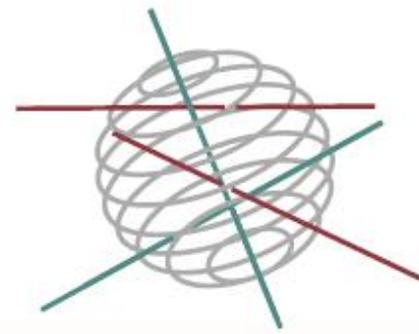# SSD
SCIENCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CONSTRUCTION OF SCENARIOS AND EXPLORATION OF
TRANSITION PATHWAYS FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION
PATTERNS

« CONSENTSUS»

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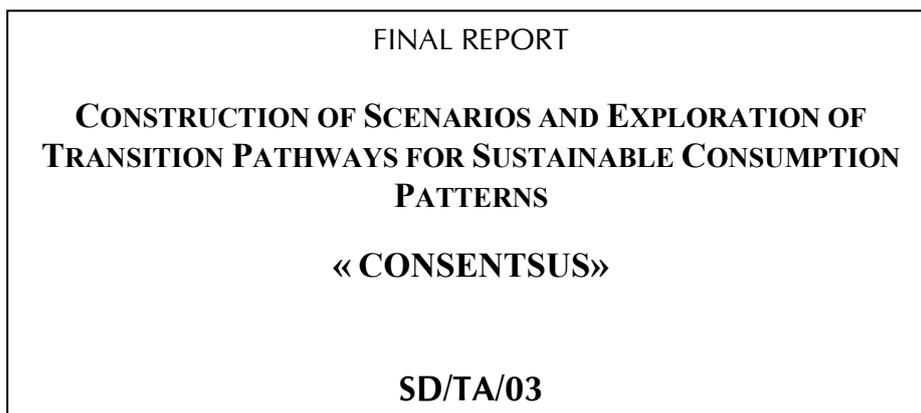
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SCIENCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Transversal actions

FINAL REPORT

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« CONSENTSUS»

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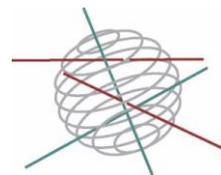
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Belgian Science Policy Office

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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The present report does not develop equally on both phases of the project. Phase 1 of CONSENTSUS (2007-2008) gave birth to extensive reporting activities, production of an interim evaluation report, working papers, conference papers and publications. These can be obtained on simple request, (or downloaded here : http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=fr&COD=SD/TA/03A). Chapter I hereafter contains nevertheless a synthetic analysis of the main results of Phase 1. The present report concentrates on Phase 2 (2009-2011) of the project, presenting thus results which have not yet been reported on.

The second phase of CONSENTSUS revolved around an exploration of internal and external dynamics of niches in food consumption. One of the operational objectives was to integrate these particular explorations into a series of consolidated challenges (or barriers/opportunities) which policy makers could use to articulate the transition of the food regime. The empirical investigations and analyses of cases studies have been finalized in autumn 2010. Following these individual explorations, we started in October 2010 an integration process of our results. Our integration exercise can be consulted in Chapter IV. The identified challenges are anchors for the future governance of aspects of the Belgian food regime. In this respect, it will be of some importance to seek discussion around these challenges with policy makers, stakeholders of the food regime and participants to food networks. The latter – the participants and driving forces of the local food networks – have already been confronted with the individual results of our explorations, both in Flanders and in Wallonia/Brussels.

The present report is also integrated in terms of work packages. Original work packages are thus not appearing in the table of contents. It might however be interesting to the reader to identify the authorships with regard to the empirical and analytical undertakings of the project. In this sense:
- CDO - U. Gent focused on a 'practice' approach of the Flemish *Voedselteams* (Part 2.1)
- IDD undertook an empirical analysis of representations and motivations in Wallonia/Brussels (Part 2.2)
- ULB concentrated on the institutional exploration of food teams (Part 3)

SUMMARY

CONTEXT

Within the policy and science community concerned with sustainable development, it is widely accepted that the first decades of the 21ˢᵗ century are a crucial turning point for the world community. Widespread poverty, growing inequality between and within a lot of countries, increasing pressures on vital ecosystems and ecosystem services combined with an intensive process of economic and cultural globalisation present enormous challenges for a world which aims for some form of sustainable development. Policy-makers, civil society organisations and scientists alike are looking for tools, concepts, approaches, theories… which can help in orienting policy in a way that a more sustainable development would become possible. It could be that the challenges of sustainable development are translated into equally important challenges with regard to the governance of sustainable development. Transition approaches - and among them 'Transition management' (TM) - have been increasingly popular alternative 'tools' in Northern Europe to conceive such shift in the governance of sustainable development.

CONSENTSUS ("*CONstruction of ScENarios and exploration of Transition pathways for SUStainable consumption patterns"*) focuses on 2 crucial aspects – and moments - of TM approaches:
-   Phase 1 was dedicated to an exploration of the significance and the conduct of scenario constructions identifying and discussing alternatives to the current food consumption regime. Phase 1 allowed - via a case study in the realm of food consumption - to identify and order the avenues towards a sustainable consumption mode of our societies;
-   during Phase 2, we worked on one of these prospectively identified transition pathways and tried to understand the mechanics, dynamics and governance of a specific 'niche' of food consumption patterns. The objective was, once that a particular transition pathway was identified, to comprehend how alternative consumption behaviour could be "up-scaled" (i.e. generalized).

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the first phase (2007-2008) of the CONSENTSUS project was to investigate and experiment how scenarios can be developed, applied and validated within the issue-domain of sustainable consumption, more particularly of sustainable food consumption. During this phase, three scenarios were collaboratively built during a series of participatory workshops with representatives of the main food regime stakeholders. Each of the scenarios was linked to one amongst three strategies for a sustainable consumption, namely the "eco-effcency" (reducing the ecological load per unit of consumption), "decommodification" (reducing the weight of market forces in the determination of consumption) and "sufficiency" (reducing the weight of consumerism) strategies.

The originally proposed phase 2 (2009-2011) of the CONSENTSUS project was oriented towards an exploration of "transition management" as a governance approach by performing a further case study (implementing an agenda of action research). Work Package 5 (WP5) was to analyse "transition management" as a concept and set up an experimental "transition arena" to develop a detailed backcasting exercise (i.e. specifying precise "transition pathways") for the particular consumption theme (i.e. food

consumption). WP6 would model the transitions developed in WP5. WP7 would investigate whether "transition management" could be applied in the Belgian governance context and WP8 would analyse the potentials of ICT-techniques in participatory processes needed within "transition management"-practice, amongst other things through a moderated internet forum.

During phase 1 of the project, our insights in the field of TM - and the field itself - have evolved. We pointed out some of the major underdeveloped areas in the field such as the role of consumption and consumers (some of these items are discussed in Paredis 2008). We also made contacts with the European and Dutch networks of transition scientists. Finally, a very first literature base on the relationships between TM and consumption emerged (see for instance, Smith, 2005, Shove & Walker, 2007 ; 2010, Seyfang & Smith, 2007 ; 2009, Spaargaren *et al.,* 2011, Grin, 2011). Consequently, all this has led the research team to conclude that some changes of accent were necessary for phase 2. Very synthetically, the change could be characterised as replacing "transition management" as central theme to the second phase of CONSENTSUS with "system innovation and governance for system innovation". The project concentrated during phase 2 hence on the exploration and analysis of system innovations in household consumption patterns. As an operational starting point the project oriented its exploration onto the level of what could be termed being existing 'niches of systemic socio-technical innovation in consumption', i.e. with a case study on one particular niche: local food networks. By changing the accent of CONSENTSUS, the workplan for phase 2 was adapted as follows:

WP5 focused on the implications of 'system innovations' on everyday life, i.e. at the individual consumer level. Due to a complete lack of quantitative data about the existing consumption niches in Belgium, the foreseen modelling effort of WP6 was adapted towards a much more fundamental construction of qualitative-quantitative knowledge (i.e. data) on the dynamics and representations of existing consumption niches in the area of the project, i.e. on local food networks. WP7 explored the 'governance of system innovation', with 'consumption niches' being the empirical material used. The focus of WP7 was to explore the current governance of (what was identified as) existing system innovations in the realm of consumption; i.e. the governance of a consumption niche. Questions of importance were: can alternative consumption niches be influenced and steered by a range of societal actors, amongst which governments? Which policy tools and instruments are deployable? How are these fitting to the Belgian context? Similarly to the focus in WP5, WP7 focused on the question of how governance approaches to niches can be applied to consumers and consumption. As a consequence of this change in focus, the original WP8 was abandoned. WP8 - aiming at developing and using procedural techniques for participation at the level of small-scale group interaction - had been elaborated mainly in order to inform the participation within the "transition arenas", and was thus not relevant anymore. In order to be able to link up with the research network on TM, and discuss results from the CONSENTSUS project, the original idea in WP8 - organizing an internet forum - is replaced by a face-to-face seminar with a small group of international researchers. The forthcoming initiative (+/- April 2011) will be formally hooked on to WP7, and gives subsequently rise to a (requested) project extension until end of April 2011.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of phase 1 show that the scenarios and the deduced consumer perspectives primarily aim at generating learning effects more specifically by stimulating debate in research, stakeholder and mainstream arenas. Framing alternative food consumption practices through structured and discourse-based scenario construction can potentially support bridging the gap between academic research and

political debate and/or introduce consumption policy to a more encompassing socio-cultural perspective on the issue. The analysis on the consumer perspectives shows that consumer identity consists of more than merely consumer choice, as is often implied in academic research or public campaigning addressing consumption.

The normative discourse approach – in this project generated by means of the decomposition analysis – provides a formal (yet not inclusive) ground to communicate on the relationship between current food consumption behaviour and sustainability goals. The normative discourse methodology could be further tested using different 'applications', i.e. re-doing the scenario exercise with other themes and different groups. The method could for instance be applied in an educational setting, aiming at introducing sustainability principles. Or, the other way around, the robustness of the principles as such could be tested through scenario development. Such kind of endeavors can yield a basis to connect normative and empirical dimensions in research in Habermasian terms. Scenario exercises harbor potential to streamline a more deepened debate and the potential transformative changes in future governance. However as long as the intrinsic processes of democratic structures remain dictated by short term electoral and economic goals the qualitative system changes as they proposed and understood in the scenarios cannot be straightforwardly considered.

Among the explored scenarios, phase 1 identified a preferred scenario among stakeholders: decommodification, which we took as the overarching starting point for Phase 2 of CONSENTSUS. Decommodification can be synthesized as a reinvention of structures and habits of exchange of goods and services, or - in other terms – as a reinvention of our current prevalent market practices in consumption.

Phase 2 focused on a specific case study: Belgian food teams. Food teams are operationalisations of alternative food consumption systems in which groups of consumers co-construct an alternative, collective system to organize their food provision. Food teams are in relatively close contact with groups of producers, and insist particularly on the active promotion of sustainable (local and in most cases organic) agriculture. For this double characteristic, i.e. collective re-organisations of an economic supply-demand relationship, those local food systems can be interpreted as being 'sustainable experimentations' which operationalize a programme of 'decommodification'. Local Food Systems/Networks are 'niches', which could be exemplary of the sort of systemic transitions that need to be imagined to render more sustainable the wider food system. Chapter I of the report defines 'alternative food networks' and 'local food systems', draws the state-of-the-art in the field and presents more particularly the system of food teams, especially in Belgium. Chapter II examines the internal mechanics which are operating in the selected 'niche', and more particularly practices and discourses within Belgian food teams, based on two case studies.

The first case study investigates the consumers of Flemish food teams (*Voedselteam*) through a "practice approach". It shows how the practice of being member of a *Voedselteam* is a dynamic process in which the connections between agency, material-functional structure and socio-cultural structure are still unstable.

The second case study analyses the dynamics within and between the Walloon and Brussels food teams, based on two surveys. These underline common attitudes towards food teams as well as more specific profiles of participants in these groups.

Chapter III explores the external linkages between the niche and its regime, by focusing on the relationships between Belgian food teams and their institutional environment in a governance perspective. Obstacles and opportunities for the development of food teams were identified in the

institutional context in which food teams interact (through both public and private actors), with some differences between the three regional systems.

As a way of conclusion and formulation of policy recommendations, Chapter IV presents a preliminary integration of the results of the internal and external mechanics. The integration is organized around an attempt to construct prospective – forward-looking - elements with regard to the evolution of food teams in Belgium and of the current food provisioning system. These prospective elements present to a certain extent the main challenges for the transition of the food provisioning and consumption systems in Belgium. Let's develop further the main conclusion.

A TYPOLOGY OF CONSUMERS WITHIN THE REGIME

On the basis of existing studies of consumer behaviour, motivation and perceptions it is possible to draw a map of the main reasons determining consumer choice with regard to types of shops and products. Generally speaking, it appears that the majority of consumers consider food shopping not as pleasure but mainly as drudgery. Moreover, counter to the main discourse of the market, it seems that the consumers give more significance to the proximity rather than the prices in their choice of a shop. For food teams their might be a number of conclusions which could be drawn.

First of all, it seems like there is a link between the attitude toward food shopping and the heterogeneity and, in some ways, the frequency of the retailing sectors visited. Those who have a utilitarian relationship to shopping and who see food shopping as drudgery go to few different distributive sectors, once or twice a week . They value the functionality, the practicality of the shops and the diversity, the low price of the products. The study underlines the volatility of these types of customers: there is more defection, less loyalty towards a particular shop for those who rarely go to the local shops. On the other hand, a hedonistic attitude to food consumption is associated with the increase in the heterogeneity and the frequency of the distributions sectors visited. Food teams participants can most probably be classified in the last category described. It signifies that most of them don't limit themselves to the products bought in food teams and they probably frequent different distribution sectors according to their other needs. In order to raise the importance of the local food networks in the food consumption patterns, it would thus be important to multiply and diversify the products sold in these niches.

Second, it appears that the main challenge for the transition to the regime towards more sustainable patterns of consumptions will be to attract "adepts of mass consumption" and consumers which are deeply "conquered by the hard discount" who are mostly sensitive to the convenience, rapidity of the shopping and their budgets. The importance given to convenience also influences the choice of the products bought, for instance via the increase of the consumption of ready-made dishes.

FOUNDATIONS FOR TRANSITION PATHWAYS

On top of this refined characteristic of consumers within the regime – even if very partial, because the typology is quite rough – we can suggest possible scenarios of transitions towards more sustainable patterns of consumption. Two (somehow opposite) obvious scenarios can be considered: the adaptation of the niche to some characteristics of the regime, on the one hand; or the adaptation of the regime to some characteristics of the niche, on the other hand.

ADAPTATION OF THE REGIME TO SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NICHE

A possible future scenario to conciliate the regime and the niche would be to adapt the regime to some characteristics of the niche. Concretely, that would mean keep the characteristics of the products – local, organic, ethical… – within the niche but within the convenience of the structure known in the regime – that is to say the supermarkets. In other words, using the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991), it means enhancing some principles of the niches (trust, locality, fairness) inside the market world and the industrial world. This scenario is not fictional: there are already organic mini-markets as well as products labelled ethical, organic and local (Belgian) in most supermarkets. However, an important question for our research is to evaluate whether this scenario does really foster wider transition of the sector toward more sustainability? There can be some doubts if we consider, for instance, the criticisms made to organic products sold nowadays in supermarkets: they have all the formal characteristics to be labelled organic, but they do not encompass the food teams' philosophy and cannot be really considered sustainable as they often come from the other side of the world and the packaging is overweening.

ADAPTATION OF THE NICHE TO SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGIME

This adaptation of the niche to some characteristics of the regime can take two main directions. As explained before, we consider food teams as a kind of de-commodification (de-marketisation) of food consumption. In fine, limiting the influence of markets implies to increase the influence of other alternative systems. The two directions that could be taken in possible future evolution may be either towards the market (multifunctional consumption) or towards the state (i.e. more public support).

INTERMEDIARY SOLUTION? THE MULTIFUNCTIONALITY OF CONSUMPTION

One of the main specificities of food teams is - using Boltanski and Thévenot concepts - to combine different worlds: the market world but also the domestic world, the political world and the environmental world (Boltanski and Thevenot, 1991). This specificity can be understood as a form of multifunctionality of consumption. To further develop this idea of multifunctional consumption, it is useful to refer to the use of this concept in agriculture – its origin - and its possible link with Transition approaches. In this context, multifunctionality refers to the functions or benefits generated by agriculture beyond the mere production of food (and fiber) that farmers sell in the marketplace. These benefits typically include contribution to the vitality of rural communities (through maintenance of family farming, rural employment and cultural heritage), biological diversity (even if mainstream agriculture has been identified as the main stressor to biodiversity), recreation and tourism, soil and water health, bio-energy, landscape, food quality and safety, animal welfare... How can this idea of multifunctionality inspire a possible transition pathway towards more sustainable patterns of consumptions through food teams? We imagined the creation of what we called a « food house », that is to say a shop with all the traditional functionalities of a shop (in this way different from the place where the meetings of the food teams take place), but where it would also be possible to provide other functions such as continuous learning, discussions and solidarity with the local producers, to get skills and learn about the products…

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PUBLIC SUPPORT OF FOOD TEAMS

The governance analyses of the three food team systems in Belgium shows regional differences as well as the emerging temporal evolutions of each system in terms of their interactions with the public

and private actors of the institutional framework. This evolution has been observed at the level of the institutional embeddedness of the food teams.

In terms of future scenarios, we can mentionthe project of the Brussels municipality of Etterbeek to create a kind of municipal food team. This project illustrates how a public institution, here the municipality, can be involved more directly in the development of food teams. Indeed, this kind of initiative – while being still at a prototypical state - and the institutionalization pathway it represents contains some opportunities and risks. A factor that could play in favour of more involvement of mainstream institutions is that institutional embeddedness is considered as encouraging the development or scaling up of niches by nurturing them through additional support and resources. In other words, institutional embeddedness allows food teams to gain resources which are useful for their development, i.e. money (subsidies from public authorities), knowledge and skills (experience sharing and practical advices for producers and food teams' members through various meetings), lobbying access (by creating or participating to some workgroups dealing with policy projects or recommendations) and visibility (through communicational tools from public authorities, trade unions and other associations). In terms of accessibility to a wider public, initiatives inspired from food teams and partly organized by a public authority have an interesting development potential. Indeed, while food teams' consumers respond to different socio-economic characteristics, this public is still limited to a well-educated and environmentally-conscious part of society. In this respect, larger supported projects could capture other categories of consumers within the regime and therefore extend niche practices to a wider part of society.

POLICY SUPPORT

System innovations and transitions in the realm of sustainable consumption policies do not emerge automatically from the present socio-political and socio-economic context. And, where some change towards more sustainable consumption patterns occurs, it might not infer the necessary structural systemic innovations, but remain restricted to mere system optimizations/adaptations. Consequently, there are repetitive calls to develop ways to (pro) actively steer transitions, i.e. to develop and implement forms of governance of transitions. These calls have also been repetitively issued in Belgium, be it at federal or regional or local level. The transition "language" has indeed well percolated towards policy makers in Belgium, and has been during the project's duration at the heart of a series of strategic institutional exercises. Right at the beginning of CONSENTSUS, the Federal Planning Bureau has elaborated extensively on transitions in its 4th SD-policy report, and has placed at that occasion a focus on food consumption.

In this study, we explored these issues related to the governance of transitions and elaborate on their application to the relatively unexplored governance of sustainable consumption patterns, more precisely in the field of food consumption.

The exploration of the institutional governance context shows that an interest for short food chains initiatives is emerging in the current Belgian policy agenda, especially in the Regions and this notably through to their competences in the agricultural field. We repetitively observed that food teams are not proactively managed or steered by public authorities in Belgium, whatever their institutional level. Indeed, food teams are originally created by consumers and farmers in an independent way, without external support; in this sense, food teams are perfect examples of bottom-up – grassroots - approaches. That does not mean that food teams are not protected from some elements of the regime,

for example the non-application of some sanitarian rules, trading rules and official labels. But these mentioned favourable elements do not constitute a voluntary exemption of rules by the state, they are rather linked to a passive laissez-faire or tolerance from the public authorities that allows food teams to act in a grey zone in some respects. We concluded that the current food teams' governance is diluted in the wider governance of short food supply chains and that, when food teams are specifically addressed, governance is spontaneously not very active. Nevertheless, we observed that institutional embeddedness of food teams tends to grow over time.

Considering these elements of the policy context, coupled with the evidence of an inexistent governmental body at federal level, the policy implications of CONSENTSUS are of a more exploratory than policy-supportive nature. Despite this hesitant policy context, there is on the opposite a huge interest within the Food Teams themselves to improve the comprehension of their activities – and to a lesser, but still proactive, level – within the main actors of the food provisioning system. It appears than also logical that CONSENTSUS' pre-results have been repetitively presented and discussed with the stakeholders of the Food Team arena, for instance at a coordination meeting of the Brussels' and Walloon food teams in November 2010 or at the first annual gathering of the French speaking Food Teams in Namur in February 2011. Results of the first phase of the project were presented and discussed at an internal meeting of the federal food industry federation (FEVIA).

VALORISATION AND DISCUSSION WITH PEERS

In order to submit the research results discussion and take part an active part to the new network emerging in the area of transitions approaches to consumption, an international workshop was organized in April 2011. Entitled "Investigating new developments in Transition approaches: Sustainable consumption as niches of innovation?", this final workshop was held the 27th of April 2011 at the University Foundation. Forty persons coming from the diverse horizons, the academic world as well as the politics and the associations, registered to the event showing a real interest for the theme (sustainable consumption) but also the theoretical framework (transition approaches) adopted in the CONSENTSUS research program. The main objective of the workshop was to bring together a series of authors who have in the recent (to very recent) past worked on the potential linkages and applicability of transition studies and transition governance approaches to consumption issues. A roundtable with Belgian stakeholder was organized at the end of the day to link the theory and the practice.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable consumption, transition management, system innovations, scenarios, governance, niche, local food systems.

INTRODUCTION

A.   STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The introductory part of the report presents the contextual and conceptual underpinnings of the CONSENTSUS project. After a short presentation of the dynamics within the project, we will synthesize the results of phase 1 of the project.

The core of the report focuses in Phase 2 of CONSENTSUS and is structured in five parts. Chapter I defines 'alternative food networks' and 'local food systems', draws the state-of-the-art in the field and presents more particularly the system of food teams, especially in Belgium.
The subsequent chapters focus on the mechanisms which are operating in the selected 'niche', and the dynamics which relate the niche to the regime; in other words, we focus on internal and external mechanics and dynamics founded on top of the niche/regime couple.

- As for the internal mechanics, Chapter II examines practices and discourses within Belgian food teams, based on two case studies. The first case study investigates the consumers of Flemish food teams through a "practice approach" (see below). The second case study analyses the dynamics within and between the Walloon and Brussels food teams. Two differentiated, sequential sociological methodologies were implemented in these latter cases.
- The external linkages between the niche and its regime are explored in Chapter III, which focuses on the relationships between Belgian food teams and their institutional environment in a governance perspective.

As a way of conclusion and formulation of policy recommendations, Chapter IV presents a preliminary integration of the results of the internal and external mechanics. The integration is organized around an attempt to construct prospective – forward-looking - elements with regard to the evolution of food teams in Belgium and of the current food provisioning system. These prospective elements present to a certain extent the main challenges for the transition of the food provisioning and consumption systems in Belgium.

B. CONTEXT AND PRESENTATION OF THE CONSENTSUS PROJECT

Within the policy and science community concerned with sustainable development, it is widely accepted that the first decades of the 21st century are a crucial turning point for the world community. Widespread poverty, growing inequality between and within a lot of countries, increasing pressures on vital ecosystems and ecosystem services combined with an intensive process of economic and cultural globalisation present enormous challenges for a world which aims for some form of sustainable development. Policy-makers, civil society organisations and scientists alike are looking for tools, concepts, approaches, theories… which can help in orienting policy in a way that a more sustainable development would become possible. It could be that the challenges of sustainable development are translated into equally important challenges with regard to the governance of sustainable development. Transition approaches - and among them 'Transition management' - have been increasingly popular

alternative 'tools' in Northern Europe to conceive such shift in the governance of sustainable development.

CONSENTSUS ("*CONstruction of ScENarios and exploration of Transition pathways for SUStainable consumption patterns*") focuses on 2 crucial aspects – and moments - of TM approaches:
- Phase 1 was dedicated to an exploration of the significance and the conduct of scenario constructions, and allowed via a case study to identify and order the avenues towards a sustainable consumption mode of our societies;
- during Phase 2, we worked on one of these prospectively identified transition pathways and tried to understand the mechanics, dynamics and governance of a specific 'niche' of consumption patterns.

PROJECT DYNAMICS

When the CONSENTSUS project proposal was written almost 5 years ago, the research team had started to explore new approaches to sustainable development policy-making such as system innovation, transitions and transition management. The term 'transition management' stood as an approach to help structure and conceptualize these discussions around a reconfiguration of sustainable development policy-making. This approach had been emerging at that time as a guiding principle – among others - in Dutch environmental policy and, in Belgium two Flemish policy domains had started to experiment with it (in the domain of sustainable building and housing, and in the domain of sustainable material management).

The first phase (2007-2008) of the CONSENTSUS project investigated and experimented how scenarios can be developed, applied and validated within the issue-domain of sustainable consumption, more particularly of sustainable food consumption. During this phase, three scenarios were built, each of them linked to one amongst three strategies for a sustainable consumption, namely the "eco-efficency", "decommodification" and "sufficiency" strategies. An extensive account of the work in CONSENTSUS can be retrieved from the reporting of Phase 1 and the respective working papers. In the subsequent chapter we will present a synthesis of the results.

The originally proposed phase 2 (2009-2011) of the CONSENTSUS project was oriented towards an exploration of "transition management" as a governance approach by performing a further case study; implementing an agenda of action research. Work Package 5 (WP5) was to analyse "transition management" as a concept and set up an experimental "transition arena" to develop a detailed backcasting exercise (i.e. specifying precise "transition pathways") for a particular consumption theme (i.e. food consumption). WP6 would model the transitions developed in WP5. WP7 would investigate whether "transition management" could be applied in the Belgian governance context and WP8 would analyse the potentials of ICT-techniques in participatory processes needed within "transition management"-practice, amongst other things through a moderated internet forum.

During phase 1 of the project, our insights in the field of TM - and the field itself - have evolved. We pointed out some of the major underdeveloped areas in the field such as the role of consumption and consumers (some of these items are discussed in Paredis 2008). We also made contacts with the European and Dutch networks of transition scientists. Finally, a very first literature base on the relationships between TM and consumption emerged (see for instance, Voss *et al.* 2006, Loorbach 2007, Newig *et al.* 2008, Tukker *et al.* 2007, Shove *et al.* 2007). Consequently, all this has led the research team to conclude that some changes of accent were necessary for phase 2. Very synthetically, the change could be characterised as replacing "transition management" as central theme to the second phase of

CONSENTSUS with "system innovation and governance for system innovation". There are different strands of reasons for this adjustment of focus.

From the point of view of the practicality of the project, it became clear that the original proposal of setting up a participatory 'real-size' transition arena with stakeholders had to be revised. First, the whole process of setting up and guiding a transition arena (i.e. gathering stakeholders every month in order to define goals and pathways for the transition, etc.) simply over-estimated the leverage of this research project. The necessary efforts linked to initiating and nourishing the participatory processes threatened to lead to disproportionate investments in organisational aspects at the expense of research tasks. Based on the insights of phase 1, we realized how difficult it is to set up such participative process (moreover with high level stakeholders and innovative private firms) within a scientific project, i.e. without specific incentives (e.g. political support, insertion into a 'real' policy-making experiment, etc).

More fundamentally, it is the evolution of the research field itself, and our knowledge-base thereof, which brought us to re-focus the second phase of the project. Indeed, the field of 'system innovation' and the related governance issues are still young research areas, which are evolving at a thrilling pace, highlighting progressively the limits and shortcomings of earlier stances. The project concentrated during phase 2 hence on the exploration and analysis of system innovations in household consumption patterns. As an operational starting point the project oriented its exploration onto the level of what could be termed being existing 'niches of systemic socio-technical innovation in consumption', i.e. with a case study on one particular niche: Local food networks. By changing the accent of CONSENTSUS, the workplan for phase 2 was adapted as follows:

WP5 focused on the implications of 'system innovations' on everyday life. As stated above, TM is but a particular governance approach within the broader field of understanding sustainable development as a form of system innovation. In this sense, studies of system innovation focus on how systems innovate, which theories can be used to conceptualize the different dynamics in the change processes, what can be learned from historical and ongoing transitions, which 'innovative niches' can be identified in a given system, what is their potential for generalisation (up-scaling) in society... The challenges in CONSENTSUS are in the translation of 'system innovation' approaches to consumption patterns, comprehending how consumption practice can be conceptualized and analysed according to the framework of socio-technical system innovation.

WP7 explored the 'governance of system innovation', with 'consumption niches' being the empirical material used. The focus of WP7 was to explore the current governance of (what was identified as) existing system innovations in the realm of consumption; i.e. the governance of a consumption niche. Questions of importance were: can alternative consumption niches be influenced and steered by a range of societal actors, amongst which governments? Which policy tools and instruments are deployable? How are these fitting to the Belgian context? Similarly to the focus in WP5, WP7 focused on the question of how governance approaches to niches can be applied to consumers and consumption.

By reformulating WP5 and WP7, it was expected that the CONSENTSUS project could better benefit and contribute to the progress of the field as we insert the research along the existing logic of two main international approaches to studying transitions: i.e. from the perspective of a) how socio-technical system innovations develop and b) how socio-technical system innovations can be steered towards sustainable development.

This change in focus had originally no major influence on the exploration of 'modelling' as foreseen in WP6. Building on the scenarios of phase 1 and on niches and niche trajectories identified in WP5, it was

expected to be possible to work towards translating transition scenarios in terms of "fuzzy cognitive maps" and in analyzing them as dynamical systems. However, during phase 2, the foreseen modelling effort had to be revisited, notably because of a complete lack of data; the existing consumption niches in Belgium were not at all investigated quantitatively up to here. WP6 was thus adapted during phase 2 towards a much more fundamental construction of qualitative-quantitative knowledge (i.e. data) on the dynamics and representations of existing consumption niches in the area of the project, i.e. on local food networks.
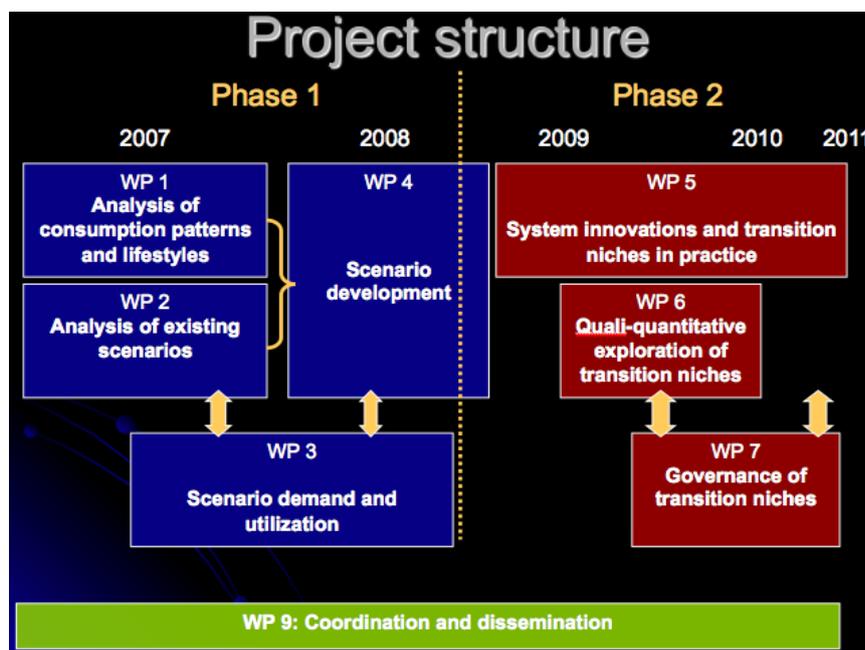
Figure 1 – Final CONSENTSUS project structure as implemented

As a consequence of this double change in focus, the original WP8 was abandoned. WP8 - aiming at developing and using procedural techniques for participation at the level of small-scale group interaction - had been elaborated mainly in order to inform the participation within the "transition arenas", and was thus not relevant anymore. In order to be able to link up with the research network on TM, and discuss results from the CONSENTSUS project, the original idea in WP8 - organizing an internet forum - is replaced by a face-to-face seminar with a small group of international researchers. The forthcoming initiative (+/- April 2011) will be formally hooked on to WP7, and gives subsequently rise to a (requested) project extension until end of April 2011.

These evolutions lead to a somewhat adapted project structure for phase 2 of the project, as is visible in figure 1 above. Before concentrating the report on Phase 2, we present a synthesis of the results of phase 1.

FIRST PHASE – SCENARIOS BASED ON SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSES

(The following synthesis of phase 1 is based on a manuscript submitted (and published) to *Futures*. The final paper can be consulted under: Crivits M., Pardis E., Boulanger P-M, Mutombo E., Bauler T., Lefin A-L (2010), Scenarios based on sustainability discourses: Constructing alternative consumption and consumer perspectives. *Futures* (42, 10), 1187-1199)

INTRODUCTION

The issue of sustainable consumption patterns remains a very complex problem where the abstract concepts of 'need', 'well-being' and 'future generations' are theoretically connected yet insufficiently understood. The bottom-line to sustainable consumption seems, however, amazingly simple: finding a good balance between human needs and available resources. However, when putting this straightforward idea of balancing needs and resources into the realms of practice, reality clearly shows that it is a largely unmet challenge. While consumption patterns are intensifying in some of the economically 'developing countries', western countries might well generate themselves a slower pace of increased consumption, but in turn are confronted with a confusing stagnation of their levels of happiness or life satisfaction.

Analyzing consumption in terms of societal well-being we face the problematic relation of needs and wants. Within the paradigm of sovereign consumer culture, 'needs' are ordinarily considered to be unlimited and insatiable. This type of conception of needs is based on the identification of the concept of freedom with the concept of private choice (Slater, 1997). Scholars however instantiated the necessity to differentiate between needs and wants, a distinction which found its basis in the work of Max-Neef. The distinction between needs and wants which thus questions the insatiability linked to sovereign consumption is linked to the notion of 'excessive demand in the North', which also stands central in the Agenda 21 vision on sustainable consumption. As is mentioned in the Agenda 21 text: *"Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment."* (Agenda 21, chapter 4, paragraph 5).

Part of the complexity of sustainable consumption is directly linked to the definition of 'consumption'. Generally speaking two different strands can be discerned. The first strand dominantly links consumption to the purchase of goods and services. Although this delineation limits consumption to a very specific commercial act it does give a clear entrance point to investigate and/or assess the relation between consumer behaviour and the use of natural resources. To give an example, Spaargaren uses the concept of 'consumption junction' to speak about the exchange gate of consumption and production (shops, markets, farm, etc.). This junction can be seen as the ideal place to develop what he calls 'environmental heuristics', i.e. the use of easy rules (of thumb) in daily behaviour, 'automatically' leading to a more socially and environmentally sound way of living.

The second strand broadens the 'what' of consumption to a wider socio-economic context, i.e. it holds that also the use-value and service efficiency of the products, after and disconnected from the purchase phase, needs to be considered. The question is posed whether consumption also encompasses non-commodities such as home-made goods and non-commercial services. This process of opening up the conceptual understanding of consumption to a broader socio-cultural field results in a more comprehensive explanation of what consumer behaviour is (and consequently, what needs to be

changed), but at the same time poses more methodological challenges. Here, there is not such a clear entrance point or 'junction' in order to determine how behaviour needs to change in terms of resource-use. Addressing this wider strand necessitates concepts such 'Well-being' and 'Quality of Life', which are partly subjective and complex to be measured or understood. Kang and James point out the insufficient conceptualization and slow progress on the evolution of these constructs to properly understand societal orientation. Regardless of intensive research efforts in economics, sociology and anthropology there remain lacunas in the answer to the question of *"what constitutes consumer and societal well-being, or how to enhance (or preserve) that well-being"* (Kang and James, p. 5). This suggests that what is generally measured is insufficiently precise to link the theoretical assumptions with empirical observations. One indication for the difficulty of measuring 'well-being' is that it cannot be reduced to the functionalities of money as is the case with its economic 'counterpart' 'welfare'. Money has the overarching functionality which makes it possible to compare and reduce subjective preferences. Georg Simmel refers to this as the reification of the heterogeneity of subjectivity. A quantifying concept such as money does not embody value but represents value, i.e. it is only through its relations that it lays with specific events that it becomes valuable. When analysing consumption from a research perspective we need to methodologically take into account the profound difference between being confronted with consumption that has its merits in the potentiality of cash equivalents or consumption as actual satisfying moments.

Scenarios now are apt tools to incorporate such a wider socio-cultural dimension precisely because they allow to integrate factors that are hard (or not) to quantify such as values, norms, behaviours and institutional feature. Scenario exercises are characterized by a set of problem definitions, boundary conditions and driving forces, thus offering possibilities to find entrance points to investigate the complex issue of sustainable consumption.

Nonetheless, the concept 'sustainable consumption' does not straightforwardly provoke system delineations needed for the construction of scenarios. Partly this is so because the act of consuming as such has different configurations in any given societal domain. For instance, it can be reasonably argued that the mobility practice of an individual (consumer) is of a different nature than his food practice. Such different societal functions are characterized by different functionings, types of rules, producer networks, behaviour, etc. This induces to conclude that the actual content of what consumption is and who consumers are, through these different practices (i.e. consumer domains), is heterogeneous to such an extent that general solutions might not be transferable from one practice (or domain) to another.

As a consequence – and to test this hypothesis of generalization – CONSENTSUS focuses on more specific practices. Four proposals for specific consumer domains were initially considered (food, tourism, play and toys, music) and evaluated against a series of criteria (available literature and information, importance in terms of environmental impacts or economic weight, expertise existing on Belgian level, interest of team members …). The practice of food consumption was finally chosen and served as a case to attain learning effects with regard to the conceptualization of sustainable consumption.

From a governance perspective one of the difficulties of these types of scenario approaches concerns the translation of theoretical insights from the literature study into a appropriate stakeholder-orientated or deliberative process. All too often theoretical arguments uttered in written academic communication are lost when they are to be applied or recognized in a policy context. Discussions in political arenas, for example, are often characterized by short-termism, often downgrading intricate issues (ecology, transition, etc.) to a struggle for power. Or, theoretical and conceptual intervention of scholars is led

by sector needs for legitimacy w/r increased competiveness. These flaws make collaborative deliberation and qualitative sustainable improvement difficult.

We will however try to show that the methodology we present has potential to create spaces of deliberation and governance. With Habermas, we recognize the huge gap between normative theorizing and empirical research found in contemporary models of deliberative democracy. The application of a normative scenario methodology can potentially serve as the basis to develop new empirical research on deliberative democratic processes.

METHODOLOGY

CONSENTSUS METHODOLOGY: NORMATIVE DISCOURSE APPROACH

The scenario construction methodology of the CONSENTSUS project has been structured along the results of a literature review on sustainable consumption and on scenario practices and theory. The literature study highlighted the main theoretic discourses on sustainable consumption, leading, through a 'decomposition analysis' to three sustainable consumption 'strategies'. This approach has been labelled as the 'normative discourse theory'. First, the purposive (normative) dimension of the concept 'sustainable development' is circumscribed by the specific general thesis: 'reducing resources use while increasing well-being'. Second, the thesis is decomposed into three rational ways to interpret this teleological structure. Working towards more efficiency, considering the characteristics and effects of the market and addressing the relationship between personal consumption and its societal implications are the three core issues that are used in a plural and prospective perspective (see Section 3.2).

General drivers of the scenarios.

The scenarios	General drivers
ECO-EFFICIENCY scenario (*C/EF*)	Confidence in technological innovation through market development. Industrial production with the use of clean technologies at every step of the food chain. Meeting the demand for highly varied and convenience; mostly processed food. Business as principal actor of societal change. Minimal state model, market driven world. Internalization of environmental costs. Competition in markets based on quality and clean technology implementation.
De-commodification scenario (*Se/C*)	Confidence and engagement in local governance and management systems. De-marketisation of the food sector (production and distribution). Main mode of provision are local and community-based 'food activities'. Highly organized citizenship (deliberative democracy). Co-production (merging of producer and consumer) and barter mechanisms.
SUFFICIENCY scenario (*Wb/Se*)	Personal care with regard to resources. Needs-oriented individuals and self-reflexive society. Flexible organizational structures (e.g. in order to prevent sunk investments or lock-in effects). Highly qualitative public knowledge.

Table 1 – General drivers of the scenarios

The resulting three strategies have framed the whole scenario construction process which was operationalized within the realms of food consumption, including two participative scenario workshops. Indeed, a participative process was set up in the form of two expert workshops, where the three strategies have been explored by asking the question of how food consumption in 2050 could be perceived, if these strategies or discourses were each on its own to be consequently followed. Using different brainstorm techniques and heuristic frameworks three distinctive images where formed of how a sustainable consumption orientated world could look in the middle long-term. The selected experts who participated in the construction of the scenarios were active in policy, NGO, sector representative organizations, business and universities and had either links with the domain of food or that of (sustainable) consumption. The research team participated in the workshops which were facilitated by an external consultant. The results from the workshops served as a basis to construct the

scenarios. The consumer perspectives are seen as a logical continuation of the three discourse-based scenarios.

The idea behind the workshop design was to allow both utopian as well as dystopian elements to seep into the conceptions based on the strategies, i.e. to construct images that are based on the distinctive strategies as such (considered in 'pure' terms) not to presuppose sustainable (i.e. good) behaviour and simply 'deposit' this under a theoretic umbrella. However, the resulting future images are still too much dominated by the tendency to describe 'perfect paradise' future conceptions. From a scenario theory perspective, we can state that the CONSENTSUS exercise can be categorized both within the exploratory as well as the normative scenario typology. The ratios from the decomposition analysis provided a pre-determined (normative) framework of driving forces (see Table 1) and the three images (partly reflected in Table 2) are the result of an exploration of the three strategies.

Different instances of food consumption (POPED).

POPED	Themes	Eco-efficiency	De-commodification	Sufficiency
Produce and process	Product design	Eco-efficient technological innovations are flourishing supported by market forces, including applications in the service sector, like the *'mobile barbecue'* appliance one can rent on summer nights, which requires advanced spatial localisation, transportation and miniaturization technologies.	Local communities and governance structures play a powerful role in the product design. "An important part of the food system is managed through a communal coordination structure which decides, in each local community, through citizen-based peer to peer networks, what has to be grown, how it has to be prepared, etc…"	Before arriving on the market, products are carefully assessed by a central agency according to high-level criteria regarding the societal needs and the products' long-term impacts on well-being.
	GMO	GMO's are produced, as long as they reduce resource input or environmental impact in terms of use of water, pesticides, fertilizers… One consequence: GMOs are allowed for domestic production of non-seasonal and exotic species (reduction of transport-related impacts).	GMO's are in a moratorium and social norm generally considers them as unnecessary, e.g. financial motives for monoculture seed production have disappeared (i.e. production is not market-based and labour intensive, hence less efficient agriculture is not problematic) and local agricultural networks are producing within natural boundaries.	A *"cost-needs"* analysis is applied with regard to needs and impacts, and decisions for or against GMO are taken on a species-by-species basis.
	Agriculture	Hybrid agriculture combines elements of traditional, organic and high-technological agriculture. The use of information and communication technologies (GPS, GIS…) in agriculture enables decreasing environmental impacts at the same time as increasing economic efficiency. By means of better monitoring and surveillance mechanisms, large fields can be efficiently managed, also in environmental terms. Agricultural decisions are based on analysis done by computer systems.	The agriculture methods are not necessarily organic, but they fit with the respect of the local environment and its inhabitants. Because of the prominence given to local networks, agricultural output is partly stemming from urban farming, and a part of the food also comes from orchard production in the neighbourhood. Cultivating methods and processes are based on local knowledge. The rather small size of the fields, and the large number of individuals engaged into agricultural activities, makes their management and surveillance easier. Agricultural decisions are taken by citizen/farmers.	Both urban and local agriculture and globalized production exist. There is a very intensive research and development activity on 'limit'-management and carrying capacities. The context imposes either the use of ICT-based agriculture or organic agriculture.

	'Farmers'	Farmers are mostly contract employees in productivity-enhancing production units. When they are engaged in organic agriculture, apart from an elite serving the high-end market, the farms are partnerships or franchises of large enterprises (occasionally even multinationals).	Everybody has a share, at least part-time, in the food production system and has some knowledge or practice on how to farm the land (or to process food).	Social norm considers farming as a highly ascribed profession, which remains in the hands of few strictly controlled units.
	Food processing	A great percentage of the food is highly processed: most of the food is "convenience food": deep-frozen, ready to (h)eat, and the (rare) fresh products are all ready to eat. The kitchens are thus minimally equipped, being used mostly to "regenerate" (defreeze and heat) rather than to cook.	The processing industry has almost disappeared. Most of the meals are freshly cooked, and the remaining processing activities are "community-based" (bread, jams…). Most of the cooking is done on a community-base in canteens, or local kitchens.	Both highly and low processed food are to be fined along the distinction between 'eat' and 'feed'. Fresh meals are often based on products from local/urban agriculture, while globalized agriculture provides the processing industry. Processing is mainly connected either to health, basic needs or well-being aspects: e.g. highly processed health 'packages' and functional food provide for 'feeding' products. No more 'non-functional' additives for texture or colour exist, as they are not considered as serving basic needs' satisfaction.
	Meat/animals	Cattle for meat (issued from a species selection according to their ecological footprint) is bred in a limited quantity, which makes meat very expensive. It is then largely replaced by protein substitutes produced in the laboratories of the processing industry.	People eat meat from locally bred cattle according to local geographical context and citizens' preferences. Animal welfare is taken into account as people are involved in the production process and develop a sense of responsibility with regard to cattle.	In general, people do not eat a lot of meat. A careful questioning about meat eating has become the norm, trying to balance physical needs, hedonist pleasure and animal welfare. Most people eat meat only at special occasions.

POPED	Themes	Eco-efficiency	De-commodification	Sufficiency
Obtain	Product variety	People are provided with any kind of food possible. The diversity is very high (with the exception of real meat).	Local and seasonal food does not per se mean less diversity, and communal institutions reflect to guarantee a "reasonable choice", e.g. through investing in 'forgotten' local species. A system of regulation and limited exchange between communities (at regional and global level) contributes to some 'exotic' diversity.	The diversity of food is relative to the needs expressed by the consumers: according to the norm and the 'cost/benefit' analysis in terms of need, impacts and well-being, plethoric diversity is counter-productive on all aspects.
	Locus of exchange	Food is bought on-line, at hypermarkets, or at highly specialized shops (for some market-niches). Food is delivered either directly to the household's "mailbox-fridges" or to neighbourhood's larders. Efficient transport, saving energy, is a very competitive element.	Food comes directly from the local stocks. It is dispatched to all active citizens/households, at specific hubs like schools, municipalities or workplaces … Fresh communally prepared meals are available in local collective kitchens.	There is a combination of anonymous and accessible supermarkets and small and local hubs and shops.
Prepare	Cooking	Cooking skills of households are limited, as specialized food services are predominant: people often prefer to eat out, or heat already prepared meals.	Most cooking is shifted to the community level: to the local collective kitchens, as to care-oriented institutions which use cooking as an activity for schools, elderly, etc.	Preparing food is very popular in a lot of societal groups. People like to experiment with recipes, tastes… ('eating' moments). 'Ordinary', daily cooking disappeared and is replaced by functional food packages which need no preparation ('feeding' moments).
	Appliances	Hi-tech cooking devices (BBQ, grill, etc.) are mostly rented and the market develops a high innovation rate. Kitchens are minimally equipped (mostly with only 'regenerative' devices).	Most individual kitchens are minimally equipped, and many households have none. The cooking, even at the household level is mostly done in local communal kitchens 'around the corner'.	The devices are functional. Most preparation for 'eating' moments is done with family or friends and requires few electric appliances. To control their nutritional intake, some people use technological devices, either PC-like, either integrated chips.
	Services	Food economy is almost exclusively a food services economy, answering the consumers' demand for high convenience and specialisation. A large number of restaurants serve large varieties of food, based on market-niches (e.g. special for pregnant women or sports(wo)men).	Local communities manage the food system so as to provide to all at least the minimal nutritionally balanced diet, everybody contributes to the food services, mainly through the collective local kitchens. People often eat out of the house, at neighbourhood kitchens/"canteens".	Services are mainly focused on personal empowerment and research of well-being. Lot of services revolves around information and knowledge management. Eating out is quite common, mostly in convivial atmosphere.

Eat	Diet	The diet is defined by a rather flexible consumer culture and the products are provided by commercialized structures.	The diet is seasonal-based and partly dependent on a local food management team. Moreover, it is very region-based and culturally specific.	The diet is highly varying within groups and through time. The diet is primarily focusing on personal and social needs and takes environmental and social impacts into account.
	Health	Laboratory research makes it possible to make 'tasty' food healthy by replacing fat and sugar by worthy substitutes.	Food is minimally processed, local and fresh. Local menu service groups work at providing healthy and nutritionally balanced food.	Extreme eating behaviour is socially controlled. Some people use technological devices to monitor personal food intake.
Discard	Waste	There are bio-methanization installations at household or collective level.	Composting is common, even absolutely necessary in order to be able to 'close' the rather local resource cycles.	Waste is considered something very negative and everything is done to prevent it.
	Packaging	Biodegradable (or even edible) packaging provides less environmental impact.	The packaging is very low, since most of the food is fresh.	There is a lot of re-use and prevention.

Table 2 – Different instances of food consumption

DECOMPOSITION ANALYSIS TO FRAME SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION STRATEGIES

One of the main objectives of the consumption-oriented strands of the research was to synthesize the (abundant) literature on consumption from different social sciences (sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology, marketing research) into a workable scheme enabling the design of a relevant and consistent set of alternative scenarios. The challenge was to translate theoretical accounts on sustainable consumption into a practical structure for scenario design. This has been solved through the use of 'decomposition analysis'. The method allows deducing interrelated parameters (i.e. macro-economic 'identities') that encompass the construct of sustainable consumption. Decomposition Analysis was initially introduced by Kaya in the context of climate change and has recently been used in scenario for carbon reduction.

In a decomposition analysis a problem, in this case sustainable consumption, is split up in various significant (sub)ratios. This somewhat formal approach starts from the basic assumption that sustainability can be measured by an indicator of productivity of valuable resources (or of material efficiency) in the well-being production process. This can be expressed in the following formula (Boulanger, 2008 inspired by Nörgard):

$$S = \frac{WB}{EF}$$

(1)

where S: sustainability; WB: the level of well-being; EF: the environmental load or ecological footprint.

The formula is not to be considered as an equation with calculable and interdependent ratios but rather as a meaningful way to formalize a construct and hence to think about its internal causal relationships, therefore allowing to organize discussions on the issues at stake. The ecological footprint concept has been incorporated in order to encompass the wider definition referred to in the introduction. As a measure to value ecological functions in terms of bio-productive land it has a significant relation to the issue of sustainable development. The ecological footprint concept is particularly insightful to connect the distribution of resource-use and the role of demand. We, however, do not discuss these related aspects in great detail for the purpose of the scenario construction. We propose to decompose formula (1) in:

$$S = \left(\frac{WB}{C}\right) \times \left(\frac{C}{EF}\right)$$

(2)

where C = commodities. Thus (WB/C) refers to the productivity of commodities in terms of well-being and (C/EF) to the intensity of commodities in natural resources.

Formula (2) shows that sustainability can be improved by increasing (WB/C), by increasing (C/EF) or both, or, putting things the other way round, by decreasing the intensity of commodities in well-being, by decreasing the intensity4 of resources in commodities or both. Things can be disaggregated further. The term (WB/C) can be expressed as

$$\left(\frac{WB}{Se}\right) \times \left(\frac{Se}{C}\right)$$

"Se" refers to the notion of service as used by Nörgard (like in the context of energy and not as used in the national accounting context) who adopted it from Daly. Indeed, what matters for the energy consumer is not energy-use as such but the lighting, mechanical power, etc. brought by energy. Likewise, what matters for the user of a TV-set is not the TV-set as a thing but the services it provides in terms of TV-programs, etc. One way to define the notion of service in a need-satisfier framework advocated by Max-Neef is to define it as the interface between the satisfier and the need or as the "satisfying virtue" of the satisfier. WB/Se stands for the productivity of the services in terms of well-being and Se/C for "consumption efficiency", i.e. the productivity of commodities in producing services. The full formula then becomes:

$$S = \left(\frac{WB}{Se}\right) \times \left(\frac{Se}{C}\right) \times \left(\frac{C}{EF}\right)$$

(3)

This formula highlights three discourses on sustainable consumption: each of the three ratios represents a 'pure' strategy to enhance sustainability (for more information see Boulanger [15]). The word 'strategy' must be considered as referring to both (1) the framing of the objective to be reached (i.e. the ratio of the decomposition analysis) as well as (2) indications on the way it could be reached (i.e. the corpus of structured ideas). The strategies must rather be seen as structured reflections on general guiding principles than as a corpus of ready-made or concrete policy options.

ECO-EFFICIENCY – EE (C/EF)

The eco-efficiency strategy aims at increasing the C/EF ratio by decreasing EF, i.e. decreasing directly the intensity in materials (including the non-renewable sources of energy) of the production, use and disposal of commodities. This strategy captures the core of the ecological modernization strand, putting forward mottos like factor 4 (i.e. a 75% reduction in natural resources uses) and is also linked to the discourses of industrial ecology [18] or the Cradle-to-Cradle movement.

DE-COMMODIFICATION – DC (SE/C)

The second strategy aims at increasing the ratio Se/C by decreasing C. This ratio has been labelled the De-commoditization strategy. This strategy aims at reversing the "commoditization" process described by Manno as the *"tendency to preferentially develop things most suited to functioning as commodities – things with qualities that facilitates buying and selling – as the answer to each and every type of human want and need"*. De-commoditization implies a decoupling of the functions provided by commodities from the market-based demand, limiting as a consequence the influence of markets and increasing the influence of other systems or organisations through which needs and aspirations can be satisfied through. That is, incorporating other 'modes of provision', heaving over responsibility and management to other societal instances than the markets, i.e. public, communal or domestic agencies.

SUFFICIENCY – S (WB/SE)

This strategy aims at increasing the WB/Se ratio formally by decreasing Se while maintaining or increasing the generated WB. This amounts to partly disconnecting well-being from the services of commodities, i.e. in simplified terms, reconsidering product functions (use-value, brand value, etc.) in function of the well-being they generate. This ratio could be called the strategy of cultural de-materialization of needs satisfaction, or in simplified terms, the Sufficiency strategy, which is partly captured in the adage "Less is more". This strategy is highly complex because it entails, as a consequence of a complexification of the understanding of well-being, a subjective and an objective factor at the same time. Additionally it has a definite normative or moral dimension because the principle of sufficiency involves the sphere of private needs and wants (individual behaviour) and connects them to a larger societal objective. This strategy is closely linked to the growing, diverse and not unified discourses related to the principle of sufficiency, such as Voluntary Simplicity and Religious Frugality. Authors such as Galbraith, Daly, Sachs, Princen have urged the need to address the problem of consumer satisfaction and affluence beyond the resource-problem, and concluded in the direction of steady-state economies or even de-growth.

These three rather theoretical discourses, or strategies, on sustainable consumption have been at the core of the structure given to the scenario exercise. Each of them has further been explored through the construction of a scenario illustrating what the world could potentially look like in 2050 if we were to follow the principles of each of these discourses.

RESULTS

SCENARIOS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION

The decomposition analysis of the sustainable consumption equation into three strategies, the participative expert workshops as well as further desk work have led to three scenarios describing potential 2050 worlds where the principles of eco-efficiency (EE), de-commodification (DC) and sufficiency (S) have been applied. Table 1 enumerates the general drivers of each scenario. These drivers – or aspects of them – are not mutually exclusive – note for instance confidence in technology is also to be found in the S and DC scenario – but they aim comprising the logical structure of the scenario.

On a more specific level three alternative modes of food consumption are represented by means of what we have labelled the POPED framework, which aims to structure the food consumption system along the line of different consumption 'instances', namely, producing (processing), obtaining (distribution), preparing, eating and disposing. Table 2 summarizes the content of the scenarios along the lines of this integrative framework. It is striking how the food-related practices and relationships among actors qualitatively vary across the different guiding principles.

It must, however, be noted that the final results in the form of the POPED framework are inspired by the particular ideas as they emerged at the workshops. Hence they possess an inevitable subjective factor. Nonetheless each scenario is a plausible future state, i.e. the scenarios remain logically connected to the underpinnings of the strategies. The E scenario tells of a hypermodern world where food is provided by an anonymous and highly productive service sector. Food technology has become very energy efficient and food prices have become a representation of the environmental cost.

The DC scenario departs from the idea that the local community has re-gained authority, resulting in the merging of consumption and production. It is relevant to mention that the localism inspired scenario (local self-sufficiency) is but one possible representation of what a de-commodification could imply. Another possible snapshot image might involve a household based global network, exchanging products on basis of personal connections and mutual need.

The S scenario shows a society that systematically applies an operational principle based on limits and needs. The psycho-social dimension of the principle results in a situation where food is embedded in social norm in a particular way, following the dynamics of 'enoughness' throughout the design, production and consumption of food. Food becoming particularly important is logical in a sufficiency-based society due to the 'special' status it possesses as primary need. Technology (and to a certain extent science) in principle becomes instrumental to personal satisfaction, societal well-being and the interaction between both.

In this article we specifically wish to focus on the consumer perspectives that can be 'deduced' from the three discourse-based scenarios. It is of course impossible to give a comprehensive overview of the specific types of consumers and consumer lifestyles that would inhabit these 'worlds' for the scenarios are limited and abstract representations of possible realities. We address an archetypical consumer, i.e. a generalized consumer developed on the basis of the structural and content elements of the three scenarios. They illustrate how the environment of interactions around the consumer fundamentally changes throughout the three discourses. These 'elements of interaction' are interesting for policy makers to use in consumer policy that aims at integrating sustainability discourses, and should be considered as a form of heuristics, enlisting a series of aspects that constitute a 'social arrangement'.

The concept of 'lifestyles' is relevant here. This approach receives a multitude of definitions. but can broadly speaking be subdivided in a 'sociological' definition, which sees it as particular ways in which people generate meaning through an assemblage of practices, and a 'marketing' definition, which defines lifestyle as 'ways in which people spend time and money'. However, until now it does remain somewhat unclear how lifestyles are precisely to be used in the sustainability discourse. The perspectives as they are based on normative guidelines could be used to serve both for sociological and marketing-orientated lifestyle research.

THREE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES

Each scenario reveals a different type (or position) of a consumer. Based on analysis of the scenarios consumer groups can be framed either as decision makers, citizen-entrepreneurs or self-reflexive consumers. Each consumer type is presented in this paper, and further illustrated through a series of constituent aspects (i.e. participation, conflicting values, trust and knowledge).

CONSUMER DEFINITIONS

ECO-EFFICIENCY (EE) CONSUMER

The first perspective – central in the EE-strategy – defines consumers as autonomous buyers whose aggregate choices determine the future of food production. The concept of consumer sovereignty is central in this perspective. The core argument with regard to sustainability goes that choosing for green products through the market steers society towards sustainable food production, provided that the right incentives are given. Sovereignty implies that a consumer is purposeful and goal oriented. The consumer 'steers' the market deciding what product (s) he chooses (and hence not chooses) to

buy, thus deciding which products (and companies) are profitable. A limit of this EE perspective is that, on the one hand, not all market segments are (equally) sovereign (low purchase power), and on the other hand, that not all consumers act (or have the possibility to act) in accordance with a stabilized (goal-orientated) belief-set.

DE-COMMODIFICATION (DC) CONSUMER

In the DC scenario, the consumer can be seen as a citizen-entrepreneur. This type of consumer has significant influence on the way the food supply is organized. Local governance systems (consisting of local citizens and municipal actors) are configured in order to organize the food system. Consumers in a way are 'entrepreneurs', taking actively part in the management of the food system. In this less commoditized world, a political consumer emerges. Not just a 'voting at the check-out consumer' but a concerned civic actor. Both individually as well as in groups, this citizen-consumer shapes the socio-technical system as such, i.e. (s) he is taking an active part in the forming of social organisations (the farm, the canteen…) and technologies (processing equipment…).

In the DC scenario as well, limitations can be anticipated. This scenario implies 'command-driven' modes of provision and can be related to a communal ideal, all citizens having equal participation in the food system, which is not at all straightforward to realize.

SUFFICIENCY (S) CONSUMER

In the sufficiency world, a self-reflexive consumer emerges. Sufficiency revolves around balancing individual needs with "reasonable" levels of consumption. The personal component is thus complemented with an altruistic element, i.e. considering the consequences of one's actions in a larger framework of social and environmental conditions. For this reason a typical consumer has come to question the underpinnings of consumption practices as such. Aware of the cultural relativity of behavioural patterns, this type of consumer debates on how the good life can be (re)defined. The mainstream consumer in the S scenario has acknowledged the existence of inevitable underlying complexity. Firstly, he understands personal complexity, i.e. that on a personal level, not only rational (or conceptual) mechanisms drive his/her behaviour. Amongst others, it is understood that (1) other modes of thinking guide behaviour (unconscious motivations, intuitive and emotional thinking), that (2) social norm and culture foster incentives to act and that (3) structural conditions limit possibilities. Secondly, the sufficiency consumer also acknowledges process-related complexity, i.e. how everyday life is under constant change and how the conditions of well-being are related to the contingent situations and thus never completely identical. Uncertainty, unpredictability, uncontrollability and cultural relativity are concepts that one tries to take along in decision processes and evaluation afterwards. The limit of this S perspective is that such a level of self-consciousness and continuous assessment of one's own behaviour is perhaps beyond human capacity (as such this perspective generates an interesting discussion on human nature, the profile of men, etc.).

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE PERSPECTIVES

The three perspectives are now worked out in a number of constituent elements. For an overview we refer to comparative Table 3.

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

The EE scenario portrays a 'passive' consumer, whose participation and reflexivity in terms of sustainability criteria is integrated at the level of the purchase act, through the types of product and services bought. The DC scenario is characterized by co-production, blurring the distinction between

consumption and production. Therefore, the consumer participates to the very definition (delineation) of the patterns of production and consumption. The sufficiency scenario features a highly self conscious consumer, continuously analysing his consumption behaviour through 'cost/benefit' analysis in terms of impact on personal and social well-being, direct and global environment.

Consumer perspectives.

Consumer perspectives	Eco-efficiency (EE): Sovereign decision maker:	De-commodification (DC): Citizen–Entrepreneur:	Sufficiency (S): Self-reflexive consumer:
Mainstream driver	Price and quality; self interest	Responsibility and local constraints	Needs and value-management
Consumer participation	'Passive' consumer	Co-production	Self-empowerment
Handling conflicting values	Value mediation through private institution	Value deliberation through local citizens agency	Value assessment on basis of sufficiency and context
Consumer trust	Trust in institutions (market and science)	Trust in their local community	Trust in facilitated self-reflexivity
Consumer knowledge	Food quality assessment through brands, labels, …	Food system direct knowledge	Self-knowledge (personal attitude towards food)

Table 3 – Consumer perspectives

HANDLING CONFLICTING VALUES

Conflicting values on food consumption vary in the three scenarios. In the EE scenario, the food provision is highly customized. This customer- and convenience-oriented approach allows for conflicting values concerning food consumption to be 'channelled' by the private institutions that provide the food. Indeed, all kinds of consumer preferences (premium brand products, retail brand products, biological products, fresh products, ready meals, etc.) are available for purchase. They are thus mediated at centralized points, i.e. by the retailers who avoid conflict with regard to production values (see Dixon, 2002 in: Lockie). In the DC scenario, this is more likely a process of value convergence. People will need to limit their individual desiderata about food due to the constraints of local food management. Further conflicts will be mediated through the local citizens' agencies through time intensive direct democracy processes of deliberation. The S scenario presupposes intensive value deliberation, based on external expertise. The consumption of certain products will be dependent on what could be called their 'needs impact assessment'. For example, does the level of coffee consumption (value of personal pleasure) affect the level of economic dislocation in coffee dependent nations (value of economic equity).

CONSUMER TRUST

Consumer trust is related to the kind of institutions or societal actors that are trusted or granted authority. Consumers often rely on information or advice coming from actors who (might) have access to what economists call credence qualities, i.e. non-verifiable product qualities (not even after consumption) such as the environmental history of the product. The way consumer trust is built has direct implications for the notion of food security and we therefore also address this notion vis-à-vis each consumer perspective. In the EE scenario, business and science are considered as principal generators of trust, i.e. social norm puts great trust in technological and economical progress. These actors communicate through media, advertising, labels, warranties and other 'indirect' information devices.

This type of mediated trust too has implications for food security. Since the EE scenario conceives the main driver of sustainable consumption to be sustainable purchase (in that way moving towards a green market) the implications of green consumers' choices should be managed by independent ethical mechanisms or institutions either internal or external to food-related companies. If ethical buying has to lead to a changed pattern in which everybody has access to affordable, safe and nutritious food than ethical aspects and treatment of externalities will have to be incorporated mostly at the level of the

private institutions providing food products. Effective state or auto-control will hence be essential and mediation of values (supra.) will relate to a differentiation in price tags.

In the DC scenario, the mechanism of trust is particularly different because products generally have significantly less credence qualities than in the EE scenario. People manage their own food supply and have a rather precise knowledge, individually and at the local community level, on the details of the origin, of its production, processing and distribution. With regard to food security it is of importance to notice that the local organization and coordination of food will facilitate a transparent process that enables a clearer link between the implications of production and the setting of the price. Since consumers are part of the production process there will be shared risk as well as a more clear view on how externalities are treated. Local food security is most likely to be attained when cooperation dynamics are optimal. Competiveness amongst regions – each region 'falling back' on their own proper local values – is however possible in this model and might yield impediments (nationalism, isolationism…) towards a global food security.

From a sufficiency perspective finally, the individual as such is the basic vessel of trust because self-knowledge is considered essential to assess sufficiency (cf. infra). Yet, anticipating on this possibility, this will only work given adequate educational systems, interpersonal trust, and other similar criteria. Again considering the relation with food security, this type of more reflexive and ethical consumption will automatically centralize the issues and principles revolved around food security within the decision framework of consumption. These kinds of principles – for example the principle of availability of food – will be used to access personal decisions within the complex dynamics of the food system.

Generally, one could say that, in EE, the consumers trust institutions; in DC, they trust people they know because of the effectiveness of social control; and in the S scenario, they rely mainly on themselves, but with the help of groups and expertise (e.g. psychotherapy, etc.).

CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE

Finally, we consider the topic of consumer knowledge. In the EE world, the distance between producer and consumer widens. The organization of food is left in the hands of a highly efficient and privatized production system. Knowledge on food (production) is very low (due to the highly technological systems only to be understood by specialists). However, precise, comprehensive and understandable information is demanded by the consumers to assess food quality (and initiate 'selective pressures') through brands, labels, etc.

A strong link with education is a logical characteristic of the DC scenario. The low level of commodification implies that people have to organize their own knowledge and production networks (there is less standardization). An active safe, healthy and efficient local management of the food system by the citizens presupposes adequate education, at the same time generalist (overall sustainability) and specialized (food-related techniques). In the S scenario the object of knowledge focuses on the nature and dynamics of needs satisfaction, to a large extent, in function of an increased well-being and quality of life. This calls for new instruments, heuristics, indicators and lifestyles that integrate the different levels of sufficiency. On a personal level, a higher degree of self-knowledge (or reflexivity) seems to be logically connected with the aptness to reach sufficiency. Indeed knowing one's self implies a more efficient relationship between the desired service and the experienced satisfaction. In respect to the more objective thresholds of sufficiency (for example daily amount of

calories, or sufficient top soil quality), the assistance of technology and decision matrices is often used.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Addressing sustainable consumption has led to a specific scenario approach consisting of both normative and explorative elements.

The scenarios and the deduced consumer perspectives primarily aim at generating learning effects more specifically by stimulating debate in research, stakeholder and mainstream arenas. Framing alternative food consumption practices through structured and discourse-based scenario construction can potentially support bridging the gap between academic research and political debate and/or introduce consumption policy to a more encompassing socio-cultural perspective on the issue. The analysis on the consumer perspectives shows that consumer identity consists of more than merely consumer choice, as is often implied in academic research or public campaigning addressing consumption.

The normative discourse approach – in this project generated by means of the decomposition analysis – provides a formal (yet not inclusive) ground to communicate on the relationship between current food consumption behaviour and sustainability goals. The normative discourse methodology could be further tested using different 'applications', i.e. re-doing the scenario exercise with other themes and different groups. The method could for instance be applied in an educational setting, aiming at introducing sustainability principles. Or, the other way around, the robustness of the principles as such could be tested through scenario development. Such kind of endeavors can yield a basis to connect normative and empirical dimensions in research in Habermasian terms. Scenario exercises harbor potential to streamline a more deepened debate and the potential transformative changes in future governance. However as long as the intrinsic processes of democratic structures remain dictated by short term electoral and economic goals the qualitative system changes as they proposed and understood in the scenarios cannot be straightforwardly considered.

Phase 1 showed that stakeholders identified the decommodification scenario as being the most important and interesting to further put emphasise on: subsequently, decommodification was taken as the overarching starting point for Phase 2 of CONSENTSUS.

SECOND PHASE – GOVERNANCE OF AND DYNAMICS IN FOOD NICHES

The present report emphasises on the second phase of the CONSENTSUS project (2009-2011) which is dedicated to the study of the potential of "new" perspectives, practices and governance approaches to draw insights in terms of potential pathways towards sustainable food consumption in Belgium. Through system innovation and transition management approaches, the project focuses on 'niches', i.e. 'incubation rooms' where "*novelties are created, tested and diffused''*, where learning processes occur and social networks are built to support an innovation. In the transition theory, these innovative practices and socio-technical objects are minority but potentially capable to impose themselves in the future as the dominant systems. As a consequence, the second phase of CONSENTSUS focuses on the study of the mechanisms – organisational, personal and institutional - of selected niches and the way they relate to the 'regime', i.e. the dominant system. Before entering the detailed presentation of the results, we present some elements of introduction to the basic theoretical and conceptual stances taken during phase 2 of CONSENTSUS.

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT, REGIMES AND NICHES: THE CASE OF FOOD

The current agro-food system is under heavy pressure. These pressures are stemming from various domains, including on the very foundations of the food system. Among the various structural pressures, the foreseen end of cheap oil will heavily impact the fundamental characteristics of current patterns of production and consumption: fertilizers, 'cold chain', distribution system, products diversity, household purchase patterns, etc. Furthermore, recent food sanitary crises and related questioning regarding the safety and nutritional value of standardized industrial food have brought to light the weaknesses of the agro-food industry. The impacts related to the current agro-food system at the environmental level raise also a lot of concerns, e.g. "industrial" methods of production and delocalization of food which leads to long-distance transport. In economic terms, the food economy is based on long supply chains which creates a producer-consumer divide and where intermediates (food industry, large retailers) capture the main part of the added value of food products. Moreover, the different failures related to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), originally created in a productivist logic supported by large subsidies, justify the need of a transition of the whole agro-food system.
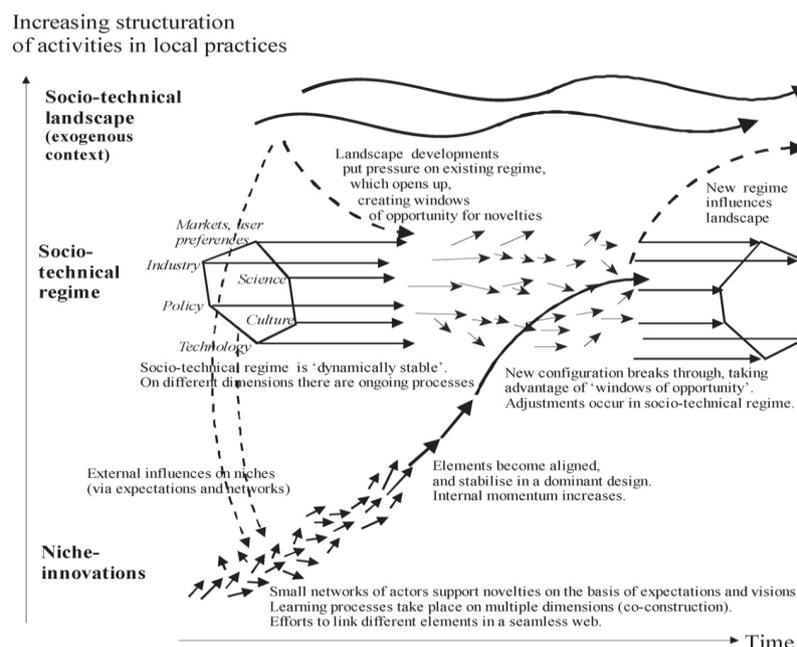

Figure 2 – A Typology of socio-technical transition pathways (Geels, Schoot 2007)

In sum, at medium or long term, the current modes of food provision will irremediably have to adapt drastically or are endangered to collapse. Transition approaches and, more generically, system innovation policies are directed towards influencing or facilitating structural and radical modifications of socio-technical arrangements on a long term basis without brutal shocks and ruptures. Transition management analyses systemic societal changes through the interactions between three levels of structuring, i.e. the *multi-level* concept composed of three levels:

- *Niches* (micro-level) are small units of innovation, socio-technical networks governed by paradigms different from those prevailing in the dominant socio-technical systems.
- *Regimes* (meso-level) are modes of ordering, systems of rules that coordinate networks of actors and things. They are characterized by the incorporation of given paradigms into concrete socio-technical systems and generally resist change (through the phenomenon of 'path dependencies').
- *Socio-technical landscapes* (macro-level) form an exogenous environment beyond the direct influence of niche and regime actors (macro-economics, deep cultural patterns, macropolitical developments).

According to this multi-level perspective (see figure 2), transitions come about through interactions between processes at these three levels (Geels and Schot, 2007): *a) niche-innovations build up internal momentum, through learning processes, support from powerful groups, b) changes at the landscape level create pressure on the regime, c) destabilisation of the regime creates windows of opportunity for niche innovations. The alignment of these processes enables the breakthrough of novelties in mainstream markets where they compete with the existing regime.*

FOCUS ON DECOMMODIFICATION, ON LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS AND FOOD TEAMS

The food system, as illustrated in the first phase of the CONSENTSUS project, is made of deeply interrelated moments - production, distribution, purchase, consumption - which are not dissociable. However, the transition and system innovation theories tend to focus mainly on the production and technical side of the transition; i.e. how innovative approaches can trickle down in industrial sectors. Therefore, during the second phase, we strived to enrich these theories through focusing on the missing consumption perspective, or, to put it differently, with an emphasis on the 'production-consumption junction' as the crucial observation point (it is Spaargaren who coined the concept of 'consumption junction', Spaargaren, 2007).

The three scenarios developed in the first phase of the CONSENTSUS project - while being focused on consumption - showed the absolute necessity to include in the focus of the research aspects of provision and distribution and even of production of food. It occurred furthermore during the workshop discussions with our panel of experts that the decommodification strategy was evaluated as being the most promising to bring about systemic change in consumption patterns. Decommodification can be synthesized as a reinvention of structures and habits of exchange of goods and services, or - in other terms – as a reinvention of our current prevalent market practices in consumption. It was obvious that phase 2 had to include a study focus on a niche which was particularly exemplary in terms of a decommodification strategy, which we operationalized into a focus on *alternative food networks*, in particular *local food systems* also named *short food supply chains*.

In these local food systems, of which an infinite number of interpretations and practices exist throughout the world and in Belgium, food products (preferably indigenous species) are locally and seasonally grown, notably in order to diminish "food miles" and support local traditions and culture in food production, supply and consumption. Moreover, farmers and consumers constitute the main actors of a local food system, singling out agro-food corporations and retailers. In this perspective, local food systems favour what has been coined as a re-localization of the food system and a re-socialization - or at least a re-connection of the linkages - between producers and consumers as well as among consumers themselves.

More precisely, in phase 2 of CONSENTSUS we examine a specific interpretation of local food systems: **Belgian food teams**. Food teams are operationalisations of alternative food consumption systems in which groups of consumers are in relatively close contact with groups of producers, and where sustainable (local and in most cases organic) agriculture is promoted. For this double characteristic, those local food systems can be interpreted as being 'sustainable experimentations', i.e. 'niches', which could be promoted to foster the systemic transition of the wider food system.

I. ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS AS CONSUMPTION NICHES

The present Chapter I and the subsequent Chapters II and III synthesize the main findings of WP5, 6 and 7 of the second Phase of the CONSENTSUS project; i.e. the mechanics, dynamics and governance of local food teams in Belgium as a case study to improve our understanding of the pertinence of concepts from 'Transition Management' to the policy domain of consumption. This Chapter I starts from the state-of-the-art of local food systems, presents some working definitions elaborated for the project. In a second instance, we present the results of two case study explorations: the Flemish *Voedselteams* are investigated according to a practice approach; the Walloon and Brussels local food systems are explored for the internal dynamics and motivations of the groups.

A. LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS: STATE OF THE ART

THE RISE OF ALTERNATIVE AGRO-FOOD NETWORKS

The term 'alternative agro-food networks' (AAN) designates a variety of emerging practices, organizations and institutions in food provisioning whose (only) common characteristic is to take distance with respect to the dominant, market-oriented channels of production and distribution of food (Holloway, Kneafsey, Venn, Cox, Dowler, & Tuomainen, 2007). Are categorized as AAN, initiatives such as vegetable box schemes, fair trade networks, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture, food cooperatives, the Slow Food Movement, AMAP (in France), community gardens... We call *Local food systems* (LFS) those AAN that emphasize the minimization of the geographical distance between producers and consumers of food products. In Belgium, the most common form of LFS are food teams (Verhaegen & Van Huylenbroeck, 2001) known as "*Voedselteams*" in Flanders, GASAP ("*Groupe d'Achat Solidaire de l'Agriculture Paysanne*") in Brussels and GAS ("*Groupe d'Achat Solidaire*") or GAC (*Groupe d'Achat Commun*) in Wallonia.

These local modes of provisioning have been recently mushrooming in prosperous countries at such a pace that a new word has been added to the 2007 issue of the New Oxford American Dictionnary: "*locavore*" defined as 'a local resident who tries to eat only food grown or produced within a 100-mile radius' (Thilmany, Bond, & Bond, 2008, p. 1303). For instance, in the USA, the number of farmer markets has registered a 150% increase between 1997 and 2006 with a 20% increase in sales between 2000 and 2005. As for Community-supported Agriculture (CSA), they have been introduced into USA in 1985. Only 50 farms were concerned in 1990 but currently (2008) about 1,900 farms are involved in such a mechanism (Brown & Miller, 2008). In France, the AMAP (*Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne*) movement, which is very close to the CSA concept, is said to concern about 50,000 households, that is about 200,000 consumers clustered in something about 1,000 - 1,200 associations with sales amounting to more or less 36 million Euros. Information on UK (Seyfang 2006), Scandinavia (Terragni, Torjusen, & Vitterso, 2009), Italy, Austria, Japan (where the CSA model is said to be born), confirm this evidence of a "momentum" in the local food movement.

Accompanying the burgeoning of AAN, several scientific disciplines, amongst which mainly rural sociology, human geography, agricultural economics, anthropology of food and economic sociology have been busy analysing their characteristics, the motivations of their participants, their differences compared to the mainstream food provisioning systems and the reasons for their development. This has given rise to a multiplication of papers on alternative agro-food networks in journals such as

"Sociologia Ruralis", the "Journal of Rural Studies", the "American Journal of Alternative Agriculture". This literature brings useful information on consumers' and producers' motivations to get involved in LFS and proposes some conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In what follows we briefly summarize the main empirical results and theoretical propositions found in this literature.

CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIVATIONS OF ACTORS (PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS)

Who are the actors (producers and consumers) of LFS and what are their motivations? Brown & Miller (2008) present a synthesis of two national surveys of CSA farms in USA, in 1999 and 2001. They showed that about 95% of the CSA farmers used organic cultural practices; that they were younger, more educated (generally with a college degree) and more likely to be women than average farmers. Figures on incomes are difficult to interpret. Indeed, if CSA farmers have, in general, higher gross incomes than conventional farms it may be thanks to off-farm earnings. On the other hand, if farmers consider that the share prices covered their operating costs, it seems that many didn't include adequate salaries in their estimations. There seems to be a high level of turnover. Brown and Miller (2008) report on a ten year follow-up of twenty-four CSA farms that shows that only fourteen of them were still operating as CSA after ten years but that the total number remained relatively steady over the period due to new start-ups of which many quit after only one or two years.

Concerning farmers' and consumers' characteristics and motivations, Cone & Myrhe's (2000) study of CSA farms, though restricted to only 8 CSA farms is nevertheless quite informative thanks to its duration (five years), the depth of the inquiry and the multiplication of surveying tools used (participant observation-working on the farms, focus groups, telephone and face-to-face interviews). Furthermore, they paid also attention to members who left CSA (74 phone interviews) in order to collect their motivations. They discovered that all farmers had experienced non-farm activities as adults before turning to agriculture and that all the farmers supplemented their income with additional non CSA activities (e.g. selling to restaurants) or even part-time jobs during winter, whilst all wanted to fully support themselves by farming. The survey conducted by Olivier and Coquart (2010) on about 101 AMAP involving 66 producers confirms some of the results obtained by Cone & Myrhe (2000) on CSA's farmers. Most of them are rather newcomers in farming, having relinquished a former activity and switched to – generally – organic horticulture. They are all small holders, exploiting sometimes less than 3 ha. Though many are certified organic producers, it is far from being the case for everyone, but they must comply with the "Alliance" charter that prohibits the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. However, it seems that the AMAP consumers are somewhat indifferent with respect to organic certification. This confirms the emphasis put on inter-individual trusts as guarantee of compliance with the charter requirements rather than on administrative control. As is the case for CSA, for farmers the AMAP-system is generally only one channel of distribution alongside more traditional ones. Typically, they sell about 40% or their production in the AMAP and the remainder mainly on street markets.

CSA members ("shareholders") analysed by Cone and Myrhe are well-educated, having at least a college degree. The most frequently cited occupations are professional (32%) and education (22%); 42% have annual incomes above $50.000. In general, annual incomes are the lowest in CSA that have the highest rate of participation and vice versa. Women are generally more active than men: *"In the course of conducting shareholder interviews and through participant observation on the farms, it appeared that, though men were often key supporters and members of core groups, the bulk of responsibility for CSA membership was assumed by women."* (Cone & Myrhe, 2000, p. 191). It is noteworthy that: *"Three-fourths of the 62 persons interviewed had some farm experience – they grew up on farms or often visited the farms of their grandparents or other family members. Essentially all*

the farm members were urban dwellers but, in addition to their farms membership, over half currently did some vegetable and/or flower gardening" (Cone & Myrhe, 2000, p. 191).

Amongst the most important motivations for taking a share in a CSA farm, Cone and Myrhe found, in decreasing order: concern for a healthy environment; desire for fresh and organic food; support for local food sources; knowing how and where the food was grown and a desire to eat vegetables in season. This ranking of priorities contrasts sharply with the results of Zepeda and Li (2006) econometric analysis of the probability of buying local (at farmers' markets). They found that the most predictive variables were in decreasing order: having a positive attitude towards cooking, being used to organic food purchases and having behaviours related to food knowledge (gardening, shopping at health food stores). When controlling for others variables, they found no influence of demographic variables (except for a negative influence of having income in the highest quintile) nor of attitudinal variables related to health, the environment or concern with farmers receiving adequate prices. Like CSA shareholders, the consumers of Zepeda and Li have some background familiarity with farming or gardening (and cooking), but their motivations are clearly more hedonistic and individualistic.

The annual cost of a share ranged from $350 to $425 and was supposed to feed four people. A comparison with prices in supermarkets showed that products from CSA farms were on average cheaper than in supermarkets, for both conventional and organic food. Others results reported by Brown & Miller (2008) confirm that, in general, organic products are cheaper (and fresher) in LFS than in supermarkets. It is less clear for conventional products. Indeed, the shareholders were in general satisfied with the cost of the share. The problems, if any, were mostly related to the variety and kinds of vegetables. After inconvenience, this was the main reason for non-returning: *"In a random phone survey with 74 non-returning members from five of the farms, inconvenience was the most common reason (54%) why people did not renew their membership. Delivery times were inconvenient. Some weeks the family rarely ate at home. Variety and quantity issues were a close second (50%). Many felt they didn't get enough of one vegetable or another, or complained about getting too many vegetables or, in some cases, too little for a meal. On the other hand, all but 2 of the 74 nonreturning members agreed that CSA was a worthwhile endeavour."* (Cone & Myrhe, 2000, p. 191).

What the survey also demonstrates is that participating in a LFS involves a learning process, which explains why the probability of leaving the system decreases with time. Members have to learn a new way of life, new practices. They have to develop new routines of obtaining, preparing and cooking food. Farmers, also, have to acquire a wide variety of skills not only in farming and gardening but also in communication and social relations management in order to build a stable and committed group of shareholders. Furthermore: *"All the farmers aspired to practice sustainable gardening. To do so, they must use methods that were congruent with the environmental characteristics of their farm. This required careful observation, experimentation, flexibility and a breadth of knowledge regarding diversity of soils, plants, insects, and animals as appropriate forms of mechanical and organic technology. Most of the farms were growing at least 30 different kinds of produce. The farmers have to become experts in complexity of natural systems... All of them function as independent researchers"* (Cone & Myrhe, 2000, p. 195).

The information on motivations of participants induces some relativism with respect to the "alternativeness" of some of the AAN. Actually, they can be qualified as "alternative" on two different grounds: either because they stand frontally (and politically) in opposition to the dominant practices in food provisioning considered as socially unjust, environmentally harmful and unhealthy or because they just propose "others" ways of giving access to food and "others" kinds of relations between

producers and consumers. Using Hirschman vocabulary, the first attitude conceives of AAN as manifestations of *VOICING* against the dominant system of production, distribution and marketing of food while, for the latter, AAN are more conceived of as ways to *EXIT* from the dominant system, to "sit besides" it without necessarily contesting it. As Goodman (2003) remarks, the first attitude is more common in North America and the second one in Europe. However, the degree of "alternativeness" depends on national or even regional contexts. For example, farmers' markets are much more alternative in USA than in France where they never disappeared despite the development of the other marketing channels. Likewise, in France, the protection of regional and local productions against trends of standardization of products and intensification of production is far from new. Such forms of re-localization are not considered "alternative" anymore in France (or in Italy), but have been fully institutionalized. The contrary holds for alternatives like AMAP which are genuine innovations insofar as they constitute new modes of coordination between producers and consumers and question the sustainability of the dominant systems of food provisioning (Olivier & Coquart, 2010).

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AS INSTITUTIONS

By focusing solely on individual motivations, we run the risk of missing the most interesting aspect of the LFS phenomena, its institutional character, by which we mean the fact that they consist of coordination systems between producers and consumers, buyers and sellers. Actually, we found no article dealing directly with the question of diversity of re-embedding initiatives. On the contrary, many articles deal altogether (or in successive sections) with farmers' markets and CSA, for instance, without wondering what are the fundamental differences between them and even why these two different kinds of LFS exist at all, instead of just one unique model of re-localized food chain.

It is precisely the research program of the new institutional economics to account for the diversity of relations, coordination systems and kinds of contracts between economic agents. According to Ménard (2000), the economics of agro-food network is particularly likely to benefit from the recent developments in neo-institutional economics if any because of the richness of institutional forms that can be observed in the sector. Another reason is that the agro-food sector is, almost everywhere but in varying degrees under State regulations and norms. Unfortunately, so far, it is mainly the mainstream agro-economic structures and relations that the new institutional economics has dealt with. Alternatives production and consumption arrangements have not received, as far as we know, the same attention from specialists of the discipline.

In what follows we will briefly consider how two different brands of the new institutional economics account for (or could account for) LFS: the transactions costs approach mainly associated with the name of O. Williamson and the economics of conventions approach mainly advocated by L. Thévenot and his associates.

THE TRANSACTION COST APPROACH

According to the transactions costs approach, different governance structures (institutions and kinds of contracts) arise from differences in transactions costs; i.e. in costs entailed by the management of relations between economic partners, e.g. buyers and sellers. The problem which transactions costs economics addresses is the following: when is it more profitable for a firm to internalize part or all of its supply chain – which is called vertically integration – and when is it preferable to look on the market for procurement. The rule is the following: the more it is costly to coordinate actions between a buyer and a seller, the more vertical integration will be looked at. There are four kinds of transactions costs (Williamson, 1979): information, negotiation, monitoring and enforcement costs. The first ones

arise *ex ante* and refer to costs of identifying trading partners, specifying and identifying product quality, gathering price information etc. The second arise during the transaction and refer to the costs of determining contractual terms, paying agents, etc. The third and fourth arise *ex post*, and refer to the costs of ensuring that the terms of the agreement have been respected and, if not, the costs of solving the problem.

If the two extreme cases with respect to vertical integration and complexity of contracting arrangements are at one end spot markets and at the other, hierarchies (i.e. firms), there are many possible hybrid models in between such as franchises, joint ventures, strategic alliances contracting, etc. Hierarchies (such as firms) are considered as the highest level of "vertical integration" because they totally internalize the transaction, the buyer and the seller sharing a common identity or being included inside the same institutional boundaries.

The importance of transaction costs depends on three characteristics of the transaction: the degree of uncertainty surrounding the procurement (quantity, quality and price), its frequency and the specificity of resources involved in the transaction, i.e. the easiness with which actors can reinvest these resources in transacting with others partners. Hobbs and Young (1999) provide a useful discussion of the factors that influence these characteristics in the food chain context. They distinguish three categories of factors: product characteristics, regulatory drivers and technology drivers. Uncertainty is also disaggregated into four categories: uncertainty for the buyer over the product quality and over the reliability of supply (timeliness and quantities), uncertainty for the seller on finding a buyer, and uncertainty for both over prices. The factors that influence uncertainty, frequency and specificity of assets in the agro-food chain are: perishability, product differentiation, visibility and variability of quality, liability, traceability and company specific technologies. Perishability – the deterioration of product quality through time - raises uncertainty for the buyer on the usable final quantity and increases negotiation costs because it is to be decided who is responsible for product quality at the different stages of the transaction. Transaction costs increase also in proportion to the level of differentiation of produces: *"(...) the transaction becomes more complex – a variety of outcomes are possible and often, the parties to the transaction have made an asset specific investment: sellers in differentiating their product to the specifications of an individual buyer; buyers in tailoring their (...) practices to the products of specific sellers"*. (Hobbs & Young, 1999, p. 6).

Also, when quality cannot be easily checked by the buyer, for example when it is linked to remote ecological, social or ethical (e.g. animal welfare) conditions of production or to non visible characteristics, or when quality is uncorrelated with appearances as is often the case with organic or traditional foodstuff, the buyer is uncertain about crucial features of the transaction. In the food context, all these factors are more and more salient as consumers become more demanding in terms of freshness, safety and ecological friendliness whilst technologies such as biotechnologies (GMO) and globalization render foodstuffs' quality and safety increasingly difficult to assess for the consumer.

Transaction costs theory predicts that the more uncertainty surrounding the transactions and the more specific resources are put to work, the more coordination between parties will depart from the spot market model and the more vertically integrated governance structures (contracting) will be developed. This explains the multiplication of contracting schemes between producers and processors in mainstream agro-industry. *"Under a contract, a farm devolves control over certain aspects of production and/or marketing in return for greater surety over access to markets or inputs and lower risk"*. (Hobbs & Young, 1999, p. 9). Food Teams, CSA, AMAP, etc. are also kinds of procurement contracts, in some ways similar to those that occur more and more often in the mainstream food chain. It would be instructive to compare systematically the contracts that tie partners of the mainstream food

chain with the arrangements between farmers and households in LFS and wonder which kind or contract a farmer having to chose between the two options would prefer and why. It is likely that factors such as the size of the farm, the background and know-how of the farmer and the social and cultural context surrounding him/her would influence the decision.

Of course, LFS are not free of transactions costs. At first sight, they even seem to be higher than in the common marketing channel, both for producers and for consumers. However, cost-benefit comparisons between the different available alternatives indicate that LFS are nevertheless finally more profitable for farmers. This is, at least, the conclusion of Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck (2001) who compared the differences in costs and benefits for farmers of six different alternative marketing channels. In all alternative channels, revenues were higher than in the common one, because prices were higher in general, including for products considered second-class, which are sanctioned rather hard in the common marketing channel. Quantities sold were roughly the same or slightly less but in that latter case higher price compensated for the loss.

Commercialisation costs (mostly transport and packaging costs) are of course higher than in the common channel for any direct selling alternative (directs sales on the farm, farmers' markets and food teams) but roughly equal in other cases (cooperatives). Transaction costs are correlated with commercialization costs as they vary in proportion to the investment of farmers in marketing their produces. Amongst the different alternatives examined, the collective ones enable savings in information (because they allow pooling of information) and negotiation costs with respect to the individual solutions (direct selling on the farm) and bring higher turnovers in consumers. In brief, all alternative systems seem to generate extra revenues with respect to the common marketing system that are considered sufficient to compensate for the increase in others costs (commercialization and transaction). Some caveats exists. First, farmers may overestimate revenues and underestimate extra costs, especially transaction costs because they are not expressed in monetary terms. Second, the farmers interviewed by Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck had original production methods and management practices that were already close to what these alternatives require or foster so that they didn't incur high adaptation costs. Finally, in systems where farmers take over part of the marketing function of wholesalers and retailers, there can be a competition in labour time allocation between production and commercialization activities so that only farms where no labour shortage exists can benefit from them. All in all, if the alternative channels amount to adding additional costs in terms of commercialization, these are generally compensated by higher prices and, for some of them (food teams, notably) by reduced uncertainty concerning both prices and quantities sold. In particular, institutions like CSA and AMAP, which impose extra burden in terms of information, negotiation and commercialization (transport, packaging) costs can nevertheless be justified on purely economic grounds by savings in financial costs (pre-financing of production) and reduction of uncertainty about quantities and prices. A similar cost-benefit analysis led by Olivier et Coquart (2010) on 101 AMAP gives almost the same conclusions.

Ventura and Milone (2004) highlight another benefit of LFS, tightly related to the reduction of uncertainty around prices and quantities: economies of scope, i.e. reduction in the average costs of producing and selling different produces. *"The existence of local systems, characterized by production processes that are strongly embedded within local culture and ecology allow farms to achieve economies of scope, without an increase in the uncertainty associated with market exchange mechanisms."* (Ventura & Milone, 2004, p. 59).

In sum, for farmers, the economic benefits from LFS can be the following:

- In CSA cases, savings in investments costs since the production is, at least partly, pre-financed.
- Reduction in uncertainty about the quantity they will be able to sell because the customers are committed to buy a specified amount;
- Reduction in uncertainty on prices because they are negotiated beforehand
- Economies of scope allowing diversification of production
- Commercialization costs can be higher or lower than in the mainstream channel, depending on the kind of LFS.

Consumers in food teams, AMAPs or CSAs also incur transaction costs, at first sight much higher than in the dominant marketing channel. They have to bear costs of identifying producers, negotiating prices, managing the orders, dispatching the boxes, coordinating members, organizing meetings, etc. We have seen that the most often invoked reason for leaving LFS was 'inconvenience', a part of which consists of transactions costs deemed too heavy. We know from the aforementioned analysis of consumer's motivations that not all of them (a majority, in fact) regard them as costs but, for those who do, we must deduce that, if they accept to incur them, it is probably because they consider that they are offset by the counterbalancing benefits consisting of a reduction in uncertainty about the quality of food and, in many cases, better prices for organic food than in industrial marketing channels. Therefore, for consumers, as was the case for farmers, it is the reduction in uncertainty brought by the LFS that is traded against the increase in other transaction costs. But, for consumers – contrarily to farmers - it is mainly the uncertainty on quality that matters, not uncertainty on prices and quantities. Because food is something we incorporate, concern with safety is particularly salient. The more "miles" the food travel before being incorporate, the more uncertainties about the freshness and safety of produces. Of course, as we have already mentioned, the agro-industrial sector has struggled hard in order to (and partly succeed in) developing safeguards in form of norms and labels (the costs of which have generally been shifted to the consumer and/or the taxpayer) supposed to reduce these uncertainties. However the aforementioned food scares have eroded consumers' confidence in the faithfulness of the labels and certifications and in the effectiveness of the monitoring by state or commercial agencies. Local Food Systems are seen as more reassuring and trustworthy ways to obtain healthy and secure food.

The transaction cost approach is based on the fundamental assumption that what happens between buyers and sellers apart from the material exchange itself, is necessarily a cost, something that should be minimized as far as possible. As Oberhsall and Leifer (1986, p.246) observed: *"In many situations, however, it is not clear that activities and transactions in the pursuit of an ostensible goal are costs alone. Benefits may be derived from the participation in a "costly" activity."* This is especially true in LFS activities. That the consumers do indeed enjoy interacting with farmers (and with other consumers) has been amply documented in many LFS surveys. It is less obvious for farmers who have first to make a living but it transpires from many interviews with farmers that many of them also prize the relationship with their customers. Hinrichs, amongst others, observed that: *"Many farmers participate in farmers' markets both because of the premium they get over wholesale price and because they enjoy the market experience as a social event."* (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 298). Anyway, this makes a significant difference with respect to the usual economical way of thinking: *"The ambiguity of costs, benefits, and goals suggests a reversal of economist's logic. Instead of explaining institutions on the basis of transaction costs minimization, one might try explaining what comes to be regarded as "costly" and "beneficial" in terms of the institutions. Bargaining, monitoring, and enforcement elicit varying enthusiasms in the modern factory, the fruit market, and the family."* (Obershall & Leifer, 1986, p. 248).

There is also an almost unique feature of the economic relationship between farmers and consumers in LFS which poses a real challenge to the transaction costs approach: it is an economic relation between households. Obviously, the consumers are households but it is also the case for farmers. A family farm is a special economic unit because it mixes institutional characteristics of the firm and of the family: two quite different kinds of institutions. Otherwise stated, there are no clear boundaries separating the familly unit from the economic one. What is efficient from the economic unit point of view may be inefficient from the household point of view and the other way round. In terms of the economics of convention, we would say it combines elements of the domestic world with elements of the industrial and of the market world.

THE 'ECONOMICS OF CONVENTIONS' APPROACH

The economics of convention qualifies also as institutional economics insofar as it addresses the same problem of coordination between economic actors and starts more or less from the same basic assumptions concerning uncertainties, incompleteness of contracts and bounded rationality. However, it goes farther than the transaction costs approach in its interpretation of uncertainty. For convention theory, it is the situation of interaction itself that remains indeterminate so long as actors don't arrive at an agreement on its nature and on the appropriate behaviour to adopt.

" (...) conventions theory views productive activity as a form of "collective action" one which relies upon the co-ordination of various entities and actors within some type of "action framework" (network, filière, chain, etc.). At the heart of this collective action are "conventions"." (Murdoch & Miele, 1999, p. 471). Conventions are 'practices, routines, agreements and their associated informal and institutional forms which bind acts together through mutual expectations' (Salais and Storper 1992, p.174). The coordination of the mutual expectations necessitates common systems and criteria of "qualification", i.e. of definition and assessment of quality of the situation, persons and things.

Drawing on Boltanski et Thévenot (1991), Thévenot (1998) distinguishes 5 categories of quality conventions: commercial (evaluation by price), domestic (attachment to place and tradition), industrial (efficiency and reliability), public or "opinion" (recognition of trademarks and brands) and civic (ecological, health and safety). In his analysis of the value chain for South African Wine, Ponte (2009), rescuing the "inspired" world of Boltanski et Thévenot (1991), adds a sixth quality convention named "inspirational" in cases *"where the personality of one of the actors ...his/her genius, intuition, creativity, vision or downright weirdness substitutes for other means of assessing quality."* (Ponte, 2009, p. 240). He shows that there is a correspondence between these different quality conventions and the segmentation of wine production in three quality brackets: basic, mid-range and top. Industrial and market conventions (prices) qualify the basic level. At the mid-range quality level, three others conventions are used: the domestic convention with reference to brand and geographical origin (ex: Bordeaux), the civic with reference to environmental and social concerns (organic, fair trade...) and the opinion convention with reference to endorsement by wine writes or publications. The domestic and opinion conventions still play a role for the top-rated wines with refinement of geographic origin into *terroirs* (ex: Graves, St-Emilion, etc.) and endorsement by influential writers. The inspiration convention also intervenes for a few exceptional or very successful wines.

Also starting from Boltanski and Thevenot (1991), Storper and Salais (1997) developed a slightly modified version of the economics of convention. They consider only four bundles of conventions called "worlds of production". The four worlds are derived from the intersection of two orthogonal dimensions of any production process. The first dimension opposes "standardized" to "specialized" products. A standardized product is produced using, known, widely diffused technologies 'in which

quality is so widely attainable that competition comes to be inevitably centred on price' (Storper, 1997, p. 109). On the contrary, specialized products are made with technologies and know-how restricted to a community of specialists and the competition on them centres on quality, price being a secondary element.

The second dimension opposes "generic" to "dedicated" products. The former can be sold directly on the market because its qualities are well-known to consumers, either because of their standardization or because of a well-developed brand name that conveys the product's qualities in the name. A generic product is typically associated with predictable markets and a relatively stable number of consumers. On the contrary, a dedicated product is oriented towards a particular demand, towards the need of a particular client or type of client: *"(t)he limit case of dedication is customization, where the "market" as such reduces to interpersonal negotiations rather than normal supply and demand curves."* (Storper, 1997, pp. 109-110).
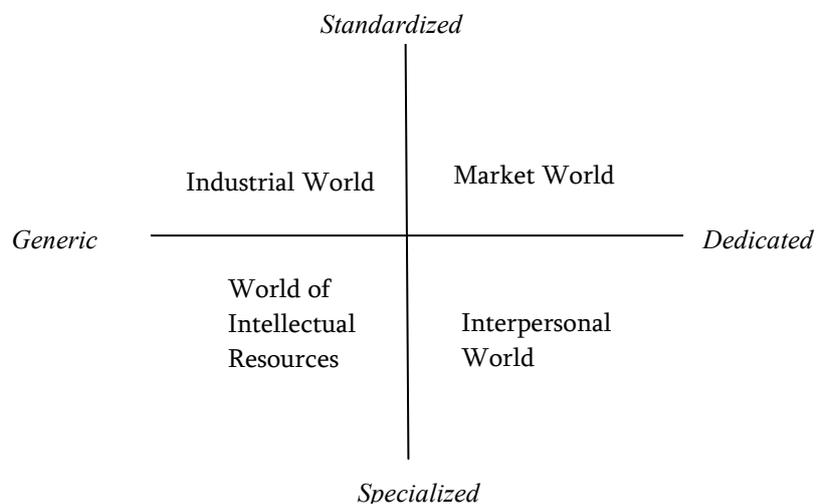
Figure 2 - Summarizes Storper and Salais conception of the worlds of production

Referring to Storper's framework, Murdoch and Miele (1999) analyzed the recent evolution of two Italian food processors and producers. The first, actually the largest producer of eggs in Italy underwent a diversification process, evolving from a unique Industrial World model of standardized, generic products towards standardized dedicated products (Market World) with an innovation such as the "egg-salami" (dedicated to special customers, especially the catering companies) and free-range farmed eggs on one hand, and towards specialized dedicated ones (Interpersonal World) with organic eggs on the other hand. The second, a group of five leading organic food cooperatives underwent a symmetrical evolution from the Interpersonal World Model towards the Market one, with the creation of a chain of small supermarkets or franchising shops arguing that 'Up to now the final price for consumers of many organic products has been affected much more by the inefficiency of the distribution channels than by the higher costs of production' (Murdoch & Miele, 1999, p. 477).

To conclude, the economics of convention approach would explain the diversity of LFS forms in terms of varying degrees of market, industrial, domestic and civic elements of convention in qualification of food. Returning to figure 1, the ranking of LFS would correspond to the respective share of market and industrial conventional elements on one hand, and of domestic and civic elements on the other hand in the definition of food and of the relation between producers and consumers.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AS 'EMBEDDEDNESS'

Re-introducing elements of domestic and civic conventions in economic transaction around food amounts - from a new sociology of economics point of view – is to re-embed market relations in social networks and culture. Indeed, this is how scholars in the tradition of the new economic sociology (Hinrichs 2000; Murdoch, Marsden and Banks 2000; Winter 2003) analyse LFS. The term 're-embedding' is used by Thorne (1996) in her discussion of LETS (Local Exchange and Trading Systems) to characterize the purposive action by which individuals or communities seek to create accessible structures that can allow them to regain some control within exchange processes. It makes reference to the concept of "embeddedness" which has its roots in Polanyi's work but became central in economic sociology since Granovetter's (1985) seminal paper "Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness" where he *"(...) argued that social relations can substantially alter the nature of transactions between individuals through "generating trust and discouraging malfeasance" (...), particularly where there is direct and ongoing interaction between the participants concerned. This has led to a more general acknowledgement that in reality the highly abstracted neoclassical conception of the market, and its associated economic activity, is always embedded within a wider political, cultural and social framework."* (Kirwan, 2004, p. 397).

Re–embedding is obviously the reverse of the dis-embbeding process, which Giddens (1990, 1991) considers the hallmark of modernity and that he defines as a *"lifting out of social relationships from local contexts and their recombination across indefinite time/space distances."* (Giddens, 1991, p. 242). In modernity, Giddens argue, coordination between individuals occurs across time and space through two abstracts systems: "symbolic tokens" and "expert systems". The former refers to symbolic media of exchange which have standard value and are therefore interchangeable across a variety of contexts. Money is of course the prime example of such an abstract system of symbolic tokens. It brackets space because it makes possible transactions between people who will never meet each other and who can be very remote in space. And, as a means of credit, it brackets time as well. By "expert system", Giddens means the systems of technical and specialized knowledge or know-how depending on rules of procedure transferable from individual to individual.

"Expert systems bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients that make use of them. Such systems penetrate virtually all aspects of social life in conditions of modernity – in respect of the food we eat (our emphasis), the medicine we take, the buildings we inhabit, the forms of transport we use and a multiplicity of other phenomena." (Giddens, 1991, p. 18).

It follows that, in order to function in modern societies, people must trust a multitude of systems and mechanisms they don't understand generally and on which they have no control. It is a different kind of trust than the one we have in persons we know and who we can qualify as trustable or not. The trust in abstract systems *"presumes a leap to commitment, a quality of "faith" which is irreducible. It is specifically related to absence in time and space, as well as ignorance."* (id. p.19). Giddens wrote these lines at a time when the major episodic food scares (BSE; *E. Coli*; foot and mouth disease; avian influenza...) were yet to come. The process of dis-embedding the production and consumption of food was at its climax and so was the confidence people had in the capacity of the agro-industrial expert systems to provide safe and quality foodstuffs. It is undeniable that the successive recent food scares have eroded the confidence people, especially the middle class (Goodman & Goodman, 2007), have in the industrial, globalized, agro-food experts systems giving rise to the current trend in re-embedding, i.e. re-localizing, food chains.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AS NICHES OF DE-COMMODIFICATION

In a transition (to sustainable consumption) management context, where three strategies have been highlighted, LFS are considered as niches of de-commodification of the food provisioning system. Indeed, beyond their differences in terms of scope, institutional setting, depth and strength of motivations of their initiators and participants, all AAN share a common concern with a - more or less radical - de-commoditization of food provisioning. De- commodification of consumption (Boulanger, 2010), in general, consists of substituting non-commercial goods and services for commercial ones, defined as: *"goods, services and experiences which have been produced solely in order to be sold on the market to consumers…(and) produced by institutions which are not interested in need or cultural values but in profit and economic values."* (Slater, 1997, p. 25). Manno (2002) shows that all goods and services can be ranked on a scale of "commodity potential", a measure of the degree to which they have qualities that are associated with, and define, a commodity. Goods that have "High Commodity Potential" (HCP) are generally those that are the most alienable, excludable, standardized, uniform, adaptable, depersonalized, anonymous, mobile, transferable, international, and context-independent, etc. On the contrary, goods and services that have low commodity potential are openly accessible or difficult to price, context-dependent, embedded, personalized, and localized.

Until recently, the tendency has been to *commodify* food as far as possible. Practically, as Goodman & al (1987) show, this has been done by combining two interrelated processes: *appropriationism*, or the attempt to replace previously natural production processes by industrial activities, and *substitutionism* or the substitution of industrial products for natural products in the food sector.

"The two processes can be seen as part of a general attempt to progressively "squeeze" biological constraints out of the production process so that, in some sense, nature is "domesticated".....the use of technologies associated with such activities as food preservation, preparation and packaging can be seen as general attempts to minimize the impacts of the biological or natural content of food products, yet they have also enabled extended linkages between distant places to be forged. Such technologies both preserve food over time and allow its movement over space thereby facilitating globalization." (Murdoch & Miele, 1999, pp. 467-468). This goes also hand in hand with standardization in production and consumption. AAN, on the contrary, aim at substituting context-dependent, embedded, personalized and localized food products to the uniform, depersonalized, anonymous, international and context-independent products sold on supermarkets shelves.

ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS: ADOPTED WORKING DEFINITIONS

On the basis of the literature review, the project adopted a series of working definitions, mainly with the objective to streamline our wording. Indeed, AAN exist in many forms and have a tremendous variety of expressions in practice.

ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS

The concept of 'alternative food networks' designates food systems which differ from the dominant agro-food system and are created as a reaction to the conventional productivist agriculture. The emergence of these systems is related to several reasons, namely consumers' concerns for *"food safety, animal welfare, environmental effects, regional development and the interest in better quality and*

fresher food' (Mathijs et al, 2006, p5) and the farmers' wish to capture a bigger part of the final value of products by diminishing or avoiding middlemen (Marsden et al, 2000).

The alternativeness of such systems is related to different dimensions or specific qualities, i.e. of the products (fresh, tasty, specific origin), of the production methods (environmental friendly, traditional, socially sound, animal welfare, aesthetic attributes) and of the marketing system (direct selling, short chain supply, box schemes, specific labelling, local/regional embeddedness) (Levidow and Darrot, 2010). Furthermore, alternative food networks are often characterized by an active involvement of the entire range of actors of the food system (farmers, processors, local distributors, CSOs, restaurants, consumers).

Alternative food networks include different kinds of systems, i.e. fair trade networks, 'slow food' movements, local and organic associations and so on. Some of these systems are searching for a *re-localization of food*: they are called 'local food systems'.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

'Local food systems' thus constitute one particular category of alternative food systems. They are defined as "*systems which allow a direct contact between consumers and producers, and/or in which consumers and producers enter into a long-term contractual relation with one another. The distance between the different actors should remain limited (geographically as well as for the number of links in the chain)*" (Mathijs et al, 2006, p7). Local food systems are thus based on some form of 'direct marketing': "*direct marketing, briefly, is largely defined by various producer-consumer pathways, both old and new, which shorten the conventional food chain, bringing these two groups of actors closer in proximity – and what this might actually and potentially denote*" (Feagan, 2008, p162). In reference with this spatial and human proximity between producers and consumers, 'local food systems' is often used as a synonym of 'short food supply chains'.

LFS include various marketing channels, i.e. on-farm sales, home sales, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, farmers' cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, box schemes (Mathijs et al, 2006) and food teams (!). This last system, chosen as case study of this research project, thus constitutes one particular kind of local food systems or short food supply chains. As a consequence, food teams share the common values of 'local food systems', but are also characterized by their specific functioning.

B. THE EMERGENCE AND ORIGINS OF BELGIAN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Local Food Systems (LFS) have emerged in Belgium in differentiated institutional contexts. Quite obviously, it is the local and regional contexts which framed the emergence of the food systems. The existing systems inherited thus extensively the conditions of regional policy regimes. As a consequence, we present hereafter the past and current food networks along the regional Belgian gradient: in Flanders, the Food networks emerged as '*Voedselteams*' (i.e. food teams); in Brussels, the networks developed on the scheme of GASAPs – Groupe d'achat solidaire de l'agriculture paysanne – which are closely inspired by the French practice in local food networks; in Wallonia, the food networks materialized as GACs – Groupement d'achat commun – much more inspired by historically existing consumer cooperatives. In parallel, Walloon GAS, similar to Brussels GASAPs, have been developed recently.

On top of the differentiated wording and acronyms, the 3 networks have their own history and developments, which we shortly detail hereafter.

Voedseteams (Flanders)

Voedselteams (Food teams in Flemish) is an alternative food system which came into existence in 1996 under the initiative of three societal organisations. An educational organisation (Elcker-Ick), a NGO focusing on food security (Wervel) and a NGO concerned with sustainable agriculture in the South (Vredeseilanden). More particularly the idea to set up a consumer-led short food supply chain initiative came from a few people who were concerned with the effects of globalization on agricultural issues. On the level of ideology two ideas played a crucial role in the emergence of the short chain initiative as an experiment. The first was the idea of local self-sufficiency and food security stemming from the eco-feminist thinking of people such as Dana Shiva. The second idea was sustainable development which has gained a significant group of enthusiasts in Flanders after the participation of a network of NGO members in the 1992 Rio Conference.

The coordination on organizational level – reaching over Flanders as a region - is since 2001 organized under the organizational structure of a non-profit organisation. In total 5 full-time-equivalent (in the form of 6 employees) are working on the coordination and steering of the food teams in Flanders. Occasionally volunteers help. Every province has its own coordinator(s). A multitude of tasks needs to be done by these people:
- contact and deliberation with the delivering as well as potential new producers
- assistance to set up new teams, organizing introduction meetings
- set up annual provincial meetings as well as the general assembly
- contact point for existing teams (complaints, external promotion, suggestions for new products and producers, etc.)
- maintaining the ordering website
- setting up meetings to set up a distribution system,
- communicating with the press and external communication
- writing subsidy applications (for dealing with staff costs)

The professionalization of the organization has introduced a number of important changes with regard to:
- the introduction of the standardized internet system
- the attempt to organize a distribution system
- the organisation of stakeholder meetings bringing together farmers
- the building of an international network with like-minded initiatives.

Currently, more or less 120 voedselteams are active in Flanders and new teams are in creation.

GASAP (Brussels)

The short food supply chain initiative GASAP (Groupe d'achat solidaire de l'agriculture paysanne) was initiated by members of the *Début des Haricots* , an non-profit organization founded in 2005 that focuses on creating citizen awareness with regard to environmental issues such as pollution and industrialization, with a specific attention towards food and agricultural aspects. Since then GASAP have become independent groups, coordinated by the *Réseau bruxellois des GASAP* (*Rézo).* This network gathers all Brussels GASAP, their producers as well as *Le Début des haricots*. Its main tasks

are to support the creation of new groups, to search for new producers, to organize an annual general assembly and to inform about GASAP.

GASAP are directly inspired by the French AMAP model (associations de maintien pour une agriculture paysanne) in which the direct contact between consumers and producers is deemed essential. Both consumers and produces have signed a charter in which they assert to comply to certain aspects (social, ecological and economical) related to sustainable smaller scale agriculture, to the short chain circuit and solidarity between both actors. Each newly formed consumer group and its producer is expected to sign a contract binding its members to purchase an amount of produce on a regular basis for the period of one year, at a constant price and quality. After initial set up assistance by people from the *Rezo*, teams are expected to function maximally autonomous. A certain structure is however laid out at the beginning. There are four functional tasks within each group; a general coordinator, a financial coordinator, someone who takes care of intake and a person who is responsible for purchase organization (depot, opening hours,..). Each functional task is filled out by two persons: one current responsible and one person who serves as back up. This back up person (reservist) then gets first-call responsibility when rotation sets in. Since 2006, the number of GASAP has grown from 3 to around 40 groups active in Brussels municipalities.

GAC and GAS (Wallonia)

Collective purchasing groups (groupes d'achats commun – GAC) are active in Wallonia. First groups have been created in the 80's and a part of them disappeared since then. Recent development is remarkable since 2005. Their overall structure is quite heterogeneous as well as their underlying rational (cf Chapter II.2.). In parallel, some Walloon GAS exist and are very close of the Brussels GASAP model. In absence of coordinating body, it is difficult to know the exact number of GAC and GAS. However, in 2011, Nature & Progrès made an inquiry and estimated that there were about 100 GAC and 2-3 GAS in Wallonia (Interview with Nature & Progrès, March 2011).

Despite these regional structural differences, note that the internal functioning of the three systems is based on volunteers: one team member needs to take care of general coordination of the team (taking into consideration complaints and suggestions, communication with other teams and/or the coordinating body), another member takes care of all financial transactions, a third member manages the intake of new members, welcoming and introducing them to the practice and others are arranging the delivery place (often through a rotational system). In some teams the same person remains team coordinator for years in other teams there is more rotation.

II. INSIDE FOOD TEAMS: PRACTICES AND DISCOURSES

CONSENTSUS strives to improve our understanding of the role of consumption in transitions to sustainability. In doing so we respond to a critique by several authors within transition management literature concerning the disproportional focus on the dynamics of technology, policy and market as compared to attention on user-dynamics, when analyzing a particular system from a transition perspective (Shove and Walker, 2007; Spaargaren, 2003). Repeatedly it has been argued that patterns of representation, perception, demand, lifestyles and everyday behaviour need to be incorporated within the system analysis of transitions. In this section, the analytical focus is shifted in a first case study (*Voedselteams*, Flanders) towards everyday practices related to purchasing, preparing and eating food. Every day life is similarly limited and steered by certain structures and social rules and hence shows potential to be object of analysis within a system analysis (see for instance Spaargaren, 2002). The second case study (Wallonia and Brussels) focuses on the exploration of the representations, motivations, attitudes of the members of the Local Food Networks. Both approaches are meant as independent, yet complementary, explorations of the socio-anthropological underpinnings and mechanisms generated within and through the participation in Local Food Networks.

The advocated weakness of the Transition Management approaches when it comes to a more consumer-based approach could be linked to the inherent complexity and indeterminacy of what we think consumption 'can be'. The scenario-phase of CONSENTSUS identified the existence of a certain 'relativity of consumption', i.e. pinpointing to the fact that the 'concept' of (sustainable) consumption as such changes according to different visions of sustainability. Transition management approaches – by definition - depart from the more prospective standpoint (Mermet, 2003) in which the formulation of long-term goals and visions by dedicated actors provides a relatively clear framework and process which are anchors to the emergence of learning effects and shared problem perceptions (Kemp and Loorbach, 2006). In Transition Management the formulated long-term visions are considered to be continually open to re-interpretation. The backcasting nature of the approaches allows for a relatively easy redefinition of objectives and targets and pathways during the TM-exercise. Nevertheless in TM, the constructed pathways are conceived as 'vehicles' which also are meant to produce political interest (Smith and Sterling, 2009). In our case, dealing with consumption as a focus for TM, the way in which 'consumption' is framed during the construction of pathways is thus also constrained by the political credibility of the proposed transition path. It has been observed that the more alternative strategies or pathways do not easily find anchorage within Transition Management processes: they don't resist the 'reality-check' of the participants' mainstream political and everyday world.

Spaargaren for instance, one of key proponents of the necessity to focus on consumption in transitions, clearly advocates for the incumbent vision of ecological modernization and opposes the depiction of a more alternative conception of the consumer as a 'food citizen': *"Talking to the farmer at the local food market and visiting the farms where our daily food stuffs are produced, can no longer remain the most dominant and relevant trust generating mechanism in reflexive modernity. People really have to rely on abstract systems, scientific expertise and various information systems, to make long-distance assessments on the quality of products and the reliability of the information flows that come along with them."*

Our insights from the first phase - notably during the assessments of the 3 consumption strategies with Q Methodology - however seem to point to the fact that alternative sustainability strategies such as De-commodification and Sufficiency are equally existing in the (expert) representations of a sustainable food consumption system. One of the common aims of both following case studies was to identify the existence of these more alternative strategies an depict how these are operationalised in everyday food consumption practices (part A below) as well as how they were shining through the statements, perceptions and motivations of Food Network participants (part B below).

A.   STRUCTURE AND AGENCY DYNAMICS OF AN EMERGING PRACTICE: CASE ANALYSIS OF *VOEDSELTEAMS*

USING THE CONCEPT OF 'PRACTICE'

Shifting the focus to a 'practice' is a widespread idea in cultural theory stemming from the contention to move away from 'individualist' and 'mentalist' accounts of what constitutes social change and to take into account the logic of the everyday. (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002b, Warde, 2005) There is however no unified approach and the attention to practices has been filled in differently by different authors. Consider for instance the institutional practice approach of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1984) next to the critique on what constitutes social (rule-interpretative) self-understanding of Charles Taylor (Taylor, 2004). Reckwitz (2002b) undertakes an attempt to make a synthesis of the practice approach. As a theory that tries to incorporate the volatile, heterogeneous and non-essentialist nature of cultural processes practice approach explicitly leaves aside from rational-individualist or rational-normative accounts that are constituted by the 'rational choice' and the 'social ought' model. A consumer or practice 'carrier' is hence not considered as a bundle of rational criteria, neither is he a malleable person who is highly susceptible to the symbolic structures imposed by social norms, etc. This has implications for research on consumption in a transitions and sustainability perspective.

Where other cultural theories take concepts such as 'mind' (objectively transcribed in structuralism, subjectively transcribed in phenomenology as consciousness), 'text' (semiotics, social linguistics, hermeneutics...) and 'intersubjective communication' (cf. The theory of communicative action by Habermas) as central to explain social change, the practice approach wishes to focus on the 'practice' as the routinized set of interconnected patterns found in everyday activities: *"A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge."* (Reckwitz, 2002b).

A practice can thus be considered as a form in which an interconnected set of routinized 'elements' are reproduced. It is clear that aspects of embodiment, the influence of artefacts and pre-conscious knowledge are considered as key additional aspects but the precise categories used to describe these elements are however suspect to interpretation (for an overview see Gram-Hannsen 2009). As Warde puts it: *"a practice can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice"* (Warde 2005, p.250). We therefore argue that because the object of analysis is located at the level of the heterogeneity of the 'everyday practice' – this can be virtually anything from shaving, to playing football to being a parliamentarian - the elements investigated and described are to a large extent co-determined by the specific case analysis that one takes to be the practice.

Because practice approaches step away from the idea that practices are solely steered by autonomous individual actors, but that they are rather reproduced within their logic (interconnectedness) of which actors are carriers (a combination of structure and agency) we need to find another concept that makes abstraction of individualism but keeps the teleological structure necessary to discriminate the sustainability of practices.

In transitions literature, the 'niche' comes about as an apt concept in that it is considered as an alternative mode of doing and saying that implies essential sources of systemic change. Where the concept of niche is originally often coined in studies of Strategic Niche Management (SNM), which studied market implementation of technological niches, the concept has recently inspired thinking on sustainability transitions (e.g. Geels 2005, Geels and Schot, 2007). Niche innovations are then seen from a broader perspective and can be anything ranging from *"new technologies, new rules and legislation, new organizations or even new projects, concepts or ideas."* (Loorbach, 2007, p.20).

One of the challenges of using practice approaches in this particular context, is obviously related to the opportunity to test the conceptual strengths of practice perspectives.

DATA GATHERING AND METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of the exploration was the study of consumer routines within a consumer-led short chain initiative called Food Teams (*Voedselteams* in Dutch). An initial exploration (for an account of these activities refer to the activity report 2008-2009) focused on the consumer-perspective by exploring the motivational aspects of members of the *Voedselteams*, but did not aim at describing the routines within the practice from a consumer perspective.

We have conducted ten in depth interviews with members and one ex-member of particular food teams. The interviews were conducted with a pre-prepared list of questions based on 4 themes: motivation, communication and relations, cooking and household and purchase. The four themes were followed as guideline and the questions were held back as a reference but not explicitly ran through in order to allow interviewees a degree of freedom. The underlying idea was to find out more about the routines consumer have developed and the perceptions they have on these routines since they have become member of the niche. The *Voedselteam* members belonged to 7 different teams. Two of them were principal coordinator (of which one interview was with a couple considering themselves both as coordinator of 'their' team), one was financial coordinator, 5 of them had no specific functions apart from occasionally being responsible for the depot (4 of them). One person interviewed was about to leave the initiative, another person who was interviewed had left the initiative (but had still contact with the organization from a professional standpoint).

In addition to the individual face-to-face interviews a series of focus groups were conducted. The same 4 themes were used to conduct 2 two-hour focus groups. In the first focus group (5 woman), the themes 'cooking and kitchen' and 'motivation' were treated; in the second focus group (3 woman, 2 men), the themes 'purchase' and 'communication' were central. Two facilitators conducted each focus group.

Additionally, we reconstructed some aspects of the producers' perception of *Voedselteams* by interviewing some people that are either producer (two farmers) or have an overview on the situation (a person who professionally works with farmers). Also, we interviewed three people who were active in the overarching coordinating structure of the *Voedselteams*. Together with an analysis of brochures

and documents, internal communication, policy documents and website information, these additional interviews were used to gain understanding about the ruptures and constraints with regard to the development of the *Voedselteams,* i.e. what could be termed also: the internal niche routines.

The producer perspective was not the scope of the research but as mentioned we did however try to include the perception of the producers by interviewing two producers. In addition we also had the idea to conduct heterogeneous groups with producers and consumers, which would have been particularly interesting because a coordinator gave away that *"in meetings with either producers or either consumers we notice how personal interest plays a role, and mutual understanding seems to disappear"* (personal communication, 2009). It would have been particularly interesting too bring these two groups together and see how new perspectives emerged as a result of discussion. Question remains if focus groups would have been the best medium for this. Looking at the producer's conception vis-à-vis short chain consumer led initiatives - such as food teams – could be an important avenue for future research.

ROUTINES AS AN INITIAL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Because 'practices' depict such a wide field of actions it is important to let the structure of the practice 'speak'. The non- essentialist logic of the practice approach thus allows to let the analytical categories to be determined by the concrete practice as such. In this we follow the few other scholars who have tried to apply practice approach to empirical material such as analysis of household standby consumption (Gram-Hannsen 2009) in which categories are determined to adequately describe the content of the case study or the analysis of food consumption data (Halkier, 2009) in which practice elements are determined by whether one considerers 'environmental friendly consumption' or rather 'food consumption practices' as a boundary object (Halkier, 2009).

We will analyze the practice *Voedselteams* in terms of the 'routine'-approach by presenting the key routines by means of a structure-agency scheme which uses three dimensions: agency, material-functional structure and socio-cultural structure. By referring to quotes from participants and discursive material from texts (stemming from the participants) we will try to illustrate the interplay between agency, material and social structure. Using this frame we (1) highlight how routines are ideally constructed within the niche (2) point out the internal instabilities with regard to the re-production of these routines. In addition we stress the importance of communication routines within the niche and how there is a tension between the ideological and functional core of the niche. Finally we confront these findings with elements of identification and how this relates to the integrative strength of the niche.

A NICHE-PRACTICE MODEL

As a framework to analyse our empirical findings, we use a model that is inspired from Spaargaren's adaptation of *structuration theory* (Giddens, 1984) in the field of environmental sociology (Spaargaren, 2003). Although the basic assumptions (e.g. individuals are not at the centre, behavioural change should not be understood in terms of attitudes...) of the presented model are equivalent with the social practice model of Spaargaren, there are also a number of important differences.

First, the level at which we scrutinize social practices is more particular to the empirical dimension of the study. Where Spaargaren speaks about food routines, we focus on more specific routines within the domain of food such as preparing and planning meals or purchasing ingredients. Second, we depart from the idea that sustainable lifestyles are exclusively built on the domain-specific categories which are usually referred to in sustainability research (e.g. food, mobility, tourism, energy). Practices can be

cross-cutting and integrative with regard to these sectors and - reasoning from the 'lifeworld' of the individual – one does not (always) think in terms of these categories. Third, where Spaargaren considers 'structure' as pertaining to the systems of provision - implicitly departing from a high degree of invariability of the existing systems - we perceive structures as material and immaterial objects that stand between and mediate between different subjects. Furthermore we consider agency as something that co-shapes the emergence of the objects (and systems) that are within these provision structures. These processes of co-evolution are especially visible within the niche, where often new objects emerge in order to create an alternative system.

The three-tier practice model conceptualizes social practice as a set of routines that are influenced by the interplay of three levels based on this constant tension between (or 'duality' of) agency and structure. This framework allows to depict three key activities (set of routines) within the niche practice. We assess the potential of a new analytical lens within practice approach. Each particular key routine is shaped by a primary motivational enactment, the use of particular things and functions and the compatibility with existing socio-cultural aspects (see figure below).
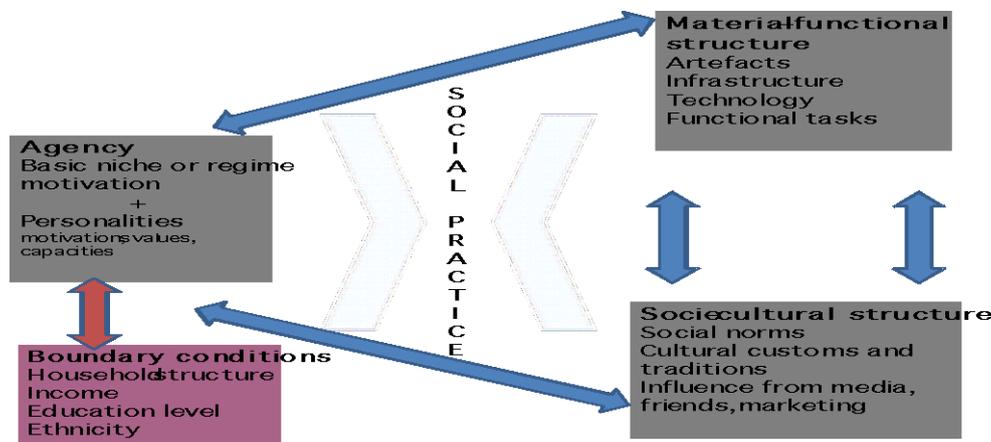
Figure 3: Three-tier practice model

AGENCY

In function of understanding the dynamics of the routine (which is an essential part of the social practice) we consider the primary or basic motivation of the routine. This basic motivation is central to the enactment of the routine. As such, the basic motivation can (1) be of a derivative nature from the individual point of view and (2) be potentially fulfilled by other external routines. Thus for instance, the motivation to acquire healthy and organic food might be fulfilled by supermarket shopping, but this fulfilment is not the same as the one in the basic motivation of the niche, because that motivation needs to be linked to an alternative material-functional structure of short-chain and to a solidarity with small scale organic farmer. But, considering from the perspective of the (ideal) niche the motivation is essentially and non-arbitrarily interconnected with the particular socio-cultural and material structures, these three dynamic yet interconnected elements 'as a whole' are shaping the niche practice.

We will illustrate how this constituting motivations of the niche become nuanced ('under pressure') when we consider how within the niche (a) there are 'carriers' (members) who are engaged in very different intensities; (b) personalities vary as to how the motivation is perceived (different attitudes) and (c) there exist boundary conditions such as household structure, income level, education level, ethnicity...

With regard to the case of *Voedselteams* it is important to notice that the nature of agency within the niche is dependent on the roles people take within the practice. Roughly following roles can be discerned:

- Coordinators: people paid fot the management of the organization/movement.
- Core members: People who are member and have important coordinative roles within the teams, i.e. people with tasks such as coordinator, owner of the depot, financial coordinator.
- Members: People who are members and have certain tasks within the team.
- Members/consumers: People who are members and consider themselves merely as consumer and do minimal necessary efforts to carry out the basic routines.
- People who are part of the household that purchases the food team products.
- Farmers
- Distributors (in some cases)
- Directors from sheltered place, social farms, etc.

STRUCTURE

We separate *structure* in a material and an immaterial part (see also Lei, 2010). The material - functional structure concerns things that are used to enact the routines. It concerns the artefacts that structure and are in there turn structured by agency. It concerns also the aspect of use, i.e. the standardized procedures that are necessary to carry out the routinized behaviour. This can be compared with concepts such as 'competence' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) and 'bodily and mental routines' (Reckwitz, 2002b). The procedures considered at this level are instrumental, i.e. they are one potential way to fulfil the basic routines of the practice.

The socio-cultural dimension finally concerns the less tangible aspects of structure; it delineates the social and cultural constraints that are at play when people conduct certain behaviour. It concerns the influence of media and norms and beliefs, statuses, social groups, social roles and cultural customs. Note that the socio-cultural dimension is as such also under tension, i.e. that there are significant shifts within the socio-cultural norms that create underlying opposing tensions (Halkier, 2009).

Subsequently, we illustrate the interplay of the three levels (agency, material structure, immaterial structure) with regard to three key activities within the niche: (1) ordering routines (2) purchase routines (3) preparing and eating routines.

PRESENTATION OF DATA THROUGH THE STRUCTURE - AGENCY SCHEMES

KEY ACTIVITY ONE: ORDERING ROUTINE

The first key routine of the social practice within *Voedselteams* is the ordering routine and connects on three levels in the following manner. The motivation of teams/individuals to order regularly and on time is – through the internet web shop and the NPO facilitation- attached to the facilitation with regard to the farmer in having a stable and long term growth and marketing plan that add up to a particular channel of sale. This particular channel of sale involves a socio-cultural dimension that includes issues such as 'solidarity with the farmer', 'willingness to pay/do more', or 'social contact'. This basic logic is however undermined by a number of constraints and external influences, as we will try to illustrate.
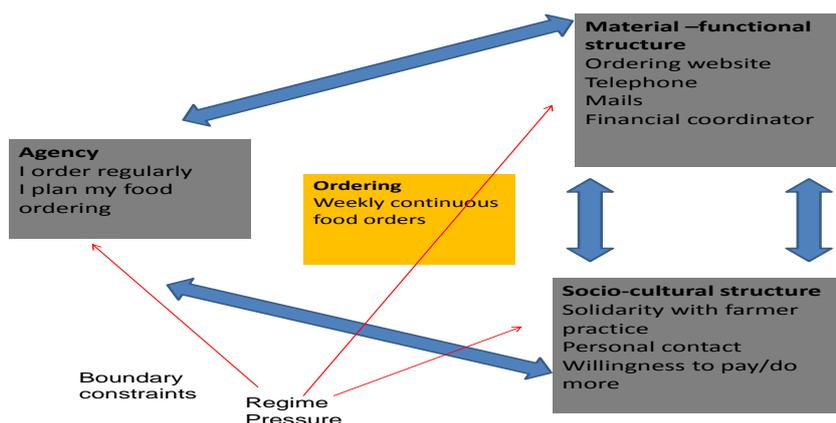
Figure 4: Ordering routines

AGENCY

Participants of *Voedselteams* need to order in advance. Every week before a certain day (say Thursday) one needs to put in the order for delivery next week (Friday). In some teams some products (especially meat) can only be ordered once every two weeks. Reasoned from the perspective of the niche practice (in which 'solidarity with the farmer is a constituting principle) one needs to take care to order regularly as a team. The NPO actors (which is the overarching regional coordinating body of all *Voedselteams* in Flanders) have standardized the ordering procedure by initiating a web shop that enables consumers to select local products, producers to add new local products and to make basic invoices. An annual membership fee is asked to support the NPO organization.

People in the interviews have indicated that they need to get used to the fact that they should order on time and re-understand it from its niche perspective: *"The ordering system is a bit difficult, but every system one needs to get used to and once this is done it's ok. Also it is difficult to do it in another way because it is dependent on the people who are on their land"* (Man, Twenties).

Many teams have also appointed one responsible who weekly sends a reminding mail to all members. This indicates that ordering ahead still needs to become a habit with a lot of people. As someone indicated: *"We have the task to remind people not to forgot ordering on time, but then I forget myself."* (man and woman, thirties-forties). It is interesting to note that several people have indicated that in the course of time they have to become more punctual with regarding to paying and ordering on time.
"Our engagement is to be sure that everything is in order, that we pay in time that we directly answer a mail, that we go to the depot at the designated hours so that we don't have to call afterwards.. so that the people who engage more than us that they don't have to bother and 'chase our backs'." (Woman, beginning thirties). This quote indicates how people understand that they need to put in a minimal level of engagement in order to support the system as a whole. The following quote indicates the same kind of general attitude of the niche practice: *"One time each month I'm responsible for the depot.. In the beginning I joined I said, I want to purchase fruit and vegetables with you but I really don't want to be doing all kinds of things.. we have been engaged in the past (in other initiatives) and that was really too much… but then I felt .. the system doesn't work in this way.. you can't make a part of it without taking some piece of responsibility .. Now I do the depot., I want to do this for two years but then it's some-one else's turn ..a system needs to be carried."* (Woman, forties).

On the other hand the same person expresses critique about the standardized system with regard to perceived necessity to 'always think about it': *"Sometimes the computer system stands in the way of efficient planning. You have to order so early in advance… for instance when you come back from vacation on a Thursday evening the first thing you need to do is flying towards your computer to put in the delivery."* (Woman, forties). Or as another focus group participant notes when asked about the moment of product selection: *"I think it is very difficult that I get my vegetables at Tuesdays and that I already need to order my new vegetables the upcoming Thursday. That I thus have to think in advance what I have to eat the next week. Only two days in between... that is something that poses difficulties for me... But in the end it is just a habit."* (Woman, forties).

It shows how the socio-cultural habit of people to freely choose when and how to order impedes with the basic motivation of the practice routine to order in time. An underlying tension appears between the (perceived) sovereignty and the (perceived) responsibility of the consumer. This tension we refer to as the *'commercialist - movement'* tension and is to be found throughout the enactment of most (sub)routines within the niche. The tension is even more clear with regard to the regularity of ordering. Interviewees as well as focus group participants indicated that they liked the fact that they could order when they want, even stating it as one of the reasons why they joined the initiative.

However, quite some people indicated that they would prefer another logic in ordering. *"…but with the ordering it would be convenient for me if I could order three weeks I a row and then one week not, etc. I always forget to order... but that's also about my problem because I forget it... it's me not the system."* (Charlotte)

The continuity of ordering is sometimes also constrained by planning processes on the level of the household. *"My oldest daughter is a student (not living with her), my other child is living alone. So I don't know in advance who will be at home in the weekend. This makes it hard for me to plan whether I want to order more or less ingredients."* (Woman, mid forties). The necessity to order regularly and in advance combined with the fact that her children only inform her on last notice whether they shall come home for the weekend makes it difficult for her to plan the meal in the household. This is an example of an external boundary condition (at household level) on the agency of the practice. Parents who have small children have this planning problem to a lesser extent, because children have a more regular presence in the household. The conventional food system allows more short-term decisions and levels out certain aspects of food planning (while it might at the same initiate other planning or selection 'problems').

MATERIAL-FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE.

The most essential artefact of the ordering routine is the website (and computer) through which people can order a range of products, depending on the different farmers that supply the specific team. At the current moment, the ordering website is not yet functionally performing very well. The interviewees indicate a number of inefficiencies. The Internet system is an application transferred from another organization and has still quite some imperfections. This is uttered in quotes like: *"It is like an excel sheet, a very dry presentation"*/*"The information boxes are empty" .*/*"There is no logic in the way the products are ordered"*/ *"One cannot save the preferences." */"Sometimes the system crashes"* (Selection of various interviews and focus groups).

Sometimes the webshop procedure is sidestepped when the consumer has (access to) personal contact with the farmer. *"Actually it is not allowed but sometimes I personally send a mail to the farmer if he still cannot take up an extra delivery, and then I pass through this adjustment to the financial coordinator."* (Woman, beginning forties). This episode is symptomatic for the instability of rules and

procedural interpretations in a niche. The same routine is thus filled out by different procedures due to a rupture (Reckwitz, 2002b) happening within the niche, in this particular case the rupture is represented by the introduction of the standardizing webshop. Individuals have still the possibility to 'run across' different 'enactments' of the ordering routines. Some people have also indicated that they found the website contributed to create a sense of distance and anonymity.

The introduction of the website introduces more than merely standardizing the ordering procedure, it also changes the way farmers are assessed by consumers. In this sense, the website is not merely a neutral artefact. Previously, the procedure of co-selecting the product range was based on the personal contacts that certain people within teams had with farmers. They were assisted by a food team coordinator who was paid by one of the three founding organizations (see the history of the *Voedselteams* above) and was assigned to evaluate local farmers according to a set of sustainability criteria. The evaluator communicated and reflected on new producers with the coordinators (and consumers) of the particular teams. The assessment was a negotiation process. The following quote is an illustration of such a negotiation process: *"In the beginning we worked together with a farmer in the region of Sint G... but then [name of assessment coordinator] recommended to shift to another producer because they operate closer, it was a workshop with handicapped people that provides vegetables from local produce... we think it is a very good initiative as such but the care for their products wasn't there... often vegetables weren't really fresh... our new farmer always puts a wet towel when it is hot in summer so the products won't dry out… we suspected that this workshop did not always deliver local as well... we went to talk several times... One time we were there and we asked where do these tomatoes come from and the man flushed"* (Man, begining fifties). In the end they chose as a team to orient their orders towards another producer. This was however done after a series of discussions with the producer (in this case, with the director of the workplace), the 'assessment' coordinator and the regional NPO instance.

The attitudes and outcomes of these kinds of negotiations are mainly dependent on the personalities involved both on the side of the teams as well as on the side of the coordination and the production. These kind of inter-subjective discussions are complex and based on a series of arguments based on rationality (quality, sustainability discussions such as on localness and organic…), as well as emotionality. The next quote illustrates how the emotional aspects (criteria) play – in this case also consciously - a role in the assessment of farmers and products. It is from a member which has left *Voedselteams* and the discussion is about whether a farmer is allowed to add other products to his offer which he would buy from other providers, for instance adding fair trade bananas to his fruit package. *"There were these discussions about bananas... but we were used to fruit packages from farmer X... I was there when this farm became founded... you go into a relationship with this farmer and you built up trust and then you accept these extra products... I am from the old guard. The emergence of the NPO has put things in a different daylight. All has become much more anonymous. Voedselteams as NPO has put itself in between producer and consumer... "*.

These types of negotiations have now become less prevalent because of the intermediary function the webshop plays. The website does not only mediate between consumer and producer in terms of products, but to a certain extent it has also 'de-personalized' the interaction. When new teams are now formed, a number of producers are suggested to the participants who are already established in the network of the NPO. Although there is some discussion still on which producers to work with more particularly, most of the newly attracted consumers are often only initiated in how to use the webshop and how to organize the depot and don't perceive themselves as participating in the assessment nor in the negociations.

The following example shows how *Voedselteams* does allow product innovation to be steered from a consumer perspective. A coordinator of *Voedselteams* explains how a new product line came into existence through a stimulus of the consumers. *"A time ago there was a lot of demand for vegetable burger and other meat replacers. One company was suggested but after a visit it turned out that the people of this firm had no idea on the origin of their vegetables. The same story went for all other market players. That's why we asked farmers (in our network) whether they had interest to produce burgers that were made from locally produced vegetables. The result is that now there is a farmer who successfully sells these kind of local vegetable burgers."*

The farmer in question needed to invest in order to produce these burgers, but because he was guaranteed a steady sale he agreed to do so. This is an example of how the practice of *Voedselteams* is a unique stepping-stone for user-orientated innovation to occur (see Grunert, et al., 2008). On the consumers side there was indeed the demand for meat replacers. This process is described by a member/consumer of a new team as follows: *"It took such a long time for the vegetable burgers to be added to the webshop. They told us the burgers will be delivered very soon in October but in December it still wasn't added. While it is in fact simply just adding a line to the webpage. And while a lot of people had the demand to have these burgers. There is only one type of burger but that is ok because it is all made from vegetables of his land [How have you formulated this demand?] Well that happens informal, I come to the depot and a core member says 'would you be interested in a meat replacer' and I said yes I'm very very interested along with a lot of other people too, I think."*

Interestingly this quote brings together the two aspects discussed before. On the one hand a product is considered to be merely part of a shop ('adding a line') and not as the result of an interactive process between the coordinating unit of *Voedselteams* and the producer. On the other hand the consumer realizes that the emergence of this new product is steered by an informal process.

A hypothesis emerges from the above: a niche that takes over formal regime elements 'attracts' regime routines. The thesis goes that because within the *Voedselteams participants* use the same form than in mainstream provision of food (website interface, product brands, labels...), some of its characteristics are projected onto the niche. In this case, however food purchase is still based on trust-based agreements with small scale farmers, the website does create relatively high convenience expectations with regard to the product quality and range, as well as high service demands. This is especially the case with new members, unaware of the old 'form'.

The shift to this orientation on convenience and product shapes a sphere of associations different from the one before. With regard to new members, processes behind the products (local production, organic production, supporting the farmer in the north) might then be considered as 'extra' by the same intensity as mainstream brand products that use cause-related marketing and are considered 'extra', i.e. the mere informational knowledge about the ethicality of the product makes the consumer willing to pay more (Berglind and Nakata, 2005). The convenience model is also to be found at the farmers' side of the practice. Some farmers which to take up the standardized forms from the conventional system – using internet to order, working with distribution – in order to modernize their channels of sale.

SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

The socio-cultural dimension of the niche is ideally to be equated with issues such as 'solidarity with the farmer', 'personal contact' and 'willingness to pay/do more'. These aspects are found back in the niche but are however also combined and/or weakened by other elements such as the convenience of

ordering and the relationship between practical efforts and engagement (cf. The commercialist – movement tension).

The routine of weekly purchases is steered by the interplay of the motivation to order regularly and on time. The website is used for this, but at the same time linked to socio-cultural norms from the regime making it a non-neutral artefact. The website could however potentially be used in such a way as to be complementary with personal contact, solidarity and a form of user-orientated innovation, which would broaden the dimension of 'ordering' to a dimension of 'co-steering' supply, hence linking the artefact to other socio-cultural norms. The question revolves around the balance between the representation of a website as a shop and its function to enable contact with the farmer. The niche works with the possibility for consumers to assess products and several of the interviewees indicated that sometimes they have complained about the origin of the products by sending a mail to the coordinators on NPO level. This indicates that the members of food team do still co-steer teleological structure of the practice.

KEY ACTIVITY 2: FOOD PROVISION ROUTINE

The basic logic of the second key routine is centred around food provision, and entails that a consumer agrees to plan his food purchase by searching and organizing a place of delivery where the food can be sorted and fetched at one particular moment in the week. This entails a number of 'tolerances' not to be found back with mainstream purchase channels such as (grocery) shops and supermarkets.

AGENCY

The motivational agreement to plan food purchase is a necessary motivation to ensure that a number of routines become enacted with regard to provision and purchase of local and quasi-organic (or more sustainable) food products. At the start of each new *Voedselteam* the group needs to find a depot that is in the proximity of all members and in some way adapted to the storage and purchase of food (electricity for fridge, storage room...). A number of possibilities are often considered and depots range from member-owned garages to public places such as schools, parochial houses and community centres. A form of engagement by actors is essential here in trying to find a place
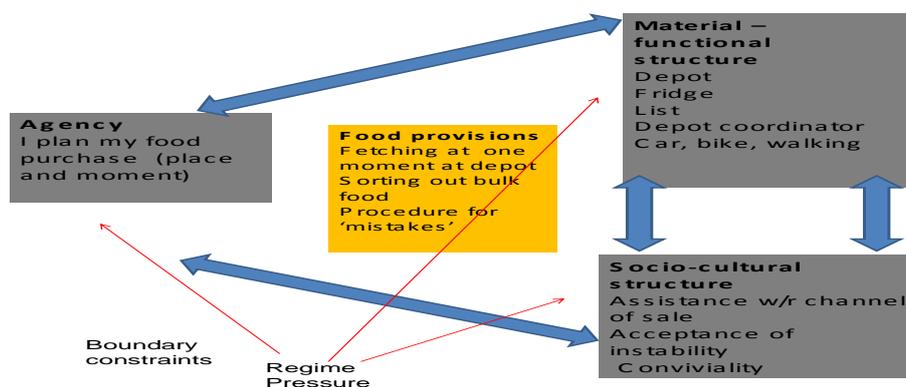
Figure 5: Food provision and purchase routines

A second form of motivational engagement is to plan food pickup at one specific moment. Normally a depot is only opened one to three hours per week at one specific day. Depending on the person and the particular social activities of this person the day and hours are more or less convenient. In order to plan the pickup moment, efforts are sometimes necessary, just like with the ordering routine: *"When*

the depot changed hours we had to really re-organize our weekly routine. I normally go swimming with the kids every Friday evening and my wife often works late. So we had to find a way to fetch the products and still do our weekly swimming." (Man, beginning forties). Products are thus fetched at one particular moment of the week. People are normally not used to this. On the other hand, it is sometimes perceived as an advantage that products can be fetched at one specific moment in the week: *"I think it is convenient that I can have all my ingredients at the same time. Before getting the children home from school I fetch my products and then I have everything for the weekend."* (Woman, beginning thirties).

For some people the fact that they have a certain amount of ingredients in stock also makes that they do not need to shop everyday: *"Before it used to be the problem of shopping... you come home and have been working all day... either you really don't feel like it, either you don't have time or you come home and the shops are already closed... and then you didn't have anything in house and then what... go quickly eat something at restaurant. But now we have everything in house, or we just received vegetables or we have something in the freezer. It is more easy to make something at home I think."* (Man, beginning forties). This quote illustrates how the routine of fetching products weekly of a more or less fixed amount at a fixed time changes the specific attitude of this person with regard to how he plans his meals. Because one has something 'in stock' the inconveniences associated with home cooking - especially in this case the after work shopping - are reduced.

Another form of shopping/cooking stress concerns the lack of inspiration, that even when confronted with a great variety of products one still tends to choose products with which one is familiar: *"You don't have to choose, I like that. When I am short of some vegetables I go to the market and then there I am... and there it's a very classic offer lying there all year, the lettuce and tomatoes. I never have inspiration. So I really like a box, delivering all different kinds of vegetables, and that's what you take."* (woman, thirties). Or in the same vain: *"I like the box schemes because otherwise I always take the same. Now I have new vegetables and do new things with this."* These quotes shows how the personal motivation to save time and reduce shopping stress constitutes - through the practice – a new conception about what defines convenience.

MATERIAL - FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

The depot is the place where the products are delivered. The people who set up a new team search for the adequate location. Therefore the location is very variable. Sometimes this can be a garage of someone who is member of the team; sometimes it is at a school, a community house or a municipal instance, depending on the contacts or work environment of the team members. From an analytical point of view, this routine illustrates how the practice is in a stage where the co-constitution of agency and structure is to a great extent permeable, volatile and conspicuous, whereas in the regime this is to a much lesser extent the case.

Because the ad hoc determination of the depot, sometimes the location needs to be changed. As an internal document of a team meeting states: *"The people of the street X wish to quit being the depot, after ten years. We wish to show our gratitude for doing this! Now however the time is pressing to find a new place."* (document meeting agenda team). Re-shifting location might have implications for proximity for certain individuals: *"After the change of the depot we were doubting whether to stay with food teams. It was suddenly almost four kilometers away were it used to be just around the block."* (Man, beginning forties).

Different procedures are agreed upon from depot to depot with regard to the arrival and pick up of the food. *"We have these big boxes. And then we have plasticized name cards in the box. And then there is a list. We than go through all, person x has 2 kilo apples and two breads and so on. And then when you come your box is prepared. [And the list?] Yes someone needs to print out the list. [Does everyone take his turn in being responsible for the depot?] Yes more or less it's part of the spirit."* / *"I used to be in a team were there were only box schemes and no loose vegetables, that was very easy to do. The team I'm in now has loose vegetables so some-one needs to sort it out."* / *"The dairy comes from the farmer who already name-labelled the products."* These quotes illustrate how the arrangements between teams and producers are varying, consequently leading to a varying amount of procedures.

Also, the way 'post-purchase service' is perceived is totally different than in a shop. One has the potential to personally address the farmer. Although personal contact is not always intense there is a form of two-way communication, different from the mainstream tendencies. *"If something is for instance rotten you are entitled to give it back to the farmer... while if you come home from the supermarket and you notice a rotten piece to be there, you won't be inclined to bring it back."* (Woman, forties).

When something goes wrong with regard to delivery quantity or quality different procedures are used. Some of them are definitely not fully standardized. *"When there is something wrong than there is a list of the depot responsible which is handed through to the financial responsible. He tries to understand what they scribbled on the list and when possible will perhaps change this in the invoice. But for the moment the whole is unstable. When there was asked for three kilos of cheese and there were only delivered two, than normally this should be deducted... when there is something too much delivered than I actually don't know what happens."* Interviews have shown that some teams seem to work with a flexible administrative procedure where minor mistakes of over-delivery and mistakes of under-delivery are compensated by the team as a whole (de facto not taking action, accepting some minor deviances). Also with regard to - for instance - the missing deliveries it depends from team to team to what extent this is organized. In some teams this is approximately deducted, in other teams one punctually puts it down. (In a sense for some people it did not really seem to matter whether some euros are 'lost 'or 'gained'). Also regularly someone (at least one family once in a while) forgets or does not manage to fetch his products from the depot at the designated time. It is dependent from team to team how this is dealt with. A returning procedure when people forget is to signalize it through phone: *"We have a list with all telephone numbers, when someone isn't there the depot responsible calls him or her."* (Woman, beginning forties). Or an alternative is sometimes the following procedure *"When people send a mail the same night they forgot to pick up, they are allowed to go and fetch their stuff in the days after."*

Also - similar as with the ordering routine - some people sidestep the more formal routines and go and directly ask the depot holder (who might be someone they know or someone they don't know). Sometimes the rule is that when someone didn't fetch his stuff that the depot owner is entitled to use what is left: *"We have depot evening Thursday evening and Friday evening I always go and look if there aren't any vegetables left anymore... people who are in vacation and they cannot come and fetch it... Than I eat these vegetables myself. Otherwise they would turn bad anyway."* (Man, beginning sixties). In a way this implies a form of solidarity with the owner of the depot, compensating his efforts with this extra 'right'.

Also the atmosphere of the depot has also shown to be varying to a great extent. The following quote for instance is from a man who fetches his food at a depot located in an old post building, with opening hours from 15.30 until 19.00. He answers as follows on the question whether the depot is a

meeting place: *"Pfff... no most of the times we are there alone... and if we run into people... it's barely hello... people don't talk much to each other here in this town... that is such a difference with the Southern countries."* (Man, beginning forties). In another team the depot is in a little room in a parish, and has 'opening hours' from 19.00 until 20.00. *"It's not a nice place... it a little hall of a rundown parish... but nevertheless a lot of people stay talking with each other especially in the summer time."* (Man, end forties).

The following quote shows the potential of the depot as a alternative place: *"The depot is about 400 meters from our house, you can reach it by two ways, the first way is through a little forest, the other way is an ordinary road... and in summer time I often take one of the children through the forest way... it has something special you take them through the forest and then you come upon a place with food, for them it is something outside normality"*. This illustrates how the depot can also have a social aspect that is external to its mere functional aspects. Following quote illustrates one of these aspects in the form of social activation of a neighbourhood: *"For us this procedures in the depot also entails social reasons... the depot is the only channel through which I learn to know new people who come to live in the neighbourhood. There are many new houses and my children go to schools outside the neighbourhood, the depot is the only place I see new faces."* (Man, beginning forties).

Depot procedures are considered fairly straightforward once a team is organized. When new people enter the particular food team it however doesn't always seem to be straightforward to acquire these new procedures instantly. The following woman - who left food teams - explains how she had difficulties in acquiring provision routines: *"Well the first time it was all stuffed in a fridge (the dairy products)... and I really didn't know what to do... I don't recognize these products, my name is not on it... and if there is nobody there how can I know...and what do I have to do... look at all these products and find what is mine (somebody else can also have pesto cheese),... And there should be some kind of out-print there of the products... but I wasn't aware of this in the beginning... I never know how it works... they give very few support... only through the telephone... for a new member... [Was there no intake conversation?]... no only through telephone, it was so vague."* (Woman, beginning fifties).
This quote shows how important it is in this practice of learning new people how the procedures of a depot precisely work and, perhaps even more importantly, how these procedures are embedded in a certain socio-cultural context. People coming from similar purchase channels will be used to this, people only used to do conventional shopping will rather not be.

On the level of coordination, following remark might be useful. One of the reasons for the fact that teams only marginally grow is because one does not have a so-called splitting attitude. In stead of allowing new members and splitting teams from the moment possible, maxima quota are kept low and losses of members aren't perceived as a problem because there are people on the waiting list.

Finally with regard to the material structure it is important to note that the way people get to the depot is also variable: some people go by car, but also a lot of people mentioned that it is so close by that it is possible to do it on foot or with the bicycle. Because quantities are often quite big the distance from depot to home needs to be within a certain range to be feasible.

SOCIO-CULTURAL STRUCTURE

With regard to the depot as 'purchase entity', a shop, it is necessary to install a norm of 'willingness' that accepts the constraints linked to the depot. There is a shift from perception based on the characteristics of the shop to a perception based on the characteristics of the depot. When something is delivered wrongly one needs to be tolerant, and because the financial administration is the voluntarily

work of a team member there is generally an attitude of tolerance with regard to minor errors made. Generally, a number of new procedures need to be taken into account with regard to the purchase of food. Nevertheless the depot organization through different procedures is regarded as part of the 'spirit' of the practice. Some people wander about the conditions of the depot in terms of for instance hygiene, but there have not been any severe complaints about quality and people tend to fetch the products directly after harvest or production.

On a less functionalist level the depot offers the potential to generate secondary social benefits as a place in which people of the neighbourhood meet each other. Although this is only sporadically done, the weekly pick up offers has potential to set up social gatherings. Food-related issues such as cooking or eating can be linked to the place of purchase, but similarly non-food issues occur. New people of the neighbourhood can be welcomed at the depot meetings. It should be mentioned that two factors seem to play an important role in the sociability of the depot. Firstly, the interviews indicated that in many teams people already knew each other and/or had met in other 'sustainability' contexts. Secondly, some neighbourhoods are already very sociable and these seem to be the typical kind of neighbourhoods in which *Voedselteams* are a popular practice.

KEY ROUTINE 3: EATING AND PREPARING FOOD

The basic interplay of the third key routine follows the dynamic in figure 6. The motivation to eat fresh and locally produced food is translated to 'creative' and 'efficient' cooking at regular times in the household. Creativity is evocated by the necessity to cook with local seasonal varieties that are unknown and/or present limited choice. Also because quantities (within box scheme offers) are varying, one is confronted with cooking situations that are new in terms of combination and 're-use' of ingredients. Efficient as well as regular cooking is likely to become a routine by means of learning how to 'use what one has' and 'finish all one has' and by means of the limited storage life of the food. The fridge is often used as means to underpin efficiency. The ideological dimension of the niche creates a link between regularity and love for (or at least absence of dislike for) cooking, as well as values attached to the way the ingredients are produced. In this way, the niche provides potential to initiate process values on meal or cooking level. People who join *Voedselteams* enter a so-called field of sustainability which has impact on other food shopping activities.
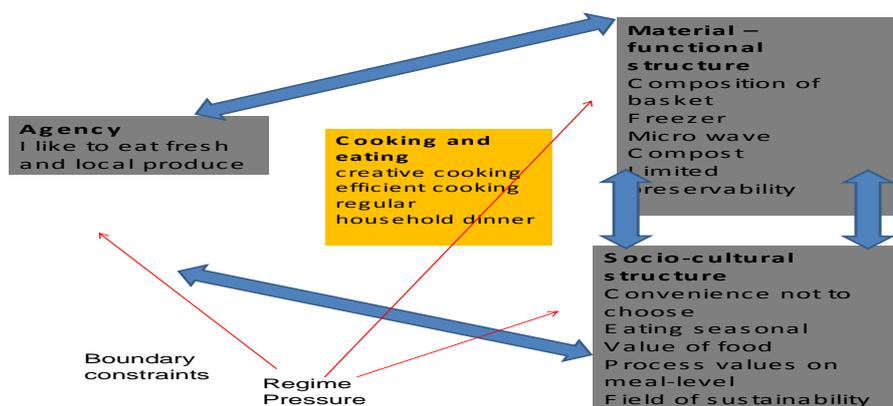

Figure 6: Eating and preparing food

AGENCY

Immediately digging into the transitional phase of the niche, the following quote illustrates how the basic building block of the agency of the practice routines is - in the current situation - open to

'interpretation'. *"There are two kind of people in food teams. There are the ones who say if we eat local and from the region we eat local and from the region, and may that be a very specific diet that so it will be, one needs to be creative in the kitchen. And then there are others who reason in another way and say either Voedselteams gives me the variety I like, or I will search it anyhow through another channel of provision."* (*Voedselteams'* coordinator and member).

Although consumption of local, fresh and (quasi)organic produce is a necessary motivation to reproduce the short chain initiative, *de facto* there are however degrees to which one endorses in locality. Agency is built on two potential opposite axes. Either one departs from the personal preferences to which one adds a local dimension. Or one departs from locality according through which one shapes one's personal preferences. This has also implications for cooking routines. In accordance with this observation, some farmers have searched for some type of middle position, for instance in the winter partly delivering the typical Flemish winter crops and partly complementing this produce with products from regular (organic) purchases, including (organic) products coming from France and Spain. Other farmers have complemented Belgian local fruits with imported exotic fruits (such as fair trade bananas).

Of all the interviewed people none organized all their food purchases through their food team. Two occurring reasons were because (1) only standard products are offered and (2) people prefer certain specific products from particular brands and qualities.

With regard to (1) it can be stated that the product range of *Voedselteams* has grown over the years. The farmers introduce sometimes new products, sometimes new farmers enter the channel of provision (like for instance the emergence of meat farmers) and sometimes there is cooperation with adjacent shops (such as fair trade and organic shops functioning as depot). With regard to (2), it is important to notice that a lot of people still assess the quality of the *Voedselteams* products against other products supply chains. Following quote is illustrating: *"I'm a really big fan of cheese and I don't think the one food team delivers is that good."* (Woman, beginning thirties).

Some people also have 'problems' with the limited conservation of the products or the alternative taste and appearance of (especially dairy) products. *"The only thing is the milk. Because it isn't pasteurized it goes bad in just a few days. That's why I don't buy it. If the farmers would pasteurize…"* (Man, beginning forties). *"The milk… it starts foaming…the children think it's dirty."* (Man, begin forties). Or also, sometimes not everybody in the household likes what is offered. *"There are periods when there are a lot of red beets. I'm the only one in the family that likes red beets. When I make it it's just for me and I cook something else for the rest of the family."* (Woman, beginning fifties). *"The children don't very much like cabbage, but then I try to process it in a lasagna and then it's ok."* (Woman, beginning forties).

These last two quotes initiate a whole corpus of questions with regard to the locus of agency. As previous research has also indicated (Rapport 'lekker gegeten goed geweten', 2009) there are often different preferences within the household as such. These differing perspectives are both on the level of taste as on the ideological level and both are often linked. Some people indicated that they really tasted the difference when vegetables are organic others indicated that household members stated that they did not like these 'raw' products. People with older children often indicated that when their children grew up they were harder to be convinced to eat some types of vegetables and meals, partly because they are interested in fast foods such as hamburgers, pizza's, Chinese food, etc.

MATERIAL FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

An important structural factor for the constitution of the cooking and eating routines is the unpredictability and robustness of the box schemes and limitations of seasonality (that as such form a crucial part of the range of most of the food teams.

A first observation is that people actually find it convenient to not be able to choose the vegetables. *"You don't have to choose, I like that. When I am short of some vegetables I go to the market and then there I am .. and there it's a very classic offer lying there all year, the lettuce and tomatoes . I never have inspiration . So I really like a box, delivering all different kinds of vegetables, and that's what you take."* (woman, thirties). *"You get what you get. Before, when we asked ourselves 'what will we buy?, we eventually always bought the same"* (man, forties). *"I joined Voedselteams because I like to be surprised every week."* (woman, beginning thirties)

The act of not having to choose in these case makes people getting to know new kind of vegetables. *"..that is something that I would have never bought ... for instance parsnip I had never heard of this…"* (woman, beginning forties). *"..And also you'll get to know new kinds of vegetables ... for this we particularly like the google pictures, ..in the beginning we really had to google to be sure what it was, because I didn't know how a 'kohlrabi' looked .."* (woman, beginning thirties).

The structure that is 'imposed' by the ability to not choose also makes people re-discover vegetables they didn't use to like. *"For instance I never liked radishes.. but now we found this recipe , something with some kind of blue cheese as dipping sauce and voila now I love radishes… Sprouts we would ordinarily never buy but now we will try to make it in an alternative way by using this 'haute cuisine' technique so that we like it.."* (woman, beginning thirties). Because one is confronted with ingredients one would not ordinarily buy and/or one didn't know how to cook it in a satisfying way one is stimulated to integrate known and unknown ingredients in new recipes or meal combinations. Not only the kind of ingredients used in recipes change but also the structure of the meal as such is often inclined to change. One interesting element which re-occurred was the inclination to let go of the classic structure of 'two vegs and one meat' (and as sauce as a unifying element) (Wood, 1995b) partly because of the quantitative structure of the box schemes. *"...it really is necessary to start combining, it invites me much more. You receive five to six vegetables at one time and with this you need to do something...my parents for instance wouldn't know what to do with a little red cabbage, they would say: 'that isn't enough for one meal, how will we combine that.. or chicory, one time they can make it in the oven , but what will you do the other days?"* (woman, thirties).

Because the quantities in a box scheme are varying the consumer is challenged to comply her/his regular cooking practice in two ways:
- when there are a lot of different vegetables in small quantities one needs to combine different vegetable recipes in one meal.
- when there is a large quantity of one kind of vegetable one needs to learn how to process the same vegetable in different recipes for meals.

These types of re-structuration change the way some people see meat as the central ingredient of the meal. This woman puts it literally as follows: *"I didn't use to cook in function of vegetables. I have changed my whole way of cooking. Well.. now I look what are my vegetables and then I will built something around that. While in the past I used to do something around meat."* (Woman, fifties). Another woman describes the shift away from the 'meat and two vegs' structure: *"I have grown up*

with potatoes, vegetables, meat every day. But if I look what I have on my plate now and what I learned from home I notice an immense difference.".

The material structure thus generally stimulates cooking skills as well as a more diverse and/or creative cooking process. One is stimulated to be creative in the kitchen. This creativity is backed up by certain artefacts such a particular websites which have substantial databases to cook with (unknown) vegetables and books such as the 'strange vegetable cooking book' from the organization.

SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

With regard to cooking and eating a number of new socio-cultural aspects are – potentially and in differing degrees - co-constituted. A first socio-cultural aspect is the emergence of a new cultural norm that equates the process of not choosing (of receiving what is offered) to feelings of convenience. This is a shift vis-à-vis the regime conception where the ability to almost endlessly choose is generally considered constitutive for consumer convenience (Slater, 1997). As mentioned above, the strength of the locality and hence seasonality of local products in the representation of the consumer preferences varies from consumer to consumer. Nevertheless a minimal attitude of preference 'sacrifice' or 'adaptation' is needed in order to reproduce the local production practices.

Also quite some people seem to attach special status to the local products that are provided. *"I am going to stay with Voedselteams because the vegetables taste better."* (recent member, man, forties). *"Now when I have joined Voedselteams, I am sure that my vegetables are healthy and organic."* (recent member, woman, forties).

The same consideration is made for the producer of the ingredients, hence laying a link between product and producer or production method. *"the idea being that now we have more valuable vegetables.. if you buy a cheap tomato in the supermarket and it becomes rotten that's not so bad ..Ok it is anyhow bad to throw away food but it's cheap and not real.. I mean it's a bit rubbish food…you 'll throw it more easily in the garbage can… But with this I have the feeling...the farmer has worked for it so they it is more 'pure'."* (recent member, woman, thirty). When we link the aspect of the perceived added value of food team products and its link to production as well as the overall importance of cooking we can come to analyze *Voedselteams* as a potential practice that can construct a socio-cultural norm which incorporates process values on the cooking and meal level. This means that people come to distinguish meals as more valuable when the processes leading to the meal are considered valuable in terms of 'sustainability' and 'ethicality'.

Finally, we have indications that people enter into a so-called field of sustainability when they enter (and stay) member of food teams. Through the frequent contact with aspects that revolve around sustainable agriculture the carrier of the practice becomes aware of with what we will call a field of sustainability (see box), in which a number of aspects re-enforcing each other. This quote for instance adequately summarizes the effects of 'being in' this field: *"On Sunday we now sometimes go to the farmers market. It isn't organic but farmers from the region. Before we wouldn't do such a thing.. If someone would have said 'over there is a farmers market' It would have been one ear in, another out.. now there is attention for these kind of things. .. it is like a snowball effect .. one thing brings forward the other."*

Voedselteams as a practice makes this 'snowball effect' more likely than loose contacts because one is frequently and systematically put in contact with evolutions in the agricultural field. On the other hand people have a tendency to homogenize the signification of sustainability, taking one characteristic for

the other (for instance confusing 'small scale and local' with 'organic') or wrongly pre-supposing all 'sustainable' characteristics at once (when it is 'local' it will also be 'organic). The field of sustainability can be associated with what practice theorists call 'background knowledge'. The 'application' of this background knowledge is not necessarily rational or conscious. The complex reality is heuristically reduced to an amount of simplifying reductions in order to facilitate action. This does however not mean that it would be impossible to assess the underlying complexities in reality.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ROUTINES: IDEOLOGICAL ANCHORAGE

In this section we will briefly touch upon the routines that are constitutive to the core of the food teams (political) ideology but which are in principle not essential to the functional reproduction of *Voedselteams* from the consumption perspective and as it is organized now (an alternative but often 'parallel' channel of sale with a focus on smaller scale local semi and full organic farmer practices). The key routines of ordering, purchase and eating are sufficient to fulfil functional reproduction of the niche from the consumer perspective, when the communication between NPO, farmer and consumer is accessible and /or trusted. In the current situation there is thus a corpus of routines which are on another level than the strict functional reproduction of the consumer routines. This more 'ideological' level is overarching in the sense that it binds the different routines within the practice and pervasive in the sense that it cuts through the different (both key as well as sub-) routines of the practice.

From the consumers' perspective this type of routines concerns initiatives such as: Meetings to visit a farm / Information meetings on globalization, agricultural practices, etc. / Cooking meetings and picnics / Politico-organizational meetings such as an exercise to redefine the mission statement of the organization / Website posts on new teams, initiatives or information. / Lobbying letters to defend local food production and consumption…

The enactment of these routines is potential for every single member and is mostly stimulated by the regional (NPO) level. Although there has been an identification of the need to stimulate these kind of routines on the level of the particular members, for instance core members initiating these kinds of meetings, forums or political debates there is a very low initiative as well as turn up rate stemming from team members. Reasoning from an opposite perspective there seems to be some type of ideological space within the niche that is appealing to certain people without them endorsing immediately in the basic reproductive routines of the practice. Following member illustrates how a loose connection between functional and ideological is possible, i.e. the person feels ideologically linked to the initiative but nevertheless indicates that he does not take off products regularly: *"You need both groups [academics and grassroots] to reach a shift in lifestyle.. reaching a new way of interacting with each other and with the planet.. this way will come anyway.. the only question is how.. how will we anticipate... If we continue business and usual.. then there will probably be panic and chaos.. but if we already have small scale local initiatives as these we have something to fall back on… I don't often order with food teams, I use it as a way to complement the products I got from the garden of my father and my auto production. But I support the initiative, I help with organization of the depot I go to meetings,…"*.

Here we see an alternative perspective in which the ideological engagement of the member of *Voedselteams* is not backed up by the enactment in the ordering and cooking routine. However, this person does however support *Voedselteams* on a communicative/ideological level. This person seems to be rather an exception and can be considered as an alternative and more derivative carrier of the practice. (It is clear that the practice would not exist if all profiles would be alike this). Another type of communication event which is crucial for the ideological motivation is the introductory meeting which

forms the basis to set up of a new team. In this meeting (a) the core members of a new team introduce themselves and/or someone introduces the vision of *Voedselteams* (b) 'practical' aspects are explained (introduction to the key routines) and (c) farmers come and talk about their personal story and bring along products to taste.

IDENTIFICATION AND INTEGRATIVE POWER

In this last section we wish to address what the growth potentials of the niche are in terms of integrative power and collective identity. The integrative power of a niche can be defined as the inter-connective strength that binds the (sociality of the) niche, without losing its teleological core on systems level. We state that there is a relationship between the degree of identification and the eagerness to cling to practices, i.e. when someone identifies more with a certain practice he/she will be inclined to less easily abandon it, and add more to the integrative power.

In his analysis on collective identity of social movements Melucci states that *"People feel a bond with each other not because they share the same interests but because they need this bond in order to make sense of what they are doing."* (Melucci, p. 41). Melucci considers social movements not as fixed entities but as action systems in which relations are constantly re-shifted, but in which there is nevertheless a set of criteria that play a role in the understanding of what people are doing.

ELEMENTS OF IDENTIFICATION: SELF-UNDERSTANDING

On the level of agency we found some indications of how people construct their own identity vis-à-vis the niche practice. One type of identification lays a connection with the farmer. When asked for their motivation to join *Voedselteams* people indicate things that link 'biographies': *"Personally I feel along with the smaller producers. I know, I myself am an accountant, I am also an independent, so I know how hard they have it to organize their sale." "We joined in 1997. Agriculture is my dada, it's my focus. I wanted to follow a course in organic agriculture at the time, but that didn't work out so I joined to still be involved with agriculture." "I also like to receive my paycheck at the end of the month, just as the farmer wants this.".*

Another type of identification lays connection with the product quality. *"I joined Voedselteams because I think it is an access the healthy food. The food in supermarkets does not always provide this. I am a doctor thus...".* Although we find these types of identification with the alternative agricultural model and food system that the niche supports, surprisingly most of the consumers do not explicitly identify themselves as an active agent of change, i.e. they do not consider themselves as the ones who actively change the system towards more sustainability. A crucial observation that underpins this is the fact that all interviewed people speak of *Voedselteams* as something of which they are member but not as something they are, i.e. they speak of 'the people of *Voedselteams* have decided that x', 'I think *Voedselteams* should do more x', '*Voedselteams* is a system that'. They thus view *Voedselteams* as something external to themselves, which is mediated for them and not as a way to actively and 'bodily' contribute, even if as we have shown through the description of the routines they are contributing (and have potential to contribute more) actively to constituting a systemic change through the niche practice. As the following person explicitly mentioned: *"I don't go out there and say hallo my name is Sophie and I'm a 'food teamer'. .. I did put it on my CV recently though that I'm a member of food teams. Because I thought it was relevant for the job."* (Woman, end twenties).

One of the socio-cultural reasons for reluctance to identify with an 'active actor of change' is the structural impediment (of 'work', 'organization') and the felt need to adhere to existing cultural norms

in which radical change is merely discursively accepted. Following quote succinctly illustrates this: *"I have lately come to the realization that we also aren't free as are the farmers in the south. We are also in a logic in which products are offered at a too low price.. You receive a certain wage; you want to do good and you want that your children have it good, You would want to isolate your house but you don't want to make crazy costs. We can make choices but these aren't unlimited, I am glad we can make all these choices but we can't do things like we would really all want to.. Yes I would like to be more home with the children but that for instance is not possible .. If I look at that blog of the Low Impact man, I think Jesus what a sacrifice or I think you have to be really strong , to really be convinced. .. I then think he puts himself at the margins. If I would be this extreme with that I couldn't live anymore, I would not be 'in terms' with things. You have to follow more or less what an average person does ..the most people buy a Christmas present for each other .. ok on the one hand you can discuss that this is very capitalist and consumer orientated but on the other hand I wouldn't want to come home to my mother without Christmas present. .You want to fit in heh, to not be that weird one."* (Woman, beginning thirties). This quote shows how people reflect on the necessity to change the system yet at the same time also on their own position within that system and the material-functional as well as socio-cultural constraints that make it hard to become an actor of change or to do what one 'really wants'. The perception of these structural barriers hampers the individual to identify oneself as an 'actor of change' (through his consumption). This shows how the endorsement of incumbent regime practices is affirmed even when people consciously reflect on their self with regard to the perceived problems and discursively understand this connection. In order to attain identification with being an actor of change one hence needs to find crucial transitions or ruptures on the extra-discursive level of the practice. (in the case of the example this could imply some type of restructuration of the interconnected elements such as 'Christianity', 'child expectations on Santa', 'conviviality', 'family', 'commercials', 'surprise', 'Christmas dinner', 'last minute (inspirational-wise risky) shopping', etc. Forcing to change this is –from a cultural perspective – unperceivable. It would be very interesting research to understand the conditions that make people re-consider these kind of 'solidified' practices.)

BALANCING BETWEEN NORMAL AND SPECIAL

In order to reflect on this sociality in relation to the foregoing we wish to introduce a conceptual view that dichotomizes between the 'ordinary' and the 'special'. When analyzing the structure of the 'everyday practices' one interestingly finds a quite rigor (perceptual) demarcation line between easily performable 'chores' and 'special tasks'. Certain practices ('routinized behavior') are carried with a status of 'speciality'. In these practices people make a conscious link between themselves and the practice of which they are carrier examples being: 'I am a politician', 'I am an academic', I am a football player'. The carrier knows the explicit routines and procedures as well as the implicitly by experience(d) acknowledged rules of 'the game' and distances himself from the other by showing expertise and attaining recognition. Carriers normally built high levels of identification on the basis of these types of practices. Social differentiation is an important mechanism in this process of identification.

On the other hand people are often also carriers of practices without realizing this fully or without need for recognition. Activities such as 'doing the dishes', 'sorting garbage', 'dreaming', 'shopping in the supermarket' or 'picking away at a reception' can for instance be considered as well delineated practices but carriers will not easily identify themselves as carrier. (Someone will not say 'I am a supermarket shopper'). One of the reasons why carriers do not explicitly identify is because these kind of practices are often seen as 'obligatory' or of few meaning ('I have to clean the dishes', 'I don't feel like shopping', 'why /how should we consider dreaming as a practice') instead as something pleasant, innovating or socially differentiating. This types of reasoning is to an extent the reason why in the

twentieth century there have been devised so many ways to manage daily chores in such a efficient way as possible, using as few time as possible. The average time in the kitchen has for example decreased significantly due to time saving innovations such as the microwave and the dishwasher (Tichner and Kjaernes, 2007).

As a practice, *Voedselteams* incorporates elements of both types: for one part it is constituted on the field of practices that are considered to be chores (ordering, 'shopping', everyday cooking); on the other hand, there are elements of specialness (contact and/or solidarity with the farmer, creative cooking with status products). Both types of elements however need to be enacted simultaneously in order to create full identification with and reproduction of the practice.

Firstly, we have seen people only clinging to the specialness without functionally reproducing the practice are not a full carrier. Also, endorsing almost only practices of the first kind will typically yield a low degree of identification and therefore also indicate a low 'switching cost', i.e. people easily shifting back to routines from the regime that fulfil the same 'tasks' but are more (or are perceived as) more efficient. Making chores more easy (mainstream) can potentially weaken the link between the 'special' and the 'ordinary' as we have seen with the introduction of the website, when people project ('ordinary') regime characteristics on the niche routine. For people outside the niche there will need to be a high degree of 'specialness' in order to switch to the perceived less efficient system. The niche for instance significantly grew when a series of food scandals came about in 2003. *Voedselteams* was then perceived as having a special status for being an efficient gateway to healthy and controlled food. With regard to the integrative power of the niche it seems however crucial that also the practices within (or as consequence of) the niche have a status of 'specialness'. Otherwise there is only an external stimulus which can be isolated from the niche as a whole and deflect identification (indeed supermarkets soon picked up organic products, covering what for them is a market segment). Therefore, ideally, there should a link be made between the 'special' and the 'ordinary' practices in such a way to provide a connection between 'recognition'/'expertise' and 'duty'/ 'task' that amplifies the identification and consequently the integrative power of the niche. One potential flaw with regard to a more integrative identification (i.e. how people integrate and identify with the practice) could however be anticipated within the niche. By stressing the importance of mediating 'chores' (website ordering...) and at the same time delegating more 'important tasks' (assessment of farmers, organizing purchase) as well as making optional the ideological tasks (meeting farmer, political engagement) one could hamper the connection between the 'ordinary' and the 'special' that has the potential to strengthen the identification with the niche 'as a whole'.

CONCLUSIONS

We have illustrated how the practice of being member of a *Voedselteam* is a dynamic process in which the connections between agency, material-functional structure and social-cultural structure are still unstable. The niche practice models as they depict the ideal interconnections are 'under pressure' and in 'transition', and different procedures to enact certain routines are co-existing. Also carriers have different levels of identification adding up differently to the construction of agency.

The integrative power of the niche has potential to grow reasoned from the three perspectives of the structure-agency model. In terms of agency, motivations can be strengthened by the inter-connective anchorage of action and ideology in the niche practice, for instance by linking the motivation to order regularly with the *de facto* solidarity for the farmer. From the material-functional perspective there are perspectives to make links between the artefacts/procedures and social meanings such exemplified in

the website for co-steering, the 'convivial' depot and the creativity inclination of the box-scheme. Finally the socio-cultural dimension entails new integrative issues such as process values and the field of sustainability.

The niche can be seen as a dynamic and complex set of routine practices in which very different elements of integrative identification are to be detected both in terms of self-understanding and status of routines. The more these types of routines are enacted the more there is a chance that the basic motivations become emotionally solidified by carriers within alternative socio-cultural norms or 'spheres'.

The concept of niche and the concept of practice have shown to synergize well, considering the practice as (1) a set of basic routines, and (2) internal ruptures, external pressures and semi-stabilized procedures influencing the re-production of this set of core routines. The concept of niche was in this section built on the practice-level reasoned from the perspective of the consumer. The hybridist nature of the concept 'consumer' (cf. phase 1) was affirmed when we scrutinized the interplay of the three levels of 'structuration' through the empirical material from the interviews and focusgroups. There are ruptures within the paradigmatic 'sovereign consumption', and niches such as *Voedselteams* propose an alternative system with a different structural anchorage than the regime systems. There are however 'tensions' within the heads of the new carriers, mediating between the regime and niche characteristics. In this sense we confirm the findings of Adrian Smith with regard to niche-regime translations on the organizational-systemic level. On the other hand - touching upon elements of identification – we have shown that other levers are at play. Even if agency has a more influential role in the still unstable connections of the new practice (the niche) than it has in the regime there is are significant identification inefficiencies and one does not consider oneself as an agent of change.

B.   INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND PERCEPTIONS IN LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS: CASE STUDY IN WALLONIA/BRUSSELS

The second phase of CONSENTSUS was oriented towards the exploration of the most prevalent alternative scenario in food consumption as identified in phase 1, i.e. the de-commodification scenario. The construction of an improved understanding of the strategy meant to explore the internal underpinnings and perceptions of the people who participate to some forms of operationalisation of such a scenario. The choice of Local Food Networks as practices of alternative niches in consumption has already been motivated. The main questions to explore were linked to :
- What is the potential for development, extension, structuralisation of alternative food systems?
- And in particular, how could the 'niche' maintain its pace of development, increase in importance over time and participate durably and structurally to the (r)evolution of practices in food provision?

These overarching questions linked to the 'up-scaling' of the niche imply a series of more detailed questions of interest which we report on hereafter on the basis of the Walloon and Brussels case studies: *how are the consumer-participants interacting in the Local Food Networks? What are their motivations? How does the niche function on a daily basis? Which are motivations to enter - or leave - the niche? Which formal or informal rules persist in the organization of the niche? Which capacities, knowledge, infrastructure, support… would be fundamental for the up-scaling of the niche?*

While these questions target partly the same interrogations as the preceding section, two differences are important.

First, the methodological, empirical ways of interrogation are based here on specific surveys with members of the Local Food Network. Indeed, we tried to gather, on the one hand, factual information about the existing food teams in Wallonia and Brussels; and, on the other hand, to better know the expectations, attitudes and judgments of the (present or former) systems' members and sympathizers. We thus sent an invitation to 77 "representatives" of those groups, investigating their representations with two kinds of surveys:
- An online questionnaire, intended for representatives of the food networks only, and trying to gather factual information about their functioning and functions. Representatives of food networks are the people which could be identified to play a major role in individual food networks. They might be the initiators or main driving forces behind the network, they might be founding members of the network.

- A Q methodology study was configured in order to reveal the discourses, attitudes and judgments. This second investigation targeted all present and former members of each of the food networks we could identify in Wallonia and Brussels.

The second difference to the case study on practices in *Voedselteams* discussed in the previous section was simply geographical. We concentrated our efforts to Local food networks in Brussels and Wallonia.

CHARACTERISING LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS : RESULTS FROM A SURVEY

The intention was to explore the organisational functioning of the Local Food Networks in Wallonia and in Brussels on the basis of a questionnaire sent to representative members of a series of identified networks. A secondary objective was to construct a set of elementary quantitative data which could shed some light on the importance of the food networks, the quantities of food involved, the number of members, the evolution through time and space of the networks and their memberships.

77 representatives of local food networks could be identified. Amongst these 77 persons which were asked to respond to survey on behalf of their food teams, 35 have actually completed the survey – and some of the answers were (very) incomplete. We were thus confronted with a set of 29 useable responses to be effectively analysed. What this set of answers could clearly not provide was to help construct an exhaustive quantitative representation of the phenomena. This is regrettable as such, as the growing attention drawn to Local food networks by institutional actors is generating a need to get a proper account of the extensiveness of the phenomena, and more so of its evolution in time and space.

The results of the questionnaire (even if the response rate has been limited) were useful to realize a general portrait of the food teams in Wallonia and Brussels. A detailed picture is drawn in the annexed working paper. Synthetically, the following characteristics emerged.

Most of the networks have been created very recently at the initiative of consumers starting from an association or a neighborhood. Most of the networks are limited in size (between 10 and 20 households). They are more or less organized or institutionalized, but nevertheless most of them have a specific bank account, organize advance payments and are delivered by one (or several) producer(s) to a permanent depot. A majority of the networks gathers regularly to discuss the practical organization of the group and, at a lesser extent, to talk about the choice of the producers or the choice of the products. Most of the time, the producers are chosen in function of their production methods and their geographical proximity, whereas the choice of the products is based on their local character (local production and indigenous varieties), their taste and, to a lesser extent, their prices. Most of the people interviewed consider the level of conviviality in their group as being quite high. One of the main manifestations of this conviviality is the active participation of most members of the group to its organization through informal exchanges of recipes or simply through a good atmosphere during the meetings. The groups that are advocating a high level of conviviality are also the most numerous to take part to parallel activities, that is to say not directly linked to food supply.

THE Q-STUDY RESULTS – A FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNAL PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD NETWORKS

On top of questioning the representatives of the identified local food networks, the quest for an improved understanding of the motivations and perceptions to join, stay or leave a food network called to implement are wider investigation, i.e. reaching all members of the food networks, whether 'normal' members or members with a role of representative of the network.

An invitation to fill an online form of the *Q methodology* has been sent to more or less 70 food teams in Wallonia and Brussels, with the request to spread the invitation among all their members. 90 persons have realized the Q-classification exercise (with a majority of Walloon (71%)). At the time of launching the invitation, we had explained that the survey was also designed for people who were no more or not yet members of food teams. Finally, only 5 persons have matched these criteria: two

specified that they had left the food teams due to a lack of time (one of them explaining also that she was fed up with the unfruitful discussions during the meetings), two were participating (nay initiating for one of them) to the creation of a food team, and the last one was belonging to a non-formalized, non-organized food teams. The 85 other respondents can be divided in four groups according to the length of their membership to a food team: (1) less than a year: about a third of the participants; (2) between 1 and 2 years: a quarter ; (3) between 2 and 3 years: less than a quarter; (4) more than 3 years: a quarter.

Q-methodology helps construct integrated images of perceptions of participants to a survey methodology. Q-methodology is a method that originated in the field of psychology and primarily bases itself on the contention that the enormous amount of subjective opinions are reducible to a 'fundamental' summary of perspectives. The method consists in having a set of proposals (this can be sentences, statements, pictures…), called the Q-Sample, that are sorted by the participants to the survey. The participants are asked to rank the propositions of the Q sample (in this case, statements on the charactiristics to be found in local food networks), usually from those with which they 'most agree' to those with which they 'most disagree'. Once this sorting is obtained, an analysis reveals the correlations between the different subjects' sortings of the statements. In a second instance, a factor analysis reveals the factors which are in common to the different sortings. Both analysis are combined and make it possible to reveal standard sortings of the proposals.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Before describing the factor analysis of the Q-exercise, some noticeable statements - as classified by the respondents – need to be discussed. An identification of the sentences amongst the *Q sample* that have globally generated the most agreements or disagreements allow to identify – and discuss - two sets of "top 5" statements on the mechanics of the niches.

'TOP 5' STATEMENTS WITH THE MOST DISAGREEMENT: ISSUES OF TIME AND MONEY

(s32): Looking for the best price should be more important than being faithful to the producers.

(s3): Being part of a food team requires too much investment in time.

(s48): Being part of food team is a constraint for me: I have to book a moment in my agenda to go there and I can't be bothered.

(s6): I take part in a food team to gain some time on my shopping.

(s18): In order to develop the food teams', it would be necessary that some of their members are paid

Interestingly three sentences amongst the statements that aroused the most disagreement (s3, s48 and s6) refer to the time spent to the activity. In the comments justifying the disagreement with the three statements, some members of food networks underline that participating in a food team doesn't take them more time than go shopping to a supermarket (*"I am not sure – even as the opposite – that this way of supply take me more time than running from a supermarket to the other chasing the best prices"* or *"That doesn't take more time than go shopping in traditional stores"* or *"Our food team was deliberately organised with the concern for the least effort for all"*). Others are not making any statement concerning the loss or gain of time, but simply balance the time spent with the group and what it brings to them (*"the time I spend seems insignificant to me compared to what it brings to me"* or *"What a pleasure! And the discovery of vegetables I wouldn't have bought if I was not part of a food team"*). Others recognise that participating in a group does not make them gain time but, in this case, this investment in time is not considered as a constraint or as something arduous (*"on the*

contrary, I spent a lot of time there but with other added values such as the quality of the relationships, the feeling of being active" or *"it takes more time than go searching vegetables and fruits in another place but I privilege contacts and the quality of products to the time I could gain and to the price"*).

The two other statements in this "top 5" are referring, somehow indirectly and with different angles, to issues of money. They underline the necessity to take some distance with a purely commercial logic. People who have made a comment concerning their disagreement about the statement (s18) motivate their position in different ways. For them, the investment in the groups' organisation does necessarily have to be voluntary to avoid *"a drift toward profitability and productivity"* to avoid *"amplifying the lucrative dimension"* and *"to confuse food teams with a shop"* but also *"to maintain the egalitarian status of the members"* because the strength of these groups is that there is *"no leader, no salary but a co-responsibility in the organisation of the group"*. Therefore is it important *"to maintain the division of the tasks"* and avoid that *"the rich within the group would take part only in paying the poors"*. The aim is thus to de-commodify food consumption.

To summarise, this "top 5" are teaching us that, for the participants to the survey, food teams are different of the regime because of a different use of time and of money occurs… or in other terms, time is no more money.

TOP 5 OF STATEMENTS WITH THE MOST AGREEMENT: IMPROVING THE 'WORLD'

It should be noted that not only have these 5 statements received the highest number of high scores (between +3 and +5), but they are also remarkable because they haven't received *any* low score (between -3 and -5). In other terms, no one in the sample has stated an important disagreement towards them.

(s44): Being part of a food team also means thinking about building another consumption and another society
(s21): I find it important that the products delivered by food teams come from local agriculture
(s31): I take part in a food team to support the local farmers

(s40): I take part in a food team to be less harmful to the environment

(s39): A food team gives everyone the opportunity to participate in, to integrate a system of values, another way of thinking.

The sentences (s21) and (s31) state the importance given to the *local* aspect of products and producers. Buying local products from local producers is valued in several respects. For some, the importance of the local is based on the fact that it allows a relationship of trust between the consumer and the producer as a direct discussion can take place. A short circuit ensures the products' freshness and healthiness, that is to say their quality. Others focus more on the aspect of solidarity and the importance of supporting endangered family farming, to ensure their livelihood in a sustainable way. This argument has a social dimension. At last, others insist on the ecological aspect: lower transport and energy cost, respect of biodiversity... This argument is in direct relation with the statement (s40). It gives an additional perspective on the position of this statement in the "top 5" (*"What seems to me important is to take part in a circuit that we know from one end to another and which can be trusted while minimizing transport and inputs of industrial agriculture"* or *"As the politics of food teams is to buy locally, thus we avoid the pollution of major freight routes. We support local and organic farmer and thus we fight against the loss of industrial land by intensive cultures and supply of pesticides, and by choosing seasonal vegetables, we save energy (transport and greenhouses)"*.

The statements (s39) and (s44) that are also part of this "top 5" are of a different nature. They are less factual and more centered on values, on the ideological aspect of participating to a food team. *"Exchange of values, advices and ways of doing. Moving from isolation to a desire to think together in order to improve how we eat."* Recapture of some power: *"(...) the power to choose what we consume and how"*… There again the local has its importance: *"start with the local if we want to change things and have a more cohesive world"*.

Faced with a very high number of comments associated with the statement (s44), we have decided to have a closer look at this statement and its meanings for participants who have given it a grade of "+ 5" (i.e. strong agreement).

ZOOM ON THE STATEMENT (S44): "(...) BUILDING ANOTHER CONSUMPTION AND ANOTHER SOCIETY"

The concepts of *EXIT* and *VOICE* developed by Hirschmann (1970) is a very useful way to enlighten the statement (s44) and its implications. According to Hirschman, the members of any group, any society have mainly two possibilities of responding when they notice that the organisation shows some signs of decline in quality or becomes less beneficial for its members. They can either *EXIT*, that is to withdraw from the relationship that binds them to this group or *VOICE*, that is to attempt to repair or improve the damaged relationship for instance through complaining and proposing ideas for change.

A careful reading of the comments of the participants who scored a maximum level of agreement to the proposal (s44), leads to the identification of two attitudes present in their discourses. Indeed, in their comments, some appear to say that taking part to a food team is a form of *EXIT* strategy while for others the participation is way of being heard, i.e. food teams are part their *VOICE* strategy.

THE « EXIT » ATTITUDE

A number of comments use a type of vocabulary linked with an *EXIT* attitude:
- Bypass: *"understand how the actual food system has deviated and learn to work around"*.
- Deny, be against: *"I am against the actual system"* or *"the way of buying has become a political act: deny that one is necessarily dependant on supermarkets"*. Or *"we have to deny this globalization of products, of transports and, above all, the enormous waste of food that follows"*.
- Escape: *"it is escaping to the grip of big financial groups and build a society not based on profit"* *"Back in the days of our grandparents"*.

THE "VOICE" ATTITUDE

On the other hand, here is some vocabulary that uses a *VOICE* attitude:
- Make the revolution: *"there are numerous of true facts that conduct to think a coherent alternative must be suggested to the actual system. Start the reflection (and the action!) with an evolution of the consumption mode is, to me, a way of "making an inside revolution"."*
- Change : « influence the current system »
- Integrate or recreate values within the current system: *"return humanist values in the liberal system"*. *"It seems to me important to reinforce these initiatives, above all because they allow recreating links in an individualist society"*. *"Brought back the sense of money toward barter rather than immaterial possession"*.
- Think and educate: *"we ought more to think about the consequences of our actual way of living"*. *"Think to another future for our society of over-consumption"*. *"food team launch*

itself in a dynamic of permanent learning, of reappropriation of its consumption and its consequences on the mode of production, on the alimentation, on health and so on".

Our analysis of the comments related to (s44) also show intermediate statements between voice and exit:

- Built another system alongside the current system and thereby show the example of another possible world. *"We create another mode of consumption more involved and conscious and that can be a path or an example for another way of operating as society."*

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISAPPOINTING REGIME

Whether they adopt a posture rather *EXIT* or rather *VOICE*, the comments are positioned in relation to the current system they reject. The sociology of Jurgen Habermas and especially its concepts of "System" and "Life world" are enlightening to give a wider understanding to this opposition felt by the members of food teams.

In the theory of communicative action developed by Habermas (1981), society appears both as a system and as a life-world – there is a dialectical relationship between these two levels. Two types of integration and social reproduction co-exist: the system attends to its material reproduction and is governed by an instrumental rationality whereas the life-world attends to symbolic reproduction and is governed by procedural rationality. Habermas considers that the pathologies of modernity can be explained by the colonisation of the life-world by the system, i.e. by an extension of impersonal systemic mechanisms to regulate the social world. That phenomenon gives rise to a legitimacy crisis matched by a feeling of meaninglessness in individuals.

From that point of view, food teams may be interpreted as an attempt, in a context of crisis of meaning, to re-introduce values, a significance within an economic system that has completely dissociated itself from the life-world. The *EXIT* and *VOICE* strategies correspond to two – somehow opposite - strategies to face this feeling of nonsense of the regime. As we have shown in the analysis of the comments, the *EXIT* is characterised by a will to exclude, "by pass", "escape", "deny" the systemic component for the benefit of a another type of society which would be based solely on the life-world while the *VOICE* strategy is rather to work within the system and try to "integrate or recreate values within the current system", reintroduce meaning, life-world with education, reflections and, why not, the revolution.

However, again, our empirical analysis shows that this "system" doesn't mean the same thing for all the participants in the survey (and probably not even for all the member of the same food team!). For some, the aim is to take some distance with a capitalist society, a liberal system which:

- Create unnecessary desire and needs
- Conduct to an individualisation
- Create inequalities
- Is not sustainable
- Has forgotten the true signification of money

For others, it is to position themselves against globalisation that induce:

- Absurd journeys
- Ecological nonsense
- A breach of ethical, political contexts

For others, it is more precisely a perverted food system that is to question, since it implies:

- The use of carcinogens or noxious compounds
- A focus on conservation rather than the taste

- An enormous waste

At last, some don't blame the current system and its problems as such, but rather the answers that are generally brought: a so-called « sustainable development » and the greenwashing.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD TEAMS

If all food team members are not sensitive to the same issues it is normal that they also consider food teams and the way they oppose to the actual system differently. Indeed, for some, food team is above all a place for the exchange, the reflection. For others, it is a place where true relationships, links between people are created. Others also see them as a place where the producers are known and it is thus possible to trust them. Some insist on the importance of being able to make a real choice as consumer. The pleasure of the identification of the real quality of a product through dialog rather than through disembodied labels is also underlined. At last, some simply consider that it is only a place where it is possible to give one's time, freely, without counting.

FACTOR ANALYSIS: PREVALENT DISCOURSES IN LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS

After the exploration of these first results, we have developed a factor analysis to identify "typical discourses" concerning food teams. We were able to identify 8 significant factors, but we have decided to keep only 6 as the factor 5 and 8 were representing significantly only one person each and were not easily understandable. The first factor represents the dominant discourse on food teams whereas the other five represent more marginal discourses. However, they put question in their differences and the dimensions that each of them highlights.

IDENTIFIED FACTORS

The factors are described here with the help of a table gathering the distinguishing statements or statements differentiating a factor from all others, by the score it assigns.

FACTOR 1: THE DOMINANT DISCOURSE – CHANGE, VALUE, CONVIVIALITY

The factor 1 is clearly the most important factor. 23 persons are significantly loaded on it, and it accounts for 21% of the variance. It can be considered as corresponding to the dominant discourse on food teams. Its description meets some aspects of the analysis realised above.

It is not surprising to see (s44) as one of the statements gathering the highest degree of agreement. In this perspective, food teams are considered as an arena of change (active) (s2) and a system of value (s39), where the conviviality and the social relationships are playing an important role (s13 and s38). As a consequence, it appears normal to devote some time to the activity, and be involved in these groups (-s6, -s48, -s3). The focus is also put on the local dimension of the products, as well as the producers (s21 and 31). The evolution of food teams towards more institutionalization (labels, legal framework: -s28 and –s45) or towards an improvement in the criteria for selecting products produced a sharp disagreement.

FACTOR 2: THE « DISAPPOINTED » (LACK OF TIME)

Factor 2 is significant for 5 persons and it explains 9% of the variance. To understand this factor and its specificity, it is first of all interesting to investigate the characteristics of the five persons who where associated to it. Indeed, two amongst them declare not to be part of a food team at the time of the interview: they have left their group due to a "lack of time" and, for one of them, due to "unsuccessful discussions". The three others persons in this factor are working women with children.

The specificity of factor 2 is linked to the fact that it is the only one to present the participation to a food team as a constraint: time and personal investment are considered as problematic (-s12, -s5, -s42, and **s48**). Persons belonging to this factor agree on the principle that food teams are a way to access healthy products, to less harming the environment, to support local farmers but they argue for a better efficiency, a better organization. The aim is not to change the relationship between producers and consumers (-s37, **-s34**.)… or to radically change their mode of consumption but simply to consume better products. A glance at the distinguishing statements confirms that this factor seems to be closest (or, at least, less far away) from a "market logic" than other factors (s30 et s34).

Distinguishing statements for factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F6	F7
(s48) Being part of food teams is a constraint for me: I have to book a moment in my agenda to go there and I can't be bothered.	-4	2	-3	-4	0	-5
(s30) If the traditional shops were selling only local and seasonal products, food teams would lose their "raison d'être"..	-5	0	2	-2	-3	-2
(s38) A food team creates a network in the neighborhood: people know each others, they build relationships between them.	3	0	3	1	4	4
(s34) The relationship between the producers and food teams should be convivial rather than commercial.	2	-3	0	0	0	0

Table 4 – Statements associated to Factor 2

NB : This table is to be read as followed: the columns represent different factors and the score given by these factors to the statements are written in the lines. The column underlined in yellow represent the interest factor: the scores in this column are different from the others considering certain statements

This factor can be illustrated by this comment left by a respondent to justify her disagreement concerning (s6) "I take part in a food team to gain some time on my shopping") : *In fact, it does take me a lot of time to take part to a food team. It's a real commitment in the week. More structure and efficiency would not be too much. I left the food team in my neighborhood because it was too energy-costing. I would be in favor of an initiative more structurally supported to lightened it and make it accessible to more people.*

FACTOR 3: THE « HEDONISTS »

As factor 2, the factor 3 explains 9 % of the variance and it is significant for 5 persons. The main characteristic of factor 3 is firstly an important reference to the relationship to products, especially their quality. The food team is considered as a way to get local products (s21), healthy (s23), fresh (s24). It is associated with a notion of happiness (**s4**) and wellness (s7). Dedicate some time or energy to it is not seen as a problem (-s6, -s3, -s48). We can also notice in this factor a will to keep a group of a small size (-s46), (-s20), probably at the scale of the neighborhood to ensure the links of conviviality (s38) on the one hand and a direct relationship with the producers (-s26), (s33) on the other hand. In this case the wish for proximity with the producer is not a form of militancy (-s43): the reference to environment (**s40**) appears as less important than for other factors, for instance. Moreover, no way to commit oneself financially in advance towards the producers (-s35), and no way to require a limited participation for those who would act as simple "costumer" (-s11). The food team is thus seen more as an alternative way of doing shopping, without hurrying…

Distinguishing statements for factor 3	F1	F2	F3	F4	F6	F7
(s4) Finding in my basket vegetables I don't know, discovering them… it's a real pleasure.	1	1	5	1	3	1
(s40) I take part in a food team to be less harmful to the environment	3	5	1	3	5	3

A glance at the personal characteristics of the respondents belonging to this factor can teach us more. It is interesting to notice that it gathers elderly women aged 50 to 64 (with only one exception, a woman aged 30-49).

FACTOR 4: THE « ALTERMONDIALISTS »

The factor 4 explains also 9% of the variance and 4 persons are significantly represented: 2 women and 1 man, aged 30-49 as well as a woman of 50-64 years old. All of them are active (employed or independent).

Distinguishing statement for factor 4	F1	F2	F3	F4	F6	F7
(s27) In the future, one should do the whole shopping (not only food) through food teams.	-1	-1	-2	5	-2	-1

The factor 4 is characterized by a prevalence of "general", "ideological" statements which refer to the link between the food team and society (s44 , s39, s40). To be part of this system is clearly considered as a kind of active militancy (s43, s2). The only distinguishing statement which advocates the widening of this supply system to all types of products is characteristic of a kind of "radicalism". The factor is also positioned against all form of institutionalisation (-s28, -s16, -s45) and against the development of food teams in the direction of the dominant system (-s29, -s26). We have called this factor "the altermondialists" in opposition with the factor 7, "the alterlocalists". Indeed, the issue here is to change the society, the consumption but reference to the local is not striking. The militancy stays blurred, directed towards principles rather than towards concrete and local actions.

FACTOR 6: THE "THRIFTY"

The factor 6 explains 6% of the variance and is significant for 2 persons (a woman and a man aged 30-49, the first is housewife and the latter is an employee-executive).

Distinguishing statements for factor 6	F1	F2	F3	F4	F6	F7
(s50) I take part in a food team because it provides me the kind of products I seek to a lesser price than in a supermarket.	-2	-4	-2	0	3	-1
(s10) As a member of a food team, I agree to pay more for one kilo of carrots (cabbage, potatoes,…) than in a supermarket.	0	2	0	1	-3	1

The specificity of this factor is to refer clearly to the economic criterion as we can see analyzing the two distinguishing statements (s50 and –s10). Food teams are seen as a good way to get some healthy(s23) and fresh (s24) (but not necessarily organic(-s22)) products at lower cost and in a convivial atmosphere. The analysis of the specificity of this factor also show a kind of equilibrium between time and money as dedicate some time to food teams doesn't seem to be considered problematic.

FACTOR 7: THE « ALTERLOCALISTS »

Factor 7 explains 8% of the variance and is significant for 3 persons: 2 men and 1 woman, all of them aged 50-64 and active.

Distinguishing statement for factor 7	F1	F2	F3	F4	F6	F7
(s42) I'm ready to commit myself into the creation of new food team.	0	-4	-1	0	-1	4

The factor 7 is similar to factor 4 in several respects (s44, s2, s40) but it seems less "generalist" and more proactive. It is important to dedicate time and personal investment (not paid! s18) to food teams (**s42**, s41, s1). In this case the local dimension seems more important. Supporting local producers (which should not cause a confusion of roles -s37 et-s8) is one of the two dimensions seen as the most important. What is more, the only reference to the products concerns their local specificity (s21). The persons associated to this factor are ready to personally invest in the development of this system but to multiply the number of the groups rather than their growth.

CONCLUSION OF THE FACTOR ANALYSIS: THE INPUT OF THE JUSTIFICATION THEORY

What does this factor analysis teach us? It is first interesting to come back a little bit to the insights of the literature. We note that (almost) all the elements that had been picked out in the literature as benefits and motivations of consumers shifting from the regime to the niche can well be found back in the "dominant discourse": the niche is well considered as an alternative to the regime in "ideological", "political" terms (s44), as a place where one can find healthy, local and fresh products, while being aware of environmental issues, and as a way to support the local farmers, and to have with them and with the other members of food teams a close and meaningful relationship.

Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that the other factors put more specifically the emphasis on one or the other of those motivations: for the hedonists, what matters above all is the quality of the products, the connection to other households sharing the same preferences, and the pleasure those elements induce. The altermondialists insist on the idea of the niche as a general "political" alternative to the regime. The alterlocalists join them, and add the importance of the local dimension (support to local farmers). Finally, for the "thrifty", the niche is especially seen as a way of getting quality products at a lower cost. The factor representing "the disappointed" is a bit different, since it helps enlightening the barriers and costs of shifting from the regime to the niche, rather than the motivations for doing so. There again, we find back the elements described in the literature.

A conclusion we can draw from this is that, even though the "niche" of persons with awareness of sustainable consumption often tends to be considered as a group with similar concerns, the interest of focusing only on persons concerned by that issue and who have taken the step of becoming members of a food team is to emphasize both the heterogeneity of the arguments that they put forward and the points in common that bring them together. The theory of "the justification" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991) is very enlightening to understand the specificity of food teams regarding food consumption when compared to the traditional consumer (Murdoch et al, 1999; Murdoch et al. 2000, Vitterso et al. 2005). The key issue in the work of Boltanski and Thévenot is to understand the principles and values the actors refer to when they want to show a disagreement without resorting to violence. Their hypothesis is that there is a plurality of "justification registers". To each of them corresponds a vision of the common good and justice and there are attached with specific situations, that is to say specific objects and devices. Through the analysis of classical work in political theory where very different conceptions of a justice are developed, they systematize and explain conceptions of justice that appear

implicitly in our daily life. In their book, they underline six "justification registers" (the so-called cities) that people use to judge what is correct in a case of dissension or criticism in their attempt to find an agreement: the inspired, domestic, opinion, civil, industrial and market cities. To each city corresponds a vision of common good that allows people to find agreements. These models can be assimilated to ideal types in the *weberian* sense of this concept: they are not a true representation of the real world but deliberately accentuate some aspects.

Following the theoretical perspective of Boltanski and Thevenot, food teams can be considered as a form of disagreement against the conception of the common good and justice as present in the regime that is based on the predominant logic of "market city" as well as the "industrial city". The principles of other cities – domestic, civic or ecological – are valued as complementary and presenting alternatives.

What are the characteristics of the industrial and market worlds according to Boltanski and Thévenot? The industrial world is characterized by the importance given to technical objects and scientific methods. The main register of justification is the efficiency and the performance in the organization. The market world has neither time nor space and is composed of individuals aimed at satisfying their desires to own the same scarce goods. One of the main principles is thus the concurrence between free individuals. In the market world, the consumer and the producer – supplier of service, distributor – are considered as agents whose interests are divergent, or even contradictory but who finally find an equilibrium according to the law of supply and demand. That mechanism is characterized by the uncertainty that it creates, both in the producer and in the consumer. In fact, since only interest maintains the social connection, the different actors are neither assured of the duration nor the quality of the relationship. How can the consumer be sure that the lure of profit will not induce the producer to take useless risks or to transgress certain values? The values of trust and respect therefore flourished as safeguards against the deviations brought about by the omnipresence of the logic of interest in the market world. It means restoring the primacy of interpersonal relations in the economic sphere and emphasizing the social dimension of trade. The analysis of the justifications put forward by the persons questioned in our research shows that one of their common points, especially as a result of crisis of confidence with regard to the abstract systems of modernity, is the desire to replace *impersonal trust* – also called "system trust" – dominant in the market and industrial logic by *personal trust* (Giddens 1994; Szompka 1999). Moreover, even though consumption is traditionally apprehended in an individualist way (everyone tries to improve the price/quality ratio of their purchases for themselves), the approach of food teams members stresses the relational dimension of that practice. We have shown, for instance, the great importance many of food team members give to conviviality inside their groups. Members of food teams are aware that their buying patterns have an impact on others – not only human beings but also the environment. These aspects are characteristic of the "domestic world". Indeed, it *"appears each time that what is just emphasis the personal relationships between people"* (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991:206). In the domestic register of justification, the values of trust and respect are very important. People are valued by the quality of the relationship they have with others.

Another major argument put forward by all food teams' members is an ecological one. The ecological register of justification has been studied in an article of Thevenot and Lafaye (1993). In the "green world" the greatness given to what is ecological, that is to say to the one whom by his actions shows his concerns for the environment and take part to its protection. The products are qualified by the adjective "green": they can be recycled or are biodegradable. These aspects differentiate food teams' members from the "traditional" conception of the consumer, who would only be concerned about maximizing his price/quality ratio. It is a way of questioning one of the basic principles of any modern

thought, namely the autonomy of the social order and the opposition of the latter in relation to the natural order. That dichotomy made possible the domination of mankind over his environment, the substantification (reification) of nature, since the latter was considered as an abundant and infinite material base completely exclusive of the social part (see also Murdoch 1999). The division between nature and social is particularly important in the logic of the industrial mode of production. In actual fact, on the one hand, the development of science and technology in the industrial world is based on an instrumentalisation and a will to master nature and, on the other hand, one of the basic postulates of the market world is that nature is free and infinite.

Thirdly, the "civil world" is also present in the results of our survey and, more specifically, in the discourses of the "altermondialists". The particularity of the civil world is to reflect in collective terms. People are united by a bond of solidarity. Greatness is achieved by renouncing one's personal and immediate interests and by giving primacy to the collective interest. Being a member of a food team is basically perceived as political means of pressure intended to combat or mitigate the failings of the current system. The intrinsic criteria (freshness, quality, appearance, taste, smell, etc.) of the products are of little importance. This type of buyers considers that it is important to be concerned about the impacts of their consumption above all in the name of the collective interest – safeguarding the environment for future generations, for instance. In a work entitled "L'imaginaire utopique aujourd'hui", Alain Pessin (2001) explains that, since the sixties, we have been witnessing a transformation of the utopian imaginary. Generally speaking, the notion of utopia is defined as a collective construction, which proposes new forms of community existence. Studying the contemporary alternative imaginary, Pessin states that the content of utopia has changed. Priority is now to the affirmative and no longer to refusal and combat. Building an entirely new world is considered as unrealistic and the current objective is rather to propose pockets of resistance and making breaches. Whereas classical utopia appeared as a coherent and comprehensive project, contemporary utopia praises partial achievements. Contradiction is considered as inevitable. Furthermore, the instituting capacity and responsibility of every person is enhanced. In that way, it is no longer question of people waiting for the Great Night but rather of people acting on a day-to-day basis. Concrete experience rooted in space and present time replaces an abstract and suspended time. Utopia is apprehended as an ongoing construction in the "hic et nunc". The project embodied by food teams presents the characteristics of the "classic ideal" of contemporary utopias outlined by Pessin. Unlike revolutionary utopias, the action undertaken by the members of food teams does not claim to break with the industrial mode of production and the capitalist system on a world scale from one day to the next in order to establish collectively a new system. It is rather question of acting immediately, concretely, by carrying out "positive" actions in the field of everyday life. The instituting capacity of individuals is emphasised.

A SYNTHESIS

This section presents the results of two surveys aimed at answering a double question: What is the potential of development, growth and sustainability of Local Food System? How can this niche maintain and develop itself to take part to a transition toward a sustainable food system? The two surveys realized are not sufficient to answer these questions. Therefore the analysis of our results cannot give them a unique and definite answer. However, we have been able to underline interesting aspects. The benefits of *Q methodology* were to underline common attitudes toward food teams as well as more specific profiles of participants in these groups. It seems widely accepted that taking part to a food team doesn't only signify taking part to an alternative food supply system. For a great majority of respondents to our survey, it signifies looking differently at society and its values, positioning oneself toward them and thinking actively to the building of another society and another consumption.

However these aspects are not discussed formally in the groups meetings. For many food teams participants, this construction goes necessarily through the local: choosing local products and supporting local producers, caring for the environment and solidarity… Thus shrink the space but widened the time: accepting to invest more time (and eventually more money) to take off more than product's quality from the food team, that is to say quality in relationships.

Along with this set of shared attitudes, we can find specific profiles. The "disappointed" for whom the investment in time is a problem would wish more organization and efficiency. The "hedonists" find more important the products' quality (that is to say fresh, healthy, local) rather than the support of local producers or the care for the environmental dimension. The "altermondialists" are more militant, more conscious of acting for the society. They are opposed to the "institutionalization" of food teams and concerned of their distinction from the traditional system. The "thrifty" view mostly food teams as a way of getting quality products to a lesser cost. At last, the "alterlocalists" are ready to invest themselves actively and voluntarily to change the local through food teams.

These diverse profiles, these diverse ways of considering food teams are characteristics of the diversity of reasons why people join these groups. This finding raises challenges for the expansion of these niches and the wider transition of the sector toward more sustainability. It will probably be difficult to underline one aspect of these groups valued by some, without losing other people attracted by other aspects.

III.   FOOD TEAMS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The objective of this chapter is to study the relationships between our case studies, i.e. the three Belgian food team systems, and their institutional environment. More particularly, we will analyse the governance of the food teams' *niche* in a transition perspective.

Chapter III is structured in three parts: 1) the first section presents the research questions, the theoretical context and the related methodology; 2) the second section is related to the analysis of the food teams' governance, based on empirical data; 3) the third and final section is related to the evaluation of the food teams' governance according to the transition- and strategic niche management approaches. The present chapter is a synthesis of an extensive working paper, which presents the empirical analyses of the differentiated policy instruments and policy levels.

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

EXPLORING THE GOVERNANCE OF FOOD TEAMS

Le Galès defines 'governance' as the whole set of formal and informal relations between public and private interests, and of arrangements along which decisions are taken and implemented (Le Galès, 1995). Governance is not a synonym of government, but an evolution of it, improving the understanding of new forms of public action which include actors beyond traditional public institutions. Governance accounts for a shift in the registers of action, which do not rely anymore predominantly on constraints, legitimate violence and domination, but on negotiation, partnership and ethical and moral principles (Jouve and Lefevre, 1999).

More particularly, the concept of 'innovative governance' refers to such a transformation in public action, through new - innovative - policy instruments, policy tools and policy techniques supplementing the traditional ones (Rubik et al, 2009). According to Lascoumes and Le Galès, innovation in policy instruments is justified by the need of a renewal or enrichment of the public action, through the introduction of particular values i.e. modernisation, deregulation and openness to the market, democratic transparency and participation (Rubik et al, 2009). Therefore, in this kind of innovation, non-state actors are often integrated in the policy process through consultative and participative mechanisms (Rubik et al, 2009). Moreover, this kind of policy making, i.e. innovative governance where public authorities are no longer the single steering centre, "*may be particularly well adapted to complex and dynamic social environments, where central coordination is difficult if not outright impossible to begin with »* (Mayntz, 2006 cited in Rubik et al, 2009, p31). The policy domain of sustainable consumption appears to correspond well to such a complex and dynamic social environment. Renting and Wiskerke implicitly evoke the need of innovative governance in the case of short food supply chains because "*existing initiatives have frequently developed outside (or even in opposition to) existing policy frameworks, but also required support mechanisms at odds with existing governance conceptions*"(Renting and Wiskerke, 2010, p1904).

Furthermore, the shift from government to governance requires an approach to policy making which is "*more systematic, flexible and oriented towards continuous learning*" (Tukker, 2008, p88), referring to the concept of 'reflexive governance'. Reflexive governance is advocated to be particularly needed to handle 'second-order problems' such as sustainability, i.e. problems caused by "*unintended*

consequences of societal actions and more difficult to handle because they require [...], putting aside the isolation of instrumental specialisation, widening filters of relevance, trading off values and engaging in interaction with other specialists, [...] transgressing the cognitive, evaluative and institutional boundaries, which paradoxically, undermines the modernist problem-solving approach" (Voss and Kemp, 2006, p6). In practice, reflexive governance requires that actors and institutions 1) "*reflect on how their frames, structures and patterns of action contribute to persistent problems*"; 2) "*loosen their grip on the desire 'to control' problems in the way that classical modernity prescribes*"; 3) "[develop] *innovative and strategic thinking to fundamentally transform existing practices and structures*" (Hendriks and Grin, 2007, p3).

Transition management is considered as a form of reflexive governance for two main reasons. First of all "*it aims at dealing with real and perceived problems of forms of modernization and tries to avoid or at least deal proactively with risks and negative side effects of solutions*" (Kemp and Loorbach, 2006, p13). Second of all, it relies on different strategies related to reflexive governance, i.e. knowledge integration, anticipation of long-term systemic effects, adaptivity of strategies and institutions, iterative participatory goal formulation and interactive strategy development. These strategies are implemented through different systemic instruments, among others 'transition arenas', i.e. multi-actors networks working to a shared problem definition and to a related sustainability vision which constitutes a guide for objectives, policies and transition pathways.

Based on these governance issues, we formulated two questions with regard to the governance of *food teams*:

1) Which actors and measures have an (direct or indirect) *influence* on food teams (considering both categories of members of food teams, i.e. producers and consumers)?
2) Which kinds of *interactions* have food teams with these identified actors and measures? Do these latter present obstacles or opportunities for the functioning of food teams? How do food teams react to these obstacles and opportunities and create ties with these different actors?

To answer the first question, the first task is to identify *existing measures and actors* which have an *influence on food teams*. In the present case, both public and non-state actors are included in the analysis. In comparison with a 'government'-perspective that would focus on state actors, the focus on governance naturally calls to widen the actors to be considered. Indeed, several studies show the important influence of non-state actors on the global food system (Tukker, 2008) and more particularly on 'alternative food networks' or 'local food systems' (Mathijs et al, 2006).

The food teams' governance framework is reconstructed through an iterative process. A first version of the governance framework surrounding Belgian food teams was drawn on basis of documents reviews (official documents, scientific literature as well as documents and websites from food teams and other associations) and attendance to meetings related to sustainable food. This framework was complemented by inputs from interviews, leading to other documents, interviews and so on. In order to structure our results, we classify public and non-state actors through different categories inspired from existing typologies (Ministère français de l'agriculture et de la pêche and Terres en ville, 2009; Renting and Wiskerke, 2010). In our analysis, we divide the food teams' governance framework into two blocks: public authorities on the one hand and non-state actors on the other hand, this latter being composed of several categories. In the first block related to public authorities, we examine different policy levels, i.e. local, regional, federal and European levels. First of all, we introduce some elements of the policy context. One the one hand, we mention some results from European or national scientific studies dealing with the relationships between policy frameworks and short food supply chains. On the other hand, we focus on the Belgian context through an examination of current government

agreements, policy notes, declarations or advices at the federal, regional and local level. After this contextual part, we detail the different measures composing the current policy framework of food teams. These measures are sorted out by six categories of policy instruments inspired from existing typologies (Eliadis, Hill and Howlett, 2005, Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2004, Salamon, 2002). Note that our typology includes both 'traditional' and more 'innovative policy instruments (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2004). The first category of instruments (traditional) is composed of 1) legislative and regulative instruments 2) economic instruments and 3) direct supply of goods and services. The second category (innovative instruments) consists in 4) communicational and informational instruments, 5) contracts and incentive instruments, and 6) norms and standards. It allows us to draw some considerations related to potential innovative and reflexive elements inside the food teams' governance realities. As for non-state actors, we define five categories adapted to the particular situation of food teams and to the Belgian context, i.e. 1) federations and trade unions of farmers, 2) platforms of the organic sector, 3) retailers, 4) investing and financing bodies, 5) environmental associations, training bodies and citizens.

In connection with the identification of the food teams' governance framework, our scope of analysis straddles two levels, i.e. the "macro" level of short food supply chains and the "micro" level of food teams. Indeed, a series of policy or private measures are led at the level of short food supply chains, i.e. enacting the perspective of the producer. This is for example the case of large regulations such as the common agricultural policy. Nevertheless, some actors and a few measures address food teams in particular.

With regard to the second question above, the objective is to analyse more deeply the *interactions between this range of actors and related measures and food teams*. This leads to two analytical parts, based on the same sources of information than for the first question, i.e. documents reviews, interviews and participation to meetings organised or not by food teams.

First, the governance framework is analysed in terms of 'obstacles' or 'opportunities' for food teams. In this field, we make two assumptions. On the one hand, we expect some obstacles due to the fact that regime institutions contribute to the stabilization and the reinforcement of the dominant system. This phenomenon, called institutional path-dependencies, leads to a global governance framework favouring the agro-food regime rather than alternative food systems. On the other hand, we expect opportunities for food teams in the governance framework because of the emergence of an interest for sustainable food and agriculture in the policy agenda due to different factors, notably the recurrent food sanitary crises, or the questioning regarding the safety and nutritional value of standardized industrial food (Goodman and Goodman, 2007), or the failures of the common agricultural policy and more generally ecological concerns related to the food system.

Second, we analyse the 'strategies' implemented by food teams in reaction to this governance framework. The use of this concept stems from the research project "Facilitating alternative agro-food networks" which has studied the influence of state actors on alternative food systems. In this project, strategies are defined as responses of these food systems to policy frameworks (Levidow and Darrot, 2010). In this perspective, we consider 'strategies' as the reactions of food teams with regard to the governance framework, i.e. not only public policies and actions but also measures implemented by non-state actors. We suppose that these strategies are intended, on the one hand, to induce to the food teams a beneficiary situation suing the existing favourable elements and, on the other hand, to diminish the constraints of the governance framework (Levidow and Darrot, 2010). Furthermore, in connection with this analysis of food teams' strategies, we refer to the concept of 'institutional embeddedness' of food teams. We define it as the extent to which food teams have relationships with

their institutional environment, namely through the building of networks composed of both state and non-state actors in order to support food teams. The rationale underlying the use of this concept is the following: by studying the way food teams create ties with the institutions of the agro-food system, we can observe how food teams constitute a new actor in the food governance framework. Moreover, transition management theory considers that 'institutional embedding' and involvement of key players from the regime constitute elements favouring the "scaling up" (i.e. development) of the niche (Raven, Van Den Bosch and Weterings, 2007). According to strategic niche management, institutional embedding "*relates to the robustness of niche development, in terms of the level of technical, market, social and institutional support.*" (Smith, 2007, p430). In our analysis, we focus on this latter dimension of institutional support, i.e. through a network of supportive actors. Indeed, strategic niche management considers the building of social networks as a factor of potential success of niches, namely in order to gain necessary resources (money, knowledge, access to lobbying and so on) (Schot and Geels, 2008). "*Forming network ties with those who control resources*" is common to all organisations (Hager et al, 2004, p164) but can prove to be even more important for small-scale initiatives such as food teams which are developing outside the regime. The importance to build external networks around innovations in the agricultural and food field have been highlighted by several studies: "*Where innovations evolve as co-production of knowledge, economic, social, organizational and technological solutions on the basis of common interests and networks, there tends to be a higher rate of success. Typically such networks involve a diverse range of actors and interests: farmers, consumers, rural entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), regional governments, universities, research and innovation support agencies, intermediaries and knowledge brokers, etc. Efficient innovation systems therefore are reflected in conducive institutional arrangements and based on collaboration in the form of partnerships among diverse groups of public and private actors, regional innovation platforms, alliances and business clusters (Knickel and Peter, 2009; Knickel et al., 2008b).*" (Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009, p11). Similarly, according to a study about Belgian local food systems, these systems need larger networks and build ties with actors outside the inner circle of local food systems in order to further develop (Mathijs et al, 2006).

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT AND THE GOVERNANCE OF FOOD TEAMS

As this research project is interrogating the conceptual framework of transition management, two additional questions are more specifically related to the food teams' governance in a transition perspective:

- Are food teams, considered as a niche, managed according to the guiding principles of the transition- and strategic niche management approaches?
- Facing these considerations, is an active governance of food teams feasible and even desirable?

The objective of this second section is to interpret the results related to both previous questions under the light of the theoretical frameworks of transition management (TM) and strategic niche management (SNM). Therefore, we mobilize the guidelines of both these approaches related to a conscious niche management in order to compare them with our results about the current governance of Belgian food teams' niche. Indeed, TM and SNM recommend to support and protect niches from the regime pressures, for example by allocating them different kinds or resources (exemption of some rules, money, learning skills and so on) (Raven, Van Den Bosch and Weterings, 2007, Van Der Hoeven, 2010). We can thus draw some conclusions about the existence or the absence of such an active support of food teams, and of their existence as a niche.

In light of these conclusions, we question the niche status of food teams assumed in the beginning of the study and the implications of their 'vague' status in terms of governance. In connection with these considerations, we finally wonder if a proactive governance of food teams is feasible or even desirable, in respect of the specificities of such innovative initiatives.

B. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK OF BELGIAN FOOD TEAMS

In the following, we detail parts of the analysis of elements of governance that influence the existence of the Belgian food teams. The main emphasis of the section is to present the results of our analysis; empirical and in-depth analyses can be withdrawn from the respective working paper.

THE POLICY CONTEXT OF SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

Several authors address the influence of public actors on short food supply chains, including food teams. Goodman and Goodman (2009) affirm that "*the entrenched regulatory hegemony of retailer-led food governance, sanctioned by the state, places alternative food networks at a tremendous disadvantage in this struggle*» (p16). In the same perspective, Mathijs et al. (2006) stated that "*the rules governing the agricultural and food sector are based on the old system of strictly separated production stages. In LFS* [local food systems]*, however, production stages are reintegrated leading often to a conflict with the existing rules. This may refer to food safety regulation, transportation, retail, zoning regulations, etc.*" (p69). In other words, the global food governance is favouring the "regime" or the dominant system, as it is constructed under the influence of dominant actors. This phenomenon is clearly to be related to the concept of institutional path dependencies mentioned in our hypothesis. Further, Marsden et al. have insisted on the particular relationships between the state and short food supply chains initiatives. According to these authors, short food supply chains either develop innovations going beyond the state support or resist to the negative effects of state policy (Marsden, 2000).

The European research project "Facilitating alternative agro-food networks" has specifically studied the role of some policies (namely the Common Agricultural Policy, sanitary regulations and trading laws) on these particular food systems, through national case studies. Their results show that "*policies are rarely designed or implemented to facilitate LFS,* [...] *In any context, each policy framework may have various features which both hinder and facilitate LFS*" (Levidow and Darrot 2010, p7). In the same perspective, another European research project about agricultural innovations highlighted that "*regulations and legal definitions can be at the origin of difficulties, as the* [direct marketing] *projects often have to face regulatory barriers. As a matter of fact, some decisions of governments, both local and national, can make the legal and institutional context more favorable to innovations in direct marketing, whereas other decisions may increase the constraints*" (Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009, p31). In reaction to those policy frameworks, local food systems implement several 'strategies', i.e. challenging, accommodating and/or bypassing unfavourable policies versus accommodating, using, strengthening and/or linking favourable ones (Levidow and Darrot, 2010).

Facing this mixed policy context, some authors insist on the opportunities that public authorities can create for short food supply chains, namely favouring public green procurement for collective catering, organising informational campaigns about locally grown products (Tischner and Kjaerbes, 2007), supporting the creation of networks to structure the supply, supporting collective processing tools and maintaining agricultural lands in dense areas (namely by local authorities) (Delhommeau,

2009). The moment of the support in the development phases of short food supply chains is also evoked: "*public decision actors can support projects through legal consultancy or local funding (for shops or groups), however, they are scarcely involved in the initial phase of the projects, but more frequently in their further development.*"(Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009, p31). Moreover, a research dealing with Belgian local food systems has identified six categories of functions which can facilitate the development of these systems i.e. 1) policy advice through research within the sector, 2) communication and promotion, 3) fiscal advice for farmers, 4) knowledge and training, 5) financing and 6) rural development (Mathijs et al, 2006). Note that these functions can be fulfilled by both governmental and non-governmental actors (Mathijs et al, 2006). In brief, this shows that, despite a global unfavourable context for short food supply chains, policy frameworks induce both obstacles and opportunities for these initiatives.

The review of the specific Belgian policy context, through various federal, regional and provincial policy declarations, notes or government agreements of the current legislatures, shows that an interest for short food chains initiatives is emerging in the current Belgian policy agenda, especially at regional level (directly linked to their political competence in the agricultural field). Both Flemish and Walloon declarations make reference to the building of a legislative framework around farm products, which is still totally absent today. The Brussels declaration refers more to the concept of sustainable food rather than agriculture, although urban agriculture is considered as well. The Walloon document offers the more detailed view about this issue and is furthermore the only to mention food teams among the initiatives to support. At the federal level, political declarations do not refer directly to short food supply chains but to the conditions of small producers regarding tax and sanitary regulations, which are key factors in such food systems. Moreover, a position about a sustainable food system from the Federal Council on Sustainable Development issues a series of recommendations about short food supply chains. At the local level, the province of Antwerp has adopted a formal policy note to promote regional and farm products including in direct marketing.

THE FOOD TEAMS' GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK IN SHORT

For the moment, no global and coherent policy on short food supply chains exists in Belgium, contrary to what can be seen in France for example (Ministère français de l'agriculture et de la pêche, 2009). However, the Flemish and Walloon policy declarations refer to the implementation of a legislative framework for farm products. The advice from the Federal Council of Sustainable Development recommends drawing up a Belgian plan for short food supply chains too. In this perspective, the Flemish work-group initiated by *Voedselteams* involving the Flemish minister of agriculture has the objective to think about such a plan in Flanders. The point has thus recently emerged on the policy agenda.

As expected, the public authorities develop measures which generate both obstacles and opportunities for food teams' initiatives. On the one hand, obstacles are linked to the institutional path dependencies reproducing power patterns through a set of policy instruments in favour of the agro-food regime. It is for example the case of sanitary rules and the land access regime that globally favour agro-food industry with its large investment capacity.

On the other hand, opportunities are due to two main reasons. First, the agricultural policy agenda has integrated objectives related to a more multifunctional and sustainable agriculture, which includes e.g. direct sales of farm products. As a result, opportunities emerge from an adjustment of existing regulations (i.e. softening process of sanitary rules for small producers) or from a more global policy

reform (i.e. introduction of a rural development pillar in the agricultural policy). Furthermore, the interest for multifunctional and sustainable agriculture in the policy agenda induces measures directly promoting short food supply chains e.g. through promotional and communicational instruments, projects led in partnerships, subsidies and supply of services and/or goods. Second, the specific status and functioning of food teams allows them to escape from a series of constraints which would normally apply to their activities. This is especially the case for sanitary rules, which are not applied in food teams' delivery points thanks to their private and non-trade status. With regard to organic labelling, for instance, food teams do not necessarily ask their producers to have been labelled organic. This is an advantage for farmers who respect organic agricultural methods, but do not want or cannot support the financial and administrative burden related to the official organic conversion process. The distinction 'state intervention' versus 'laissez-faire' may also characterise these different opportunities. Some opportunities are consequences of state interventions, and food teams may grasp them when appropriate e.g. subsidies for food teams' coordination, legal protection of their name, material helps, land access, communication around short food supply chains. In parallel, other opportunities simply emerge from an absence of state intervention, i.e. laissez-faire: e.g. no sanitary rules in the delivery rooms and no compulsory labels.

In sum, these results confirm one of the conclusions of the European research project "Facilitating alternative agro-food networks" according to which "*policies are rarely designed or implemented to facilitate LFS, (...) In any context, each policy framework may have various features which both hinder and facilitate LFS*" (Levidow and Darrot, 2010, p7). However, if legislative frameworks about short food supply chains and farm products would be in the future put to implementation, this will not necessarily be in favour of increased protection of food teams. If up-scaling of the niche would thus mean a bigger pressure form state actors to regulate the activity, food teams would not necessarily gain from this. We will come back to this point in the next section.

With regard to non-state actors, several categories of organisations are linked to short food supply chains and offer opportunities for food teams. We can mention 1) trainings and guidance services, informational tools and the political mission of trade unions, 2) the protection of organic producers and outlets and promotion towards consumers from the regional organic platforms, 3) the investing initiatives from individuals or ethical banks and 4) the different functions of environmental and agricultural associations, i.e. consumers' awareness raising, farmers' trainings and building networks between actors involved in short food supply chains. Some small shops are partners of food teams, especially in Flanders. In opposition, there is no formal interaction between supermarkets and food teams. Obviously, these actors (regime vs niche) influence each other. On the one hand, food teams have been created also in reaction against the multiplication of intermediaries within the 'long food supply chains', in which supermarkets are dominant actors. On the other hand, supermarkets and more generally the retailing sector are co-influenced by local food systems in their drive to increase the visibility of local and regional products.

DIFFERENTIATED GOVERNANCE OF PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

With regard to our global analysis of the food teams' governance framework, we can examine in which proportion the measures that constitute opportunities for food teams are oriented towards supply/production (food teams' farmers) or demand/consumption (food teams' consumers). The inventory of the policy instruments shows that several kinds of measures address farmers, i.e. the producers' side:

1) measures of the rural development pillar in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and related regional rural development programmes
2) related rural development subsidies
3) the softening process of sanitary rules for small farms (active or not in direct marketing)
4) LEADER+ partnerships and other incentive initiatives around short food supply chains
5) communicational and informational tools : experience sharing through the different actors included in the partnerships and/or in regional sustainable food networks, studies about short food supply chains.
6) trainings and guidance in diversification projects

Furthermore, opportunities for farmers emerge from non-state actors:
1) trainings, guidance and political lobbying from agricultural trade unions
2) protection of the organic sector, including short food supply chains outlets, through the organic platforms
3) involvement in cooperative projects from financial bodies
4) specialized agricultural trainings from training bodies

On the other hand, the same or other policy instruments address consumers:
1) raising awareness and involvement of citizen in the framework of public-private partnerships and incentive projects
2) laissez-faire : no sanitary rules in the delivery rooms
3) subsidies for food teams' coordination (and for specific projects in the case *Voedselteams*)
4) communication and information about short food supply chains: various promotional tools and experience sharing in the framework of partnerships' projects or sustainable food networks
5) supply of municipal rooms for the delivery of food teams' boxes

Non-state actors implement also measures oriented towards consumers:
1) informational and promotional tools on short food supply chains from trade unions
2) informational and promotional tools on local organic farmers from the organic platforms
3) consumers' raising awareness and support to food teams' creation (in Wallonia) from non-profit-making environmental and agricultural associations
4) private initiatives to promote direct marketing of local products

Identified policy measures are thus quite balanced between 'supply' and 'demand' sides, if one takes their sheer number as a first measuring rod. All the 'supply' measures focus on short food supply chains in general and not on food teams specifically. A lot of 'demand' measures are also inserted in the broad context of short food supply chains. The few measures that are more directly related to food teams in particular either emerge from an active demand of food teams themselves (subsidies, municipal rooms) or constitute the result of a *laissez-faire* from public authorities (e.g. sanitary rules).

In brief, the current food teams appear to be diluted in the contextual governance frame attributed to short food supply chains and, when food teams are specifically addressed, the mode of governance used is not very active.

ELEMENTS OF INNOVATIVE AND REFLEXIVE GOVERNANCE

In order to examine if the food teams' governance framework contains some elements of innovative governance, we refer to the typology of Lascoumes and Le Galès (2004) to qualify traditional versus innovative instruments. Indeed, this governance framework is composed of both traditional and more innovative instruments. On the one hand, the traditional policy instruments are:

1) regulative and legislative instruments: the CAP rural development pillar, sanitary rules, trading rules and legal regime for land access
2) economic instruments: subsidies for farmers and for food teams' coordination and projects
3) direct supply of services and goods: trainings and advice for farmers, municipal rooms for the delivery of food teams' boxes

On the other hand, the innovative, or less traditional, instruments are:

1) contracts and incentive instruments : principally partnerships LEADER (in the rural development pillar of the CAP) for farmers and consumers but also partnerships/projects through agenda 21, local development agencies, municipal programmes of rural development, campaigns *"ça passe par ma commune"* and *"fair trade municipalities or provinces"*
2) informational and communicational instruments towards farmers and consumers

According to this typology, there is nevertheless leverage to question the real innovative nature of informational and communicational instruments, because of their frequent use in the food domain, and more generally in the consumption domain (Tukker, 2007, Rubik et al, 2009). In contrast, contracts and incentive instruments have a higher innovative potential for the agro-food system. Indeed, Renting and Wiskerke have drawn the contours of a new *"integrative and territorial mode of agri-food governance"*, searching for a *"redefinition of the roles of state agencies, market parties and civil society groups"*, and where *"public-private partnerships, territorial bottom-up approaches and active citizen's involvement play an important role"* (Renting and Wiskerke, 2010, p1907).

Furthermore, some particular elements of the food teams' governance framework are worthwhile to be stressed, in terms of both innovative and reflexive governance. For example, the regional sustainable food networks in Wallonia and Brussels gather several categories of actors who think about a common definition of sustainable food, including short food supply chains, and share their practical experience in the field. These actors are either part of dominant institutions of the agro-food system, i.e. agricultural ministries, trade unions, consumers' organisations, organic platforms, catering industry, or of small-scaled initiatives such as food teams. As these different actors think together about a vision for a sustainable food system, we could argue that these networks constitute a place of innovative and, at the same time, of reflexive governance. Indeed, members of these networks are reflexive, in the sense that they *"reflect on and confront not only the self-induced problems of modernity* [here of the modern agro-food system]*, but also the approaches, structures and systems that reproduce them* [i.e. agricultural policies and instruments governing the food system, the economic structure of the long food supply chains, and so on]" (Hendricks and Grin, 2007, p5). The same observation is true for the Flemish work-group on short food supply chains which should lead to a strategic action plan. In this sense, these networks and work-group could be considered as embryonic transition arena as well as potential sites of (second-order) reflexivity, i.e. *"reflexive arrangements"* or *"isolated moments of reflexivity amid a sea of everyday politics"*(Hendricks and Grin, 2007, p5).

Nevertheless, we note that innovation and reflexivity are much more developed inside food teams themselves, than in their governance framework. Indeed, food teams constitute *"relational contexts where producers and consumers, through "social learning" processes, co-produce "novelties"* […]" (Wiskerke and Van Der Ploeg, 2004, p356). This social learning, through a collective experience between consumers, is illustrated by adjustments in purchasing, consumption and eating routines (Rossi and Brunori, 2010). Farmers are also facing such learning processes on an operational level through adjustments in their entrepreneurship model, and on a more cognitive level due to the specific approaches, techniques and relationships typical of direct marketing (Rossi and Brunori, 2010). Furthermore, food teams' consumers and producers have to learn about the regulations related to their status and their functioning (notably sanitary and trading rules). Food teams' consumers and producers

are thus reflexive through questioning the habits and structures of the dominant agro-food system and about their potential contribution to a more sustainable model. Thinking about the societal and environmental impacts of their activity constitutes thus an important concern, even if this reflexivity depends on each group and member. The Brussels and Flemish coordinating bodies insist particularly on this learning aspect: *Le Rezo* speaks about "cultivating the knowledge" (Réseau Bruxellois des GASAP, 2010) and *Voedselteams* about "education", which constitutes the connecting thread of its activities (*Voedselteams*, 2010).

With regard to food teams' innovative potential, innovation is visible at the levels of practices and of collective organisation, but also at the level of strategies that food teams implement to face obstacles, namely in the policy context. Indeed, "*all these processes (*of a niche construction) *can be read as innovation pathways that rise through progressive overcoming of "nodes" in order to find solutions to solve the problems or take the opportunities as they occur*" (Rossi and Brunori, 2010, p1915). The reflexive and innovative characteristics of food teams thus do not yet correspond to their governance, i.e. the way they are 'managed'.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FOOD TEAMS AND MEASURES AND ACTORS OF THE AGRO-FOOD SYSTEM

The interactions between food teams and the measures of the governance framework are translated by food teams into different kinds of 'strategies'. Against unfavourable measures (here in the policy framework), food teams try:
- to integrate the constraints by adapting to them
- to diminish constraints by creating innovative responses
- to change the system to make it more favourable
- to bypass problematic constraints

About favourable measures, strategies consist in:
- seizing available opportunities
- creating opportunities (close to the strategy "to change the system to make it more favourable")

These different kinds of strategies are sometimes implemented in the same policy instruments. In the case of sanitary rules, all strategies exist. Food teams' producers 'integrate the constraints' when they adapt themselves by using the guidance systems offered by public services through intermediary structures or by trade unions and related associations. This illustrates at the same time the strategy 'to seize available opportunities' because these guidance systems exist in the governance framework. The strategy 'to diminish constraints by creating innovative responses' is illustrated by a more 'radical' initiative; a farm which delivers a series of food teams is advocating to create a consumers' cooperative in order to step out of the rules which determine the trade of agricultural goods, notably to escape sanitary rules, but also taxes (and subsidies). Some food teams (producers and consumers/coordinators) also try 'to change the system' by questioning policy makers on difficulties met by small producers. Third, some rules are bypassed, as illustrated by the sporadic unofficial delivery of processed products that do not answer all requirements of the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain related to processing methods or materials.

With regard to financial means, there is a mixture between 'adapting to the current system' and 'creating innovative responses to diminish difficulties'. Some producers of food teams use guidance

services to benefit from existing subsidies and, at the same time, implement an innovative pre-financing system (i.e. prepayment and/or commitments by food teams' consumers to purchase to the same farmer for a defined period, which allows producers to foresee their income and their investment capacity). Projects of land cooperatives and their particular funding systems constitute another kind of innovative response to difficult access to subsidies and land. Finally, food teams seize the subsidising opportunities for food teams' coordination.

More encompassing food teams' actions are linked to both strategies 'to change the system to make it more favourable' and 'to create new opportunities'. These actions consist in creating support in favour of food teams or more generally short food supply chains through building ties with both public authorities and non-state actors. One example is the creation of the work-group at the *Voedselteams'* initiative in the aim to draw up a Flemish plan on short food supply chains.

This last strategy is related to the 'institutional embeddedness' of Belgian food teams. This concept refers to the external ties that food teams create with the actors of institutions of the agro-food system (state and non-state actors) and shows if and how food teams constitute a new actor in this system. Moreover, institutional embeddedness itself is a factor of development or scaling up, which nurtures food teams through additional support and resources.

While the mechanisms appear to be identical, we observe regional differences in terms of the *kinds* of actors with which food teams are linked and the *intensity* of these ties.

FLANDERS

The Flemish system, composed of the coordinating non-profit association *Voedselteams* and the individual local *Voedselteams* (whose name is legally protected), is the most institutionally embedded among the three Belgian food team systems. Indeed, the association is officially considered as a socio-cultural movement and benefits from a permanent subsidy from the Flemish ministry of culture. This contributes to pay a regional coordinator and four provincial collaborators. In return, the association has to adopt a five-year action plan related to its missions and to deliver annual activity reports. Moreover, *Voedselteams'* last activity report mentions explicitly a strategy of searching for new public subsidies, for example through a provincial LEADER+ partnership. *Voedselteams* has also the objective to communicate as much as possible about its system and uses therefore various promotional and communicational tools developed by public authorities. Finally, the political mission of *Voedselteams* is relatively well developed, by regularly questioning policy makers (for example about sanitary rules and organic agriculture). A particular illustration of this questioning is the call for a participative reflexion about the possibility to implement a Flemish plan about short food supply chains. As mentioned, this call has been translated into a work-group composed of *Voedselteams,* the Flemish minister of agriculture as well as other structures related to traditional trade unions and the organic sector. In this sense, this work-group could prefigure the establishment of a Flemish network on short food supply chains, gathering dominant and alternative actors. The first step of this work-group consisted in an inventory of short food supply chains in Flanders, made by the Flemish agricultural department itself. This shows the direct involvement of the public authority in this topic. In connection with non-state actors, *Voedselteams* and the main Flemish farmer trade union *Boerenbond* have recently started a rapprochement process about organic agriculture and short food supply chains. This rapprochement could be strengthened through their mutual participation to the work-group mentioned above. By taking the initiative, *Voedselteams* preferred collaboration to competition. At the same time, *Voedselteams* tries to gather its forces with producers' federations sharing the same values. Therefore, it envisages introducing a demand to be member of the

international movement *Via Campesina* that defends peasant agriculture. Moreover, *Voedselteams* collaborates with the organic platform, what was more expectable in comparison with *Boerenbond*, due to their common interest for organic agriculture. Indeed, *Bioforum Vlaanderen* considers *Voedselteams* as an interesting outlet for the organic sector. Therefore, they work in close collaboration for some projects, including the work-group in creation. With regard to retailers, *Voedselteams* has only ties with alternative shops, i.e. some organic and fair-trade shops. Their relationships are synergetic because these shops constitute *Voedselteams'* delivery places and/or make their promotion. Fair trade shops are also suppliers of some products. Moreover, *Voedselteams* is busy with a project with an ethical bank for creating the financial structure to buy land for organic producers. A training body in organic agriculture is also involved in this project. Finally, there are strong linkages between *Voedselteams* and different associations in the environmental and agricultural fields, including the most important Flemish environmental NGOs. All these elements show how *Voedselteams* is active to win several actors - including those of the regime - to its cause, in order to benefit from external support and to set its vision at the agenda.

BRUSSELS

In terms of institutional embeddedness, the Brussels food team system is placed between the Flemish and Walloon systems. Since end 2009, the coordinating body *Le Rezo* benefits from a grant in the framework of a public convention between the Brussels minister of environment and the non-profit-making association *Le Début des Haricots*. It allowed to hire a regional coordinator in order to structure the functioning of *Le Rezo*. In order to continue with this coordination, *Le Rezo* asked all Brussels municipalities for a financial help and material support for the logistics of food teams (municipal delivery rooms but also lands for urban agriculture). Moreover, reflections related to a common positioning towards some state interventions start to emerge inside *Le Rezo,* illustrated by the project of an internal commission about sanitary rules. Currently, the debate is not settled and *Le Rezo* does not communicate about policy makers' initiatives what is explained by its too recent internal stabilization. However, the building of networks with public and non-state actors is developing through the participation to some formalised networks, namely the Brussels and Walloon networks for sustainable food (*Réseau des Acteurs Bruxellois pour l'Alimentation Durable* and *Réseau des Acteurs Wallons pour l'Alimentation Durable*) in which both dominant and alternative actors of the agro-food network are found. Furthermore, the internal regulation of *Le Rezo* mentions among its objectives to participate to the public debate around the agricultural production and the food consumption (Réseau bruxellois des GASAP, 2010). With regard to ties with non-state actors, the Brussels system strongly interacts with agricultural and environmental associations, including the larger ones, as it is the case for the three regional systems. It has also links with the progressive French-speaking trade union and related organisation: collaboration exists with *Saveurs Paysannes,* assigned to promote and facilitate short food supply chains in Brussels and Wallonia, and *Le Rezo* has a partnership with the trade union *FUGEA* (*Fédération Unie de Groupements d'Eleveurs et d'Agriculteurs*). However, this partnership has not led to a real cooperation until now. Relationships exist also with the organic platform *Bioforum Wallonie*, namely through the intermediary of *Nature et Progrès*, the member of *Bioforum* that represents the voice of short food supply chains. Nevertheless, no collective projects have been conducted for the moment. Therefore, the networking between these actors and *Le Rezo* led to less concrete realisations than in the case of *Voedselteams*. Moreover, other elements show that the Brussels system is on a lower stage of institutional embeddedness than the Flemish one. Indeed, *Le Rezo* is still reluctant with regard to political recuperation. This distrust constitutes one of the reasons why *Le Rezo* decided to register the names "groupes d'achats solidaire pour une agriculture paysanne" and "groupes d'achats solidaire" as collective brands for which the use is subjected to the respect of the *Rezo's* charter. This particularly contrasts with the recent demands of subsidies and access to room

addressed to all Brussels municipalities. We can thus perceive a kind of tension between institutional embeddedness versus independence in the Brussels system, particularly with regard to public authorities. Nevertheless, this tension is subject to a temporal evolution. Indeed, we explained that the demand for a subsidy by *Le Début des Haricots* created an internal debate inside GASAP's and *Rezo*'s members. The pro- and counter-arguments dealt with the opportunity for coordination and the adequate use of public financial means versus the political recuperation and the loss of financial independence. Furthermore, at the beginning, the coordination work was envisaged as an intermediary step (during one year, corresponding to the length of the subsidy) in order to make the *Rezo* autonomous (Interview *Rezo*'s coordinator). But now the subsidy has been given and the coordinator is in place, these questions seem to have "disappeared" under the issue of searching new subsidies for pursuing this coordination. The recent demand from the *Rezo* to all Brussels municipalities clearly illustrates this change. Therefore, this temporal evolution could have implications in terms of more institutional embeddedness.

WALLONIA

Finally, the Walloon system is the less embedded in its institutional framework. Walloon food teams are divided in their modes of operation between "groupes d'achats commun" and "groupes d'achats solidaire"; no comprehensive inventory exists despite a few attempts. No association coordinates these teams and no public subsidy is given. This lack of coordination hinders a common representation of Walloon food teams, for example in some networks such as the Walloon network for sustainable food (RAWAD). Walloon food teams did thus not build particular ties with public authorities, except occasionally on very local level, for instance by those who benefit from a municipal support under the form of a delivery room.

With regard to non-state actors, the situation is similar to the Brussels case because the same actors are involved. However, the form of these interactions is different. Indeed, in the absence of a coordinating body, neither formal partnerships (as it is the case between *le Rezo* and FUGEA), nor common representation are possible. Therefore, the Walloon food teams' voice(s) is (are) carried by the associations to which they are close (here *Nature et Progrès*, *Le Début des Haricots*, *Saveurs Paysannes*). Moreover, *Bioforum Wallonie* is reserved about the advantages of some Walloon food teams, i.e. the "groupes d'achat commun", because they do not have contractual commitments with the producers, contrary to "groupes d'achat solidaire". Note that, similarly to the Brussels situation, Walloon food teams are probably subject to a temporal evolution. Indeed, a project of coordination has been recently discussed in the context of a work-group about Walloon food teams composed of *Le Début des Haricots* and *Nature et Progrès*. This coordination could be accompanied by a public subsidy because *Le Début des Haricots* addressed a demand to the Walloon minister of agriculture. However, *Nature et Progrès* is sceptical about a real possibility of coordination because it does not currently appear as a need expressed by Walloon food teams. *Nature et Progrès* thus does not think that the model of Brussels GASAP could be immediately applied in Wallonia, through a common charter and a coordinating body (Interview responsible *Nature et Progrès*). But despite these uncertainties related to a future coordination, we note a change in the role of the regional authorities in this respect. Indeed the Walloon Region "suggested" a possibility of subsidy for food teams by communicating explicitly their wish to support the creation of "groupes d'achat solidaire". This objective is mentioned in the current governmental declaration and the agricultural department asked the concerned associations to move towards coordination (Interview *Rezo* coordinator). Therefore, the future potential Walloon coordination would differ from the Flemish and Brussels cases, because of the initiative role of the regional authority changing in consequence the institutional embeddedness of Walloon food teams. This is certainly a direct consequence of the increasing interest for short food

supply chains in policy agendas. This point is thus related to the role of public authorities in supporting actively niches, according to the transition and strategic niche management approaches with which we deal in the next section.

Globally, this regional comparison shows a correlation between the institutional embeddedness of food teams and their internal coordination. The fact that a better coordination leads to stronger interactions with the actors of the agro-food system can be explained by the following reason: when a coordinating body is created, it obtains the role of spokes-person, charged to represent a common position, and becomes an identifiable actor in the eyes of the other actors of the agro-food system. In this perspective, the absence of coordination of Walloon food teams complicates the configuration of a network with external actors. But the correlation also works in the other sense because interactions with actors of the regime can support internal coordination. In this case, ties with public authorities imply further resources for food teams, i.e. subsidies which are used to pay coordinators.

These results show also a possible temporal evolution towards more institutional embeddedness and internal coordination. This is especially visible in the Brussels case and, in a more uncertain level, in the Walloon case. Moreover, this latter illustrates that regional authorities could play more of a leading role in this process towards a growing (public) institutional embeddedness. Due to the longer experience of *Voedselteams* in coordination (since 1996), we can wonder if the Flemish food teams' system could prefigure the future evolution of the Brussels and Walloon food teams and, in this case, if the Belgian food teams' system could be more unified. Due to the rather fast current evolution, it is difficult to answer now. Moreover, other factors that the temporal one probably play a role in the trajectory of each food teams' system, namely their respective development perspectives. Indeed, *Voedselteams* clearly announces its objective of development, in number of food teams and of members (*Voedselteams*, 2010) while the development perspective of *Le Rezo* in terms of number of food teams is moderated, in all cases in the short-term, in order to control the growth and to take the necessary learning time (Interview *Rezo's* coördinator). In Walloon food teams, development perspectives are currently neither discussed in a global framework nor in individual groups (cf Part II). As a result, these different points of views about development maybe also condition efforts towards institutional embeddedness. According to this hypothesis, *Voedselteams* would be the more embedded in the institutions of the agro-food system because of its more ambitious development objective.

In all cases, institutional embeddedness allows food teams to gain resources (in terms of coordination, voice, networking…) which are useful for their development, i.e. money (subsidies from public authorities), knowledge and skills (experience sharing and practical advices for producers and food teams' members through various meetings), lobbying access (by creating or participating to some work-groups dealing with policy projects or recommendations) and visibility (through communicational tools from public authorities, trade unions and other associations).

C. FOOD TEAMS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF NICHES

We start to integrate all the elements of the previous institutional analysis related to the food teams' governance in order to answer the following questions:

- *Are food teams – if we consider them as a niche - managed according to the guiding principles of the transition- and strategic niche management approaches?*
- *Facing these considerations, is an active governance of food teams – i.e. a food consumption niche - feasible and even desirable?*

At first, we need to touch shortly on the recommendations or guidelines developed by both transition- and strategic niche management approaches with regard to niches, in order to examine if these latter are put into practice in the Belgian food team context. One of the activities of transition management is to initiate and to execute 'transition experiments' (Raven, Van Den Bosch and Weterings, 2007) and, more specifically, to create a portfolio of such experiments reinforcing each other and contributing to sustainability objectives in significant and measurable ways (Loorbach and Rotmans, 2006). This activity is considered as particularly important in the 'pre-development phase' of a transition, i.e. the first phase of a transition "*where there is little visible change at the systems level but a great deal of experimentation at the individual level*" (Loorbach and Rotmans, 2006, p4). In this framework, the principal recommendation is to protect niches from the regime (Raven, Van Den Bosch and Weterings, 2007). Indeed, transition- and strategic niche management literature states that niches should be protected from the mainstream (the dominant system) to avoid immediate or direct pressure from existing regimes, and to improve their potential to 'survive' within the regime (Raven, Van Den Bosch and Weterings, 2007). 'Transition managers' are thus supposed to exempt niches from some rules and to provide them resources, namely knowledge, money, skills, lobbying possibilities and experiment space (Van Der Hoeven, 2010). Transition management also insists on the need of a guiding vision to manage niches.

Confronting these recommendations with the Belgian food teams' governance, we observed that food teams are not pro-actively managed or steered. Indeed, food teams are originally created by consumers and farmers in an independent way, without external support. That does not mean that food teams are not protected from some elements of the regime, for example the non-application of some sanitary rules, trading rules and official labels. But these mentioned favourable elements do not constitute a voluntary exemption of rules from the state, they are rather linked to a passive *laissez-faire* or tolerance from public authorities that allow food teams to act in a grey zone in some respects. Furthermore, opportunities linked to the emergence of short food supply chains in the policy agenda often favour food teams in an indirect way because they are embodied in a set of various direct marketing initiatives. Food teams thus scarcely are the object of specific measures and have to seek support by themselves. We concluded in the previous section that the current food teams' governance is somewhat diluted in the governance of short food supply chains, and that, when food teams are specifically addressed, their mode of governance is not a very active one. However, we observed that the institutional embeddedness of food teams tends to reinforce itself, allowing them to gain several kinds of additional resources. Most of these resources are the product of a direct demand from food teams (i.e. subsidies, material help, organisation of a work-group), and can thus not be taken for a sign of an increase in public steering.

Moreover, in connection with the vision dimension, several institutions advocate for the construction of a vision of a sustainable food system (notably, the Federal Council of Sustainable Development and the Brussels Region), but none exists for the moment. As a consequence, the role of food teams is not yet integrated in a global vision for the transition of the agro-food system.

These elements show that the food teams' governance does not correspond to a model of *active management* recommended by the transition- and strategic management approaches. Nevertheless, we could be faced soon to a turning point towards a more proactive support. In this respect, we can mention the objective of the Walloon Region to support the creation of 'groupes d'achat solidaire' and the region's potential role as initiator to favour their coordination through a subsidy. Moreover, the possible creation of a legislative framework or a strategy for short food supply chains (announced or in discussion) could reinforce opportunities for food teams, by adopting a more coherent policy approach. These instruments could be also helpful for creating a (long-term) vision and clarifying the specific role of food teams in comparison with other short food supply chains initiatives, namely with regard to their respective innovative potential in the framework of a sustainable transition of the food and agricultural system. In this realm, the project of a Brussels municipality to create an expanded food team at the municipal scale goes in the direction of a (very) direct involvement of public actors in the creation of (new kinds of) food teams.

Facing these considerations, we can wonder whether such an active governance of food teams is feasible, and even desirable in some respects.

First, the feasibility of such proactive governance can be questioned with regard to the particular status of food teams. Indeed, we have considered since the beginning of the study that food teams constitute a niche that should be promoted to potentially challenge the agro-food regime in a more sustainable way. However, the concept of niche and the transition approach are not particularly well-known by all actors playing a role in the food teams' governance. As a consequence, support of food teams is not automatically considered within a transition perspective and all its related guiding principles. Moreover, we can question the niche status of food teams as a whole. Indeed, despite some common values and organisational characteristics, there are considerable differences between the three regional food teams' systems, as well as between individual food teams of the same region, as well as between members of individual food teams. Our governance analysis particularly highlighted these differences at the level of interactions of food teams' systems with the actors of the agro-food system. The existence of a Belgian food team niche is thus not so clear than it could seem at the first sight. Moreover, in a larger perspective, we wonder whether the niche concept would not better apply to the broader set of short food supply chains, which gathers various direct marketing initiatives including food teams. Indeed, this would be justified with regard to our analysis of the governance framework that mostly addresses this level rather than food teams in particular.

In any case, food teams as a particular kind of short food supply chains are lacking a clear status inside society. They are of course inserted into the food consumption system but represent more than just a system of food provisioning. For example, the food teams' dimensions of conviviality and learning about sustainable food and agriculture – or a sustainable model of society in general - give to (food) consumption a multifunctional character. Facing these specificities, the food teams' official status is sometimes vague, as it is the case for *Voedselteams* which is considered by the Flemish Region as a socio-cultural movement (linked to its subsidization by the regional ministry of culture). We could argue that this difficulty to give food teams a defined status has implications in the way their management is conceived by external actors, particularly public authorities. Pushing the reasoning further, the lack of clarity in the food teams' status could explain why their governance is not very

active. This assumption is close to the conclusion of a research project which deals with several European case studies of innovations in the agricultural sector related to direct marketing (including solidarity consumer groups and community structured agriculture in France, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands) (Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009). According to this project, the lack of involvement of the public decision system with regard to direct sale innovations and the absence of close ties between these initiatives and the conventional regulatory and institutional framework are explained with the informal status of the initiatives themselves. Furthermore, the absence of (pro)active support from institutions is attributed to a weak ability to identify and manage innovations: "*administrators are not receptive and proactive towards innovative concepts and projects in so far that they do not recognize and do not know how to manage them*" and "*capacities to assess the potential of emerging innovations are not always present in support organizations and embedded in their institutional culture*" (Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009, p25). As a consequence, the current food teams' governance would be influenced by the imprecise status of food teams at the eyes of public authorities, and namely by their unclear "innovation status" that moreover requires specific management abilities, probably not sufficiently existing within the public bodies.

Another normative question is whether it would be desirable to actively 'govern' food teams. Indeed, the citizens' basis of food teams, through their autonomous creation and (volunteer) management, constitutes a common value in the three regional food teams' systems. By the way, it seems that "*the lack of involvement of the public decision actors can sometimes be considered as an opportunity for individual alternative innovators*" (Knickel, Tisenkopfs and Peter, 2009, p25). If we consider that participation in a food team induces a reflection, or even a change in practices in other consumption patterns, then this self-regulation or self-governance of food teams should be maintained. Indeed, "*food looks as a gateway for other changes in attitude and practices*" (Rossi and Brunori, 2010, p1919) and thus "*innovation in social practices around food, as empirical evidences show, can encourage broader changes in consumption behaviours (beyond food and beyond purchasing of goods), and stimulate other processes of awareness and citizenship raising (about more general issues, such as development patterns and their environmental and social implications)*" (Rossi and Brunori, 2010, p1927). In other words, the direct implication of the consumer as a citizen certainly constitutes a central lever to favour in the governance of the transition for sustainable consumption. In these conditions, one of the stakes of the food teams' governance is to build favourable conditions to encourage and sustain these initiatives without eroding their innovative potential and citizen commitment. Changes in the institutional context in favour of short food supply chains at the European and Belgian level should thus be pursued. Moreover, we can argue that measures which specifically address consumers should be more developed, by finding ways to stimulate civil society initiatives or, at least, by facilitating their implementation. Experience sharing and raising awareness that take place through the different contracts and incentive instruments and the facilitator role that public authorities and agencies play within these instruments already go in this direction. Subsidies and material help are also useful, under the condition they do not induce too much dependence, which is difficult to assess nevertheless. A certain level of tolerance or flexibility in the regulations which apply to food teams as fact associations, namely the absence of sanitary rules in delivery rooms, should be maintained too. With regard to a more proactive role of public authorities, for example in the creation of food teams, things are more difficult to settle. Indeed, the expansion of food teams' systems to a larger public is praiseworthy and, in a sense, could be considered as a mission of public service. However, the experiment with a Brussels municipality creating such a system (not yet operationalised, though) is perceived with some distrust by the Brussels *Rezo*. Besides the fear of political recuperation, the *Rezo* is afraid of a less active involvement of consumers due to a bigger initiative role of public actors, which would represent a significant loss of the interest of the food teams' system. In this particular example of project, the lack of collaboration between the concerned

municipality and the grassroots movement, i.e. *the Rezo*, could likely work against the project. As a consequence, a model where public authorities lean on the existing grassroots initiatives to develop food teams, for example in the Walloon case, would be probably more efficient (see also the prospective chapter).

More broadly, such a desirable governance framework would imply "*the presence of a public support system open to innovative projects and so addressed to experimentations, in order to fine-tune innovative institutional arrangements*" (Seyfang, 2006 cited in Brunori and Rossi, 2010, p1926). This fits with the previous considerations about the feasibility of an active governance of innovations, i.e. the need to recognize and assess the potential of such innovations and to develop appropriate governance tools. This certainly implies more innovative and reflexive governance and, in this sense, the examples found in the policy instruments influencing food teams (networks on sustainable food, work-groups on short food supply chains) should be strengthened.

In conclusion, a more active governance of food teams by public authorities is feasible and desirable if the status of food teams is clarified, particularly as innovation in the agro-food field, and if this innovative potential is developed, through a favourable policy framework, a support of grassroots movements that encourage direct involvement of food consumers and, more generally, institutional arrangements that induce innovative and reflexive governance in the agro-food field.

IV. LOOKING AT THE CHALLENGES AHEAD: A (PRELIMINARY) PROSPECTIVE OF THE EVOLUTION OF LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS

Our empirical studies focused on an analysis of the Belgian food teams, considered as sustainable experimentation and as 'niches' that could/should be promoted to foster wider transition of the food sector toward more sustainability. We have underlined the limitations as well as the seeds of a potential expansion of these niches. However, a better understanding of the characteristics of the consumers within the regime appears to be essential in order to suggest possible scenarios of transitions. Indeed, a future expansion of the niche implies a bi-directional influence between niche and regime, leading to new forms of food systems. In the following we will thus shortly address questions such as: *are there some common features between consumers within the niche and consumers in the regime that could help promoting a change of consumption patterns? Is it possible to draw some parallel between the seven factors analyzed in our empirical Q-study and attitudes of the traditional consumers?*

The following chapter presents the ***preliminary version*** of our attempt to integrate results form the individual case studies. Exploring how internal perceptions and motivations of participants of food teams (as represented by the Factor analysis, for instance) resonates with – or is grounded in - the changes in everyday food routines, and how these are a result of a series of opportunities given to the food teams by public authorities. We link and integrate external analysis of the governance scheme of food teams with the internal motivations and frustrations in the food teams and with the individual level of how people live their participation to the food team. The objective is to identify which aspects of the *modus operandi* of food teams favour or hinder the future evolution of the niche; i.e. *how can the niche upscale into the regime*?

A. A TYPOLOGY OF CONSUMERS WITHIN THE REGIME

Organizations specialized in the study and observation of consumers – such as the "*Centre de Recherche et d'Information des Organisations de Consommateurs*" (hereafter OIVO-CRIOC) in Belgium or the "*Centre de Recherche pour l'EtuDe et l'Observation des Conditions de vie* (hereafter CREDOC) in France - conduct frequent investigations concerning consumer behaviour. It is thus possible to draw a map of the main reasons determining consumer choice with regard to types of shops and products. It is interesting to underline some results of these studies that are somehow counter-intuitive with the theoretical model of the traditional consumer. Generally speaking, it appears that the majority of consumers consider food shopping not as pleasure but mainly as drudgery. Moreover, counter to the main discourse of the market, it seems that the consumers give more significance to the proximity rather than the prices in their choice of a shop. The CRIOC (2002-2009) underlines that few consumers are able to assess the price of food purchased. Their appreciation of the price is made in comparison with products of the same kind. Therefore, the run towards the reduction of prices is not mainly due to a market analysis of consumer behaviour and needs, but simply to the competition between food retailers (see for instance, the rise of hard discount since the end of the 1980s).

Generally speaking, two evolutions of the regime highlighted in these studies are in favour of its transition towards more sustainable patterns of consumption. On the one hand, the CREDOC underlines the current crisis of the immaterial component (*composante immatérielle*) of marketed products. The immaterial component of a product corresponds to its symbolic value, its ability to feed the imagination of consumers, to enable him/her to express his/her adhesion to some values. Robert Rochefort (2007) considers that there has been a crisis of brands at the beginning of the years 2000. Marketing strategies were not completely aligned with the preoccupations and the interests of consumers. On the other hand, the barometer of Belgian consumers realized each year by the CRIOC since 2002 shows the progressive rise of the sensitivity to environment and ethics concerns amongst consumers. However, this change of attitude is not often followed by changes in behaviours. This questioning regarding the immaterial component of traditional products and the rising sensitivity to environmental and ethical concerns amongst consumers may open the door for other types of products more compatible with sustainable patterns of consumption.

Another interest of the studies of consumer behaviours is to offer a description of the characteristics of different types of consumers within the regime. An in-depth study conducted by the CREDOC in June 2005 (Moati, Meublat, Pouquet, & Martial, 2005) among a sample of 1008 individuals representative of the French population aged 18 and over, put forward a typology distinguishing five categories of customers regarding their choice of food consumption: the adepts of mass consumption (*les massificateurs*), the conquered by hard discount, the supermaniacs, the eclectics of proximity and those who flit about frequently (*les papilloneurs frequents)*.

- The adepts of mass consumption (20%) represents mostly working couples with children living in urban agglomerations. They generally go shopping once a week in large supermarket and favour above all the functionality of these places: the rapidity, convenience and diversity of choices.
- The conquered by hard discount (24%) are distinguishing themselves from the first category by their sensitivity to budget constraints. They combine shopping in large supermarkets with visits to hard discounters. There are more young people (18 to 34 years old) and fewer seniors in this category.
- The supermaniacs (19%) enact frequent visits to the supermarkets (a couple of times per week). Generally speaking, this category chooses the place they go shopping mainly according to its proximity to their job or home. They thus appreciate these types of distribution sector because of their accessibility but also their pleasantness. The specificity of this group is to count many persons living alone in small agglomerations.
- The eclectics of proximity (24%) combine many different types of distribution sectors (mini-markets, groceries stores in their neighbourhood, visit to the weekly market, specialized stores…). While the three categories described above frequent one or two types of commercial circuits per weeks, their number turns around five. This category represents people living in (often large) cities and people that don't own a car. Their attitude towards consumption is less utilitarian. They consider shopping can be pleasant and they give importance to the enjoyable surrounding in the stores.
- Those who flit about frequently (14%) are also characterized by their eclecticism but most of them depreciate the hard discounts and the large supermarkets considered as dull and selling low quality products. Another specificity of this category is the importance they give to the geographical origin of the products, the hygiene, the security as well as the environmental dimension. Price and the rapidity have less impact on their choice.

What are the contributions of the description of these different consumer profiles for our research? First of all, it seems like there is a link between the attitude toward food shopping and the

heterogeneity and, in some ways, the frequency of the retailing sectors visited. Those who have a utilitarian relationship to shopping and who see food shopping as drudgery (mostly the three first categories described above) go to few different distributive sectors, once or twice a week (except for the third profile described). They value the functionality, the practicality of the shops and the diversity, the low price of the products. The study underlines the volatility of these types of customers: there is more defection, less loyalty towards a particular shop for those who rarely go to the local shops. On the other hand, a hedonistic attitude to food consumption is associated with the increase in the heterogeneity and the frequency of the distributions sectors visited. Food teams participants can most probably be classified in the last category described. It signifies that most of them don't limit themselves to the products bought in food teams and they probably frequent different distribution sectors according to their other needs. In order to raise the importance of the local food networks in the food consumption patterns, it would thus be important to multiply and diversify the products sold in these niches.

Second, it appears that the main challenge for the transition to the regime towards more sustainable patterns of consumptions will be to attract the "adepts of mass consumption" and the "conquered by the hard discount" who are mostly sensitive to the convenience, rapidity of the shopping and their budgets. The importance given to convenience also influences the choice of the products bought. The studies (CRIOC, 2002-2009; Moati, Meublat, Pouquet, & Martial, 2005) show the increase of the consumption of ready-made dishes. These types of products also seem partially incompatible with food teams which sell mostly raw and un-prepared (sometimes unknown) products. An evolution towards supplying pre-prepared food stuffs in food teams has however been identified at the level of our enquiry in practices; e.g. in Flanders a number of *Voedselteams* have a first set of partially pre-prepared food stuffs in their lists.

B. FOUNDATIONS FOR TRANSITION PATHWAYS

On top of this refined characteristic of consumers within the regime – even if very partial, because the typology is quite rough – we can suggest possible scenarios of transitions towards more sustainable patterns of consumption. Two (somehow opposite) obvious scenarios can be considered: the adaptation of the niche to some characteristics of the regime, on the one hand; or the adaptation of the regime to some characteristics of the niche, on the other hand. To illustrate these two scenarios, the help of the Kolm triangle is very enlightening (see below, Kolm 1984; Van Parijs, 1990). The main idea is to represent different possible patterns of consumption by a point in an equilateral triangle: points located at the three angles are pure state, market or communal consumption patterns whereas the distances in between represent a mixed proportion of these different components. The fundamental logic pursued by food teams can be located in the communal sphere of the triangle, it can be analyzed as a de-commodification (or de-marketisation) of food consumption, that is to say the market logic usually predominant in food consumption is replaced by a communal logic.

ADAPTATION OF THE REGIME TO SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NICHE

The description of traditional consumers' attitudes towards food shopping shows that most people are over all sensitive to the convenience, rapidity of shopping and their budgets. At first glance, it seems somehow impossible to conciliate with food teams: it takes time, it is not always very well organized, can cost more money. A possible future scenario to conciliate the regime and the niche would be to adapt the regime to some characteristics of the niche. Concretely, that would mean keep the characteristics of the products – local, organic, ethical… – within the niche but within the convenience

of the structure known in the regime – that is to say the supermarkets. In the Kolm triangle (see figure 7), this option can be understood as a move of the market logic to some aspects of the communal sphere (where we have located food teams).
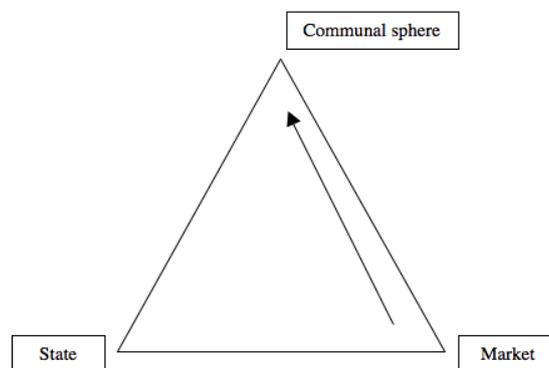

Figure 7 – Kolm triangle: including characteristics of food teams in supermarkets

In other words, using the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991), it means enhancing some principles of the niches (trust, locality, fairness) inside the market world and the industrial world. This scenario is not fictional: there are already organic mini-markets as well as products labelled ethical, organic and local (Belgian) in most supermarkets. For instance, in 2001, a major player like Colruyt has launched "Bio-planet", a chain of supermarkets only dedicated to the selling of organic and environmentally friendly products. In a smaller scale, some franchised supermarkets also distribute local products directly delivered by the producers. The idea would then be to widen and encourage these types of initiatives.

However, an important question for our research is to evaluate whether this scenario does really foster wider transition of the sector toward more sustainability? There can be some doubts if we consider, for instance, the criticisms made to organic products sold nowadays in supermarkets: they have all the formal characteristics to be labelled organic, but they do not encompass the food teams' philosophy and cannot be really considered sustainable as they often come from the other side of the world and the packaging is overweening.

ADAPTATION OF THE NICHE TO SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGIME

The challenge is thus to ensure that the specificities and the benefits of the food teams in terms of sustainability are maintained while attracting consumers from within the regime. This adaptation of the niche to some characteristics of the regime can take two main directions illustrated by the two arrows inside the Kolm triangle. As explained before, we consider food teams as a kind of de-commodification (de-marketisation) of food consumption. *In fine,* limiting the influence of markets implies to increase the influence of other alternative systems. The food teams' niche can be localized at the top of the triangle in the communal sphere. The two directions that could be taken in possible future evolution may be either towards the market (multifunctional consumption) or towards the state (i.e. more public support).

INTERMEDIARY SOLUTION? THE MULTIFUNCTIONALITY OF CONSUMPTION

One of the main specificities of food teams is - using Boltanski and Thévenot concepts - to combine different worlds: the market world but also the domestic world, the political world and the

environmental world (Boltanski and Thevenot, 1991). This specificity can be understood as a form of *multifunctionality of consumption*. A first possible scenario would be to keep this particularity of the niche and to enlarge it to the regime by "pushing" it in the direction of the market sphere. Concretely, that would mean to create a "place" that would not be purely commercial, but would fulfil other functions of consumption/consumers.

To further develop this idea of multifunctional consumption, it is useful to refer to the use of this concept in agriculture – its origin - and its possible link with Transition approaches. In this context, multifunctionality refers to the functions or benefits generated by agriculture beyond the mere production of food (and fiber) that farmers sell in the marketplace. These benefits typically include contribution to the vitality of rural communities (through maintenance of family farming, rural employment and cultural heritage), biological diversity (even if mainstream agriculture has been identified as the main stressor to biodiversity), recreation and tourism, soil and water health, bio-energy, landscape, food quality and safety, animal welfare... Note that these outcomes are not automatic: they vary widely according to the agriculture practices, the farm size or its localization. As underlines Bart De Vries (De Vries, 2000), the production of these benefits is seldom rewarded in the marketplace and often requires support through subsidy or other policy mechanisms in order to become widespread. The recognition of multifunctional agriculture is a way to reconsider the valuation of its performance: food production is weighted with other types of benefits such as rural development, environmental amenities or social cohesion (Mundler, 2002). Faced with the negative consequences of the productivist methods, speaking about the multifunctionality can lead to redefine the objectives assigned to agriculture in a broader way.

Despite all the actual heated debates around this concept, the reference to multifunctionality in agriculture is not new. Its first institutional use in the international stage was made as early as two decades ago at the Rio Summit; *"(...) multifunctional aspect of agriculture, particularly with regard to food security and sustainable development (...)"* (Agenda 21, Chapter 14). Later on, in 1998, it was taken over by OECD. However, since then, there have been different (and sometimes conflicting) interpretations. Some developing countries expressed their concern that multifunctionality was just a term used by European countries for matter of protectionism. For G.A Wilson (2007), who attempted a systematic theorisation of this poorly conceptualised term, all agricultural systems are and have been multifunctional. He distinguishes different levels of multifunctional 'quality' (weak, moderate and strong multifunctionality). Highly productivist action can still be seen as 'multifunctional' (i.e. weak multifunctionality). As a consequence, the notion of multifunctionality can be applied to any geographical or temporal scale. In his view, multifunctionality should be thus seen as a normative and holistic concept and linked with transition approaches, that is to say changes characterized by their non-linearity, heterogeneity, complexities and inconsistencies.

How can this idea of multifunctionality inspire a possible transition pathway towards more sustainable patterns of consumptions through food teams? We imagined the creation of what we called a « food house », that is to say a shop with all the traditional functionalities of a shop (in this way different from the place where the meetings of the food teams take place), but where it would also be possible to provide other functions such as continuous learning, discussions and solidarity with the local producers, to get skills and learn about the products… The products sold would be similar to those that can be found in food teams but with a larger range, that is not only vegetables, fruits but all kinds of products that can be found in groceries. People would then not only go there for food shopping but also to participate in all sorts of parallel activities.

In order to analyze the possibility and the viability of "multifunctional consumption", we have undertaken an exploratory study of existing initiatives characterized by the aim of offering to a large public a combination of these diverse dimensions: trading, conviviality, awareness raising and expression. We thus realized five in-depth interviews with the initiators of *citizens stores* and groceries in Belgium (Brussels and Louvain-la-Neuve) and France (Rennes, Lilles and Augan). The people interviewed were asked to answer open questions related to their motivations, the peculiarity of their public, the characteristics of their initiative, their viability, their drawbacks and their future projects.

The best way to identify the peculiarities and the potential diffusion of *citizens stores* is to compare them with food teams. What are their commonalities and their differences? Do *citizens stores* and groceries offer a multifunctional relationship to consumption? And what is their potential of diffusion to the regime?

As food teams, *citizens stores* and groceries have been spreading quite recently (the oldest project we found, "Le café citoyen", located in Lilles, was created in 2005). But it is not the only similarity between these two types of initiatives: three main common characteristics can indeed be underlined. First of all, food teams and citizens stores share the same philosophy based on the promotion of local products and fair trade, most of the time from organic farmers. It leads them towards a search of coherence in the long run even though the confrontation with the reality is sometimes difficult (when you have to get fresh and local products on a daily basis) but, for most of all, it creates a continuous learning process. These two different types of approaches are thus pedagogical for the actors involved. As explained by Mathieu Bostyn, manager of the groceries "Le champ commun" located in a village of Brittany: *"With the creation of our groceries, we questioned us a lot concerning the significance of local production: is there a critical size? Where does the local start and where does it end?"*. Finally, both food teams and citizens stores are characterized by the atmosphere of conviviality they cultivate. People become members or customers of these places also (and sometimes overall) for their friendliness and their warmness (literally as well as figuratively speaking).

Despite these common characteristics there are three important distinctions between food teams and citizens' stores. The main one is probably the commercial dimension of citizen's bar and groceries: whereas the food teams are a form of de-marketisation (de-commodification) of food consumption, the initiators of citizens' stores intend to create an activity inside the market sphere as a way to show the economic viability of sustainable patterns of consumption. These new citizens projects belong to a new wave of young entrepreneurs in search of coherence and driven by a strong will of confronting their ideals to reality. Their main idea, as explains Antoine Suberville founder of the store "Tout l'or du monde" located in the centre of Brussels since September 2007, is *"to combine a commercial and professional approach, without privileges, with a militant approach, committed to fair and environmental friendly trade in south/north as well as north/north relationships"*. This philosophy influences the selection of the products (organic agriculture, most of the time from local and/or fair trade) but also it influences the choice of the commercial status given, that is to say a cooperative sometimes associated with a social finality. This new types of entrepreneurship can thus be defined as a third way between the voluntary and, sometimes charity approach on the one hand, and the actual spreading of fair trade and organic products in supermarkets with the rise of labels, on the other hand. Second of all, the initiators of citizens' stores distinguish themselves by their willingness to address to a large audience and not only to the niche of people who are already sensitive to these issues. It is different from food teams where, according to the results of our case study based on Q methodology, the issue of expansion and awareness raising is not very important for the actors (see the Brussels and Wallonia case study). Most of the initiators of citizens' stores we interviewed insisted on the

importance of "*not to do violence, nor to moralize the people who come to the place and raise the awareness through a questioning around the specificity of the products sold*". Generally speaking, they are aware that if the citizen image associated to bars or groceries can attract some people, it can also be reluctant for a large public. The idea is thus to change the conceptions of people and inform them on issues related to environmental preservation or human rights through daily activities such as eating or having a drink. To guarantee the accessibility of their stores, their activism goes up to reduce the margins on the products sold. As states Sorina Ciucu from the citizens' bar "Altérez-vous" in Louvain-la-Neuve, "*the main objective is always to be coherent with the whole project, even if it asks us a lot of sacrifices, more work and less margins*". In the discourses of the interviewed people the philosophy of the project thus prevails over the commercial dimension of the activity. Last but not least, the originality of these citizen projects compared to food teams is their cultural dimension. Indeed, these new types of bars and groceries also intend to be some kind of cultural spaces. The types of activities organized are diverse and numerous: fair appetizers, host tables, meeting and tasting evenings with producers, conferences but also concerts, storytelling evenings, exhibitions, documentation centers or, more original, such as "knit night", do-it-yourself night dedicated to the homemaking of cosmetics, conversation tables and singing in dialect… The agenda hangs on the specificities of the place and the taste of the owners but it can also emerge from collaborations with local associations or customers' initiatives. Thereby, some citizens'stores have a function of intermediary between different associations or serve as meeting place which leads to fostering their networking. The culture thus plays a role of opening the doors for awareness raising.

In conclusion, this comparison shows that citizens' stores keep the multifunctional relation to consumption which is also characteristic of food teams (a common philosophical and political orientation, the importance given to conviviality, the educative role), but they add aspects that may favour the diffusion and fostering of a more sustainable food system, that is to say the willingness to address to a large audience and the possibility given to the people to identify themselves and appropriate the store, its products and its activities. Moreover, they consider important to give a commercial dimension to their activity and to improve the image of the intermediary under-evaluated by food teams. It is thus clearly a move from the communal sphere to the market sphere in the Kolm triangle. However, the viability of these new types of stores is not guaranteed. If the initiators of citizens' stores generally manage to live out of their commercial activity (and even sometimes to hire other employees), their economical situation is tenuous and very demanding in terms of personal investment. "*It has an important impact on the private life: you cannot launch this type of project if you don't have strong convictions, a personal incentive and a lot of motivations*" (Sorina Ciucu and Patrick Ayoub from the citizen bar "Altérez-vous"). The interviewees also insist on the absence of public support for these kinds of initiatives. It could be feared that citizens' stores may enter in competition with other initiatives of alternative consumption such as food teams. However, our exploratory study shows that citizens' bars and groceries are not a thread for their development as they serve as meeting place for some food teams, a space of distribution for CSA or storage for organic baskets.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PUBLIC SUPPORT OF FOOD TEAMS

The governance analyses of the three food team systems in Belgium show regional differences as well as the emerging temporal evolutions of each system in terms of their interactions with the public and private actors of the institutional framework. This evolution has been observed at the level of the *institutional embeddedness* of the food teams.

Adopting a prospective vision raises the question of the future mode of institutionalization of food teams. We consider one specific aspect of institutionalization, i.e. the development of food teams through the support or involvement of mainstream institutions, in particular state institutions. We intend to draw some considerations about the potential increasing involvement of mainstream (regime) institutions - including state institutions - in the creation and/or development of food teams.

As mentioned, there are some regional differences in terms of institutional embeddedness, i.e. the interactions between food teams and actors of the governance framework. According to our analysis, the Flemish system can be considered as the most institutionally embedded system, followed by the Brussels one and finally by the Walloon one. However, our results highlighted some elements that could prove as a sign of an evolution in this respect. In the Brussels case, the coordination of food teams by the *Rezo* was firstly envisaged as a punctual period of one year, but is currently pursued with the support of a regional subsidy. In Wallonia, the workgroup initiated by *Nature et Progrès* and *Le Début des Haricots* met a few times in order to discuss common questions (such as juridical status of food teams) and to share organizational tools to facilitate the functioning of food teams. A meeting between Walloon and Brussels food teams and producers is also organized where development perspectives could be touched upon. We cannot speak yet of real coordination but the present evolution is remarkable nevertheless.
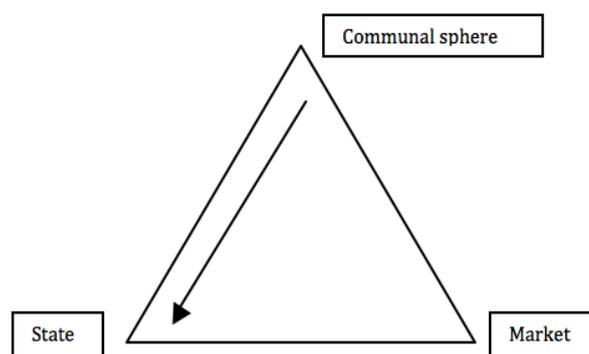

Figure 8 – Kolm triangle: Including characteristics of food teams in public action

More specifically about the role of public support (i.e. the *state* component in the Kolm triangle), we identified a few examples of (in)direct support from state institutions to food teams. In terms of future scenarios, we mentioned the project of the Brussels municipality of Etterbeek to create a kind of municipal food team. This project illustrates how a public institution, here the municipality, can be involved more directly in the development of food teams. Indeed, this kind of initiative – while being still at a prototypical state - and the institutionalization pathway it represents contains some opportunities and risks. A factor that could play in favour of more involvement of mainstream institutions is that institutional embeddedness is considered as encouraging the development or scaling up of niches by nurturing them through additional support and resources. In other words, institutional embeddedness allows food teams to gain resources which are useful for their development, i.e. money (subsidies from public authorities), knowledge and skills (experience sharing and practical advices for producers and food teams' members through various meetings), lobbying access (by creating or participating to some workgroups dealing with policy projects or recommendations) and visibility (through communicational tools from public authorities, trade unions and other associations). In terms of accessibility to a wider public, initiatives inspired from food teams and partly organized by a public authority have an interesting development potential. Indeed, while food teams' consumers respond to

different socio-economic characteristics, this public is still limited to a well-educated and environmentally-conscious part of society. In this respect, larger supported projects could capture other categories of consumers within the regime and therefore extend niche practices to a wider part of society.

In contrast, some consider – including some food teams' coordinators - that this more direct involvement of a public authority constitutes a thread to citizens' involvement, consciousness and appropriation that are key principles and values of most of current food teams. In the particular project of Etterbeek, the Brussels *Rezo* reproached the municipality for the lack of collaboration with them. As a consequence, in future initiatives, the rooting in the grassroots associative movement is certainly an important factor not to neglect for a successful development.

Of course the arbitration between risks and opportunities of a larger public support is subject to the different considerations of intrinsic values of food teams or alternative food consumption in general. The debate about the role of volunteer work and personal involvement in awareness-raising of citizens is complex. While these functioning characteristics are probably a driver of change at consumer level, it is unrealistic to think that all people are going to dedicate time and energy to the organisation of such a supply food system. As in the case of the citizen's stores and bars, the redefinition of the role of intermediary, here played by a public actor, can be an interesting scenario in order to develop sustainable food consumption at a larger scale. Public supported initiatives can of course coexist with 'classical' autonomous food teams, and ideally interact with each other in order to adapt to different social and geographical contexts. For this reason, the continuing and the extending of opportunities from public state (legislative, economic, informational, incentive instruments etc) focused on private initiatives in the realm of sustainable/local food systems combined with public projects constitutes possibly an adequate mixed action-plan.

POLICY SUPPORT AND DISSEMINATION

System innovations and transitions in the realm of sustainable consumption policies do not emerge automatically from the present socio-political and socio-economic context. And, where some change towards more sustainable consumption patterns occurs, it might not infer the necessary structural systemic innovations, but remain restricted to mere system optimizations/adaptations. Consequently, there are repetitive calls to develop ways to (pro) actively steer transitions, i.e. to develop and implement forms of governance of transitions. These calls have also been repetitively issued in Belgium, be it at federal or regional or local level. The transition "language" has indeed well percolated towards policy makers in Belgium, and has been during the project's duration at the heart of a series of strategic institutional exercises. Right at the beginning of CONSENTSUS, the Federal Planning Bureau has elaborated extensively on transitions in its 4th SD-policy report, and has placed at that occasion a focus on food consumption.

In this study, we explored these issues related to the governance of transitions and elaborate on their application to the relatively unexplored governance of sustainable consumption patterns, more precisely in the field of food consumption.

The exploration of the institutional governance context shows that an interest for short food chains initiatives is emerging in the current Belgian policy agenda, especially in the Regions and this notably through to their competences in the agricultural field. Both Flemish and Walloon strategic policy declarations make explicit reference to building a legislative framework around *farm products*. The Brussels declaration refers more to the concept of sustainable food rather than agriculture, while urban agriculture is considered as well. The Walloon document offers the more detailed view about this issue and is furthermore the only to mention Food Teams among the initiatives to support. However, at the federal level, policy declarations do not refer directly to short food supply chains even if the fact that an advice about a sustainable food system was commissioned to the Federal SD Council by a member of the government and contends recommendations about short food chains reveals the interest – or at least the curiosity – which seems to develop slowly also at federal level.

We repetitively observed that food teams are not proactively managed or steered by public authorities in Belgium, whatever their institutional level. Indeed, food teams are originally created by consumers and farmers in an independent way, without external support; in this sense, food teams are perfect examples of bottom-up – grassroots - approaches. That does not mean that food teams are not protected from some elements of the regime, for example the non-application of some sanitarian rules, trading rules and official labels. But these mentioned favourable elements do not constitute a voluntary exemption of rules by the state, they are rather linked to a passive laissez-faire or tolerance from the public authorities that allows food teams to act in a grey zone in some respects. We concluded that the current food teams' governance is diluted in the wider governance of short food supply chains and that, when food teams are specifically addressed, governance is spontaneously not very active. Nevertheless, we observed that institutional embeddedness of food teams tends to grow over time.

Moreover, in connection with the dimensions of vision and steering or modulation of the niches' development, several public institutions ask for the development of a vision of a sustainable food system (notably, the Federal Council of Sustainable Development and the Brussels Region), but none exists for the moment or has been politically debated. All these elements point to the fact that food

teams are not actively managed as such niches would necessarily be if the model recommended by the transition and strategic management approaches would be implemented in Belgium.

Considering these elements of the policy context, coupled with the evidence of an inexistent governmental body at federal level since almost 4 years (which corresponds roughly to the project's duration!), the policy implications of CONSENTSUS are of a more exploratory than policy-supportive nature. Despite this hesitant policy context, there is on the opposite a huge interest within the Food Teams themselves to improve the comprehension of their activities – and to a lesser, but still proactive, level – within the main actors of the food provisioning system. It appears than also logical that CONSENTSUS' pre-results have been repetitively presented and discussed with the stakeholders of the Food Team arena, for instance at a coordination meeting of the Brussels' and Walloon food teams in November 2010. Results of the first phase of the project were presented and discussed at an internal meeting of the federal food industry federation (FEVIA).

VALORISATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS WITH PEERS

CONSENTSUS was prolonged to April 2011, and the main activity programmed during that supplementary period was to configure, convene and animate a meeting gathering expert in transition and consumption as well as stakeholders – including both the level of the Food Teams themselves and policy-makers – in order to submit our research results to discussion and take part an active part to the new network emerging in the area of transitions approaches to consumption.

CONSENTSUS FINAL WORKSHOP: MINUTES OF THE EVENT

Entitled "Investigating new developments in Transition approaches: Sustainable consumption as niches of innovation?", CONSENTSUS final international workshop was held the 27th of April 2011 at the University Foundation (Meeting Room A). Forty persons coming from the diverse horizons (see annex), the academic world as well as the politics and the associations, registered to the event showing a real interest for the theme (sustainable consumption) but also the theoretical framework (transition approaches) adopted in the CONSENTSUS research program.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

CONSENTSUS concentrates on the study of the mechanisms – organisational, personal and institutional - of selected food consumption 'niches' (i.e. alternative food networks) and the way these relate to the 'regime', i.e. the dominant food provision system. By doing so, CONSENTSUS questions the applicability of the concept of 'niche' in the realm of consumption. The main objective of the workshop was to bring together a series of authors who have in the recent (to very recent) past worked on the potential linkages and applicability of transition studies and transition governance approaches to consumption issues. Keynote interventions were configured around existing papers or reflections, and were submitted to discussion.

Three sets of questions were addressed during the workshop. 1° what is the current experience in transition studies in terms of applying the current frameworks to non-technological innovations? 2° within these areas of non-technological innovations, is it feasible to use transition governance approaches on issues of consumption? 3° can 'alternative' consumption practices/patterns be conceptualized as niches, and hence be an entry point to link the transition framework to the issues of consumption?

Program

10h-11h15	New developments in transition studies: beyond (socio-)technological innovations. Derk LOORBACH (DRIFT, NL). Discutant: Erik PAREDIS, (UGent, BE)
11h30-12h45	Grassroots Innovations for Sustainable Consumption Adrian SMITH (University of Sussex, UK) Discutant: Grégoire WALLENBORN (ULB, BE)
14h-15h15	Alternative food networks as collaborative niches of innovations in consumption? An empirical analysis of practices, perceptions and institutional embeddedness. Paul-Marie BOULANGER (IDD, BE), Tom BAULER (Université Libre de Bruxelles, BE), Maarten CRIVITS(Universiteit Gent, BE). Discutant: Denise VANDAM (FUNDP, BE)

15h30-16h30   Roundtable with Belgian stakeholders on the future perspective of the evolution of local food network.
Wim MERCKX (Voedselteams), Denis POHL (DG Environnement, SPF Santé Publique), Rob RENAERTS (RaBAD), Maarten ROELS (REZO-GASAP), Coline RUWET (Université Libre de Bruxelles, BE)

OVERVIEW OF THE DEBATES

This section is dedicated to a general overview of the discussions following the three main theoretical presentations that took place during the CONSENTSUS workshop. The slides are available in the annex.

Derk Loorbach (DRIFT, NL) started the day with a general presentation of the actual challenges faced by the transition management approaches, especially the integration of consumption pattern within the system analysis. As discutant, Erik Paredis (CDO, UGent) from the CONSENTSUS research team, pointed out a weakness of the transition studies: the complete absence of an analysis of the mechanisms, the driving forces creating wicked problems, the symptoms of unsustainability in our society such as the inequalities, the drive for profit… Not doing this normative analysis of the cause of the actual problems in our society, we miss some important explanations relevant to address the issues related to consumption. In the first phase of the project, the CONSENTSUS research has tried to address this challenge by showing the existence of several scenarios (eco-sufficiency, de-commodification and sufficiency) to face the issues of unsustainable consumption. The general discussion with the assembly then turned around the difficulties linked to being normative in the theoretical framework. Is it up to people to use the transition framework as then want? We know what is unsustainable but it is much more difficult to know what is sustainable, especially when scaling-up. And what about the normativity of the transition researcher: he is an analyst but also part of the picture, part of the problem?

With Adrian Smith's (University of Sussex, UK) presentation, the second half of the morning was dedicated to the study of sustainable consumption in a niche based approach. The history of the spread of organic food in the UK (1930-present) was used as a case study to show an important paradox in the evolution of the niches: how is it possible to suggest a radical change in the regime whereas the success of grassroots movements (niches) is related to its compatibility with the mainstream assumptions, principles and practices (that is to say, the regime)? Grégoire Wallenborn (IGEAT, ULB) suggested in his comments three concepts that could help a better understanding of the asymmetric articulation between the regime and the niche: innovation, translation and practice. He also insisted on the importance of thinking about policies that would foster the diversity, allow the existence of different types of experiments at the niche level. Generally speaking, the discussion in the assembly turned around the understanding of the innovation phenomenon at the niche level. Is it really interesting for the niches to up-scale if they lose their specificity and radicalism? Paul-Marie Boulanger (IDD) underlined one of the inputs of the CONSENTSUS research: the distinction between "exit" and "voice" niches which make a distinction between the niches that want to influence the regime and those that just do not want any interference. It might also sometimes be the regime that picks up new ideas and principles from the niches. All these discussions leaded to the difficulties of defining the boundaries between the niche and the regime some people considering that these concepts might sometimes be too rigid other insisting on their practicability for civil society and decision makers.

The presentation of the CONSENTSUS research project was divided in three parts. Firstly, Maarten Crivits introduced the research and CDO research on the analysis of the food teams' niche through the lenses of the practice approach. Secondly, Paul-Marie Boulanger presented the analysis of the perception and motivation of food teams members in Wallonia and Brussels with the help of the Q-methodology. Thirdly, Tom Bauler presented the opportunities and the obstacles linked to the gouvernance of local food network in Belgium insisting on the difference between the three regions of the country. As discutant, Denise Vandam (FUNDP) insisted on the importance of integrating the

collective movement inside the transition studies. She tried to complete the analysis made in the CONSENTSUS research with additional theoretical framework (Gendron, Krisy).

THE ROUNDTABLE WITH BELGIAN STAKEHOLDERS

Transition approaches involve generally a multiplicity of actors. The main idea behind the organization of the roundtable with Belgian stakeholder at the end of the CONSENTSUS workshop was to link the theory and the practice. How do the actors concerned react to the transition approach and the analysis that is made of their movement? How do they imagine their evolution in the future? Is an up-scaling of the alternative food networks feasible and desirable?

We gathered representative of associations active in the field of sustainable consumption initiatives in the three regions of the country, that is to say actors within the niches (Wim Merckx, voedselteams coordinator in Flanders and Marteen Roels, representative of the GASAP-REZO in Brussels were present) and representative of the institutional level, the gouvernance side (Denis Pohl, head of Product Policy Unit Directorate-General Environment and Product Policy, Belgian Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, and Rob Renaerts, Representative of the RABAD, the Brussels Network for sustainable food/consumption, network gathering 29 organizations working around sustainable production and consumption).

Three themes were discussed during a lively and stimulating debate.

(1) Paradox of alternative consumption
- Adrian Smith has pointed out a paradox linked to the development of grassroots movements in the area of consumption (and social innovation in general). Theoretically, the success of these movements (that is to say, their chances to influence the transformation of the system) is related to its compatibility with the common ways of doing and saying. However this compatibility signifies that these movements cannot suggest changes that are radically different from the mainstream assumptions, principles and practices. It thus limits the system transformations. How do you react to this paradox?

(2) Future of local food networks
- How do you imagine the future of food teams and alternative food networks in general?
- What do you think about their potentiality to really have an influence on the transformation towards more sustainability?
- Is the generalization of alternative food networks desirable? And is it feasible? What kinds of measures have you put in place in your level to do so?

(3) Towards a new model of sustainable consumption?
- Do you think that food teams can be considered as a new model of sustainable consumption? Why do you consider is it sustainable? Could it be enlarged to other fields of consumption (housing, transport, energy)?

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ANNEXES

Appendix 1: interviews part III
Appendix 2: meetings and conferences part III
Appendix 3: List of written material

THE ANNEXES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE

http://www.belspo.be/belspo/ssd/science/pr_transversal_en.stm