehensive analysis that encompasses a wider range of stakeholders in diverse food systems. Additionally, investigating the complex influences of power dynamics, policy frameworks, and institutional settings on the values and functioning of AFIs would provide a more holistic view of their transformative potential. Developing inclusive and context-sensitive approaches will also be crucial as AFIs continue to evolve in diverse national settings, helping to advance sustainability, fairness, and social justice in food system transformation. Furthermore, there is a need for agrifood research to develop a deeper understanding of perspectives and values that go beyond AFIs, highlighting the importance of developing sound theoretical frameworks to guide this exploration.

References

Abson, D.J., Fischer, J., Leventon, J., et al. (2017) 'Leverage points for sustainability transformation', *Ambio*, 46(1), pp. 30–39. DOI: 10.1007/s13280-016-0800-y.

Appadurai, A. (1986) *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Balmaceda, N.A. and Deon, J.U. (2023) 'Sistemas alimentario-nutricionales agroecológicos en Argentina ¿desterritorializando al agronegocio en la provincia Córdoba?', *Cuadernos de Geografía: Revista Colombiana de Geografía*, 32(1), pp. 158–176. DOI: 10.15446/rcdg.v32n1.88786.

Baudrillard, J. (1981) *For a critique of the political economy of the sign*. St. Louis: Telos Press.

Bauermeister, M.R. (2016) 'Social capital and collective identity in the local food movement', *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 14(2), pp. 123–141. DOI: 10.1080/14735903.2015.1042189.

Beilin, R. (2005) 'Photo-elicitation and the agricultural landscape: "seeing" and "telling" about farming, community and place', *Visual Studies*, 20(1), pp. 56–68. DOI: 10.1080/14725860500064904.

Belliggiano, A., Sturla, A., Vassallo, M., et al. (2020) 'Neo-endogenous rural development in favor of organic farming: two case studies from Italian fragile areas', *European Countryside*, 12(1), pp. 1–29. DOI: 10.2478/euco-2020-0001.

Beus, C.E. and Dunlap, R.E. (1990) 'Conventional versus alternative agriculture: The paradigmatic roots of the debate', *Rural Sociology*, 55(4), pp. 590–616. DOI: 10.1111/j.1549-0831.1990.tb00699.x.

Bezner Kerr, R., Liebert, J., Kansanga, M., et al. (2022) 'Human and social values in agroecology', *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 10(1). DOI: 10.1525/elementa.2021.00090.

Blancaneaux, R. (2022) 'Seasonality as value(s) in organic farming: On the conflict on heating greenhouses in France', *International Sociology*, 37(6), pp. 740–757. DOI: 10.1177/02685809221115959.

Blumberg, R., Leitner, H. and Cadieux, K.V. (2020) 'For food space: Theorizing alternative food networks beyond alteri-

ty', *Journal of Political Ecology*, 27(1). DOI: 10.2458/v27i1.23026.

Bogner, A., Littig, B. and Menz, W. (2009) *Interviewing experts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9780230244276.

Borghoff Maia, A. and Teixeira, M.A. (2021) 'Food movements, agrifood systems, and social change at the level of the national state: The Brazilian Marcha das Margaridas', *The Sociological Review*, 69(3), pp. 626–646. DOI: 10.1177/00380261211009792.

Brent, Z.W. (2018) 'Territorial restructuring and resistance in Argentina', in Hall, R., Borras, S.M., Scoones, I., White, B. and Wolford, W. (eds) *Global land grabbing and political reactions 'from below'*. London: Routledge, pp. 205–228.

Brinkley, C. (2018) 'The small world of the alternative food network', *Sustainability*, 10(8), 2921. DOI: 10.3390/su10082921.

Brunner, A.-M. (2022) *The missing pieces to food system's socio-ecological transformation? Community-supported agriculture in Argentina*. Master's thesis, University of Graz.

Bundesamt für Statistik (2017a) Beschäftigte, Landwirtschaftliche Betriebe, Landwirtschaftliche Nutzfläche (LN) und Nutztiere auf Klassifizierungsebene 2 nach Kanton. Available at: https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/land-forstwirtschaft.assetdetail.2348926.html (Accessed: 10 August 2025).

Bundesamt für Statistik (2017b) Land- und Forstwirtschaft: Panorama. Available at: https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/land-forstwirtschaft.assetdetail.2241462.html (Accessed: 10 August 2025).

Bundesamt für Statistik. (2020). Land- und Forstwirtschaft. Panorama. Neuchâtel. Available at: https:// dam- api. bfs. admin. ch/ hub/ api/ dam/ assets/ 13695 307/ master (Accessed: 10 August 2025)

Christensen, B.C., Kennedy, M. and Patton, D. (2015) 'Regional identity can add value to agricultural products', *California Agriculture*, 69(2), pp. 85–91. DOI: 10.3733/ca.v069n02p85.

Clapp, J. and Moseley, W.G. (2020) 'This food crisis is different: COVID-19 and the fragility of the neoliberal food security order', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 47(7), pp. 1393–1417. DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2020.1823838.

Da Rocha Oliveira Teixeira, R., Arcuri, S., Cavicchi, A., et al. (2023) 'Can alternative wine networks foster sustainable business model innovation and value creation? The case of organic and biodynamic wine in Tuscany', *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7. DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2023.1241062.

Daugstad, K. (2019) 'Resilience in mountain farming in Norway', *Sustainability*, 11(12), 3476. DOI: 10.3390/su11123476.

Delicato, C., Collison, M., Myronyuk, I., et al. (2019) 'Is local better? Consumer value in food purchasing and the role of short food supply chains', *Studies in Agricultural Economics*, 121(2). DOI: 10.22004/ag.econ.292233.

Desmarais, A.A., Claeys, P. and Trauger, A. (eds) (2017) *Public policies for food sovereignty: Social movements and the state*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315281797.

Diez Tetamanti, J.M. (2018) *Cartografía Social: Estrategias para una Eficaz Transformación Comunitaria*. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Biblos.

Dobson, M.C., Reynolds, C., Warren, P.H., et al. (2021) '"My little piece of the planet": The multiplicity of well-being benefits from allotment gardening', *British Food Journal*, 123(3), pp. 1012-1023. DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-07-2020-0593.

Donati, K. (2022) 'Toward a ruminant gastronomy', *Environmental Humanities*, 14(2), pp. 265-283. DOI: 10.1215/22011919-9712368.

Dorn, F. and Hafner, R. (2018) 'Re-primarization revisited: An analysis of decision-making variables in the Argentine soy agribusiness (1993-2015)', *Sustentabilidade em Debate*, 9(2), pp. 14-26. DOI: 10.18472/SustDeb.v9n2.2018.28611.

Ermann, U., Langthaler, E., Penker, M., et al. (2018) *Agro-Food Studies: Eine Einführung*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag. DOI: 10.1007/s11614-020-00397-x.

Eurostat (2018) Statistiken über die Struktur landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Farm_structure_statistics/de (Accessed: 10 September 2024).

Faltmann, N.K. and Stotten, R. (2025) 'What are the values of alternative food systems? A systematic review', *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-025-10756-7.

Feagan, R.B. and Morris, D. (2009) 'Consumer quest for embeddedness: A case study of the Brantford Farmers' Market', *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33(3), pp. 235-243. DOI: 10.1111/j.1470-6431.2009.00745.x.

Feenstra, G.W. (1997) 'Local food systems and sustainable communities', *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, 12(1), pp. 28-36. DOI: 10.1017/S0889189300007165.

Feito, M.C. (2020) 'La Agricultura Familiar en la cuestión alimentaria: proveedores fundamentales del mercado interno', in Padawer, A. (ed) *El mundo rural y sus técnicas*. Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras Universidad de Buenos Aires, pp. 471-501.

Forney, J. and Häberli, I. (2017) 'Co-operative values beyond hybridity: The case of farmers' organisations in the Swiss dairy sector', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 53, pp. 236-246. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.04.003.

Forssell, S. and Lankoski, L. (2015) 'The sustainability promise of alternative food networks: An examination through "alternative" characteristics', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32(1), pp. 63-75. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-014-9516-4.

Fourat, E., Closson, C., Holzemer, L., et al. (2020) 'Social inclusion in an alternative food network: Values, practices and tensions', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 76, pp. 49-57. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.03.009.

Friedmann, H. (2005) 'From colonialism to green capitalism: Social movements and emergence of food regimes', in Buttel, F.H. and McMichael, P. (eds) *New directions in the sociology of global development*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 227-264. DOI: 10.1016/S1057-1922(05)11009-9.

Friedmann, H. (2016) 'Commentary: Food regime analysis and agrarian questions: Widening the conversation', The *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 43(3), pp. 671-692. DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2016.1146254.

Froning, P. and Stotten, R. (2024) 'Shaping territorial agri-food systems through social innovations: The example of Valposchiavo, Switzerland', *Rivista di Economia Agararia*, 79(1), pp. 33-46. DOI: 10.36253/rea-14833.

Fuchshofen, N., Hirsch, D., Brodtmann, L.I., et al. (2017) 'Importance of organic agriculture and food in Argentina: An explorative analysis of the domestic situation and its regional context', *International Journal on Food System Dynamics*. DOI: 10.18461/pfsd.2017.1718.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006) *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Glenza, F., Giannuzzi, L. and Senattori, E. (2020) 'Huerta Ecológica Santa Elena: Una experiencia de agricultura sostenida por la comunidad', in Filippini, M.F. and Greco, S. (eds) *Libro de Resúmenes: Primer Congreso Argentino de Agroecología*. Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, pp. 814-818.

Gliessman, S. (2022) 'Why is there a food crisis?', *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 46(9), pp. 1301-1303. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2022.2115187.

Glowacki-Dudka, M., Murray, J. and Isaacs, K.P. (2013) 'Examining social capital within a local food system', *Community Development Journal*, 48(1), pp. 75-88. DOI: 10.1093/cdj/bss007.

Gobo, G. and Molle, A. (2017) *Doing ethnography*. London: SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9780857028976.

Goodman, D. (2002) 'Rethinking food production-consumption: Integrative perspectives', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 42(4), pp. 271-277. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9523.00216.

Goodman, D., DuPuis, E.M. and Goodman, M.K. (2013) 'Engaging alternative food networks: Commentaries and research agendas', *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 20(3), pp. 425-431. DOI: 10.48416/IJSAF.V20I3.184.

Graeber, D. (2001) *Toward an anthropological theory of value*. New York: Palgrave. DOI: 10.1057/978-0-312-29906-4.

Hafner, R., Rainer, G., Ruiz Peyré, F. and Coy, M. (2016) 'Ressourcenboom in Südamerika: alte Praktiken – neue Diskurse?', *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie*, 60(1-2), pp. 25-39. DOI: 10.1515/zfw-2016-0002.

Heuts, F. and Mol, A. (2013) 'What is a good tomato? A case of valuing in practice', *Valuation Studies*, 1(2), pp. 125-146. DOI: 10.3384/VS.2001-5992.1312125.

Holloway, L., Cox, R., Venn, L., et al. (2006) 'Managing sustainable farmed landscape through "alternative" food networks: A case study from Italy', *The Geographical Journal*, 172(3), pp. 219-229. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4959.2006.00205.x.

Holloway, L., Kneafsey, M., Venn, L., et al. (2007) 'Possible food economies: A methodological framework for exploring food production-consumption relationships', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 47(1), pp. 1-19. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9523.2007.00427.x.

Horcea-Milcu, A.-I. (2022) 'Values as leverage points for sustainability transformation: Two pathways for transformation research', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 57, 101205. DOI: 10.1016/j.cosust.2022.101205.

Ilbery, B. and Maye, D. (2005) 'Food supply chains and sustainability: Evidence from specialist food producers in the Scottish/English borders', *Land Use Policy*, 22(4), pp. 331-344. DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2004.06.002.

INDEC (2023) *Exportaciones por complejos exportadores: Años 2020-2023*. Available at: https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Nivel4-Tema-3-2-39 (Accessed: 26 August 2024).

ISAAA (2019) *Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops in 2019*.

Jehlička, P. and Daněk, P. (2017) 'Rendering the actually existing sharing economy visible: Home-grown food and the pleasure of sharing', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 57(3), pp. 274-296. DOI: 10.1111/soru.12160.

Joas, H. (1997) *Die Entstehung der Werte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Kallio, G. (2020) 'A carrot isn't a carrot isn't a carrot: Tracing value in alternative practices of food exchange', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37(4), pp. 1095-1109. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-020-10113-w.

Kjellberg, H. and Mallard, A. (2013) 'Valuation studies? Our collective two cents', *Valuation Studies*, 1(1), pp. 11-30. DOI: 10.3384/vs.2001-5992.131111.

Kluckhohn, C. (1951) 'Values and value orientations in the theory of action', in Parsons, T. and Shils, E.A. (eds) *Toward a general theory of action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 388-433.

Lamine, C., Garçon, L. and Brunori, G. (2019) 'Territorial agrifood systems: A Franco-Italian contribution to the debates over alternative food networks in rural areas', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 68, pp. 159-170. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.11.007.

Leedon, G., L'Espoir Decosta, J.-N.P., Buttriss, G., et al. (2021) 'Consuming the earth? Terroir and rural sustainability', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 87, pp. 415-422. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.09.030.

Loconto, A.M. and Arnold, N. (2022) 'Governing value(s) and organizing through standards', *International Sociology*, 37(6), pp. 601-611. DOI: 10.1177/02685809221133055.

Martin, J.L. and Lembo, A. (2020) 'On the other side of values', *American Journal of Sociology*, 126(1), pp. 52-98. DOI: 10.1086/709778.

Mattozzi, A. and Piccioni, T. (2012) 'A depasteurization of Italy? Mediations of consumption and the enrollment of consumers within the raw-milk network', *Sociologica*, (3). DOI: 10.2383/72702.

Mauss, M. (1967) *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge.

Maye, D. (2013) 'Moving alternative food networks beyond the niche', *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture*

and Food, 20(3), pp. 383-389.

Mazzocchi, C. and Sali, G. (2022) 'Supporting mountain agriculture through "mountain product" label: A choice experiment approach', *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 24(1), pp. 701-723. DOI: 10.1007/s10668-021-01464-3.

McKeown, B. and Dan, T. (2013) *Q Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9781483384412.

Meier, M.S., Stoessel, F., Jungbluth, N., et al. (2015) 'Environmental impacts of organic and conventional agricultural products—Are the differences captured by life cycle assessment?', *Journal of Environmental Management*, 149, pp. 193-208. DOI: 10.1016/j.jenvman.2014.10.006.

Michel-Villarreal, R., Hingley, M., Canavari, M., et al. (2019) 'Sustainability in alternative food networks: A systematic literature review', *Sustainability*, 11(3), 859. DOI: 10.3390/su11030859.

Miralles, I., Dentoni, D. and Pascucci, S. (2017) 'Understanding the organization of sharing economy in agri-food systems: Evidence from alternative food networks in Valencia', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 34(4), pp. 833-854. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-017-9778-8.

Misleh, D. (2022) 'Moving beyond the impasse in geographies of "alternative" food networks', *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(4), pp. 1028-1046. DOI: 10.1177/03091325221095835.

Misoch, S. (2015) *Qualitative Interviews*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Moschitz, H. and Oehen, B. (2020) 'Creating value(s) by integrating local and extra-local resources in cereal production in the Swiss Alps', *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 26(1), pp. 48-68. DOI: 10.48416/IJSAF.V26I1.62.

Moura, J.T.V. de, Cavalcante, L.V., Jara, C.E., et al. (2024) 'A political ecology of resistance: Actions and reactions of agrarian socio-territorial movements in Latin America', *Latin American Perspectives*, 51(1), pp. 40-62. DOI: 10.1177/0094582X241242418.

Nováčková, V., Pixová, M. and Plank, C. (forthcoming) 'The role of community-supported agriculture in transforming the current food regime in Czechia', *Agriculture and Human Values*.

Paddock, J. (2017) 'Household consumption and environmental change: Rethinking the policy problem through narratives of food practice', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17(1), pp. 122-139. DOI: 10.1177/1469540515586869.

Penker, M. (2006) 'Mapping and measuring the ecological embeddedness of food supply chains', *Geoforum,* 37(3), pp. 368-379. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2005.09.001.

Pixová, M. and Plank, C. (2025) 'Quiet right to the city: Contributing to urban sustainability by converging allotment and community gardens', *Environmental Sociology*, pp. 1-13. DOI: 10.1080/23251042.2025.2512599.

Pixová, M. and Plank, C. (2024) 'Urban food governance without local food: Missing links between Czech post-socialist cities and urban food alternatives', *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-024-10567-2.

Plank, C., Hafner, R. and Stotten, R. (2020) 'Analyzing values-based modes of production and consumption: Community-supported agriculture in the Austrian Third Food Regime', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 45(1), pp. 49-68. DOI: 10.1007/s11614-020-00393-1.

Plank, C., Stotten, R. and Hafner, R. (2024) 'Values-based modes of production and consumption: Analyzing how food alternatives transform the current food regime', *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 8. DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2024.1266145.

Polanyi, K. (1978) *The great transformation: Politische und ökonomische Ursprünge von Gesellschaften und Wirtschaftssystemen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Renting, H., Marsden, T.K. and Banks, J. (2003) 'Understanding alternative food networks: Exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development', *Environment and Planning A*, 35(3), pp. 393-411. DOI: 10.1068/a3510.

Renting, H., Schermer, M. and Rossi, A. (2012) 'Building food democracy: Exploring civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship', *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 19(3), pp. 289-307. DOI: 10.48416/IJSAF.V19I3.206.

Rosol, M. (2020) 'On the significance of alternative economic practices: Reconceptualizing alterity in alternative food networks', *Economic Geography*, 96(1), pp. 52-76. DOI: 10.1080/00130095.2019.1701430.

Rosol, M. and Barbosa, R. (2021) 'Moving beyond direct marketing with new mediated models: Evolution of or departure from alternative food networks?', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 38(4), pp. 1021-1039. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-021-10210-4.

Rychlík, J. (2019) 'The "Velvet Split" of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992)', *Politeja*, 15(6), pp. 169-187. DOI: 10.12797/Politeja.15.2018.57.10.

Sage, C. (2003) 'Social embeddedness and relations of regard', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19(1), pp. 47-60. DOI: 10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00044-X.

Sarandon, S. and Marasas, M.E. (2017) 'Brief history of agroecology in Argentina: Origins, evolution, and future prospects', *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 41(3-4), pp. 238-255. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2017.1287808.

Sarris, A.H. (1999) 'Agricultural restructuring in central and eastern Europe: Implications for competitiveness and rural development', *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, 26(3), pp. 305-329. DOI: 10.1093/erae/26.3.305.

Sayer, A. (2000) 'Moral economy and political economy', *Studies in Political Economy*, 61, pp. 79-104. DOI: 10.1080/19187033.2000.11675254.

Sayer, A. (2003) '(De)commodification, consumer culture, and moral economy', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 21(3), pp. 341-357. DOI: 10.1068/d353.

Scherer, B. and Rist, S. (2017) 'CSA in europäischen Ländern – ein Vergleich', *LandInForm*, (7), pp. 6-7.

Schermer, M. (2015) 'From "food from nowhere" to "food from here": Changing producer-consumer relations in Austria', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32(1), pp. 121-132. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-014-9529-z.

Smith, J. and Jehlička, P. (2007) 'Stories around food, politics and change in Poland and the Czech Republic', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 32(3), pp. 395-410. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2007.00258.x.

Smith, J. and Jehlička, P. (2013) 'Quiet sustainability: Fertile lessons from Europe's productive gardeners', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 32, pp. 148-157. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2013.05.002.

Smith, K., Lawrence, G. and Richards, C. (2010) 'Supermarkets' governance of the agri-food supply chain: Is the "corporate-environmental" food regime evident in Australia?', *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 17(2), pp. 140-161. DOI: 10.48416/ijsaf.v17i2.264.

Smutná, Z., Vávra, J. and Duží, B. (2024) 'An insight into market and non-market alternative food networks in Czechia during Covid-19 and beyond', *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 11, 1327308. DOI: 10.3389/fnut.2024.1327308.

Spates, J.L. (1983) 'The sociology of values', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9(1), pp. 27-49. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.so.09.080183.000331.

Špička, J., Vintr, T., Aulová, R., et al. (2020) 'Trade-off between the economic and environmental sustainability in Czech dual farm structure', *Agricultural Economics*, 66(6), pp. 243-250. DOI: 10.17221/390/2019-AGRICECON.

Steinegger, S. and Faltmann, N.K. (2025) 'Proximity despite distance? A Community-supported agriculture across rural mountain and urban areas in Switzerland', *Journal of Political Ecology*, 32(1). DOI: 10.2458/jpe.5944.

Stephens, R. and Barbier, M. (2021) 'Digital fooding, cashless marketplaces and reconnection in intermediated third places: Conceptualizing metropolitan food provision in the age of prosumption', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 82, pp. 366-379. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.11.009.

Stotten, R. (2024) 'Heterogeneity and agency in the contemporary food regime in Switzerland: Among the food from nowhere, somewhere, and here sub-regimes', *Review of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Studies*. DOI: 10.1007/s41130-024-00207-y.

Stotten, R. and Froning, P. (2023) 'Territorial rural development strategies based on organic agriculture: The example of Valposchiavo, Switzerland', *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7. DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2023.1182993.

Swain, J. and King, B. (2022) 'Using informal conversations in qualitative research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21. DOI: 10.1177/160940692210850.

Thøgersen, J., Pedersen, S. and Aschemann-Witzel, J. (2019) 'The impact of organic certification and country of origin on consumer food choice in developed and emerging economies', *Food Quality and Preference*, 72, pp. 10-30. DOI: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2018.09.003.

Thomas, W.I. and Znaniecki, F. (1921) *The Polish peasant in Europe and America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tregear, A. (2011) 'Progressing knowledge in alternative and local food networks: Critical reflections and a research agenda', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 27(4), pp. 419-430. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2011.06.003.

Trenouth, L. and Sovová, L. (2025) '(Alternative) food consumption practices in Central and Eastern Europe: An integrative critical literature review', *Agriculture and Human Values*, pp. 1-14. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-025-10717-0.

Varga, M. (2019) 'From the qualities of products to the qualities of relations: Value conventions in the solidarity economy in Sicily', *Valuation Studies*, 6(1), pp. 63-86. DOI: 10.3384/VS.2001-5992.196163.

Varga, M. (2015) 'Value chains or social capital? Producer organizations in the citrus fruit sector', *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 22(2), pp. 85-103. DOI: 10.48416/IJSAF.V22I2.130.

Veen, E.J. and Eiter, S. (2018) 'Vegetables and social relations in Norway and the Netherlands', *Nature and Culture*, 13(1), pp. 135-160. DOI: 10.3167/nc.2018.130107.

Wadel, C.C. (2015) 'Participatory work-along as an apprentice—A qualitative research tool in studying organizations and work practices', *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 5(3a), 85. DOI: 10.19154/njwls.v5i3a.4835.

Wahren, J. (2021) '»Territorios Insurgentes» Aportes Conceptuales En Torno A La Dimensión Territorial De Los Movimientos Sociales De América Latina', *Revista Nera,* 24(61), pp. 15-35. DOI: 10.47946/rnera.v0i61.9094.

Wahren, J. and Guerreiro, L. (2014) 'Campesinado, territorios en disputa y nuevas estrategias de comercialización de la producción campesina en Argentina', *Veredas, Revista del Pensamiento Sociológico*, 28, pp. 297-342.

Watts, D., Ilbery, B. and Maye, D. (2016) 'Making reconnections in agro-food geography: Alternative systems of food provision', in Munton, R. (ed) *The rural: Critical essays in human geography*. London: Routledge, pp. 165-182. DOI: 10.1191/0309132505ph526oa.

Wezel, A., Brives, H., Casagrande, M., et al. (2016) 'Agroecology territories: Places for sustainable agricultural and food systems and biodiversity conservation', *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 40(2), pp. 132-144. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2015.1115799.

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

Whatmore, S. and Thorne, L. (2004) 'Nourishing networks: Alternative geographies of food', in Barnes, T.J. (ed) *Reading economic geography.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 235-248. DOI: 10.1002/9780470755716.ch15.

Willer, H. and Schmid, O. (2016) 'Geschichte', in Freyer, B. and Axmann, P. (eds) *Ökologischer Landbau: Grundlagen, Wissensstand und Herausforderungen*. Bern: Haupt Verlag, pp. 22-43.

Zasada, I. (2011) 'Multifunctional peri-urban agriculture—A review of societal demands and the provision of goods and services by farming', *Land Use Policy*, 28(4), pp. 639-648. DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2011.01.008.

Appendix A: Case studies

C 1: Switzerland: Organic region *(for details refer to Froning and Stotten, 2024; Stotten and Froning, 2023)*

Heuristic analytical field	Level of indicators	Organic region (CH)
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Regional scale defined by topographic conditions and by political borders (national and administrative) Temporary project that is seeking permanent implementation
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Diversified organic farming of livestock, dairy, fruit, arable farming; multifunctional farming system
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	• Local supply chains/local processing • Selling to local consumers and tourists, supplying hotels, restaurants, and local shops
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Bakeries, butcher, markets, restaurants and hotels, online platform for business clients, little exposure to national retailer
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Direct selling, cooking demonstrations, consumer information
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Regional identity, increase local added value, positioning own produce as a niche product
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Local community cohesion among local population
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Guided by a core group of the project, members include elected representatives of farming association, tourism board
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Ecological and spatial embeddedness (focus)

C2: Switzerland: Mountain cheese system (cooperative) *(for details refer to Froning and Stotten, under review)*

Heuristic analytical field	Level of indicators	Case
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Regional scale defined by topographic conditions and by political borders (national and administrative) Permanent cooperation (unless resolution)
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Organically produced dairy, small-scale production
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Direct local supply, local processing, six dairy farm members, one cheese dairy, one cheesemaker
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Local shops, online platform, through one national retailer, production contract for Swiss airline
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	No direct contact between producers and consumers Awareness raising through the retailer's magazine
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Being competitive with small-scale production through cooperation for producers, processors Support traditional way of farming in mountain areas for consumers, taste and quality
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Local group of farmers (group belonging), partnership and joint ownership
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Equal rights within the cooperative, elected president
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Ecological embeddedness (organic farming), economic embeddedness (sustaining local livelihoods)

C3: Switzerland: Mountain CSA *(for details refer to Steinegger and Faltmann, 2025)*

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Local food production in rural mountain area with food deliveries to CSA members in mostly urban areas three to four times per year
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Participating farms produce organic apples as well as goat cheese and meat from a goat herd involved in transhumance pastoralism in the Swiss Alps Consumer participation through CSA member work stays
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Local processing of apple juice and goat dairy Supply from rural mountain area to CSA members in (mostly) urban areas
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Subscription membership scheme
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Food growing work during CSA member work stays CSA subscription membership scheme
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Support of sustainable mountain farming and small-scale farmers' livelihoods Production of environmentally sustainable food, considering animal welfare
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Group membership of CSA members Partnership between CSA members and participating farms Shared values, including partnership and shared risk through CSA model
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Contract farming and shared food growing work through CSA subscription membership scheme Decision=making through annual member assemblies

Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Ecological embeddedness (organic farming, transhumance, animal welfare) Spatial embeddedness (supporting mountain farming) Social embeddedness (direct relationships between farmers and CSA members, solidarity, fairness, trust, transparency) Economic embeddedness (sustaining local livelihoods)

C4: Czechia: CSA in Prague *(for details refer to Nováčková et al., under review)*

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Urban and peri-urban location; first CSA founded in Czechia 2009; since then, CSA initiatives have evolved in the country
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Vegetables; consumer participation, e.g. as coordinators of CSA
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Direct local supply for the city/the capital of Czechia
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Three types of CSA initiatives in Czechia: 1. community subscriber groups, where a group of consumers commits to a specific farm for a defined period, often a season; 2. community shared farms, refers to a specific form of CSA initiative where a community takes the lead in organizing the arrangement; 3. subscription CSA group, a model in which farmers offer their agricultural products to consumers, who subscribe to receive shares throughout an entire season at a discounted price

Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Three primary roles exist: Farmers: cultivate, grow, and harvest produce, supply members with fresh, local products. Consumers: Purchase shares of produce to support local agriculture, collect vegetables from designated pickup points. Coordinators: Organize share distribution and manage logistics, facilitate communication and community events, foster a sense of community among members and stakeholders
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Environmental awareness and protection, community and solidarity, local and ethical consumption, and health and quality of food
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Common values are shared among consumers, among farmers, and among coordinators, and to some extent there are also shared values between all three groups
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Coordinator plays a crucial role in the governance. Institutional governance or embeddedness is characterized by: 1. CSA initiatives function autonomously within the broader institutional framework 2. They are not entirely free from institutional influence 3. Institutional support, including financial aid and non-financial resources at regional and local levels, is limited 4. Improved access to such institutional support would enhance opportunities for the growth and development of CSA initiatives

Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Challenges related to ecological (material) and socio-economic embeddedness: Social challenges include: • Economic and financial difficulties • Issues in fostering community building and participation • Problems with communication, coordination, and time management • Social attitudes and perceptions that may hinder progress Material challenges include: • Dealing with seasonality and crop diversity • Addressing climate-related and environmental issues • Managing technical limitations and resource constraints

C5: Czechia: allotment gardeners in Prague *(for details refer to Pixová and Plank, 2025)*

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Local, permanent, urban and peri-urban, long history – some gardens have survived since 1920s, currently a decline due to urban development
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Small-scale subsistence and hobby gardening, mostly organic, occasional use of chemical treatment against pests etc., efforts to produce healthy and safe food for personal consumption, prevalence of traditional gardening methods inherited from the 20th century, manual weeding
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Direct local supply typical for subsistence food production, producer = consumer, no intermediaries, no employees, sharing with other gardeners, family members and friends, positive social-ecological impact for urban areas – climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, community building, leisure activities and relaxation for urbanites

Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Non-monetary sharing and exchange directly within gardening area, or among friends and family members living in proximity
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Producer = consumer Awareness raising through the activities of the Czech Gardeners Association (Český zahrádkářský svaz) – exhibitions, award events, the monthly *Gardener* magazine (časopis Zahrádkář) Public events organized by individual gardening units to publicize their activities and thereby strengthen them in cases where they are threatened in the city, where they are threatened by urbanization. Gardeners organize cooking and baking competitions, community roasting, various festivities etc.
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Hobby and leisure activity, active time spent outdoors, access to healthy local food, appreciation of home-grown food and its rich taste
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Desire to cultivate soil and produce (private) green space, direct access to fresh and healthy food, variety of produce, non-monetary exchange, reduction of shopping. Communal relations among gardeners in a gardening unit combined with privacy of individual plots. Some gardening units specialize in cultivation and ornamentals. Environmental motivations are individual, not shared by all allotment gardeners
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Typically operate under the umbrella of the Czech Gardening Association (legal, financial, and counseling support; gardening promotion and lobbying). Allotment gardeners rely on shared infrastructure and democratic governance. Predominantly retired leadership. Allotment gardens on private/public land

Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Ecological and spatial embeddedness – gardeners are attached to their plots, to green urban space which they can produce and cultivate. They are also socially embedded as their membership in the gardening unit provides them with local social relations with other fellow gardeners. Some allotment gardeners find life in a gardening unit to be reminiscent of life in a village – people know each other, help each other, talk to each other, children can roam around freely. Economic embeddedness – for most gardeners, self-grown food is not cheaper than that bought in the supermarket, but is much tastier and has a personal value

C6: Czechia: Cooperative food shop in Prague *(for details refer to Pixová and Plank, 2024)*

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Local and regional, some produce international, two permanent locations in Prague – one central, one peripheral
Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Various organic farms, distribution of food from CrowdFarming – e.g. from a Greek cooperative organic farm
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Direct local supply and direct supply from international organic producers. Consumers are members of the cooperative and pay entry and monthly fee, some work as coordinators. In the peripheral branch it is possible for members to pick up food on their own
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	Two distribution centers, monetary exchange, monthly fees by members to fund the operation of the two spaces

Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Producers interact only with co-ordinators, who ensure supply of produce to cooperative shops
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	Access to healthy and zero-waste food grown in an ethical and environmentally sustainable way, less dependance on the global food system and supply chains, solidarity with local farmers
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Solidarity with farmers but not really sharing their risks – this is especially due to the farmers' ingrained conviction that they cannot ask consumers to pay for food if they receive none. Members are mostly concerned with the high quality of food and its origins. Some members are more concerned about organic labeling and are willing to buy food from a long distance away; others put more emphasis on supporting small Czech farmers, even if they are not certified. The cooperative does not really form a tightly knit collective, it collectively owns the cooperative but does not participate in many communal activities. Shared values are stipulated in the code of conduct and on the website, and include cooperation between farmers and consumers, local ecological and zero-waste food production, food production as a way of renewing the relationship to the Earth and connections between people and different social groups, food affordable for most consumers

Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Code of rules. Annual meeting for all members. Very few active people, little effort is put into public relations and recruitment of new members, the cooperative is not growing. Communication with members is via e-mail, personal meetings, newsletter, website, Facebook site and Google groups. No institutional support, it is especially hard to find non-commercial premises. Currently, the distribution centers use municipal premises, which were very hard to find
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Abstract ecological embeddedness – members of the food cooperative do not relate to any specific farm, but relate to the Earth and the global ecosystem, no specific relationship to the distribution centers – problems with finding financially affordable places with good accessibility, solidarity with farmers and their economic situation – absence of intermediaries makes it possible to pay a fair price to the farmers. Social embeddedness is relatively low, members of the cooperative are quite passive in relation to activities of the cooperative, most of them are only interested in picking up food

C7: Argentina: Agroecological producer—commercialization—consumer collective *(for details refer to Brunner, forthcoming)*

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Local (12 producers located in the Valle Inferior del Rio Negro + consumers, agricultural advisers/technicians), rural and peri-urban (production sites) + urban (commercialization), semi-permanent (10 out of 12 producers are working on rented allotments with no long-term contracts and thus face the constant fear of expulsion)

Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	Agroecological food production, with some crops in transition to agroecology (minor use of pesticides in case of impending crop failure)
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	Direct selling of products at the municipal farmers market (held twice a week) and the agroecological farmers market (held once a week) in the nearby city of Viedma. Intermittent sales of pre-packed vegetable boxes in the city (every two to three weeks) Sales at neighboring cities' farmer's markets (193km of distance, every two weeks) • Intermittent sales via train or refrigerated transporter to Bariloche (824 km away, organized according to harvest quantities and availability of transportation)
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	• No physical space of exchange owned by the collective (but demanded), vegetable boxes are sold at the home of one member of the collective + main selling spaces are the local and regional farmer's markets • Mainly monetary exchange, bartering and gifting among farmers • Rarely, barter trades with Workers' Unions in Buenos Aires (e.g. the Union of Land workers – Union de Trabajadores de la Tierra (UTT)) are organized (e.g. exchanging pumpkins for sweet potatoes or peanuts)
Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	Weekly direct contact between producers and consumers at the farmers market, at the beginning of the initiative's existence (2018/2019) farm walks were organized for consumers to get to know the production sites and methods + occasionally help with weeding/harvesting, farm walks have been stopped since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	• The foundation of the collective was most strongly initiated by the already previously formed consumer organizations in the area, with the aim of accessing locally and agroecologically produced goods and fostering agroecology in the territory in more general terms • Producers' motivation: Many changing from conventional to agricultural production due to negative effects on health caused by the use of agrochemicals, aiming for a higher quality of life (also family-friendly production sites with no risks for children), hope for better sales markets • Technical advisers/ institutional actors involved: Personal conviction that agroecology is the only viable agricultural system for the future
Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Partially restricted group identity (unclear definition of who is part of the collective, fluctuation of actors involved), however core group (of producers, consumers, technicians) sharing the same set of values (member stated that it "has been a long process to get to this point")
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Example: Price setting for selling goods of multiple farmers to external markets happens in a democratic way > gathering of farmers and members of the collective in charge of organizing the sales, joint discussion on what crops can be harvested and at what price they shall be sold. For individual sales: farmers can decide individually on crops produced and price. Equal rights among all members of the collective, however different roles (producers, social media, commercialization, technical advice etc.)

Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	• Ecological embeddedness (environmentally friendly food production) • Economic embeddedness (e.g. direct commercialization, fighting for fair prices for agroecological produce, aiming for economic accessibility of agroecological produce for everyone – in the beginning, hosting farmers markets in different districts of the city, including poorer areas) • Social embeddedness (e.g. establishing agroecological farmers market and organizing it as a social event where people are invited to make personal contacts, e.g. hosting live musicians – "eventization", community as central term and guiding value for practices)

C8: Argentina: Agroecological farm with CSA/subscription membership scheme and experimental field *(for details refer to Brunner, 2022)*

Heuristic analytical field	Level of indicators	Case
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	• Local food production at peri-urban location (Parque Pereyra; Province of Buenos Aires), allotment appointed as an annex of the National University of la Plata • 10 hectares of state-owned territory, allocation based on time-restricted rental contract of 50 years (conflict over land) + purchasing products for resale from other local agroecological producers (united as an informal cooperative, in the process of formalization) • + purchasing and reselling from supralocal producers at the Central Market of Buenos Aires (e.g. Paralelo Orgánico)

Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	• Agroecological, manual production method • Multifunctional farming – educational farming, research, co-production (university's teams), consumer participation (restricted)
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	• Local supply: Self-pick-up and home delivery to surrounding districts (Villa Elisa, La Plata, Quilmes, Ranelach, Berazategui; and CABA) (four distributors, one extra employee for preparing the orders), every Wednesday and Saturday • Direct marketing of own products + Intermediary selling activities: vegetables of six neighboring agroecological producers and fruits bought at the Central Market of Buenos Aires • Consumers: 35 "CSA subscribers/ subscription farming", in total 60 clients per week
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	• Physical space of exchange: Home delivery or self-pick-up at the house of the head of the initiative • Monetary exchange • CSA/subscription farming members paying at the beginning of the month, or on a weekly basis when receiving vegetables • + Exchange in social currency (PAR) • + Exchange: space for goods (apiarists may use the space, HESA receives 2kg of honey per month)

Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	• Producer–consumer relation: Subscription membership scheme: good, personal relationship, weekly direct contact, amicable (distributors entering houses of elderly consumers to store away products etc.) • Forms of communication: WhatsApp for sending weekly list of offered products and for receiving orders, face-to-face (on delivery days) • Events on the farm: Researchers and students -> weekly visits to the farm for cultivation on designated area for experimentation; intermittently: consumers visiting the farm > farm walks
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	• Producer's motivation for implementing CSA/ subscription scheme: Enhanced consistency and calculability of sales (especially challenging during summer months), ex-ante financing of needed infrastructure (greenhouse) • Motivation for partner organizations (National University of La Plata): Initially to offer producer family aid in defending territory against planned highway construction; nowadays, access to experimental field for researchers and students, personal relations • Motivation for consumers: Weekly supply of fresh agroecologically produced vegetables (product quality), delivered to their homes (convenience), cheaper prices when choosing subscription/ CSA model (price), relationship of trust (transparency in production methods)

Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	Shared values: Solidarity among producers; producer and consumer (subscription member scheme); however, no shared risk (aiming at CSA principal, but difficult to implement, thus weekly delivery not charged when not picked up by consumers; static amount of vegetables delivered independently of actual harvest), direct selling, fairness: buying for a fair price from neighboring producers + farm walks and visits before pandemic, shared food growing and knowledge transfer among producers and involved (university) actors at HESA
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Producer family with main decision-making power (regarding crops cultivated, farm investments etc.) Experimental agroecological production area: Group of involved researchers has decision-making power over parcel Joint decision-making process and close collaboration among producer family and research group when it comes to larger events organized on the farm (e.g. university courses) for coordination and access to farm facilities (room for meetings, toilets), strong support of university with regard to legal aspect of land ownership and bureaucratic processes
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Some aspects of all categories, but most strongly: Ecological embeddedness (agroecology; production field within biosphere reserve) Spatial embeddedness (defending territory for local food production in peri-urban area)

C9: Argentina: Solidarity-based food distribution cooperative

Heuristic analytical field	**Level of indicators**	**Case**
Spatial and temporary scale of food production and processing	Local, regional, permanent, temporary, rural, urban, location	Incorporating locally produced goods (urban) as well as supra-regionally sourced products (urban and rural) from primarily permanent suppliers (singe farmers, producer cooperatives etc.)

Food production methods (challenging the third food regime)	Organic, biodynamic, agroecology, consumer participation, co-production, horse plowing, transhumance, permaculture, subsistence, multifunctional farming	• Only agroecologically produced food • "Products full of history, dreams and social struggles": All sold products originate from associative, self-managed and non-exploitative work, for example from worker-owned sites
Mobilization of food in the supply chain	Direct local supply, highly enmeshed for international supply, size, employees, consumers, intermediaries in the supply chain, social-ecological impact on different scales	• Cooperative works as (solidarity-oriented) intermediary in the food supply chain; the cooperative directly purchases goods from alternative food producers/processors in bigger amounts and makes them (through a central sales point) accessible to urban consumers • Emphasis on keeping supply chains as short as possible
Arena of exchange	Physical space, monetary or non-monetary exchange	• Physical space of exchange: Food distribution primarily via central sales point (urban shop) • Weekly food deliveries to households, primarily of boxes of vegetables from local surrounding peri-urban/rural producers • Sales in fixed stands and fairs: Weekly stand at the National University of Cuyo and intermittently at other fairs • Primarily monetary exchange for purchasing food stuff • + Possibility of exchange in social currency • Group of "consumer partners" who pre-pay a certain sum monthly, collectively building the cooperative's budget to purchase goods without incurring debt

Producer—consumer interaction	Direct selling, e-mail, newsletters, cooking demonstrations, food growing work (such as weeding parties), farm walks, share/subscription membership schemes	• Little direct producer–consumer interaction as the cooperative works as a solidarity-based intermediary • The food cooperative organizes intermittent visits to close-by food producers and processors from whom they purchase products, to foster personal relations between consumers and producers as well as people working at the cooperative (sellers) and producers • The cooperative organizes social events such as board game evenings and "international" dinners in the house where their shop is located to promote awareness of the shop and products, and to foster a sense of community among consumers and employees of the food cooperative • Forms of communication: website, Instagram
Motivation for participation of producers—processors—consumers	Business success, making food accessible, social/environmental concerns, anxiety avoidance, sensory pleasure	• Producer's motivation: Reducing number of intermediaries, achieving fair prices as the cooperative operates according to the principals of a social and solidarity-based economy • Motivation for employees of the food cooperative: Employment (also for people with little or no formal education, as a focus is placed on inclusion, social justice, and enhancing people's lives), activism (challenging the corporate food regime and its capitalist logic; social justice and environmental concerns) • Motivation for consumers: Access to healthy, high-quality, and fairly produced products through one single solidarity-based intermediary, guaranteeing fair prices for all

Constitution of individual and group identities of the initiatives	Shared values, group belonging, partnership, joint ownership, shared risk	• Shared values: solidarity among producers, intermediary (food coop) and consumers; social justice: buying and onward sale of products (that where produced under fair conditions) to a fair price, basic principle: no-one (producers, distributors and consumers) shall be exploited for the production of capital, including nature • Shared goal of building another economy: "non-capitalist, emancipatory and liberating" • Group belonging in the sense that the food cooperative forms part of a national socio-political workers' movement confronting capitalism
Style of governance	Power relations, forms of communication, negotiations	Horizontal organization in line with the form of organization, as a cooperative: regular assemblies for joint reflection, exchange of ideas and decision-making, working toward real economic democracy
Values among producers—processors—consumers	Ecological embeddedness, spatial embeddedness, social embeddedness, economic embeddedness	Some aspects of all categories, most strongly social and economic (social and solidary economy) and ecological embeddedness (agroecology)

References

Brunner A-M (forthcoming) What happened to agroecology? Actors' (power) relations, interests, and perspectives on success in food system transitions.

Brunner A-M (2022) *The missing pieces to food system's socio-ecological transformation? Community-supported agriculture in Argentina*. Master thesis, University of Graz. Graz.

Froning P and Stotten R (under review) The role of social capital in traditional mountain cheese systems: Two examples from Grisons/Southern Switzerland. *Sociologia Ruralis*.

Froning P and Stotten R (2024) Shaping territorial agri-food systems through social innovations: The example of Valposchiavo, Switzerland. *Rivista Di Economia Agraria* 79(1): 33–46.

Nováčková V, Pixová M and Plank C (under review) *The role of community-supported agriculture in transforming the current food regime in Czechia*. Geoforum.

Pixová M and Plank C (2025) The quiet right to the city: overcoming dualization between allotment and community gardens for a sustainable urban future. *Environmental Sociology*.

Pixová M and Plank C (2024) Urban food governance without local food: missing links between Czech post-socialist cities and urban food alternatives. *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-024-10567-2.

Steinegger S and Faltmann NK (2025) Proximity despite distance? A Community-Supported Agriculture across rural mountain and urban areas in Switzerland. *Journal of Political Ecology* 32(1).

Stotten R and Froning P (2023) Territorial rural development strategies based on organic agriculture: the example of Valposchiavo, Switzerland. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 7.