NURTURING NETWORKS

A Social Movement lens on Community-Supported Agriculture

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Het voeden van netwerken
Community-supported agriculture vanuit een sociale bewegingslens.

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AbL   Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft e. V.;
German association of peasant farmers, member of La Via Campesina

AMAP   Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne; French name for CSA

AMPI   Czech network organisation of local food initiatives

BMEL   Bundesministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft;
German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture

BUND   Friends of the Earth Germany

BVVG   Bodenverwertungs- und –verwaltungs GmbH;
German association for re-development of land property formerly owned by
the government of the German Democratic Republic

CDU   Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands; German Christian Democratic
Union

CSA   Community-supported agriculture

DBV   Deutscher Bauernverband e. V.; German farmers association

DES   Distretti di Economia Solidale; Italian Solidarity Economy Districts

EJ   Environmental justice

GAS   Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale; Italian Solidarity Purchase Groups

IG BAU   Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt;
German trade union for construction, agriculture, environment

NGG   Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten; German food union

NOW   Netzwerk Oekonomischer Wandel; economic transformation network

RIES   Rete Italiana di Economia Solidale; Italian Solidarity Economy network

SALSIFI Supporting Advanced Learning for Stakeholders Involved in Sustainable Food-
Systems Initiatives; Erasmus+ project of the European Union, coordinated by
the international CSA network Urgenci

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

SMT	Social movement theory
Solawi	Abbreviation of Solidarische Landwirtschaft, the German name for CSA, which literally means solidary agriculture
Solawi network	Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V.; German community-supported agriculture network
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands; German Social Democratic Party
UPOV	International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
Urgenci	International network for CSAs and other local, solidarity-based partnerships for agroecology

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Community-supported agriculture within and beyond capitalist agri-food systems

Agri-food systems reflect and reproduce capitalist logics and relations (McMichael 2009). The capitalist characteristics of agri-food systems are visible in various spheres; for instance, they fundamentally rely on processes of commodification of land, labour, and nature (e.g. Klepek 2012; and Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018 on the commodification of seeds), capital accumulation (McMichael 2006), and enhanced productivity (Weis 2010). Increasingly, capitalist agri-food systems are therefore criticised for driving environmental change and social injustice. With its input-intensive, large-scale crop monocultures, capitalist industrial agriculture is detrimental to the environment; it contributes to the loss of biodiversity (which is vital to supporting life on Earth), degrades soils, changes biogeochemical flows and land use, contributes to the spread of zoonotic diseases, pollutes waterbodies, and emits greenhouse gases, which fuel climate change (Clark et al. 2020; IPES Food 2019; IPCC 2019; Willett et al. 2019; Rivera-Ferre et al. 2021; Weis 2010). On the social side, too, there are many challenges, including unequal access to food (FAO et al. 2020; 2019); unequal power relations, which manifest in the form of the concentration of capital and food supply in the hands of large agri-food businesses (Howard 2016); price fluctuations linked to the increasing financialisation of agriculture (Burch and Lawrence 2009); food waste (Campbell, Evans, and Murcott 2017); a lack of transparency and disconnect between producers and consumers (Gordon et al. 2017), to increases in obesity and diet-related diseases (Blüher 2019; Dixon 2009).

A growing body of literature on the sustainability transformation of agri-food systems has therefore advanced our understanding of related problems and their possible solutions (Foresight 2011; Friedmann 2017; Levidow, Pimbert, and Vanloqueren 2014), including the examination of alternative models of food production and consumption promoted by agricultural grassroots initiatives and movements,[1] also known as counter-movements (Escher, Schneider, and Ye 2018), food movements (Giménez and Shattuck 2011), or alternative food networks (Forssell and Lankoski 2014; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012; Goodman, Dupuis, and Goodman 2013; Maurano and Forno 2016). These initiatives

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[1] In this dissertation, I use the term 'initiative' to refer to locally operating agri-food farms, collectives and projects, whereas with 'movements' I refer to the ensemble of local initiatives who are united by a common political agenda and goal and loosely organised into networks.

and movements have formed in response to the environmental and social flaws of capitalist agriculture and attempt to create more environmentally sound and socially just agri-food systems. They span a wide range of topics and demands, such as food sovereignty (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Desmarais 2008), the redesign of public procurement to support sustainable and just agri-food systems (Morgan and Sonnino 2007; Desmarais, Claeys, and Trauger 2017), local or short-supply chains (Laforge, Anderson, and McLachlan 2017; O'Hara and Stagl 2001), 'slow' food (Hendrikx et al. 2017), and organic food (Niederle et al. 2020).

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is one of the most prominent examples of these agricultural grassroots movements. In the past decade, CSA has spread and grown considerably with CSA initiatives mushrooming across different locations around the globe (Urgenci 2016b; Stapleton 2019). In its essence, CSA is a direct, long-term 'partnership between a farm and consumers where the risks and rewards of farming are shared' (Bashford et al. 2013, 6). Together, the members of a CSA finance a farm's budget for a predefined period (typically one year or a season) in return for a harvest share (Rommel et al. 2022). The farm's budget equates with the entire operating costs, including fair wages for the producers and various types of inputs, such as land, seeds, and machinery. Since the members finance the agricultural production (instead of purchasing single products), they share the risks and uncertainty of farming. That is, how much food the harvest share will provide depends on weather-related and seasonal fluctuations (Rommel et al. 2022). This form of agriculture is often praised by scholars and practitioners alike for reconnecting producers and consumers, building trust relations and overcoming the separation between the clearly distinguished roles of producers and consumers, as captured by the term *prosuming* (Piccoli, Rossi, and Genova 2021; Espelt 2020; Blättel-Mink et al. 2017). Several authors have therefore argued that CSAs, at least in certain regards, challenge and transcend capitalist logics and instead adopt post-, non-, or alternative-capitalist practices, relations, and discourses; in so doing, these authors acknowledge that CSA is a necessarily uneven, contingent, and incomplete process and that not all initiatives trace the root cause of agricultural unsustainability to capitalism (Jarosz 2011; Vincent and Feola 2020; Cristiano et al. 2021).

However, while CSAs can 'create spaces within which radical social and environmental agendas can be established […] these processes are not automatic; CSAs are neither inherently radical nor inherently successful' (Cox et al. 2008, 206). In fact, the CSA model has

repeatedly been subject to criticism. Several scholars (and activists) have called out CSAs for its limited inclusiveness and reproduction of privilege: members of CSAs are 'overwhelmingly' white, highly-educated, belong to the middleclass, and typically possess abundant time resources, thereby limiting their potential for advancing social justice (Jarosz 2011; Cone and Myhre 2000; Guthman 2008; Farmer et al. 2014). Even in countries where so-called 'contribution rounds' are practiced (a reallocation mechanism which aims to allow people with lower incomes to join and participate in a CSA initiative), such as in Germany (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017), CSA initiatives struggle to attract more diverse members (own data). As pointed out by Cropp (2015), reallocation mechanisms prove difficult in structurally deprived areas with low incomes. Relatedly, Guthman, Morris, and Allen (2006) discuss to what degree farm security (i.e. decent incomes for producers) and food security (i.e. the affordability of produce) are compatible goals. Additionally, a number of studies have found that the CSA model, in some cases, fails to relieve farmers and gardeners from (economic) pressures – some producers 'still operate on a shoe-string budget' (Bonfert 2022b, 500). At times, CSA producers even adhere to self-exploitative practices – in particular, when they alone bear the burden of finding and retaining members and taking care of the community (Galt 2013; Hinrichs 2000).

These limitations showcase that, while CSAs prefigure – to different degrees – alternatives to (and ways to transcend) capitalist logics and institutions (Vincent and Feola 2020), they simultaneously also struggle within and against the capitalist system and other systems of oppression (Guerrero Lara et al. 2023, published in this thesis as **Chapter 6**). How capitalist societies are organised significantly hinders the dissemination and practices of agricultural grassroots movements. For instance, driven by land speculations, rising land prices and leasing payments hamper access to land for small-scale farmers and for new entrants who lack capital; thus, they result in crowding out and higher concentrations of agricultural land (BMEL 2019a; Forstner, Tietz, and Weingarten 2011). Furthermore, high land prices and lease payments increase productivity pressures on farmers, which disincentivises more environmentally friendly production. In addition to the lack of access to land (European Access to Land Network and Urgenci 2017), limited funding due to ill-incentivised subsidy schemes (Bonfert 2022b) and strict hygiene regulations (personal communication, 21st January 2023) pose difficulties for CSA initiatives. These barriers are a result of (neo-

)productivist agricultural policies – notably, of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), whose shortcomings have been widely acknowledged 'even in an ambitious reform scenario' (IPES Food 2019, 20).

In turn, other common challenges to CSA initiatives, such as the lack of diversity among members, the ongoing self-exploitation of producers and volunteers, and difficulties in member retention are not only related to agricultural policies but can be traced to the structural inequalities undergirding capitalist societies more broadly. For instance, a study on member retention in the context of Germany explicates that most common reason for leaving CSAs is, in fact, structural: Despite aligning with the ideas and values behind CSAs, the daily routine of members is often not compatible with participating in a CSA initiative (Maschkowski, Barth, and Köngeter 2017). A 40-hour work week leaves little time for engaging in alternative food practices and community projects such as CSA week – in particular, when members have further care responsibilities in other areas of life and are part of other self-organised collectives and political projects which require their time (Homs, Flores-Pons, and Mayor Adrià 2021). People with little time for food procurement and provisioning often choose supermarkets, which are designed to provide convenience (Dixon and Isaacs 2013). As Lucie Sovová (2020, 1) aptly states, 'Diced pumpkin sold in supermarkets' has become a symbol of capitalist 'social norms around work and social reproduction'. Consequently, to create a world where CSAs and other agricultural grassroots movements do not simply survive but thrive, transforming the agri-food system alone is hardly enough; instead, efforts to build different, more environmentally sustainable, and socially just agri-food systems need to be accompanied by radical structural changes within society more generally.

1.2. Bringing in degrowth

Investigating CSA as a collective, political actor to induce change in capitalist agri-food systems requires a conceptual perspective that engages with different dimensions of structural change in and beyond agri-food systems. Degrowth calls for this kind of fundamental and structural reorganisation and resizing of economies and societies (Kallis et al. 2018). Based on an elaborate critique of the systemic unsustainability and injustices rooted in the capitalist, growth-compelled economy of high-income countries, degrowth scholars

sketch a hopeful vision for a 'good life for all' within the planetary boundaries (Muraca 2013; Kallis and March 2015; Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022). In its essence, degrowth is a planned, democratic attempt to decrease ecologically destructive and socially unnecessary practices and products while increasing those goods and services that people need to flourish (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014; Hickel 2020). Acknowledging the ecological debt and historical and contemporary violence between the Global North and Global South, the call to scale down material throughput is primarily directed at rich nations (Hickel 2021b; 2021c).

Degrowth is fundamentally different from negative GDP growth or a recession (Hickel 2021c). While it signifies a society with a smaller metabolism – that is, one reducing energy and material flows – more importantly, the metabolism has a different structure and serves new functions: 'In a degrowth society everything will be different: different activities, different forms and uses of energy, different relations, different gender roles, different allocations of time between paid and non-paid work, different relations with the non-human world' (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014, 3f).

The concept of degrowth has diverse intellectual roots (see Demaria et al. 2013; Muraca 2013), the most prominent ones being bioeconomics (Georgescu-Roegen 1971) and ecological economics, both of which debunk myths of ecological modernisation (Schneider 2008), cultural-anthropological critiques of development (Sachs 1992; Escobar 1992), and the model of the *Homo oeconomicus*, which has so fundamentally shaped economic thought (Mauss 2002). Furthermore, studies on well-being (notably the Easterlin Paradox (Easterlin 1974), which states that happiness and income are not significantly correlated over the long-term), (deep) ecology (Bookchin 1987), democracy (Illich 1973; Castoriadis 1998), and justice (Ariès 2005) have informed degrowth thought. Finally, feminist, decolonial, and political ecology perspectives have equally entered degrowth debates (Saave-Harnack, Dengler, and Muraca 2019). Consequently degrowth is a multifaceted concept that cannot be reduced to a single understanding (Kallis 2011; D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). Despite this diversity, proponents of degrowth typically embrace a number of common values and principles, which differ from those that capitalist societies are built on. They cherish conviviality, commoning, care, community, solidarity, democracy, and sufficiency, to name a few (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014).

However, degrowth should not be reduced solely to a scientific concept or debate, it is also a set of policies (Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel 2021; Kallis 2015; 2011) and a provocative 'rallying slogan for a movement of movements' (Petridis, Muraca, and Kallis 2015, 178). Degrowth activists and scholars therefore discuss and pursue different transformation strategies to put degrowth into practice. These strategies – which include a mix of building alternatives (also referred to as 'nowtopias'), oppositional activism, policy proposals (or 'non-reformist reforms') and research – are put forward on multiple levels, from the local to the global, and should be understood as complementary (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022; Demaria et al. 2013); for a similar formulation, see also Chertkovskaya (2022), who builds on Erik Olin Wright's interstital, ruptural, and symbiotic strategies. Nowtopias are a 'laboratories for a good life' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022, 255) where members can explore and experiment with alternative ways of being – for instance, by re-organising food supply, housing, currencies, and technology around their needs and meaning-making activities. CSAs, which collectively redefine how food is produced and consumed, are a prominent example of degrowth nowtopias. In turn, concrete policy proposals aim to change existing institutions. Scholars specifically call for non-reformist reforms, a term coined by André Gorz, which 'refers to reforms that take advantage of existing institutions and bureaucratic regulations and yet also lead to immediate gains for social movements and even point beyond the capitalist, growth-oriented mode of production and centralized technocratic states' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022, 32). Examples of such (non-reformist) reforms include policy proposals regarding labour (work sharing and the reduction of the working week to at most 32 h), welfare (minimum and maximum income), redistribution of wealth (within and between countries, especially the Global North and Global South), consumption (reduction of advertising, withdrawal of subsidies for polluting activities), and finance (green tax reform) (Kallis 2015; Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel 2021). These large-scale institutional changes are urgently needed to strengthen grassroots experiments that continually face structural limits (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022; see also Plank, Hafner, and Stotten 2020 for institutional barriers of CSA).

Finally, building on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which denotes a system of power and domination, degrowth scholars argue that it is necessary to dismantle the hegemonic growth paradigm and build a counter-hegemony (Schmelzer, Vetter, and

Vansintjan 2022). Such a strategy therefore refers to attempts to unmake dominant institutions, practices, and common senses (i.e. the beliefs, values, and perceptions which underpin the dominant worldview). For instance, such unmaking could be pursued by engaging in oppositional activism in the form of civil disobedience, boycotts, direct action, demonstrations, influencing media and public discourse, and artivism, as well as by promoting popular education. Building a counter hegemony complements the other degrowth transformation strategies (Demaria et al. 2013); that is, the successful implementation of non-reformist reforms fundamentally depends on the establishment of a counter-hegemony that enforces 'ruptures in certain areas of conflict around key issues' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022, 268).

Degrowth is a particularly relevant body of literature for this thesis for two reasons. First, this thesis is critical of capitalist agriculture and questions the possibility of pursuing transformations towards sustainability without transforming or 'unmaking' capitalist practices, institutions, and beliefs (Feola 2019). In line with this argument, degrowth 'unveils the ideological role of capitalist growth' and 'the existing contradictions between growth, the environment and social well-being' (Asara et al. 2015, 381). Degrowth activists and scholars therefore attempt to openly re-politicise public and academic debate on sustainability as well as sustainability practices (Demaria et al. 2013; Asara et al. 2015). In this way, 'degrowth takes sides' and accepts that a 'neat distinction between science and politics is impossible to sustain' (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). Thus, degrowth is a well-suited body of literature for situating this thesis within ongoing debates on sustainability (science) and critiques of capitalism. Second, as explained above, degrowth is relevant to this thesis because it brings in a structural perspective on the current unsustainability and injustices of capitalist agri-food system. Considering the manifold structural barriers that CSA faces, this perspective is much needed and can be useful to productively consider which politics CSA movements should adopt. Finally, drawing on degrowth as a 'connecting thread' (Demaria et al 2013, 210) allows me to explore the intersection of struggles for agri-food system transformation, broader processes of societal change, and related sectors and to bring CSA into conversation with struggles across different topics and areas and functions. Thereby, this thesis contributes to the emerging bodies of the literature on degrowth and agri-food system transformation (Gerber 2020; Nelson and Edwards 2021; Scheidel, Ertör, and Demaria 2022; McGreevy et al.

2022), including the role of CSAs therein (Bobulescu et al. 2018; Cristiano et al. 2021; Tschumi et al. 2019; Bloemmen et al. 2015).

1.3. Research on community-supported agriculture as actors for social change: The state of art & prevailing gaps

With its proliferation on the ground, CSAs have also attracted the interest of the scientific community, which has explored various aspects of CSA. Academic contributions on CSA range from largely depoliticised discussions of its health and nutritional dimensions (e.g. Cohen, Gearhart, and Garland 2012; Allen et al. 2017) to their role in inducing societal change and contributing to a radical transformation of the agri-food system in line with degrowth values and visions (e.g. Cristiano et al. 2021; Bobulescu et al. 2018). According to a recent literature review and bibliometric analysis by Fomina et al. (2022), the latter (studies analysing the ability of CSA to induce social change) have investigated a large range of themes, including the motives of farmers and consumers for participating in CSA (Cox et al. 2008; Krcilkova et al. 2016; Diekmann and Theuvsen 2019a); the (limited) potential of bringing about social and political change by changing consumption patterns (Zoll et al. 2018); relationships (Schermer 2014); decision-making models (Mert-Cakal and Miele 2020); CSA as ethical or political consumerism (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007); and the social (in)justice and mechanisms of in- and exclusion in CSAs (Guthman 2008; Hinrichs and Kremer 2002). Others have explored the alignment of the values and practices within CSAs with degrowth (Bloemmen et al. 2015; Bobulescu et al. 2018; Cristiano et al. 2021) or conceptualised CSA as a social innovation or experiment (e.g. Piccoli, Rossi, and Genova 2021; Mert-Cakal and Miele 2020), focussing predominantly on alternative practices on the ground.

However, the political dimension of CSA – beyond prefiguring[2] alternatives to the conventional, capitalist agri-food system – remains largely unexplored. In fact, Giugni and Grasso (2018), two leading social movement scholars, have called for more explorations of the political dimension of alternative economic organisations, to which CSAs belong. The authors argue that the most studies on these movements and initiatives 'focus on the social and economic sides [… and] are mostly seen as social or economic actors, often with a solidary

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[2] Prefiguration of agrifood movements refers to a type of politics, which, inspired by a sense of hope and possibility, consists of performing ways of producing and consuming food in the present that are envisioned for the future (Reinecke 2018; Yates 2020 on the concept of prefiguration; 2015; also see Gibson-Graham 2008).

aim. In this way, their political dimension is often overlooked' (Giugni and Grasso 2018, 780). Similarly, in his exploration of how degrowth and critical agrarian studies can enrich each other, Gerber (2020, 236) calls for future research to inquire into the 'broader political potential of these [food] initiatives and movements'. In this thesis, I address this gap. My understanding of the political dimension goes fundamentally beyond notions of political consumerism that push individualised 'vote with your fork' narratives and that view the primary role of citizens in inducing societal change as acting as individually responsible consumers who can purchase ethically produced produce (for a critique that political consumerism often neglects the collective dimension of politics see, for example, Graziano and Forno 2012; Grasseni 2014b; 2014a). Instead, I am interested in how CSA forms and acts as a collective, political actor, including through its diverse forms of political engagement and organisation.

A further research gap can be identified upon more closely examining the literature on CSA. To date, most studies on CSA have explored questions of societal change by investigating the internal dynamics at the initiative level through in-depth case studies, and, with a few exceptions (see Bonfert 2022a; 2022b), detailed explorations of CSA as a social movement as a whole are still lacking. Therefore, this thesis studied the political dimension of CSA at the level of the network organisation. CSA initiatives, similar to other grassroots initiatives or innovations, are organised in (supra-)national and regional networks (Loorbach et al. 2020; Feola and Butt 2017). In the context of CSA, the most well-known organisation is Urgenci,[3] the international network, which was founded in 2006 (see Stapleton 2019 on the origins, mission, and activities of Urgenci). CSA networks provide a space for collectively negotiating a common identity and values, discourse, visions, strategies, and demands for transforming the agri-food system. Moreover, these grassroots networks are socio-material in the sense that they serve to 'exchange, translate and diffuse ideas, objects and activities' (Loorbach et al. 2020). In their pursuit of societal change, these networks and movements employ different forms and strategies of collective action, ranging from the performance and experimentation of alternative practices on the ground to mobilisation for contentious political action, including the participation in manifestations, campaigns, and political advocacy work. While CSA initiatives are diverse, having varying ideological roots and practical forms of

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[3] For further information visit: https://urgenci.net/.

organisation, national CSA networks can speak with one voice for local CSA initiatives when engaging with general public, policy makers, or potential allies, such as peasant and environmental organisations. In this thesis, I focus on the German CSA network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft* (hereafter the *Solawi* network), as my main case-study (see Box 1.1, **section 1.6**).

In sum, this thesis addresses the gaps outlined above by conceptualising and studying CSA from a social movement lens, which broadens the perspectives beyond local initiatives and can shed light on the role that CSA can play as a collective political actor to bring about change towards degrowth-benign agri-food systems. A social movement lens on CSA offers important insights into how a common identity, political strategies, claims, and struggles are negotiated and enacted, which have remained obscured in the extant research.

1.4. A social movement lens on community supported agriculture

To advance our understanding of CSA networks as a collective political actor, I analysed them through the lens of social movement scholarship, a perspective that remains largely underutilised in studies of CSA (see Bonfert 2022b for an exception). According to Snow et al. (2019a, 10), social movements can be defined as 'collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part'. Although social movements can be heterogenous given the range of topics and phenomena associated with them, they typically share some common features. They (i) involve collective and political action; (ii) formulate change-oriented claims and goals; (iii) build a network and have some degree of organisation; and (iv) have some degree of temporal continuity (Snow et al. 2019a; Millward and Takhar 2019). CSA networks can fruitfully be analysed through a social movement lens; besides sharing these four characteristics, they also often self-identify as a social movement (Stapleton 2019; Hitchman 2014).

Social movement studies have a long tradition and have explored different facets of movements, including identity, organisational structures, resources, and frames to emotions, spanning 'the entire social scientific spectrum' (Travaglino 2014, 2). Over time, different

perspectives have emerged, ranging from structuralist approaches that explore political opportunities (Giugni 2009; Tarrow 2012) to resource mobilisation (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards, McCarthy, and Mataic 2019) to cultural approaches that are interested in the production of frames (Benford and Snow 2000), meanings, and identity (Flesher Fominaya 2010; 2019; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994), as well as the role of group dynamics and emotions (Goodwin and Jasper 2006; Eyerman 2005). Each of these perspectives has its own merits and contributions to understanding social movements. In what follows, I briefly outline the historical development of the central concepts and intellectual debates of social movement research of the past 50 years, which informed this thesis. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive overview but rather to introduce the reader to concepts that are relevant for this thesis and to explicate how they relate to and build on each other.

During the 1970s, the *resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* paradigms gained popularity. These theories – which focus on the resources, assets, and capacities of movements as well as the political system to explain the rise and decline of social movements – showed that 'movements were more likely to emerge under conditions of structural stability, social connectedness and favourable mobilisation of resources' (Travaglino 2014, 5). The theories had considerable influence in social movement studies and contributed to fundamentally changing the image of movements and crowds: previously pejoratively labelled as disorganised and irrational, movement were portrayed as 'rational actors' that act according to a careful cost-benefit analysis (ibid.). Prominent representatives of these perspectives are Charles Tilly, Bob Edwards, and Syndey Tarrow.

Two of these scholars – namely, Tilly and Tarrow – are furthermore known for the conceptualisation of *repertoires of action* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Tilly 1993). Action repertoires are the 'arrays of performances that are currently known and available' (McAdam and Tarrow 2019, 23). Social movements employ a variety of activities that they consider effective to achieve their goals, including artivism, deliberation, protesting, advocacy work, manifestations, campaigns, and blockades (Soule and Roggeband 2019). Therefore, the choice of action repertoires reflects 'a strategic sense of how the social world works, which differs substantially in different movements' (Doherty and Hayes 2019, 282). Originally, scholars focused almost exclusively on contentious repertoires of action, which challenged institutionalised power and threatened the primacy of privileged actors (Della Porta and Diani

2006; Snow et al. 2019b); however, the conceptualisation of action repertoires has expanded together with its diversification on the ground (see, for instance, the paragraph on prefiguration below).

The emphasis on structural aspects such as resources and political opportunities as explanatory factors for social movements was soon contested by scholars calling for a cultural turn. According to them, structuralist accounts of social movement theories left no room for the agency of movements and movement participants: 'Grievances and attitudes of potential participants were downplayed in favor of organizational factors such as professional staffs and fundraising, and external circumstances such as elite allies and resources, state crises, a slackening in state repression, and other "windows of opportunity" in the political environment' (Jasper 2010, 966). Further critiques were voiced regarding the implicit and hidden assumptions of these paradigms and the economic language in particular of resource mobilisation theories (Travaglino 2014).

As a response, in the 1980s and 90s, scholars such as Barbara Epstein (1991) and Alberto Melucci (1995) marked the cultural turn in the context of Europe by investigating so-called *new*, or *contemporary*, *social movements*. In contrast to historical class-based movements struggling for economic redistribution, these new movements attempt to bring about broader structural transformations within society and often pursue postmaterialist values relating to topics such as environmental sustainability, human rights, sexuality, gender, race, and pacifism (Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994; Buechler 2013) and are frequently characterised as decentral, participatory, egalitarian, and prefigurative forms of organising (Buechler 2013; Yates 2020). This realignment of movements is often interpreted as a direct response to the rise of a post-industrial society, advanced capitalism, and modernity (Bernstein and Taylor 2013; Buechler 2013). Conceptually, new social movement scholars started to focus on the role of identity politics, movement membership, emotions, and meanings. Since class structure was no longer seen as a driving force behind activism and because of the multiplicity and fluidity of identities, scholars viewed collective action as intrinsically linked to the ability of movements to define and maintain their collective identity (Melucci 1989, 1996 in Buechler 2013). Closely connected to questions of collective identity is the concept of *boundary work* – that is, the processes through which a movement defines and situates itself temporally and spatially in relation to its context (Hunt et al., 1994).

Boundary work entails negotiating and defining a collective 'we' (Taylor and Whittier 1992), making in-group and out-group distinctions by establishing requisites for joining the movement (Melucci 1995), and constructing protagonists and antagonists (Silver 1997; Benford and Snow 2000).

Meanwhile, in the 1980s in the North American context, the concept of *framing* was introduced (see e.g. Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000; Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars 2019). Frames are 'sets of beliefs, perspectives and mental structures which guide individuals' perception and action' (Travaglino 2014, 6). In turn, framing activities, consist of producing ideas and assigning meaning to interpret reality. Scholars often highlight the role of diagnostic and prognostic framing – that is, the negotiation of a shared understanding of underlying problems and viable solutions (Benford and Snow 2000). These two framing activities are an essential part of a movement's political strategy since they intend to mobilise the movements' participants, supporters, and sympathisers and to demobilise its opponents (Snow and Benford 1988; Travaglino 2014).

In the 1990s, this cultural turn in social movement studies further contributed to a renewed interest in the role of *emotions* for social mobilisations (Flam and King 2005; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 2011). In particular, feminist and queer perspectives 'inspired a broader critique, not merely of academic models, but of Western thought more generally, for ignoring, denying, and denigrating the role of emotions in social and political life' (Jasper 2011, 288).

Around the turn of the millennium, with the rise of the alter-globalisation movements and the Occupy Wall Street movement, the concept of *prefiguration* increasingly gained importance among social movement scholars (Monticelli 2018; Maeckelbergh 2011; Monticelli 2022; Yates 2015). These movements adopt a prefigurative politics – that is, they disengage from the state and its institutions and instead embody a 'vision of a future society through their ongoing social practices, social relations, decision-making philosophy and culture' (Monticelli 2018, 509). Their politics entail performing in the present the ways of being and doing that are envisioned for the future (Reinecke 2018; Yates 2020; 2015) and are motivated by sense of possibility and hope (Gibson-Graham 2008; Dinerstein 2015). Prefiguration combines processes of 'collective experimentation, the imagining, production and circulation of political meanings, the creating of new and future-oriented social norms or

"conduct", their consolidation in movement infrastructure, and the diffusion and contamination of ideas, messages and goals to wider networks and constituencies' (Yates 2015, 15). In prefigurative politics 'the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs' (Leach 2013, 1).

Having outlined the vast diversity of social movement concepts and perspectives and their respective influence over time, the reader may wonder which perspectives are the most useful and relevant for studying the phenomenon of CSA. Here, I agree with Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars (2019, 405) in their reasoning that '[t]hese perspectives should be seen not so much as competing but as addressing different aspects of the character and dynamics of social movements'. Some strands of social movement research, such as the ongoing work on social movement coalitions have integrated multiple intellectual perspectives. Coalitions can be defined as 'organisations […[or networks that animate […] collective action [and act as] structuring mechanisms that bridge political organisations and the looser, more permeable, social movements' (Brooker and Meyer 2019, 253). Coalitions are a key political strategy of movements for inducing societal change since they contribute to the mobilisation of large numbers of people and resources, broaden the action repertoire of movements, and instigate political and social change (Van Dyke and Amos 2017; Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018). Research on coalitions, draws on a number of explanatory factors from ideology, framing, and identity to resource mobilisation and political opportunities (Van Dyke and Amos 2017; Obach 2010).

1.5. Research questions: Community-supported agriculture as a collective, political actor

In this thesis, I applied a social movement lens to investigate to what extent and in what ways CSA networks form and act as a collective, political actor of societal transformation. I understand collective actors as an aggregate of individuals – in this case, CSA initiatives and activists – whose degree of organisation can range from highly to loosely organised, from centralised to decentralised (van der Eijk 2019; Kavada 2015). The individual actors become a collective by negotiating and constructing a common identity (Melucci 1995). Collective actors are political since they produce and negotiate meaning, formulate political goals, and engage in political conflict and other repertoires of collective action to bring about social change (van der Eijk 2019).

I operationalised the main research question of CSA networks as a collective, political actor via three sub-questions (see Figure 1.1.) that explore how the German CSA network (i) becomes a collective, political actor; (ii) acts politically via advocacy work; and (iii) broadens their political action through coalition building. Each of these sub-question draws on a different strand of social movement theory (presented in **section 1.4**.). I utilise the social movement literature on identity and boundary work (**Chapter 3**); political strategies and advocacy work (**Chapter 4**); and coalition building (**Chapter 5**). Below, I outline my approach per chapter in more detail.
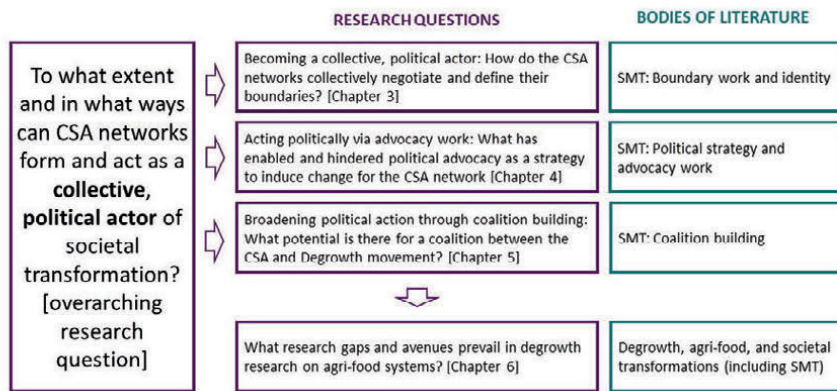
Figure 1.1: Overview of research questions and their connection to the respective thesis chapters. SMT stands for social movement theory.

Having provided background information on the German capitalist agri-food system (**Chapter 2**), I start my analysis of CSA networks as a social movement by investigating how the German and Italian CSA networks create, maintain, and enforce their identitarian boundaries – that is, the process through which they become a political, collective actor and the underlying negotiation of shared values, principles, and agendas (**Chapter 3**). Such exploration allows for a better understanding of who is involved and the dynamics between different subgroups within the movement. Analytically, I draw on scholarship on collective identities and the boundary work of movements to explore how CSA networks become a political and collective actor (e.g. Melucci 1995; Flesher Fominaya 2010).

Having established that CSA networks can be fruitfully conceptualised as a collective actor, as well as having outlined their identarian contours, I explore how CSA networks act politically

in **Chapter 4**. CSA networks pursue different strategies and repertoires of action to bring about change. These diverse approaches range from prefigurative politics to more conventional movement politics, such as protests, manifestations, and lobbying. Building on critiques that prefigurative politics of food movements are a necessary but not sufficient aspect of agri-food system transformations, since they construct 'new standalone local agrifood systems, which preferences secession from rather than direct confrontation with the conventional agrifood system' (Myers and Sbicca 2015, 17), this chapter primarily studies conventional politics and, in particular, political advocacy, as a strategy for inducing change within agri-food systems. The chapter mobilises social movement literature on political strategies, advocacy work, resource mobilisation, and emotions to unpack the attempts to 'act politically' within the German CSA network.

In **Chapter 5**, I draw on the literature on coalition building to explore whether and how political action can be broadened through a coalition between the CSA and degrowth movements. The questions are operationalised by assessing to what degree the political strategy and ideology (i.e., the framings, action repertoires, and existing coalitions of the *Solawi* network) is compatible with that of the degrowth movement. Additionally, factors that can be conducive or hinder coalitions are analysed in the form of social ties, resources, and internal organisation. The chapter transcends the realm of agri-food systems and explores how processes of societal transformation, as envisioned by the degrowth movement, could contribute to creating a world in which CSAs thrive.

The fourth research question connects to this last point and explores the intersection between agri-food systems and degrowth more generally. This open-ended question thus allows me to identify and explore open questions for transforming agri-food systems towards degrowth, from a social movement perspective and beyond, thereby further elaborating on the necessity to connect agrarian and societal struggles (**Chapter 6**).

By answering these questions, my research makes a theoretical contribution to CSA scholarship and the literature on agri-food system transformations by conceptualising CSA as a social movement. In particular, it contributes to a rapidly growing strand within the literature on CSA that explores the alternative practices and logics of CSA and the associated transformative potential to change the agri-food system (see Fomina, Glińska-Neweś, and Ignasiak-Szulc 2022). Contrary to the large majority of extant research, this thesis explores

CSA on the level of national networks. Making the national network the object of my thesis allowed me to understand the phenomenon more broadly and to shed light on the immense heterogeneity between different CSA initiatives and their politics – differences that remain obscured by single case-study approaches. By using a social movement lens, I showcase how, despite such internal diversity, a common identity, strategies, claims, and struggles are negotiated, which are essential for mobilisation. Finally, my research also makes a practical contribution to the activists within CSA networks by providing reflections on the ongoing discussions pertaining to the political strategies of the movement.

1.6. Research design: An in-depth case-study approach

This thesis is based on four empirical articles, **Chapters 3–6,** which form the basis of my research. A detailed description of the methodology can be found in the respective chapters. For **Chapters 3–5**, I adopted a case-study approach to develop theoretical and practical insights on CSA as a political actor, mainly drawing on the case of the German CSA network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V.* (for a brief description, see Box 1.1). The *Solawi* network, which self-identifies as a social movement, is a particularly suitable case study because of its long-term existence and relatively high degree of formalisation. Since this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was furthermore crucial that the network was able to shift the vast majority of activities online to continue my engagement with the network despite travel bans. Lastly, as a native German speaker, investigating the *Solawi* network was an obvious choice; speaking the native language is a great advantage for conducting social science research, understanding the cultural context, and having meaningful interactions with research participants.

Additionally, two chapters build on multiple case studies that complement the German case. In **Chapter 3**, I adopted a comparative case-study approach, introducing a second case – namely, the Italian CSA network *(Rete Italiana delle CSA – RICSA)* – to highlight distinct approaches to boundary work across countries. **Chapter 5** on coalition building draws on the case of the German degrowth movement and the German CSA movement. The latter was operationalised by studying the *Solawi* network and four individual CSA initiatives which illustrate – to different degrees – the ideological and strategic alignment between the two movements.

The 'Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft'

The first German CSA, and thus the entire German CSA movement, originated in the late 80s, inspired by a US-American biodynamic CSA farm. The movement is to a large extent organised via a formalised network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V.*, which was founded in 2011 by a number of CSA farmers, as well as by activists with backgrounds in the anti-globalisation, solidarity economy, and right-to-food movement. With the foundation of the *Solawi* network, the movement grew considerably, from 12 members to over 462[4] individual CSA initiatives today (with an additional 104 initiatives being developed – see the numerical development in Figure 1.2. below).
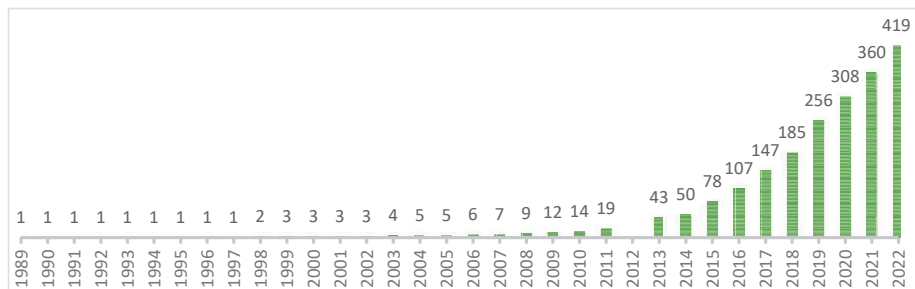
Figure 1.2: Numerical growth of CSA initiatives in Germany, 1989–2022, based on official numbers of the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft. *No data for 2012 available.*

The official goal of the *Solawi* network is to safeguard and promote a sustainable peasant agriculture based on a close consumer-producer partnership that views agriculture as a joint responsibility. For this purpose, the *Solawi* network (i) provides support and advice for individual CSA initiatives in their foundation phase and beyond by providing documents, webinars, consultations, and referral to counsellors; (ii) develops training programmes and coordinates research activities; (iii) engages in and facilitates networking regionally, nationally, and internationally among individual initiatives, researchers, and politicians; and (iv) carries out advocacy work targeting political decision-makers, and (v) develops informational and promotional material. Importantly, the network also provides a space for mutual exchange and learning and reconciles positions among the extremely diverse members; the network brings together an array of diverse types of CSA initiatives, including producer-led, consumer-led, gardening collectives, family farms, and anarchist- and anthroposophical-motivated initiatives, to name just a few examples. The *Solawi* network has clear, basic democratic principles of representation, and decisions are largely taken in line with sociocratic principles based on either consent or consensus. However, because of its legal form, a non-profit association, the network consists of four different organs: the general assembly, the council, the coordination, and the board. The *Solawi* network is a member of the international organisation of the CSA movement via the *Urgenci* network.

Box 1.1: Case-study description of the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft

I combined a wide variety of qualitative, ethnographic methods to collect data (see also Bryman 2012) and to develop a detailed account of the *Solawi* network,[5] including the following:

- A scoping phase, which included of the review of websites of the *Solawi* network and CSA initiatives in Germany. At the time of the screening in 2020, these sites were at least three years old. I also conducted field visits and online calls with selected CSA initiatives. The scoping phase served to familiarise myself with the case and identify relevant research questions.

- Overt participant observation of six (five online and one in-person) bi-annual network meetings, each of which lasted three days. I also engaged in participant observation of three working groups – namely, the working group on organisational development (weekly meetings between June 2021 and November 2022), on politics (bi-weekly meetings from December 2022 to the present), and the working group against the far-right (monthly meetings between January 2022 and February 2023). In all these instances, I took extensive field notes to document my experiences. Participant observation allowed me to establish a close relationship and familiarity with the network via my participation in their activities and practices.

- Semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with longstanding activists and staff-members, as well as with single CSA initiatives, that have historically shaped the German CSA movements because of their early formation or high visibility. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in German and comprised open-ended questions, which allowed me to follow up on emerging themes and explore the participants' narratives, generating rich empirical data (Bryman 2012). The interview protocols were designed with the conceptual background on social movement theory in mind and adapted throughout the process. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually.

- Document analysis of reports and minutes of past network meetings and web content as well as newsletters, magazines, podcasts, radio features, and YouTube videos related to the CSA network. Documentation review was particularly well-suited to gather historical

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[4] Last accessed: 24-08-2023.
[5] For the other cases, see the methodology section of the respective papers.

information about the network and complemented the insights from fieldwork (Bryman 2012).

I performed a qualitative content analysis of the textual data, which I coded and analysed with the data analysis software NVivo (for an explanation of the type of coding, see the respective sections on the methodology of each chapter). The software helped me to organise the collected data in a transparent and effective way and assisted with exploring and categorising the data into emerging themes.

1.7. Towards an engaged research practice

This thesis adopted a social-constructivist ontology approach to research – that is, I view knowledge as situated and socially constructed as opposed to claims that research can be 'objective', 'neutral', and 'value-free' (Bryman 2012; England 1994). From this approach, it follows that the biography and positionality of researchers fundamentally shape both the research output and process – most notably, in the form of fieldwork and the researcher's interactions with the participants (England 1994). Such a stance inevitably leads to the following questions: How have my own social background, values, and beliefs shaped my research process? What role(s) did I inhabit, and how do I position myself towards the participants of my research? In the following, I outline my positionality and its implications for my research.

During my PhD journey, I juggled various intersecting roles and positionalities that shifted and evolved throughout the research process. At the time of this writing, I no longer consider myself solely an academic but also an ally and activist of the German CSA movement. Having been trained as economist and with little experience in social science methods other than interviews, my research started in a rather conventional manner, mostly in the form of conducting interviews and sporadically participant observation at the bi-annual network meetings. I was, to say the truth, a bit scared of the complexities and responsibilities that come with wearing multiple 'hats' and conducting research *with* movements. Inspired by writings on the ethics of research on and with movements (Arribas Lozano 2018; Chesters 2012) and on scholar-activism (Chatterton, Hodkinson, and Pickerill 2010; Duncan et al. 2021; Hale 2008) and encouraged by the numerous discussions with my colleagues on our own role and means to advance societal transformation, I nonetheless decided to venture into the

unknowns of 'stepping outside' my role as an academic. As such, almost two years into my PhD, in April 2021, I expressed interest in supporting the network more tangibly and started to regularly participate in the weekly meetings of the working group on organisational development of the *Solawi* network.

From there, my engagement with the network quickly extended to two further working groups, the working group on the far-right and the working group on politics. I attended numerous online calls and (multi-day) in-person meetings with many convivial moments, dinners, bonfires, singing, and dancing. I also helped with care tasks (e.g. cleaning and cooking), which contributed to establishing mutual trust with research participants and, in some cases, even strong bonds and friendship. During these many encounters, I repeatedly dwelled on the usefulness of my research and how to meaningfully 'give back' to the CSA movement. I often asked other activists what, according to them, researchers should investigate: What do actors within the *Solawi* network want to know? What types of knowledge do they value? During these interactions, I noted that many activists were especially interested in research that can legitimise CSA (e.g. by providing evidence that CSA initiatives are more environmentally sustainable than conventional agricultural farms) or in research that can provide practical, hands-on recommendations (such as the research project *nascent*, which investigated the minimum and maximum size for CSA initiatives to maintain economic stability, social cohesion, and their transformative dimension (see Antoni-Komar et al. 2021)). Being embedded in a larger research-project with a particular, pre-defined set of questions, there were limits on the extent to which my research could fulfil such a function. Nonetheless, I strived to be 'practicing research alongside rather than on' the *Solawi* network and CSA movements more generally (Gibson-Graham 2006, xvii). To the extent that was possible, I therefore aspired to provide critical reflections that are actionable, accessible, and understandable to the CSA movement activists (see also Chatterton, Fuller, and Routledge 2008).

Over the course of my engagement in the network, I also started to co-produce knowledge with network activists. **Chapter 4** of this thesis was co-designed and co-authored by a staff member of the *Solawi* network. During an informal conversation at the network meeting in Spring 2022, we realised that there was a strong thematical alignment between my research

interests and a side project of the network on political advocacy.[6] In fact, we had both been carrying out interviews with the same activists on similar issues. Soon after, I was invited to accompany the German delegation of the *Solawi* network to the SALSIFI[7] meetings, a project on political advocacy led by the international network Urgenci. After two intense days of exchanging ideas and discussing the current state of advocacy, we decided to continue exchanging ideas and to co-author an academic, yet practically relevant, publication.

Additionally, together with my colleague Julia Spanier, we conducted a participatory (action) research study on and with the working group against the far-right. Our aim was to support the working group in their endeavour to develop an anti-racist practice within the network and to make it more diverse and inclusive. At the time of submitting this thesis, the academic output was still in the making. However, the societal output was already finalised and can be found in **Chapter 7**.

These accounts of my interactions with the *Solawi* network indicate that my research practices over time became aligned with two core dimensions of scholar-activism: (i) having a strong relationship and political alignment with the *Solawi* network and (ii) producing knowledge that is useful to the CSA movement, as well as the involvement of activists in the process of knowledge production (Duncan et al. 2022).

Adopting a more engaged approach to research was particularly important and relevant since the German CSA movement is currently on the verge of being over-researched. For the last decade, the movement has been subject to a large amount of research, ranging from bachelor theses to entire research projects. Because of the evident interest in CSA and the concomitant burden to respond to researchers' requests, the *Solawi* network has started to discuss the (dis-)advantages of interacting with academics and has established guidelines for researchers (NWSL 2017). Among the main advantages of research listed by those guidelines is knowledge that is useful to the movement in different ways; it can (i) legitimise CSA in the eyes of

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[6] After key individuals left the network, a small side project of the network attempted to recompile crucial information on political advocacy work.

[7] SALSIFI stands for 'Supporting Advanced Learning for Stakeholders Involved in Sustainable Food-systems Initiatives'. It is an Erasmus+ project of the European Union, which ran from September 2020 until August 2023. It was coordinated by the international CSA network Urgenci and brought together different CSA and other agri-food grassroots movements across Europe.

politicians and increase the possibility of receiving governmental funds, (ii) function as publicity work, and (iii) provide lessons and reflections for the movement.

At the same time, the *Solawi* network called out several difficulties in their interactions with researchers – most notably extractivist research practices and insufficient transparency during the research process. To counter these difficulties, the network has been encouraging researchers to actively reflect on how reciprocity between the movement and researchers can be practiced – that is, to what extent and in what way research can provide useful insights for the practitioners of the movement and whether (or how) research participants will have access to the results. Thereby, they echo literature on scholar-activism arguing that the ethics of reciprocation entail that scholars should 'return favours' for the time taken from activists (but see Gillan and Pickerill 2012 on the dangers that are associated to the logic of reciprocation: practicing reciprocation as a way to gain access and the persistence of the objectification of movements).

This call for more engaged research is now slowly starting to bear fruit. During the network meeting in spring 2023, movement activists and researchers reflected on the development of research practices within the network. In the words of a fellow researcher, we, as researchers working on and with CSAs, are currently in the process of unlearning dominant practices of academia. This process entails acknowledging the movement as a knowledge producer in its own right, from whom researchers can learn. Activists, too, gratefully noted a change in the researchers' attitude and the type of research being conducted: in their eyes, researchers now tend to put greater emphasis on (co-)producing knowledge that is useful for the movement (for a reflection in what ways my research has been relevant and impactful to the CSA network see the **Chapter 7** of this thesis).

1.8. A brief note on collaborations throughout this thesis

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This thesis was a collaborative effort in many ways. Whether during field work, joining efforts for interviewing, exchanging ideas during conferences, or collaborating on the writing process, the continuous exchange and discussions with my co-authors and colleagues have shaped and enriched my work significantly. Because of the prevailing neoliberal norms around authorship in academia, which favour individualism and foster competition among scholars, these collaborations are seldomly given visibility and value beyond the acknowledgements section of a paper. Therefore, I would like to name and express my gratitude to those with whom I have collaborated most closely, the co-authors of the chapters of my thesis.

Chapter 2 was developed together with my two supervisors, Giuseppe Feola and Peter Driessen, and with Jessica Duncan, a scholar working on food governance processes. For **Chapter 3**, I collaborated with Giuseppe Feola and Peter Driessen. **Chapter 4** was developed and written in collaboration with Baldur Kapusta (a staff member of the *Solawi* network), scholar-activist Jessica Duncan, and Giuseppe Feola. For **Chapter 5**, I share the first authorship with my colleague Julia Spanier. The chapter was further developed in close collaboration with Giuseppe Feola. **Chapter 6** was a team effort of the Unmaking research project (Laura van Oers, Jacob Smessaert, Julia Spanier, Guilherme Raj, and Giuseppe Feola) which I led and coordinated. The societal impact outputs presented in **Chapter 7** were elaborated in collaboration with my colleagues Julia Spanier, Jacob Smessaert, Guilherme Raj, Laura van Oers, Giuseppe Feola, and Iline Ceelen, as well as food justice educator Samie Blasingame and the working group against the far right. Lastly, many of my fieldwork trips were conducted together with my colleagues and dear friends Julia Spanier and Guilherme Raj.

An overview of the authors and publication status of each empirical chapter can be found in Table 1.1. While all chapters are entirely based on journal articles, I have renamed them to make the narrative of this thesis more coherent.

Table 1.1: Authors and publication status per chapter. For all chapters I was the lead and first author and involved in all research stages from conceptualisation to writing.

	AUTHORS & PUBLICATION STATUS
Chapter 3	Submitted to *Journal of Rural Studies* as: Guerrero Lara, L., Feola, G., & Driessen, P. (under review). Drawing Boundaries: Negotiating a Collective 'We' in Community-Supported Agriculture Networks. *Journal of Rural Studies*.
Chapter 4	Submitted to *Interface: A journal for and about social movements* as: Guerrero Lara, L., Kapusta, B., Duncan, J., & Feola, G. (under review). Organising for Political Advocacy. The case of the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft. *Interface: A journal for and about social movements*.
Chapter 5	Published in Agriculture and Human Values as: Guerrero Lara, L., Spanier, J., & Feola, G. (2023). A one-sided love affair? On the potential for a coalition between degrowth and community-supported agriculture in Germany. *Agriculture and Human Values*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10462-2
Chapter 6	Published in *Sustainability Science* as: Guerrero Lara, L., van Oers, L., Smessaert, J., Spanier, J., Raj, G., & Feola, G. (2023). Degrowth and agri-food systems: a research agenda for the critical social sciences. *Sustainability Science*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01276-y

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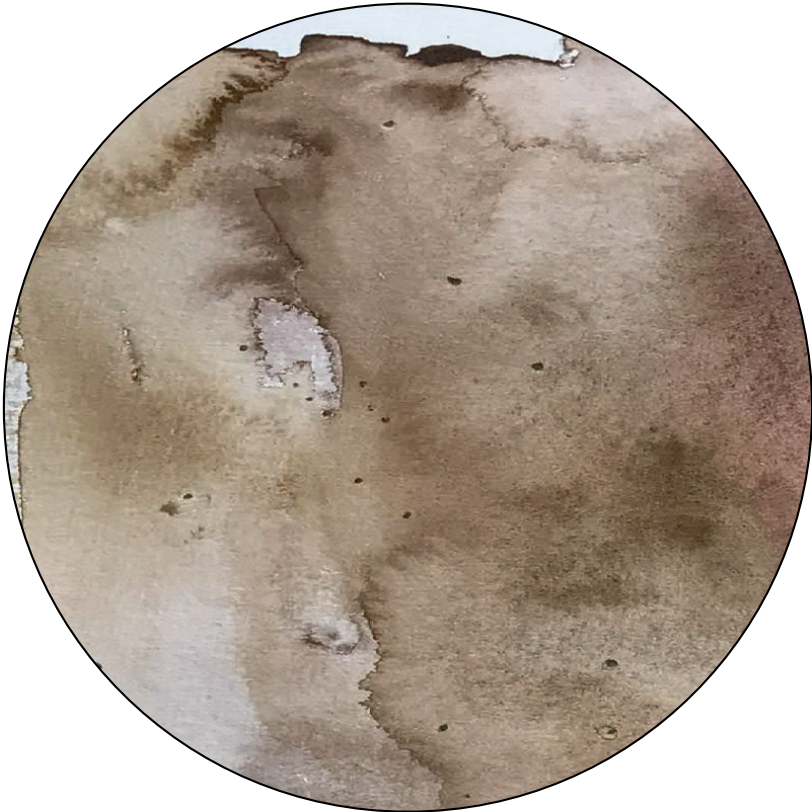
BACKGROUND: THE GERMAN CAPITALIST AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM

2.1. An institutional perspective on capitalist agri-food systems

Social movement studies have repeatedly stressed that the political context in which movements are embedded matters for mobilisations (McAdam and Tarrow 2019). The German CSA movement is situated within a capitalist agri-food system, which exploits humans and non-humans alike, degrades the environment and contributes to the disconnect from food producers and consumers. The dynamics of capitalist agri-food systems have been extensively described by food regime scholars (Friedmann and McMichael 1989; Bernstein 2016; McMichael 2013a). Due the importance of transnational relationships, global commodity chains, transnational agribusinesses, and ultimately the global institutions regulating agricultural production, food regime literature has focussed largely on the global level and dynamics. In contrast, this chapter seeks to describe the capitalist dynamics that are specific to the German capitalist agri-food system from an institutional perspective that focuses on the national level, thereby providing the reader with important background information regarding the socio-political context that the CSA movement is embedded in.

Capitalist agri-food systems are consequently conceptualised as complexes of institutions that regulate, shape and coordinate food from production to consumption in a manner that enables commodification, exploitation and capital accumulation (Higgins and Lawrence 2005; Jakobsen and Hansen 2019; Otero 2016). These institutions create complementary expectations that 'govern the behaviour of all social actors' (Friedmann 2005a, 125). For example, intellectual property rights protect and commodify expert and scientific knowledge, which is key to developing human-made commodities such as machines, chemical fertilizers, and bioengineered seeds (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018; Klepek 2012; Otero and Lapegna 2016). These commodities not only enable the appropriation and exploitation of nature but also are essential for increasing the margin of capital accumulation through the intensification of agriculture (McMichael 2009). In particular, this chapter describes the inner workings of three institutions, namely labour, land, and seeds, as they are basic inputs for food production.

The three institutions are interrogated through a set of guiding questions on content, origin, supranational linkages, and distributional impacts (see Table 2.1.). The guiding questions were derived from reviewing literature on capitalist institutions in agri-food systems, notably from the field of food regime studies.

Table 2.1: Guiding questions to interrogate capitalist institutions in agri-food systems

Content: What is the scope of the institution?	
Guiding questions	Examples
Which aspects of the agri-food system are regulated? Whether or in what way they are enacted? And which aspects are not regulated? The scope covers laws, rules, informal norms and understandings, and their implications for food production to consumption (Moran et al. 1996).	• although the right-to-food legislation in India guarantees legal protection against hunger and provides food and cash benefits for groups at risk of poverty, these rights are far from being guaranteed (Jakobsen 2018; Pritchard et al. 2016); • various agro-environmental payments have replaced price subsidies in Austria to incentivise more sustainable production, notably organic production (Schermer 2014); • and certification programmes serve as incentives for responsible pesticide use in Trinidad and Tobago despite the lack of legal regulations for the sale and use of imported pesticides (Wilson 2016).

Origins: What are the historical roots of the institution?	
What conditions and events have impacted the origin and development of institutions? How does a better understanding of the origins of institutions in agri-food systems help us to understand today's institutions (Moran et al. 1996; Graddy-Lovelace and Diamond 2017; Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2012)?	• the historical roots of price and supply management in the U.S. are traceable to an attempt to mitigate production surplus that in turn depressed prices (Graddy-Lovelace and Diamond 2017); • farmers´ unions in France originated as a means to protect rural interests and values (Moran et al. 1996); • longstanding collaborations between commercial private seed producers and public research institutes in Germany since the end of the 19th century, shaped today´s intellectual property rights (IPR) and variety protection (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018); • and the social and historical relevance of traditional maize in Guatemala can be linked to the indigenous identities of a large share of the population (Klepek 2012).

Supra-national linkage: What is the interplay of national institutions with their supra-national or foreign equivalents (if existent)?	
What hierarchical relationships and interplay between national and supra-national institutions exist (Barling and Duncan 2015; Klimek and Bjørkhaug 2017; McKenna, Le Heron, and Roche 2001; Pechlaner and Otero 2008; Pritchard et al. 2016; Stringer 2000)? How do supra- and transnational institutions shape their national equivalents (Seabrooke 2010)?	• the role of the Trade Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights in influencing national intellectual property rights (Pechlaner and Otero 2008); • the impact of foreign environmental standards and regulations in shaping domestic production standards in cases of strong export-orientation, (McKenna, Le Heron, and Roche 2001); • the influence of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement on the international harmonisation of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (Pechlaner and Otero 2008); • the effect of EU integration on member regulations (Klimek and Bjørkhaug 2017); and trade policies and barriers more generally (Stringer 2000; Pritchard et al. 2016).

Distributional impact: Who benefits and who is disadvantaged from existing institutions?	
How do institutions define and defend the interests of particular groups, potentially at the expense of other groups? This includes defining the ownership of, access to and use of certain elements, as well as the symmetry of relationships and how interactions can take place**.**	• regulations can alleviate or enhance market concentration (Schneider 2017); • land reforms and access to land may favour land concentration or distribution (Pietilainen and Otero 2018; Werner 2019); • seed regulations create conflict with farmers' traditional seed saving and exchange practices and rights (Pechlaner and Otero 2008); • dependencies between countries caused by free trade are likely to impact food security (Jakobsen and Hansen 2019; Otero, Pechlaner, and Gürcan 2013); • price volatility induced by speculations is often disastrous for small-scale farmers but beneficial for large-scale farm groups (Ioris 2017).

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2.2. Methods

Data was primarily collected in the beginning of the PhD (2020) through (i) scientific publications by independent researchers and leading research institutes on agriculture, notably the *Thünen Institute*, the German Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries as well as (ii) grey literature such as reports issued by the Ministry for Food and Agriculture (Bundesministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft – BMEL), non-governmental organisations working on the topics of agriculture and the environment, and industry reports on the German agri-food system.

The documents were coded according to the dimensions of the Table 2.1, following which the information was validated and triangulated with four semi-structured expert interviews, the participants of which were as follows:

- a representative of the German farmers' association (Deutscher Bauernverband – DBV). Organising more than 90% of all farm businesses, the DBV is by far the largest farmers' association in Germany (Deutscher Bauernverband 2019). Although the DBV represents a variety of farm businesses, not all are involved to the same extent; typically, farm managers of large businesses are less involved in daily on-farm work routines and have more time to actively pursue their interests. The DBV is very well connected to both policymakers and actors along the food chain and can be regarded as influential in shaping the institutional environment of the agri-food system in Germany (Ostendorff and Heintz 2015; Feindt 2009).
- a representative of the German peasant farmers' association (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft – AbL). A member of the food sovereignty movement La Via Campesina, the AbL is significantly smaller and less influential than the DBV and represents the interests of 1500 peasant farmers; and
- two scientists with backgrounds in rural sociology and ecological economics, respectively, who work on the German agri-food system.

Interviewees were interviewed about the institutions they considered to fall within their expertise. The interview questions were derived from the guiding questions included in the framework. All interviews were digitally recorded, coded according to the dimensions of the

framework and used to validate, nuance and extend the findings of the document analysis. In the text, the interviewees are referred to as I-1 to I-4.

2.3. Land, labour and seeds within the German agri-food system

In the following I examine labour, land and seed institutions within the German capitalist agri-food system.

2.3.1. Labour: agricultural income schemes and labour and wage regulations

The income of a farm is influenced by a number of factors, including the type of farming, the prices obtained for the produce, and agricultural income support schemes. In turn, the income of the farm conditions the wage and working conditions of employed workers to a certain extent. The labour complex reveals exploitative structures and inequalities alongside processes of capital accumulation and the existing redistributive mechanisms.

Content: In Germany, labour in agriculture can be divided into independent farmers leading farm businesses and the agricultural workforce (farm workers). The vast majority of farm businesses are family owned; they comprise 91% of all farms and 64% of all utilised agricultural area (Eurostat 2019). Family farms are getting bigger, more competition-oriented and more complex, and they increasingly employ additional non-family workers (Lehmann 2018). Family labour forces form 48% of the total workforce, outnumbering employees (22%) and seasonal workers (30%) (BMEL 2019b). Overall, the income situation of the agricultural workforce in Germany is precarious, as many farm businesses struggle to secure their income (I-2). Next to subsidies, how much a farm earns ultimately depends on the price obtained for the produce, as income is subject to market price fluctuations and strongly influenced by powerful actors, i.e. large retailers (BMEL 2019b; I-2). These fluctuations are to a large extent driven by the global market (I-1; I-2). The income volatility results in uncertainty and planning difficulties for farm businesses (BMEL 2016; Thünen Institute 2020). Additionally, in some sectors, such as the milk sector, production costs are no longer covered by the prices of produce (Reichert and Leimbach 2015; I-2). To stabilise farmers' incomes, agricultural income schemes offset the competitive disadvantage caused by relatively high environmental and animal welfare standards in relation to global standards, as well as high product safety and quality requirements (BMEL 2016; Scown, Brady, and Nicholas 2020). These schemes are defined by the CAP (see supranational linkages) and issued as direct annual payments tied to

the area that is farmed; a minimum area of three hectares is required to be eligible. About 30% of the direct payments are only issued if specific environmental or 'greening' measures are met. Additional payments are issued to small and medium farmers and young farmers (under 40 years old) as well as for the adoption of climate and environmentally-friendly farming methods. Together, these payments amount to almost half of a farm business's income and can thus be considered essential for their persistence (BMEL 2020a; I-1; I-3).

Origins: The CAP was established in 1962 to establish minimum prices to ensure adequate food supplies in post-war Europe (BMEL 2014). Following the region's economic recovery, the system led to significant overproduction of food. In 1992, in the wake of the MacSharry-reform, direct payments were introduced to compensate farmers for the gradual abolishment of support and minimum prices (ibid.).

Distributional impact: Farmers' incomes are very unevenly distributed (Thünen Institute 2020). Their income is influenced by several factors, including geographical location (climate and soil quality), farming type (e.g. arable farming, mixed farming, animal husbandry, processing), conventional vs. organic, and farmers' education/vocational training (BMEL 2020a; Thünen Institute 2020). Furthermore, farm size plays an important role—large farms receive higher subsidies and often have intensified farming practices, thus benefitting from economies of scale. The income disparities between well-off and poor farm businesses have been increasing over recent years (Thünen Institute 2020). Thus, the CAP is highly debated in Germany and more broadly in Europe, as exemplified by the protest *Wir haben es satt!/Wir machen Euch satt!* ('We are fed up/We feed you') (Feindt et al. 2019; Nowack, Schmid, and Grethe 2019). Along with various political parties and organisations, the DBV and the AbL are particularly active within the debate around direct payments (Nowack, Schmid, and Grethe 2019). A common critique is that the concentration of direct payments to bigger farms is unjust are because (i) smaller farms are more environmentally friendly and socially desirable, and (ii) current payments are not needs-oriented (Nowack, Schmid, and Grethe 2019). Although there is no academic consensus regarding the former claim (Nowack, Schmid, and Grethe 2019; I-4), the latter needs to be carefully unpacked. Direct payments mostly go to prosperous, large-scale farms; 20% of farms receive 69% of all payments (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019; Deutscher Bundestag 2017). Further, the share of the total income comprised by direct payments is proportionally higher for farms that receive large subsidies. Peasant

organisations such as the AbL consider the CAP payments unjust, as they disproportionally favour farms whose income lies above the average and exclude very small farms below three hectares (I-2). Subsidies for large-scale farms are said to render small and medium scale farms less competitive (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019). However, according to Nowack et al. (2019), the debate around direct payments favouring large farms over small farms lacks nuance, as not all big farms profit equally. Rather, it is large farms with a low work-load that most benefit from the CAP (Forstner et al. 2018; Nowack, Schmid, and Grethe 2019; I-2). A recent regional study found that (i) CAP payments are disproportionally allocated to regions where farmers are well-off and (ii) climate-friendly and biodiverse farming regions are under-remunerated (Scown, Brady, and Nicholas 2020). We follow Forstner (2018) and Scown et al. (2020), who advocate for a needs-based income support to protect both farmers and nature from exploitation, as a mere reform of the CAP is likely to fall short of providing the desired effect. Additionally, environmental organisations and the AbL claim that insufficient money is allocated to agri-environmental schemes, and existing measures are both inefficient and overly bureaucratic (BirdLife Europe, EEB, and NABU 2017; I-2). What measures are chosen and whether payments are input- or result-oriented is determined by the federal states that co-finance the EU-payments (BMEL 2015; I-4). Input-based payments prevail; however, result-oriented payments are said to be more effective and create a sense of ownership and pride among famers, as they are able to see the results of their measures (I-4). Finally, the capitalisation of direct payments into land rental prices is objected by the food sovereignty movement (I-2; see next section). Although the DBV agrees that the CAP for being too bureaucratic, they largely perceive the CAP as being both efficient and just, as in their view, the main reason for direct payments is to offset the EUs high environmental and social standards (I-1).

A further source of contestation is the market power of supermarkets and discounters to 'dictate' prices to farmers. This concern is increasingly raised by organic farmers, who currently charge higher prices (BMEL 2020b; I-2). With the emergence of discount organic produce in supermarkets, competition among organic farmers is increasing, including among labels with typically strong environmental and social standards (Brand 2006; I-3). For example, Lidl has introduced BIOLAND and Kaufland Demeter products in their assortment (Bakir 2019). In the long run, the price battle between grocery stores, including offering low-

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price organic produce, is likely to reinforce 'predatory competition' tendencies and result in dumping prices for farmers (I-1; I-2). Similarly, these pressures have led many organic farmers to progressively intensify and specialise their production, making it less environmentally friendly (Sanders and Heß 2019).

The logic of profit maximisation in combination with price pressures borne by farm businesses has implications for the working conditions and payment of the agricultural workforce, especially for seasonal workers (I-2). As stated above, seasonal workers make up 30% of the total agricultural workforce in Germany, reflecting a high dependency on predominantly Romanian seasonal workers (BMEL 2019a; Schmidt 2020). Despite the introduction of a minimum wage in 2015, seasonal workers present a cheap source of labour for German farms; those who work less than three months per year are exempted from otherwise mandatory health insurance and social security obligations. It is estimated that the vast majority of seasonal workers (68%) are not insured (Initiative faire Landarbeit 2019). This form of seasonal work can be classified as precarious due to temporary contracts, low payment, and the lack of social security (Schmidt 2020). Further critiques of employers include that they (i) systematically try to pay below the minimum wage; (ii), record working hours in an opaque manner; and (iii) charge excessive prices for seasonal workers' accommodation, which often has low hygienic standards. It is further criticised that workers face overly long working hours and lack rest days (Initiative faire Landarbeit 2019).

Supranational linkages:[8] As part of the CAP, direct payments are bound by supranational requirements. Although room for manoeuvre is left to adapt the payments to the specificities of the member states, 'the German government still refuses to make use of its room for manoeuvre within the constraints of EU policy' (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019, 31; I-2). Less than half of the potential 15% of direct payments are reallocated to more environmentally- and climate-friendly production methods. Furthermore, although the BMEL claims to support small- and medium farmers, only 7% (instead of the potential 30%) of direct payments are reallocated to these farms (BMEL 2016; Chemnitz and Becheva 2019). In light of the 2021 CAP reform, new proposals and adjustments are currently being discussed, such as size-

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[8] Due to the limited space and the scope of this background chapter, I have limited the analysis to those institutions that most directly impact the German agri-food system. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that the global capitalist political economy encompasses many more supranational institutions that shape national agri-food systems, such as the international labour convention and trade agreements.

dependent caps of subsidies and degressive payments; however, such proposals are always ultimately 'watered-down' (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019, 17), and the German government rejected them for being overly bureaucratical and only inducing strong effects in some regions (Feindt et al. 2019). According to a representative of the AbL, the current allocation of direct payments is influenced by the strong agrochemical lobby, which aims to reinforce the shift towards the large-scale, industrial farms that are their principal customers (I-2). Furthermore, the federal organisation of the German state hinders the implementation of caps or degressive payments, and the agricultural ministers of the East German states strongly oppose any reform attempts (Agrarministerinnen und Agrarminister der ostdeutschen Länder 2017; I-3). Finally, it is often argued that the implementation of a cap would only impact 2000 farms in Germany if applied to single farm businesses; the effect would be much stronger if the cap were applied to company groups (Forstner et al. 2018; I-4).

2.3.2. Land: owner ship rights & concentration policies

This section examines land ownership rights and land concentration policies. To understand whether and how agricultural land is used as means for capital accumulation, we examine historical ownership and heritage structures as well as farm land distribution and concentration and how these factors have influenced price developments of arable land in Germany.

Content: Prices for agricultural land (both lease and purchase) have risen about 170% over the last 15 years (especially after the 2008 financial crisis) due to investments from non-agricultural actors, although the increase has recently slowed down (BMEL 2019a; I-1). Prices for recently rented land (*Neupachtentgelt*) are on average much higher than those for leased land. However, regional differences exist between the North and South as well as the West and East (I-1; I-3: I-4); for example, purchase values in the former West Germany (Federal German Republic) are higher than in the new federal states, and the gap has been increasing during recent years (BMEL 2019a).

Agricultural land has become interesting for (non-agricultural) investors due to several reasons. Firstly, land is becoming scarce—high demand for land for settlements, transport infrastructure, and renewable resources, especially in light of the state support for bioenergy production—drive up the prices for agricultural land (Forstner, Tietz, and Weingarten 2011; I-2; I-4). In combination with short rental contracts, this scarcity obliges tenant farmers to

maintain good relations with lessors to get contract renewals (I-4). Secondly, low interest rates and low associated risk make capital investments in arable land attractive for non-agricultural investors (Feindt et al. 2019; Forstner, Tietz, and Weingarten 2011; I-1; I-2). Although current real estate law grants a pre-emptive right to farmers, this is not always the case in reality due to the high transaction costs to ensure the pre-emptive right (I-2; I-4). The number of non-agricultural investments is rising and currently comprises 20–35% of all bought land—a development that has special relevance in the former Eastern Germany (Feindt et al. 2019; I-2). A recent study argued that the concentration of farms may be far more advanced than official numbers suggest due to the inability of current agricultural statistics to reflect new organisational realities (Laschewski, Tietz, and Zavyalova 2019). Finally, landowners can capitalise direct payments by charging higher leasing fees (Feindt et al. 2019).

Origin: Next to geographical factors (I-4), distinct historical institutional settings can explain today´s land ownership structure and its regional variations. For instance, the share of leased land in the former Eastern Germany (68%) is significantly higher than in former Western Germany (54%) (BMEL 2019a). In the former Eastern Germany (German Democratic Republic), land was owned by the state and collectively farmed in form of large agricultural cooperatives (*landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*) following land expropriation processes in the 1950s (Martens 2010; I-4), and 90% of the land was still leased from the state in 1999, nine years after the reunification. Another remnant of agricultural cooperatives is the farm structure; Eastern Germany is characterised by large farms (224 hectares on average) that employ few workers, whereas predominantly small- and medium sized firms are found (47 hectares on average in the West) in South-Western Germany (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019). In the latter region, heritage laws required that land be among all heirs, thereby contributing to the fragmentation of farms. Many of these laws still apply today (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 2011; I-3). Recently, these regional differences have been decreasing; in the wake of land privatisation, the proportion of farmers owning agricultural land is now increasing in Western Germany and decreasing in Eastern Germany (BMEL 2019a). The land privatisation in the East is coordinated and facilitated by a public company, *the Bodenverwertungs- und –verwaltungs GmbH* (*BVVG)* (BMEL 2019a). Until 2007, low prices for agricultural land were reserved for farmers, and according to the AbL, the BVVG

systematically favoured large farms over small farms (I-2). A reform of privatisation policies in 2007 aimed at guaranteeing more 'market transparency' mandated public advertisements of sales of agricultural land, which has attracted more financially strong investors (Feindt et al. 2019; I-2). Due to rising land prices, the BVVG adapted its policy in 2015 and 2017, including lowering the maximum size of patches and prolonging the end date of the privatisation process from 2025 to 2030.

Distributional impact: Price increases agricultural land is viewed as problematic by actors supporting peasant farming for a number of reasons (I-2). First, higher leasing payments reflect an income transfer of public payments—i.e. direct payments originally meant for farmers—to non-local land owners (BMEL 2019a). Approximately 60% of all land[9] is leased in Germany, which translates to the capitalisation of 30–60% of all direct payments by landowners (Feindt et al. 2019; Swinnen, Ciaian, and D'Artis 2008). Second, non-local investors can extract capital from rural regions to their headquarters rather than creating new jobs and livelihoods. How much land owners are regionally invested seemingly depends on the organisational form of the farm; cooperatives tend to take into account existing landscapes and provide more services for the municipality (I-3). Third, rising land prices and leasing payments hamper access to land for small-scale farmers and new entrants who lack capital (I-3) and result in crowding out and higher concentrations and disposition powers of agricultural land (BMEL 2019a; Forstner, Tietz, and Weingarten 2011; I-2). Finally, high land prices and lease payments increase productivity pressures on farmers, which disincentivises more environmentally friendly production. At the same time, environmental protection measures are not benefitting from low interest rates, as this sector is not of interest for investors (Feindt et al. 2019).

Supranational linkages: Increasing land prices, land speculation and concentration are EU-wide problems (IPES Food 2019). As a result, the legal status of agricultural land was revisited in 2017, and arable land now has to be legally treated as a resource rather than a source for investment (BMEL 2019a). This is reflected by the BMEL's goal to achieve widely spread land ownership as a foundation for sustainable, economically viable and intergenerationally fair agriculture. Further regulations of markets for agricultural land are pending. The *Länder* (sub-

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[9] Numbers vary per region.

federal states) play a crucial role, as the legal instruments to regulate the land market have been under their responsibility since the federalism reform in 2006 (BMEL 2019a; I-1).

2.3.3. Seeds: knowledge systems, seed regulations, intellectual property rights

This section explores knowledge systems, seed regulations and intellectual property rights. Seed production is shaped by both existing regulations and intellectual property rights that determine to what degree the knowledge around seed production is protected.

Content: In Germany, but also more broadly within the EU, the production of agricultural knowledge, seeds and innovations has been driven by the aim to increase and secure land productivity (Kohl, Dobeson, and Brandl 2017). Seeds with higher crop yields were developed to increase farm productivity, and agrobiodiversity is rapidly deceasing with the use of predominantly high-yield and hybrid seeds (Banzhaf 2017; I-2; I-4). The innovation process underlying the development of seeds is substantially shaped by intellectual property rights (IPR) around seeds, which are rather weak in Germany (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018). Seed producers have free access to use already existing varieties of other seed producers to develop new varieties; this is commonly referred to as 'breeder's privilege' (Kotschi and Kaiser 2012), and the cooperation of private companies and universities is incentivised in form of publicly funded research projects (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018). In other words, knowledge is mainly provided as a 'club good' (see below).

Origins: This type of arrangement is based on long-term contacts between public authorities and companies and is characterised by incremental innovation, cooperative company structures, and a moderate concentration of the seed market, especially compared with the global seed market (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018). The cooperation of private seed producers and public research institutes in Germany dates back to beginning of the 20th century (ibid.). The protection of IPR was first introduced in Germany in the 1930s, since then, seeds can only be sold by holders of plant variety protection rights and licenses (Banzhaf 2017).

Supranational linkages: The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) was founded in 1961 and has been revised three times (in 1972, 1978 and 1991) (Gröhn-Wittern and Remesch 2020). Important changes were implemented in 1997 to comply with the latest UPOV Convention (Banzhaf 2017). Although the concentration of national seed producers is moderate, global producers proliferate (Chemnitz et al. 2017), and many big seed

and agrochemical producers have merged (Gelinsky 2018). For example, the German company Bayer merged with the former US American company Monsanto for US $66 billion in June 2018. The merger deal further strengthened Bayer's global position, and among the new possibilities in its portfolio, it can now develop agrochemicals that match specific seed varieties, thereby rendering farmers even more dependent on these products (I-2; I-4). Bayer has enormous market power, and together with the other three major seed and agrochemical producers, DowDuPont, ChemChina-Syngenta, and BASF, they significantly determine both the price and quality of agri-chemical products, which they typically offer in packages (Chemnitz et al. 2017; Gelinsky 2018).

Distributional impact: The UPOV Convention had significant implications for breeders and farmers. Since 1997, new varieties need to be significantly distinct from existing varieties, which has substantially restricted 'breeders' privilege' (Kotschi and Kaiser 2012), and farmers' privilege to freely reproduce their own seeds has been constrained because seed breeders can charge reproduction fees (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018; Kotschi and Kaiser 2012; von Witzke 2007; I-2). Reproduction fees are relevant for non-hybrid varieties, as hybrid varieties are worthless for reproduction due to their instability and inability to form pollen (Banzhaf 2017; Wirz, Kunz, and Hurter 2017). Wheat, an important crop in Germany, is non-hybrid and grown on 39% of croplands (Banzhaf 2017). Thus, reproduction fees play a major role in Germany, contrary to countries where hybrid crops such as corn prevail.

The AbL fundamentally question the legitimacy of reproduction fees. In their view, seeds are a cultural heritage that peasants have cultivated and owned for millennia; often, patented seeds heavily rely on this cultural heritage. Thus, they resist against the patent- and seed replica regulations that undermine their 'farmer´s right' to reproduce seeds by refusing to provide information regarding what seeds they reproduce (Banzhaf 2017; Kotschi and Kaiser 2012; I-2). However, seed companies also take action, albeit via biological-technical rather than legal channels; they have been engaged in efforts toward the development of hybrid wheat varieties since the 1960s. Seed companies develop hybrid wheat varieties in cooperation with research projects financed by the German government and thus have access to large funds (Banzhaf 2017). Such investments are clearly aimed to support seed companies at farmers' expense; hybrid wheat varieties will likely double seed companies' turnover,

whereas wheat farmers would need to purchase new hybrid seeds for every sowing (Banzhaf 2017).

This cooperative arrangement, in which knowledge is a club good, has further adverse effects. It is difficult for breeders of ecological or local seed varieties to become part of the 'club'. For instance, the registration of new varieties is costly, and self-produced seeds are banned from trade (I-2). One rationale is that the *Bundessortenamt* (Federal Plant Variety Office) aims to clear up the seed market. In line with the logic of the market economy, only the most productive varieties are admitted in order to make it easier for farmers to plant seeds with a high yield (Brandl, Paula, and Gill 2018). This is a significant barrier for ecological seed varieties, which are consciously heterogenous in order to endow the plants with natural protection from challenges such as extreme weather events. Heterogenous seeds are not admitted in Germany or the EU and therefore cannot be sold (ibid.). Furthermore, although ecological breeders in Germany, are listed as companies, they work according to non-profit principles (Wirz, Kunz, and Hurter 2017).

2.4.   Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the dynamics of the German capitalist agri-food system with a focus on labour, land, and seeds. Exploring the distributional impacts and patterns of exploitation within the German agri-food system helped to refocus attention on capitalism rather than the market economy or market institutions.

The chapter found that the existing institutional arrangement contributes to the decapitalisation of peasants, although this does not equally apply to all production types and to all regions. That is, peasants are selling means of production in order to make a living, as the price of produce cannot cover long-term production costs. In particular, the analysis has shown that the combination of labour-intensive agricultural practices, low farm incomes (due to price pressures from wholesalers and insufficient or sometimes non-existent income support schemes), rising land prices, and expensive seeds make it increasingly difficult for peasant agriculture to persist. As a consequence, peasants are often obliged to sell off parts of their machinery or land and thereby resort to self-exploitation and slowly decapitalise their farms. At the same time, capital accumulation processes for different types of actors such as large farms with low labour-intensity, non-agricultural land-owners, and big seed and

agrochemical corporations are taking place. The three institutional clusters, namely labour, land and seeds, strongly condition these (de-)capitalisation processes.

The CSA movement can be understood as a *counter-movement* (McMichael 2009) to these capitalist dynamics and processes, in particular the vanishing of small-scale farming (see also **Chapter 3**). Consequently, the CSA movement promotes different values, logics and institutions, which will be explored in the subsequent chapters. Finally, the chapter highlighted several key actors within the German agri-food system—notably the AbL and the DBV—and their political positions, who seek to shape the institutional environment in which they operate. The relevance of these actors and whether they support or stand in diametrical opposition to the politics of the German CSA movement will be further discussed in **Chapters 4** and **5**.

3

BECOMING A COLLECTIVE, POLITICAL ACTOR

3.1. Introduction

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a direct, long-term 'partnership between a farm and consumers where the risks and rewards of farming are shared' (Bashford et al. 2013, 6). The model first emerged in Japan in the early 1970s, where it is known as *teikei* (Kondoh 2014). Subsequently, similar ideas were developed independently in Switzerland (Stapleton 2019). Since the turn of the millennium, the CSA model has spread significantly, particularly in Europe (Urgenci 2016b), and can currently be found on all continents (excluding Antarctica) under different labels and names such as *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* (Germany), *Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne* (AMAP, France), and *Voedselteams* (Belgium; Stapleton 2019). Common to CSA initiatives around the world is that they foreground principles of partnership, solidarity, locality, and close producer-consumer relations. CSA initiatives promote commitment to mutual support and risk-sharing between consumers and producers, respect the environment, relocalise the economy by shortening agri-food chains, and enable direct, horizontal, person-to-person contacts which contribute to building mutual trust (Urgenci, 2013).

Despite those widely shared principles, CSA is 'a tremendously flexible concept for a new consumer-farmer connection' (Urgenci 2016b, 5). Local CSA initiatives are remarkably diverse and organise according to various logics reflecting their immediate social and cultural context, motivations, and needs (Stapleton 2019; Jacques et al. 2019), resulting in commonalities and specificities across regions and countries. For instance, a particularity of CSA in the Netherlands is that most initiatives require self-harvest (Van Oers, Boon, and Moors 2018), whereas in Germany, CSA is known for the 'contributory' rounds to decide how much each member contributes financially per harvest share (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017).

Research on CSA has highlighted the coexistence of different models and types of initiatives, also within the same country (see e.g. Blättel-Mink et al., 2017, on 'socio-politically transformative', 'spiritual-communal', and 'pragmatic' initiatives in Germany; Bobulescu et al., 2018 on the differences between 'transitional' and 'ideal' initiatives; and Cristiano et al., 2021, on 'market-based' versus 'socially-transformative' initiatives). Nonetheless, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no research has explored how diverse models and definitions of CSA are collectively established, maintained, and enforced vis-à-vis changing political, economic, social, and cultural contexts.

We address this gap by drawing on the concept of boundary work developed in social movement theory, which describes the process through which a social movement defines and situates itself in time and space in relation to its context (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). Delineating one's boundaries entails the negotiation of shared 'core' principles or characteristics of a movement (Melucci 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1992) and the creation of in-group/out-group distinctions ('us/them') via membership criteria. Boundary work thereby creates a sense of togetherness essential for maintaining collective action over time (Rupp and Taylor 1999). The concept of boundary work is particularly insightful for the scope of this paper as it acknowledges that the process through which social movements define who 'we' are does not occur in a vacuum; it is relational and geographically, socially, politically, and culturally situated (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002). This includes the relationship to a movement's opponents and other social movements.

Specifically, we investigate the boundary work of CSA at the level of the national network organisation as the network's core function 'is to set the principles, define the names and set rules for the use of these names' (Jacques et al. 2019, 10). In other words, these networks provide a space where boundary work happens. As our analysis shows, the questions of who 'we' are, what counts as a CSA, and who can or should join the network are constantly negotiated within national CSA networks. This is partly occurring implicitly in everyday operations (e.g. in the form of discourse) and partly explicitly as part of discussions in designated meetings or working groups. National CSA networks can also enforce their boundaries by expelling members or refusing the entry of interested actors. Furthermore, in these networks, members, the majority of whom adhere to individual CSA initiatives, come together to exchange experiences, provide mutual support, and collectively negotiate the focus and political orientation of their movement, including their common goals and objectives.

In particular, this explanatory study aims to understand (i) how and via which mechanisms boundaries are produced and negotiated in the national CSA networks in Germany and Italy as well as (ii) the underlying tensions, challenges, and political trade-offs which emerge during boundary work over time. Germany and Italy were chosen due to the first author's ongoing engagement with the two networks.

For the first time in the scholarship on CSA, this article employs the theoretical lens of boundary work within social movement research. We thus provide an empirical contribution to the growing literature on CSA and advance the knowledge of how the CSA model is delineated and a collective 'we' is constructed differently across countries. By studying boundary work as a constantly ongoing process, we visualise the internal contestations within the networks, which are often made invisible by the seeming unity depicted in social mobilisations and the networks' official documents.

3.2. Conceptual Background: Boundary Work in Social Movements

In this study, we conceptualise the CSA networks in Germany and Italy as social movements. A social movement is 'a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity' (Diani, 1992, 13). CSA networks can be fruitfully analysed through this lens as CSA initiatives organise in networks, where a shared identity based on common goals and beliefs is negotiated and collective action undertaken.

Social movements engage in boundary work, the process through which a movement defines and situates itself temporally and spatially in relation to its context (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). Boundary work is fundamentally relational; it entails social movements defining and distinguishing themselves from 'the web of others in the contested social world' (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 111). This relationality makes boundaries a useful 'thinking tool' for social movement studies and social sciences more generally and for understanding movements in their contexts (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 169). Social movements can frame boundaries in opposition to the status quo, in relation to other social movements, and even vis-à-vis other groups or factions within the same movement (Flesher Fominaya 2019; Saunders 2008; Taylor and Whittier 1992). These symbolic boundaries are socially constructed and reflect the activists' views on their immediate surroundings, the world, and past experiences (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018). As Melucci (1995, 48) claims, 'in affirming its difference from the rest of the society, a movement also states its belonging to the shared culture of a society and its need to be recognized as a social actor'.

At a practical level, boundary work requires negotiating and defining a collective 'we', as well as making in-group/out-group distinctions by establishing requisites for joining the

movement (Melucci 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). In order words, it entails constructing protagonists and antagonists and delineating 'the boundaries between "good" and "evil"' (Benford and Snow 2000, 616; Silver 1997). Whilst establishing boundaries with antagonists proves relatively straightforward, the inclusion or exclusion of subgroups 'who might reasonably be considered members' poses a challenge to movements which can lead to internal disputes (Gamson 1997, 180). However, boundary work does not necessarily imply striving for narrow definitions and tight membership; it can also reflect a deliberate openness to difference, as exemplified by the 'anti-identitarian' stance of autonomous activists in the global justice movement or the British radical eco-movements (Fominaya 2010). In these cases, collective identity formation requires participatory assemblies and defines 'the spaces in opposition to institutional left practices' (ibid., 398).

Furthermore, in line with currents of social movement scholarship which stress the dynamic character of social movements (Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018), we understand boundary work as a reflexive *process* which may change over time. Movements do not only constantly (re)define their boundaries through everyday life interactions (Melucci 1995); boundaries themselves are also 'porous', enabling the moving in and out of activists and thereby altering the movements' identity and priorities (McCammon and Boutcher 2019).

Boundary work is essential for movements in several ways: (i) for mobilisation, indicating who can participate and who does not, (ii) for collective grievances, articulating to whom the claim is directed, and (iii) for group solidarity, marking and reinforcing personal ties (Gamson 1997). Along similar lines, Lamon and Molnár (2002) and Taylor and Whittier (1992, 11) argue boundary work can 'promote a heightened awareness of a group's commonalities' and thus create the feeling of belonging and similarity. As such, boundaries constitute a vital component of a movement's collective identity and are a crucial prerequisite for the emergence and persistence of movements over time (Flesher Fominaya 2019; Melucci 1995; Flesher Fominaya 2010; Taylor 1989). On an individual level, a movement's boundaries can help members revalue and find pride in their marginalised identities (Gamson 1997).

Nonetheless, boundary work can also create conflict and fragmentation within movements when different understandings and views about the desired boundaries cannot be reconciled (Fominaya 2010; Gamson 1997). Members may leave a movement if they no longer believe it represents them (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 292). Thus, to sustain collective action,

movements must navigate the challenge of clearly distinguishing themselves from oppressors, bystanders, and other social movements 'without suppressing difference' (ibid., 292).

Finally, studies of boundaries in the social sciences have identified and catalogued different mechanisms of boundary work, namely the 'activation, maintenance, transposition or the dispute, bridging, crossing and dissolution of boundaries' (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 187). The formulation of such abstract mechanisms is vital to move beyond a fragmented collection of case studies (ibid.). However, these mechanisms are only limitedly applicable to social movement studies as the authors draw on a multitude of boundary types ranging from spatial boundaries, national identity, and nation-building to professions, science, and knowledge as well as class, racial, and gender/sexual inequality (ibid.). In contrast, social movement scholars have largely abstained from systematising the various mechanisms through which boundaries of movements are produced (see Diani and Pilati 2011, on self-definitions;; and Flesher Fominaya 2010, on mechanisms of exclusion when movements distinguish 'us' from 'them').

3.3. Research design

This research explores and compares the boundary work of the two CSA networks in Germany and Italy. A comparison is relevant as both are embedded in distinctive contexts against which they define themselves. Whilst context can be conceptualised in manifold ways, we find it most useful to understand it as a relational phenomenon (Siméant-Germanos 2019), that is, an actor-centred account considering the relationships between (actors of) social movements, as well as their opponents, which resonates with the idea of boundary work. Below, we describe the case studies, data collection, and analysis of this study.

3.3.1. Case studies

The German and Italian CSA networks were chosen as case studies due to the first author's engagement with them. During an exploratory fieldwork phase, we noted that Germany and Italy are salient case studies for comparison due to marked differences in boundary work, such as the contrast between the officially adopted definitions of CSA. The following sections briefly present the two networks.

Germany

The CSA movement in Germany has a longstanding tradition, with the first initiative founded in 1988. The movement is organised via a formalised network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, launched in 2011. Ever since, the movement has grown considerably, from 12 to over 416 individual CSA initiatives today (with an additional 98 initiatives in the foundation).[10] With the movement's growth also comes remarkable diversity as each CSA initiative is lived and organised uniquely. For instance, initiatives can be farmers-led or community-led; organised as cooperatives, associations, or enterprises; engage in market gardening (i.e. producing vegetables) or farming (i.e. crops and animal products in addition to vegetables); means of production (such as land or machinery) can be rented or collectively or privately owned. The network provides a space of encounter and dialogue for people with different biographies and ideological backgrounds who are united by their lowest common denominator (i.e. their struggle for a paradigm change in agriculture and the persistence of smallholder farmers who currently find themselves confronted with the false choice of growing or being squeezed out of the market).

To become an official member, prospective candidates must complete an online form available on the website (www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org) and pay a yearly membership fee. There are three types of active members: (i) CSA initiatives, (ii) CSA initiatives being founded, and (iii) individual members. All members must formally accept the statute of the CSA network. Only approximately half of the over 400 CSA initiatives in Germany are official members of the CSA network.

Italy

The Italian CSA movement, known as *Rete Italiana delle CSA*, has a much shorter history. Most CSA initiatives in Italy have existed for less than four years, with the oldest dating back to 2013, whilst the national network was founded in 2018. Today, 15 initiatives are listed on the official webpage (http://www.reteitalianacsa.it), concentrated in northern and central Italy. Similarly to the German case, the Italian network is composed of diverse CSA initiatives which follow different organisational and legal models. Ideologically, the various CSA initiatives find inspiration in struggles for solidarity economy, food sovereignty, and the autonomous left.

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[10] Cited November 2022.

Several CSA initiatives have also built on previous alternative experiences in the territory, such as Solidarity Purchase Groups (in Italian, *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale, GAS*) or Solidarity Economy Districts (*Distretti di Economia Solidale, DES*). Most CSA initiatives are located in urban or peri-urban areas and are limited to vegetable and/or cereal production.

The Italian CSA network is informal and loosely structured and has no formal entry procedure. Thus far, the network has comprised representatives of local CSA initiatives and individuals who are part of other agri-food organisations (see **section 4.2.1**). No membership fee or statute is accepted before joining the network.

3.3.2. Data collection and analysis

We employ a diverse dataset comprising multiple sources collected between March 2020 and March 2022. The first author conducted 24 semi-structured in-depth interviews with members of German (nine) and Italian (six) CSA networks, as well as members of local CSA initiatives in the two countries (three in Germany, six in Italy). In the results, the interviews are referred to as G1–G12 and I1–I12, respectively. We adapted our sampling approach to the specific conditions in each country. For the German CSA network, we interviewed members who were, at the time, or had been before part of the board, council, or coordination of the national CSA network and consequently had a representational function of the network. This sampling approach was not applicable to the Italian network, which is more informally organised than the German one. Therefore, in Italy, we interviewed those members with the most active roles in the organisation of this network.

In both countries, we interviewed members of the most longstanding local CSA initiatives due to their historical overview of the development of the movement. Because of the travelling and social interaction restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, some interviews were conducted online. All interviews were held in the local language (German or Italian) and digitally recorded and transcribed. Further sources of data include research notes from participant observation of the semi-annual network meetings of the German (three) and Italian (two) CSA networks as well as web content (e.g. NWSL no date (a); Ökolandbau.de 2020; RICSA 2022), documents (e.g. NWSL, 2019, 2018, 2017; RICSA, 2021, 2019, 2018), videos (e.g. Farbe der Forschung, 2014), and radio features (Radio Dreyeckland 2014; Freie-Radios.net 2011). We performed a content analysis of all documents with the help of NVivo. For insights into the *process* of boundary work, we organised the data chronologically to

reconstruct the narratives of boundary work and inductively identify different phases which feature vital moments and debates within each network. Subsequently, by comparing the two networks, we abstracted more general mechanisms of boundary work.

3.4. Results

The following sections outline the boundary work and process of defining CSA in the German **(section 4.1)** and Italian **(section 4.2)** networks. To capture the dynamic character of boundary work, we present essential phases which have shaped discussions and debates about each network's boundary and identity over time. **Section 4.3** synthesises the results from both cases by proposing mechanisms of boundary work.

3.4.1. Germany

Since the foundation of the German CSA network in 2011, members have debated where the boundaries of the CSA model lie, and the notions of what can be considered a CSA initiative and who belongs to the network have changed (G2). We distinguish five phases of boundary work of the German CSA network which we identified during the analysis and present them in chronological order. Although these phases emerged at different times, they partly overlap and continue to be relevant today. For each phase, we first reconstruct the overall narrative, followed by a brief overview of the observed mechanisms of boundary work.

Alternative to the industrial, globalised agri-food system (2011)

In its early days, the network foremost defined itself and its goals in opposition to the industrial, globalised agri-food system (G5; G10; Blättel-Mink et al., 2017; Freie-Radios.net, 2011; see also Kraiß, 2008). The founding members of the network, primarily biodynamic CSA farmers and activists of the right-to-food and anti-globalisation movements, were profoundly concerned about dire conditions for farmers who found themselves forced to 'grow or perish' (i.e. they faced the false choice between growing and industrialising or being squeezed out of the market; G3, G7). To halt the loss of smallholder agriculture happening at an alarming rate, the network members agreed their main goal was to *'reinvent agriculture'* (G5) and initiate a paradigm change (G3; G7; G9), which entailed moving from the ongoing industrialisation and concentration of agriculture towards regional, (bio-)diverse, and responsible agriculture which secured the livelihood of small-scale farmers.

During the second encounter of the German CSA network in 2011 in Fulda, the founding members saw the need to establish a uniform name for the CSA model to gain visibility in Germany since CSA initiatives which predated the network had coined different terms and labels to denote the CSA model. The agreed-upon term, *Solidarische Landwirtschaft (Solawi),* literally translated means 'solidary agriculture' and intentionally alludes to the solidarity economy movement (Gruber 2020). The name is intended to emphasise that producers and members meet on equal terms and foregrounds the need of practising solidarity via risk-sharing schemes (G5; G12). The emphasis on risk-sharing is further formalised by specifying it as a core principle in the network statutes (NWSL 2011). Further principles include mutual trust, joint definition of production methods, joint financing of production and adequate wages for farmers, long-term and binding relationships, freedom from economic pressures, contribution to food sovereignty, and the support of the health of soils, waterbodies, plants, animals, and people (ibid.).

During this first phase, the network engaged in two mechanisms of boundary work. First, it started to create boundaries by (i) engaging in antagonist/protagonist framing in relation to the status quo (i.e. the globalised and industrial agri-food system) and (ii) specifying the network's statutes which consolidated a shared set of core principles. Second, it started the process of institutionalising CSA discursively in the German context by agreeing on a common name.

Demarcating CSA from other alternative agricultural models (2012–2014)
In the subsequent phase, the boundary work of the CSA network unfolded in relation to other alternative agricultural models, notably the biodynamic movement and box schemes. One interviewee recalled the need for a fundamental paradigm change *'was evident to everyone, and everyone knew that we can realise this change rather with [the] CSA [model] than any other model'* (G3). Whilst the first nine CSA initiatives in Germany originated from the biodynamic movement (G3; G10; also see Kraiß 2008), certified biodynamic and/or organic agriculture alone was not deemed sufficient to realise the envisioned paradigm change in agriculture. Therefore, during public events, such as an information event in 2012, and in official documents, the network repeatedly emphasised that the organic sector was not exempted from the globalised market and the concomitant pressures for farmers (NWSL 2012; no date (b)). One interviewee summarised the perks of the CSA model over organic and

biodynamic farming: whilst the latter have been subjected to market logic (the introduction of biodynamic produce in the assortments of supermarkets and discounters and the organic certification of large agribusinesses leave little doubt on that), the CSA model should remain inherently non-market-based (G10).

Box schemes, a form of direct marketing where customers pre-order a vegetable box on a weekly or monthly basis (Kraiß 2008), were another relevant reference point for the CSA movement. Consequently, the differences to box schemes were frequently highlighted within the network: Whilst box-scheme customers purchase single products, members or 'prosumers' of a CSA initiative commit for an entire year to finance the production, thereby providing planning security for producers. Moreover, in the case of box schemes, operators often sell produce from other farmers along with their own. Thus, contrary to the CSA model, box schemes do not enable risk-sharing and have less potential to build direct relationships and trust between consumers and producers (ibid.). Members debated the distinctions between CSA and box schemes during a workshop at the national network meeting in 2014, including the possibilities to institutionalise and enforce these differences (Radio Dreyeckland 2014). Referencing the experience of the French AMAP, the workshop participants discussed the benefits and disadvantages of having a more detailed charter and potential compliance mechanisms (ibid.). They saw a risk in overly defining and thereby restraining the German CSA movement. Simultaneously, they questioned how diversity could be celebrated within the network without turning CSA into an arbitrary model. Commenting on this tension, one member voiced that a young movement should observe and reflect on the direction it may develop before proposing a clear-cut definition (ibid.). Differentiating the CSA model from box schemes has remained relevant to today as the dissimilarities between the two models are reiterated on the network's webpage (NWSL no date (a)) and in its external communication with third parties (Ökolandbau.de 2020).

The German CSA network refined its boundaries in this second phase by extending the antagonist/protagonist framing to previously existing alternative agricultural models. Whilst mechanisms of institutionalisation and enforcement of the boundaries were discussed, they were not considered appropriate for a young, emerging movement.

Resisting capitalist (2012–2017) and far-right (2013–present) co-optation

Delineating the boundaries of CSA also served as a means to resist attempts at capitalist and far-right co-optation. Since its inception, the CSA network has been aware of the ubiquitous threat of capitalist co-optation. Several interviewees stated that the CSA movement, due to its growth, will attract increasingly more people with an entrepreneurial mindset (G6) or even mainstream actors in the food system, such as supermarkets: '*I mean, let this [movement] grow; let it be 2,000 CSA holdings. Then there will be assholes, apologies for the wording, that will be interested in using [it] for themselves'* (G5). The network's strategy to protect itself from capitalist co-optation relies on two pillars. First, already in 2012 (i.e. before any concrete attempts of co-optation were observed), the network protected the name *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* as well as its slogan, 'Sharing the harvest' (*sich die Ernte teilen*), and logo as a trademark. Ever since, the network has prevented people or organisations seeking to commercialise the CSA model from using the official name and logo. In the past, the network solved trademark infringements without taking legal measures. Instead, *Solawi* staff members contacted those responsible for the infringement such as a health food shop in southern Germany, explained what the CSA model entails, and asked them to no longer use the name *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* (G12). A second strategy by the CSA network to prevent co-optation is the development of a more detailed definition of what the CSA model comprises. During a workshop at the network meeting in autumn 2017, it was proposed that the definition of the key characteristics of the CSA model, such as renouncing profit maximisation, can effectively prevent big players in the agro-industry from co-opting the model (NWSL 2017).

Second, similar to other agri-food and peasant movements, CSA appeals to right-wing environmentalists and 'folkish' settlers due to an ideological overlap: the celebration of local food, environmental protection, autonomy, and (re-)connection to land (NWSL 2020). The danger of right-wing co-optation became tangible for the first time in 2013 when council members discovered a person with far-right ideologies in their midst due to a conflict unfolding in a local CSA initiative. The person adhered to a CSA initiative which had been (unknowingly) co-founded by people with left and people with folkish ideologies (G7; G11). When those with a left stance became wary of their co-founders due to their racist rhetoric, they left and founded a new CSA initiative. However, one co-founder who adhered to folkish

ideologies was actively engaged in the network as a single member. Consequently, the council initiated a process to develop a clear stance against the far right in the network's statute. Changing the statute was necessary to have a legal basis for excluding the far-right single member from the network and denying their CSA initiative membership (G5; G7). Furthermore, due to the trademark protection of CSA, the right-wing CSA initiative was no longer allowed to call itself *Solidarische Landwirtschaft* (G11).

Despite the exclusion of the member and the prohibition to use the label *Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, the case remained highly relevant: In the region of the excluded CSA, many people had begun to associate the abbreviation *Solawi*, which, contrary to the full name, is not protected by trademark,[11] with far-right ideologies. Some CSA initiatives nearby, which suffered from these stereotypes against the CSA model, organised a workshop during the network meeting in spring 2017. During this workshop, it became evident that the problem of far-right tendencies within CSA was not an isolated case as other participants also reported similar struggles in their initiatives. Due to the scope of the problem, a group of eight concerned members formed a voluntary working group in 2017 designated to fight against far-right co-optation and raise awareness on the issue within the network (G11).

Besides assisting CSA initiatives which encounter problems with members with far-right ideologies, the working group also asserted the incompatibility of CSA and far-right ideologies in the broader network by organising workshops in the annual network meetings and developing informational and educational material and active communication via the newsletter. For instance, since 2017, the webpage has featured a small banner, 'CSA against the far right' (*Solawi gegen rechts*) on all subpages, which quotes the statute's passage declaring the exclusion of far-right ideologies from the network. As such, the pop-up successfully signals to both existing and potential members that the network does not welcome people with far-right ideologies; at the time of writing, one initiative voluntarily cancelled its membership, and two others decided not to join the network based on its clear stance against the far right as well as positioning statements distancing itself from the

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[11] The abbreviation *Solawi* was already widely used in Germany when the network tried to protect it in 2016. Therefore, the network was unable to establish *Solawi* as a trademark.

protests against the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic[12] (G7; G11). Furthermore, in 2022, the working group launched a bottom-up, participatory writing process which seeks to develop a more comprehensive positioning against the far right, explaining why CSA far-right ideologies and other forms of discrimination are problematic and incompatible with CSA and explicitly positioning CSA as a *political* project. The process is open to all network members to ensure the values and ideas are shared beyond the working group.

Despite these efforts, the strategy of a clear delineation of the CSA model has limitations: Several initiatives which are inspired by the model but do not comply with the network statutes have started to use other related names which allude to CSA. By choosing a name similar to *Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, the initiatives try to capitalise on the recognition CSA has gained in Germany. As these initiatives are neither members of the network nor use the protected label, the network has little margin to influence them. For actors outside the CSA movement, the difference between these initiatives and the CSA model as defined by the German CSA network is not immediately apparent. Consequently, these initiatives risk leaving 'brown stains'[13] on the network's reputation.

In this third phase, the German CSA network engaged in three mechanisms of boundary work. It reinforced boundaries by developing a more detailed definition which specifies CSA as non-profit-oriented. It institutionalised the boundary by adjusting its internal organisation and particularly its membership criteria within the statute to highlight the incompatibility of CSA and far-right ideologies. Finally, it enforced legal boundaries (i.e. by protecting CSA as a trademark and expelling or refusing entry to members who do not comply with the statute).

Factionalism between agricultural holdings and community-supported enterprises (2019)
Whilst in the initial phases the network's relationship to other social movements and actors in the food system significantly shaped the process of defining CSA, internal disputes and factionalism dominated the boundary work within the network over time. This development was spurred by the changing composition of the network's members. From being founded primarily by (biodynamic) CSA farms (G3), the network evolved to being composed mostly of

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[12] The working group problematised these protests since they were attended by both people from the ecological and anthroposophical movements, including members of CSA initiatives, as well as by conspiracy theorists and right-wingers (AG Rechte Tendenzen 2020).
[13] In Germany, brown is the political colour of the far right, alluding to the uniforms worn by the paramilitary wing of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

vegetable-gardening initiatives, often organised as collectees or cooperatives. These two groups have different modus operandi in how they set up and run a CSA initiative, which, in their extremes and to use the words of one interviewee, can be stylised into, on the one hand, '*patriarchal hierarchical family farms'* which farm on privately owned land and, on the other, grassroots projects which experiment with '*common property…as well as collective decision-making processes'* (G7). Building on this, they also have different visions of what the network stands for: whether it should fight solely for safeguarding peasant agriculture or become more broadly '*an actor of a social-ecological transformation'* (G4).

In particular, the factionalism was triggered in March 2019, when the co-founder of the oldest CSA cooperative in Germany organised a meeting with other cooperatively organised CSA initiatives, envisioning establishing their own network. The group of, at the time, 10 cooperatively organised CSA initiatives did not feel represented (or appealed to) by the CSA network's emphasis on peasant agriculture (G4). However, when approached by the CSA network, they decided to unite forces and not have two competing movements. Subsequently, the cooperatively organised CSA initiatives were integrated in the form of a working group in the existing network (G5). This integration resulted in new impulses and ideas which substantially altered the network's vision and definition of CSA (see 4.1.5.), albeit not without fierce discussions during internal meetings and over the mailing list. Especially some members of the older generation found it difficult to accept that the network was becoming less of a peasant struggle. One founding member complained, '*All of this [the activities of the network] run under the label of solidarity **agriculture** [Solidarische Landwirtschaft]. If you look at the holdings which take part of the network and which do agriculture, of 400 [CSA] holdings, those which I consider do agriculture are 25 to 30 holdings; the others are vegetable gardens… The initial impetus [of the network, i.e. safeguarding peasant agriculture] is no longer alive*' (G5). The interviewee continued warning against loosening the focus on peasant agriculture as this would further weaken the network's capacity to appeal and speak to traditional agricultural farmers, an important target group. In fact, the network has been relatively unsuccessful in mobilising traditional family farms (G2). Whilst there are undoubtedly practical challenges which hinder traditional farms from becoming a CSA (e.g. it proves significantly more challenging to transition an existing farm to the CSA model than starting a market garden as a CSA [G3, G5]), one interviewee believed the

main reason for the lack of CSA farms is the closed '*mindset of the peasant clientele*' who are not willing to experiment with a '*radically transformative economic model. Let alone commonly owned property or possibilities of participation of "city folk"*' (G5).

Moreover, discourse was central to the heated disputes and the internal boundary work, including which words the network should use in official documents, talks, and internal documentation to denote the CSA initiatives. The choice of words ultimately enables or constrains whether current and prospective members can identify with and feel part of the movement: '*Under these circumstances [if the network was framed exclusively, or at least primarily, as a peasant struggle], as an unofficial representant of the CSA cooperatives, I cannot explain to them [cooperatively organised CSAs] why they should join this network. No cooperative understands themselves as peasants. If in this network [there] is only place for peasant agriculture, which place do we have?*' (G4).

To settle this dispute, a representative of the cooperatively organised CSA initiatives proposed to replace 'peasant agriculture' [German: *bäuerliche Landwirtschaft*] with 'smallholder agriculture' [German: *kleinstrukturierte Landwirtschaft*], hoping both sides could identify with this supposedly more neutral term. However, to older generation members, it was fundamental to explicitly refer to peasant agriculture. To them, peasantry is a political category with a longstanding international history of resistance (personal communication, 2 February and 26 September 2022). Peasant agriculture then is the antithesis of industrialised agricultural production and therefore perceived as a powerful slogan (personal communication, 26 September 2022). Thus, in the end, the network decided not to use the term 'smallholder agriculture' and instead explicitly name both 'peasant holdings' and 'community-supported enterprises' in its documents and on its webpage (G4; NWSL no date (a)). The factionalism has become less pronounced since some members with a strong peasant identity exited the network in early 2021 and due to efforts to end the conflict and shift focus to the 'integrative capacity' of the network. Nonetheless, the issue still resurfaces on different occasions.

Finally, during the fourth phase, we observed a process of de-institutionalising the boundaries of CSA which manifested in the form of discourse (peasant versus community-supported enterprises) and internal organisation (formation of the working group for cooperatively organised CSA initiatives).

Collectively defining CSA (2019–2021)

In November 2019, the network embarked on a collective and participatory process to define the core principles of the CSA model (G2). The discussions during that process reflected and built on earlier debates within the network, uniting themes from the previous phases.

The participatory process was initiated to delineate the CSA model from other alternative agricultural models and support the identity formation of the network, which due to its rapid growth in membership, needed to reaffirm its boundaries (NWSL no date (a); 2019). Furthermore, defining the core principles of CSA was expected to create a consistent image of the movement for the general public (NWSL 2018a) and was considered necessary to be eligible for state funding in the future (G8).

The elaboration of the collective definition occurred in different spaces: input was collected from the movement during the council and semi-annual network meetings, and a working group was established to develop text blocs. Specifically, collective discussions on the boundaries of CSA were organised during two network meetings in 2018 and 2019 (NWSL 2018a; 2019). During the workshops, which were open to all interested participants in the network meetings, the desirability of adopting a narrow as opposed to a broad definition was discussed, followed by elaboration of a first set of 'soft' criteria. Based on experiences of other CSA movements in Europe, one member remarked that the Swiss CSA movement encountered difficulties when it adopted a very narrow definition and that the broad but inclusive approach of the French AMAP movement may be a better role model for the German network. Additionally, members debated the relationship between *Solawi* and the broader international movement, postulating that *Solawi* extends beyond CSA: 'While every *Solawi* is a CSA, not every CSA is a *Solawi'* (NWSL 2018a, 16).

The collective process consolidated a shared, solid understanding of the core principles of a CSA whilst also inevitably leading to contestations amongst different factions of the network (see also **4.1.4**; G2; G7). To ease these tensions and ensure inclusivity, the statement's first sentence explicates that CSA 'means diversity', acknowledging that this diversity is both a challenge and a strength (NWSL no date (a)). Although finding and foregrounding commonalities amongst heterogenous actors is a laborious and continuous endeavour (G3), it is also a strength to unite people with distinct ideological backgrounds who otherwise seldomly interact (G1).

A long internal reflection process lasting approximately two years was necessary to derive a joint definition, which was approved by the council in late 2021. Along with fundamental questions on the strategic orientation of the network (e.g. Who do we envision joining the movement? How can we reach a broad audience without losing our core values? What do we talk about: [peasant] agriculture, collectives, gardening?), practical questions were raised (e.g. What do we mean by *sustainable* agricultural practises? What is a fair wage?; G2).

During the participatory process, the network identified seven central pillars of CSA:

1. Joint financing of the agricultural production and sharing of risks and harvest
2. Recognition and appreciation amongst all parties involved
3. Direct relations with and involvement of members
4. Transparency regarding the annual budget and production methods
5. Future-proof agricultural practises
6. Good working conditions and social security for farmers
7. Tolerance within the network and exclusion of far-right ideologies (NWSL no date (a))[14]

Each principle is explained on the network's webpage, including 'optional' requirements (NWSL no date (a)). For instance, contributory rounds, a widely adopted system in Germany whereby members financially contribute what they can afford as long as production costs are covered, are encouraged but not mandatory. The network abstained from defining more than these seven principles to provide room for the diversity of CSA initiatives (G2). Consequently, the definition does not stipulate forms of member involvement such as their participation in the fields and their role in decision-making processes, nor does it exclude producers who engage in forms of marketing other than the CSA, as long as they are transparent about it.

At the time of writing, the network does not verify or assess the initiatives' adherence to the core principles. One interviewee clarifies, '*CSA would just become a strong certificate, which they [CSA initiatives] could not lose under any circumstances. […] I don't think the network strives to bind people via restraints or formal requirements*' (G2).

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[14] However, the definition is not considered final in any way; rather, reflecting the idea that a movement's boundaries keep evolving and that defining CSA is a (continuous) process, it is merely considered as the current state of affairs (G3).

During the fifth phase, the German network engaged in (re-)creating the boundary by starting a deliberate and participatory process to formulate an inclusive definition. This boundary was institutionalised through discourse, particularly by framing CSA as a diverse struggle.

3.4.2. Italy

The following section presents three phases which emerged from the data analysis and were essential to the boundary work of the Italian CSA network.

Ideological roots of the Italian CSA movement (2011–2018)

To understand the ongoing boundary work of CSA in Italy, it is helpful to first explore the ideological roots of the movement and situate it in the strong and longstanding Italian alternative food network, comprised of farmers' markets, GAS, bio districts, DES, and food self-provisioning in rural areas (I10). Particularly relevant for CSA in Italy is the GAS movement, a consumer-initiated and collectively organised form of direct provisioning of ethically and sustainably sourced products which is ideologically rooted in the Solidarity Economy paradigm (Fonte 2013; Grasseni 2014b). The GAS movement is well established and widely recognised in Italy (ibid.) and was for some time conflated with or regarded as the Italian form of CSA (Urgenci 2016b; Medici, Canavari, and Castellini 2021).

During the last decade, GAS was repeatedly criticised for becoming conventionalised—notably also by its own members and supporters; concomitantly, a search for other models which better embody the values of Solidarity Economy started. In particular, during an encounter with the Italian Solidarity Economy network (Rete Italiana di Economia Solidale, RIES) in 2016,[15] one of the founders addressed the present 'gasistas' (members of GAS initiatives), claiming an orientation towards the community dimension was necessary to counter the stagnation of the movement (I6). The meeting was attended by one person, who—inspired by the talk—later founded a CSA initiative. Further members who are presently part of the Italian CSA network have strong ties to RIES and therefore were influenced by the discussions regarding which alternative models are the most promising from a Solidarity Economy perspective (I7; I11; I6). Moreover, various CSA initiatives, including the first Italian CSA, developed from an existing GAS and/or DES (I6; I7; I11) as a

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[15] Until 2020, the official name was Tavolo RES (Roundtable of the Italian Solidarity Economy network).

deliberate decision to strengthen their ideological roots within the solidarity economy or stress their explicit opposition to the GAS model (I3).

In addition to the GAS and solidarity economy movement, many initiatives form part of agricultural rural community and food sovereignty movements (I1) such as Genuino Clandestino, a network of community and peasant movements promoting autonomy and resistance to industrial agriculture (I2) and the Italian Rural Association (Associazione Rurale Italiana, ARI; I3). Moreover, Italy's second-oldest and best-known CSA, which functions as a reference point for other Italian CSA initiatives, is ideologically rooted in the food sovereignty paradigm (I12): 'We are part of CampiAperti [a local association for food sovereignty] because we recognise our right to food sovereignty' (Arvaia no date).

During this first phase, whilst the Italian CSA network had not yet been officially founded, future members were already engaged in protagonist/antagonist framing (i.e. framing CSA as an essential actor in the solidarity economy movement and affirming its difference to the GAS movement).

Adoption of the international charter (2018)

The first meeting of the Italian CSA network occurred in Bologna in 2018. Besides the different CSA initiatives, it was also attended by several members of Urgenci, the international CSA network, who, to start the meeting, presented the European charter of CSA, also known as the Ostrava declaration (RICSA 2018). This framed the meeting significantly and led to an explicit discussion of the boundaries of the network: How can common denominators be singled out without falling back to rigid definitions? As part of this discussion, the relationship between CSA and GAS was raised. It was proposed that creating a network could make the specificities of CSA in opposition to other alternative models of the solidarity economy, such as GAS, recognisable (RICSA 2018). Contrary to the experience of the German network, finding an Italian term was not necessary since the acronym CSA in Italian can be translated literally as *Comunità a Supporto dell'Agricoltura*.

One year later, in 2019, during the second annual meeting, the Italian CSA network again debated the European charter of CSA and decided to formally subscribe to it. The charter defines CSA as '*a direct partnership based on the human relationship between people and one or several producer(s), whereby the risks, responsibilities, and rewards of farming are shared,*

through a long-term, binding agreement' (Urgenci 2016a) and specifies the core principles of CSA initiatives. On its recently constructed webpage, the Italian network outlines the following principles of a CSA, which were adopted from the Ostrava declaration:

1. Responsible care for the soil, water, and seeds
2. Food as a common good
3. Support of peasant/smallholder agriculture
4. Fair working conditions
5. Community-building around food
6. Diffusion of trust relationships (RICSA 2022)

In the official documentation of its annual meeting in 2019, the network praised the 'strength and importance' of the definition, particularly with regard to distinguishing CSA from any other form of market relation (RICSA 2019). However, the early adoption of an already existing charter can also be understood as a pragmatic decision; the Italian network hardly had the capacity and time to formulate its own definition (I3).

According to many members of the network, the charter should be understood as a guideline which explains *'in general what [a CSA] is or, rather, what it should be'* (I4, see also I5). The network can then be a space where initiatives can constructively confront each other and inquire *'"Why don't you try to do also this? This would get you even closer [to the CSA model]." Or if they don't do it [ask]: "Why don't you do it? Why is this not feasible in your current condition?"'* (I5). However, the potential of the charter to shape the understanding of the boundaries of CSA in Italy more broadly was, at least until recently, very limited. The charter is barely known to those initiatives which self-define as a CSA but are not part of the network for a simple reason: until the webpage launch in December 2021, the document was not publicly available (I1; I2; I4).

In this second phase, the network created boundaries by importing the pre-existing definition of the European charter. However, due to a lack of external communication, the institutionalisation of the boundaries only occurred a couple years later.

Different interpretations coexist (2019–2022)
The charter, especially compared to the German network's core principles, only loosely defines CSA and leaves room for interpretation (I1; I2; I3; I4; I5). Consequently, different

readings of the charter coexist, spurring internal discussions (e.g. Must an initiative exit all market relations and refrain from having other income sources? What is a reasonable size for a CSA to ensure community-building? [I7; I8; I9]). Additionally, one interviewee, taking the example of the second principle, food as common good, questioned whether all concepts in the charter are known to existing and prospective members of the CSA network: '*People do not even know what food as a common good means, at least the vast majority'* (I1).

Despite the formal adoption of the charter, the interviews revealed a selective reading of which aspects are considered essential to the CSA model. Several interviewees highlighted co-financing and risk-sharing amongst consumers and producers as key (I6; I7; RICSA 2021). Others foregrounded direct partnerships as a crucial dimension of the CSA model (I1). Depending on which aspect of the charter is considered essential, members derive different conclusions as to which initiative can legitimately claim to be a CSA. Those who view risk-sharing as central typically stress that CSA should be understood in a narrow sense. As such, several network members referred to those CSAs which fully practise risk-sharing as 'true' or 'pure' CSAs (I7; I8) whilst criticising that there are many initiatives which wrongly self-label as a CSA (I3, I6). One interviewee explains, '*They are an agricultural holding where you go on a Saturday morning to get your groceries. And they say, 'We are a CSA'. No, you are not a CSA'* (I6). A related critique is that the label 'CSA' is used in an '*inflationary manner'*. In other words, it is used without referring to a defined model but to the literal meaning of community-supported agriculture: '*Because within their possibilities/means, many communities support the agriculture'* (I6; see also I3).

In contrast, centring direct partnerships allows for envisioning various forms of relationships between producers and consumers and therefore aligns with a broad understanding of CSA (I1). The advantage of a broad understanding would then enable (re-)imaging CSA beyond risk-sharing (i.e. what could the consumer-producer relationship mean in the context of Italy?). One interviewee argued that a broader interpretation could strengthen the movement by making it more accessible to, for instance, peasant farmers, who thus far have shied away from joining the network (I1). Building on this, they explained that a shift in discourse would be necessary to enable the identification of peasant farmers with CSA. Many CSA initiatives allude to their producers as 'producing members' instead of using terms such as 'peasants' or 'farmers' (I1). This call for a broader definition reflects a development within the international

network, Urgenci, to open to a wider range of actors and initiatives. As such, Urgenci has started to speak of 'local solidarity-based partnerships for agroecology' additional to CSAs to allow the movement to be more inclusive (I1).

Whether members prefer a broad or narrow definition of CSA correlates considerably with their ideological roots. Network members with strong ties to the solidarity economy movement are concerned with promoting a strict definition of CSA, whilst other members have a looser approach to defining the boundaries of CSA since they do not seek to establish it in relation or opposition to a pre-existing movement. In the view of the former, recognising the differences between a CSA and other alternatives models is vital to understand in which direction the movement is heading (I6), which currently seems to be lacking: '*I think that many don't even know for sure what a GAS entails, they don't know anything about different models, and neither do they know about the solidarity economy*' (I7). However, not all network members agree with the reading of CSA as an evolution of GAS. Instead, one member specifies that only certain aspects of CSA are superior to GAS (I2), whereas another interviewee asserts the two models are not very different (I4).

Nonetheless, there is consensus that the vagueness of the current charter is problematic as it does not provide clear guidance. During the national network meeting in June 2022, the Italian network therefore decided to form a working group which specifies the principles of CSA (personal communication, 28 September 2022). Whilst building on the already existing charter, the working group envisions defining more tangibly what the different principles (e.g. fair working conditions) entail.

This final phase was marked by the difficulty of the Italian network to institutionalise its boundaries and the concomitant coexisting discourses.

3.4.3. Synthesis: Comparing boundary work in Germany and Italy

Our findings reveal at least three different mechanisms of boundary work: (i) creating, (ii) (de-)institutionalising, and (iii) enforcing the boundary (Table 3.1.). Our two case studies engaged, to different extents and in various forms, in these mechanisms. Both networks partook in boundary creation via protagonist and antagonist framing, yet they took different approaches to adopting a definition: the German network deliberately developed its own definition and adjusted it over time, whilst the Italian network imported the pre-existing European definition

of CSA. We see further differences in the institutionalisation of their boundaries. The German network has institutionalised its boundaries in the form of discourse, its internal organisation, and communication. At the same time, the German CSA network showcases how existing boundaries can be challenged (i.e. deinstitutionalised) when the composition of the network's members changes over time and, with it, the discourse. In Italy, institutionalisation proved difficult due to a lack of internal coherence: different discourses and interpretations of the definition continue to coexist. Furthermore, their informal organisation hindered the institutionalisation of the boundaries. For instance, not having a webpage until 2021 impeded sharing the definition beyond those already active within the network. Finally, only the German network has started to enforce its boundaries by creating legal boundaries based on which they could prohibit the use of the trademark *Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, as well as expelling and refusing the entry of members in line with the network's statutes. Being formally organised was essential to create legal boundaries and have the ability to enforce them. In contrast, the Italian network has no will nor means to enforce a definition.

Table 3.1.: Overview of mechanisms of boundary work.

	Mechanisms of boundary work	Empirical examples	
		Germany	Italy
Creating the boundary	Deliberating on a definition of CSA	(Participatory) development of own definition and positioning statements	/
	Importing a definition of CSA	/	Adopting the European CSA charter
	Protagonist/antagonist framing	Protagonist: CSA as an actor in the agricultural transition; Antagonist: industrial, large-scale agriculture; alternative agricultural movements	Protagonist: CSA as an actor in the solidarity economy; Antagonist: GAS movement (for parts of the network)
(De-)Institutionalising the boundary	Developing discourse	New term: *Solidarische Landwirtschaft*; Coexisting discourse: CSA farms versus community-supported enterprises	Adopting the existing term *CSA*; Coexisting discourses: narrow versus broad definition
	Organising (internally)	Formal network: creating formal membership criteria (adhering to the network's statute); council as a legitimised organ of the network to take decisions on boundary work; Creation of subgroups/factions	Informal network: no formal membership criteria or structure
	Communicating (internally and externally)	Sharing the definition on the website and during network meetings; CSA-against-the-far-right button; circulating positioning statements	Sharing the definition during network meetings and since 2021 on the website
Enforcing the boundary	Creating legal boundaries	Protecting the CSA slogan and logo as a trademark; embedding the incompatibility of CSA and the far-right in the network statute	/
	Prohibiting use of the trademark	Prohibiting use of the CSA slogan and logo	/
	Expelling noncompliant members	Excluding a member with far-right ideologies	/
	Refusing entry to noncompliant members	Refusing entry of far-right initiatives	/

3.5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study comparatively analysed how the German and Italian CSA networks have (re-)defined the core principles and boundaries of the CSA model over time. Drawing on the concept of boundary work from social movement theory allowed us to understand the construction of a collective 'we' as a relational process which unfolded at times in opposition to and at times inspired by other already existing movements in the country as well as the international CSA movement. To emphasise the processual character of boundary work, we reconstructed the narratives and key moments of both movements during which they framed antagonist and protagonists and negotiated the core principles of CSA and who should be part of the networks. Moreover, this study distinguished essential mechanisms through which boundaries are produced (i.e. creating, institutionalising, and enforcing the boundary) and thereby provided a first attempt at systematising them for social movement scholarship.

Below, we present three practical challenges around boundary work which we have identified in the German and Italian CSA networks. First, we discuss the distinction between boundary work as a process and a product as well as a potential misalignment between the two. Then we unpack the implications of choosing a narrow or broad definition for the membership of the CSA networks. We end with reflections on how the internal heterogeneity within CSA networks, particularly the coexistence of members with food sovereignty and alternative economies backgrounds, presents a challenge during boundary work.

3.5.1. Boundary work: process or product?

Social movement scholars have extensively debated whether boundary work, particularly collective identity, should be studied as a process or a product; whilst the former view it as an intra-movement phenomenon, the latter refer to the shared attributes of a movement which are recognisable by movement insiders and externals (Flesher Fominaya 2010; Melucci 1995; Snow 2001). This study approached boundary work as a process, enabling us to look beyond the seeming unity produced in official documents and visible moments of mobilisation. Our analysis instead reveals 'the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations' (Fominaya 2010, 398) occurring in CSA networks, such as the decision to adopt a narrow or broad definition (**section 5.2**) and the struggles related to dual affiliation (**section 5.3**). A process lens which views boundary work as relational was also instrumental for reconstructing the interactions with and historical influence of other related agri-food

movements and actors in shaping how the networks frame antagonists and protagonists, define the principles of CSA, and formulate membership criteria.

Moreover, the analytical distinction between process and product allowed us to detect misalignments between internal disputes and the reproduced definitions in both the German and Italian CSA networks. Our results show that the formally adopted definition and discourse do not necessarily reflect the interactions, collective discussions, and internal reflections within the networks. To some extent, this misalignment is unavoidable due to the dynamic nature of boundary work and movements themselves. For instance, the case of the German CSA network shows that the growth of a movement (and the concomitant change of the member composition) can foster and exacerbate misalignments, which manifested in the factionalism between agricultural holdings and community-supported enterprises (**section 4.1.1**). To productively address misalignments, movements need an openness to question and challenge established boundaries, despite the possibility of conflict. In other words, they must approach boundary work as a (continuous) process which requires a high degree of reflexivity (Gamson 1991; Flesher Fominaya 2010).

The Italian case shows a similar misalignment. Drawing on the experience of the Italian CSA network, which adopted the European charter early on, we observe that 'importing' a pre-existing definition (boundary) as a product increases the chances of misalignment because it precedes and shortcuts the process of collectively establishing those boundaries (**section 4.2.2**). In response to this misalignment, the Italian network is currently reworking its definition and key principles of CSA, allowing it the possibility to translate and adapt the general European charter to its own specific context. As argued by various scholars, such translation and adaptation are prerequisites for a successful diffusion of social movements across countries (Shawki 2013; Soule and Roggeband 2019).

3.5.2. Persisting tension: broad versus narrow definition

When movements engage in boundary work, they face an unavoidable dilemma: should they define themselves narrowly or broadly, and what benefits or challenges does this choice entail, in particular regarding the exclusion/inclusion of potential members? These questions have been extensively discussed not only by the Italian and German CSA networks but also by social movement scholars more generally. The broader the definition and identity of a movement, the more inclusive and diverse is its membership (Flesher Fominaya, 2010;

Mansbridge, 1986). Conversely, a narrow definition promises ideological purity and reflects a strong sense of idealism whilst possibly excluding potential members (Mansbridge, 1986). Similarly, based on the UK CSA network, which consciously adopted a convergent identity to be open to new members, Bonfert (2022b, 506) has warned that refraining from promoting a specific model may dilute 'CSA's non-commercial and ecological ambitions'. This concern is echoed by several scholars who foreground only those 'ideal' (Bobulescu et al. 2018; Feagan and Henderson 2009) or 'socially transformational' (Cristiano et al. 2021) CSA initiatives which decommodify food, cultivate strong prosumer relations, and are inherently non-market based, in other words, those which embody 'a radical critique of capitalism' (Earles 2007, 5).

Striving for purity and adopting and enforcing a narrow definition would, however, certainly exclude many CSA initiatives from the networks. Therefore, the German network has chosen an alternative approach which emphasises the diversity of the CSA model and seeks to accommodate different factions within the network, in line with what Bonfert (2022b) calls 'pragmatic pluralism'. Ultimately, it is a deliberate strategy of the network seeking to connect to a range of potential members with at times conflicting ideas. In other words, to spread the CSA model in Germany, it is necessary to adopt a definition open enough to engage a diversity of actors and narrow enough to prevent co-optation.

In contrast, in Italy, whilst formally a broad definition has been adopted, different opinions exist on whether a broad or narrow definition would be best-suited for the movement. The aspiration of parts of the Italian network, namely those who have strong ties to the solidarity economy movement and see the added value of CSA being an evolution of GAS, envision a narrow definition. Others prefer a broad definition for a twofold reason. First, since CSA is a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy, the young movement may benefit from taking time to observe what CSA could mean in the context of Italy without already being trapped in a narrow definition. Second, a broad definition may appeal to peasants and small-scale farmers who, at least in the context of Italy, do not yet feel attracted to the CSA model.

A compromise between adopting a narrow and broad definition could consist of following the example of Urgenci and AMPI (https://www.asociaceampi.cz), the Czech network organisation of local food initiatives. Whilst both networks seek to strengthen and empower local food initiatives more broadly, they develop specific projects and strategies to facilitate exchange between existing CSA initiatives and promote the creation of new CSAs (Krcilkova

et al. 2016; Urgenci 2016b). This way, a narrow definition of CSA can be implemented whilst simultaneously supporting other forms of alternative agriculture.

Contrasting the German and Italian networks helps us better understand different approaches to implementing a broad definition. In the Italian context, due to having adopted a broad definition, ambiguity persists concerning what counts as a CSA, who can enter the network, and how CSA initiatives should be organised. Thus, the diversity of members is not a deliberate decision but a result of not having clearly established the boundaries of the CSA network. In contrast, a broad but sharply bounded definition, as adopted by the German CSA network, is purposeful: it grants access to various types of members, allowing for inclusivity and diversity within the network, whilst explicitly articulating who is not part of the network (e.g. those with far-right ideologies). Therefore, the clearly delineated definition, combined with the creation of legal boundaries, protects the German CSA network from attempts at far-right and capitalist co-optation (see also Raridon et al., 2020, on boundary maintenance in response to attempts of co-optation of the grass-fed livestock movement in Texas, USA).

Indeed, when considering the historical link between the far right, the natural environment, and environmental protection in Germany, the *Solawi* network's necessity to defend its boundaries against the far right is hardly surprising (Forchtner 2020; Uekötter 2014). Our results show the Italian network has not explicitly demarcated itself from the far right. Does this mean that in Italy there is no immediate threat from the far right? Contrary to Germany, in Italy the environment has not been a prominent topic for far-right parties and movements (except CasaPound, an Italian neo-fascist movement; Bulli, 2020). Nonetheless, the Italian CSA network may wish to carefully monitor to what extent CSA can become attractive to these ideologies. The rise in support of the far right, which culminated in the election of the right-wing coalition led by the party *Fratelli d'Italia* ('Brothers of Italy'), presents a severe threat to agricultural grassroots movements. In particular, the decision of Italy's government to rename the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies to Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty shows the far right is attempting to co-opt ideas close to the CSA movement such as food sovereignty, which is then interpreted as autarchy and food nationalism (Giusberti 2022; Sferini 2022).

3.5.3. Navigating the dual affiliation of CSA

Judith Hitchman (2014; 2019), the renowned food sovereignty activist and president of the global CSA network, Urgenci, has argued that CSA, by definition, has a 'dual affiliation': to the food sovereignty and peasant movement(s), on the one hand, and to the alternative economies movement and particularly solidarity economy on the other. Drawing on her experience of political advocacy work for the CSA movement, she noted that despite overlaps, the bridge-building the CSA movement attempts between food sovereignty and alternative economies 'is no easy job' (Hitchman 2014, 13; 2019). Our empirical insights on boundary work in CSA networks show these difficulties not only emerge at the level of political representation but also when a shared sense of 'we-ness' is negotiated. Since the CSA networks source a large share of their members from people engaged in other spaces and movements, notably from agricultural/peasant or alternative economies movements, power struggles over how the CSA movement should define and distinguish itself from other actors can arise.

Particularly in the context of Germany, one central point of conflict between members of the CSA networks who adhere to different sides of the dual affiliation is language (e.g. which words are appropriate to denote CSA initiatives?). Language is a key mechanism for institutionalising the boundaries of the networks as words and concepts determine who does or does not identify with the movement now and in the future.

As elaborated in **section 4.1.4**, in Germany, those from a food sovereignty background who identify as peasants wish to speak of CSA as an agricultural struggle. They depend on the farm income for a livelihood and therefore experience the hardship of farming first-hand, particularly the prevailing competition amongst farmers due to liberalisation and unification of the European agricultural market, the discrepancy between production cost and prices for the produce, and a lack of recognition for farming (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017). To them, using the term 'peasantry' is therefore a political act (see also AbL 2015). Whilst in everyday language, the term 'peasant' is pejoratively connotated, evoking some sort of backwardness, they take inspiration in the international food sovereignty movement, which resignified the term and uses it to reaffirm a collective peasant identity (Desmarais 2008; Edelman 2013). At the core of the peasant identity is 'a deep attachment to [rural] culture' (Desmarais 2008, 141) and pride in being a farmer (Desmarais 2008; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). Actors

who locate themselves primarily within alternative economy movements are often disconnected from the struggles of farming, specifically from the 'historical and contemporary oppression of peasants' (Edelman 2013, 13). Even practitioners of gardening collectives or cooperatives often do not identify as farmers or peasants as many of them are newcomers to gardening. These newcomers, who are often highly educated (see Jarosz, 2011, on CSA in the United States; and Monllor and Fuller, 2016, on newcomers to farming in Europe) consciously chose gardening as a second career path, seeking to attribute meaning to their professional lives (Jarosz 2011). Experimenting with alternative agricultural practises is often part of a political and intellectual project, which is reflected in their discourse ('community-supported enterprises' in Germany or 'producing members' in Italy). Thus, the quarrel over language in the CSA networks points to the profound and challenging issue of privilege and inequality. Contrary to farmers who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, the often well-educated actors of the alternative economies movement can enter and leave gardening or farming as 'they and their partners can seek other opportunities' (Jarosz 2011, 315).

Finally, the power struggle between the different factions teaches us that boundary work unfolds in an interplay with individual members' personal histories and identities (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Snow 2001; Flesher Fominaya 2010). Whilst these negotiations are bound to be conflictual (see, e.g., Gamson, 1997, on the conflicts within sex and gender movements), they are particularly challenging to navigate when the various positions are underpinned by privilege and historically grown power relations which are reflected in the individual identities of different movement members, such as members with a longstanding peasant identity (e.g. What does it mean to enter discussions of who 'we' are as partners on equal footing when differences in privilege are not collectively unpacked?). We argue that the German CSA network could benefit from reflecting on these different positions of privilege during its boundary work as a means to create a better understanding of the different coexisting positions and consolidating their integrative capacity (i.e. negotiating a shared 'we-ness' in which different personal and collective identities have space).

4

ACTING POLITICALLY VIA ADVOCACY WORK

4.1. Introduction

That we were mentioned in the government agreement of the grand coalition, that was an incredible success! [The network] was the only agricultural association that was [explicitly] mentioned in the government agreement. Just imagine! And I would say that many people [within the network] didn't get that. And what follows from this, namely, that we could have built on this. (Interview #1)

In 2018, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft*,[16] the national German network of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA), a growing, but still considerably small and niche agricultural grassroots movement, was mentioned in the national-level government agreement: *'Within the scope of lighthouse projects, we want to promote and support best practice examples of regional value chains and marketing, e.g. the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft' (CDU/CSU and SPD 2018).*

The promise of institutional support for the German CSA network (hereafter: *Solawi* network) appeared remarkable since the Ministry for Food and Agriculture was led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a conservative party whose agricultural policy caters largely to the interests of the German Farmers' Association (Deutscher Bauernverband e. V. – DBV) (Feindt 2009). The DBV, representing 90% of all farmers in Germany, advocates mainly for productivist measures that benefit large and medium-sized farms (Feindt 2009). In contrast, the *Solawi* network was born as a bottom-up response to the industrial, globalised agri-food system, which forces smallholders to grow and industrialise, as otherwise they are squeezed out of the market (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017). Seeking to bring about a paradigm change towards a regional, ecologically sound, and socially responsible agriculture, the *Solawi* network promotes the spread of a CSA model, which isolates small-scale producers from market pressures: establishing a long-term producer–consumer partnership in which consumers collectively share the risks and costs of farming in return for a harvest share (Rommel et al. 2022).

The explicit naming of the *Solawi* network in the government agreement was the result of the persistent and diligent political advocacy work of a couple of activists who used their personal contacts with Members of Parliament (MPs) across different parties to make a case for the

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[16] https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/startseite

CSA network (I-2).[17] However, what first appeared to be an opportunity led to internal contestations and ultimately contributed to the disengagement of several members who were actively pushing for political advocacy as a key strategy of the network.

Political advocacy refers to the 'efforts to push public policy in a specific direction on the behalf of constituencies or a general political idea' (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008, 1106). It is pursued via influencing policy making, legislation, political parties, and state bureaucracies (Amenta et al. 2010). As such, it represents a strategy for social movements to bring about societal change by trying to work from 'within' a system (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008). The role of political advocacy as a strategy for the *Solawi* network has been repeatedly debated internally: (How much) does the network want to prioritise political advocacy? What does this mean for their resource allocation? Who is a legitimate advocate? Is political advocacy a viable strategy for stabilising the movement and contributing to agri-food system transformations, or will the institutional support backfire and make the *Solawi* network become dependent on politicians and lose its core values and vision?

Scholarship on CSA, including in the German context, has paid little attention to this topic. Among the few publications that have addressed institutional upscaling in the context of CSA networks, the most comprehensive study was carried out by Bonfert (2022b). Drawing on the experience of the UK CSA network,[18] he describes a strategic shift from covering advocacy work via alliance building towards pro-active advocacy work on their own behalf. According to Bonfert, mobilising resources and appointing a policy coordinator for the network enabled the UK CSA network to issue policy briefings, raise awareness among politicians about the potential of CSAs, and articulate national policy demands (ibid.).

(Scholar-)activist contributions have further cursorily engaged with transnational advocacy work for decentralised food chains (Hitchman 2014; Stapleton 2019). These contributions have highlighted tactics such as capacity-building workshops, international exchange on advocacy work, building alliances with other international organisations, and engaging in policy spaces that are organised around the participation of different stakeholders, including civil society and grassroots movements (Stapleton 2019; Hitchman 2014). In sum, whilst some studies have acknowledged attempts of CSA networks to influence policy making, a

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[17] Interview #2, henceforth I-2.
[18] See also: https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/

systematic analysis of political advocacy in such networks, including its enabling and inhibiting factors, is still lacking.

In this paper, we address this gap by taking stock of and reflecting on past attempts to advocate for CSA and the resulting internal debates and contestations within the *Solawi* network. Specifically, we analysed what enabled or hindered political advocacy work between 2018 and 2022 in order to examine political advocacy as a strategy for the *Solawi* network. For this purpose, we draw on the literature relating to social movements and advocacy groups.

As scholar–activists who have a strong relationship and alignment with the *Solawi* network and are committed to (co-)producing knowledge that is relevant and useful to its struggle, our hope is that this article can provide reflections on the potential, controversies, and difficulties in relation to advocacy work in the contexts of CSA networks and similar grassroots networks and perhaps inform future discussions regarding which forms of political advocacy may be continued. We are, however, not taking a general position on whether grassroots movements should engage in political advocacy. Rather, our starting point is the observation that grassroots movements, such as the *Solawi* network, already have been pursuing political advocacy as one strategy (among many), making it a relevant object of study that can inform these ongoing debates.

4.2. A framework for understanding political advocacy

The framework presented in this section was built by way of an iterative process that led from exploratory fieldwork and data collection, engagement with literature on political advocacy, and data analysis to the refining of final concepts and dimensions of political advocacy relevant and useful for the scope of this study.

After finalising the data collection, we inductively coded the interviews and data sources (see **Research Design**). Building on this first round of data analysis, we conducted a selective literature review to identify key concepts from the literature on political advocacy and assessed whether they matched the empirical case at hand. While conducting the literature review we noticed a stark fragmentation of the field, which spans scholarly traditions ranging from social movement studies to sociology to economics to political science (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008; Andrews and Edwards 2004). This fragmentation is reflected by the

various labels for groups pursuing questions of advocacy, such as interest or pressure groups, advocacy organisations, non-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social movement organisations, and civil society organisations, to name a few (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008; Andrews and Edwards 2004; Císař 2013). To date, exchange between different disciplines and strands of literature have remained cursory, rendering it challenging to study advocacy (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008). Therefore, we used our insights from the first round of data analysis and experiences of working with different agri-food movements to select those strands of advocacy literature that were most appropriate to apply to the empirical case at hand, including considering some additional aspects not covered directly by these perspectives (see **Emotions and group dynamics**). Because of the limited scope of this paper, we focus primarily on the internal dynamics within the *Solawi* network and do not systematically assess the role of broader political opportunities (for a treatment of political opportunities see MacIndoe and Beaton 2019 more generally; and Shawki 2010 in the context of food movements).

Our framework is constituted by five dimensions pertaining to the analysis of political advocacy: strategic orientation, organisational structure, resources, places and spaces of advocacy, and emotions and group dynamics that can enable (or hinder) political advocacy. As shown in Table 1, these dimensions allow us to explore the feasibility and desirability of political advocacy from various angles. We now briefly outline the relevance of each of these five dimensions.

4

Table 1: Framework: Dimensions of Political Advocacy

Dimension	Guiding questions
Strategies and tactics	What long-term strategy does the network have?
	What advocacy tactics are prioritised: outsider or insider tactics?
	What position does the network have towards insider tactics in general?
Source	(Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014; Beyers et al. 2008; Giugni and Grasso, 2020; Doherty and Hayes, 2019)
Organisational structures	How professionalised and formalised is the network?
	Is the degree of professionalisation conducive for political advocacy? How is decision-making organised?
	What influence do the network's members have on advocacy?
Source	(Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Grasso & Giugni, 2018; Almog-Bar & Schmid 2014; Chewinski & Corrigall–Brown, 2020; Foley & Edwards 2002)
Resources	What material (i.e. financial and physical), human, moral, and socio-organisational resources has the network mobilised for political advocacy?
	On human resources specifically, do advocates have the necessary skills, abilities, and professional experience for advocating?
Source	(Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Chewinski & Corrigall–Brown, 2020; Almog-Bar & Schmid 2014; Mosley 2010; 2011)
Emotions and group dynamics	What positive (or negative) affective emotions have hindered or enabled advocacy within the network?
Source	Scoping fieldwork; (Flam and King 2005; Jasper 2011; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2006)
Advocacy spaces	In what spaces (supranational, national, federal, or local) was advocacy work undertaken?
	(How) does this match the structure of the political system?
Source	(Giugni & Grasso, 2018; Armingeon, 2001)

4.2.1. Strategies and tactics

Movements pursue different strategies and tactics to realise their goals. The term 'strategies' refers to the various decisions made in the interest of a social movement or its constituent organisations (Meyer and Staggenborg 2021; Smithey 2009). They typically denote long(er)-term thinking which connects the means and ends of collective action (Doherty and Hayes 2019). This fundamentally entails choices about 'tactics,' which form the 'essence of collective action' (Ennis 1987, 520). Tactics include protests, boycotts, petitions to civil disobedience,

commemorations, and political advocacy and are advanced to persuade, encourage negotiation, and invite different responses from a range of actors (Smithey 2009).

While diverse classification of social movement strategies and tactics co-exist, scholars interested in advocacy work typically distinguish between insider and outsider tactics (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Giugni and Grasso 2018). The former consist of working 'inside the system' via institutional tactics such as networking and advocating with political and administrative elites (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008). The latter refer to extra-institutional tactics that intend to induce change by working 'outside the system' – for instance, via protests, manifestations, direct action, mass media, and campaigns (Giugni and Grasso 2018) as well as by creating spaces for experimentation and prefiguration (Yates 2020).

Research has shown that movements and interest groups, including farmer associations, often combine insider tactics, such as direct access to politicians and governmental authorities, with outsider tactics; for example, they may engage in manifestations and work to be 'vocal in the public sphere' (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008; Binderkrantz 2005; Nicolosi, Feola, and Pleune 2021).

The choice of tactics is typically influenced by the maturity of the movement. Outsider tactics are prevalent in the nascent phase of social movements since they contribute to their organisational maintenance and member recruitment, while older and more stable movements tend to increasingly utilise insider tactics (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008). Over their lifetime, movements therefore (re-)negotiate and balance the associated (dis-)advantages of the respective tactics. For instance, insider tactics enable access to decision-makers and thus can contribute to policy change (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). At the same time, movements that utilise insider tactics can become dependent on state resources and thus become more prone to being co-opted.

4.2.2. Organisational structure

Various scholars (e.g. Andrews and Edwards 2004) have highlighted the role of the organisational structure for its capacity or likelihood to engage in advocacy work. This capacity typically relates to the movement's organisational size, degree of professionalisation

and formalisation, and decision-making structure (Giugni and Grasso 2018; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014).

A key metric for assessing the organisational size and the professionalisation of a movement is the number of paid staff members.[19] Larger organisations tend to have more staff members, which is positively correlated with a movement's likelihood to engage in political advocacy (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). Staff members play a vital role since they can 'aggregate privately held resources for collective purposes [such as advocacy work] from socially dispersed individuals' (Andrews and Edwards 2004, 489). Furthermore, staff members tend to spur the professionalisation of movements. Research has shown that this process often goes hand-in-hand with insider strategies, including advocacy work. Typically, the professionalisation of a movement is also accompanied by its formalisation, which is manifested by adopting a formal legal status and written constitution (Giugni and Grasso 2018). At the same time, processes of professionalisation may risk 'alienating advocates from memberships and constituencies' (Onyx et al. 2010, 46). In sum, the literature on advocacy argues that small organisations tend to be less institutionalised, formal, and bureaucratic, that they have fewer obligations to governmental agencies, and that they engage less often in advocacy than larger organisations (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014).

Decision-making mechanisms are another key dimension of the organisational structure of movements. Members co-decide or at least influence the strategies and tactics of a movement, and their role in the movement's governance shapes how, to what extent, and on what topics advocacy work is carried out (Foley and Edwards 2002). However, decision-making can be organised in different ways, ranging from so-called 'oligarchies', where members have little to no power over the board, to decentralised grassroots democracies where members jointly decide most aspects of the movement's life (ibid.).

4.2.3. Resources

The mobilisation of resources is key for the initiation and continuation of political advocacy work. In this article, we distinguish four types of resources: material, human, social-organisational, and moral resources (adapted from Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Among

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[19] See also subsection on human resources below.

material resources, financial resources are vital for advocacy work since they are a prerequisite for hiring additional staff members to carry out advocacy work and 'may contribute to a general aura of power and prestige around the organization, increasing political clout and making policy makers more responsive to their overtures' (Mosley 2011, 443). Additionally, some studies suggest that financially stable movements invest more in political advocacy work than underfunded movements (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014).

Building on the above-described trends associated with staffing movements, the literature also shows that human resources are important for political advocacy. These resources include labour provided by paid staff and volunteers as well as the skills, experience, and expertise of movement members (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Since political advocacy is highly time consuming and often extends beyond regular work hours, advocates need to be willing to make sacrifices and invest their own time for the 'good cause' (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). While few scholars would contest that advocates require a specific skill set for conducting advocacy work, such as superior communication skills, being politically savvy, and seizing opportunities for advocacy (Mosley 2011), this domain has only been marginally explored (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). Scholars have furthermore pointed out that not all advocates possess the necessary capabilities, specific skillsets, or expert knowledge to enter political arena. This lack of knowledge and skills can be explained by the fact that advocacy significantly differs from the other day-to-day tasks of movement members or employees (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014), which makes attending special trainings necessary (Mosley 2010).

Social movement scholars have furthermore highlighted the importance of social-organisational resources such as 'infrastructures, social ties and networks, affinity groups, and coalitions' (Edwards, McCarthy, and Mataic 2019, 81). Socio-organisational resources are of particular relevance for the study of advocacy work since network relations can help sustain advocacy work by providing access to resources and since coalitions are key for coordinating advocacy with other actors (Andrews and Edwards 2004).

Finally, outsiders such as researchers, politicians, and celebrities can provide moral resources to movements by enhancing their legitimacy or by openly proclaiming solidarity and sympathetic support (Edwards, McCarthy, and Mataic 2019). Positive media coverage can further legitimise and mobilise support for movements (Pilny, Atouba, and Riles 2014).

Building on an empirical analysis of several agricultural advocacy groups in Germany, Feindt (2009), and Kleinschmitt and Feindt (2004) found that the frequency of media coverage and the image of agricultural advocacy groups in the media (i.e. whether the group is portrayed as part of the problem or part of the solution) are relevant indicators for the advocacy group's influence. However, according to Andrews and Caren (2010), news media favour professional and formalised groups that employ non-confrontational tactics over volunteer-led, confrontational groups that advocate on behalf of topics beyond the mainstream.

4.2.4. Emotions and group dynamics

Most literature on advocacy has mobilised structural theories of social movements, such as resource mobilisation, institutional perspectives, and political process (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). Studies on group dynamics and on the role of the emotions that arise during these interactions is still largely lacking in political advocacy research. During our engagement in the field, we observed that group dynamics and related emotions had a significant impact on political advocacy. In line with our inductive approach, we decided to further explore the role of emotions in political advocacy and drew on the literature on emotions in group processes (Flam and King 2005; Jasper 2011; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001). As King (2006, 876) explains, it 'is evident that the ways in which emotions are constructed, managed, manipulated and reconstructed are important for understanding patterns of engagement in social movements by activists.' For instance, the force of emotions such as joy, excitement, group belonginess and solidarity have been found to sustain activism in movements (Eyerman 2005). In addition, love, affection, and loyalty for other members can lead to action on behalf of the movement, while respect and trust for representatives of the movement can influence their legitimacy and credibility (Jasper 2011). In contrast, the lack thereof can contribute to a movement's decline: internal conflicts within a movement can induce anger and frustration, potentially leading to factionalism and even the disengagement of single individuals (Eyerman 2005). These emotions is what Jasper (2011, 267) coined as 'affective commitments or loyalties' within movements, which he defines as 'relatively stable feelings, positive or negative, about others […] such as love and hate, liking and disliking, trust or mistrust, respect or contempt'.

4.2.5. Advocacy spaces

Social movements can conduct advocacy work in different spaces (Giugni and Grasso 2018). In her article 'A guide for feminist advocacy', Kristy Evans (2005, 14) encourages movements to reflect in what institutional spaces relevant decisions are taken and in which spaces they can have the greatest impact. Political scientists have pointed out that the structure and scope of advocacy work often mirrors the structure of the political system (Armingeon 2002). For instance, in Germany, a federal republic, interest groups are typically also organised in a federal manner in order to have access to the right policy spaces (ibid.).

Agricultural movements and organisations in Germany can advocate at different levels: the supranational (i.e. EU), the national, the federal (i.e. Bundesländer), and the local (i.e. municipalities). These levels have various degrees of decision-making power and roles when it comes to agricultural policies. Since agricultural policies are largely regulated at the European level via the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), this level typically is considered to have considerable leverage (Feindt 2009). However, it is challenging to advocate at the EU level, particularly for scarcely resourced grassroots movements. At the same time, there are possibilities to influence agricultural policy by advocating on the national level: the CAP is translated into national plans which leave some room for country-specific implementations, such as the possibility to adjust direct payments for farmers (Henke et al. 2018). Despite this possibility, in the past, the German government made little use of its room for manoeuvring (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019) – notably, because the DBV has fiercely and successfully opposed mechanisms of reallocation (Chemnitz and Becheva 2019; Deutscher Bauernverband 2021). In contrast, the German federal states use their leeway with regard to agricultural policy, leading to an 'astonishing heterogeneity' among the different federal states (Ewert 2016, 253). This heterogeneity is also product of the advocacy work of agricultural associations: in those federal states where the federal farmer associations have a strong monopoly position, the productivist paradigm,[20] which they defend, is particularly strong (ibid.).

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[20] See also Lang and Heasmann (2015) on the origins and dynamics of the productionist paradigm globally.

4.3. Research design

4.3.1. Positionality of the authors

This research was part of a larger PhD project of the first author of this paper, which was carried out between 2019 and 2023. During her engagement with and participant observation of the *Solawi* network, she identified strong thematical alignment between her research interests and a side project of the network on political advocacy, which attempted to recompile crucial information on political advocacy. In fact, by chance both the first author and an employee of the *Solawi* network had been carrying out interviews on political advocacy with the same activists on similar issues. After several informal meetings, we decided to join efforts, notably in the form of co-designing and co-authoring this study. In addition to its academic contribution, this publication therefore seeks to produce 'movement-relevant' knowledge (Bevington and Dixon 2005), which can instigate reflections on the potential, controversies, and difficulties around political advocacy work for the *Solawi* network specifically and agricultural grassroots movements more generally. This research is aligned with two core dimensions of scholar-activism; (i) the commitment to produce knowledge that is relevant and useful for the *Solawi* network as well as the involvement of activists in the process of knowledge production and (ii) having a strong relationship and political alignment with the *Solawi* network (Duncan et al. 2021).

4.3.2. Data collection & analysis

The data collection took place between April 2021 and January 2023. It followed standard research ethics procedures following the Utrecht University code of conduct for academic practice. We drew on a diverse set of data including (i) participant observation in bi-weekly meetings over the span of approximately one year in the working group on politics and in the working group on organisational development, (ii) interviews with current and former active members of the network, and (iii) internal documents, including protocols of council and coordination meetings from 2018, when political advocacy work was discussed (see **Appendix A.I** for an overview of the documents and the profile of the interviewees). In total, we conducted nine interviews, eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and one focus group interview with the working group on politics. The interviews lasted between 42min and 2h09, with an average duration of 1h26. We complemented this data with background knowledge

on political advocacy work more generally, which we obtained from participant observation at two three-day meetings of the SALSIFI project (Supporting Advanced Learning for Stakeholders Involved in Sustainable Food-systems Initiatives) on political advocacy work. SALSIFI is an Erasmus+ project of the European Union running from September 2020 to August 2023. It is coordinated by the international CSA network Urgenci and brings together nine agri-food movements across Europe.

The first author of this paper analysed all data with NVivo, using open coding. After a first round of coding, the data was synthesised by the first and second author and collectively discussed with all co-authors. Subsequently, the first author recoded the results in several cycles of analysis, drawing on the theoretical framework presented in Table 1.

4.4. Results: Political advocacy within the *Solawi* network

The *Solawi* network was founded in 2011 by a number of CSA farmers as well as by activists with backgrounds in the anti-globalisation, solidarity economy, and right-to-food movement. Since its foundation, the movement has grown considerably, from 12 initial members to over 431[21] individual CSA initiatives (with an additional 99 initiatives in foundation). The network provides a space for mutual exchange and learning for CSA initiatives and reconciles positions among its diverse members. Indeed, it brings together an array of various types of CSA initiatives – including producer-led initiatives, consumer-led initiatives, gardening collectives, peasant family farms, anti-capitalist-emancipatory efforts, and anthroposophical-spiritual initiatives.

Formally organised as an association, the network is composed of four different organs: the general assembly, the council, the coordination, and the board (Figure 1). On a bi-yearly basis, members elect the council, which represents the interests of all members and is involved in the development of the network's vision, goals, and values (NWSL, 2023). Moreover, the network has several decentralised groups, including regional groups for promoting exchange between nearby CSA initiatives and working groups which span numerous topics, from societal transformations to self-organised vocational training. In 2022, approximately 50 people were actively engaged in different spaces of the network. As a 'grassroots democracy',

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[21] Last accessed: 08-03-2022.

the network aspires to take decisions within the different organs and working groups in line with sociocratic principles based on either consent or consensus.

The proclaimed goal of the network consists of safeguarding and promoting a sustainable peasant agriculture based on a close consumer–producer partnership that views agriculture as a joint responsibility. This goal implies fundamentally transforming the industrial agri-food system (NWSL no date). The network pursues this goal via a variety of activities, including political advocacy work.
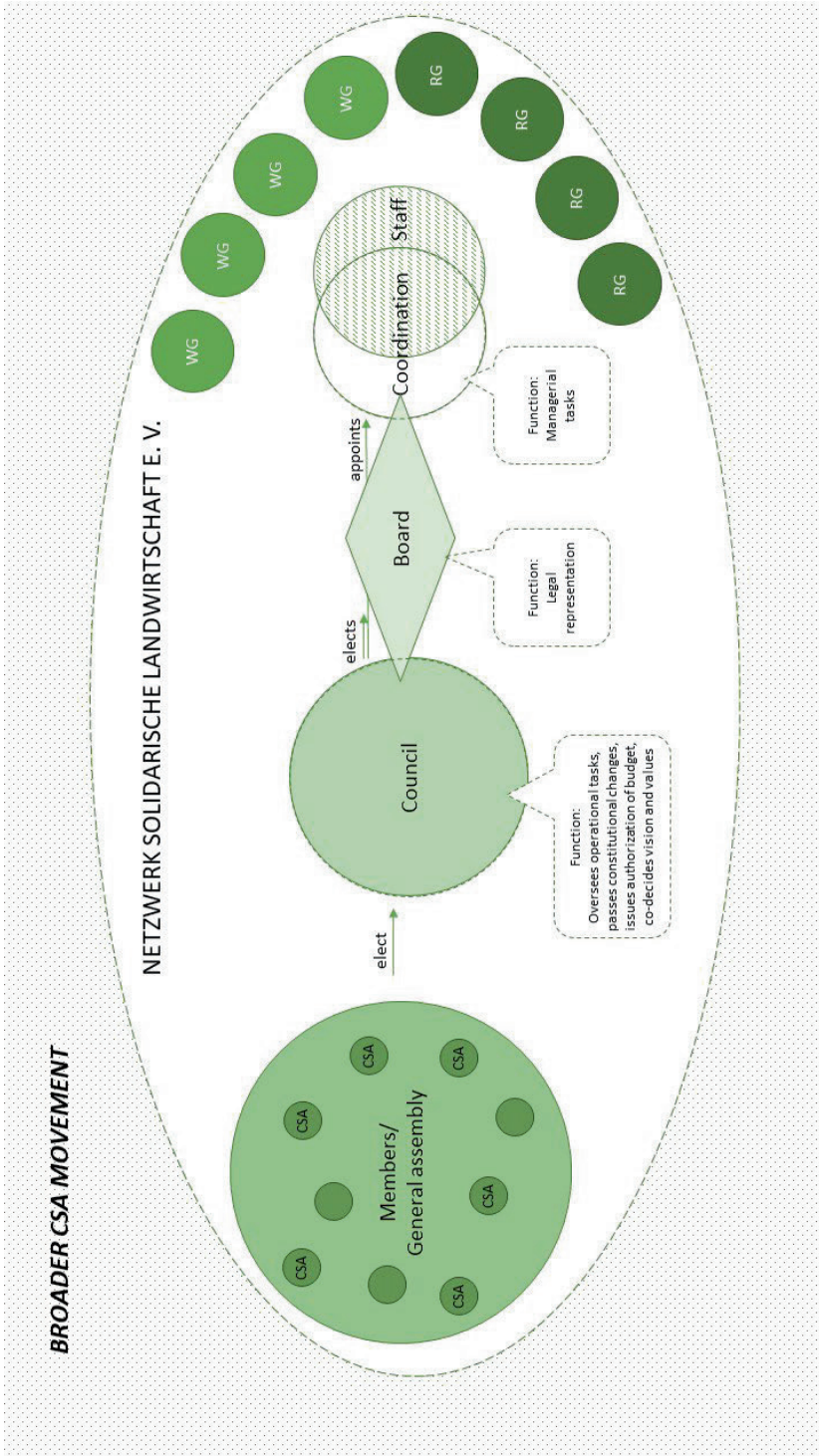
Figure 1: Organisational diagram of the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V. Adapted from: https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-netzwerk/ueber-uns/struktur. Abbreviations: WG = working group; RG = regional group.

In the past, the *Solawi* network has carried out political advocacy in various ways and by various activists, on both the national and federal level (see Figure 2). A major achievement of these advocacy efforts was to be mentioned in the government agreement in 2018, which was realised because of an activist's personal contacts to MPs (I-2). However, long, internal debates regarding the desirability of receiving institutional support and the slow decision-making pace of the council delayed and hampered the efforts of advocates to communicate their demands and receive tangible institutional support from the government.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020 brought advocacy activities by and large to a halt. Additionally, in the beginning of 2021, several key advocates decided to disengage from the *Solawi* network after not being re-elected as council and board members. As a result, the network was left without active members who had expertise in conducting political advocacy, and the network's social ties to politicians were significantly weakened. The subsequent rebuilding of political advocacy was largely driven by CSA initiatives which, in collaboration with the *Solawi* network and the newly found working group on politics, invited agricultural ministers from their respective federal states to their CSA farm, introducing them to the CSA model and its potential to reinvent agriculture.

In what follows, we outline factors that have enabled and hindered political advocacy work. The findings are structured using the theoretical framework (Table 1) on the network's strategic orientation, its organisational structure, its ability to mobilise resources, the influence of emotions, and the spaces where advocacy is undertaken. While we draw on different instances of political advocacy which have unfolded between 2018 and 2022, this study does not seek to reconstruct change processes; instead, our analysis dissects what has (or has not) worked with regards to political advocacy, thereby drawing lessons for the future.

4

national level

02/2018
CSA mentioned in government agreement after network invites members of parliament (MP) to attend an event on CSA as part of the alternative green week

12/2018
Delegation of network meets with MP, who connects them to the Chief Secretary of Agriculture

11/2018
CSA mentioned in plenary session of the German parliament, after delegation of network meets with MP

03/2019
Delegation of network visits the Agricultural Ministry and negotiates forms of support with the Chief Secretary of Agriculture

01/2022
Attendance of the event 'Nationaler Dialog: Wege zu nachhaltigen Ernährungssystemen'

01/2022 –
Working group on politics is founded

09 & 12 2022 – Mecklenburg-West Pomerania: Agricultural minister visits CSA farm and invites all 22 CSAs for a meeting with the ministry.

12/2022 – Saxony: CSA activists receive funding for setting up a federal network

Change in composition of the network

Covid-19 Pandemic

federal states level

12/2020 – North Rhine Westphalia: Delegation presents position paper to the 'enquete commission' on supply chains and marketing structures at the federal parliament

03/2021 - Saxony: Agricultural minister visits CSA farm to hand over grant in person and encourages CSAs to found a federal network to be eligible for further support

07/2021 – Bavaria: Advocate receives mandate for political advocacy

01/2022 - North Rhine Westphalia: Agricultural minister visits CSA farm

10/2022 – Lower Saxony: Failed attempt to be mentioned in government agreement
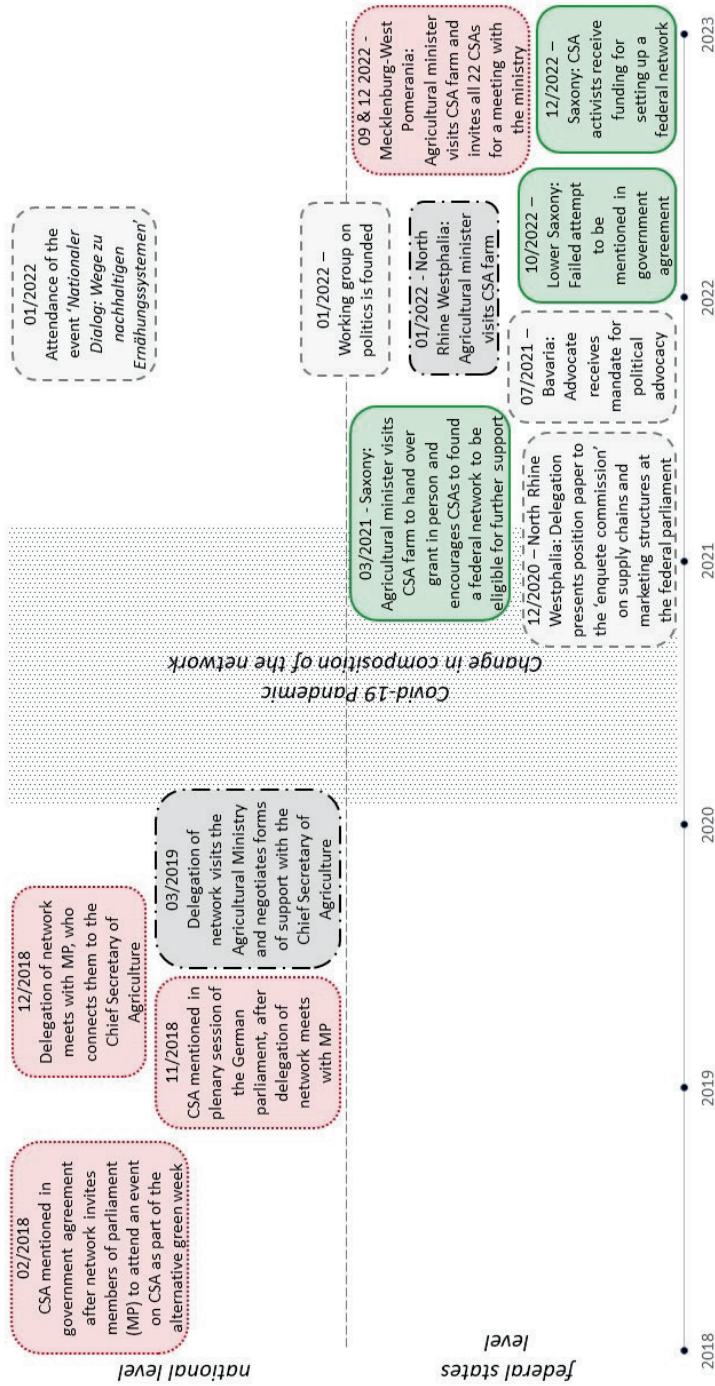
2018   2019   2020   2021   2022   2023

Figure 2: Own creation. Timeline outlining different political advocacy activities across the national and federal state levels, 2018-2022. The colour and line type of the shape symbolise the actor involved; red dots: Social Democrats; black, long dashes and dots: Christian Democrats; green solid line: Green Party; grey dashes: non-party related activities.

4.4.1. Strategies and tactics: Political advocacy as a side strategy

The *Solawi* network has employed various outsider and insider tactics to pursue its goals. However, because of limited resources, the network was forced to prioritise these tactics. This prioritisation, which was co-decided by the council and coordination, is re-negotiated every two years, following the election of a new council. Beyond this, the CSA network did not have a long-term strategy.

By and large, the network prioritised outsider tactics. Supporting a prefigurative politics, the network provided a number of services that aimed to spread the CSA model and consolidate existing initiatives (Doc-1). This included providing support and advice for individual CSA initiatives in their foundation phase and beyond via webinars, consultations, referral to counsellors, and shared support materials (NWSL 2021). The network further facilitated mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and networking between CSA initiatives by providing spaces, such as the bi-annual network meetings, regional meetings, email lists, and online collaboration platforms. More conventional outsider tactics included the participation in protests and petitions, most notably the annual large-scale manifestation *'Wir haben es satt!'* ('We are fed up!'), which calls for a fundamental transformation of the agri-food system towards a small-scale, environmentally friendly, and globally just agriculture.

By contrast, insider tactics—namely, carrying out advocacy and targeting political decision-makers—only played a secondary role for the network (Doc-1). The low prioritisation of political advocacy was reflected by the lack of allocated resources for that purpose. Consequently, with the exception of the aforementioned government agreement, for which a delegation of *Solawi* advocates proactively contacted politicians, the network largely carried out reactive political advocacy. That is, while it sought to respond to requests from authorities and politicians and support CSA initiatives that invited politicians for farm visits (see Figure 2), it did not proactively reach out to well-positioned policy makers. Since there was no dedicated person or team in charge of carrying out advocacy, the requests were answered by employees or activists who were interested in and available for conducting political advocacy. Nonetheless, the low prioritisation of political advocacy and the choice to focus on reactive

advocacy was hardly sufficient to induce changes in agricultural policies or to receive institutional support.

A further, and perhaps more fundamental, barrier against the use of insider tactics was the reservations that some members held against engaging in political advocacy. In particular, the internal discussions in the aftermath of being mentioned in the government agreement revealed a twofold concern regarding the possibility of advocating for and receiving federal funds. Some members feared that the network could become financially dependent on political parties (Doc-2); they reasoned that if the network was to receive a large sum from the government for a limited time frame and if they were to use the funds to enlarge their staff, they could run into difficulties once the funding ended as they would be no longer able to pay their employees. Another related concern was a fear of loss of autonomy; some activists associated receiving institutional support with no longer being able to independently decide how and what financial resources can be used because of the official requirements associated with the reception of governmental funds (Doc-2).

4.4.2. Organisational structure: increasing professionalisation and agility

The network has become increasingly professionalised over the past five years. This change is noticeable in the steady increase in employees—at the time of writing, there are six paid (part-time) staff members and three 'mini-jobbers' (i.e. employees who earn less than €520/month). There has also been an increase in organisational development efforts, which entailed redefining decision-making structures inspired by sociocracy and restructuring the roles of the different organs of the network. As part of this process, the role of the council was redefined. Instead of taking fundamental strategic and political decisions, it began to oversee the operational activities that the employees and the coordination carried out, ensuring their compliance with the network's jointly established goals, values, and strategies. The adjusted role of the council promised more agility and faster decision-making since previously, the tasks and responsibilities of council members frequently exceeded their time capacities. This shift may ultimately enhance the network's ability to engage in political advocacy. When CSA was mentioned in the government agreement, several advocates

pointed out that slow decision-making processes significantly hindered their work and foreclosed the possibility of seizing further, more substantial gains and support (I-1; I-2).

While the network had extensively worked on its internal organisation, there were no clear structures or procedures for nominating or legitimising political advocates. In the past, activists received (i) long-term mandates for political advocacy because of their personal contacts to politicians or (ii) ad-hoc mandates after having received an invitation to speak at an official event. These mandates were rather fuzzy; it was not specified how extensive the mandate was, what positions and demands the activists should voice, in what way and with what frequency they ought to report back to the general network, nor under what conditions the mandate would lose its validity. On one occasion, these uncertainties delayed and thereby hampered efforts to advocate, since a more specific mandate was needed to continue the ongoing negotiations (I-2).

All in all, the broad base of the network's members hardly had a say in political advocacy. While members provided considerable financial stability to the *Solawi* network (NWSL 2022a), they were not directly involved in deciding how and for which activities the finances were allocated. Instead, the prioritisation of activities and tactics fell under the responsibility of the council and coordination, and the broad member base influenced them only very indirectly via the election of the council's members. Consequently, it is unclear to what extent the prioritised tactics and activities matched the needs and wishes of its members—in other words, whether political advocacy would have received more importance when taking into account the members' preferences. In fact, anecdotal evidence points to a few CSA initiatives that decided to join the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft*[22] (AbL - the German peasant organisation) instead of the *Solawi* network since AbL's advocacy work was more professional (I-3).

Those members who wished to do political advocacy could nonetheless take initiative, as the network left ample room for self-organisation. The working group on politics, established in 2022, bridged and coordinated different network activities related to political advocacy, alliance work, and public relations. It brought together actors involved in political advocacy

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[22] See also https://www.abl-ev.de/start.

from the federal, state, and supranational levels. This working group's principal aim was to raise awareness within the network regarding the potential benefits of political advocacy for CSA and to develop a list of demands which advocates could use when interacting with policy-makers. Furthermore, several members of the working group had participated in meetings with politicians organised by local CSA initiatives in order to support those initiatives (I-3).

4.4.3. Resources: the bottleneck for political advocacy

Limited resources, in particular material and human resources, significantly hampered the political advocacy of the network, despite the successful mobilisation of moral and socio-organisational resources.

With a yearly financial budget of approximately €260,000, the network was underfinanced and, as mentioned above, forced to prioritise the activities it engaged in. The largest and most stable from of revenue for the *Solawi* network in 2022 was membership fees (42%), followed by donations (27%), and grants (8%) (NWSL 2022a). To a large extent, the budget financed the paid staff positions of the network. However, since political advocacy did not fall under the prioritised activities, only a mini-jobber, whose position was created through funds of the SALSIFI project, focussed on political advocacy. The other employees, who all faced a high workload due to the increasing responsibilities, tasks, and challenges that accompanied the growth of the CSA network, only engaged with political advocacy to a small extent (I-4; I-5). Nonetheless, some key activities of employees overlapped with political advocacy—most notably, networking, public relations, and event organisation.

Because of the lack of funding for political advocacy, most activities relied on voluntary work. However, there were a number of challenges associated with relying solely on volunteer work. First, similarly to the staff members, most volunteers experienced a very high workload, as they were often also heavily involved in their local CSAs and other community projects. Second, while political advocacy was demanding in terms of knowledge and time requirements (I-5; see also **Appendix A.II** for an overview of key skills for political advocacy), the volunteers often had a diverse set of skills, time availability, expertise, experiences, and social ties and, consequently were differently equipped to carry out political advocacy. An interviewee with extensive experience in advocacy therefore voiced the need for paid

personnel dedicated to political advocacy (I-2). Third, the reliance on volunteer work for political advocacy turned out to be risky when advocates disengaged from the network in 2020, resulting in a tremendous loss of knowledge and skills and a temporary halt of advocacy activities (I-5). That incident further highlights another problem: the concentration of knowledge within a few activists and a lack of knowledge transfer. With hardly any internal documentation of past advocacy work, it was difficult and time-consuming for new staff members and volunteers to recompile the necessary information and contacts to continue political advocacy. This challenge became evident during the organisation of an event directed at the intersection of politicians, civil society, and scientists since there was no documentation of the organisation of previous events nor contact lists of relevant actors who should be invited (I-3). To some extent, the SALSIFI project remedied this situation by providing the network with funds to conduct interviews with those activists who, in the past, had been active in advocacy work for the network. The project not only took stock of the existing knowledge on political advocacy for CSA but also made it available to interested activists in the form of an online course.[23]

Beyond material and human resources, the network successfully mobilised moral resources. First, the network strategically drew on research to work with politicians to legitimise the CSA model and its socio-economic and sustainability potential (Doc-7). Second, in 2018–19, the network mobilised politicians from different parties (i.e. the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party [SPD], and CDU) for their cause. For instance, the network arranged a meeting with an MP of the SPD who was already knowledgeable of and sympathetic to the CSA model, to jointly strategize how CSA could receive support (I-7). Afterwards, the MP publicly expressed his regard for CSA during a speech at the German Parliament (I-5; see also Deutscher Bundestag 2018) and released a supportive statement on his webpage (Spiering 2018). The MP, who had little formal power, further helped the network by asking the Chief Secretary of Agriculture, an influential politician of the CDU, to meet with a delegation of the *Solawi* network and to assess possibilities for institutional support (I-1). While the latter showed general interest in and openness towards the CSA model, the meeting only resulted in a small grant for an educational project for the *Solawi* network, since, by then, most

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[23] See https://hub.urgenci.net/salsifi-course-program/.

relevant funds of the ministry had already been used up (I-6). At the time of writing, most of the MPs at the national level who were supportive of CSA in 2018–19 had retired from politics, weakening the network's moral resources.

Finally, the network mobilised a number of socio-organisational resources in the form of social ties and allies. Because one advocate had personal contacts to politicians, political advocacy was greatly facilitated (I-2). In some instances, the network was able to capitalise on these social ties and turn them into organisational ties. For example, in January 2023, the *Solawi* network co-organised, for the third time, a symposium on CSA with the foundation of the Green party, even though no personal contacts had remained. In addition to reviving old ties, since 2022, the network has been building new connections and contacts—in particular, to high-level employees of the Federal Agency of Agriculture and Food ('Bundesanstalt für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft').

A strong asset for conducting political advocacy was the network's alliances with likeminded organisations, many of whom allocated significant financial and personal resources to political advocacy. An important ally of the network was the AbL, which is like a 'big sister' to the *Solawi* network (I-8). The AbL devotes significant resources to, and, with its expertise, has established professional structures for political advocacy, both on the national and the federal level. Because the AbL's goals overlap with those of the *Solawi* network (both call for substantial support for smallholder farmers), some activists have suggested to intensify their collaboration (I-3). Moreover, the network is part of the 'Agrarbündnis', an agricultural alliance consisting of environmental and alternative agri-food associations. In addition to their advocacy activities and campaigns, the Agrarbündnis issues a yearly report on the state of agriculture in Germany and Europe to which the *Solawi* network has repeatedly contributed to (see e.g. van Elsen and Kraiß 2012; and Kapusta 2023). Additionally, the *Solawi* network is also part of Urgenci, which, at the request of *Solawi* activists, launched two projects on political advocacy that contributed to knowledge exchange and capacity building for political advocacy. Lastly, being well-networked and having allies can create unexpected opportunities for advocacy around CSA. For instance, the environmental organisation BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany) chose a CSA farm as a location for an inauguration event on organic agriculture, which was attended by the federal state minister of Mecklenburg-Western

Pomerania. Shortly after, the minister invited all CSA initiatives of the federal state to the Ministry of Agriculture to continue the conversation and explore how the ministry could support CSAs better.

4.4.4. Emotions and group dynamics: the elephant in the room

Emotions and internal group dynamics had significant impact on the network's ability to carry out advocacy work. We found that both a lack of trust in advocates and a lack of visibility and valorisation of advocates can lead to frustrations and a loss of motivation and thereby hinder political advocacy. The internal discussions of how to proceed after being mentioned in the government agreement and the negative emotions this triggered illustrate these points clearly. During a council meeting in 2018, shortly before an upcoming negotiation with an MP, the delegation of advocates was confronted with questions and concerns by other council members who asked to bring an additional council member to the negotiation (Doc-2). This request, which was interpreted as a sign of mistrust, offended the delegation, which quickly affirmed that the negotiations would naturally be carried out in the best interest of the *Solawi* network and that there was no need for an additional member to join and 'control' them (Doc-2). Instead, to allay the doubts and mistrust, the delegation proposed that the council should jointly develop a concrete list of demands which they could take to the negotiations, thereby ensuring that the negotiations reflect the wishes of the council. They further promised to consult with the council when decisions were imminent – a procedure that was eventually adopted. However, the mistrust was not resolved, essentially remaining the elephant in the room (Doc-2; I-2). Potential explanations for the mistrust voiced by activists ranged from previous bad experiences such as the abuse of mandates in other organisations (Doc-2) to the perception of one advocate not being politically neutral and impartial, due to his double role (besides to his volunteering for the *Solawi* network, he worked for an MP) (I-2; I-9).

Another source of frustration was the lack of visibility and limited valorisation of the advocacy efforts. Political advocacy is a laborious task, and some volunteers spent up to 15 hours per week advocating for the *Solawi* network (I-1); however, these efforts at times remained hidden. For instance, to inform its members of being mentioned in the government

agreement, only a brief statement was circulated via the newsletter: 'The [CSA] network was mentioned in the government agreement' followed by a quotation from the government agreement (NWSL 2018b). The statement entirely concealed the efforts of advocates to *Solawi* members who are only sporadically active. In addition to the lack of visibility, there was also a lack of valorisation. Several activists reported that they did not feel sufficiently appreciated for their volunteer work by other members of the *Solawi* network, leading to frustrations and, eventually, their disengagement from the network (I-1). Such lack of valorisation was also rooted in the prioritisation of different strategies and activities by activists: while for some political advocacy was critical to induce change in the agri-food system, others did not view it as essential or productive. Altogether, these instances showed that negative affective emotions and knotty group dynamics can render political advocacy particularly difficult and even lead to the disengagement of activists (I-1; I-2).

Despite those past issues, trust in and valorisation of advocates have ceased being major issues of contention during the rebuilding of political advocacy within the *Solawi* network in 2022–23. Moreover, driven by the appointment of a new public relations officer, the visibility of advocacy efforts has also increased. Activists who carried out political advocacy efforts did so only sporadically, as one of many activities, and thus were less emotionally invested than the former fixed delegation of advocates, who approached politicians on a regular basis. Nonetheless, members of the working groups on politics voiced that, at times, there was a tendency among network activists outside their group to give input on areas outside of their area of responsibility. Such unsought advice can be tiring for the person in charge and lead to irritations (I-3). The working group pleads that trust is not only a matter of verbal expression; instead, it needs to be lived and practiced, for instance, by refraining from interfering (I-3).

4.4.5. Advocacy spaces: moving from the national to the federal level

Over time, political advocacy shifted from primarily the national to the federal level (see Figure 2). From 2018 to 2019, because of pre-existing personal contacts of one advocate to an MP, political advocacy was mainly conducted at the national level, targeting politicians working on agricultural topics. The advocacy efforts primarily aimed to raise awareness for CSA and to mobilise institutional support, while more specific, content-related demands

largely exceeded the capacities of the *Solawi* network (I-2). The lack of a list with demands for agricultural policy changes clearly illustrates this point. Content-based advocacy was therefore limited to sharing, supporting, and signing statements, petitions, and demands of their allies—for instance against seed patents[24] and the privatisation of public agricultural land in Eastern Germany.[25]

After personal changes within the network in 2020, most advocacy efforts were located at the federal state level. In total, in five of the 16 federal states, some form of advocacy work was undertaken (see Figure 2). In fact, the, until 2021, largely neglected federal level yielded new opportunities for the *Solawi* network. According to one activist with a law background, many agricultural policies that have hindered CSA initiatives are regulated at the federal state level, such as building permits for agriculture land, which are exclusively issued to agricultural holdings. This regulation has inhibited many CSA initiatives organised as associations from building structures, such as foil tunnels, on their land plots (personal communication 21st January 2023). Additionally, the Chambers of Agriculture, which promote and support farmers and which are responsible for agricultural vocational training (a major concern of the *Solawi* network), are exclusively located on the federal state level.

However, carrying out political advocacy at the *federal* state level is not easily put into practice by a *national* network. Consequently, at the time of writing, the network is in the process of appointing several representatives for a number of federal states. These representatives can serve as contact persons when receiving invitations from federal politicians or authorities.

4.5. Discussion: Internal organising matters for political advocacy

In what follows, we discuss the intersections between the dimensions of the framework that, in our opinion, have the most direct practical relevance for the *Solawi* network. While we acknowledge that political influence is not something that movements 'can simply provide, pizza-like, for themselves' (Amenta et al. 2010, 96), we nonetheless argue that the network's internal organisation intersects with their strategies and tactics, ability to mobilise resources,

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[24] See https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/aktuelles/news/news-detail/online-petition.
[25] See https://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/index.php/de/petition.

emotions and group dynamics, and advocacy spaces (see Figure 3). We discuss how these intersections affect the network's ability to advocate, including possibilities to organise more effectively for political advocacy. Thereby, we point out a number of open issues practitioners can take into account.
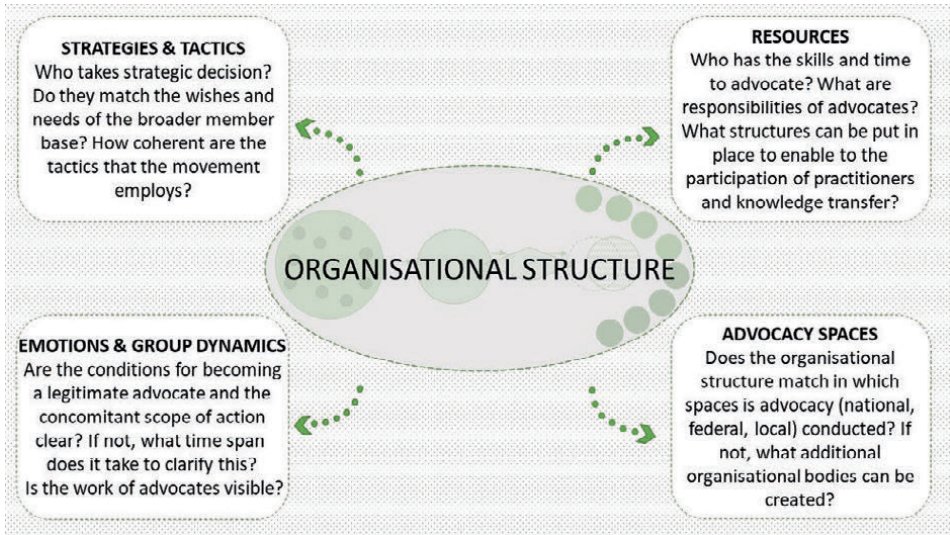

STRATEGIES & TACTICS
Who takes strategic decision? Do they match the wishes and needs of the broader member base? How coherent are the tactics that the movement employs?

RESOURCES
Who has the skills and time to advocate? What are responsibilities of advocates? What structures can be put in place to enable to the participation of practitioners and knowledge transfer?

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

EMOTIONS & GROUP DYNAMICS
Are the conditions for becoming a legitimate advocate and the concomitant scope of action clear? If not, what time span does it take to clarify this? Is the work of advocates visible?

ADVOCACY SPACES
Does the organisational structure match in which spaces is advocacy (national, federal, local) conducted? If not, what additional organisational bodies can be created?

Figure 3: Questions arising from the interlinkages between the network's organisational structure and remaining dimensions of the framework.

4.5.1. Organising & tactics: exploring member's participation

With regards to the interconnection between the *Solawi* network's organisational structure and its strategies and tactics, we have observed potential tensions concerning the prioritisation of tactics. As explained above, it is unclear to what extent the prioritisation of tactics, including the low prioritisation of political advocacy, reflects the needs and wishes of the broader member base. A survey by Lapschieß and Degens (2023) on the perceived importance of the activities undertaken by the *Solawi* network suggests otherwise: political advocacy was one of the activities that established CSA initiatives valued most; over 60% of all respondents considered advocacy important, with only a few other activities receiving more approval —such as providing knowledge resources and a platform for mutual exchange, consulting services (e.g. for taxes and organisational development for CSA initiatives), and the provision of training on agricultural and economic topics. However, because of the relatively

small sample size (only 10% of all CSA initiatives participated in the survey), those results need to be carefully interpreted, and the network should consider further exploring the needs of its members. Given the heavy workload of both activists and employees, it is important to consider how this exploration can be organised in a way that allows for ample participation without requiring too much work and time. Already existing (offline) formats and spaces, such as the network meetings, a space that gathers around 100 CSA activists, could serve as a first step to assess how well the network's prioritisation matches the wishes of the member's base.

The representation of the members' views and needs is particularly salient considering the rapid membership growth of the *Solawi* network. The network faces the challenge of preserving its grassroots character despite its growth. It must consider how the network can defy the risk which so many movements and advocacy groups are susceptible to—namely, that a small group takes decisions on behalf of the whole movement (see Andrews and Edwards 2004 and; Foley and Edwards 2002 on oligarichisation tendencies in advocacy organisations). In light of the increasing digitalisation and growth of the *Solawi* network and the geographical size of Germany, it is difficult for CSA initiatives from all over the country to attend the network meetings. In response to this challenge, digital platforms could become 'decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating and for deciding' (Castells 2015, 257).

In addition, to maintain its grassroots character, the network leaves ample room for self-organisation beyond the officially prioritised tactics and strategy and concomitant use of resources. As such, members can, in a decentralised and unbureaucratic manner, pursue activities they are passionate about, including political advocacy, on their own behalf as volunteers. The tactics that the network employs with regard to political advocacy are therefore, to a large extent, the result of a variety of ad-hoc or reactive actions of individuals, and they are not necessarily aligned. To align a movements tactics (i.e. their means) and goals, developing a long-term strategy is necessary (Doherty and Hayes 2019), yet such a strategy is currently missing for the *Solawi* network. Mid- and long-term thinking could therefore help activists to strategize freely, without the constraint of limited financial resources and may entail moving from reactive to proactive political advocacy, as well as

clarifying (i) with which actors the network wishes to engage with and to what extent, (ii) for which advocacy spaces demands should be formulated and placed, and (iii) what alliances should be strengthened.

4.5.2. Organising & resources: ambiguities around responsibilities and legitimacy of advocates

The organisational structure of the *Solawi* network intersects with the network's ability to mobilise resources in at least three ways. First, regarding who can advocate and whose voices are represented, there is a lack of organisation in the decision-making process. Consequently, as shown in this study, political advocacy is highly dependent on human resources, notably volunteers, and carried out only if and as long as individual activists step forward (or react to external mobilization).

In light of the high time investment required for political advocacy (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014), the network is in need of establishing mechanisms that help with managing and distributing the high work-load of volunteers. This need includes defining the degree of accountability and reporting back which can be expected of volunteers—in particular of farmers, who already have a high workload. The difficulty for advocates to report back in full transparency in light of 'time and other human constraints' also applies to agricultural grassroots movements more generally (Hitchman 2014, 13). What can the *Solawi* network learn from these movements and their efforts to reduce the workload on farmers and gardeners who advocate? For example, the CSIPM (Civil Society and Indigenous People Mechanism[26]) teams up food producers who are eager to be involved in advocacy work with volunteers that have (potentially) more time and can take over background tasks such as reporting back after advocacy events, taking minutes, and writing draft contributions on the basis of conversations with food producers (see Claeys and Duncan 2019). While this type of work-sharing comes with its own limitations—in particular, the concentration of expertise and power within a few dedicated individuals (ibid.)—it can enable food producers to adopt the advocate role. It is important that farmers take up the role of advocates, since their

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[26] The CSIPM is an autonomous part of the UN Committee on Food Security. For more information see: https://www.csm4cfs.org/what-is-the-csm/

personal experience with the difficulties of farming and running a CSA renders them particularly powerful and legitimate advocates (see also **Appendix A.II**).

Additionally, drawing on her experience and engagement with transnational advocacy for agricultural movements, Hitchman (2014) argues that it is vital that advocates (especially those who are not practitioners) remain connected to the grassroots level to be knowledgeable of the concerns and pressing issues that movement practitioners face and receive input for policies (see also Claeys and Duncan 2019 on the need and difficulty of 'grassrootifying' struggles to ensure legitimacy and adequate representation). Thus, the *Solawi* network could establish procedures that help volunteers to collect the views of the member base.

Furthermore, because of a lack of resources, the network has not yet defined a set of criteria regarding which circumstances and what topics committed activists can or cannot legitimately advocate and represent the *Solawi* network in the presence of policy-makers. To compensate for this lack of clarity, the network has issued temporary ad-hoc mandates and has asked activists to only speak in their own name when engaging in advocacy. However, this coping strategy has significant drawbacks. If political advocacy for CSAs is not shaped by a collectively negotiated politics of the network, but by single advocates, this could lead to the (co-)existence of potentially contradictory demands. The CSA network is, after all, heterogenous and has different factions; some position themselves as an actor of a societal transformation more broadly, while others push for the safeguarding of small-holder agriculture (Spanier-Guerrero Lara and Feola 2023). This heterogeneity results in different political agendas; for example, the former openly questions the viability of private property and strives for collectivising land and means of production, while the latter are often land-owners themselves.

Additionally, it is uncertain whether policy makers and administrative elites, who are not familiar with the structure of the *Solawi* network, will understand whether CSA advocates are speaking on their own behalf or on behalf of the network, especially if this role keeps changing. These practical difficulties around questions of legitimacy and representation are

fundamental to any convergence process in (agricultural) grassroots networks (Claeys and Duncan 2019), and they therefore need more attention from scholars and activists alike.

Third, a lack of internal organisation—in particular, missing structures for knowledge transfer and sharing—temporarily led to the concentration of knowledge within a few activists and consequently hampered political advocacy. Setting up organisational structures that facilitate knowledge sharing—for instance, by a meticulous documentation of ongoing political advocacy processes or by setting up trainings, such as the SALSIFI project—is an important step to decrease dependency on individuals and prevent new staff members and volunteers from having to repeatedly recompile the necessary information, skills, and contacts for carrying out advocacy. This need for knowledge sharing echoes the findings of Onyx et al. (2010), who stressed the necessity to organise training sessions in self-advocacy skills as well as knowledge and skill sharing for effective advocacy.

4.5.3. Organising & emotions: creating the basis for political advocacy

While the importance of emotions in studies of political advocacy and its interrelation with a movement's organisational structure have been overlooked by extant research, the case of the *Solawi* network provides empirical evidence for how a group's internal structure can adversely affect members' emotions and group dynamics. In particular, unclear organisational structures and recurrent discussions on whether activists are legitimate advocates are likely to cause frustrations and aggravate already existing tensions among the activists. These feelings may, in the worst case, lead to the disengagement of some individuals (see also Eyerman 2005 on the decline of movements as a consequence of anger and frustrations among activists). Therefore, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities is vital to ensure that the motivation of advocates is not compromised by long and complicated internal negotiations regarding whether and what topics they can(not) advocate on.

Furthermore, ensuring the visibility of advocacy efforts—for instance, by reporting on advocacy activities in an appreciative manner—can nurture the positive affective bonds and solidarity to sustain collective action (Jasper 2011). First, this form of visibility may give advocates the feeling that their efforts are valued by the broader movement, which may be particularly relevant in light of the factionalism within the *Solawi* network (Spanier-Guerrero

Lara and Feola 2023) and the concurrent rise and fall of the status and power of activists (Kemper 2001). Second, providing additional information may enhance transparency and, concomitantly, the trust that members have towards advocates.

4.5.4. Organising & advocacy spaces: identifying (mis-)matches

How a movement is organised influences the spaces in which political advocacy can be fruitfully conducted. That is, political impact is more likely when movements adjust their organisational structure and tactics to match the institution they seek to influence (Amenta et al. 2010).

Representing CSA initiatives from all over Germany, the *Solawi* network is well positioned to conduct political advocacy on the national level. At the same time, the network is still a relatively small actor in the German agri-food system and lacks resources, contacts, and expertise to advocate on its own. Small(er) movements tend to form alliances and join political advocacy campaigns of larger movements which push for more fundamental changes (Onyx et al. 2010). Similarly to the UK CSA network (see Bonfert 2022b), the *Solawi* network already has established alliances at the national level with other agricultural grassroots movements, notably the AbL and Agrarbündnis. Thus, strengthening these already existing alliances and thereby supporting systemic changes in the agri-food system are necessary to move from building a supportive environment for CSAs to bringing about a paradigm change in agriculture more generally (see Spanier-Guerrero Lara and Feola 2023 on the benefits for CSA to build alliances with movements that demand structural changes).

Furthermore, as the findings show, the network is increasingly shifting its focus of advocacy to the federal state level. Since the *Solawi* network, contrary to other agricultural advocacy organisations such as the DBV (Feindt 2009), does not (yet) have any federal divisions, its internal structure does not mirror the political system (Armingeon 2002); consequently, it is not fit to advocate on the federal state level. This limitation is supported by observations that the organisational structure of advocacy organisations differs significantly depending on whether they operate on the national, federal, or local level (Andrews and Edwards 2004).

However, adjusting and expanding the internal structure, including nominating representatives for conducting advocacy in the federal states, is complex. It requires a two-fold legitimisation process: the network needs to approve the federal advocacy representatives, and the local initiatives of the respective federal state, too, need to give input into who can advocate on their behalf in the future. Nonetheless, this effort may be well worth it; engaging on the federal state level could open new possibilities to the *Solawi* network. In particular, since many agricultural policy decisions are taken at the federal level, such involvement could complement the network's focus on advocating for institutional support, with efforts to place concrete demands for agricultural policies. As pointed out by Ewert (2016), the federal states shape the realities of food producers in several ways. Besides providing financial incentives, such as agri-environmental schemes, the federal states also have legislative power over a range of topics, including agricultural and environmental protection laws, and they shape agricultural vocational training via the Chambers of Agriculture. Thus, the federal states are most relevant for pushing for changes which are specific to CSA. For example, the case of building law, mentioned above, illustrates how political advocacy in the respective federal states could contribute to the removal of legal and administrative barriers which render the everyday practices of CSA gardeners particularly difficult.

4.6. Conclusion

This study found that internal organisational structure of the *Solawi* network (or lack thereof) influences the strategies and tactics, resources, emotions and group dynamics, and advocacy spaces in various ways and thereby can enable or hinder political advocacy. Because of the limited engagement of the broad member base in deciding which strategies and tactics are prioritised, it is unclear whether the low prioritisation of political advocacy reflects the views and wishes of *Solawi* members. In light of the its limited financial and human resources, the network needs to clarify the responsibilities and legitimacy of advocates and to develop procedures that allow food producers to carry the voice of the movement. This analysis further showed that negative emotions, such as frustration, lack of trust, and not feeling appreciated (which typically are overlooked in studies on political advocacy), can be partially traced back to unclear role descriptions. These emotions undermine advocates' motivation

to further pursue advocacy. Finally, while the political advocacy efforts of the *Solawi* network have shifted from the national to federal level, thereby opening new spaces to influence agricultural policies, adjusting the network's internal structure brings new challenges in terms of legitimacy. We therefore conclude that movements and practitioners wishing to engage in political advocacy may benefit from paying due attention to the organisational structure of their movement, including some of the tensions and questions that we raised in the previous section (see Figure 3).

It is difficult to draw general conclusions regarding political advocacy because the type of actors and policy contexts vary greatly. The findings of this study, too, are specific to Western European agricultural grassroots networks which are grappling with dynamics of organisational growth and increasing professionalisation.

5

BROADENING POLITICAL ACTION BY COALITION
BUILDING

5.1. Introduction

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a grassroots response to the threat the industrial agri-food system poses to smallholders (NWSL no date (b)) who find themselves forced to choose between growing and industrialising or being squeezed out of the market. While isolating small-scale producers from the pressures of the global market, CSA connects producers with consumers within their region, who commit to collectively bearing the costs and risks of agriculture in return for a share of the harvest (Bonfert 2022b; Rommel et al. 2022). In many CSA initiatives, at least in Germany, consumers practise solidarity not only with producers (the German name of CSA is Solidarische Landwirtschaft [*Solawi*]—solidarity agriculture) but also among consumers, making the financial contributions dependent on a member's budget (through so-called 'contribution rounds') (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017). The distance between producers and consumers is shortened not only physically but culturally as well, with interactions ranging from few farm visits per year to the frequent participation of consumers in the agricultural work or administration of the initiative. Since the first CSA initiatives emerged in the late 1980s in Germany, CSA has grown into a social movement (Diekmann and Theuvsen 2019b), largely organised via a formalised network, the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft (hereafter the *Solawi* network), which was founded in 2011 by CSA farmers and activists. With the foundation of the *Solawi* network, the movement grew considerably from 12 initiatives to 434 CSAs today, with an additional 99 currently in the process of foundation (NWSL no date (c)).[27] The network brings together an array of diverse types of CSA initiatives, from producer-led to consumer-led ones, gardening collectives to family farms, and anarchist to anthroposophic groups.

In its resistance against the growth-pressures within the global food economy through its enactment of a communal, ecological and market-independent way of small-scale food production, CSA has attracted attention from the degrowth community who is engaged in its own fight against an economy focused on continuous growth. Degrowth represents the call for a 'radical reorganisation and resizing of […] economies' (Gerber 2020, 237) as a response to the fundamental ecological unsustainability and socio-economic injustice of societies

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[27] Accessed April 2023.

based on the primacy of economic growth, aiming at achieving wellbeing and the 'good life for all' (Muraca 2020). While degrowth has a broad conceptual base and there is lively debate about its contours (Kallis et al. 2020; Schmelzer and Vetter 2019; Petridis, Muraca, and Kallis 2015), degrowth scholars typically call out the inherent contradiction between the pursuit of environmental sustainability and social justice on the one hand, and capitalist growth on the other (Asara et al. 2015). In the endless pursuit of capital accumulation, capitalist growth depletes resources and bio-physical conditions on which it depends and undermines social justice notably by the creation of public and private debt which fuels and legitimates growth (ibid.). Yet, degrowth cannot be reduced to a call for negative GDP growth (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). As a response to the current ecological and societal crises, it envisions a holistic reorganisation of societies in the Global North (Kallis et al. 2020; Van Den Bergh and Kallis 2012): the decentering of the dominant logics of endless growth, commodification, competition, acceleration and exploitation, and, instead, the reorientation of societies around the principles of conviviality, sufficiency, commoning, care, community and democracy, amongst others (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014; Petridis, Muraca, and Kallis 2015). While often perceived as a purely academic concept, rooted in a long history of academic critiques to economic growth (Petridis, Muraca, and Kallis 2015), degrowth has recently started to be spoken of as a movement (Demaria et al. 2013 see elaboration on degrowth as a movement below). The movement members, degrowth scholars and activists, have debated and pursued a variety of strategies to bring about their vision for a radical transformation: from activism to research, and from bottom-up grassroots initiatives to concrete top-down policy proposals (Petridis, Muraca, and Kallis 2015). The latter include work-sharing and the reduction of the working week, a basic and maximum income, the reduction of advertising, environmental caps and bans, the withdrawal of subsidies for polluting activities and a green tax reform (Kallis 2015; Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel 2021).

In the context of the former—degrowthers' interest in bottom-up initiatives—they have, in recent years, frequently referred to and reached out to CSA, both in their publications and their actions. For many degrowthers, CSA is included among those grassroots initiatives that prefigure a transformation in line with the principles of degrowth (Nelson and Edwards 2021; Kallis et al. 2020; Schmid 2019) and degrowthers are frequently themselves members of CSA

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initiatives or invite these to join degrowth gatherings (own data[28]). So far, however, this interest has not been mutual. The German *Solawi* network does not have a formal position towards, nor a partnership with degrowth. Apart from few advertisements for degrowth-related events (NWSL no date (d); no date (e)), the CSA network's official webpage does not make references to the degrowth movement, let alone a formal endorsement. In a screening of all webpages of CSA initiatives listed on the webpage of the *Solawi* network (solarische-landwirtschaft.org) in 2020, we identified no initiative that explicitly embraced degrowth.

This unilateral interest is, to an extent, the consequence of the transformation trajectory imagined by degrowthers. They often envision a degrowth transformation as occurring through a combination of grassroots practices and larger-scale institutional reforms (Kallis et al. 2020 see above), thereby considering relevant all those grassroots initiatives which embody core ideas of degrowth (see above) and thus 'prefigur[e] degrowth transitions' (ibid., 62). The contribution of grassroots initiatives to societal transformations is thereby hypothesised to lie in their experimentation with alternative forms of production, consumption and ownership, as well as in their consolidation of degrowth-aligned 'common senses' that prepare 'conducive environments for change' (ibid., 52) from the individual to wider societal levels. Often, and thus in the case of CSA, '[m]ost of the[se] initiatives are not pursued in the name of degrowth' (ibid., 62) and this is acknowledged by degrowth scholars, including Kallis et al. (2020).

However, the lack of mutual interest, much less a coalition, might be more than a mere formality after all. Why is there no political connection between CSA and degrowth, if the values of the futures that CSA and degrowth aspire to seem very much aligned? Coalitions are a key political strategy of social movements in bringing about societal change. Abundant research has shown that coalitions support social mobilisation via mobilising large(r) numbers of people and resources, broadening the collective identity and choice of tactical repertoires of movements and instigating external social and political change (Van Dyke and Amos 2017;

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[28] This initial observation was based on our ongoing research on the German CSA movement and our engagement with the international degrowth community. This observation was confirmed by interviewees DM2 and DM3.

Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018). At first sight thus, a coalition would make strategic sense for both CSA and degrowth in their struggle for more desirable futures.

Accordingly, Hickel et al. (2022) have called for the investigation of political movements which are aligned with degrowth. And in terms of other movements, most notably in the case of environmental justice (EJ), degrowthers have explored a potential coalition, thus going beyond the examination of a discursive and practical alignment by also reflecting on social movement politics and political strategies, as well as their potential mismatches (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019; Akbulut et al. 2019). This deeper examination is still lacking for the CSA movement. CSA has mainly been considered through the lens of single CSA initiatives, highlighting examples for their alignment with degrowth values (Bloemmen et al. 2015; Tschumi et al. 2019; Cristiano et al. 2021). These studies did not provide insights into why this alignment has not led to any form of political collaboration or mutual interest. We are thus in line with Gerber's (Gerber 2020, 256) observation regarding agricultural grassroots movements more broadly: that there is a need to study how and if they concretely act as 'allies of the degrowth movement'.

Therefore, this study undertakes a systematic analysis of the potential for a coalition between CSA and degrowth in Germany, including the benefits and risks of such a coalition. We chose to study the CSA and degrowth movements in Germany, as Germany is one of the few countries where both the CSA and degrowth movements are comparatively well established. Notably, we thereby do not a priori assume that a coalition between CSA and degrowth is indeed desirable; rather we investigate the empirical lack of what, from a degrowth perspective, appears to be an obvious coalition. Why is there, in spite of evident alignment between the values and practices of CSA and degrowth, no coalition between the two movements in Germany? Which reasons keep them from becoming formal allies? Then, building on this, we ask what the potential for a coalition in the future is, and, consequently, what the concomitant benefits and risks of such a coalition would be.

In order to answer these questions, we use social movement theory (SMT) on coalitions as the basis of our conceptual framework. SMT defines coalitions as 'organisations [...] or networks that animate [...] collective action [and act as] structuring mechanisms that bridge

political organisations and the looser, more permeable, social movements' (Brooker and Meyer 2019, 253). SMTs, by focusing on political strategy and ideology, as well as context factors such as social ties, resources or existing coalitions, offer alternative perspectives to the currently dominant focus on values and practices and are thus perfectly suited to engage with our research question. Both CSA and degrowth exhibit characteristics of social movements (see below, e.g. Bonfert 2022b on CSA; and Demaria et al. 2013 on degrowth), which is why we conceptualise them as social movements, making use of the analytical strength of SMT.

This paper is structured as follows: we begin with a review of studies on the alignment of the CSA and degrowth movements in discourse and practice. After introducing our conceptual framework, we present our analysis as a comparison of both movements' political strategies and ideologies as well as the conducive and hindering factors for coalition building. Our analysis mainly explores CSA and degrowth on the network level, but we use four CSA initiatives as case studies to illustrate the diversity of political ideologies and strategies embraced within the CSA movement. The paper ends on a reflection on the desirability of a potential coalition, based on the findings of this study, highlighting both the benefits and risks. We find that the benefits of a entering a coalition consist of harnessing the synergies between practice- and discourse-driven change. The CSA movement can benefit from degrowth's structural perspective which denounces the inherent flaws of capitalist society, many of which impede the CSA movement to flourish. In turn, the degrowth movement can learn from the criticisms voiced by the CSA movement regarding the abstract and at times highly academic discourses of degrowth and critically self-reflect on how they can better support practice-driven movements. However, entering a coalition may risk aggravating already perceptible tensions between different factions within the CSA movement, reinforcing both movements' shared exposure to right-wing co-optation, as well as misspending limited resources on an alliance across difference.

5.2. The alignment between degrowth and CSA

Degrowth scholarship has described an alignment of CSA and degrowth based on similar principles and values, as expressed in discourse and/or practice. Tschumi et al. (2019), for instance, depict CSA initiatives as unknowingly practising a degrowth business model. They identify a CSA initiative in a Swiss mountain region as a 'growth-independent' initiative; a quality rooted in the initiative's (1) transformation of consumers into prosumers and (2) establishment of short supply chains with strong ties between all the involved actors, allowing for (i) low shares of, or interest-free, borrowed capital, (ii) the possibility of replacing high capital input costs with manual labour, and (iii) a 'purchase' guarantee for the produced, 'decommercialized' goods (ibid.).

Bloemmen et al. (2015) similarly identify a CSA initiative as a model for microeconomic degrowth. To counter the neoclassic model of homo oeconomicus, they use the case of a Belgian CSA initiative to develop an alternative, 'holistic microeconomic agent' (ibid., 113), based on the characteristics of a CSA member (consumers and producers). This alternative agent represents several degrowth principles and values: they do not seek to maximise utility or profits, but rather value quality over quantity, seek conviviality, trust, cooperation, community participation, and sympathy in social relations and assume responsibility towards nature.

Other authors have transcended a purely microeconomic understanding of degrowth and considered how CSA initiatives challenge wider capitalist relations beyond the economic sphere. This is particularly the case for multiple publications in Nelson and Edwards's (2021) edited volume Food for Degrowth, which includes a series of chapters on CSA. Amongst these, Edwards and Espelt (2021) make a more extensive case for the relevance of CSA for degrowth, specifying CSA[29] as 'sharing a degrowth philosophy in terms of supporting quality human relationships […] democracy, sustainability and justice' (ibid., 129), as 'nurtur[ing] good intentions between country and city, promoting an ethical, local, degrowth lifestyle' (ibid.,

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[29] The definition of CSA used by Edwards and Espelt (2021) is broader than the definition we adopt; it includes initiatives that make use of weekly food purchases via digital platforms.

130) and as being political in the sense of 'stimulat[ing] goals of the social and solidarity economy' (ibid., 131).

Cristiano et al.'s (2021) contribution to Food for Degrowth, then, sets a limit to the alignment between CSA and degrowth. Conceiving of degrowth as essentially embracing decolonisation and deconstruction and as a 'transformation [away] from an unjust and unsustainable economistic growth imaginary' (ibid., 90), the authors specify that not all CSA initiatives are in line with this understanding. They argue that only those initiatives with strong 'prosumer relations' are transformative as they simultaneously instigate societal, economic and environmental change towards a degrowth economy. They give the example of the CSA Veneto (Italy), which is characterised by strong producer–consumer relationships, a redistribution mutualism between all members, participatory internal organisation, self-governed democracy, the transformation of means of production into common ownership, a 'collective degrowth consciousness' (ibid., 97), and the consequent decommodification of food, the latter of which represents, for the authors, the epitome of 'degrowth food'.

5.3. Conceptual framework: social movement coalitions

In this publication, we go beyond an understanding of degrowth and CSA as the discursive or practical performance of values, as shown in the literature review above, and conceptualise them as social movements. Social movements are 'collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part' (Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars 2019, 10). Thus, in movements, individuals engage in collective action to bring about societal change (Millward and Takhar 2019).

CSA networks can be fruitfully analysed through a social movement lens as individual CSA initiatives organise in networks, where common goals and identities are negotiated and collective action is undertaken (see also Bonfert 2022b on the political agency of CSA networks). In Germany, CSAs organise through the *Solawi* network, which self-identifies as a

movement,[30] with the formulated collective goal of the 'conservation and promotion of sustainable peasant farming' and 'a paradigm change in agriculture' (NWSL no date (f)).

The definition of degrowth as a movement is more contested. Degrowth, as an 'activist slogan', emerged more than 20 years ago 'in France[,]Italy […] Catalonia and Spain' (Demaria et al. 2013, 195), and has also begun to be taken up by activist circles and citizen initiatives in Germany. There, in the first decade of the 2000s, the confluence of mobilisations of the anti-globalisation and ecological movements paved the way for German degrowth debates (Brand 2014). Further milestones of degrowth in Germany included the Attac[31] congress 'Beyond Growth' in 2011 and the degrowth conference in Leipzig in 2014, which connected researchers, practitioners and activists from diverse backgrounds. These events, and in particular the degrowth conference, exhibited initial signs of turning the German degrowth debate and discourse into an actual social movement (Eversberg and Schmelzer 2018; Brand 2014). Thus, while the existence or status of a degrowth movement is still debated—both internationally and in Germany—many scholars have started to speak of a 'degrowth movement' (e.g., Akbulut et al. 2019; Gerber 2020; Heikkurinen, Lozanoska, and Tosi 2019), with Demaria et al. (2013) making an elaborate case for this analytical frame (see also the concepts 'degrowth spectrum' (Eversberg and Schmelzer 2018, 250), and 'degrowth in movement' (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2017a, 2).

Against this background, we agree with Demaria et al.'s (2013, 193) attestation of the 'relevance of social movement theory for degrowth': applying SMT equips us with the theoretical apparatus for assessing the current absence and potential of a political coalition between CSA and degrowth. It illuminates to-date not or little considered aspects of the two actors, regardless of the empirical ambiguity of degrowth as a social movement.

The conceptual framework applied in this paper combines several key concepts of SMT. These concepts were selected in an iterative process that led from exploratory fieldwork, engagement with SMT, data collection and analysis to the refining of final concepts. After

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[30] On their webpage, the CSA network writes: 'the [CSA] network considers itself equally as a movement, grassroots democratic organisation and association' (NWSL no date (f)).
[31] Attac is a globalisation-critical movement, which emerged during the 1990s in France and subsequently spread globally (Rätz and Paternoga 2017).

exploratory research in the German CSA movement, the authors defined the research question of this paper and identified SMT as most promising theoretical lens. The authors used their insights from exploratory fieldwork, as well as their engagement with the degrowth community, to pre-select those strands of SMT that were most adequate to apply to the empirical case at hand, including considering some additional aspects not covered directly by these perspectives. After the majority of data was collected, they finalised the choice of concepts after a first round of data analysis, picking those most relevant for investigating the research question.

The resulting conceptual framework (Figure 5.1.) compares the social movements on the basis of three dimensions and their respective features: (1) a movement's political ideology and strategy (expressed in frames, action repertoires and coalitions), (2) (internal) factors that facilitate or hinder a movement in entering into coalitions (social ties, resources and internal organisation), (3) a movement's perception of the other movement. As shown in Figure 5.1., this comparison explores the likelihood of a coalition between the movements: Are their ideologies and strategies compatible? Are the movements' internal situations conducive or hindering coalition building? How do they perceive each other? We briefly outline the relevance of these three dimensions.
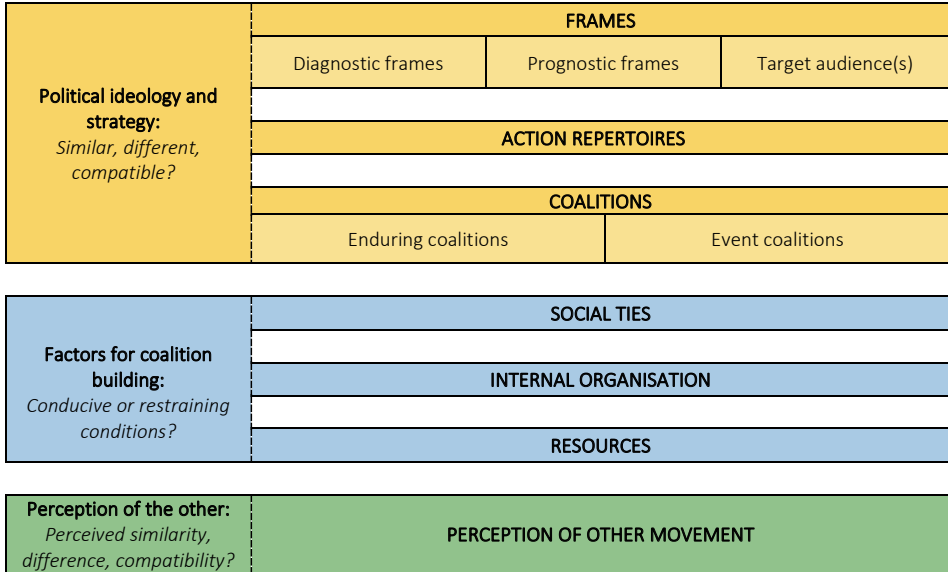
FRAMES		
Diagnostic frames	Prognostic frames	Target audience(s)

ACTION REPERTOIRES

COALITIONS	
Enduring coalitions	Event coalitions

Political ideology and strategy:
Similar, different, compatible?

SOCIAL TIES

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

RESOURCES

Factors for coalition building:
Conducive or restraining conditions?

PERCEPTION OF OTHER MOVEMENT

Perception of the other:
Perceived similarity, difference, compatibility?

Figure 5.1. Conceptual framework on coalition building with three dimensions (left: Political ideology and strategy, Factors for coalition building, Perception of the other) and respective features (such as frames) to compare the two social movements. The questions in italics are investigating the potential for a coalition.

5.3.1. Compatibility of political ideology and strategy

The first dimension of our framework concerns social movements' 'political ideology and strategy'. The alignment of political ideology is an important determinant of coalition formation (Van Dyke and Amos 2017; Brooker and Meyer 2019). Political ideology is a 'system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting social change' (Oliver and Johnston 2000, 43). These values, beliefs and meanings shape social movements and their activities (Zald 2000), and thus their choice of coalition partners. In contrast, political strategy—the purposeful mobilisation towards achieving a movement's goals—does not necessarily need to be similar in order to forge a coalition. Since 'a fundamental means-ends relationship under-pins strategy' (Smithey 2009, 660), a coalition can form when movements with different strategies view it as likely that the coalition will assist them in fulfilling their own goals and objectives (Maney 2012).

Here, we conceptualise a movements' political ideology and strategy as expressed through framing, its repertoires of collective action, and the coalitions which it has previously entered. We do so for several reasons: First, as the political ideology shapes the framing work of social

movements (Benford and Snow 2000), framing processes are often used as a proxy for ideological alignment (Brooker and Meyer 2019). The same is applicable to action repertoires, as these are, second, influenced both by a movement's inner logic, i.e. political ideology and associated interpretative processes (Ennis 1987; Carmin and Balser 2002; Zald 2000), and a movement's strategy (Doherty and Hayes 2019). Third, the types of coalitions that have been established reflect the political strategy of a movement (Obach 2010). Finally, as explained above, these indicators were also deemed relevant based on first data analysis findings.

Framing is the process of producing ideas and assigning meaning to interpret reality (Travaglino 2014). Framing involves the collective negotiation and construction of a shared understanding of problems and solutions, commonly referred to as *diagnostic* and *prognostic framing* (Benford and Snow 2000). These two framing activities are core to social movements, as they typically 'seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue' (ibid., 616). A movement's diagnostic and prognostic framing intends to mobilise its internal and external *target audience*—its participants, supporters, and sympathisers, and demobilise its opponents (Snow and Benford 1988; Travaglino 2014). As such they constitute a vital part of the political strategy of movements: while frames are shaped by a movement's political ideology, they are also tailored to suit the targeted audience(s) a movement seeks to engage (Benford 1993; Benford and Snow 2000). To facilitate coalition formation, frames can then be extended beyond the original problem and solution definition to embrace issues of prospective adherents or related movements (Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars 2019; Rootes 2004). As shown by Haydu (2012) regarding the 'Pure Food Movement' in the United States, ideological differences can be transcended with a more inclusive master frame, enabling a broader coalition. Beyond this, once a coalition is established, the cohesion of frames can 'thwart potential conflict and ease coalition work' (Brooker and Meyer 2019, 259).

Action repertoires, in turn, are the 'arrays of performances that are currently known and available' (McAdam and Tarrow 2019, 23). Social movements employ a variety of activities and tactics that they consider effective to achieve their goals (Soule and Roggeband 2019). The choice of action repertoires reflects 'a strategic sense of how the social world works, which differs substantially in different movements, even within the same polity' (Doherty and Hayes 2019, 282). Repertoires of collective action can be viewed as an expression of the

ideology of a movement and consequently lay the foundation for a coalition; if two movements use similar clusters of collective action, this may signify their similarity (Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018; Carmin and Balser 2002). At the same time, coalition formation may broaden the tactical diversity of the movements, which, in turn, likely enables the mobilisation of a wider range of people and the ability to reach a 'greater number of institutional niches' (Brooker and Meyer 2019, 257; see also Haydu 2012).

Coalitions can be distinguished in two types: event and enduring coalitions. The former are 'short-lived, created for a particular protest or lobbying event' (Levi and Murphy 2006, 655) and tend to be spontaneous and informal. The latter, i.e. enduring or issue-based coalitions, signify a 'long-term cooperation with chosen partners' (ibid., 655) and tend to involve formalised agreements on resources and means of coordination (Brooker and Meyer 2019; Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018). Typically, enduring coalitions require a greater degree of ideological and cultural fit than event coalitions (Van Dyke and Amos 2017).

It is important to note that, contrary to the predominant social movement scholars' focus on ideological alignment as the basis for coalition building, degrowthers investigating coalitions with other social movements have considered different motivations for coalition building. Martínez-Alier (2012) and Akbulut et al. (2019), for instance, assessing the connection between the EJ and degrowth movements, discuss the opportunity of a coalition based not only on aligning values, struggles and objectives, but also on complementarity. They find that degrowth's broad theoretical roadmap could strengthen the EJ movement, while the latter could provide its rootedness in localised but connected struggles, which in contrast is lacking in the still largely intellectual degrowth movement. In a similar manner, Rodríguez-Labajos et al. (2019) suggest that the cement of a coalition between EJ and degrowth may be found not in commonalties, but in analogies, which facilitate 'cross-cultural encounters, since they promote learning without losing the essence of plurality' (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019, 179). Writing on coalitions between degrowth and social movements more broadly, Burkhart et al. (2017b) also argue that while there are many overlaps and connections, there are important and justified distinctions. Building on Kothari et al. (2014), among others, they suggest the metaphor of the mosaic as a way to bring together diverse movements (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2017b).

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5.3.2. Factors for coalition building

The second dimension of our framework concerns internal 'factors for coalition building', i.e. contextual and movement-specific characteristics that increase or limit a movement's ability to enter into coalitions (rather than the overall 'match' between two movements). We focus on three factors—social ties, internal organisation and resources. We do so both due to their key role in SMT on coalitions, and due to their relevance in our findings.

Social ties are connections between individuals across, as well as pre-existing formal organisational ties between, social movement organisations. Social ties have been shown to facilitate coalition formation and longevity (e.g. Van Dyke and Amos 2017). Individuals that are engaged in multiple movements, so-called 'brokers' or 'bridge-builders', can play a significant role in forming coalitions by pointing out shared struggles and interests (Brooker and Meyer 2019; Van Dyke and Amos 2017). Moreover, overlapping adherence to movements can establish trust and contribute to a better comprehension of the respective other (Arnold 2011).

The *internal organisation* of a movement is crucial because the presence of professional leaders and/or leaders with rich human and cultural capital, as well as the ability to divide labour (within or across coalition partners), facilitates coalition formation and longevity (Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018).

Lastly, coalitions require significant *resources*, both financial and temporal, and are therefore unlikely when either of these are scarce (Van Dyke and Amos 2017).

5.3.3. Perception of the other

The last dimension of our framework is the 'perception of the other': how a movement perceives the respective other movement. This dimension is not based on an established concept in SMT, but emerged from the exploratory fieldwork of the two first authors, when they noted strongly variating perceptions within the CSA community with regards to degrowth. The dimension is based on the premise that cultural and ideological similarities between movements, for instance, are not sufficient if they are not recognised as such by the movements themselves. Similarly, matching political strategies may not be perceived as such if the movements do not know enough about each other (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu

2017b). The movements may have different knowledge about each other than the information we obtained as researchers, drawing, most likely, on their public representation and/or social ties.

5.4. Research design

Our research focuses on the CSA and degrowth movements in Germany, where both are, compared to other European countries, relatively well established. Nonetheless, neither of the two movements are completely *contained* within a bounded institution in Germany. As the CSA movement is still largely represented by the *Solawi* network (of which the majority of CSA initiatives are members), we collected data about the CSA movement by treating the *Solawi* network as the representative of the movement. At the same time, we also collected data on the level of the CSA initiative. While the network most directly represents the CSA movement in Germany, it is important to pay attention to the diversity of initiatives gathered in the network, particularly with regard to their differing proximity to degrowth. We selected four CSA initiatives which illustrate the diversity of the CSA landscape in Germany (Table 5.1.). The initiatives were selected based on a screening of all CSA initiatives listed on the webpage of the *Solawi* network (295 in 2020, codebook in Appendix B.I).

Table 5.1. Overview of CSA initiatives used as case studies

	CSA 'Biodynamic'	CSA 'Large'	CSA 'Small'	CSA 'Radical'
Type	biodynamic farm, producer-led	vegetable farm, consumer-led cooperative	vegetable garden, consumer-led	collectivised vegetable farm, producer-led
Size	approx. 100 harvest shares	more than 1000 harvest shares	approx. 30 harvest shares	approx. 200 harvest shares
Rural/ urban	rural	urban	rural	peri-urban
Political self-representation	proximity to biodynamic movement	ambitious actor in socio-ecological transformation on municipal level	no political self-representation; focus on local food	openly radical left, autonomist movement

The German degrowth movement is very diverse and is not represented by one central organisation or platform. It includes both groups that revolve around the German term for degrowth, '*Postwachstum*'—either as a deliberate reference to its English equivalent (*Postwachstum* translates to the less challenging English notion of post-growth[32]), or as a mere custom of using the German terminology[33]—and groups that deliberately use the more radical English term 'degrowth'. In this publication, we choose degrowth' as an overarching term that includes perspectives that could also be framed as 'post-growth'. According to Schmelzer (2015), five distinct discourses can be distinguished, namely (1) conservative, (2) social reformer, (3) sufficiency-oriented, (4) critiques-to-capitalism, and (5) feminist types. Here, we decided to cluster these discourses in two groups within the German degrowth movement: the 'sufficiency cluster', a loose group of researchers connected to the sufficiency-oriented degrowth scholar Niko Paech, and the 'international cluster', a loose group of researchers who actively engage in the international degrowth debate and its feminist, critiques-to-capitalism currents, such as researchers affiliated with the *Konzeptwerk* in Leipzig or the University of Jena. We defined these two clusters due to the differences identified by Schmelzer (2015), as well as their level of visibility in Germany; the sufficiency-oriented variety is most known. We collected data for these two clusters through semi-structured interviews with degrowth scholars and activists who have a broad overview of the degrowth community. The data collection took place between October 2020 and March 2022 following standard research ethics procedures. In total, we conducted 19 interviews, five on the level of the degrowth movement[34] (with researchers and activists from the 'international' and the 'sufficiency' cluster), five on the level of the CSA movement,[35] and nine on the level of individual CSA initiatives.[36] The interviews lasted on average 1h07min (see Appendix B.II for a detailed description of the role of each interviewee, the date, duration and location of the interviews, as well as the interview guides and questions). On the level of the CSA network, we complemented these interviews with background knowledge from participant

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[32] For a discussion of the terminological difference between degrowth and post-growth, see Schmelzer et al. (2022).
[33] There is no established direct translation of de-growth into German; as Schmelzer et al. (2022, 29) point out, Ent-wachstum or De-wachstum would be 'awkward' words.
[34] Referred to in this text as DM1–5.
[35] Referred to in this text as CM1–5.
[36] Referred to in this text as B1, L1–3, S1–2, R1–3.

observation during the network's working groups on 'organisational development' (1.5 years) and 'against the far-right' (one year), participant observation during four network conferences, in addition to the analysis of official documentation and publications such as the network's vision and core principles (NWSL no date (a)). On the level of the CSA initiative, we complemented the interviews on CSA 'Small' and 'Radical' with contextual information from further interviews[37] and participant observation at the CSAs for another research project. On the level of the degrowth movement, we used German degrowth literature (e.g. Schmelzer and Vetter 2019; Muraca 2020) to contextualise our findings.

We analysed all interviews with NVivo, using categorical codes deduced from our conceptual framework (example codes: diagnostic frame, prognostic frame, target audience, etc.). We subsequently synthesised the results for each category per movement and initiative in several cycles of analysis. We thereby coded the data on individual CSA initiatives through the same categories as data on the movement level. As CSA initiatives do not classify as movements, we interpret our findings on individual CSA initiatives as complementary to the findings on the level of the CSA movement: as illustrating, and illuminating, the wide diversity of frames, action repertoires, social ties, and perceptions of degrowth, amongst others, that are held within the CSA movement and that may not be captured by the dominant positions held by the CSA network.

5.5. Findings

In the following, we outline, first, why, from the perspective of SMT, the movements have not yet entered into a coalition, and, second, how and why this may change in the future. We present the findings for the four CSA initiative case studies in tables throughout the text.

5.5.1. Why there is no coalition between CSA and degrowth in Germany

We see several reasons why the two movements are currently not further engaged in a political partnership or coalition, both in terms of mis-matching political ideology and strategy, and in terms of hindering internal factors against coalition building.

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[37] 12 further interviews for CSA 'Small', and 11 further interviews for CSA 'Radical'.

Differences in political ideology and strategy

While the movements' values seem aligned at a superficial level, their ideologies and political strategies, as expressed through their diagnostic and prognostic frames as well as their action repertoires, differ in several regards. The degrowth movement's diagnostic and prognostic frames are relatively abstract: the core problem is defined as the overarching growth-dependent economy, and the core solution as a structural transformation away from this economic system. More concretely, one interviewee from the sufficiency cluster (DM3) proposed the solution of degrowth enterprises—the promotion of growth-independent businesses. In this context, they consider CSA a model for achieving growth-independent farms. The international cluster, while particularly strong in their calls for the systemic dismantling of growth-based capitalism, also celebrates more practical solutions. Our interview partners, in line with an abundance of degrowth publications, considered grassroots initiatives, such as CSA, to be key actors in a radical societal transformation.

The main action repertoires of both degrowth clusters in Germany are academic research and external communication. Degrowth is mostly spread discursively, within academic communities and the wider public, while many non-academic degrowth publications cater to niche intellectual audiences with prior interest in related topics. Notwithstanding this, degrowth researchers are often activist scholars, maintaining a strong relationship with the communities they study, with some of them engaging in participatory action research. Several members of the sufficiency cluster (including Niko Paech), for instance, lead the research project nascent[38] which collaborates with the *Solawi* network and also provides practical input on the basis of their findings (and sufficiency degrowth theory) to CSA initiatives. Members of both clusters, as expressed by interviewee DM2 and DM3, are often themselves engaged in grassroots initiatives, thus locally realising degrowth values in the present. Strengthening degrowth-aligned initiatives can be considered a key form of political action chosen by the degrowth movement. In addition, members of the international cluster go beyond supporting prefigurative politics (prioritised by the sufficiency cluster) and similarly engage in contentious politics, most prominently the climate movement (DM5). They thus

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[38] https://www.nascent-transformativ.de

engage in strategies of resistance against structural injustices, choosing, amongst others, disruptive actions such as blockades.

In contrast, the CSA movement focuses in its main problem frame on a pressing, more palpable reality: the loss of smallholder agriculture in Germany. The members propose both a more systemic and very concrete solution: a 'paradigm change in the food system' on the one hand, and the strengthening and spreading of CSA initiatives on the other. Their political actions focus mostly on the latter solution, nurturing the CSA movement in Germany. The network invests its energy into connecting CSA initiatives, facilitating their mutual exchange, learning and support, as well as supporting their foundation, providing information and consultation services. To a limited degree, and mostly depending on the individual initiative, the CSA movement also voices its political interests with political parties, and forms enduring and event coalitions with other social movements. These movement coalitions have so far only been forged with agri-food movements, such as the German smallholder association (AbL) or the movements joining the annual 'Wir haben es satt!' ('We are fed up with it!') demonstrations for the transformation of the agri-food system. External communication with the wider public is mostly neglected as an action repertoire.

This prioritisation of concrete actions over systemic advocacy and resistance implies that the CSA movement understands CSA not only as an alternative to, but also within, the current (food) system: as a way to preserve smallholder agriculture by shielding it from the pressures of the capitalist agri-food system. The same is true for the wider positioning of the movement within the capitalist growth economy. While the movement clearly does not desire the continuation of the current economic system, it does not put its strategic focus on its discursive rejection. Instead, epitomising prefigurative politics, it puts forward an initiative that practises difference within the capitalist present, a peri-capitalist solution (Tsing 2015; differing from Gibson-Graham's 2006 more optimistic term 'postcapitalism'). As one interview partner explained, for degrowthers, who emphasise a structuralist critique to capitalism, this focus on postcapitalist prefiguration limits the transformative capacity of CSA and thus its 'usefulness' for degrowth: for them, CSA, like other community economy initiatives, unintendedly maintains the status quo by providing the services the state currently fails to provide and not advocating for structural reforms and/or radical disruptions of a

fundamentally flawed system (DM4). In contrast to this, some members of the CSA movement view their prioritisation as a question of urgency. They perceive abstract debates about the economic system as too time-consuming and ineffective in the face of the speed with which peasant agriculture is foundering in Germany. When asked about degrowth, several interviewees of the CSA network described the movement as abstract and academic, as well as not being of particular use for the pressing task at hand: 'it is not our main focus to […] take a certain stand on economic politics […] Our main focus is […] to achieve that as many peasant farms as possible—every day another one closes down—remain, and that new ones emerge' (CM1).

This disinterest in an additional theory—such as degrowth—was also noted by two of our individual case studies, namely CSA 'Large' and CSA 'Radical'. Neither initiative avoids naming capitalism as the root problem to be dismantled. While both of them are appreciative of academic knowledge production, and thus of academic critiques of the capitalist political economy, they ask if the lacking ingredient for societal change truly is a new academic concept—or rather an increase in actions implementing existing concepts (Tables 5.2. and 5.3). One of the founders of CSA 'Large' commented: '[the society we need in the future], if we call it post-fossil […] or degrowth society […] oh well, that is such an ivory tower discussion!' (L2). Instead, as a founding member of CSA 'Radical' stated: 'It is more useful if one of [these degrowthers] makes a move and co-founds a concrete organisation, organises themselves [or] works the soil, since […] the problem in changing the world is less the knowledge than ourselves' (R2).

Table 5.2. Description of CSA 'Radical'

CSA 'RADICAL'	
Framing	• <u>problem</u>: capitalist society and capitalist model of market gardening, including low wages, dire working conditions, separation of natural protection and agricultural production, deskilling, the alienation of citizens from food production and a lack of ownership of the means of production • <u>solution</u>: vegetable farming in the form of CSA, following principles of workers' self-management, the collective ownership of means of production and the integration of natural protection in farming practice
Action repertoires & organisation of CSA	• emphasis on member self-organisation and participation (e.g. food distribution points are self-organised, members self-organise their assistance on the farm) • contribution rounds for economic accessibility and grassroots democratic decision-making via consensus (including questions of salary), but constrained by the culture of low food prices and expectations of the (traditionally) low wages of gardeners in Germany • tensions between ideology and pragmatism: from romanticisation of old machinery to technological professionalisation; from originally mostly contentious and prefigurative politics to including civic forms of politics as a way to integrate in a village
Social ties	• with anarchist, eco-activist and antifascist faction of the political left; • alternative food initiatives in the region, including other CSA initiatives; • global food sovereignty movement: La Via Campesina • some individual links, and event coalition, with degrowth
Perception of/ relation to degrowth	• knowledge about degrowth, but no interest in deepening the connection to degrowth • some members with critical stance towards degrowth: (1) degrowth (including the international cluster) is not sufficiently critical about capitalism and established power structures; (2) degrowth does not offer any advantage to CSA; instead of another theory, they want to see actions

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Table 5.3.: Description of CSA 'Large'

CSA 'LARGE'	
Framing	• <u>problem</u>: the urgent environmental crisis, putting the future of younger generations at risk; rooted in the current economic system • <u>solution</u>: immediate actions with considerable impact, such as setting up a resilient, community-based basic food supply system in their city; thereby contributing to societal unlearning of the values and practices that perpetuate the current system—'unlearning capitalism' (L3)

Action repertoires & organisation of CSA	• strategy of growth (hectares, members) of the CSA initiative:
	  (1) to be attractive to various consumer groups, little effort is expected from the members
	  (2) to be agile and efficient, the initiative is run by a small leadership group, without much space for grassroots participation
	
	• growth and visibility facilitated the collective acquisition of more farmland, employment of relatively large number of staff with comparatively high wages
	
	• active engagement in local politics on the topics of food and environmental change
	
	• tensions:
	  (1) reproach from within the CSA network: CSA 'Large' promotes the capitalist co-optation of CSA
	  (2) struggle with the question of adequate size: which size in harvest shares is still compatible with the principles of CSA? To which degree can consumers still become 'prosumers'?

Social ties	• with food and environmental citizen initiatives and networks in their city-region • some individuals with connections to degrowth, notably to Niko Paech (the CSA is a project partner of *nascent*); departure of one founding member loosened intentional link to degrowth movement

Perception of/ relation to degrowth	• perception of concordance between the principles of degrowth and the CSA initiative, agreement with the need for a degrowth transformation; association temporarily defined a 'degrowth-proof basic supply system' as their goal
	• new leadership team identifies less strongly with degrowth, instead perceive alignment with the economy for the common good and have a preference for pragmatic, down-to-earth solutions without the need of an 'overarching masterplan'
	• degrowth is perceived as a theoretical discourse on the meta-level without practical relevance

At the same time, we also understand the abstinence from an openly anti-capitalist stance as a strategic choice of the CSA movement, considering its target audience: the movement wants to be in conversation with a diverse group of prospective and existing members in order to spread CSA in Germany—from traditional family farms to leftist gardening collectives and middle-class urban consumer groups. The collectively held diagnostic and prognostic frames thus need to integrate a range of ideologies. A discursive focus on the faults of capitalism could scare away potential members whose habitus differs from that of the radical left but who otherwise share the values of the movement (although, as described in CSA 'Radical', an anti-capitalist stance is certainly attractive to some). This might be particularly relevant for the movement's declared goal of persuading traditional agricultural farms to transition to CSA—currently a rather unsuccessful endeavour—as we observe the existing framing difference to be particularly evident for the original founders of the CSA movement: agricultural family farms. These CSA initiatives focus much more on traditional agricultural themes and the discourse of peasant struggles than newer generations of CSA. The newer generations, mostly represented by vegetable CSAs which now make up the majority of initiatives in the network, often identify more with the language around community economies and the commons. Some interviewees described these differences as a tension— between initiatives that are 'young [...] and left and far away from the reality of agriculture' (CM5) and 'patriarchal, hierarchical [farms] [...] embracing a Christian work ethic' (CM3). This tension recently played out in a conflict in 2019 about the identification of CSA with 'peasant agriculture' (German: bäuerliche Landwirtschaft). For some members of the CSA movement

with an intellectual, urban background, peasant farming reminds them of poverty and the past; at the same time, traditional smallholder farms strongly identify with the term, and would feel further alienated should it be removed from the self-description of the CSA movement. The network resolved this tension by explicitly referring to both 'peasant holdings' and 'community-supported enterprises' when referring to CSA initiatives in its documents and on its webpage.

Factors that inhibit coalition building

On top of these differences in the movements' ideologies and political strategies, we find that the movements' resources, as well as their internal organisation, limited mobilisation of social ties and lack of knowledge about the other movements, do not form conducive factors for coalition building. First, the movements differ in their degree of formalisation. While the *Solawi* network is a formalised association, with paid staff and a clear organisational structure, the German degrowth movement, contrary to other European countries such as Italy (Associazione per la decrescita: www.decrescita.it and Movimento per la decrescita felice: www.decrescitafelice.it) or the Netherlands (Ontgroei: www.ontgroei.degrowth.net), does not have an encompassing organisation or network. The organisation of the emergent movement occurs via communication platforms and networking events, as well as via several smaller degrowth hubs. Due to this difference, members of the CSA movement struggle with perceiving degrowth as a movement on equal standing: 'I do not know any real representatives of degrowth, or their organisation. I mean, which organisation represents degrowth thought [...] is this only a discourse on the metalevel?' (CM4). Evidently, not knowing who to connect to does not facilitate coalition building.

More generally, there is also little knowledge about degrowth on the side of CSA. Some of the strongest social ties of the CSA network are within the rural agri-food realm, such as to organic farming associations, and thus do not overlap with the rather urban-centred agricultural social ties of the degrowth movement. Even those few people who are simultaneously connected to the CSA and the degrowth movements have so far not acted as bridge-builders between the two movements, nor are all of them equally involved in or knowledgeable about both movements. In addition, the personnel fluctuation in the CSA movement hinders the establishment of long-term coalitions on the basis of social ties, which currently depend on

select individuals. Table 5.3 illustrates how initiatives' ideologies and political strategies, including their interests in coalitions with other movements, change with the moving on of individual members. One founding member of CSA 'Large' had an explicit interest in degrowth. While, after their departure, the remaining leadership team still agrees with the idea of degrowth, they now prioritise other concepts and movements.

Degrowth has never been discussed at the network level of the CSA movement, and has rarely been treated as a principal topic in other formats. Similarly, many initiatives, even those whose practices and values appear to perfectly align with, or even embody, degrowth, do not know about the concept of degrowth, nor are they part of related alternative economy movements. This is well illustrated by CSA 'Biodynamic' (Table 5.4.): while directly practising several key values of degrowth (e.g. farming within the ecological limits of the territory, decommodification of food), the initiative does not have any connections nor knowledge about degrowth.

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Table 5.4.: Description of CSA 'Biodynamic'

CSA 'BIODYNAMIC'	
Framing	• <u>problem</u>: risks and economic constraints that (peasant) farmers face inhibit production according to own ideals • <u>solution</u>: CSA model via risk-sharing ensures 'farming in freedom' from consumer and market constraints, enabling a coherent, diverse biodynamic production
Action repertoires & organisation of CSA	• holistic biodynamic farming, combining horticulture, agriculture and livestock: preserving old varieties, soil regeneration, production determined by the limits and characteristics of available land • attempt to decommodify food discursively and practically, such as via collective property ownership, abstaining from fixed quantities of harvest shares (members can decide how much they need); slogan: 'food loses its price and thereby regains its value' • enhance accessibility via contribution rounds • limited on-farm engagement of members, but self-organised distribution groups, consumers framed as 'non-active' farmers • tensions: not all members share the farm's values to the same extent, which has repeatedly been a source of conflict
Social ties	• with local agricultural actors (notably the biodynamic community) and the municipality • no ties to degrowth
Perception of/ relation to degrowth	• no awareness of degrowth, yet an intuitive critique in line with degrowth thought: qualitative instead of quantitative growth is needed • own CSA viewed as an 'island', a concrete, already existing example of exiting growth-driven and consumer society

Even the nascent project focuses in its collaboration with the CSA network on practical input that is disconnected from larger theories of degrowth. Consequently, many members of the CSA movement know mostly the version of degrowth as shared by nascent, perceiving connections between CSA and degrowth on the basis of growth independence and antiglobalisation sentiments. None seemed to be aware of the international degrowth cluster, or their engagement in prefigurative initiatives or coalitions with the German climate and anti-coal movement. As the sufficiency cluster is not known to be particularly engaged in

movement politics (but rather works on the level of microeconomics), this exclusive connection between CSA and nascent did not facilitate any advances towards a movement coalition between CSA and degrowth. As one member of the international cluster states: '[Paech, member of nascent] is not an actor who partakes in the building of a movement or who tries to act strategically on the level of social movements' (DM5).

Lastly, neither of the two movements currently have sufficient financial, personnel or time resources to engage in activities at the margins of their fields of action, including the establishment of coalitions with movements engaged in related, but not identical, struggles. The agricultural practitioners in the CSA network in particular, whose movement participation occurs after long days of manual work, do not have time to read articles about degrowth, or they might set different priorities for their leisure time. As shown in the case of the CSA 'Radical' (Table 5.2.), this means that even initiatives that know about degrowth, including the international cluster, have entered event coalitions and share several links in related anti-capitalist communities, do not engage in, nor are they interested in, establishing longer-term coalitions with the degrowth movement, as they do not perceive added value in doing so.

5.5.2. On what basis could a coalition be established in the future?

While to date there is no coalition between the CSA and degrowth movements, there are several possibilities for a potential coalition. Besides promising social ties, a careful analysis of the framing of both movements shows instances of ideological alignment when abstracting from core issues and listening to the voices of subgroups within both movements.

Alignment and complementarity of political ideology and strategy

First, with regard to the diagnostic framing, the CSA movement views the loss of peasant agriculture as embedded in the bigger problem of 'market pressures' that permeate the current agri-food system. To survive, farms are obliged to specialise and seek economies of scale, a concept captured by the slogan 'grow or perish'. Consequently, one degrowther from the sufficiency cluster argued that degrowth ideas are core to the *Solawi* network and its efforts to bring about a paradigm change in agriculture (DM3). At the same time, the problematisation of international trade articulated by the international degrowth cluster aligns with the critique of the globalised market within the *Solawi* network. This alignment

can be traced back to the origins of both movements; members of the anti-globalisation movement were heavily involved in the emergence phase of both the *Solawi* network and the degrowth movement. A closer examination of the diversity of problem sub-framings reveals further similarities, such as critiques of deskilling (Table 5.2.), or the precarious perspectives for future generations (Table 5.3) in addition to continuous technologisation.

Second, the prognostic framing of the *Solawi* movement resonates with perspectives often held by sufficiency degrowthers. CSA, which assures the survival of smallholder farms by shielding them from market pressures, echoes the idea of overcoming growth pressures at the micro-level via growth-independent enterprises (DM3). Some members of the *Solawi* network therefore suggest an ideological alignment with degrowth, arguing that agricultural production in CSA is not growth-driven but need-driven: what and how much is produced is decided collectively by the members of a CSA and not dictated by the expected revenue of production (CM1, CM3, CM4). In line with this, many members commented on the sufficiency-based nascent project as being enriching and useful (CM1, CM4). CSA 'Large' also illustrates the alignment between CSA and sufficiency degrowth well (Table 5.3): reflecting on the question regarding the adequate size of their impact-driven initiative, they sought advice from Niko Paech. Paech legitimised the initiative's growth as furthering a degrowth transformation.

Beyond an alignment with the sufficiency cluster, CSA initiatives organised as vegetable gardening collectives often embrace and uplift degrowth values that also the international cluster espouses, such as autonomy, self-determination, and collective engagement (CSA 'Radical', Table 5.2). The prognostic and diagnostic frames of the newer CSA initiatives, in comparison to the discourse by older generations of CSA, come closer to a discursive dismissal of the growth economy, and may thus make a future movement coalition on the basis of alignment of frames more likely. This newer generation of CSA has recently started to shape the politics of the CSA network, as illustrated by a recent frame broadening: CSA is no longer exclusively portrayed as a peasant struggle fighting for the survival of smallholder agriculture, but now also features as a 'key-figure in social-ecological transformation processes' (NWSL no date (a)).

Third, an analysis of the action repertoires of both movements for complementarity, rather than similarities, exhibits further scope for coalition building. One the one hand, degrowthers can—and, in some instances, already do— strengthen the CSA movement via research and communication. (Participatory action) research on and with CSA initiatives can provide concrete insights when investigating topics and questions that are of relevance for the movement, but are not taken up due to a lack of resources. Additionally, according to one interviewee, the degrowth movement's emphasis on and expertise with external communication could compensate for the current lack of capacity for external communication on the part of the *Solawi* network, for instance in the form of newspaper articles or blogposts that raise awareness about the CSA model (DM2). Furthermore, a member of the CSA network hopes that degrowth could shift the broader societal discourse towards the urgency of the multiple unfolding crises which are rooted in the growth paradigm (CM4). Juxtaposing these crises with the CSA model would then legitimise the work of CSA initiatives and portray them as viable alternatives to the status quo.

In turn, CSA practices prefigure, in the present, a post-capitalist society. In line with the perspectives of degrowth scholars summarised earlier in this article, some of our interview partners referred to the value of CSA initiatives' (unknowing) translation of abstract degrowth theory for broader society (DM2, DM5). In this way, CSA initiatives are also appealing to degrowthers who join initiatives to practise the values they embrace (DM2). CSA can also speak to people that do not yet feel attracted to degrowth and introduce them step by step to new topics and ideas and provide a space for unlearning growthism. The founder of CSA 'Large' (L3) explicated how their CSA can serve as a 'Trojan horse' of transformation: consumers join for a mere vegetable box, not expecting a radical political project behind it, but their participation slowly unlocks a process towards putting things more fundamentally into question.

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Table 5.5.: Description of CSA 'Small'

CSA 'SMALL'	
Framing	• <u>problem</u>: unsustainability of food production • <u>solution</u>: CSA provides access to locally produced, healthy vegetables
Action repertoires & organisation of CSA	• Member size is kept deliberately small, thereby enabling a strong sense of community • collective gardening instructed by a gardener: large share of the gardening work conducted by members (including self-harvest) • no unified political vision (intentionally 'unpolitical'), although discussions about societal challenges (e.g. neoliberalisation) occur informally during collective gardening work
Social ties	• with associations and cultural infrastructure in surrounding villages and small towns and with anthroposophic institutions in the region • attendance of conference on alternative economies

Perception of/ relation to degrowth	• degrowth is not discussed at the group level
	• different degrees of interest in/knowledge about growth criticism:
	  (1) most members are not familiar with degrowth
	  (2) one board member mentioned degrowth, referring to sufficiency, market independence and a stronger dependence on the natural environment
	  (3) some members feel torn between the 'blessings' and 'disadvantages' of the capitalist economy

CSA 'Small' illustrates this Trojan horse idea very well (Table 5.5). When the initiative was founded, most of the members were primarily interested in access to local, healthy food. Self-identifying as mere 'normal people', the initiative's mostly rural member base did not have many ties to typical 'leftist or environmentalist bubbles' and thus did not strive to have a larger societal impact with CSA. When the group underwent a crisis—membership was halved in size and they were in want of a farmer—members experienced a process of collective (un)learning: forced to do the gardening work themselves, they temporarily had to unlearn their role as consumers. They developed a strong sense of community and established, after finding a farmer, a commitment to weekly participation in farming work of all members. Beyond this crisis, the members perceive their participation in CSA as a learning process,

including, for some, the unlearning of certainties about the growth-based economy. As a CSA initiative, members were invited to join a conference on alternative economies. There, they were confronted with critical perspectives on capitalism and its pending crash due to the impossibility of further growth. Several members remember this event as a disconcerting experience: they currently do not see a (possible) alternative to the capitalist economy; its pending crash thus symbolises a rather bleak future.

Factors that enable coalition building

Existing coalitions and social ties provide fertile ground for a future coalition between degrowth and CSA in Germany. The existence of individuals who are active within both movements, or at least knowledgeable of the respective other, has led to one enduring coalition in form of the research project nascent, and several event coalitions in the form of workshops (e.g. on CSA at the degrowth conference in Leipzig), panel discussions, and the co-authorship of one book chapter in the publication Degrowth in Movement(s) (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2017a). Starting from concrete and practical links, event coalitions can lay the foundation for an enduring coalition (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019), while requiring a relatively low amount of time and capital, which seems key in light of the limited resources of both movements. Furthermore, event coalitions resonate with the idea of polycentric organisation that some members of the CSA network embrace. Polycentric organisation advocates for informal, spontaneous exchange across movements on common topics without formal or hierarchical organising (CM3). Members of the degrowth and CSA movements also meet in other common spaces and movements, notably the antiglobalisation movement (Attac) and the commons movement (including housing projects, workers' collectives, and autonomous movements), as well as initiatives and movements around the community and solidarity economy. The commons movement, strongly represented in Germany by the Commons Institute,[39] may even function as a further prospective bridge-builder. Degrowth and commons are ideologically very close; in fact, some scholars have argued that both movements 'in some way contain each other' (Euler and Gauditz 2017, 101) or that there is a commons-oriented current within the degrowth movement (Schmelzer and Vetter 2019).

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[39] https://commons-institut.org/.

Simultaneously, there is a relatively high degree of identification with and visibility of commons-related ideas in the CSA network.

The relaunch of the Netzwerk Oekonomischer Wandel[40] (economic transformation network, NOW) potentially provides the most tangible opening for an enduring coalition between CSA and the international degrowth cluster. Once a purely intellectual thinktank uniting different strands within the alternative economies movement (including degrowthers from the international cluster), it has now opened its doors to practitioners, including individuals from the *Solawi* network. In the eyes of a member of the latter, the value of NOW lies in its potential to 'give a voice to the alternative economies movement as a whole […] contribute to its diffusion and visibility […] and potentially initiate lobbying and advocacy work' (personal communication). This statement shows once more how the need for an alternative economic system is recognised within the CSA movement, yet also how little importance is given to whether these ideas run under the banner of the degrowth, commons, solidarity economy movement, or another one.

5.6. Discussion

In what follows, we connect these insights to degrowth debates on coalitions and to SMT on coalitions, by drawing out both the benefits and risks of a potential coalition between CSA and degrowth. These benefits and risks do not 'sum up' to a recommendation in favour of, or against, a coalition; it is the movements themselves who will ultimately do this evaluation.

5.6.1. The benefits of a coalition (and their limitations)

Social movement scholars typically stress that ideological alignment forms the base for entering a coalition (e.g. Brooker and Meyer 2019; Van Dyke and Amos 2017). Our results show that such commonalities or overlaps exist, particularly between CSA and the sufficiency cluster within degrowth. While it is certainly true that commonalities render coalition work easier, we find it limiting to think about a potential coalition only in terms of alignment. After all, coalitions across differences, while challenging to build, can be enriching and hold strategic value, since new perspectives and experiences are shared (Gawerc 2020; 2021). We

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[40] https://netzwerk-oekonomischer-wandel.org/.

find inspiration in the metaphor of a 'mosaic of alternatives' as cited above: a mosaic implies heterogeneity and, as a vision for building a plural world, combines diverse struggles and strategies (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2017b). In line with degrowth scholars who explored a potential coalition with the EJ movement, we ask: How could the movements benefit from each other's struggles? What could they learn from each other (Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2017b)? In other words, how could degrowth assist the CSA movement in fulfilling their own objectives, and vice versa (Maney 2012)?

In our view, the benefits of a coalition between CSA and degrowth in Germany would lie in the complementarity between practice- and discourse-driven social change; in the synergy between a movement focusing on practices of prefiguration and survival, and one concentrating on discourses of structural transformation. In the beginning of this publication, we summarised how degrowth scholars have engaged with and identified the relevance of CSA for degrowth, particularly as a way of practising degrowth values in the present. Our research confirmed these reflections, also from the viewpoint of CSA, as one interview partner from the CSA movement proposed the metaphor of the Trojan horse. However, our research warns against viewing CSA as a grassroots practice that can simply be 'claimed' by degrowth as a 'mosaic' of its movement, or performance of its principles. Instead, it shows how degrowth can, and should, learn from the CSA community. CSA practitioners challenge degrowth's theory of change by contrasting it with the urgency and reality of smallholder survival in the pre sent. They call degrowth out as 'an ivory tower discussion', and thus pose clear demands on the degrowth movement to practise critical self-reflection: how can degrowth, and the international degrowth cluster in particular, better connect with practitioners on the ground who might not have the time nor the desire to engage in complex, and sometimes seemingly futile, academic thinking? How can the degrowth movement, beyond summarising all the existing struggles and practices of alternative futures, become a useful ally to practice-driven movements such as CSA? What can it offer to them?

Theoretically, degrowth can offer something to CSA: As outlined in our findings, CSA initiatives, and the movement, do not strategically focus on bringing about structural change, especially beyond the agri-food system, but invest their energies into surviving within the capitalist market, which is difficult enough. This is crucial, especially as their daily work entails

the prefiguration (and preservation) of postcapitalist alternatives. Complementary to that, critique-to-capitalism currents within the international degrowth cluster point out the caveat that prefigurative initiatives, while necessary for societal transformation, are not sufficient: they ought to be accompanied by structural changes such as the reorganisation and redistribution of work and wealth, as well as the dismantling of social and cultural hierarchies (Schmelzer and Vetter 2019). Contrary to the sufficiency cluster's tendency towards reformist strategies and vagueness regarding capitalism, the international degrowth cluster holds a clear position against capitalist forms of thinking, doing, and valuing. It exposes power and domination in capitalist society and points out who currently benefits from the growth imperative and capitalist modes of accumulation.

CSA initiatives find themselves embedded in this capitalist society and its cross-sectoral constraints (Guerrero Lara et al. 2023, published in this thesis as **Chapter 6**). While shielding food producers from the pressures of the food market, CSA does not represent an impermeable postcapitalist bubble, but rather peri-capitalist survival (Tsing 2015). For instance, while many CSA initiatives enhance accessibility through contribution rounds, these are limited to the possibilities within a structurally unequal society: while enabling the participation of less financially secure members, contribution rounds do so only at the mercy of affluent 'patrons', risking turning CSA into a neoliberal charity that liberates the state from its obligations (Cropp 2015; 2022). Initiatives which are located in economically weak regions may struggle to pay adequate wages to their farmers (ibid.). Lastly, almost all initiatives struggle with the low time resources most of their members can offer to support farm and administrative work—the consequence of a socially normalised 40-h-work week, and an economy in which five days of work per week are necessary to earn (or not even earn) a decent living (see also Pole and Gray (2013), who report on the circumscription of member participation in CSA in New York, albeit without reference to peri-capitalism).

As these examples illustrate, strengthening a structural perspective—as promoted by the international degrowth cluster—in the CSA movement's ideology and strategy would eventually shift the focus of the CSA movement from assuring that smallholder agriculture survives in Germany, to ensuring that it thrives. It would eventually mean sharpening the CSA

movement's self-image as a political actor, with political demands for a radical, structural transformation of the economy.

Clearly, for neither CSA nor degrowth is the respective other the only opportunity for such a bridge between structural change and prefigurative survival. For the degrowth movement, there are other prefigurative initiatives that exist independently of degrowth but practice values and ideas in line with its vision, such as urban gardening (Anguelovski 2014), back-to-the-landers (Calvário and Otero 2014), and ecovillages (Kliemann 2017), to name a few. At the same time, however, neither of these initiatives are mutually exclusive. Considering degrowth's vision of a 'mosaic of alternatives', relations to all forms of grassroots movements prefigurating futures in line with the broad visions of degrowth are valuable. For the CSA movement, the food sovereignty movement can similarly provide impulses for demands for structural change. However, this is currently not the case. While, in its transnational movement, food sovereignty represents a radical and holistic call for the abolition of all forms of structural oppression, exploitation and inequality of power, condemning the power of transnational corporations and international trade (Nyéléni Forum 2007), the German CSA movement has, despite its enduring coalition with the German member of La Via Campesina, AbL, not taken up this radical discourse. In addition, as Salzer and Fehlinger (2017) explicate in their analysis of the relationship between food sovereignty and degrowth, the two communities have different strengths regarding systemic critiques of the economy. While the food sovereignty movement focuses on calling out the destructiveness of market mechanisms and profit logics, the degrowth movement can still complement this structural critique with a bigger picture of the general workings of capitalism: what are the structural roots of the primacy of profit and growth in capitalism and what would it mean to unmake these roots and the power relations that underly them (Salzer and Fehlinger 2017)?

5.6.2. The risks of a coalition (and how to overcome them)

On the other hand, we perceive several risks of a potential coalition. First, we fear that a coalition with degrowth, informal or formal, might aggravate the already perceptible tensions around the CSA movement's identity that exist between the different cultural-political backgrounds within the *Solawi* network. Contrary to newer generations of CSA that view CSA as a form of alternative economy, members with a strong peasant identity may find the

language of degrowth too distant from their own struggles. Moreover, as the links to the degrowth movement are currently largely held by select individuals within the CSA network (particularly so for the case of the international degrowth cluster), the building of a coalition may be (wrongly or rightly) perceived as the pursuit of these personalities' individual agendas, rather than the pursuit of the general objective of the movement. This resonates with observations from social movement scholars who have pointed out that coalition work can make 'conflicts between different associated groups more salient' (Wang, Piazza, and Soule 2018, 179). To overcome this risk, degrowth would need to connect with the realities and identities of its potential allies (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019). While parts of the CSA movement, as shown in our analysis, are already close to the degrowth movement in terms of political ideology, other members may indeed need time to connect with degrowth ideas. These differences in pace should be recognised and not obscured by arguments of urgency of societal change, as put forward by some newer members of the CSA movement. Entering a coalition without addressing the above-named issue will likely bear consequences for the type of members that the network seeks to attract. In the worst case, a coalition would further work against the project of making CSA attractive to traditional family farms, whose transition to CSA might be one of the few ways of saving them from the false choice of 'growing or perishing'.

A second risk of a coalition lies in reinforcing the weaknesses that both movements share. One point in case is the risk of far-right co-optation. The CSA movement has experienced these attempts in several ways, leading them to establish a working group that develops political strategies against far-right co-optation.[41] Similarly, degrowth scholars have noted how localist positions within degrowth thought appeal to right-wing ideologies. Here, again, a coalition with the degrowth movement as a whole, rather than a reduction of degrowth to sufficiency, could limit this risk. While the sufficiency cluster has so far not tried to establish a clear position against the far-right (Muraca 2020; Eversberg 2018), the international cluster

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[41] The threat of far-right cooptation became apparent for the first time in 2013, when the network discovered a person with far-right ideologies in their midst and initiated an exclusion process (for a more detailed description of the history of far-right cooptation in the context of CSA in Germany and concomitant boundary work of the CSA network see **Chapter 3** and Ahlert (2022) on action strategies against far-right co-optation). For further information on the activities and statements of the working group visit: www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-netzwerk/arbeitsgruppen/rechte-tendenzen.

has started to problematise structural racism and practise reflectivity (Eversberg 2016; 2018; Habermann and Humburg 2017).

A last risk lies in the above-stated mismatch between the political ideologies and strategies of the two movements. While we have dwelled on the potential benefits of an alliance based on complementarity, we similarly see risks. The academic, abstract discourse of the degrowth movement, as criticised by members of the CSA movement, may not only act as a day-to-day barrier in collaboration and subsequently lead to alienation between the two movements, but also, to put it bluntly, not help the CSA movement in achieving its goals. In the worst case, it may even have adverse effects: if the CSA movement were to take on an adjusted 'master frame' that aligns with degrowth, a movement with marginal political power in Germany, the similarly marginal CSA movement may not only not increase, but possibly even limit its appeal to more dominant political forces. Moreover, as stated by a member of the CSA network, an increased engagement of the CSA movement in intellectual debates on capitalism may demand important time and personnel resources from the already underfunded and understaffed network; it may take up resources urgently needed to work towards the primary collective goals of the movement.

Yet, coalitions can take manifold forms. The movements could take this latter risk into account when developing the concrete arrangement of their alliance. While coalitions can involve forging a common agenda including adjusted master frames (e.g. Gawerc 2020) and the coordination of repertoires of action (e.g. Polanska and Piotrowski 2015), they do not need to be this extensive. Rodríguez-Labajos et al. (2019) conclude in their analysis of a potential coalition between degrowth and the environmental justice movement that coalitions characterised by plurality ought to start small; these coalitions should necessarily first develop 'specific alliances on concrete projects' rather than attempting to forge an overall coalition (ibid., 182). In this sense, a coalition between CSA and degrowth could build on topics on which both movements are already converging, such as commoning, collective ownership, alternative democratic practices or sufficiency, and thus harness the advantage of an extended audience in the mobilisation of a critical mass. This could entail collaborating for, or coordinating the dates of specific events, or giving visibility to each other in the communication with their member base. Moreover, before considering a formal or more

enduring alliance, the two movements may simply engage in a non-public process of mutual learning: consulting the expertise of the respective other to the extent that the movements themselves consider enriching.

5.7. Conclusion

This study provided a first comprehensive assessment of a potential coalition between CSA and degrowth in the context of Germany. Drawing on SMT, we find that the current absence of a coalition can be explained by (1) ideological and strategic differences which are expressed in differing diagnostic and prognostic framings as well as action repertoires, (2) a lack of conducive factors for coalition building due to differing forms of internal organisation, scarce resources, and the limited mobilisation of existing social ties, and (3) a lack of knowledge about degrowth on the side of CSA.

At the same time, we identify several openings for a future coalition. First, there are subtle alignments in sub-framings, most notably in critiques of growth pressures in the food system. Second, we find that the divergent action repertoires of the two movements are complementary: the CSA movement largely focuses on practice-driven social change, while degrowth mainly pursues discourse-driven change. Third, our analysis shows the presence of potential 'bridge-builders' in the form of individuals who are engaged in both movements, as well as in other networks or movements which are closely related to degrowth and CSA. Until recently, such connections were largely limited to sufficiency degrowthers (such as the nascent team). The relaunch of NOW provides an avenue for similarly deepening the engagement of CSA with the international degrowth cluster.

Our study identified several potential benefits and risks of a coalition. Considering the advantages, we expect that entering a coalition would bring with it the benefits of complementarity: The international degrowth cluster can promote and strengthen a structural perspective that calls out the inherent flaws of the capitalist society within which the *Solawi* network is based. In turn, rather than being 'used' to prefigure a degrowth society in the here and now, the CSA movement can challenge the abstract and at times seemingly disconnected academic discourses of degrowth and thereby (hopefully) instigate a critical self-reflection in the degrowth movement on how to support practice-driven movements. On

the other hand, we see several risks of a potential coalition: first, an aggravation of already existing tensions within the CSA movement's diverse membership—further alienating those members identifying with traditional peasant politics rather than gardening and solidarity economies; second, an exacerbation of weaknesses that both movements share (notably the risk of far-right co-optation); and, third, a misallocation of sparse resources for the CSA movement, which may not see sufficient benefits in a coalition with degrowth. While these findings might offer starting points for similar inquiries into political collaborations between CSA and degrowth movements in other countries and transnationally, we would like to stress the specificity of our analysis to the context of Germany, and the associated difficulty of drawing general lessons for a coalition between degrowth and CSA on a global level. Further studies may continue this inquiry into CSA as an explicitly political movement and degrowth as a usefully self-critical ally in the fight for a radical transformation towards societies centred around the good life for all; societies where not only the survival, but the actual flourishing of smallholder agriculture becomes both a desirable and realistic political horizon.

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6

DEGROWTH AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS: A RESEARCH AGENDA

6.1. Introduction

In today's context of multiple socioecological crises, discussions and critiques of growth, as well as proposals for post- or degrowth societies have entered public debates (see e.g. Jackson 2009; Smil 2020; Hickel 2021a). In particular, degrowth has become a recognised paradigm for identifying and critiquing systemic unsustainability rooted in the capitalist, growth-compelled economy. Degrowth is defined as 'an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that will reduce societies' throughput of energy and raw materials. […] Degrowth signifies a society with a smaller metabolism, but more importantly, a society with a metabolism which has a different structure and serves new functions' (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014, 3f). In an attempt to translate degrowth's broader critiques into concrete debates and policies, researchers have recently begun exploring intersections of degrowth with specific economic sectors such as housing (Nelson and Schneider 2018) and tourism (Fletcher et al. 2019). Increasingly, degrowth is discussed in relation to the agri-food sector, as attested by a growing number of journal articles, conference contributions and a recently edited volume by Nelson and Edwards (2021).

This interest in agri-food systems from a degrowth perspective is not entirely new; in fact, this literature reconnects with the intellectual work of some degrowth pioneers who have addressed agri-food in their writings from different perspectives ranging from explorations of entropic degradation and the biophysical limits it poses to agricultural production (Georgescu-Roegen 1971) to discussions of meta-physical questions on the value of land and living beings (Schumacher 1973).

In turn, the resurgent literature on agri-food systems and degrowth has started to explore the centrality of the growth question to agri-food system sustainability and agrarian change (Gerber 2020) and the relevance of degrowth for alternatives to industrial, capitalist agri-food systems (Nelson and Edwards 2021). Yet, much remains to be explored. How would a research programme for the critical social sciences on degrowth and agri-food systems look? How could the strengths of degrowth's system analysis be combined with those of other scholarship traditions such as rural studies, sustainability transformations and agrarian studies, among others? What research questions would emerge from a reflection on the

embeddedness of agri-food systems in broader capitalist socio-economies and socio-ecologies? This article takes stock of this emerging body of literature and proposes a research agenda that deepens, expands and diversifies future degrowth research on agri-food systems. Agri-food systems 'encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities, engaged in the primary production of food and non-food agricultural products, as well as in storage, aggregation, post-harvest handling, transportation, processing, distribution, marketing, disposal and consumption of all food products including those of non-agricultural origin' (FAO 2021, xii).

Among the publications that have established degrowth scholarship on agri-food systems as a distinct area of study, Edwards and Nelson (2021) and Gerber (2020) have mapped the contours of the field and proposed avenues for future research; however, each of these foundational publications took a rather specific analytical or disciplinary focus. Edwards and Nelson's (2021) research agenda highlights a diverse range of relevant research topics, including reconnecting households to food provisioning, multidimensional care and the influence of, and resistance to, growth narratives in food systems. Their research agenda forms the final chapter of their edited volume Food for Degrowth and primarily builds on the findings of the volume's contributions. Gerber (2020) applies a marked political economy perspective to connect critical agrarian studies with research on degrowth, conceptually linking the agrarian question to the growth question. He elaborates on the focus, key themes, intellectual traditions and normative orientations of both research fields to identify potential analytical synergies. This paper builds on these two research agendas and is further informed by a literature review (for further information on materials and methods see Online Appendix C.I). By extending the scope of the considered literature, this paper endeavours to forge a research agenda that can contribute to establishing degrowth research on agri-food systems as a field of study. It identifies remaining gaps, proposes ways to address them and stirs new discussions by challenging some current assumptions held in this emerging research field.

This research agenda is directed at scholars interested in the intersection of degrowth and agri-food systems. Following the footsteps of Gerber (2020) and Nelson and Edwards (2021), we approach this intersection from a critical social science perspective. For this purpose, we mobilise diverse bodies of literature ranging from social movement scholarship, critical

transformation research, new materialist literature on the more-than-human, political economy perspectives on agri-food systems such as food regime and rural studies, amongst others. Doing so allows us not only to enrich degrowth research on agri-food with well-established approaches to agri-food studies that have only marginally been mobilised in degrowth research, but also to explore the intersections of a specific degrowth transformation of agri-food systems with a wider, societal degrowth transformation. In particular, adopting a critical perspective to degrowth agri-food system can highlight and identify the root causes of the present unsustainability and injustice of agri-food systems in larger, capitalist societal structures and is not bound to solely look at the agri-food sector. Thus, this research agenda explores connections with pertinent critical social science theories and transformation practices of agri-food systems beyond degrowth as well as debates on societal-level degrowth transformation.

Thereby, we seek to contribute to the ongoing debates in this journal which adopt a critical social science perspective and openly call for repoliticising and pluralising sustainability science (see Asara et al. 2015 on degrowth; Escobar 2015 on the pluriverse; Ertör and Hadjimichael 2020 on blue degrowth; Menton et al. 2020 on environmental justice). Such politicisation is much needed in light of the dominant sustainability discourse, which, all too often, promotes sustainability platforms and agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Blythe et al. 2018). Since economic growth remains a central goal within the SDGs (Muraca and Döring 2018), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development fails to combat the root causes of the multiple injustices that persist globally (Menton et al. 2020). More so, the SDGs have, in specific areas, ignored universally agreed human rights. For instance, food, contrary to water or health, has not received the status of a fundamental human right within the SDGs, degrading the 'right to food' to 'a development goal carrying no accountability' (Vivero Pol and Schuftan 2016, 4). However, market mechanisms alone will not be sufficient to guarantee the food needs of every human being (ibid.). Therefore, this research agenda invites scholars to explore the manifold possibilities to construct degrowth-benign agri-food systems. As a group of researchers based in Europe and versed in specific themes of agri-food system and degrowth research, the positionality and expertise of the authors are reflected in this research agenda. Furthermore, this research agenda emerges

from the engagement with extant literature on degrowth, which mainly originated in and gained momentum in Europe, and therefore overrepresents Western case studies (Demaria et al. 2013; Dengler and Seebacher 2019). Nevertheless, this paper seeks to represent a diversity of theoretical approaches to degrowth and agri-food systems and has identified specific areas in which critical environmental justice and decolonial approaches can fruitfully inform a research agenda on degrowth and agri-food systems.

The paper is structured as follows. 'Degrowth research on agri-food systems: an emerging research field' takes stock of degrowth research on agri-food systems. 'Gaps and avenues for future research' identifies avenues for future research along four themes, namely, (i) degrowth conceptualisations, (ii) theorisation of transformations towards sustainability, (iii) the political economy of degrowth agri-food systems and (iv) rurality and degrowth. The final section concludes the paper with a brief summary.

6.2. Degrowth research on agri-food systems: an emerging research field

Degrowth research on agri-food systems has adopted a broad range of research designs and spanned various levels of analysis ranging from the individual to the collective, community and translocal network levels (Nelson and Edwards 2021). A substantial proportion of this scholarship has followed a case study approach, often investigating 'alternative' agri-food practices' and grassroots initiatives' compatibility with and embodiment of degrowth. This type of case study research has usually been characterised by qualitative analysis and mainly, though not exclusively, by a focus on the local level (ibid.). Other types of contributions have included theoretical discussions, for instance on appropriate agricultural technologies for degrowth (Bartkowski 2017; Gomiero 2018), and quantitative research on the social metabolism of agri-food systems as well as projections of food and calories provisioning under different degrowth scenarios (Leahy 2021). Participatory and activist practices are strongly represented in degrowth research on agri-food systems, including the notable emergence of auto-ethnography as a method for drawing on intimate knowledge of and direct engagement with case studies (e.g. Bogadóttir and Olsen 2017 on setting up a university-based food co-operative; Strenchock 2021 on direct marketing in Hungary).

Degrowth research on agri-food systems has built upon long-standing and central concepts, theories, and debates in degrowth scholarship, such as those of social metabolism, sufficiency, appropriate technologies, and democracy, as well as more recently emerging themes such as gender, care, work, open localism, indigenous knowledge and social movements. This expanding and diversifying conceptual basis has informed analyses of the current agri-food system as well as examinations of existing alternatives and the elaboration of visions of agri-food system transformation beyond accumulation, exploitation and growth. Specifically, degrowth research on agri-food systems has put the degrowth debate into conversation with existing work on food sovereignty (Roman-Alcalá 2017), agro-ecology (Cederlöf 2016) and decolonisation (Radu et al. 2021). In developing these connections, the literature has found inspiration in a variety of theoretical traditions, including ecological economics (e.g. Bloemmen et al. 2015; Gomiero 2018), political ecology (e.g. Bogadóttir and Olsen 2017; Ertör-Akyazi 2020), social practice theory (e.g. Boonstra and Joosse 2013), diverse and community economies (e.g. Daněk and Jehlička 2021) and, lately, critical agrarian studies (e.g. Gerber 2020; Scheidel, Ertör, and Demaria 2022) and (eco)feminism (e.g. Prieto and Domínguez-Serrano 2017; Brückner 2021). Fruitful interconnections have been established between degrowth and studies of alternative food networks and movements (e.g. Öz and Aksoy 2019), short supply chains (e.g. Voget 2009) and local food systems (e.g. Boonstra and Joosse 2013).

Degrowth research on agri-food systems has mostly been limited to food production, and within that, horticulture, whereas limited attention has been given to animal husbandry. A recent wave of studies has started to address fisheries and marine ecosystems for sustainable food production in what is referred to as 'blue degrowth' (for a review, see Scheidel, Ertör, and Demaria 2022). For instance, Bogadóttir (2019) problematises blue growth strategies in the Faroe islands, while Ertör-Akyazi (2020) also looks at blue degrowth practices in Istanbul that develop in response to growth in marine capture fisheries. Furthermore, degrowth research on agri-food systems has provided notable discussions and analyses of food production, but has largely disengaged with other sections of food supply chains, such as food consumption, processing, distribution and retail. A prominent theme in this field is the degrowth transformation of agri-food systems. Contributions to this theme include (i) diverse

strategies to bring about a transformation towards degrowth agri-food systems, ranging from explicitly revolutionary, anti-statist (Sklair 2019) to reformist approaches via public policies (González De Molina 2015), as well as hopeful, 'utopian' politics (e.g. Roman-Alcalá 2017); (ii) explorations of different geographies of degrowth transformations, including pleas for urban agriculture (e.g. Manteuffel 2014; Cederlöf 2016) and speculations how an agricultural transformation towards degrowth may materialise differently in the Global South and Global North (Clausing 2014); and (iii) examinations of intentional, outward and 'vocal' strategies of change in contrast to more 'quiet' (but potentially transformational) forms of engagement with alternative agri-food systems (Bogadóttir 2020; Daněk and Jehlička 2021). Lessons and important insights have been derived from both historical and ongoing 'success cases'— notably Cuba's agro-ecological transformation (Boillat, Gerber, and Funes-Monzote 2012; Borowy 2013; Cederlöf 2016) and Catalunya's agro-ecological co-operative movement (Edwards and Espelt 2021; Homs, Flores-Pons, and Mayor Adrià 2021).

In summary, degrowth research on agri-food systems is a diverse and expanding body of literature. It draws on rich case studies to provide insights into the ongoing prefiguration of and transformation towards degrowth agri-food systems on various levels. It engages with a vast variety of conceptual and theoretical traditions of degrowth research and beyond. The next section identifies remaining research gaps and sketches a research agenda that can productively build on the existing scholarship and move the field forward.

6.3. Gaps and avenues for future research

This section discusses four areas for further development that emerged during the literature review, namely (i) degrowth conceptualisations, (ii) theorisation of transformations towards sustainability, (iii) the political economy of degrowth agri-food systems and (iv) rurality and degrowth. Each area identifies research needs and proposes questions that can fruitfully inform future degrowth research on agri-food systems.

6.3.1. A reflexive approach on conceptualising degrowth for research on agri-food systems

Various scholars have acknowledged and discussed the lack of a single understanding of degrowth (e.g. Kallis 2011; D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). In fact, the concept of degrowth

has diverse intellectual roots; it is multifaceted rather than a sharply defined analytical concept (Demaria et al. 2013; Muraca 2013).

Therefore, it is not surprising that degrowth research on agri-food systems adopts a broad range of degrowth conceptualisations, encompassing varying degrowth principles as well as denoting degrowth at times as a movement, theory or political programme. For example, some researchers have stressed the anarchist (e.g. Sklair 2019), anti-capitalist (e.g. Nelson and Edwards 2021) or feminist (e.g. Brückner 2021) character of degrowth in relation to agri-food systems or pointed to the conceptual similarities between degrowth and agro-ecology (e.g. Homs, Flores-Pons, and Mayor Adrià 2021). Some have conceptualised degrowth as a form of ordinary and 'quiet' sustainability (e.g. Daněk and Jehlička 2021; Pungas 2021), whereas others have assumed that this process entails more conspicuous 'conscious' or 'deliberate' action (e.g. Cristiano et al. 2021).

Particularly in case study research examining the relevance of alternative agri-food initiatives for degrowth, and vice versa, many studies take for granted the existence of a core set of 'degrowth principles'. However, the principles that have been foregrounded in the literature vary from care (e.g. Brückner 2021; Pungas 2021), conviviality (e.g. Edwards and Espelt 2021), autonomy (e.g. Edwards and Espelt 2021), decommodification (e.g. Cristiano et al. 2021), commons (e.g. Bogadóttir and Olsen 2017), re-localisation (e.g. Boonstra and Joosse 2013), to frugal abundance (e.g. Nelson and Edwards 2021) and economic democracy (e.g. Bogadóttir and Olsen 2017; Roman-Alcalá 2017), among others.

Consequently, there is a risk of oversimplifying degrowth by demeaning it to a 'shopping list' from which to selectively choose principles for strategic research purposes—for instance, to argue for the alignment, or lack thereof, between a given agri-food initiative and degrowth. However, in the absence of a widely agreed list of degrowth-defining principles, and with awareness that each principle is susceptible to different understandings across cultural contexts (e.g. care) and political orientations (e.g. community), we consider it essential to more holistically engage with the concept to avoid a reductionist approach. Such an approach necessarily overlooks the multidimensional and systemic character of alternative agri-food initiatives and practices. Although specific studies may legitimately delve in-depth into

selected characteristic of alternative agri-food initiatives, it is crucial to reflect on how this emerging field can analytically scrutinise, rather than merely illustrate or even take for granted the degree of alignment between degrowth and alternative agri-food practices. In a recent article, McGreevy et al. (2022) present five 'post-growth agri-food system principles'—sufficiency, regeneration, distribution, commons and care—which they deem essential for moving beyond the growth paradigm. Importantly, their work recognises the need to simultaneously engage with several degrowth principles, but it fails to specify why these and not other principles were selected (ibid.).

The diversity of degrowth conceptualisations in the degrowth literature on agri-food systems has at least three important implications.

Considering the ecological and material throughput of alternative agri-food initiatives
First, there is a tendency to focus on social principles of degrowth while overlooking ecological ones. Studies that investigate the ecological conditions and the energy and material throughput of alternative agri-food initiatives are scarce (for a notable exception, see Cederlöf 2016 who investigates the ecological geography of different organic urban farms and their integration in industrial systems of energy and material provision). In other words, degrowth research on agri-food systems has often assumed, rather than investigated, the ecological sustainability of alternative practices. More research is needed to identify and quantify the actual, multidimensional impacts of alternative agri-food practices. To address this gap, it is useful to draw on existing quantitative assessments of farming systems and aspects related to social metabolism, nutrition and resource distribution (also beyond the initiative level). For instance, Leahy (2021) asks whether permaculture in greater Melbourne, Australia, can reduce not only Melbournians' 'foodprint' but also provide enough food without the use of fossil fuels, Bogadóttir (2020) considers the social metabolism of degrowth aquaculture models in the Faroe Islands and Gomiero (2018) assesses the possibility of self-sufficiency via ecological food provisioning in Germany. Research that identifies and quantifies possible changes on social metabolism and nutrition could serve as a 'reality check' for claims about the potential of different alternative agri-food models to contribute to a reduction of throughput while maintaining the capacity to meet nutritional needs and increase social well-being. Important questions in this respect are: What is the social

metabolic space of possibilities for the reduction of material and energy throughput in agri-food initiatives from food production to consumption to make them 'thermodynamically efficient' (Cederlöf 2016, 783) rather than thriving for more economically efficient modes of consumption and production? What contested trade-offs (e.g. land use for food production versus other purposes) within and beyond the agri-food system are involved in such a reduction of material and energy throughput? Conceptually and methodologically, social ecology and ecological economics offer fertile ground for addressing such questions around the ecological relations in production systems (Scheidel, Ertör, and Demaria 2022).

Reconceptualising degrowth as a political programme and social movement

Another concern regarding research on agri-food systems is that a more reflexive approach to the conceptualisation of degrowth beyond 'degrowth as a practice' is needed. The ways in which researchers understand, read and conceptualise degrowth matter, as they fundamentally shape how research is carried out, the focus of analysis, and how potential for transformative change is envisioned. For instance, conceptualising degrowth as a practice likely results in the analysis of individuals and grassroots initiatives that prefigure a degrowth society. In contrast, two conceptualisations of degrowth have been scarcely used in degrowth research on agri-food systems, namely, degrowth as a policy and as a social movement.

Degrowth can be seen as a set of concrete policy proposals regarding labour (work sharing and reduction of the working week to at most 32 h), welfare (minimum and maximum income), consumption (reduction of advertising, withdrawal of subsidies for polluting activities) or finance (green tax reform), such as those discussed by Kallis (2015) or proposed in Green New Deals without growth (Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel 2021). However, to date, few studies have investigated the role of policies, such as those governing trade and agriculture (González De Molina 2015; De Schutter 2020), as factors of a degrowth transformation of agri-food systems. Furthermore, it remains poorly understood how broader degrowth policies, such as a universal basic income or a reduced working week, may matter for a degrowth transformation of agri-food systems by providing financial stability and time, which may enable and/or motivate some households to engage in food self-provisioning or participate in agri-food collectives. What social and economic policies, and under what conditions, can support a degrowth transformation of the agri-food system? Answering this question requires

drawing from policy analysis literature from both theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Another conceptualisation of degrowth is that of a social movement (e.g. Muraca 2013). Social movements organise and sustain collective action to bring about or resist social change (Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars 2019). This aspect opens a further promising research avenue, equipping us with the theoretical baggage to investigate political alliances and other forms of mutual support between the degrowth and agrarian movements (see also Gerber 2020). However, whereas degrowth is often referred to as a social movement in theory and practice, it is seldom studied as such in connection to agri-food systems. For a notable exception, see Salzer and Fehlinger's (2017) chapter on the food sovereignty and degrowth movements, which, amongst others, unpacks their relationship by looking at their discourses and learning opportunities between the movements. However, since both authors are practitioners, their analysis does not engage with social movement scholarship. The analysis of degrowth as a social movement through the vast field of social movement scholarship helps put forward questions that have rarely been asked to date: Under which conditions does degrowth as a social or intellectual movement have political, economic and/or cultural impacts on the agri-food system (see Amenta et al. 2010; and Amenta and Polletta 2019 for the impacts of social movements)? How can political alliances for change between the degrowth and agrarian movements form and be consolidated, in particular if they do not (yet) feel attracted to each other? What are potential benefits or tensions of such alliances? How do sets of tools and actions move within and across degrowth and agrarian movements? Can complementarity between social struggles forge strong alliances between degrowth and agrarian movements rather than overlap among them? Key to answering these questions may be (i) the analysis of networks of degrowth-inspired agri-food initiatives rather than individual initiatives and (ii) the examination of how such networks articulate both prefigurative (e.g. Yates 2015) and contentious politics (e.g. Diani and McAdam 2003) across multiple levels. Although there are examples of degrowth research on agri-food systems that focus on networks (Edwards, Pedro, and Rocha 2021; Szakál and Balázs 2021), as argued by Roman-Alcalá (2017), there is ample room and need for further theoretical development in determining the role of collective agency geared towards shifting policies, influencing political

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debates, reconfiguring social norms and institutionalising discourses towards degrowth within the agri-food system.

Enriching the concept of degrowth through the lens of agri-food systems

Scholars working solely on degrowth can benefit from engaging with research on specific economic sectors and notably agri-food systems. As noted above, conceptualisations of degrowth are highly diverse, and due to the dynamic nature of this field, they are evolving along an expanding body of literature. How do understandings of degrowth evolve when applying it to a specific sector? In what ways can applications of degrowth research to agri-food systems enrich the concept of degrowth? In other words, what unique insights can be gained from investigating the agri-food system through a degrowth lens to further the theorisation of a degrowth transformation, thereby potentially challenging and/or enriching key assumptions of degrowth as well as proposing new concepts? For instance, how can seasonality, the non-intervention in and acceleration of growing cycles and heterogenous temporalities in agriculture help us to move beyond the linear thinking and time efficiencies of the growth economy? See, e.g. Vincent and Feola (2020) for a discussion on decelerated and cyclical notions of time in agri-food collectives as a response to linear, continuously unfolding time and Carolan (2022) on temporal and spatial fixes in vertical farming.

6.3.2. Advancing the theorisation of transformations towards degrowth agri-food systems

While it is widely agreed that degrowth advances fundamental socioecological transformations of societies and economies (Asara et al. 2015; Kallis et al. 2020), degrowth research on agri-food systems has lacked a rigorous explanation of how change towards degrowth comes about. Insights into the realisation of change in agri-food systems have been valuable but fragmented. This research has only marginally been informed by the scholarship on sustainability transitions and societal transformations, thereby largely neglecting the recent turn in degrowth research towards a focus on how degrowth transformation can be fostered (Kallis et al. 2020). Looking ahead, degrowth research on agri-food systems urgently needs a more solid and in-depth engagement with theories of sustainability transitions (e.g. Abson et al. 2017; Loorbach, Frantzeskaki, and Avelino 2017), transformations to sustainability (e.g. Pelling 2011; Feola 2015) and their applications to agri-food systems

(Lamine 2011; Hermans, Roep, and Klerkx 2016; El Bilali 2019). There are at least three ways in which degrowth research on agri-food systems can fruitfully build on these theories and specific currents therein.

Learning from critical perspectives within sustainability transitions and transformation scholarship

Firstly, the currently limited engagement with the above-named theories has led to a number of shortcomings—for instance, a lack of understanding on how different system levels are connected in processes of sustainability transitions or transformations. To date, degrowth research on agri-food systems has focussed to different extents on the micro (individual, local), meso (urban area, regional) and macro (national, global) levels. However, it has typically limited the engagement with this issue at the level of assumptions (see González De Molina 2015 on the necessity of simultaneous individual, collective and institutional change for agroecology) and essentially failed to investigate the propagation of change across levels. Cederlöf (2016) investigates the multiscalar configurations that constitute productive agricultural systems and Ertör-Akyazi's (2020) study on small-scale fisheries briefly addresses existing alliances across scales; yet, neither study connects explicitly to processes or theories of sustainability transitions and transformations. Such theories have proven useful in a diverse range of geographical contexts and offer the most advanced and sophisticated understanding of these processes to date, including issues such as multiscalar and multilevel connections, which have been understudied in degrowth research on agri-food systems. Consequently, they could represent a reference point for those interested in developing theory-informed accounts of degrowth transformation as it concerns agri-food systems.

These theories certainly have limitations for the type of fundamental socioecological transformation that is of interest to degrowth researchers. For example, they have usually lacked a consideration of capitalism (Feola 2020; Newell 2020), have been predominantly developed and applied to Western countries and are of limited or uncertain applicability to non-Western societies (Hansen et al. 2018). They have also often given scarce consideration to normative and ontological pluralism, which has contributed to the rigidity of de-politicised techno-centric responses to global environmental change and undermined the transformative co-production of political economies, cultures, societies and biophysical

relations (Pelling 2011; Stirling 2011; Nightingale et al. 2020). Sustainability transition and transformation theories have considered a narrow spectrum of political strategies to face global environmental change, often overlooking the potential of resistance and conflict to initiate the early stages of a transformative process as well as how movements have generally been at a high risk of capitalist co-optation by actors interested in maintaining the status quo (Feola 2015; Blythe et al. 2018; Nightingale et al. 2020).

Nevertheless, the most critical theories within this field, namely those building on political economy, critical social sciences and humanities (Scoones 2016; Hansen et al. 2018; Feola 2020) can be useful for degrowth research on agri-food systems. One example is the recent effort to theorise processes of deconstruction of capitalist modernity for the construction of post-capitalist realities in transformations to sustainability (Feola 2019; Feola, Vincent, and Moore 2021). By bringing together theories of regime destabilisation and those of decoloniality, autonomy, resistance, social movements, political ecology and degrowth, this approach foregrounds processes of deconstruction, rupture and disarticulation as conditions for—rather than consequences of—transformation, which can be used to inform thinking about the role of unmaking modern capitalist configurations that hinder degrowth-benign agri-food systems (ibid.). Therefore, the question remains open: What processes of deconstruction are needed to make space for degrowth-benign agri-food systems? How can degrowth research on agri-food systems fruitfully build on existing theorisations of sustainability transitions and transformation while also possibly contributing to their development? How can critical perspectives on sustainability transitions and transformations ontologically enrich degrowth research on agri-food systems? Finally, (how) do theorisations on 'degrowing agri-food systems' resemble processes of de-(construction) in sustainability transitions?

Investigating the multiplicity of agents of change beyond grassroots initiatives
Secondly, the underlying message that degrowth research on agri-food systems appears to convey is that transformative change occurs from the bottom up through local grassroots initiatives that experiment with social innovation and alternatives to growth-based, industrial agri-food models. Interlinkages and material flows between local grassroots initiatives (e.g. urban gardens) with city, provincial, national and international levels are not explored.

Furthermore, the role of peasant and food movements (Roman-Alcalá 2017; Salzer and Fehlinger 2017), national governments (e.g. González De Molina 2015) and the business sector (e.g. Rodrigues de Souza and Seifert 2018), among others, feature in degrowth research on agri-food systems as a largely minoritarian sub-field of mostly theoretical nature.

Therefore, degrowth research on agri-food systems needs to complement its predominant focus on single, grassroots initiatives by devoting more attention to the formal and informal translocal networks of which local grassroots initiatives are often part. In this context, theories of social movement organisations and their geographies can help shed light on processes of diffusion of alternative practices, their embedding or emplacement in diverse geographical contexts, and the mechanisms of mutual support, empowerment and learning that occur across interconnected grassroots agri-food as well as other grassroots initiatives (Nicholls 2009; Loorbach et al. 2020). In particular, peasant and Indigenous movements, which remain largely unexplored, deserve explicit attention in light of repeated claims for a decolonial degrowth movement and science.

Although Hickel (2021b, 3) argues that degrowth is decolonial by definition, Dengler and Seebacher (2019) affirm that decoloniality has not yet become an integral part of degrowth reasoning. Engaging and dialoguing with peasant and Indigenous movements becomes necessary for truly 'decolonising the social imaginary' (see Latouche 2003) and can further enrich degrowth debates. For instance, Indigenous, non-dualist ontologies can broaden degrowth perspectives by shifting attention to communal and relational worlds (Escobar 2015). However, future studies should place decoloniality centre stage, since existing studies e.g. on degrowth and the food sovereignty movement (Roman-Alcalá 2017; Salzer and Fehlinger 2017) lack explicit discussions on ('neo-')colonial practices and structures.

Furthermore, it is paramount to understand agricultural grassroots initiatives as multifaceted agents of transformation; they can be political actors as well as sites of social innovation and experimentation. Individual initiatives, as well as their formal networks, often operate in the political arena in more diverse ways than through prefiguration. They also engage in conventional politics through lobbying, protests, and advocacy, among other ways, as well as unconventional politics such as direct action (e.g. Hitchman 2014; Stapleton 2019). This point

highlights the narrow nature of traditional theorisations of grassroots initiatives as spaces of social innovation and experimentation (e.g. Seyfang and Smith 2007).

Finally, various conceptualisations of the politics of grassroots actors also raise the question about their relations with the state. Degrowth scholars have taken different positions concerning the roles that different social agents at the local level ought, are able, or willing, to play in a degrowth transformation, ranging from anarchist perspectives that foreground autonomous spaces (Dunlap 2020) to frameworks that foreground the state as an agent of change (D'Alisa and Kallis 2020). However, more research is needed to identify, critique and theorise the (potential) roles that state and non-state, systemic and anti-systemic or anti-statist actors may have in promoting, inhibiting or sustaining a degrowth transformation of agri-food systems.

In sum, with a multitude of actors present in the agri-food system, such as grassroots initiatives, peasant and indigenous movements, translocal networks, the state, local authorities, and businesses the following questions remain unanswered: What role do these multiple agents of change play in a degrowth transformation of the agri-food system and how do their efforts intersect? Which agents are currently mostly upholding and reproducing a growth mentality? How can such a mentality be challenged? Where do their politics create synergies, for instance by simultaneously advancing similar claims in different social and political arenas? When can conflicts arise due to diverging agendas and priorities? Can degrowth provide a shared narrative for these multiple agents bridging their diverging political visions, positionalities and agendas? To address these questions, it is useful to draw on literature on agrarian change and peasant studies that has investigated the role of the various actors in food politics (for a review see Borras 2009).

Bringing in the more-than-human
Thirdly, degrowth research on agri-food systems would benefit from engaging with the emerging materialist literature on the more-than-human and its role and agency in politics and societal transformations (e.g. Braun and Whatmore 2010; Contesse et al. 2021), which to date have been only marginally addressed in the degrowth scholarship (but see Gertenbach, Lamla, and Laser 2021 on multispecies conviviality). A theoretical approach that attends to

non-human agency in agri-food systems is pertinent in several ways. A particular attention to the more-than-human can broaden our perspective on how the capitalist agri-food system functions through geographically contingent human-non-human assemblages (such as the making of genetically modified food) and how these might constitute hindrances against a transformation away from the growth economy as well as resources of power to resist and break away from it (Barua 2016; Greenhough 2017). How, then, can degrowth agri-food systems be created in a world that for centuries has implicated human and non-human actants into the web of the capitalist growth economy? How can this scholarship deal with super-productivist cattle and chicken breeds, GMO corn, polluted soil in urban brownfield sites and nutrient-poor arable land evolved with years of monocultures in the countryside? Also, what openings does the liveliness of agri-food commodities provide for degrowth transformations? How can natures' resistance to complete commodification be organised and strengthened (Castree 2003; Robertson 2006) in the strategies for agri-food system transformation?

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Furthermore, centring non-human agency and human-non-human relations can help illuminate the novel forms of internal governance and democratic practices of agri-food initiatives such as ecovillages, CSAs or food collectives that are almost daily confronted with decisions conditioned by their entanglements with more-than-human elements such as soil, water, livestock and pests. Examining such relations might provide promising starting points for investigating the role of non-humans in transformative change and developing a multispecies democratic praxis that rejects the political division between nature and society (Latour 1993) and rather builds on human-non-human companionship (at times conflictual), co-existence and collaboration (Hobson 2007; Haraway 2016; 2008).

Lastly, there is much to be gained from introducing insights from science and technology studies (see Whatmore 2006) and posthumanism to debates about the roles of different kinds of desired agricultural technologies and the place of GMOs in degrowth transformation (see Bartkowski 2017 for a plea; and Gomiero 2018 for a critique of GMO). How might an emphasis on non-human agency, such as the protection of hedgerows against pests or the intelligence of seeds (Spanier 2021), enrich degrowth's vision of convivial agri-food technologies

(Samerski 2018)? Also, how can degrowth farming practices that are in balance with 'nature' be envisioned without essentialising nature (Latour 1993)?

6.3.3. The political economy of degrowth agri-food systems: recentring capitalism

The transformation to a degrowth society cannot possibly materialise without conflict in a growth-dependent capitalist system (Foster 2011; D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). Agents in degrowth transformations of the agri-food system, in particular agricultural grassroots initiatives and movements, therefore, necessarily struggle to survive and thrive in a socio-economic context that prioritises market exchange, competitiveness, private property and accumulation of capital. Below, three ways how capitalism matters for the political economy of degrowth agri-food systems are explored.

Mitigating the risk of capitalist co-optation

Being situated within a capitalist agri-food system exposes grassroots actors to significant risk of being co-opted by corporate interests or government authorities that may appropriate and conventionalise a watered-down version of claims, practices and technical or institutional innovations. While many degrowth scholars have acknowledged the ever-present risk of capitalist co-optation in relation to degrowth (e.g. D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014; Escobar 2015), this has remained rather cursory. In contrast, capitalist co-optation has been addressed in agri-food studies, which have a long-standing tradition in investigating the conventionalisation of, for instance, the organic agriculture (e.g. Guthman 2004; Darnhofer et al. 2009) or the fair-trade movement (Jaffee and Howard 2010). Degrowth research on agri-food systems has recently started to problematise the conventionalisation of organic agriculture, which depoliticises a socioecological movement through the reduction of organic agriculture to a set of technical standards (González De Molina 2015; Gomiero 2018). However, rather than replicating already existing studies and arguments, degrowth research on agri-food systems may forge of new questions: in line with proposals to form strategic alliances against capitalist co-optation (Holt-Giménez and Altieri 2013), in what ways could an alliance between agri-food movements and degrowth mitigate the risk of capitalist co-optation? What understandings of degrowth underlying particular agricultural grassroots initiatives or movements are most capable of resisting capitalist co-optation? It is crucial to reflect on the risks of capitalist co-optation that derive from reducing degrowth to a narrow

and easily manipulated set of principles dissociated from the critical intellectual origins of the movement (Gertenbach, Lamla, and Laser 2021). In contrast, as food sovereignty activists Salzer and Fehlinger (2017) have proposed, espousing an explicit stance for an anti-capitalist reading of degrowth may be very fruitful while also minimising the above-mentioned risk of capitalist co-optation.

Struggling within and against capitalism

In relation to the above, in-depth investigations of how specific capitalist institutions and practices that govern agri-food systems hamper the degrowth transformation are needed. Although cogent analyses and critiques of capitalist institutions and practices in the agri-food system and their environmental and social unsustainability abound (see Bernstein 2016 for a review), drives of growthism in capitalist agri-food systems and their impact on the everyday life of peasants and farmers deserve more scrutiny. Particularly insightful to better understand growthism in capitalist agri-food systems and how these systems came into being are historical analyses of capital accumulation in agriculture and food which have been advanced by food regime scholars (see e.g. Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Food regime scholarship traces global power and property arrangements over time and sheds light on '(unequal) relations among states, capitalist enterprises, and people' (Friedmann 2005b, 228). It has informed and contributed with analysis, critique and documentation to a better understanding of the dynamics of global agriculture, and its long tradition makes it a necessary starting point for studying agrarian change (Bernstein 2016). Scholars typically distinguish at least three food regimes (see Friedmann 1987 for the original formulation; and Bernstein 2016 for a synthesis and critique of subsequent work). Analyses of the current 'corporate' food regime (McMichael 2006) highlight, amongst others, the dynamics through which farmers are subordinated to the logics of the corporate model. For instance, McMichael (2013b, 671) explored how the integration of farmers in corporate markets and value-chains traps them in debt relations that result from the use of farming inputs such as 'seed, fertilisers and other agrichemicals'. According to Gerber (2014, 741) 'economic growth […] results – perhaps above all – from the obligation to take out loans and form the subsequent constant threat of defaulting in a competitive context'. Consequently, degrowth research on agri-food systems should investigate the role of indebtedness of peasants (but also of corporate

farmers): How can farmers resist or break 'the chain' of debt that ties them to capitalist agriculture and forces them into the growth spiral?

Moreover, there remains scope to investigate how the mechanisms and workings of capitalist institutions impede the success of degrowth agri-food initiatives, how they may be contested and resisted by agricultural grassroots initiatives, and what alternatives can be sought. The example of access to land helps illustrate potential avenues for degrowth research on the political economy of agri-food systems. To afford high land prices, farmers often find themselves forced to embrace the growth paradigm, seeking efficiency gains from economies of scale. In the context of Europe, land prices are driven up by, amongst other things, investments in and speculations with land, low interest rates, area-based payments, and prevailing competitions for land use such as renewable energy and housing (IPES Food 2019). Land concentration is increasing, with larger-scale farmers with financial means and recipients of area-based payments being more likely to be able to afford land for sale or rent (ibid.). Moreover, land grabbing is no longer only a pressing issue in the Global South, but is increasingly a global phenomenon, and is gaining relevance in Europe (Borras et al. 2012; Edelman, Oya, and Borras 2013; Van Der Ploeg, Franco, and Borras 2015). In other words, farmers often face structural constraints imposed by the land ownership regime, pushing them to cultivate in a productivist manner that is at odds with degrowth (see also Gerber 2020).

Due to these structural constraints that render access to land difficult and expensive, agricultural grassroots initiatives that strive to prefigure degrowth societies while remaining situated within capitalism often struggle to survive. Commoning and decommodification are often proposed by degrowth scholars as means to move beyond capitalism by aiding peasants and agricultural grassroots initiatives to address and overcome unequal access to land (e.g. Gerber and Gerber 2017; Kallis et al. 2020). But where might commoning fail to work due to the normalisation of private property ownership in the capitalist society? In a society predicated on private property ownership, what elements need to be unmade as part of a degrowth transformation to ensure the decommodification of land and prioritise the use value of land over its exchange value? How can the degrowth movement pursue large-scale land decommodification while avoiding a situation wherein people with access to

decommodified land may more easily 'accept large-scale commodification in other spheres of their life' (Gerber and Gerber 2017, 555)?

Moving beyond agri-food systems

Although capitalist logics infiltrate societies as a whole and are by no means restricted to the political economy of food, the potential that a systemic degrowth transformation holds for agri-food systems has remained largely unexplored. Much can be learned from linking broader societal changes towards degrowth to food practices that are incompatible with capitalism. In other words, how could a societal transformation towards degrowth and a concomitant societal value shift make space for and support alternative agri-food practices? For instance, feminist currents of degrowth scholars have emphasised the need to recentre and rethink care for oneself, other people and the environment—which are systematically devalued in capitalist societies—as vital elements of degrowth transformations (e.g. Dengler and Strunk 2018). Care practices such as cultivating land, harvesting, cooking and preserving are often regarded as integral elements of degrowth agri-food systems (e.g. Brückner 2021; Pungas 2021). To what extent could a structural recentring and revalorisation of social–ecological care and reproductive work change dominant ways of food consumption and production? How could (non)human relations and gender roles associated with specific food practices be redefined? What types of food production and consumption practices would become obsolete?

The materialisation of societal transformations of the depth and scope envisioned in degrowth are hardly limited to the boundaries of a single economic sector. The agri-food system is tightly interlinked with numerous other sec-tors, which emphasises the need for cross-sector approaches to degrowth research on agri-food systems (Scheidel, Ertör, and Demaria 2022). As Brückner (2021, 46) pointed out, 'everyday activities of mobility, work, childcare and work affect food practices'. Solely focusing on the agricultural sector may obscure ways to leverage a degrowth transformation by creating synergies and exploring interdependencies with other sectors. However, interconnected political–economic strategies, priorities and interests are largely absent from the extant degrowth research on agri-food systems. What leverage points and opportunities can a degrowth transformation of other sectors, such as housing, energy or mobility, offer that might positively impact the agri-

food system? How can changes in infrastructure and mobility enable food distribution in a manner compatible with degrowth (Pohl, Wieding, and Baptista 2014)? To what extent can common spaces for food production enhance convivial forms of living and thereby become an integral part of degrowth housing and planning? Also, how does the growth imperative undergirding most industrial sectors inhibit degrowth agri-food systems? How can land use competition with solar and wind power be avoided if the energy sector is prone to continue to grow, even if in a supposedly 'green' manner (Kallis et al. 2018)? How could affordable housing, particularly in urban areas and metropoles, contribute to a higher prioritisation of ethically and sustainably produced food, a seemingly impossible endeavour when tenants spend half of their salaries on housing? What would cities look like if growing food is re-integrated into households (Daněk and Jehlička 2021)? Altogether, to what extent can a degrowth transformation only be sought in one sector?

6.3.4. Degrowth in place: research avenues on rurality and degrowth

Up to 85% of food worldwide is produced in rural areas (Ikerd 2018). For centuries, rural life has been defined both materially and culturally by agricultural production. However, with the rapidly expanding industrialisation of agriculture, food production has—particularly in the Global North— stopped to be the defining factor of rural dwellers' lives (for a literary treatment of the vanishing of peasant life in Europe, see Berger 1988; or Mak 2007). This has not diminished the importance of the countryside for the present and future of food provision, nor has it reduced the impact of the ongoing transformation of the global agri-food system on the world's diverse rural areas [such as extractivism in Latin America (Infante-Amate et al. 2022), Africa and parts of Asia (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012)]. Similarly, in many rural regions of the world, and particularly in the Global South, the defence of traditional peasant agriculture, of the rights of the peasantry, their lands, resources and food sovereignty, remains ongoing (Rivera-Ferre, Constance, and Renard 2014). These struggles have been an important inspiration for the degrowth movement as a whole (Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2019).

Degrowth research on agri-food systems has begun to establish connections to ongoing peasant and food sovereignty struggles (e.g. Roman-Alcalá 2017; Salzer and Fehlinger 2017) as well as the practices and knowledges of past rural life (e.g. Jones and Ulman 2021).

Scholarship has also analysed some cases occurring in the countryside (or implicating it importantly) as (prefigurative) experiments of degrowth food futures (e.g. Boillat, Gerber, and Funes-Monzote 2012; Bogadóttir and Olsen 2017; Strenchock 2021). Some researchers have carried out meso- and macro-scale projections of degrowth agri-food systems and have thus implicitly contributed to an understanding of what degrowth transformations might mean for the countryside (and spatial planning more broadly) (Infante Amate and González De Molina 2013; Clausing 2014; González De Molina 2015), with rare exceptions explicitly engaging in these reflections on rural futures (Gomiero 2018; Leahy 2021). Gomiero (2018) argues that there is a tendency among degrowth scholars to promote a ruralisation of society—which, in his view, and based on a hypothetical example of the ruralisation of Germany, would have catastrophic environmental and socio-economic effects. In contrast, building on a degrowth scenario for the city of Melbourne, Leahy (2021) concludes that feeding Melbourne without energy-intensive transport from within the city-region would likely be untenable. He aligns himself with permaculture visions for 'self-sufficient rural communities' and 'decentralisation with compact rural towns' as viable options for energy scarce futures (ibid., 210), although— likely informed by the frequent critique of degrowth thought being unjustifiably romantic about past rural life (Salzer and Fehlinger 2017)—he makes sure to explicitly oppose the revival of a feudal rurality. Similarly, already the early work of Schumacher (1973) pointed out the necessity of reconstructing rural culture and employing a larger number of people in rural areas.

However, quite contrary to this supposed enthusiasm for the rural(-lisation), most of the cases referred to in degrowth scholarship on agri-food are set in urban (e.g. Öz and Aksoy 2019 on a food co-operative in Istanbul; Edwards, Pedro, and Rocha 2021 on the edibile cities lab in Portugal; Szakál and Balázs 2021 on the Budapest Food City Lab; McGreevy et al. 2022 on the potential of home and urban gardening across the globe) or peri-urban areas (see Pungas 2021 on peri-urban garden plots in Estonia). This discrepancy between the importance of the countryside in degrowth visions and its practical embeddedness in urban movements might help clarify why degrowth scholars have only rarely engaged in-depth with current

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realities in the countryside.[42] Important questions remain unanswered: In which ways could degrowth contribute to the revival of the social and cultural capital of depopulated rural areas? How might degrowth help to effectively fight rural marginalisation and decline, such as that produced by urbanisation and the de-industrialisation of many of Europe's former industrial regions (for an exception, although not focusing on agri-food, see Dax and Fischer 2018)? In the following subsections, we propose two avenues for exploring degrowth and rurality.

Implicating rural populations in degrowth

Degrowth scholars have been silent about the ways in which degrowth could 'speak to', i.e. learn from and listen to diverse rural populations. In the case of Europe, from where this agenda is written, doing so might bring a variety of challenges to the narrative of degrowth. To name just a few questions: How can degrowth speak to large-scale farmers who have been formed and shaped by the capitalist economy's ruthless paradigm of continuous growth, technologisation and cost reduction (see Salzer and Fehlinger 2017)—such as those who cultivate and/or own the majority of Europe's arable land? What does degrowth's emphasis on structural growthism have to offer to mediate between environmentalists and large-scale farmers, the latter of whom are often held personally responsible for the environmental crisis? How can degrowth speak to those who have not been socialised in diverse, progressive, intellectual and activist urban environments, but rather have been socialised in rather conservative rural and small-town environments (see Daněk and Jehlička 2021 on 'quiet' sustainability)—the very same environments in which decentralised and variably ruralised degrowth livelihoods might take place in the future? How can degrowth speak to the middle-class living comfortable suburban lives (see Leahy 2021 on degrowth in the suburbs)? Lastly, at a time when right-wing populism is on the rise in rural Europe (Mamonova and Franquesa 2020), how can degrowth ensure that it is not co-opted by far-right movements (Eversberg 2018), which have already used the romantic appeal of the countryside to co-opt some environmentalist currents (Staud 2015; Lubarda 2020)?

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[42] Our critique presented in this section refers to the prioritisation of the urban in degrowth research on agri-food systems. We do not intend to diminish the importance of the urban context for food production nor past research that has explored this question in detail. We are aware that, in the light of rapid urbanisation processes, urban food production will be crucial for the food self-sufficiency of cities.

Reconnecting urban and rural livelihoods in degrowth agri-food systems

Finally, although re-territorialisation and re-localisation have been central principles advanced by degrowth scholars writing on the agri-food system (e.g. Infante Amate and González De Molina 2013), their effect on a re-connection of rural and urban livelihoods has, when considered at all, too often been taken for granted (Spanier and Feola 2022). How would a degrowth agri-food system envision the relationship between city and countryside? What economic, social, and cultural relationships should be established between people living in urban and rural areas to foster more just, collaborative, decommodified and non-exploitative relations? Are the unequal power relations between city and countryside established in the capitalist urban society reproduced or unmade by localising food within a region? Do all local and regional food initiatives (culturally) re-connect urban and rural lives? Do they automatically include rural communities and the diversity of rural food producers in decision-making? And what of the abundance of long-distance rural–urban connections in the global agri-food system that are not transformed by establishing local food networks between a town and its surrounding peri-urban and rural regions? Voget's (2009, 431) proposal of avoiding the 'defensive stance of localism' through the more open concept of short food supply chains, which reduce the number of intermediaries between producers and consumers as much as possible, presents an excellent starting point.

6.4. Conclusion: beyond a sectoral approach to degrowth research on agri-food systems

The aim of this paper was to forge a research agenda for the critical social sciences that contributes to establishing degrowth research on agri-food systems as a field of study while also identifying remaining gaps, suggesting ways forward to address them, and stirring new discussions by challenging some currently held assumptions in this emerging research field. In doing so, this agenda has built on the emerging degrowth scholarship on agri-food systems. It proposed avenues for future research and concrete research questions that can substantially deepen, expand and diversify future degrowth research on agri-food systems and fruitfully connect it with ongoing debates on agri-food systems sustainability and degrowth transformations.

Our research agenda proposed four key themes for future degrowth research on agri-food systems: exploring (i) degrowth conceptualisations; (ii) theorisation of transformations towards sustainability; (iii) the political economy of degrowth agri-food systems; and (iv) rurality and degrowth. Together, these avenues give due attention to a variety of agents (ranging from translocal networks to non-humans), spaces (e.g. the rural), theories (e.g. sustainability transitions and transformations towards sustainability) and policies (of the agricultural sector and beyond) that thus far have received limited attention within this body of literature. Importantly, this research agenda calls for a more reflexive approach to degrowth conceptualisations, which crucially shape the analytical lenses through which degrowth research on agri-food systems is scoped and designed. In line with degrowth thinking that is critical of capitalism, techno-centrism and productivism, this research agenda proposes to problematise how the inner workings of capitalism structurally hamper degrowth transformations and expose agri-food initiatives prefiguring degrowth societies to the ever-present risk of capitalist co-optation. However, capitalism structures societies well beyond the realm of agri-food systems, thus challenging us to ask questions on how the transformation of other economic sectors and capitalist institutions more broadly could contribute to degrowth agri-food systems. The critical reader may have further ideas and visions for degrowth research on agri-food systems beyond the areas that are proposed in this paper. Further debates in this field, both within and beyond the academy, are needed.

This paper is directed at scholars who situate themselves at the intersection of degrowth and agri-food system research. We suggest that these scholars may find the critical social science approach presented in this research agenda valuable, as it points to new, at times uncomfortable but necessary, questions for advancing socially just and environmentally sound degrowth agri-food systems. Moreover, a critical social science perspective foregrounds that the present unsustainability and injustice of hegemonic agri-food systems are not merely a problem of the agri-food sector alone, but rather are ingrained in social imaginaries of how economies and societies should work as well as the political–economic structures that uphold and reproduce these imaginaries. As such, it has the potential to help rethink transformation of the agri-food system in the context of and in connection with other economic sectors and broader societal structures.

7

SOCIETAL IMPACT PORTFOLIO:

SUPPORTING TRANSFORMATIONS OF AND BEYOND

CAPITALIST AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

As the title of my thesis *'Nurturing networks – A social movement lens on community-supported agriculture'* alludes, my work presents an extensive examination and critical reflection on CSA at the level of national networks from a social movement perspective. In its literal meaning, the word 'nurturing' means caring for and helping someone or something to grow.[43] Just as plants need to be nurtured to grow, social movements need to be nurtured in order to become collective political actors. I hope that this thesis not only contributes to documenting the processes of becoming a collective actor and acting politically within the German CSA network but also that, through my engagement with the CSA activists and the reflections shared with them, I have helped to further nurture the movement.

Specifically, building on the research insights presented in **Chapters 3–6**, this thesis aimed to create societal impact by developing a range of activities, toolkits, and talks that can support grassroots actors in the transformation of and beyond capitalist agri-food systems. In line with calls to practice research with or alongside social movements (Gibson-Graham 2006), I aspired to provide critical reflections that are actionable, accessible, and understandable to the CSA activists (see also Chatterton, Fuller, and Routledge 2008). While most of the impact activities were primarily developed for and directed at the CSA community, I believe that they may be of interest for similar agri-food collectives and grassroots movements. In what follows, I first present an overview of the various dissemination and impact activities, including how they relate to the preceding chapters of this thesis. I then offer three examples of societal impact outputs.

Based on the research presented in **Chapter 3**, I gave two talks on the process through which CSA networks become a political actor. One was at the *Fachtag Solidarische Landwirtschaft 2023* in January 2023 in Berlin, which was co-organised by the German CSA network and the Heinrich-Böll foundation (see Photo 7.1.). The other, following the invitation of an activist-researcher, was at the *Convegno in occasione dell'Incontro Nazionale delle CSA 2021* in November 2021 in Trento, which was co-organised by the Italian CSA network and Trento University. Both talks were attended by a mixed audience consisting of policy makers, administrators, civil society, and scientists interested in CSA and sustainable agrifood systems

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[43] See: Cambridge dictionary: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nurture

more broadly. Explaining how meaning is ascribed to CSA and how the German and Italian CSA networks draw their boundaries to movement outsiders is important since doing so helps convey a nuanced account of the ideas, values, and core principles of CSA. For wider dissemination of the results within the CSA context, I furthermore co-produced a leaflet which explains the process of boundary work in simple language and which outlines guiding questions that movements can use to reflect on how they (want to) establish, maintain, and enforce their boundaries (see **section 7.1.**). In particular, this leaflet can be of use for young CSA networks that are still grappling with their values, definition, and vision. The leaflet is available in English, German and Italian.

*Photo 7.1.: Talk at the '*Fachtag Solidarische Landwirtschaft'*, January 2023, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Berlin, Germany. Photo credit: Emilie Schmidt.*

Based on my research on political advocacy (**Chapter 4**), in May 2023, I held a short intervention during an online workshop on political advocacy and shared my insights in a podcast format (to access the recording of the workshop and the podcast, click here). Both were developed as part of an e-training of the SALSIFI project and were designed to strengthen the capacity of CSA networks and activists of other small food movements and

initiatives seeking to engage in political advocacy and to influence public food policies at the national level. As such, my intervention aimed to provide actionable knowledge by outlining necessary skills and resources to engage in political advocacy work. To a very limited extent, I was also involved in the design and production of content for the course in a couple of instances (i.e. attending two in-person meetings of the SALSIFI project in April and September 2022).

Building on the insights of **Chapter 5,** my colleague Julia Spanier and I held a workshop at a CSA network meeting in February 2023 on the potential and desirability of an alliance between the CSA and degrowth movement. In the first part of the workshop, we shared our findings from our research – that is, we explained why movements enter alliances, how CSA perceives degrowth and vice versa, and potential benefits and risks of an alliance between the two. This presentation also served to debunk some commonly held beliefs. For instance, since we had discovered that most CSA activists who had engaged with degrowth were only aware of the sufficiency current, our workshop aimed to broaden their perception of degrowth and make other degrowth currents – in particular, anti-capitalist, feminist and decolonial currents – more widely known among the CSA movement. In the second part of the workshop, we jointly discussed whether an alliance between CSA and degrowth were desirable, the associated benefits and risks, and the question of how such an alliance could be practically organised. The workshop was attended by 25 participants.

Additionally, based on **Chapter 5** and **6**, in collaboration with members of the research project Unmaking, we elaborated a workshop toolkit entitled 'Degrowth and Food System Transformation' (see **section 7.2.**). The toolkit can be used by CSAs and other food initiatives and activists to stir reflections on the interlinkages of degrowth and the transformation of agri-food systems. Participants explored how our societies and food systems are organised around the ideology of endless growth, devoting due attention to systemic unsustainability and injustices. Furthermore, the workshop used a playful approach to help participants in designing tactics, strategies, and ideas for building sustainable food systems and overcoming the barriers that growth-based societies pose. To test the workshop, we held it twice: at the Food Autonomy Festival in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 2021, and at the Degrowth Conference in the Hague, the Netherlands, in 2022 (see Photo 7.2.). The toolkit was adjusted

based on the input of the working group on societal transformations of the *Solawi* network. It is available in English and German and was widely disseminated via several channels, such as the Degrowth Conference in Zagreb 2023, the working group on societal transformations and several blog posts.

Photo 7.2.: Degrowth and food system transformation workshop at the Degrowth Conference 2022, the Hague, the Netherlands. Photo credit: Laura van Oers.

Finally, for the ongoing research on anti-racism and diversity within the German CSA network, my colleague Julia Spanier and I engaged in participant observation of the working group against the far-right over the time span of one year. As part of this engagement, we conducted several activities to support the working group. In November 2022, we facilitated and conducted an action planning session, which aimed to help the working group in formulating goals and planning concrete actions for fighting structural discrimination and making the network more diverse (see Photo 7.3.). For this purpose, we took an existing action planning template from Soulefire Farm and adapted it to the needs and reality of the working group. Additionally, we helped to mobilise financial resources via our project funds, making it possible to hire Samie Blasingame, an educator and expert on the topic of food justice, and to develop a toolkit for raising awareness of the importance of anti-racism and diversity in the German CSA movement (see **section 7.3.**). At the time of writing, the working group

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against the far-right is still revising and further adapting the toolkit, which will be made available on their webpage upon finalisation. The foreword of this version of the toolkit (see **section 7.3.**) was written by Julia and me.

Photo 7.3.: Action planning with the working group against the far-right, November 2022, Kassel, Germany. Photo credit: Leonie Guerrero Lara.

Beyond these concrete impact and dissemination activities, I also adopted a 'politics of resourcefulness' during my research (Derickson and Routledge 2015). That is, I engaged in more direct yet subtle forms of 'giving back' to the German CSA movement by 'channeling [sic] the resources and privileges afforded academics […] to advancing the work of non-academic collaborators' (Derickson and Routledge 2015, 1). In other words, I supported the German CSA network by making time and carrying out a wide range of (organisational) tasks

– from simply taking over email communication to providing transparency regarding how their goals matched their funding applications and co-organising events.

7

7.1. The 'Boundary work' leaflet

DRAWING BOUNDARIES

How Community-Supported Agriculture networks can position themselves by creating, maintaining and enforcing a shared collective identity

What are core principles and values of CSA?

Who is permitted to join the network?

How can members of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) networks collectively negotiate and define a shared identity? Why does this matter? This short document is an introduction into the idea that CSA networks have boundaries by defining their own identity. It provides reflections on how such boundaries can be created, maintained and enforced over time to position the network strategically and to support its own internal development.

WHAT ARE THE BOUNDARIES OF CSA NETWORKS?

National networks of CSA initiatives need to continually negotiate and define their common identity. For example, they need to decide who is permitted to join the network and who is not, and on what basis. They also need to identify the principles and values that unite them, as well as ways to ensure that individual initiatives adhere to those principles and values.

We call this the network's **boundaries**: the invisible contours of the network's identity which determine how the network relates to other organizations, and how it distinguishes itself from them and from the context more generally.

A network's boundaries are not fixed forever. They tend to change over time, amongst others due to the natural turnover of members who bring in various ideas and political agendas. Boundaries are formed and changed in a

How can we ensure compliance with our core values and principles?

DRAWING BOUNDARIES

never-ending process that includes crucial moments of (often deliberative) decision-making—for instance, collective decision making regarding inclusion criteria and expulsion rules. They are also formed and changed through a network's more subtle, everyday operations— as exemplified through network members' language, i.e. how they talk about CSA.

Boundaries: the invisible contours of the network's identity which determine how the network relates to and distinguishes itself from other organizations

Finally, CSA networks may decide to adopt broad or narrow definition of their boundary. Either option has advantages and disadvantages: a broad definition can ensure diversity and the inclusion of its members, while a narrow definition can safeguard ideological purity. Each network needs to identify its own balance between broad and narrow boundaries, taking into consideration its political context, and the priorities in its own development.

WHY DO BOUNDARIES MATTER FOR CSA NETWORKS?

Boundaries are important because national CSA networks need to position themselves within their political context. They face an almost constant risk of being co-opted by market actors (for example, supermarket chains claiming support to local, fair, and/or organic produce). CSA networks also face unfavourable policies (for instance, around access to land and subsidies) and competition from other civil society organizations. Well-defined boundaries help to mitigate the risk of co-optation, for example through making it clear which initiatives can present themselves under the banner of CSA, and which cannot. There are also several other advantages. Boundaries make it easier for network members to collaborate by marking and reinforcing solidarity

Boundaries help to identify strategic direction towards potential adversaries as well as allies, and contribute to project a unitary image.

and social connections. They also help identify strategic direction towards potential adversaries (for example, food retail and supermarket chains) as well as potential allies (for example, other civil society organizations concerned with sustainable agriculture), and contribute to project a unitary image.

NOT A LINEAR PROCESS

Creating, maintaining and enforcing the boundaries of a CSA network is not a linear, straightforward process. It is a process that requires continuous questioning, challenging and reconsideration of existing boundaries. In turn, this implies a willingness and ability to activate internal processes of self-reflection, despite potential frictions and even conflict that this may generate within the network.

7

2

CREATING THE BOUNDARIES

- Defining who we are (not).
- Negotiating core principles and values.
- Adopting a shared definition of CSA.

MANTAINING THE BOUNDARIES

- Defining entry and participation requirements.
- Adopting a language reflecting core principles and values.
- Communicating who we are to others.

CSA NETWORK

- Organizing for monitoring adherence to core principles and values.
- Protecting visual identity, name and other marks of identity.
- Expelling and refusing non-compliant members.

ENFORCING THE BOUNDARIES

DRAWING BOUNDARIES

CREATING, MAINTAINING AND ENFORCING BOUNDARIES

These are some questions that CSA networks can ask themselves while thinking about the network's boundaries.

CREATING THE BOUNDARIES

- What are our core principles and values? What is our common denominator?
- Who are we (not)?
- Who or what do we struggle against?
- What does CSA mean to us? What definition of CSA do we apply? How is CSA defined in other contexts/countries?
- Do we want to adopt a narrow or a broad definition? What are the (dis-)advantages of either option?

MANTAINING THE BOUNDARIES

- How are we organized? Who is permitted to join our network, and who is refused access, and on what basis?
- How do we communicate who we are?
- What terms and languages do we use to speak about members and producers, activities, visions, etc.?

ENFORCING THE BOUNDARIES

- (How) is the compliance of individual initiatives with our [the network's] core values and principles enforced? Is there a legal basis for this enforcement, e.g. by anchoring the core values and principles in the network's statue? Who is responsible for this enforcement? Is this realistic, given our current resources?
- What are other viable tools for ensuring compliance with our values? Can, for example, participatory guarantee system serve this purpose?
- Who is allowed to use our name and visual identity (e.g., logo), and under what conditions? For what reason do we wish to protect them?

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CREDITS

unmaking | Utrecht University

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7.2.   The 'Degrowth and Food System Transformation' workshop toolkit

DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

WORKSHOP DEVELOPMENT

This workshop was developed in 2021 by a team of PhD researchers (in alphabetical order: Guilherme Raj, Jacob Smessaert, Julia Spanier, Laura van Oers, and Leonie Guerrero Lara) involved in the UNMAKING research project in collaboration with Iline Ceelen. UNMAKING is a research project led by Giuseppe Feola at the Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development at Utrecht University. The project aims to investigate how grassroots agricultural food initiatives disrupt or 'unmake' modern capitalist institutions and practices and under what conditions. Here is a link to the project: https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl/. UNMAKING is funded by the European Research Council (Starting Grant 802441) and by the Dutch Research Council (NWO; grant 016.Vidi.185.073).

The project aims to investigate how grassroots agricultural food initiatives disrupt or 'unmake' modern capitalist institutions and practices and under what conditions

When finalising the toolkit, we had hosted the workshop twice: at the International Degrowth Conference in 2021 in the Hague, the Netherlands, and at the Food Autonomy Festival in 2021 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Now, we want to share this toolkit freely and widely, hoping it can support more people in strategising for food system transformation. Enjoy the workshop!

Utrecht University, 2023

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This document was designed by www.bomburo.com

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Table of Contents

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About the workshop

WHAT IS A DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP?

The degrowth and food workshop is a two- to four hour process where participants engage in open-minded and critical reflection regarding food systems and their relationship to the growth-based economy. The goal of the workshop is for participants to consider the links between the struggle for more just and ecologically viable food systems and the core ideas of a degrowth transformation and, through this, to think about strategies to overcome the obstacles to a food system transformation rooted in societies' current pursuit of endless economic growth.

WHY A WORKSHOP ON DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION?

The food system is broken and unsustainable. It depends on cheap and abundant fossil fuels, mineral fertilisers, chemical pesticides, capital-intensive machinery and technology, and the exploitation of cheap labour worldwide. Along with the ideology of economic growth that underpins it, conventional agriculture is depleting natural resources, polluting freshwater sources, destroying forests, and drastically changing the climate. Simultaneously, citizens are often disconnected from the food they eat. They do not know where their food comes from, how it has been produced, or what the social conditions of agricultural workers are, and they expect a wide variety of cheap and fresh food all year long.

We consider agriculture and food systems as sites for societal transformation. Transformation is usually addressed in technological terms, through clean

We consider agriculture and food systems as crucial sites for societal transformation

and efficient new technologies or in terms of individual behavioural change (consumption and lifestyle). Both these transformation discourses direct attention away from systemic issues, notably how societies are organised around the ideology of endless economic growth. This workshop aims to scrutinise these systemic links between food systems and growth-based economies. We believe this discussion allows for a more nuanced understanding of the processes at play in societal transformation to design tactics, strategies, and ideas appropriate for addressing these crises.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The workshop integrates creative and interactive training methods to motivate reflections and discussions in different group settings with case presentations and interactive activities. The workshop is designed to be facilitated by at least one moderator. This workshop toolkit contains all the information necessary for the moderator to facilitate the workshop. Through interactions between participants in the discussions and exercises, participants can share their experiences, learn from each other, and create new strategies for social change.

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Each exercise explains the objectives, the materials, and the preparation needed to facilitate the exercises and presentations. All spoken words are *in italics*; the facilitator can use them as word-for-word speaking points. This toolkit has estimated times for each exercise, helping the moderator through the workshop.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE? Anyone willing to critically reflect on our economic system and who cares about creating more socially just, ecologically viable, and resilient food systems can participate. No previous knowledge or expertise is needed.

WHO CAN FACILITATE? Anyone can facilitate. We provide resources for people with little knowledge of degrowth who would like to facilitate the workshop (see videos below). Ideally, two people should co-facilitate the workshop, but one person can also facilitate it.

WHAT IS A GOOD LOCATION FOR THE WORKSHOP? The workshop can be held indoors or outdoors. If the weather allows it, we recommend holding the workshop in a lush, green space, ideally connected to food production. Such a green setting helps participants engage more creatively with the topics. However, workshop presenters should consider printing this PowerPoint presentation to share with participants unless a projector can be arranged outdoors. Nevertheless, the workshop also works well indoors. We prioritised in-person workshops and saw many benefits of conducting face-to-face activities (for group dynamics, etc.). We do not have experience holding the workshop online, but all workshop activities could easily be translated to an online setting using video-call platforms. One aspect that may require particular attention when organising the workshop online is the division of sub-groups in Activity 4. For example, many video-call platforms provide 'breakout rooms', which could solve this problem easily.

Participants can share their experiences, learn from each other, and create new strategies for social change

TOOLKIT STRUCTURE This toolkit comprises workshop activities, a facilitator guide, a degrowth presentation, and activity materials. It is structured as follows:

- This PDF contains an overview of the activities, indicating what material to use and the times for facilitators.
- PowerPoint presentations explain degrowth to refresh knowledge or familiarise those who have not heard of it yet. These presentations can be used during the workshop.
- A file with the obstacle cards supports one of the workshop exercises. The cards should be printed in advance of the workshop.

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1/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT
(LARGE GROUP FORMAT – 15–30 participants – 3H–4H)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
1. INTRODUCTION (15 min)	**Step 1:** Introduction	2 min	Full group	• Pens • Stickers for nametags • Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed	e.g. 10:00–10:15
	Step 2: Participants' introduction	8 min			
	Step 3: Rules	5 min			
2. VISIONING EXERCISE (40 min)	**Step 1:** Introduction	2 min	Full group	• Pens • Markers • Paper for writing or drawing • Flipchart paper	
	Steps 2–4: Visioning exercise	5 min	Individually		
	Step 5: Drawing	10 min	Individually		
	Step 6: Sharing visions	5 min	Duos or trios		
	Step 7: Sharing visions	5 min	Full group		
	Step 8: Identifying values and principles	10 min	Full group		
	Step 9: Transition to the next activity	2 min	Full group		
3. DEGROWTH INTRODUCTION (12–15 min)	**Steps 1–6:** Interactive slides	10 min	Full group	• Presentation (included in the training package) • Laptop with internet connection • Projector • White screen • Speaker	
	Video: Explaining degrowth	2–5 min			

Break 5–10 min

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2/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT
(LARGE GROUP FORMAT – 15–30 participants – 3H–4H)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE ENVISIONED FOOD SYSTEM (85–105 min)	**Steps 1–3:** Introduction	10 min	Full group	• Obstacle cards printed double-sided • Tape to hang obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room • Flipchart paper per group • Markers • Flipchart with guiding questions • Flipchart stand	
	Steps 4–5: Instructions and clarification	5 min	Full group		
	Steps 6–7: Group exercise	45–65 min Depending on the group size and time needed to strategise in each group	Small groups		
	Steps 8–9: Plenary	20 min	Full group		
	Step 10: Wrap up	5 min	Full group		

Break 5–10 min

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
5. PLENARY DISCUSSION (20 min)	**Step 1:** Bridge to the previous exercise	2 min	Full group		
	Steps 2–3: Learning and takeaway points	13 min	Duos or trios		
	Steps 4–5: Questions and closing	5 min	Full group		

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | TIMETABLE FLOWCHARTS

1/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT
(SMALL GROUP FORMAT – up to 15 participants – 2H–2H30)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
1. INTRODUCTION (10 min)	**Step 1:** Introduction	2 min	Full group	• Pens • Stickers for nametags • Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed	e.g. 10:00–10:10
	Step 2: Participants' introduction	3 min			
	Step 3: Rules	5 min			
2. VISIONING EXERCISE (30 min)	**Step 1:** Introduction	2 min	Full group	• Pens • Markers • Paper for writing or drawing • Flipchart paper	
	Steps 2–4: Visioning exercise	5 min	Individually		
	Step 5: Drawing	10 min	Individually		
	Step 6: Sharing visions	3 min	Duos or trios		
	Step 7: Sharing visions	3 min	Full group		
	Step 8: Identifying values and principles	5 min	Full group		
	Step 9: Transition to the next activity	2 min	Full group		
3. DEGROWTH INTRODUCTION (12–15 min)	**Steps 1–6:** Interactive slides	10 min	Full group	• Presentation (included in the training package) • Laptop with internet connection • Projector • White screen • Speaker	
	Video: Explaining degrowth	2–5 min			

Break 5–10 min

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | TIMETABLE FLOWCHARTS

2/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT
(SMALL GROUP FORMAT – up to 15 participants – 2H–2H30)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE ENVISIONED FOOD SYSTEM (65–85 min)	**Steps 1–3:** Introduction	5 min	Full group		
	Steps 4–5: Instructions and clarification	2 min	Full group	• Obstacle cards printed double-sided • Tape to hang the obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room • Flipchart paper per group • Markers • Flipchart with guiding questions • Flipchart stand	
	Steps 6–7: Group exercise	45–65 min Depending on the group size and time needed to strategise in each group	Small groups		
	Steps 8–9: Plenary	10 min	Full group		
	Step 10: Wrap up	3 min	Full group		

Break 5–10 min

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
5. PLENARY DISCUSSION (10 min)	**Step 1:** Bridge to the previous exercise	2 min	Full group		
	Steps 2–3: Learning and takeaway points	3 min	Duos or trios		
	Steps 4–5: Questions and closing	5 min	Full group		

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Theoretical frame

WHAT IS DEGROWTH?

The presentation slides introduce the question: What is degrowth?

Dr Barbara Muraca explained degrowth during the Degrowth Symposium in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 2019:

"Degrowth is not a reversal of things that we had before. It is not an elephant put on a diet. It is a different creature."

"Degrowth is not about reversing GDP. People think that degrowth is about shrinking, having less, and living simpler. It's not the point. The point is that we need a change in the structure of society, and it's not just a desirable path for the environment. This is the necessary path for us not to get into trouble."

- Her lecture from the symposium is available at the following link:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5qsUkiiKyM&t=211s
- The presentations from that day are on the website:
  https://ontgroei.degrowth.net/utrecht-degrowth-symposium/
- There is also much information on degrowth.info.

These links can also be shared with participants at the end of the workshop if they want to learn more about degrowth.
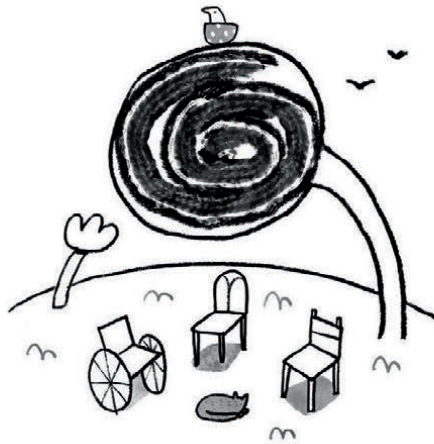

Snail image inspired by: degrowth.info

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Workshop exercises and facilitator guide

Degrowth and food system transformation:

The workshop

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1. Introduction Session

SESSION OVERVIEW In this session, as the facilitator, introduce yourself, your motivations for giving the workshop, and what the workshop addresses. This session sets the tone for the rest of the workshop. Give some room to explain the workshop experience and set some ground rules for the coming two to four hours, such as 'listening without commenting on what is said', 'respecting different points of view', 'we are all on a different path, and no one stands at the same position' etc. This time would also be the perfect moment to have an introduction round with all participants and let them briefly share their expectations.

OBJECTIVES

- Participants and facilitators get to know each other.
- Participants get to know each other.
- Participants know what to expect.
- Participants know the code of conduct.

MATERIALS

- Pens
- Stickers for nametags
- Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed

TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS, I.E., 15–30 PARTICIPANTS (TOTAL 15 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 8 min for introducing participants (Step 2)
- 5 min for explaining the workshop and rule setting (Step 3)

TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS, I.E., UP TO 15 PARTICIPANTS (TOTAL 10 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 3 min for introducing participants (Step 2)
- 5 min for explaining the workshop and rule setting (Step 3)

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | WORKSHOP EXERCISES AND FACILITATOR GUIDE

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Set the room up and position the flipchart so everyone can see it.

INSTRUCTIONS

► STEP 1

Facilitators welcome participants, introduce themselves, and say a few words about this workshop and its theme.

► STEP 2

[May not be needed if the participants already know each other]: Ask participants to introduce themselves – name, what they do in life, and why they are here. This step helps the facilitator prepare for questions or discussions during the workshop.

► STEP 3

Explain what the workshop entails and ask participants what rules they would like to create to ensure a safe environment for everyone to participate. Write the rules if you prefer. As the facilitator, you can also propose rules to the group. However, to provide the participants with a sense of co-creation, including them during the rule development might be better.

Possible rules or guiding principles to create a safe space and spark an environment of deeper reflection could be any of the following:

- Be aware of the space (and time) you take up and the position and privileges you bring to the discussion.
- Avoid assuming the opinions and identities of other participants.
- People with disabilities have equal rights.
- Be aware of the language you use in discussions and how you relate to others.
- Foster a spirit of mutual respect by listening to the wisdom everyone brings to the group.
- If you cannot find common ground, agree to disagree.
- Ask before taking pictures of people.
- Give room and space to the words and emotions of others.
- Maintain a welcoming and comfortable environment for everyone.

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2. 'Visioning' exercise:
Envisioning socially just and environmentally sound food systems

SESSION OVERVIEW This session makes participants imagine what their desired future food system might consist of through guided questions. After an individual reflection, the participants discuss in groups what they envision and deduce core values for future food systems.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop individual visions for desired food systems
- To reach a collective understanding of the values and principles envisioned for a future food system

MATERIALS

- Pens
- Paper for writing or drawing
- Flipchart paper
- Markers

TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 40 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 5 min for introspection (Steps 2–4)
- 10 min for writing or drawing ideas from the exercise (Step 5)
- 5 min for the small group discussion (Step 6)
- 5 min for the plenary discussion of examples from two to three people (Step 7)
- 10 min for writing the values and core principles (Step 8)
- 3 min for the discussion and wrapping up (Step 9)

TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 30 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 5 min for introspection (Steps 2–4)

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | WORKSHOP EXERCISES AND FACILITATOR GUIDE

- 10 min for writing or drawing ideas from the exercise (Step 5)
- 3 min for the small group discussion (Step 6)
- 3 min for the plenary discussion of examples from two to three people (Step 7)
- 5 min for writing the values and core principles (Step 8)
- 3 min for the discussion and wrapping up (Step 9)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Provide each participant with a pen and sheet of paper. Determine how you want to divide participants into groups of two to three people for the group discussion. Set up the flipchart and markers.

INSTRUCTIONS

► STEP 1   Introduce the activity as an introspection of their visions and principles related to the envisioned food systems.

► STEP 2   Ask participants to sit comfortably in their chairs and close their eyes.

► STEP 3   Start the exercise. *Try to envision your ideal food system in a future not too far away.*

► STEP 4   Ask the following prompting questions: Leave enough time in between the questions. Be sure to speak slowly.

- *Where do you get your food? What does this place look like? How does it feel to be there? Are you alone? Is it hard to get the food you want?*
- *Where is your food produced? Who produces it? How do they produce it? Do you know them? Do you like them? Do you know how they are feeling?*
- *What does your dinner look like? What does it taste like? Who prepared it? Who does the dishes? Do you enjoy it?*

► STEP 5   Ask participants to open their eyes, write the words that came up, and express their feelings using their chosen creative method. For instance, you can suggest they draw their vision/feelings.

► STEP 6   Divide participants into smaller groups and let them share their visions, feelings, and experiences regarding the exercise within the group.

► STEP 7   In the plenary, ask two to three people to share their visions or what they discussed in the group.

► STEP 8   In the plenary, ask participants to deduce the *values and principles* that emerge from their visions and discussions about food production, supply and consumption.

Guidance question: *What are your envisioned food system's values and core principles?*

Write the above question on the flipchart paper. While the participants share their thoughts, note the key values and principles they mention on the flipchart paper.

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | WORKSHOP EXERCISES AND FACILITATOR GUIDE
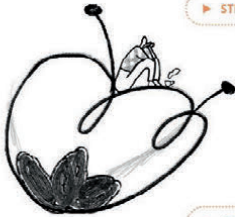
▶ STEP 9   Hang the flipchart paper on a wall to stay present in the workshop and wrap up.

▶ STEP 10   Link to the following section on degrowth. Here is a proposal for how you could make a bridge to the following section.

We keep the flipchart paper in sight to keep the values/principles in mind. We want to connect the values/principles you mentioned and the concept of degrowth, which (1) criticises growth-based societies and (2) proposes alternative societal models based on some of these values. To make these connections explicit and explore which specific values/principles you wrote that resonate with degrowth (and which do not), we want to briefly introduce degrowth to get all of us on the same page.

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3. Introducing Degrowth

For this section, we prepared two options. Depending on the participants' political consciousness of this topic, you can either present an introductory presentation on degrowth ('degrowth light') or a more advanced presentation. Neither presentation assumes that the group is already familiar with degrowth. The difference lies in the degree to which participants are familiar with critiques of capitalism. It is best to review both presentations and then decide.

Generally, we recommend the following:

- Version 3a is for groups not immediately comfortable with a deeper critique of capitalist society and who prefer a gentler introduction to critical questions about society and the economy.
- Version 3b is for groups where most people are not afraid to criticise capitalism and want to think about capitalism's reliance on global structures of exploitation.

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DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | WORKSHOP EXERCISES AND FACILITATOR GUIDE
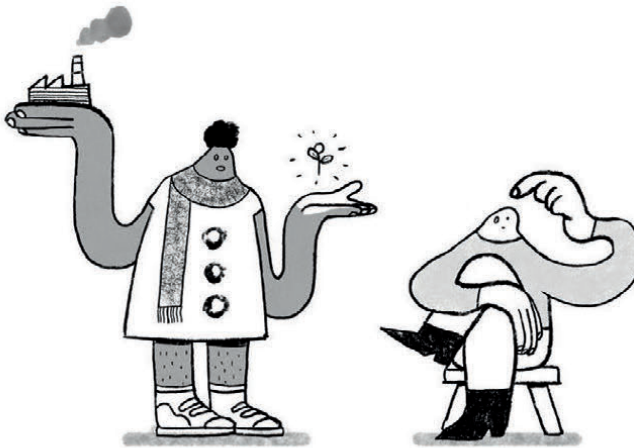
3a. Introducing Degrowth
Light version

SESSION OVERVIEW

Give the whole group an easily understandable presentation about degrowth to help familiarise those unfamiliar with degrowth and refresh and complement the knowledge of those who know/have heard of it so that everyone is on the same page. While long debates can be held about degrowth, these slides present some key takeaways. You can use the PowerPoint presentation attached in the annexe of this document.

If you prefer not to use a laptop/projector, you can print the PowerPoint presentation and hand it out to participants or present it freely. However, the short YouTube videos introducing degrowth cannot be presented in this case.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the key ideas of degrowth and link the 'visioning' exercise and Part 4 of this workshop: overcoming the obstacles to food system transformation
- At the end of this session, the participants should understand that degrowth
  - is a growth critique and positive vision;
  - is not a recession – It is not less of the same, but building something different;
  - is planned and selective, reducing harmful production and consumption;
  - targets unnecessary consumption, acknowledging that not all people consume the same way but that the ultra-rich drives most consumption and resource use. For example, most flights are taken by a very small percentage of the population;
  - What do we need to (de-)grow? What counts as useful production?

MATERIALS

- Presentation (included in the training package)
- Laptop with an internet connection
- Projector
- White screen
- Speaker

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TIMELINE FOR ALL SIZE GROUPS (TOTAL 12–15 MIN)

- 10 min for the presentation (Steps 1–3 and 5–8)
- 2–5 min for the video (Step 4)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Read the presentation and ensure the sound works for the video. Check the videos in the introduction of the toolkit.

INSTRUCTIONS

▶ STEP 1

Start the presentation (Slide 1) and introduce the topic. Make a bridge between the 'visioning' exercise, if possible, by examining the values and principles the participants envisioned for food systems and quickly assessing whether some represent degrowth principles, as you will present below.

- If yes, you can say: *We have arrived at quite an impressive number of values and principles for socially just and environmentally sound food systems. We will now discover that the degrowth movement also embraces many of these principles.*
- If not, you can say: *Thank you all again for sharing your values and visions for socially just and environmentally sound food systems. Degrowth proposes another vision that we want to introduce to you. Some of the values and principles that degrowth proposes might inspire you further.*

▶ STEP 2

Go to Slide 2, 'Degrowth: A vision for the good life for all'.

Here is an overview of values and principles frequently associated with the degrowth movement. Which principles resonate with the ones we just summarised about our envisioned food systems? Which ones do not? These principles already help us understand degrowth better and that degrowth promotes many values that many of us naturally share (such as cooperation and sharing a work-life balance) without knowing the degrowth movement. When you first hear the word degrowth, you may think of something negative, of a critique. Yes, degrowth is about reducing and slowing down, **but by design, it means living well** *with less by living differently, prioritising well-being, equity and sustainability. A degrowth economy puts well-being ahead of profit, celebrates solidarity and empathy over competition and individualism, and considers human beings part of nature rather than dominating it. Degrowth is more than a critique. It describes a positive vision.*

> *Degrowth means living well with less by living differently, prioritising well-being, equity and sustainability*

▶ STEP 3

Go to Slide 3, 'Let's brainstorm', and ask the group:

Before I go into more detail, there may be many people here who can give their view, perspective, or definition of degrowth. Who has heard of degrowth/the degrowth movement? Do you want to suggest a spontaneous description of what it means to you?

Let two to three people explain what degrowth is from their perspective.

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▶ STEP 4

Go to Slide 4, 'Let's listen' – play the video (in the language of choice).

Here is a short introduction to degrowth.

▶ STEP 5

Go to Slide 5, 'Degrowth: Vision and critique', and explain what is written on the slide.

We have learned so far that degrowth has different dimensions. First, degrowth presents a hopeful and positive vision for human societies. Second, degrowth is a critique of a growth-based economy.

▶ STEP 6

Go to Slide 6, 'Degrowth as a growth critique'.

For this workshop, we want to pay special attention to this strength of degrowth: the analysis of how putting economic growth first is a major barrier to making fair and sustainable societies. Degrowth starts with a critique and analysis of the idea and ideology of growth, which is the foundation of Western society.

In modern societies, growth is taken for granted and no longer questioned. However, we should work hard to break down the idea that growth is always good, which means realising that we cannot keep trying to grow at all costs, especially if it hurts people or the environment.

Degrowth also says that economic calculations, such as the gross domestic product (GDP), should not be the basis for making decisions. How does the GDP measure things? It is the worth of all the goods and services made yearly. The GDP is not a good way to measure how well a country is doing. For example, when a natural disaster, like an earthquake or storm, wipes out the way of life for thousands of people, the GDP may go up because new infrastructure and housing must be built, and people need to be assisted. Therefore, the GDP paints the wrong picture of a country. When the GDP is the main factor in making decisions, the needs and well-being of people come second to making money.

> **Degrowth starts with a critique and analysis of the idea and ideology of growth, which is the foundation of Western society**

Growth that never stops can also lead to too much unnecessary production and consumption. Companies must always improve their products by making new versions or following trends to stay competitive. In addition, products are made to break down quickly, called 'planned obsolescence', forcing people to buy new products. Last, commercial ads encourage overconsumption by making people want things they did not want before.

▶ STEP 7

Go to Slide 7, 'Degrowth: in favour of a good life for all within planetary limits'.

Degrowth calls for a radical reorganisation and resizing of our economies instead of a continuation of this need for growth in our societies.

- *This strategy involves a democratically **planned, fair, and selective** reduction in consumption to get back within the planetary limits and ensure everyone has a good quality of life while ensuring that the remaining consumption is shared fairly. (Planetary limits can be understood as being like the life support system of a spaceship. When they are used up, astronauts cannot continue to live on the spaceship.)*
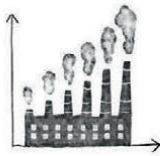
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- How does this work in real life? Degrowth is different from a crisis or a recession. With **selective downscaling**, degrowth is both about **having less and having more**: It means cutting back on things like private jets, polluting industries like oil and coal, and other things that hurt the planet and life on it and harm social justice. At the same time, it is about doing more things that could stop the planet's destruction and social injustice (such as public transport, education, public health, etc.). Not all production and consumption are unsustainable in the same way, and not everyone consumes the same amount.

With selective downscaling, degrowth is both about having less and having more

- Finally, moving away from the growth intention means redistributing wealth on a large scale, both within countries and between the Global North and Global South, not only because the richest 10% are responsible for about half of all current greenhouse gas emissions but also because redistribution is an important way to fix social injustices.

► STEP 8

Go to Slide 8, 'What is the link with our envisioned food system?'.

How does all of this help us move towards our desired food systems? Clearly, what we noticed in our visioning exercise was that our desired food systems are not yet entirely realised. Many aspects of the current food systems are at odds with our desires. Why is that? How can we change it?

What we have learned from this introduction to degrowth:

- First, the need for growth in our societies is one reason our ideal food systems have not come to fruition yet.
- Second, to make our desired food systems possible, we need a radical transformation away from this growth imperative. We must overcome the obstacles the growth economy poses to food system transformation.

We need a radical transformation away from this growth imperative.

Let's try this in the following exercise.

DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION | WORKSHOP EXERCISES AND FACILITATOR GUIDE

3b. Introducing Degrowth
Advanced version

SESSION OVERVIEW Give a slightly advanced presentation to the whole group about degrowth to familiarise those unfamiliar with degrowth and refresh and complement the knowledge of those who have already heard of it so that everyone is on the same page. While long debates can be held about degrowth, these slides aim to present some key takeaways about degrowth. You can use the PowerPoint presentation attached in the annexe of this document.

If you prefer not to use a laptop/projector, you can print the PowerPoint presentation and hand it out to participants or present it freely. However, the short YouTube videos introducing degrowth cannot be shown in this case.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the key ideas of degrowth and link the 'visioning' exercise and Part 4 of this workshop: overcoming the obstacles to food system transformation
- At the end of this session, participants should understand that degrowth
  - is a growth critique and positive vision;
  - is rooted in a critique of capitalist ideology;
  - makes us question established power relations, norms and principles;
  - should be decolonial and in solidarity with social movements in the Global South;
  - calls for a good life for all people worldwide;
  - more broadly implies a political struggle for a radical restructuring of our economies and societies.

MATERIALS

- Presentation (included in the training package)
- Laptop with an internet connection
- Projector
- White screen
- Speaker

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TIMELINE FOR ALL SIZE GROUPS (TOTAL 12–15 MIN)

- 10 min for the presentation (Steps 1–2, and 4–8)
- 2-5 min for the video (Step 3)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Read the presentation and ensure the sound works for the video. Check the videos in the introduction of the toolkit.

INSTRUCTIONS

▶ **STEP 1** Open the presentation.

▶ **STEP 2** Go to Slide 2. Ask the participants: *Who is familiar with degrowth or post-growth? What does degrowth or post-growth mean to you?*

Invite a few people to share what post-growth/degrowth means to them.

▶ **STEP 3** Go to Slide 3, 'Let's listen'. Play the video.

▶ **STEP 4** Go to Slide 4, 'Degrowth: Vision and Critique'.
What we thus far understand is that degrowth has different dimensions. Degrowth is a positive vision full of hope for a future society. Degrowth stems from a critique of how economic growth is prioritised in our current society.

If you like, you can quote from the book *The Future Is Degrowth* or inform participants of it in some other way.

▶ **STEP 5** Go to Slide 5, 'Economic growth: ideology of capitalist societies'.

- *What is the degrowth movement criticising about our society? It asserts that economic growth cannot be separated from resource consumption. Endless economic growth is incompatible with social justice or environmental and climate protection.*
- *While 'growth' in our society has the connotation of being positive, it relies on the exploitation of the environment (resources) and people (labour) and the privatisation of what used to be the communal or public use of goods and services from which only a small group profits.*
- *We are all familiar with the consequences of this: global social inequality, ecological crises, and the destruction of our livelihoods.*
- *This pursuit of perpetual economic growth is rooted in the functioning and ideology of capitalist societies. It is explicitly not just about a capitalist economy but rather a capitalist society. Existing power relationships, dominant norms, values, and ideas sustain the capitalist system that is behind the compulsion to pursue perpetual economic growth.*

▶ **STEP 6** Go to Slide 6, 'Questioning dominant values and power relations'.

- *The degrowth movement says we must question the capitalist values and principles on which our societies are built.*
- *For example, what roles do individualism; the sacred character of private*

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property; adherence to hierarchical, colonial, and patriarchal structures; and the centrality of such ideas as efficiency, profit maximisation, mass production, Western superiority, and the pursuit of economic growth, play in the current social and ecological crises?

(At this point, you can also choose other examples for the slide or your own.)

- What values and principles are neglected in our society?

► STEP 7 Go to Slide 7, 'Economic growth & (neo)colonial exploitation'.
One aspect that deserves special consideration in this context is the link between economic growth and colonial exploitation.

- Some members of the degrowth movement specifically direct criticism towards countries in the Global North.

  - The overwhelming majority of environmental destruction is driven by the excess consumption and use of resources and energy in the Global North, the consequences of which are borne primarily by the Global South (Hickel 2020).
  - Consumption and prosperity in the Global North are principally based on exploiting (forced cheap) resources and (forced cheap) labour in the Global South.

- Degrowth should be thought of in decolonial terms and stand in solidarity with social movements in the Global South advocating a break with neocolonial dependencies and a self-determined development of countries (often also associated with a rejection of Eurocentric, colonial development indicators, such as the GDP, and a focus on goals, such as 'the good life/buen vivir').

► STEP 8 Go to Slide 8, 'Degrowth: in favour of a good life for all within planetary limits'.

What are the requirements of the degrowth movement?

- We must reduce those things destroying life on our planet and undermining social justice, which means reducing production and consumption in the Global North and breaking Eurocentric, colonial notions of development.
- In contrast, degrowth activists demand the expansion of those things that improve life on our planet and social justice, promoting principles and values, such as solidarity, sustainability, sufficiency, justice, cooperation, well-being, and caring.
  - Specifically, a redistribution of wealth is required between the Global North and Global South and within countries and regions.

Degrowth requires us to question the current power relationships and demonstrate a political commitment towards a radical restructuring of society

What does this mean for us in specific terms?
We have learned that individual life changes (such as doing without) and changes at the farm level are important but not sufficient for the required social transformation. Degrowth requires us to question the current power relationships and demonstrate a political commitment towards a radical restructuring of society.

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4. Overcoming obstacles to food system transformation

SESSION OVERVIEW

The participants will start analysing how a growth-based society hinders transformations towards more just and sustainable food systems using the obstacle cards in the annexe. Participants can come up with strategies to overcome these structural obstacles. In the first phase of this session, the participants should be divided into groups of three to four. Finally, participants will reconvene and discuss their findings in the plenary.

OBJECTIVES

- Participants reflect on the current unsustainable and unjust food systems and the obstacles societies face to introduce a transformation towards more sustainable food systems.
- Participants recognise how changing the food system is related to overcoming the primacy of economic growth deeply enrooted in how societies function.
- Participants identify the usefulness of the degrowth perspective on food system transformation.
- Participants start sketching and reflecting on strategies for moving away from growth-based societies towards alternative food systems.

MATERIALS

- Obstacle cards printed double-sided
- Tape to hang the obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room
- Flipchart paper for each group
- Markers
- Flipchart with the guiding questions
- A flipchart stand

TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 85–105 MIN)

- 10 min for the introduction (Steps 1–3)
- 5 min for providing instructions and clarification (Steps 4–5)

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- 45–65 min for strategy development (Steps 6–7)
- 20 min for the plenary strategy discussion (Steps 8–9)
- 5 min for wrapping up (Step 10)

TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 65–85 MIN)

- 5 min for the introduction (Steps 1–3)
- 2 min for the instructions and clarification (Steps 4–5)
- 45–65 min for strategy development (Steps 6–7)
- 10 min for the plenary strategy discussion (Steps 8–9)
- 3 min for wrapping up (Step 10)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Print the double-sided obstacle cards, which are in the annexe of this document, and read them in advance. Write the guiding questions on flipchart paper and set this aside until the exercise.

INSTRUCTIONS

▶ STEP 1

Ask participants to listen to the instructions. Start with these instructions:

- *In this last exercise of the workshop, we explore the usefulness of a degrowth perspective—a perspective that, at its core, tells us that the necessary fundamental changes we need in our society to create a just and sustainable future can only be achieved if we manage to overcome the capitalist rules and norms that currently govern growth-based societies.*
- *Putting this perspective into practice, the workshop developers have created obstacle cards, which I have put [on this wall/table].*
- *The obstacle cards represent specific ways growth-based societies constrain the possibilities of transforming food systems. This list is not exhaustive but provides examples of economic and cultural aspects of growth-based societies.*

▶ STEP 2

Show the obstacle cards.

- *For each obstacle, there is a short explanation and examples regarding how it affects the food system.*
- *In this exercise, we use these obstacle cards while strategising pathways to reach our desired food systems. We can think about the structural barriers we must overcome on our journey to more desirable food systems using these obstacle cards. The task is to develop strategies to do so.*
- *Please divide into groups of three to four people (max). In each group, please select one or two obstacle cards, discuss them, and develop specific strategies to overcome this obstacle on our path towards the desired food system.*
- *To simplify this exercise, as a group, pick a specific aspect of your desired food system (such as buying food locally, drastically reducing large-scale farming, reducing food waste, etc.), and strategise only to achieve this specific goal with your specific obstacles in mind.*

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► STEP 3 Show the participants the guiding questions and indicate how much time they should spend on each question. (They are in the annexe if you want to print them to hand them out to the participants.)

- Vision [time: 5 min]:
  - *On which aspect of our envisioned food system do we want to focus?*
- Obstacles [time: 10 min]:
  - *What does this obstacle mean in practice?*
  - *How does this obstacle relate to our desired food system?*
  - *How does it make transformation difficult?*
- Strategies [time: 20 min]:
  - *How can we overcome this obstacle?*
  - *What is our strategy?*
  - *Who or what does the strategy target?*
  - *What types of specific interventions does it include?*
  - *Towards what or whom are the specific interventions directed?*
  - *Who carries out the strategy?*
  - *How does it help, in practice, to overcome the obstacle you chose?*
  - *How can you evaluate the strategy's effects?*

► STEP 4 Provide some more clarification and instruction.

- *You can also come up with other obstacles to the growth in society that you want to overcome.*
- *Consider this obstacle in your groups in your specific context, not in general. Consider how a specific obstacle makes reaching your desired food system difficult and how we might strategise to establish changes in the food system (e.g. circumventing rules, unlearning habits, creating alternative ways of organising collectively, etc.). Be creative with your strategies!*

► STEP 5 Explain the time frame for this and where to ask for help.

- *You have about 45 min to discuss and strategise in your groups.*

Ask each group to develop specific strategies and describe them on a big sheet of paper (text or drawing).

- *Afterwards, we will discuss and collectively reflect on some of your strategies in the plenary. We will go from group to group if you want to discuss your ideas.*

► STEP 6 Check whether the exercise is understood and answer any questions. Let them form groups, or you can assign groups for them. Let them read the obstacle cards and collect the material they need.

► STEP 7 Walk around the room and pass by the groups to see whether they need support. Inform them when they have used 50% of the time and when they have five minutes left.

► STEP 8 Call them back into the full group to discuss their strategies.

► STEP 9 Ask them to share their experiences from the group work.

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- Does anyone want to share which strategy they came up with in their group?
- What do others think about this strategy? Is it feasible? How does it connect to their specific obstacle(s)?

► **STEP 10** Wrap up the exercise. Here is a possible reflection text that you can use if it works for you and your group. You can also wrap up the exercise in whatever way you like.

The exercise we did today showed us how our growth-driven economy and its reliance on efficiency, profit maximisation, and consumer culture, to name just a few of its features, create barriers and systemic pressures that make it harder to build the food system we want. Strategies to build food systems that are more fair and good for the environment must involve deep systemic changes that go beyond just the food system and include other parts of society, institutions, and values that shape how society is run. Let's look at the case of time. The average work week is 40 hours. Many people, especially women, are involved in care work. Along with getting and preparing food, care work includes caring for babies, children, sick family members, or older adults. They do not have much time left to do other things that take considerable time but are important to the degrowth of food systems, like joining a food collective, working in a community garden, growing and harvesting food, biking 30 min to a nearby farm, or cooking from 'scratch' without using pre-made food. By reorganising and revaluing labour and care work, we can free up the time needed to do these things.

We need to imagine and plan how we can systemically change the food system beyond capitalist, growth–driven economies and societies

Food production and consumption are also linked to many other parts of the economy, such as infrastructure and mobility, housing and planning, and energy. It is important to plan how possible synergies can be used and how possible trade-offs can be dealt with to create degrowth-beneficial food systems. For example, affordable housing, especially in cities and metropolises, can make it more important for people to eat food produced ethically and sustainably, which seems impossible when tenants spend half of their income on housing. Implementing a universal basic income could make a big difference in getting more people involved in sustainable and fair food practices. Overall, we need to imagine and plan how we can change the food system and consider the interdependencies we have already discussed and start pushing for systemic change beyond capitalist, growth-driven economies and societies. To do so includes, among other things, building alliances and supporting and being in solidarity with other actors, initiatives and movements.

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5. Closing reflection and next steps

SESSION OVERVIEW This exercise helps participants reflect on their experiences throughout the workshop, determine which information, feelings, or attitudes have remained the same or changed because of the workshop, and express any unresolved issues or concerns. Additionally, it allows participants to think about what specific actions they can undertake in the future.

OBJECTIVES

- To allow a final reflection on the workshop
- To answer outstanding questions
- To recap the discussed topics
- To offer the possibility to ask for feedback

MATERIALS

No materials are needed.

TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 20 MIN MAX)

- 2 min for bridging to the previous exercise (Step 1)
- 13 min for participants to reflect on what they take away from the workshop (Steps 2–3)
- 5 min to answer any outstanding questions and close the workshop (Steps 4–5)

TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 10 MIN MAX)

- 2 min bridging to the previous exercise (Step 1)
- 3 min to ask what the participants take away from the workshop (Steps 2–3)
- 5 min to answer questions and close the workshop (Steps 4–5)

ADVANCED PREPARATION

No need for advanced preparation.

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INSTRUCTIONS

► STEP 1 — Create a bridge from the previous exercise. *Degrowth gives us tools and a way to look at these different aspects so we can analyse and criticise them. It also tries to develop systemic alternatives to a 'growth' society. Today, we did this for food systems, but similar activities could be done for other sectors and the different ways they are linked.*

► STEP 2 — Ask two to three people: *What have you learned?*

► STEP 3 — Ask two to three people: *What will you take away from the workshop? What are the possible next steps?*

► STEP 4 — Ask whether there are any unanswered questions and answer them if possible. *Do you still have questions that you would like to ask?*

► STEP 5 — Thank everyone for their time and energy and close the workshop.

Annexes

All annexes are in the zip file, available under:
https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl/resources/

ANNEX 1 Presentation on degrowth and food systems.

ANNEX 2 Obstacle cards to be printed double-sided.

ANNEX 3 Guiding questions for the obstacle cards to print and hand out to groups.

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7.3. The 'Anti-racism and diversity in the food system' toolkit
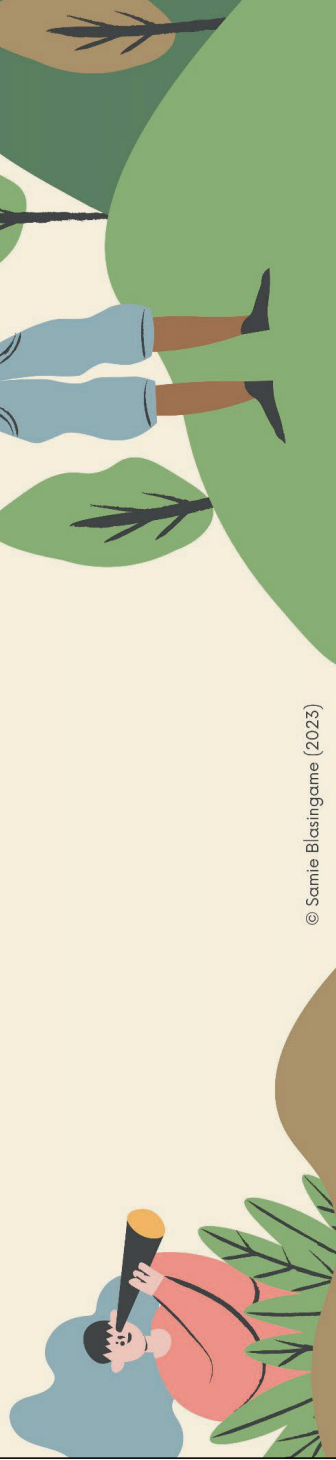
FOREWORD: WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

By Leonie Guerrero Lara and Julia Spanier

Alternative food movements are white spaces

Alternative food movements have been repeatedly called out for being primarily white spaces, particularly from scholars and activists in the US-American context (Slocum 2006; Guthman 2008). The term white spaces does not only refer to 'the presence of pale-skinned bodies' (Alkon and McCullen 2010, 940), but also, and more fundamentally, to the 'habitus of whiteness' (ibid.) and the associated social and cultural practices of the members of these movements. White people often fail to reflect on their own whiteness in these spaces. For instance, they understand their own white world as the norm and, unconsciously, behave in a way that can give BPoC[1] people the impression that they are not included and thereby hurt them. Such exclusionary tendencies manifest themselves, for instance, in the types of food offered in these alternative agriculture projects (for instance, very few CSA initiatives grow pulses or offer dairy and meat products; often the vegetable varieties chosen cater to a Western-European diet). Moreover, according to a study by Alkon and McCullen (2010), the so-called white farm imaginary prevails in many agricultural grassroots projects. In such projects, members of agri-food movements often have a romanticised image of white family farmers, while the role of non-white (often low-paid) producers, such as seasonal workers, is often rendered invisible. Additionally, in a racist society, BPoC are often economically disadvantaged in a structural manner.

[1] The term "Black Person and Person of Colour" (plural: Black People and People of Colour; abbreviated BPoC) is a self-determined designation of and for people who are not "white". The [...] description assumes that people who are not "white" skinned have a common horizon of experience in a predominantly "white" society. The term encompasses all "non-white" people, emphasising common experiences of systemic racism. [...] It is necessary to differentiate between "Black People" and "People of Colour" since "Black People" are also discriminated by other "People of Colour" and vice versa. [...] The term "Black People and People of Colour' was developed as a self-determined term to bridge this divide.' https://star-e.icja.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Empower-yourself-handout-what-does-BPoC-mean.pdf

Consequently, high member fees or prices for food produce can create participation barriers. Taken together, these reasons can prevent BPoC from joining agri-food movements (Alkon and McCullen 2010). At the same time, many members of these movements do neither proactively reflect on the exclusivity of agri-food movements, nor their own privilege, in particular their white privilege[2] which grants them access.

This toolkit was originally developed for the German community-supported agriculture (CSA) movement. As a predominantly white space, the movement is subject to the above-named problems. However, in contrast to the US-American context, the issue is not yet widely discussed in European alternative food movements. Therefore, it is important to call out, reflect on and unmake the prevalent structural racism in alternative food movements in Germany and other European countries.

We have all been socialised in a racist society

An important distinction needs to be made here: Structural racism is not exclusively reproduced in far-right or right-wing contexts. In fact, most alternative food movements, including the German "Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V.", explicitly condemn and reject far-right ideologies, embracing a clear no-tolerance policy towards any form of racist, xenophobic or otherwise discriminatory behaviours, practices or endeavours.

[2] White privilege 'is hard to see for those of us who were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted. [... it] is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do; in other words, purely on the basis of our skin color doors are open to us that are not open to other people' (Kendall 2013, 22).

What activists, writers and scholars on structural racism emphasise however is that a positioning within the leftist and liberal political spectrum does not shield individuals or groups from the unintentional, unconscious reproduction of a racist society. Alternative agri-food movements, just like everyone else, are embedded in a structurally racist society. Racism is woven into the fabric of our societies, and from an early age onwards, people are confronted with stereotypes and racial assumptions and unconsciously reproduce them. We refer here to the explanation of racism by Tupoka Ogette (2017). She writes:

Black people and People of Colour experience racism on a daily basis in Germany [...]. At day care centers, schools, in their families, at work [...]. This racism often happens in contexts in which people consider themselves as tolerant, fair, and above all "antiracist". Or in spaces which white people declare as "free from racism". This is where the problem lies: In Germany, racism is considered an individual and conscious misconduct of other people. This means that is often assumed that racism can only be found with nazis or other "bad/malign" people, who have concordant intentions' (Ogette 2017, 16, own translation).

Tupoka Ogette contrasts this with the omnipresence of racism: today's society, our culture and our economic situation are based on colonial exploitation, an exploitation justified and legitimised through racism. Consequently our society is inevitably deeply characterised by racism:

'We grew up in a world, in which, for over 300 years, racism has been deeply ingrained. So deeply, that there is no space, in which we cannot find racism. And just because you live in this world, you became part of this system. The way you have learnt to think and speak about yourself and others: through children's books, ... digital media, ... your textbooks, ... everything. In a nutshell: You have been socialised in a racist world. Just as many generations before you, for over 300 years' (Ogette 2017, 53, own translation).

In this society, BPoC experience microaggressions on a daily basis – 'insults, degradations, and humiliations... from white, "well-meaning/well-intentioned" people, who are not aware of their hidden message' (ibid. 55). For instance, 'the inquiry: "Where are you really from?" implies that a Black person or PoC cannot be German and therefore cannot feel home in their own country' (ibid. 55f). In our society, racism has penetrated existing institutions and their structures in the form of power relations and behaviour patterns, as well as in the form of assumptions who or what is 'normal' and who or what should be considered as the 'other' (ibid. 57-61).

The necessity of developing anti-racist practices within the CSA movement

There are several reasons why CSA movements in Germany and other European countries should develop anti-racist practices.

First, solidarity is a key value for CSA movements (Plank, Hafner, and Stotten 2020). According to Plank, Hafner, and Stotten (2020), four spheres of solidarity can be distinguished in relation to CSA: 'solidarity (i) between producers and eaters, (ii) amongst eaters, (iii) amongst producers, and (iv) within society, understood in a wider transnational and universal context.' If we take the latter seriously, solidarity must also extend to people who face (racial) discrimination.

Second, CSA movements aspire to contribute to food sovereignty. Food sovereignty fundamentally includes 'social relations free of oppression and inequality' (Nyéléni Forum 2007). This implies that CSA movements should actively contribute to dismantle racist structures within our society, which also pervade the CSA movement itself.

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Third, as mentioned above, some CSA networks already specify in their statue that they do not tolerate racist, xenophobic or otherwise discriminatory behaviours or endeavours. While such an explicit positioning is very important, as Tupoka Ogette explains, it can certainly not be sufficient to dismantle racism. It is not possible to eradicate racism by a positioning statement alone. As explained above, the members of the CSA movement, too, unconsciously reproduce elements of our racist society. Therefore, practicing anti-racism means that the CSA movements should self-critically confront their own whiteness and unconscious racism.

On the origin of this toolkit

This toolkit was developed by activist and researcher Samie Blasingame for the working group against the far-right (AK Gegen Rechts) of the German CSA movement. It builds on a workshop on food justice equally developed by Samie Blasingame. Both the toolkit and the workshop form part of a process that aims to establish anti-racist practices in the German CSA movement, as well as increasing its diversity. We, Julia Spanier and Leonie Guerrero Lara, accompanied this process between January 2022 and February 2023. At the time of writing, the AK Gegen Rechts is adapting and revising this toolkit to make it fit for the audience of the German CSA movement. Once finalized, the toolkit will be made available on their webpage.

How should this toolkit be used?

This toolkit is meant as a first contact with the topic of anti-racism. It provides a set of exercises and materials intended first and foremost for members of the German CSA movement, who can use them to familiarize themselves with structural racism, food justice and white privilege.

Therefore, it aims to raise awareness of the entanglement of the CSA movement in a racist society and the fact that the CSA movement largely consists of white, middleclass, and academic members. The toolkit contains resources and activities for both individuals and groups.

We hope that many CSA initiatives use this toolkit to critically question their own (lack of) diversity, accessibility/inclusivity and, more broadly, the associated implications in a racist and discriminatory society. While this toolkit was originally developed for the German context and the CSA movement in particular, we believe that several exercises and inputs can be of interest to other alternative food movements in Germany and across Europe.

We see this toolkit as a potential starting point for entering the process of becoming an anti-racist CSA (member). However, this toolkit is by no means sufficient to engage with the complex topics of structural racism and developing anti-racist practices. Both should be conceived as life-long learnings that require repeated personal engagement with and critical reflections on the topics. The AK Gegen Rechts is conscious of this limitation. To support members of the CSA movement in their anti-racist journey, they are currently working on other formats, notably a facilitated workshop, that can hopefully be held regularly for the network.

References

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GOALS

- Raising awareness of structural forms of discrimination and effects of own privileges also in the Solawi-movement

- Reflect on problematic patterns of thinking and behavior and acknowledge that they need to change

- Help improve accessibility of the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft (Solawi network) & the Solawi movement for people of diverse backgrounds. Reach out to different social groups and identify and break down structural barriers

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THIS TOOLBOX CONSISTS OF THREE BUILDING BLOCKS

(1) **Knowledge input**: introduction to food justice and racism in a German context.

(2) **Reflection Activities**: methods for individual and group thinking about the topic.

(3) **Further readings**: A list of open-source links and materials.

KNOWLEDGE INPUT
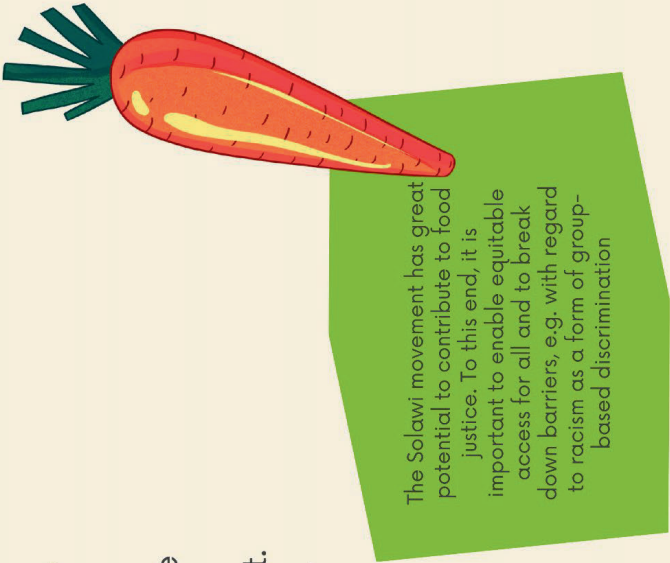
The following slides aim to help you begin developing an anti-racist and oppression-sensitive practice, as well as identify implications of anti-racist politics in the Solawi network and associated projects.

It begins with a definition of "Food Justice" as a tool to help us see the food system in a multi-dimensional and intersectional way. Producing enough food in an agro-ecological way is only one step of food justice; it also involves culturally appropriate food and access to food for those with no or lower income and for differently abled people of our communities.

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What is Food justice?

"Food justice is a holistic and structural view of the food system that sees healthy food as a human right and addresses structural barriers to that right. Drawing on the concept of environmental justice, the food justice movement works not only for access to healthy food for all, but also examines the structural roots of these disparities — and works for racial and economic justice, too."

The Solawi movement has great potential to contribute to food justice. To this end, it is important to enable equitable access for all and to break down barriers, e.g. with regard to racism as a form of group-based discrimination

Reference: Foodprint (2021): Food Justice

If Food Justice works for racial justice too – how is race* discussed within a German context?

*In German, there is still no adequate translation for the term race. The meaning of the german word "Rasse" as a literal translation is a biological categorization and does not reflect the social construction of the concept of "race". In a similar way no deconstruction of the terms "white" and "black" has yet taken place in German-speaking countries, which clearly suggests that the terms are not skin colours or real characteristics, but a constructed, ascribed category with which certain experiences (privileges vs. discrimination) are associated. To make this clear, the term "black" is often capitalised in German and the term "white" is written in italics.

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REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

Individual Reflections:
- Checking your Emotions
- Unpacking Privilege

Group Reflections:
- Towards a collective Self-Understanding
- Ecosystem Mapping

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

The following slides contain reflection exercises using different methods for individual and group reflection on the topic. The required documents are linked on each slide. If you use the Toolkit printed out, print out the following documents.

Required exercise materials:

- Center for Intersectional Justice (2021): (pages 13-16)
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LRIq6Xx5AAjGFF4BU2Ks-MKcct46UKS0/view

- Jugend im Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (2023): (choose one or more texts)
  - https://www.bundjugend.de/wp-content/uploads/verRuecktesKlima_beHinderteLoesungen_digital.pdf

- Sauseng, Prugger, Kübler (n.d.): (pages 20-22)
  - https://www.uibk.ac.at/ma-gender/downloads/allyship-in-action_online.pdf

- McIntosh & Cleveland, (1990):
  - https://www.ende-gelaende.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/McIntosh-White-Privilege.pdf

- Deepa Iyer, (2018):
  - https://solidarityis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/INTRO-to-the-Social-Change-Map-Dec-2022.pdf
  - More information on the Social-Change-Map you can find here: https://buildingmovement.org/our-work/movement-building/social-change-ecosystem-map/

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"The failure to acknowledge the role of race in European discourse, allows racism to be reproduced further in institutions, such as the police, or policy, e.g. on migration, domestic violence, or even in politics."

– Factsheet: Race in Germany and Europe

to do

Read and reflect on Chapter 3: "Challenges and Limitations of Anti-Racism in Germany and Europe"

Have you experienced any of these challenges yourself? How did you overcome them?

cij CENTER FOR INTERSECTIONAL JUSTICE

FACTSHEET RACE IN GERMANY AND EUROPE

MAY 2021

Reference: Center for Intersectional Justice (2021): Factsheet - Race in Germany and Europe

Racial injustices are just one aspect of a person's identity that may cause them to feel marginalized in white-majority, imperialist, capitalist and partiarchal society. We also live in an ableist society, which sometimes requires us to design spaces that seek to address needs outside of our own.

to do

Reflect on some of the stories shared within BUNDJugend's "VerRücktes Klima – BeHinderte Lösungen" publication and note down ways in which they have inspired you to shift ways in which you have been seeking increased inclusion in your organising.

Reference: Jugend im Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (2023): Verrücktes Klima – behinderte Lösungen

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Individual Activity 1

CHECKING YOUR EMOTIONS

When white people are confronted with their own racisms, they react differently: from indignant defensiveness and defense of their own unspoken privileges to sadness, shame and anger. These reactions are explained in Tupoka Ogette's 5-phase model in her book "exit RACISM".

When we question different manifestations of the dominant culture – race, religion, sexual identities, physical conditions, economic status, etc. – we may feel uncomfortable. It is important to recognize and reflect on these emotions as they arise. This is critical to how well we are later able to dismantle learned social structures. Recognizing such emotions in others allows us to have productive conversations and build more inclusive communities and projects with ever-growing confidence.

Referenz: Tupoka Ogette (2017): exit RACISM. rassismuskritisch denken lernen; Sauseng, Prugger, Kübler (n.d.): Allyship in Action

Individual Activity 1

CHECKING YOUR EMOTIONS

Happy Land

Defense

Guilt

Recognition

Shame
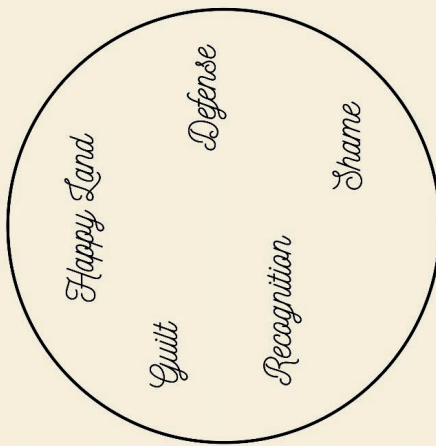
**The order of the five phases is variable
and jumping back and forth is possible.**

to do

Read through Tupoka Ogette's 5-phase model
in the linked brochure on pages 21-22.

Have you experienced or observed some of these
emotions in yourself?
Can you find yourself in any of the phases?

Consider how you can help yourself and others deal
with emotions that often arise
in the process of changing dominant culture
- especially when white supremacy is involved.

Reference: Tupoka Ogette (2017): exit RACISM. rassismuskritisch denken lernen; Sauseng, Prugger, Kübler (n.d.): Allyship in Action
Note: You can find a clear summary of the 5-phase model from Tupoka Ogette HERE on page 21-22.

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Individual Activity 2

UNPACKING PRIVILEGE

This is Dr. Peggy McIntosh. She has written several articles on white privilege and says that white folks are born with a knapsack which contains all kinds of goodies including educational opportunities, credit cards, blank checks, passports, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks." The reality of the invisible knapsack – in a society shaped by white supremacy – is that if you are white you can't take it off. It will be there until the day you die or the day systemic racism is ended. So it is not a matter of choosing whether or not to be a part of a racist system that benefits all white people. You can't simply say, "I am not going to be privileged anymore." As long as the institutions of society are designed to provide us with privilege, we will get these privileges whether we want them or not.

As bell hooks described, we live in an "imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" and as such, one's privileges tend to extend beyond the color of one's skin.

Reference: rdow (2010): What exactly is "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy?" ENC1145 Writing about nature.

Individual Activity 2
UNPACKING PRIVILEGE

WHAT'S IN YOUR INVISIBLE KNAPSACK?

to do
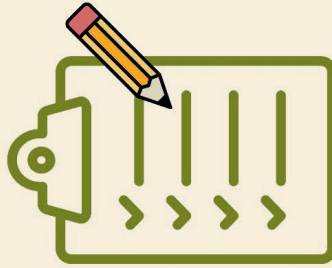
Read McIntosh's article and make your own list of the various privileges you benefit from – not only racial privileges, but socio-economic, mental or physical, cultural, religious, gender, passport, age, education and all other privileges too.

Keep this list and add to it whenever you become aware of an additional aspect of your privilege.

Share this activity with a friend and ask them to compare and discuss your lists together. How do these privileges show up in your daily life and how could the lack of them impact the life of someone else?

Reference: McIntosh & Cleveland, (1990): "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"

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Group Activity 1

TOWARDS A COLLECTIVE SELF-UNDERSTANDING

1 How would you describe the diversity in your Solawi – both positive and challenging aspects?

2 Have you already engaged with anti-racist practice and the accessibility of your Solawi? If yes, to what extent and what prompted you to do so? If not, why not?

3 How would you like to see your Solawi develop in this area? What do you hope the Solawi will look like in 5 or 10 years?

4 What does Food Justice look like to you/your group in practice?

to do

Step 1: Allow time for everyone to reflect on the questions individually – write them down to share later

Step 2: Discuss your answers in the group with the aim of aligning and finding a common diraction

Gruppenarbeit 2

ECOSYSTEM MAPPING
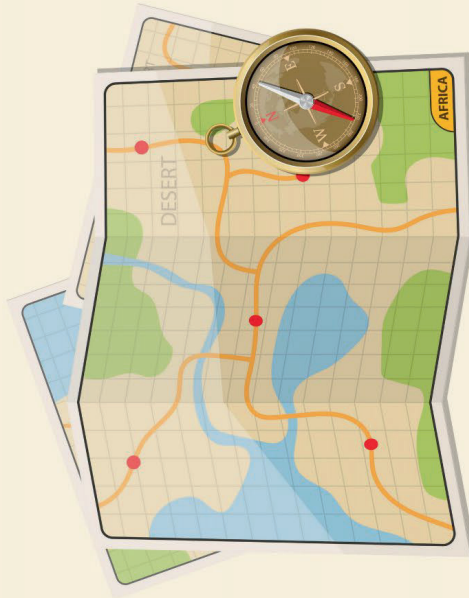
In our own environment, whether privately, professionally or in voluntary work, we can campaign for equality and against structural discrimination. For some of us, striving for social change is new territory and we don't know where to start. Others have been fighting for change for a long time and feel overwhelmed and burnt out. Still others are forced to act because of a crisis situation.

The Social Change Ecosystem Map on the next slide developed by Deepa Iyer is a tool that can help individuals, networks and organisations to reflect on and align their values around social change, their individual roles and the wider ecosystem.
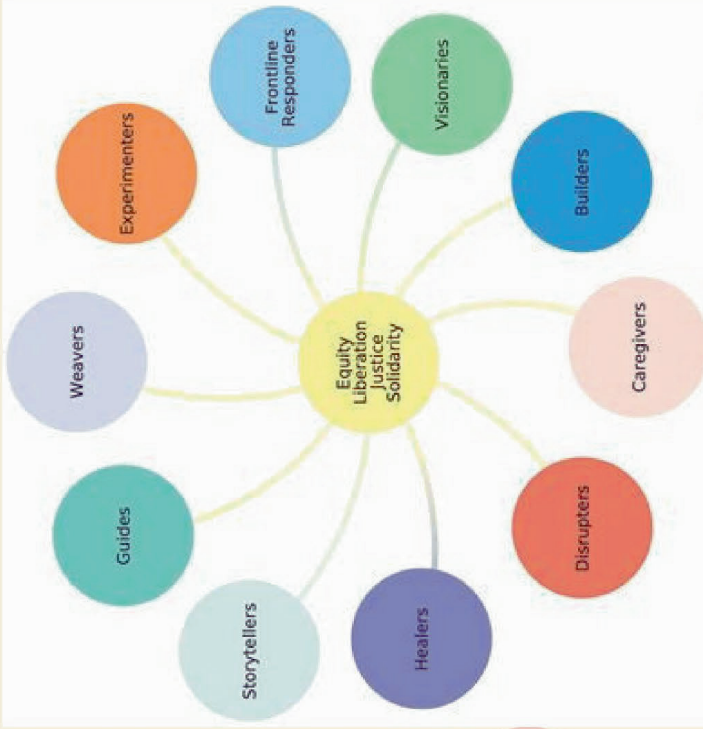
Quelle: Deepa Iyer, 2018: Social Change Ecosystem Map.

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Group Activity 2

ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

todo

Look at the figure on the right: Which values would you write in the middle? Do you agree with the values in the figure?

Read through Iyer's role descriptions following the link below: What role(s) do you often/never/sometimes take on in your social contexts? Do you know people who embody other roles?
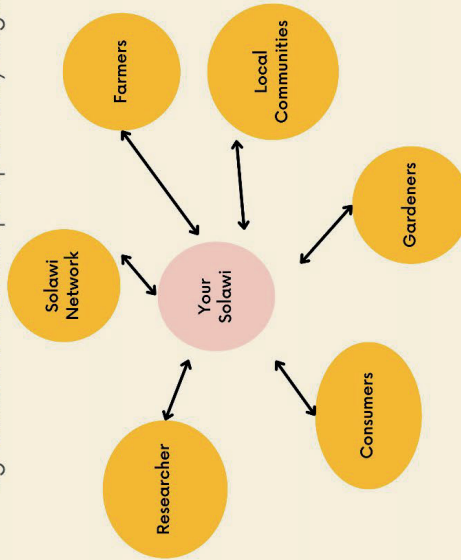
Reference: Deepa Iyer, 2018: Social Change Ecosystem Map

Frontline Responders

Visionaries

Experimenters

Builders

Equity
Liberation
Justice
Solidarity

Weavers

Caregivers

Guides

Disrupters

Storytellers

Healers

Group Activity 2

ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

This task should help you to find out what you can do concretely in your Solawi and how you can best link struggles and work together with movements and groups that are active on the topic of food and agriculture from other perspectives/angles (e.g. postmigrant organizations, seasonal workers, etc...)

to do

Grab a big piece of paper and some pens. Draw out your group's "ecosystem", visualizing every group, individual, project, business, that relates to your work and your ideas (comrades and opponents alike!)

Reference: Deepa Iyer, 2018: Social Change Ecosystem Map.

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Group Activity 2

ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

to do

Think about the ecosystem map you just created. Can you recognise roles from Iyer's ecosystem? Which ones are necessary but missing? Where does your map show that you need stronger collaborations to achieve your goal for your Solawi? Who can you approach for cooperation that is not yet on your map?

Reference: Deepa Iyer, 2018: Social Change Ecosystem Map

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Below you will find a list of further readings, podcasts and visual media on the topics of anti-racism and food justice.

We encourage you to read them on your own first and then discuss them with friends or colleagues. Taking the time to analyse the various contributions together with others can help you to take responsibility in this ongoing learning process.

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READINGS

- "Exit racism – rassismuskritisch denken lernen" by Tupoka Ogette
- "Racism in Germany is part of everyday life" (DW, 2022)
- "Ausbeutung und Rassismus auf deutschen Feldern – der Alltag osteuropäischer Saisonarbeitskräfte" (FARN, n.d)
- "Postcolonial debates in Germany – An Overview" (Elise Pape, 2017)
- "Deutschland Schwarz Weiß" – (Noah Sow, 2018)
- "Connecting the Dots: Lernen aus Geschichte(n) zu Unterdrückung und Widerstand" – (Gokal, 2017)
- "Plantation Memories" – (Grada Kilomba, 2008)
- "Rassismus ist kein Randproblem" (Bürgerstiftung Barnim, 2018)
- "Die Diversität der Ausbeutung" (Mendívil & Sarbo, 2023)
- "Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum" (Aydemir & Yaghoobifarah 2019)
- "Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion Des Anderen in Der Postmigrantischen Gesellschaft" (Fatima El-Tayeb, 2015)
- "Food system-oriented 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge" by Food Solutions New England

PODCASTS / AUDIO BOOKS

- "Exit racism – rassismuskritisch denken lernen" by Tupoka Ogette
- "Der weiße Fleck – Eine Anleitung zu antirassistischem Denken" by Mohamed Amjahid
- "Vortrag von Imeh Ituen und Joshua Kwesi Aikins vom BPoC-Environmental-and-Climate-Justice-Kollektiv Berlin: "Klimawandel, Rassismus und Globale Verantwortung – Schwarze Perspektiven Auf Die Kolonialität Der Klimakrise"
- "White Privilege Check – mit Rainer Maria Jilg" (Kanackische Welle. 2019)
- "IG Live Series: Food & Stuff" (Stil in Berlin, 2021)
- "Weißabgleich – taz Podcast von PoC"

VISUAL MEDIA

- "Der weiße Fleck – Eine Anleitung zu antirassistischem Denken" by Mohamed Amjahid
- "Rassismus nach Lehrplan" mit Josephine Apraku
- "My Culture Is NOT A Costume" by Teen Vogue
- Geschichte des Rassismus
  - 1/3 Das Geschäft mit der Sklaverei
  - 2/3 Die fatalen Folgen
  - 3/3 Das Vermächtnis der Kolonialherren
- "On White Privilege" by Tim Wise
- "Why Color Blindness Will NOT End Racism" written By: Danielle Henderson
- "The Surprisingly Racist History of "Caucasian"" with Franchesca Ramsey
- "Gehört der Rassismus zu Deutschland? Und wenn ja: Warum?" by Mark Terke
- How microaggressions are like mosquito bites
- What Did Jesus REALLY Look Like? with Franchesca Ramsey

CREDITS

This toolkit was created by Samie Blasingame and AK gegen Rechts for the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft. It consists of adapted resources from the workshop "Building Food Justice: Practical Steps for the Solawi Network in Germany", which was developed for the network in April 2022.

The toolkit was translated from English to German by Miriam Kronester. The German and the English version can be found on the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft website.

Thanks to funding from the UNMAKING research project led by Dr. Giuseppe Feola at the University of Utrecht, the method kit could be produced. The workshop, on which the method kit is based, was organized in collaboration by the Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V. and the UNMAKING research project.

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CONCLUSION

This final chapter reflects on the combined body of work outlined in the first chapter and presented in **Chapters 3**–**6**. I begin with answering my research question. Subsequently, I reflect on my overall research approach – that is, my positionality and the limitations of this thesis. To conclude, I interrogate what strategies and alliances are conducive for CSA as a collective, political actor in agri-food system transformation, thereby pointing to open (research) questions which deserve due attention.

8.1. An interrogation of the German community-supported agriculture movement as a collective, political actor

This section starts with a brief summary of my main research findings, followed by a broader reflection on what type of actor the German CSA movement is.

8.1.1. Summary of main findings

The main research question I investigated in this thesis was: *How do CSA networks form and act as collective, political actors of societal transformation?* To answer this research question and to generate novel insights on the political dimension of CSA, I used the case of the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, the German CSA network (hereafter: *Solawi* network) and conceptualised it as a social movement. This research drew primarily from social movement theory and different strands therein: First, I used the concept of boundary work to shed light on the process through which CSA networks become a collective actor (**Chapter 3**). Subsequently, drawing on literature on political advocacy, I analysed how CSA networks act politically via political advocacy to induce change within capitalist agri-food systems (**Chapter 4**). Building on the literature on coalition building, I then investigated how political action can be broadened by systematically analysing the potential of entering a coalition between the CSA and degrowth movement (**Chapter 5**). Finally, I examined the transformation of agri-food systems more broadly through the lens of degrowth literature and identified pertinent avenues for future research (**Chapter 6**).

To operationalise the main research question, I deduced a number of sub-questions, which were answered in the respective chapters (see Figure 1.1.). In the following paragraphs, I re-iterate these questions and summarise the main findings of each chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 3, 'Becoming a collective, political actor', set out to answer my first sub-question: *how do CSA networks collectively negotiate and define their boundaries?* It illuminated how CSA networks collectively negotiate common values and core principles, how they frame their antagonists and protagonists, and who can(not) legitimately join their struggle. Drawing on the concept of boundary work, I showed that the construction of a collective 'we' is a fundamentally relational process; that is, CSA networks draw their identarian boundaries in relation to other already existing movements, at times in opposition to, at times inspired by, these movements. The study compared two cases, the national CSA networks in Germany and Italy, which have adopted different approaches to boundary work. Reflecting its origins in the anti-globalisation and biodynamic movements, the *Solawi* network positioned CSA as an alternative to the industrial, globalised agri-food system and other alternative food networks. However, as the network became more diverse in terms of membership, it adjusted its (in-)formal boundaries over time. Only eight years after its foundation, the *Solawi* network then deliberately developed its own inclusive, but sharply bounded definition of CSA. In contrast, the Italian CSA network adopted the (rather broad) European CSA charter early on without translating it to the specificities of the Italian context. However, since parts of the movements – in particular, the older generation of activists – are rooted in the solidarity economy paradigm, voices calling for a narrower definition resurfaced. Building on these two cases, the chapter proposed a categorisation of mechanisms of boundary work – namely (i) creating, (ii) (de-)institutionalising, and (iii) enforcing boundaries. While the chapter explored how CSA networks become a collective actor, it acknowledged the tensions and difficulties therein, which are induced by the existing heterogeneity and co-existing views on what CSA should stand for, such as the factionalism in the German CSA network over agricultural holdings and community-supported enterprises. Finally, the chapter discussed potential misalignments between whether boundary work is a process or product, the implications of choosing a narrow or broad definition for the membership, and the challenge of addressing internal heterogeneity within CSA networks.

Chapter 4, 'Acting politically via political advocacy work', approached sub-question two: *what has enabled and hindered political advocacy as a strategy to induce change for the CSA network?* Thus, it analysed the political advocacy work of the *Solawi* network as a strategy to

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induce change in the capitalist agri-food system. Drawing on experiences with political advocacy from 2018 to 2022, the chapter mapped enabling factors and barriers for pursuing such a strategy. It found that, despite the increasing professionalisation and formalisation of the network, two factors that tend to be positively correlated with political advocacy, political advocacy was not prioritised, since limited financial and human resources significantly hampered it. The analysis also showed that negative affective emotions, such as frustration, lack of trust, and feeling underappreciated (which typically are overlooked in studies on political advocacy), can undermine advocates' motivation to further pursue their engagement. By and large, the political advocacy efforts shifted from the national to federal level, thereby opening new spaces and entry points to influence agricultural policies. The study concluded that the organisational structure (or lack thereof) of the *Solawi* network influenced the strategies and tactics, resources, emotions, and advocacy spaces in various ways. Therefore, the chapter argued that advocates ought to give due attention to a movement's organisational structure including potential tensions around member participation in decision-making, responsibilities and legitimacy of advocates, visibility and valorisation of advocacy work, and (mis-)matches between the internal structure and advocacy spaces.

Chapter 5, 'Broadening political action by coalition building', addressed my third sub-question and analysed *what potential there is for a coalition between the CSA and degrowth movements*. It outlined the ideologies and strategies embraced within the German CSA movement and systematically compared them to those of the German degrowth movement. Based on the comparison, the study assessed why there is no coalition and whether a future coalition between the two movements is feasible and desirable. Drawing on social movement scholarship on coalitions, the study found that the lack of a coalition between the two movements can be explained by a lack of alignment of their main frames and action repertoires. Other factors preventing their alignment are scarce resources, differing forms of internal organisation, and limited knowledge about degrowth on the side of the CSA movement. However, the study argued that entering a coalition in the future could be beneficial for both movements. In particular, it suggested that the strategies of both movements, practice-driven change for CSA and discourse-driven change for degrowth, are

complementary. CSA could benefit from degrowth's structural perspective, which denounces the inherent flaws of capitalist society, many of which impede the CSA movement's flourishing. In turn, degrowth could benefit from entering into a coalition with CSA by learning how to become more practically relevant and support struggles on the ground. The study also acknowledged the concomitant risks of a coalition; most importantly, a coalition could aggravate the already existing tensions around the CSA movement's cultural-political identity that exist between the different factions of the network.

Chapter 6, 'Agri-food system transformations beyond CSA: A research agenda from a degrowth perspective', provided an answer to my fourth sub-question on *identifying research gaps and avenues in degrowth research on agri-food systems*. Consequently, it reviewed the emergent field on degrowth agri-food systems and outlined four research avenues: (i) degrowth conceptualisations; (ii) theorisation of transformations towards sustainability; (iii) the political economy of degrowth agri-food systems; and (iv) rurality and degrowth. A key contribution of the chapter was its consideration of how the current injustice and unsustainability of capitalist agri-food systems are a product of the social imaginary of endless, capitalist growth and of the political-economic structures that reproduce this social imaginary. As such, the reader was invited to reimagine transformations of agri-food systems in the context of and in connection with broader societal structures and other economic sectors. The study further problematised how the inner workings of capitalism structurally hamper transformations towards degrowth agri-food systems – for instance, by hindering grassroots initiatives' access to land – and how agri-food initiatives prefiguring degrowth societies are exposed to the ever-present risk of capitalist co-optation. The research agenda connects to the remaining chapters in multiple ways. First, it encouraged investigations of a multiplicity of agents of change beyond single initiatives as well as greater attention to formal and informal grassroots networks (such as CSA networks). Second, the research agenda proposed to investigate these agents as political actors that operate in diverse ways in the political arena – from prefiguration to conventional politics such as advocacy (see **Chapter 4**). Finally, the study encouraged conceptualising and studying degrowth as a social movement, including the possibility of building alliances with agrarian movements, a call that is responded to in **Chapter 5**.

8.1.2. On the political, collective, and heterogenous nature of community-supported agriculture

In this thesis, I argue that CSA should not be read simply as a social innovation or real utopia, but as a social movement and a collective, political actor with a common identity and a variety of political strategies. For this purpose, I extensively examined CSA at the level of national networks. Such spaces, where CSA initiatives negotiate meaning, boundaries, and political strategies across their diversity, had been largely overlooked by extant research, which focuses primarily on individual CSA initiatives. Thereby, my thesis showcases the multi-scale dimension of collective action (see also D'Alisa, Forno, and Maurano 2015) of the CSA movement; in other words, collective action expands from single CSA initiatives to national CSA networks and to the transnational network Urgenci.

Based on my research findings, I conclude that the *Solawi* network is a collective, yet heterogenous actor, which is also reflected in its politics. While the network engages predominantly in a prefigurative politics, different understandings of what it means to be political co-exist within the movement. In the following section, I bring insights from across the empirical chapters of this thesis into conversation and nuance this argument by (i) elaborating in what ways and to what extent the CSA movement is political, (ii) outlining the collective dimension of the movement, and (iii) acknowledging and discussing the existing heterogeneity within the movement (for a more in-depth discussion of CSA as a collective, political actor of societal transformations in relation to existing literature see **section 8.3**).

With regard to the political nature of the *Solawi* network, consensus on certain positions coexists with points of divergence on other topics. As explained in **Chapter 3**, there is a strong consensus to exclude CSA initiatives and activists adhering to far-right positions (see also Degens and Lapschieß (2023a). The chapter points out a number of mechanisms to institutionalise and enforce the incompatibility of CSA with right-wing ideas, thereby shielding the *Solawi* network from far-right co-optation. These mechanisms may be of interest to other food movements who have no clear position on this matter. Developing an explicit stance against the far-right is becoming particularly relevant considering the resurgence of right-wing ideologies, parties, and movements in Germany, and Europe more generally. At the time of writing, summer of 2023, the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), a

right-wing populist and, in parts, extreme right party, has, for the first time in history, appointed both a county commissioner and mayor (ZDF 2023) and is scoring 20% in the polls (ZEIT Online 2023). In the context of agriculture and the countryside, too, there are worrisome trends; for example, right-wing settler movements, such as the volkish Anastasia movement, are gaining influence (Röpke and Speit 2021; Schenderlein 2020).

Beyond the shared, explicit distancing from the far-right, there is, however, little agreement on whether and in what ways CSA is political. If the question was to be answered by my research participants, there would be a wide range of possible answers, rooted in differing interpretations of what being political can or should mean. Throughout this thesis, I have captured co-existing views on the political nature of the CSA movement. Some activists would, quite assertively and vocally, state that yes, CSA is without a doubt political. They would refer to the participatory positioning statement (which is in development), that frames CSA as an emancipatory struggle (see **Chapter 3**), point to political advocacy efforts and participation in manifestations and signing petitions (see **Chapter 4**). They would highlight the prefigurative nature of CSA (see also **Chapter 5**), a view that is in line with the dominant view among scholars (see e.g. Degens and Lapschieß 2023a, 3), who argue that CSA is an 'expression of food democratic experimentalism in itself'), frame CSA as a key actor in processes of societal transformation (see **Chapter 5**), or quote a column in the monthly newsletter entitled 'CSA is political'. The column, written by members of the working group against the far-right, seeks to politicise the movement by sharing various content – for example, drawing inspiration from food sovereignty struggles around the globe, highlighting the relevance of feminist struggles within agriculture, giving visibility to the equal pay and care day, and circulating information on radicalisation prevention and right-wing extremism in the context of the German agri-food system. Another pertinent example of CSA's political nature is the positioning statement that the council and working-group against the far-right of the network released in June 2020, warning against and distancing themselves from the COVID-19 protests (see **Chapter 3**). These protests were joined by a variety of people with different backgrounds, including conspiracy theorists, anti-vaxxers, and far-right groups (Reichardt 2021). In addition, during my engagement with CSA I observed that the *Solawi* network has become increasingly politicised and that new topics have entered the internal

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debates. For example, in the evaluation of the third German CSA symposium, co-organised by the *Solawi* network and the foundation of the Green Party, a long-standing CSA activist noticed that feminist and anti-capitalist perspectives were naturally referenced and that a couple of years ago, such references would have been inconceivable (personal communication, 18th January 2023).

However, while parts of the *Solawi* network explicitly understand themselves as political, others would shy away from taking a stance and instead declare themselves to be deliberately 'apolitical' (see also Table 5.5, on CSA 'small', **Chapter 5**). Those who believe that CSA is rightfully not political sometimes equate being and acting political with party politics, or they fear that taking a stance on political positions would undermine the diversity within the CSA movement and alienate potential members. Consequently, I conclude that the CSA movement is politicised to different extents and that the question of to what extent the movement wants to be political remains internally contested and debated. While further politicisation is necessary to support societal transformation processes (see also **8.3.1.**), for a social movement that consists of a large number of heterogenous initiatives (see below) this process is complex and problem-ridden. In sum, this thesis gives a nuanced view of the ways in which CSA networks can be understood as political, which, by and large, has been omitted by studies on CSA who mostly study them 'through a lens of business models and social innovations, which does not capture their social movement nature and political agency' (Bonfert 2022b, 500f).

Besides positioning CSA as a political actor, another key insight of this thesis is to highlight the collective dimension of the CSA movement – notably, by fleshing out existing commonalities between the diverse members as well as by examining the underlying negotiation processes which allowed them to find a common position. Adopting a social movement lens was essential to draw the attention to the collective dimension and processes of negotiation within the network, which have been obscured by extant research on CSA. **Chapter 3** shed light on the collective identity of the CSA movement, foregrounded common principles and values of CSA, and explored how and where boundaries are drawn. In turn, **Chapter 4** unpacked the political strategy and tactics that are prioritised by the movement, which above all, manifested in a prefigurative politics and the support for founding new CSA initiatives.

Chapter 5 then explored the prognostic and diagnostic framing of the CSA network as a collective expression of the movement. This suggests that CSA movements collectively produce and negotiate meaning and engage in collective action to bring about social change in the agri-food system and beyond. In particular, the novelty of this thesis regarding its focus on the collective dimension of CSA movements lies in its emphasis on the internal process – that is, the detailed documentation and interpretation of the unfolding debates and internal contestations – rather than on the actual state of the movement. In doing so, it differs even from the minority of studies on CSAs at the level of the network (e.g. Bonfert 2022a; 2022b; Rommel et al. 2022) – but see Degens and Lapschieß (2023b) for an exception.

At the same time, like most social and food movements (see e.g. Giménez and Shattuck 2011), the German CSA movement is highly heterogeneous. In this thesis, I therefore shed light on the existing diversity among CSA initiatives in terms of views, values, ideologies, and practices, all of which are rooted in the different experiences and personal backgrounds of activists. While a number of studies on CSA have tried to capture the movement's diversity by systematising and developing a typology of CSA initiatives, most have focused on the practical organisation of CSA initiatives (see Gruber 2020 on self-organised, participative and service-oriented CSAs; Paech et al. 2020 and; Rüter 2015 on producer-led, collaborative, and co-entrepreneurial CSAs). Other studies on CSA have focused on the degree to which CSAs can be considered 'ideal' or 'transitional' (Bobulescu et al. 2018), while still others have explored how CSAs perceive the various unfolding societal crises (Blättel-Mink et al. 2017 on sociopolitical, spiritual-communal, and pragmatic-economic CSAs). This thesis complements those existing studies by highlighting that the diverse everyday practices of CSA initiatives are shaped by different underlying ideologies, including anthroposophical and spiritual, anti-capitalist and emancipatory, peasant and traditional family farms, and conservative-patriarchal. **Chapter 5** further illustrated this diversity by outlining four different CSA initiatives and their ideological and political alignment with degrowth – from a large-scale, consumer-led cooperative concerned with having significant impact; a radical and autonomous producer-led vegetable collective; a small and self-declared 'apolitical' consumer-led vegetable garden; and a producer-led biodynamic farm rooted in the anthroposophical movement.

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Adopting a social movement perspective allowed me to explore how CSA initiatives with differing values, ways of organising, and political goals are positioned towards each other, including the prevailing tensions within the movement and how they are mitigated (see also Ghaziani and Kretschmer 2019 on infighting as a common phenomenon within movements). For instance, **Chapter 3** unpacked the factionalism between progressive, left-leaning gardening collectives, which view CSA as an actor of social-ecological transformations, and mostly (biodynamic) family farms, who wish to safeguard small-scale farming and bring about a paradigm change in agriculture. Thus, this thesis expands existing work on the anthroposophic roots of the German CSA movement, as proposed by Gruber (2020), who showed how the values of CSA practitioners have changed over time, highlighting the internal negotiation processes that consequently played out at the network level. Furthermore, I showed that the *Solawi* network, similar to the UK CSA network (see Bonfert 2022b) adopted a pragmatic politics to deal with the internal diversity. For instance, while some of these perspectives – notably, the anti-capitalist, emancipatory, and conservative-patriarchal – are, to say the least, contradictory, the *Solawi* network explicitly welcomes plurality in its midst (see **Chapter 3**) and encourages in-depth exploration of a variety of topics in decentral working groups – a pragmatic decision that has allowed the movement to grow and diffuse within multiple, distinct circles.

However, while I argue in several instances of this thesis that the German CSA movement is heterogeneous and diverse, I am fully aware that this diversity does not translate into the socio-demographic background of members and producers in CSAs. As called out by several scholars working on alternative food networks more generally, people who unite in this movement are primarily highly educated, middle class, and white (Guthman 2008; Jarosz 2011; Slocum 2006; Alkon and McCullen 2010). In fact, this lack of diversity is currently also addressed and self-critically reflected on within the *Solawi* network. The working group against the far-right has launched a so-called 'diversity' process, which aims to instigate a collective reflection on the privileges, underlying biases and reasons for exclusionary dynamics within the network and broader movement, and how to change these deficits. Challenging class privilege and whiteness and building an anti-racist practice is necessary step for the CSA (and other food) movement(s) to develop its emancipatory potential and become

more intersectional and consequently contribute not only to environmentally sound but also socially just food systems (Motta 2021).

However, there are hardly any studies that investigate how food movements, such as CSA, try to respond to these critiques – for example, whether they develop anti-racist practices that are necessary to self-critically confront their own biases and resist the rising far-right forces. Together with my colleague Julia Spanier, we therefore started to explore when and why these processes of reflection and internal learning are initiated, who drives them, and how they are organised. While the academic product of that collaboration is still in the making and therefore cannot yet be shared in this thesis, **section 7.3.** presents a first practical output in the form of toolkit on anti-racism and diversity in the food system. The toolkit was developed by food justice educator Samie Blasingame for the working group against the far-right.

8.2.1. Reflections on the research approach

My findings, outlined above, are the product of my research approach, which is how I collected the data and what theories I used to analyse my case. In what follows, I reflect on the limitations of my work and my positionality as an engaged researcher.

8.2.1. Limitations of this research

Social movements, and therefore also CSA movements, are locally embedded and influenced by a wide range of context-specific factors, such as the prevailing societal norms and values, laws and regulations, (food) culture, other actors in the agri-food system, and the political system. This embeddedness limits the generalisability of my thesis, which mostly focused on the *Solawi* network and the German context. The *Solawi* network is, at least to some degree, a special case. Within the context of Europe, it is among the most professionalised and well-established CSA networks (next to the French and British networks). This professionalisation made the network a particularly well-suited case for studying political advocacy work (**Chapter 4**), since such advocacy is foremost employed by rather professionalised movements (Giugni and Grasso 2018; Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). However, during meetings of the international CSA network Urgenci, it became evident that very few other CSA networks use political advocacy as a strategy to have a political impact. In addition, founded in 2011, the *Solawi* network has a comparatively long history on which to draw, which made it an

interesting case for studying processes of change with regards to boundary work (**Chapter 3**). Studying the same research questions in a different context and for younger networks would most certainly have led to different findings. Additional comparative studies on CSA networks are needed to produce more robust, generalisable findings on the politics of CSA networks. Currently, most research on the network level is focussing on the rather well-established German or British CSA networks (see e.g. Degens and Lapschieß 2023b; Bonfert 2022b; Rommel et al. 2022), while younger or less institutionalised networks, such as CSA networks in Eastern Europe, remain understudied. Choosing the *Solawi* network as my main case study had further limitations. Several research questions, while relevant from a social movement perspective, would have required a different set of case-studies. For instance, if I had been studying processes of diffusion and cross-fertilization with regard to the CSA movement and the associated practices, it would have been important to transcend the European perspective – notably, by studying the Japanese Teikei movement, which forms the origin of the CSA movement (Kondoh 2014), as well as the role of the international network Urgenci in shaping these processes of diffusion (Elizabeth Henderson 2010).

Moreover, conceptualising the *Solawi* network as a social movement came with some trade-offs, as such a conceptualisation also inhibits some features of an organisation, especially when considering that *Solawi* is undergoing a process of professionalisation and institutionalisation. Thus, on the one hand, adopting a social movement lens enabled me to shed light to the collective and political dimension of the CSA network. On the other, to better understand the challenges associated with the process of institutionalisation and organisational development, a more prominent integration of organisational studies could have been beneficial.

Additionally, this thesis faced serval methodological limitations that are related to the sampling approach of research participants. To obtain insights into CSA as a social movement, I studied CSA on the level of national CSA networks. However, while these networks are the most important space where CSA initiatives come together and negotiate meaning and political strategies for collective action (see also Degens and Lapschieß 2023b on CSA networks as a 'governance unit'), not all existing CSA initiatives have officially joined the network. In fact, the *Solawi* network estimates that only two thirds of the entire movement

are organised within the network.[44] Consequently, this thesis does not capture the perspectives of CSA initiatives that are not official members of the *Solawi* network. This lack of complete representation raises important questions: Who are these initiatives that do not join the network? Do their definitions of CSA and political strategies coincide with those of the network? And, perhaps most importantly, why do they decide not to join? Is it a deliberate decision, expressing their discontent with the network's activities and strategies? Are they organised in other agricultural grassroots movements, such as the German peasant association? Is there a lack of incentives for CSA initiatives to become a member, as non-members benefit from the network's activities almost to an equal extent as members? Or are these initiatives simply not aware that, to formally become a member, it is not enough to add their details to the crowd-sourced map of CSA initiatives in Germany but that they must pay an annual fee to become a member?

Another, related limitation is that I mostly studied the inner circle of staff members and activists of the *Solawi* network. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, I did not interview and visit CSA initiatives that, while having officially joined the network, remained passive and did not seek to shape the politics of the CSA networks. Thus, their views are underrepresented in this thesis. Other research methods, such as an extensive survey would be well-suited to elicit the viewpoints and needs of such CSA initiatives. However, while this limited scope, at least to some extent, presents a potential bias and limits the type of available information on the CSA movement, it is also the result of the research questions put forward in this thesis. Those questions, by and large, explored phenomena that are decided on the level of the network and consequently are shaped by those activists who are most vocal, such as those who collectively define the meaning of CSA (**Chapter 3**) and who conduct political advocacy work (**Chapter 4**).

Finally, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the interactions with research participants were online. This format influenced what type of information could be collected

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[44] In the end of 2022, 350 out of 514 CSA initiatives were official network members (NWSL 2022b)

and the concepts underpinning this thesis. For instance, **Chapter 3** studied the boundary work of CSA movements and not their collective identity more generally, since the online interactions made it difficult to collect data on the role of symbols and rituals, which play a fundamental role for identity formation and feelings of belonging (Polletta and Jasper 2001). At the same time, relying on online interactions enabled me to access and participate in various network meetings and several working groups over a sustained period of time, which otherwise would have been much more time-consuming.

8.2.2 Positionality

Engaged research is messy. It inevitably comes with contradictions and complexities that arise during the process (Arribas Lozano 2018; Hale 2008), and my research process was no exception. In this section, I outline some complexities and tensions that I encountered during my research with and on the *Solawi* network, followed by a consideration of how my engagement in my main case-study differed from my engagement with the Italian CSA network. I conclude with reflections on the co-production of knowledge and scholar-activism.

Shortly after beginning my engagement in the network and joining the weekly meetings of the working group on organisational development, I encountered challenges. While I had originally joined the working group purely as a volunteer, it proved difficult to separate my engagement with the group from my research; too often would we touch on topics core to my research questions. I wondered how to deal with this situation, and, ultimately, I decided to bring the topic up with the working group. For me, it was helpful to openly discuss my double role as a researcher and volunteer with the other members of the working group, including potential tensions. What information could I use and in what form? Is it okay to take notes during the meetings? What (sensitive) topics should be excluded from my data collection? Can or should I partake in decisions that concern my research more imminently? Discussing these questions enabled us to co-develop a procedure we all felt comfortable with. For example, the other members of the working group did not perceive it as a problem that our discussions would also inform my research. Additionally, following the idea that consent is a process, we agreed that they could always retrospectively voice if information was after all considered sensitive and should not be used for research purposes.

Another difficulty consisted in the realisation that my participation and membership contributed to the (already ongoing) academisation of the network, a network that was originally founded by and for practitioners. Academics, contrary to farmers who need to reconcile their volunteer work with their long working hours of up to 60h per week (even in CSA farms), can devote part of their working time to engaging in network meetings, and thus, they may disproportionally shape the politics of the network. The academisation of the movement, which is not only driven by researchers but also by newcomers to farming who have entered agriculture as a second career path, manifests in the changing discourse and composition of the network as well as in the changing activities offered during the network meetings. The *Solawi* network is aware of this tendency and has started to address this issue. At the same time, the network encourages sympathetic supporters and researchers to join as 'individual members' for economic reasons; that is, the finances of the network, and therefore the continuation of paid work, depends to a large degree on the revenues from membership fees. In light of the dire financial situation of the network and to show my support and solidarity, I decided to join the *Solawi* network as an official individual member. However, I was mindful of the fact that my perspective as an academic would differ from the perspective of practitioners. To navigate this tension, I consciously called for the inclusion of practitioner perspectives throughout my engagement. In my academic work, too, I attempted to highlight the role of practitioners – in particular, those practitioners who were more underrepresented, such as traditional family farms. For instance, **Chapter 5** explicitly states that entering into an alliance with the degrowth movement could further alienate traditional family farmers. Moreover, when the elections for the new council were imminent in spring 2023 and several members approached me to encourage my candidacy, I decided to not stand as a candidate. In my eyes, the council, which is the representative body of the movement, should be composed of a high proportion of practitioners and not of academics – in particular, if they, like me, do not form part of any local CSA initiative in Germany.

To me, moving towards engaged research and participant observation was also a means to move beyond dry facts and information and to develop a 'deep, multifaceted and complex understanding of the topic under study' (Hale 2008, 20): I began to experience what all my interviewees had been telling over and over again. One example of the richness of experience-

based understanding was in the resource mobilisation of the *Solawi* network. In almost every interview I was told how seriously under-resourced and understaffed the network was. Yet the full dimensions of this problem and the implications which followed from it only became evident to me during my engagement within the network. Before even officially starting to volunteer I felt the consequences of resource constraints; it took a couple of months after having offered to volunteer to actually be able to start. There was simply no one with enough time available to introduce me to my tasks, let alone be my contact person in the case of clarification questions. Over time, I also started to note patterns during the check-in rounds, where activists would share how they were doing and what they were working on, showcasing again and again the immense number of tasks that the rather small organisation must manage. Similarly, in the working groups that were exclusively run by volunteers, moments of task division were often characterised by an uncomfortable silence: Everyone already had so many tasks that they needed to finish, either for the network or their individual CSA initiatives, or other collectives,. As a result of the high workload, I witnessed several activists (temporarily) quit or reduce their engagement because of risk of burn-out and self-exploitation in the CSA movement. In fact, burn-out prevention became a recurring topic of discussion in formal and informal settings. Finally, related to this point, I experienced how difficult it can become for activists to disengage from a working group. Knowing that with one person less available to share the workload, the pressure on the remaining activists would become even greater, my disengagement almost felt like 'letting them down'. Altogether, the engaged research practice added new layers of understanding what resource constraints mean in practice and how they shape intrapersonal relations between activists.

My research approach outlined above and in **section 1.7.** allowed for several advantages (e.g. building trust relations and generating rich data), while also generating complexities and tensions (e.g. regarding my participation and engagement with the case and study participants). Such implications reflect the nature not only of engaged research and scholar-activism but also of ethnographic work more generally, and in particular, of overt participant observation (see also Bryman (2012) and Whyte (1979) on the advantages and disadvantages of participant observation as a method).

My research approach with the *Solawi* network differed substantially from my engagement with other research subjects – notably, the Italian CSA network – for two reasons. First, my research took place during 2019–2023 and was therefore profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. While my research was originally supposed to include a stronger comparative component, travel restrictions and the impossibility to meet in person thwarted not only my ability to conduct in-person fieldwork but also the activities of the young Italian network, which were largely on hold for most of 2020 and 2021. In contrast, the older and more institutionalised German network rapidly digitalised their activities and meetings, such as the bi-annual network meetings, in an interactive and engaging manner. In addition, many working groups of the *Solawi* network already met on a regular (i.e. weekly to monthly) basis online, which compensated, at least partially, for their inability to meet in person and facilitated a much better and closer access to my case study.

Second, the two networks have different organisational structures, which facilitated my close engagement in the German network and hindered my engagement in the Italian network. First, since its foundation, the *Solawi* network has encouraged the participation of people who are not themselves members of a CSA initiative but who are merely sympathetic to the cause. In fact, several co-founders of the *Solawi* network were not part of any CSA initiative but rather were activists in the alter-globalisation, solidarity economy, and right-to-food movements. Back then, the openness to people not directly engaged in a CSA initiative was also institutionalised in the network's formal organisational structure in the form of different types of membership for both CSA initiatives and individual persons. As such, it is easy for outsiders, including researchers, to engage in the network. In contrast, the Italian CSA network is foremost a space for members of different CSA initiatives. While their general email list is open to the general public and while bi-annual network meetings can be attended on request, internal communication channels are reserved only for network members. Second, as a young, emerging network, the frequency of meetings (both online and in-person) is significantly lower than those of the *Solawi* network, which has regular meetings of different groups in place, beyond the bi-annual network meetings.

Finally, my experience with conducting research on and with CSA networks taught me to embrace the messy interactions with research participants and to allow for discomfort. Such

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engaged research can be extremely enriching and has, without doubt, helped me mature as an academic and person. Along the way, it has involved making several compromises in order to navigate the tensions between producing practically and scientifically relevant knowledge and adjusting expectations of what I, as a PhD candidate working in a larger research group with a pre-defined focus, can contribute to the struggles on the ground. At the same time, I have learned that whether research on social movement becomes research with social movements depends not only on my good will (i.e. the good will of the researcher). It fundamentally depends on the needs and wishes of the community. As such, when our research interests or timelines do not align, it may well be that we as researchers need to take a step back and adjust our research approach. Sometimes, that may mean that less engaged research is the way to go.

8.3. Future prospects: An interrogation of community-supported agriculture as a collective, political actor of societal transformation

In this section, I draw on the different insights across my chapters, put them in a broader context, and point out future research avenues. In particular, I outline which strategies the German CSA movement employs, contrasting them with an exploration of the strategies that would be necessary to fundamentally transform the agri-food system and society more broadly. Building on these insights, I discuss what types of alliances with other agrarian, environmental and social movements could be conducive for transforming the capitalist agri-food system.

8.3.1. What are conducive strategies for transforming capitalist agri-food systems?

Building on my main findings presented in **section 8.1**, I reflect on the strategies that the German CSA movement as a collective, political actor employs (or fails to employ) to transform the capitalist agri-food system. For this purpose, I draw on the three parallel strategies to induce change proposed by degrowth scholars: (i) building alternatives on the ground, (ii) oppositional activism and building counter-hegemony, and (iii) 'non-reformist reforms', as outlined in **Chapter 1.**

Building alternatives

This thesis has shown that the main strategy of the *Solawi* network consists of supporting the foundation of new initiatives and facilitating support and networking among existing initiatives (see **Chapters 3** and **4**). In other words, the *Solawi* network supports the creation of prefigurative spaces and aims to bring about change 'in the here and now' rather than in the future (Yates 2015; Maeckelbergh 2011). Their efforts appear successful. Since the foundation of the CSA network, the number of newly founded CSA initiatives is steadily increasing[45] (see also Box 1.1, **Chapter 1**). Additionally, many CSA activists strongly identify with and espouse a prefigurative politics, as illustrated by the slogan 'agricultural paradigm change – we'll just start with it' ('*Agrarwende, wir fangen dann schon mal an*'). The self-organised vocational trainings for CSA gardeners are a further excellent example of espousing a prefigurative politics. In small groups, CSA activists decentrally and autonomously tailor their gardening curriculum to their own needs, as the state-approved vocational training lacks an option to specialise in ecological gardening, does not offer training on deliberation processes in food collectives, and ignores political questions around food sovereignty.

Building alternatives and aligning the ends and means of their struggle (see also Maeckelbergh 2011; Yates 2015) is, however, not limited to supporting the creation of new CSA initiatives, instigating self-organised vocational trainings, or experimenting with sociocratic decision-making processes. It also includes alternative ways of relating. Despite the personal conflicts which have surfaced over time (see **Chapter 4**), the network – and in particular, the network meetings – provide a space for weaving friendships and relationships based on care and trust (see **section 1.7**). Put differently, they provide space for nurturing relationships that have been argued to 'constitute the fabric of collective action itself' (Yates 2020, 13). During my fieldwork, I further observed that by adopting a prefigurative politics, activists embraced hope again – hope so urgently needed in times of multiple ecological and (geo-)political crises (see also Dinerstein 2017b).

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[45] However, the growth of the movement needs to be interpreted with care. Most of the newly found CSA initiatives are small gardening collectives who farm on only a couple of hectares. In other words, while new CSA initiatives are steadily founded, the area (or share of all agricultural land) farmed by CSA initiatives increases which a much slower pace.

The prioritisation of a prefigurative politics by the network may explain why, as argued in the introduction of this thesis, in studies on CSA, the politics and strategies of CSAs (and CSA networks) are often and foremost read as nowtopias and why their political dimension is reduced to being a prefigurative space. In contrast, this thesis provided novel insights into the politics of CSA networks and discussed strategies for agri-food system transformations in more depth (see the sections on non-reformist reforms and building a counter-hegemony below).

(Non-reformist) reforms

The current institutional arrangements of the German agri-food system are ill-designed (see **Chapter 2**). They no longer reflect the needs of the majority of (small-holder) farmers nor consumers but rather the wants of large farm 'factories', agri-businesses, and supermarkets. The flawed institutional framework makes reforms and policy proposals a central strategy for transformation. **Chapter 4** explores the role of political advocacy for the *Solawi* network in bringing about institutional change. But what type of institutional change is the network pushing for? Is it aiming to fundamentally change existing institutions by advocating for policies which point beyond growth-oriented modes of producing and consuming food (also referred to non-reformist or radical reforms)? Or does the network propose reformist reforms, which, in turn, do not instigate profound transformations and, in the worst case, may even reinforce the dominant system? The insights from **Chapter 4** show that the *Solawi* network, while engaged to some extent in political advocacy work and political protest, is currently barely pushing for fundamental, non-reformist reforms (apart from signing a couple of petitions which, for instance, oppose patents on seeds). Instead, its focus currently lies in dismantling administrative barriers for CSA initiatives (also referred to as 'administrative advocacy', see e.g. Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014). As explained in **Chapter 4**, one reason for this focus lies in the internal structure and resource availability of the network. Advocacy work is mainly carried out by volunteers who are at the same time actively involved in their local CSA initiative and therefore only have limited time capacity to push for more profound changes at the policy level, let alone to coordinate such efforts. In this sense, their difficulties in advocating resemble those of other agroecological networks; as pointed out by Holt-Giménez (2010, 206), the horizontal and decentralised organisational structure of such

networks, while highly conducive for knowledge exchange, 'is also a political weakness', since 'there are no coordinating bodies' that are sufficiently 'capable of mobilising farmers for social pressure, advocacy, or political action'.

The limited focus on (non-reformist) reforms on behalf of the network may also be a matter of scale. Since the network primarily operates on the national level, its agency to push for non-reformist reforms is limited.

On the one hand, many agricultural policies that most fundamentally shape the German capitalist agri-food system, such as the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), are regulated at the supranational level (see **Chapter 2**). However, involving local and national struggles at the supranational level is a major challenge for already 'under-resourced and over committed' movements (Hitchman 2014, 11). Hitchman (ibid.) explains that '[m]any local and national networks are so concerned and involved with their local and national issues (understandably) that they fail to see the relevance of working at meta-[supranational] level'. Thus, taking the example of the *Solawi* network, this thesis confirms that limited resources are a common concern for social and agrarian movements that are becoming more professionalised and institutionalised. Scarce resources force these movements to consider and choose between a variety of goals and associated action repertoires – an endeavour that becomes particularly challenging when collective action is carried out on multiple scales.

On the other hand, because Germany is a federal republic, various institutions, such as the legal instruments for regulating the land market, are decided at the federal level (**Chapter 2**). At the time of writing, the *Solawi* network is increasingly active on the federal level (**Chapter 4**), which may ultimately strengthen the ability of the network to place more fundamental, content-based demands for policy changes on politicians. Finally, while the network does not act on the local level, several CSA initiatives are engaged in their own municipalities (Bonfert 2022a), which provide 'privileged spaces within which democracy and redistribution of economic power can be obtained through a larger participation of the community' (Laamanen, Forno, and Wahlen 2022, 12). Perhaps the most interesting case here is a food policy council in Leipzig which founded a working group on CSA representing the interests and

demands of CSA towards policy makers.[46] The network now provides a space for mutual learning and exchange on how to influence the political sphere.

But which institutions of the capitalist agri-food system are most urgently in need of radical reforms (see also **Chapter 6**)? Which (non-reformist) reforms would imply a reconfiguration of power relations and structural change in the agri-food system that would benefit the CSA movement (see Box 8.1. for an illustration of a non-reformist land reform)? How can movements distinguish between reformist reforms and non-reformist reforms? When do reforms only risk to stabilise the existing system of accumulation, exploitation, and commodification within the agri-food system? And what reasons may hinder movements from advocating for non-reformist reforms? These questions remain poorly understood and deserve further scholarly exploration, not only in the context of the German CSA movement also in the context of agrarian movements in Europe.

Finally, since agriculture is tightly intertwined with other economic sectors and societal structures (see **Chapter 6)**, these policy proposals cannot be limited to the realm of agriculture alone. They also need to span broader social and economic policies (such as the reorganisation of labour and reduced working hours as argued for in **Chapter 5**), and they need to include policies that impact related sectors, such as energy and transport (see **Chapter 6**).

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[46] See https://ernaehrungsrat-leipzig.org/ueber-uns/.

A non-reformist land reform?

As outlined in **Chapter 2** and **6**, access to land is a central challenge for small-scale farmers. This challenge is perhaps even more salient for CSA farms (European Access to Land Network and Urgenci 2017), making it a relevant example for a much-needed non-reformist reform. Other agrarian movements, such as the food sovereignty movement, prominently represented by La Via Campesina, are attempting to induce structural changes with regard to land policy. Building on proposals of the European Economic and Social Committee (2015) and a report of the European Parliament (2017), the European Coordination of La Via Campesina (ECVC) has called for a comprehensive land policy framework. Their demands include (i) ceilings on the number of hectares that may be farmed or bought to 500 hectares or lower; (ii) pre-emptive rights for 'young people, those working on agroecological projects, new farmers, peasants settled on smallholdings and farmers in vulnerable land tenure situations' (ECVC 2023, 20); and (iii) an indexation of land prices based on farm incomes. A reform of the subsidy schemes of the CAP is also frequently called for by movements and scholars, as the area-based payments drive up land prices and structurally reinforce existing (land) concentration (Latruffe and Le Mouël 2009; ECVC 2023). While these reform proposals yield the potential to have redistributive effects on the current land regime and facilitate more equitable access to land for CSA initiatives and small-holders more generally, the most fundamental aspect of the land regime is land ownership. In his exploration of non-reformist reforms in South-Africa, Evans (2021) argues that rethinking and redistributing land property is necessary and must include 'radical' measures – for instance, expropriation without monetary compensation based on market prices. An earlier report on land concentration and land grabbing in the context of Europe for ECVC and the Hands off the Land network reiterates the property question and demands to 'abolish the patriarchal system of land possession or heritage', develop a legal framework for co-ownership arrangements, and 'recognise historical use rights and communal land systems' (Borras, Franco, and Van Der Ploeg 2013, 26). However, proposals for expropriation are only cautiously put forward: '[s]tates may consider […] expropriation of private land […] for a public purpose' (ECVC 2023, 8). As a movement that represents 'peasant farmers, small- and medium-scale farmers, and agricultural workers across Europe' (ECVC no date), some of whom are land owners themselves, it may indeed be difficult to be more outspoken about expropriations as a means to redistribute access to land, since middle-sized farmers may easily take 'reactionary position[s] when it comes to property questions' (Borras 2023, 18).

Box 8.1. A non-reformist land reform? A thought experiment.

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Building counter-hegemony

Building a counter-hegemony – that is, creating new common senses and parallel institutions of power – is a third key strategy for transforming the capitalist agri-food system and broader societal structures. From all three strategies, building counter-hegemony is explored least in this thesis. On the one hand, this lack of attention can be explained by the nature of the study object: unconventional repertoires of action, such as civil disobedience or direct action, which threaten the supremacy of privileged actors are currently not employed by the *Solawi* network. On the other, it reflects the general state of the academic debate; neither the food movement nor degrowth scholars have explored this strategy in detail (Myers and Sbicca 2015; Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022). **Chapter 6**, which proposes a research agenda for degrowth agri-food systems, therefore reiterates the topic of building a counter-hegemony by asking how rural populations (which are not from activist, academically educated, progressive, or privileged social milieus) can be implicated in a degrowth society. As aptly pointed out by Schmelzer et al. (2022, 271), '[d]egrowth concepts can only reach a wider population if they become meaningful by directly relating to everyone's life, and if they are experienced as the promise of radical abundance rather than as the threat of individual renunciation'.

Nowtopias, when politicised, play an important role in fostering and strengthening counter-hegemonic values. As explained in **section 8.1.2.**, the German CSA movement is politicised to different extents. Based on this observation, several questions that deserve due attention from scholars and activists arise: How can the *Solawi* network further politicise those members who insist that CSA should be deliberately apolitical on topics of agriculture and degrowth? What collective processes of (un-)learning are necessary to support this politicisation (van Oers et al. 2023; van Oers-Smessaert and Feola, no date)? And to what extent does the CSA movement already contribute to building a counter-hegemony: (In what ways) does it develop new common senses of what is necessary and desirable in today's society? The working group on societal transformation (*AK Gesellschaftliche Transformation*[47]) of the network, founded in 2022, has started to explore these questions,

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[47] For further information visit: https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-netzwerk/arbeitsgruppen/Solawi-gesellschaftliche-transformation

with the explicit intention not only to reach the members of the *Solawi* network but also the members of individual CSA initiatives. Abstaining from oppositional tactics, their focus is on popular education: They organise talks and workshops and produce informative materials that can contribute to the formation of a counter-hegemonic imaginary (see also Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022 on counter-hegemonic potential of popular education more generally; and Meek 2017 on the counter-hegemonic potential of education in an agrarian context). Amongst others, the working group expressed the need for interactive educational formats and tools that can support CSA members in questioning capitalist beliefs, practices, and values, which prompted us to develop the degrowth and food system transformation workshop toolkit (see **Chapter 7.2**).

Lastly, a perhaps more subtle form of building a counter-hegemony are the types of relations and feelings that are cultivated in the network. The in-person network meetings were marked by joy, mutual support, empowerment, a sense of unity, and finding meaning with others. According to Schmelzer et al. (2022, 271), it is these feelings that foster the 'immaterial sources of satisfaction that are central to creating a new common sense around the degrowth imaginary'.

Complementarity of the strategies

This thesis showcases that while the *Solawi* network engages – to varying extents – in all three types of strategies, its main focus is on building alternatives, which echoes findings by Plank (2022) on food initiatives more generally. In what follows, I argue that building alternatives alone will barely bring about a paradigm shift in agriculture and that radical institutional changes and building a counter-hegemony, while often perceived as contradictory, are, in fact, complementary to the prefigurative politics of the *Solawi* network (see Figure 8.1.). While this argument has been repeatedly presented by a number of degrowth (e.g. Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022; Chertkovskaya 2022), agri-food (Myers and Sbicca 2015; Fehlinger, Jost, and Rail 2022), and transformation scholars more broadly (Wright 2010), the literature on CSA has not yet explored the 'mutual fertilisation between micro-practices and macro-politics' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022, 263).

First, it is essential to build alternatives on the ground – for instance, by experimenting with new ways of 'prosuming', decommodification of food, horizontal decision-making, and collectivising private property in CSA initiatives (Cristiano et al. 2021; see e.g. Blättel-Mink et al. 2017). Such alternatives can create new common senses and redefine capitalist values and relationships built on exploitation. At the same time, critiques of prefigurative spaces have pointed out that they can 'run the risk of becoming a "relic in the town museum", failing to bring transformative change and offering only to keep capitalism and neoliberalism afloat' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022, 261). A good case in point, presented in **Chapter 5**, is the contribution rounds practiced by many CSA initiatives in Germany. While the redistribution mechanism thus far has only had a limited impact on the inclusion of low-income groups (Degens and Lapschieß 2023a), they (unintentionally) risk becoming a form of neoliberal charity (Cropp 2015; 2022). If the CSA model, and with it the contribution rounds, would become more mainstream, they would, at least theoretically, release the state from its responsibility to redistribute income and wealth and thus legitimise the rolling back of the state (Cropp 2015; see also Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022 albeit not on CSA). As a consequence, prefigurative food movements have also been called out for being 'secessionist' and 'movements of self protection' which 'operate alongside conventional food spaces in a non-antagonistic manner' (Myers and Sbicca 2015, 19) and therefore fail to bring about structural changes (see also Reinecke 2018 on the limitations of prefigurative politics more generally). This argument is underpinned by the observation that the capitalist agri-food system is becoming ever more powerful and concentrated – despite the growth of alternatives on the ground (ibid.).
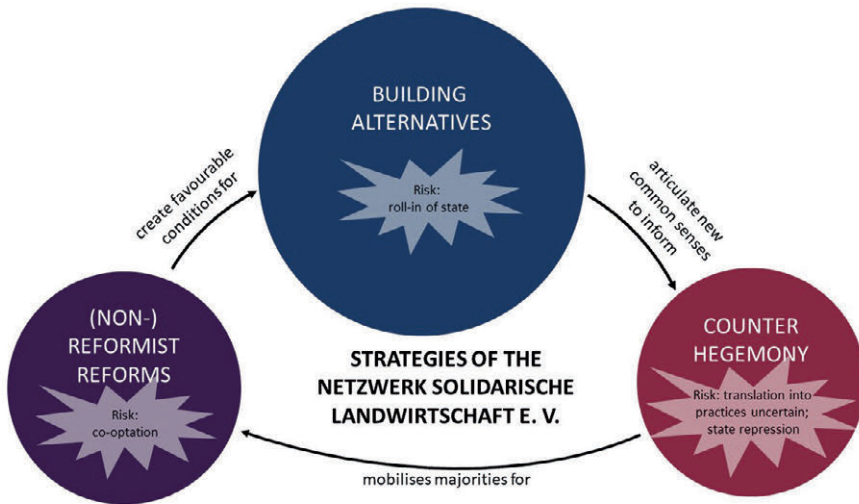
Figure 8.1: Transformation strategies employed by the Solawi network and their potential synergies. The size of the circle represents the degree to which the network is employing the strategy. The 'explosion shape' represents the risks associated with each strategy.

Therefore, I follow Wright (2010), a strong advocate of prefigurative politics, in arguing that building alternatives can never be the sole political strategy. Instead, a combination of strategies is needed to induce societal change and to transform the capitalist agri-food system. As called for by Fehlinger et al. (2022, 217), '[g]rowing food and degrowing food systems should [...] follow this mix of strategies to approach social-ecological transformation'.

Without institutional changes or (non-reformist) reforms, CSAs and other prefigurative agricultural initiatives, which face numerous structural constraints and struggle within the capitalist system on a day-to-day basis, will necessarily remain at the margin. For instance, **Chapter 5** exemplifies how the current organisation of labour inhibits participation in agricultural grassroots initiatives such as CSA, and **Chapter 6** argues that land concentration and high land prices render access to land difficult for agricultural grassroots initiatives and smallholder farmers. At the same time, many scholars have pointed out that efforts to institutionalise (non-reformist) agrarian reforms may be susceptible to the risk of co-optation (and Dale 2017; see e.g. Campbell 2001). In particular, the role of the state in bringing about radical reforms is contested, as the state on various levels reproduces 'hierarchy, power structures and violence' (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022). The state then 'translates'

the emancipatory dimension of policy proposals into 'capitalist-colonial logics of power' (Dinerstein 2017a, 58). These concerns are also echoed by some CSA activists (see **Chapter 4** and Bonfert (2022a)). Given that the state nonetheless remains an immensely powerful actor[48] that cannot be circumvented (ibid.), it is important to consider how the CSA and other (food) movements can protect themselves from being co-opted when pushing for institutional change. Different proposals for ameliorating the risk of co-optation co-exist. They include calls to engage in collective advocacy efforts uniting movements and organisations; calls to create a designated space where 'oversight, contestation, and negotiation of multiple interests' occur (Onyx et al. 2010, 58); calls to build alliances with openly anti-capitalist or radical (food sovereignty) movements (Holt-Giménez and Altieri 2013); and lastly, calls to push for a prefigurative translation of movements into the policy sphere (Dinerstein 2017a).[49] Whatever proposal is pursued, this question remains of high relevance for scholars and activists alike.

Finally, the implementation of non-reformist reforms described above will only materialise if a counter-hegemony can push the political debate to the left, pressure the status quo, and build sufficient political power to democratically implement the reforms (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022). However, building a counter-hegemony can be met with state-repression if pursued with oppositional tactics (Burkhart et al. 2022). For instance, in Germany, groups who are openly and outspoken anti-capitalist, such as the climate and anti-coal movement 'Ende Gelände', are listed as 'left-wing extremist' by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2019). The potential surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution poses a serious threat for the most radical CSA initiatives in the context of Germany.

Another challenge for inducing societal change is that the creation of new common senses and cultural change does not necessarily translate into changes in (voting) behaviour (Kallis et al. 2020). To ensure that non-reformist reforms can and will be voted for and implemented,

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[48] For a nuanced discussion on the role of the state in the contemporary food regime, containing both elements of 'moving-in' and 'stepping back' see Pritchard et al. (2016) and Jakobsen (2018).

[49] The latter posits that institutional change ought to engage 'with the concrete processes of anticipating the future in the present in heterotopic spaces created to that end' and 'a concomitant and commensurate consideration of the significance of the struggles surrounding the process of prefiguration' (Dinerstein 2017a, 66).

organised majorities – notably, in the form of social movements – are necessary (Schmelzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022). Further research should therefore explore the tactics that are conducive to mobilising majorities for a paradigm change in agriculture and societal transformation more broadly. In Germany, but also in most other countries around the world, CSA is 'still a relatively small niche in the panorama of food systems' (Piccoli, Rossi, and Genova 2021, 17). What other players in agri-food systems, in addition to CSA initiatives and networks, are working towards an ecologically sustainable and socially just food system by building a counter-hegemony? In the next section, I discuss the possibility of entering into alliances and strengthening existing ties.

8.3.2. Which alliances can support processes of transformation?

This thesis concludes that alliances are a key strategy for CSA movements to leverage societal change. In various chapters, I have discussed the role and potential of building alliances. Most notably, **Chapter 5** examined the possibility and desirability of forming a coalition between CSA and degrowth, while **Chapter 6** called for an extensive examination of alliance formation and consolidation between degrowth and agrarian movements more generally. Likewise, **Chapter 4** argued that political advocacy efforts could be strengthened by intensifying already existing alliances with other agrarian movements, such as the German peasant organisation, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft* (AbL). In this discussion of alliances, I follow a long tradition of scholars interested in societal change, scholars who have highlighted the role of building alliances in various facets (see e.g. Borras 2023 on agrarian, rural and rural–urban alliances; Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019 on North-South alliances; Motta 2020 on human-non-human alliances; Paulson 2020 on alliances between feminism and degrowth; Gawerc 2020 on alliances across race, ethnicity, class, and nationality).

Alliances are important vehicles for societal change as they can mobilise broader support for the struggle at hand by reaching large numbers of people, mobilising resources, and broadening the choice of tactical repertoires and the collective identity of movements, thereby instigating external social and political change (van Dyke and Amos 2017; Wang et al. 2018). Building (and strengthening existing) alliances with movements pushing for radical reforms and building a counter-hegemony, rather than adopting a prefigurative politics, may

be a strategic choice in light of the limited resources of the *Solawi* network and the resulting difficulty to pursue all three above-mentioned strategies at the same time.

But which alliances are most urgently needed to advance socially just and environmentally sound agri-food systems and societies? Certainly, there are numerous food movements and alternative food networks, whose values and visions partially overlap with those of CSA. These include, for instance, the peasant movement, food policy councils, cooperatives which transform agricultural land into commons, open-source seed initiatives, food co-ops, box schemes, urban gardens, and many more. However, considering the impossibility of bringing about change of the agri-food system without transforming broader societal structures and other economic sectors which are interdependent with the food system (see **Chapter 6**), it is indispensable to build alliances across different struggles and with actors who are not primarily concerned with the transformation of the agri-food system.

Therefore, it makes me hopeful, or at least curious, to see that, in times of ever-deepening environmental crises and accentuated social inequalities, driven by capitalist growth-economies, gentle signs of a range of rather unusual alliances are emerging on the horizon (see Gawerc 2021; and Paulson 2022 on alliances across difference). First, the *Solawi* network has begun establishing linkages with a powerful and historically successful actor for bringing about societal change: the trade labour unions. While trade unions are an heterogenous actor and are organised into different sectors and pursue diverse political ends, their tactical repertoire is complementary to the CSA movement, as they push, above all, for institutional changes, making them a potentially interesting ally. At the *Solawi* network meeting in February 2023, a trade union representative from IG BAU (*Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt* – trade union for construction, agriculture, environment) was invited and co-organised a workshop on wages and labour conditions within agriculture (NWSL 2023). During the meeting, common goals regarding working conditions were identified, and the union representative incentivised CSA farmers and gardeners to join the union, which currently only organises 5% of all employees in the agricultural sector and therefore has limited influence, while being very well connected to and present in important policy spaces. Supporting the union could be a tangible step to both internally and externally problematising exploitative, capitalist work relations that co-exist with non- or post-capitalist labour arrangements within

the CSA movement (Galt 2013; Raj, Feola, and Runhaar 2023). Indeed, such support would also show solidarity with those workers in the agri-food system who are most vulnerable, such as seasonal workers.

In addition, trade unions are beginning to establish connections with the degrowth movement. At the Beyond Growth conference in Brussels 2023, trade labour unionists featured prominently. For example, during the closing panel, the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation promised support for degrowth ideas and policies, and for a trade unionist from the German food union (Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten – NGG) spoke at the panel for transforming food for the wellbeing of people and the planet. I call this an unusual alliance since there is a historical cleavage between trade unionists and degrowthers underpinned by mutual criticism: 'Many of those who are critical of economic growth on environmental grounds consider trade unions to be both uncritical and powerful proponents of economic growth […]. Conversely, trade unions accuse the environmental movement and those involved in the degrowth movement of not taking any, or only little, account of the interests of employees or maintaining jobs in their political demands.' (Flemming and Reuter 2017, 321; Barca 2017). However, united in their call for wellbeing and a good life for all, some trade unionists and degrowthers are making concrete attempts to reconcile both of their struggles.

Second, in Germany, the climate and agrarian movements have started to combine forces, despite (or perhaps because of) their thematic and strategic differences. Under the slogan 'Exceptional times require unusual alliances' ('*Besondere Zeiten erfordern außergewöhnliche Bündnisse*'), four groups – the peasant association AbL, a small farmers association called '*Landwirtschaft verbindet Deutschland e. V.*', Fridays for Future, and Parents for Future – were protesting against the planned EU-Mercosur trade agreement (Struck 2023). They called out the agreement for incentivising industrial agriculture in both Europe and South America and increasing the already high volume of imported meat, a key driver for deforestation of the Amazon rainforest (see also Gröhn-Wittern and Remesch 2020 on the impossibility of combining free trade with agroecology). Additionally, activists from the peasant organisation AbL and activists of local CSA initiatives, as well as many degrowth activists, participated in the anti-coal protest in Lützerath proudly presenting their banners and showing solidarity

with the climate movement. The German climate movement – in particular, the more radical currents within it – emerged as a counter-hegemonic movement that views civil disobedience as a legitimate and necessary form of political expression in order to influence public debates and common senses (Scherhaufer, Klittich, and Buzogány 2021; Kalt 2021).

This development towards alliances across different struggles – which bridges worker, agri-food, degrowth and environmentalist movements – certainly deserves more scholarly attention. Following Borras (2023, 17), I propose that future research should investigate how these movements and struggles can be bundled together 'into a formidable anti-systemic force'. What could be gained (and lost) from entering an alliance for the respective movements (see also Staggenborg 2010)? What master frame can serve to unite these struggles; should it be agri-food transformations, degrowth, labour justice, or something else (see Borras 2023; and Staggenborg 2010 on the importance to choose a master frame that enables broad identification in cross-movement coalitions)? What is needed for these emerging expressions of sympathy and spaces for dialogue to materialise into encompassing, long-term coalitions? And how can movements recognise differences and 'attend conscientiously to power dynamics among them' when attempting to build alliances across those difference (Paulson 2022, 184)?

In particular, the role of trade unions has thus far only been cursorily discussed in the degrowth literature (for exceptions see Flemming and Reuter 2017; and Kreinin and Latif 2022). As the power of trade unions has been dwindling (trade union membership has been decreasing over time both in Germany and more generally worldwide), so has their ability to organise and represent workers (Ebbinghaus and Göbel 2014). In light of such trends, can uniting forces with degrowth help them with a much needed redefinition? For instance, can feminist currents challenge the deeply engrained masculinity in trade unions (Ledwith 2012)? In turn, can a coalition with trade unions help degrowth to broaden its base of support and learn to speak the language of those workers who do not identify with the intellectual, progressive discourse of degrowth? Which trade unions are the most promising ally of the degrowth and CSA movements? What strategies and tactics to pressure the government can be learnt from the trade unions, considering that CSA is foremost a practice-oriented movement and that degrowth is foremost a discursive movement (see **Chapter 5**)? And

finally, can these unusual alliances across difference help create urgently needed majorities in an ever more polarised society? In other words, can forging broad alliances counter the rising (populist) backlash which has the potential to derail efforts to build more just and sustainable agri-food systems and societies?

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APPENDIX

Appendix A.l Overview of data sources

Profile of interviewees

Table A.1.: Overview of interviews

Acronym	Role (at the time of being interviewed)	Duration
I-1	Former board member & advocate	2h09
I-2	Former board member & advocate	46min
I-3	Focus group: Members of the working group on politics composed by staff members and active advocates	2h00
I-4	Staff member	1h44
I-5	Staff member	1h02
I-6	Former advocate, staff and council member	1h44
I-7	Former board member & advocate	1h24
I-8	Board and council member	1h21
I-9	Staff member	42min

Overview of Documents

Doc-1: NWSL, 2021. Prioritisation of the network's goals and targets, June 2021. *Unpublished document*.

Doc-2: NWSL, 2018. Protocol of the council meeting 30.11.-02.12.2018 . *Unpublished document*.

Doc-3: NWSL, 2018. Protocol of the conference call of the coordination meeting 23.08.2018. *Unpublished document*.

Doc-4: NWSL, 2018. Protocol of the conference call of the working group on organisational development 14.09.2028. *Unpublished document*.

Doc-5: NWSL, 2018. Protocol of the conference call of the coordination meeting 20.09.2018. *Unpublished document*.

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Doc-6: NWSL, 2018. Protocol of the conference call of the coordination meeting 10.11.2018. *Unpublished document*.

Doc-7: NWSL, 2020. „Welche Möglichkeiten gibt es bei Wertschöpfungsketten und Vermarktungsstrukturen, um die Stellung der Landwirtinnen und Landwirte zu stärken? Anhörung von Sachverständigen Enquetekommission V 'Wertschöpgunsketten Und Vermarktungsstrukturen.'"
https://www.landtag.nrw.de/portal/WWW/dokumentenarchiv/Dokument/MMST17-3335.pdf.

Appendix A.II: Skills, abilities & professional experience of advocates

Skills, abilities & professional experience of advocates

Tailoring discourses to target audience: Which topics and key words resonate with politicians depends on their background, i.e. their political party and area of expertise. For instance, politicians of the Green party may be open to CSA when it is presented as a form to ensure the survival of small-scale peasant agriculture, environmental protection, or as participatory civil society initiatives. In contrast, politicians of the CDU may more inclined to support CSA when framed as safeguarding traditional family agriculture and stimulating rural areas.

Using formal and informal channels: Next to formal requests and official, written demands, political advocacy fundamentally relies on seizing and participating in informal moments and meetings. For instance, approaching a member of parliament after the official panel discussion over drinks paved the way for getting CSA into the government agreement. Contrary to formal channels, informal channels heavily rely on personal continuity on both sides.

Assessing role of politicians: Advocates need to have knowledge about the different responsibilities of politicians and identify and target those with similar values and decision-making power. Thus, advocates should not shy away from contacting politicians with high functions. If these are not ideologically close to the values of CSA, advocates can use brokers, i.e. politicians that support CSA and have good contacts to the politicians in question, to get access to decision-makers (see also moral resources below).

Recognising 'windows of opportunity': Awareness of key timelines of parliamentary and agricultural policy – that is, when are things debated or decided on – is important. For instance, co-organising an event during the alternative Green week, which precedes and opposes the International Green week, the world's largest (conventional and productivist) agricultural fair, enabled a high-attendance from politicians and media coverage.

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Showing presence and persistence: To make contacts and make CSA as a concept more widely known among politicians, it is important to appear at different events related to agriculture, food systems and regional development. When reaching out to politicians, always follow up emails with calls. This requires tolerance to frustration, as often there is no immediate positive response and advocates need to present their concerns multiple times.

Having 'hands-on experience' with farming: Stressing first-hand experiences with and the every-day difficulties in agriculture tends to convince policy makers better than reporting dry facts and statistics that, e.g., centre the vanishing of peasant agriculture. Additionally, personal narratives can increase the credibility of advocates and relevance of their demands in the eyes of politicians.

Sharing insights from the broader CSA movement: Narratives become more powerful when advocates complement their own experience by referring to the situation of other CSA projects, as this signals to politicians that CSA is a widespread phenomenon and that the topics discussed are also relevant to other actors.

Box A.1: Overview of key skills and abilities of advocates based on expert interviews I-1; I-2; I-6; I-7.

Appendix B.I: Data collection on the level of the CSA initiative

To identify suitable CSA initiatives as case studies for this paper, we conducted a screening of all CSA initiatives enlisted on the webpage of the *Solawi* network (295 in 2020), using a codebook with the following categories: (i) type of CSA, (ii) rural-urban setting, (iii) reproduction/disruption of capitalism in their political positioning, (iv) engagement beyond food (see Table B.1). We excluded all CSAs younger than 3 years at the time of screening, as well as initiatives that aligned themselves with the far-right (one initiative). The four initiatives eventually selected show a diversity regarding these categories.

Table B.1: Codebook for screening of local CSA initiatives

Categories	Description
Type of CSA and general information	
Size of CSA	Number of households/members
'Drivers' of CSA	Consumer-driven/producer-driven
Approach to agriculture	Describes the kind of agriculture, specifies which kind of sustainable agriculture; distinguishes gardening collectives and agricultural farms
Types of Produce	a) Horticulture
	b) Agriculture
	c) Meat Production
	d) Milk Production
	e) Processing of Products
	f) Broad Offer
Rural-urban setting	
Location in Germany	*Bundesland*, North/South, East/West
Rural-urban setting of farm	Located in a village, small town, periphery of larger town, city
Rural-urban setting of collection points	Collection points for produce are located in a village, small town, periphery of larger town, city

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Background of farmers	a) Neo-rural dwellers b) Rural dwellers and/or farming background c) Urban dweller
Rural-urban power dynamic	a) Balanced: e.g. strong participation of both sides through frequent meetings, through farm visits, through special support or help by consumers involved; framing: e.g. food territory, rural-urban linkage, local food system b) Rural-driven: e.g. more utilitarian interaction, all organized by the producers in the countryside; framing: e.g. remunerative small-scale agriculture, solidarity with the farmer c) Urban-driven: e.g. organization's work mostly done by members based in a city, rural or peri-urban production rather as a source of produce than as an equal partner; framing: e.g. urban food provision, sustainable cities, food in the city
Reproduction/disruption of capitalism	
Reproduction/disruption of capitalism in their internal organization and/or political positioning	a) Disruption: e.g. very small initiative, intentional limit to number of consumers; agroecological production, no dependency on agro-chemical industry; potential additional sources of income next to CSA; solidarity principle also among consumers; framing: critique to capitalism b) Reproduction: e.g. big membership, aim to feed the population; conventional agriculture; cooperation with private sector companies, supermarkets; framing: no critique to economic system
Engagement beyond food	
Activities that go beyond farming and the organization of the consumer-producer relation	E.g. Involved in political protests; alliances with other actors; community building activities on the farm; care work; hosting of festivities; self-harvest as community-building approach; explicitly anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist engagement

Appendix B.II Overview of interviews and interview guide

Overview of interviews

Table B.2: Overview of interviews

Anonymous	Role of interview partner(s)	Date	Duration	Location
Degrowth				
DM1	Degrowth scholar working on CSA	21.09.2021	38min	Videocall
DM2	Degrowth scholar; author of 'Degrowth in movement(s)'	29.09.2021	25min	Videocall
DM3	Degrowth scholar working on CSA	09.09.2021	43min	Videocall
DM4	Degrowth scholar working on CSA	08.09.2021	56min	Videocall
DM5	Degrowth activist, author of 'Degrowth in movement(s)'	10.03.2022	36min	Videocall
CSA network				
CM1	Board member	18.03.2021	1h22	Videocall
CM2	Staff	21.04.2021	1h02	Videocall
CM3	Former council member	28.05.2021	52min	Telephone call
CM4	Staff	21.06.2021	1h44	Videocall
CM5	Former board member, founding member	30.09.2021	1h24	On farm
CSA initiatives				
CSA "Biodynamic"				
B1	Staff, child of founding member	29.09.2021	1h28	On farm
CSA "Large"				
L1	Founding member, paid staff	20.10.2020	2h30	On farm
L2	Founding member, paid staff	11.10.2021	1h28	Videocall
L3	Founding member, former staff	21.06.2021	45min	Videocall
CSA"Small"				
S1	Committee member of the CSA	06.04.2021	1h10	On farm

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S2	Committee member of the CSA	29.05.2021	1h38	On farm
CSA "Radical"				
R1	Gardener, founding member	05.11.2021	1h01	On farm
R2	Gardener, founding member	09.11.2021	52min	On farm
R3	Gardener, founding member	03.11.2020	56min	Videocall

Interview guides

At the level of the degrowth movement

Original (German):

- Wieso und seit wann beschäftigst du dich mit Postwachstum (und ggf. Solawi)?
- Möchtest du kurz die Postwachstums-/Degrowthbewegung in Deutschland beschreiben, auch in Bezug auf verschiedene Gruppierungen/Strömungen
- Wo (in welcher Gruppierung/Strömung) würdest du dich verorten?
- Was würdet ihr als das zugrundeliegende Problem beschreiben, das Postwachstum adressiert? Worauf ist, für euch, Postwachstum die Antwort?
- Welches Ziel verfolgt die Postwachstumsbewegung?
- Mit welchen Aktivitäten versucht ihr, die euch gesteckten Ziele zu erreichen? Mit welchen Aktivitäten adressiert ihr das zuvor beschriebene Problem?
- Was verbindest du mit dem Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft? Wofür setzt sich das Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft deiner Meinung nach ein? Was ist das adressierte Problem? Was sind ihre Lösungsvorschläge und Ziele?
- Auf welche Art und Weise siehst du zur Zeit thematische oder personelle Überschneidungen zwischen der Solawi und Degrowth Bewegung?
- Welche Rolle kann Solidarische Landwirtschaft deiner Meinung nach in einer Postwachtsumsgesellschaft spielen? Welche Rolle kann/könnte Postwachstum für Solawi spielen?

English translation:

- Why and since when have you been involved with degrowth CSA and degrowth?
- Could you briefly describe the degrowth/postgrowth movement in Germany, also in relation to different groups/currents that exist therein?
- Where (within which grouping/current) would you see yourself?
- What would you describe as the underlying problem that degrowth seeks to address? To which problem does degrowth seek to provide an answer?
- What is the goal of the degrowth movement?
- Which activities does the degrowth movement carry out to achieve its goals? With which activities do you address the problem described above?

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- What do you associate with the CSA network? In your opinion, what does the CSA network stand for? What is the problem it addresses? What are their proposed solutions and goals?

- In what way do you see thematic or personal overlaps between the Solawi and degrowth movement at the moment?

- What role do you think CSA can play in a degrowth society? What role can or could degrowth play for CSA?

On the level of the CSA network

Original (German):

- Was würdet ihr als das zugrundeliegende Problem beschreiben, dass das Netzwerk adressiert? Worauf ist, für euch, Solawi die Antwort?

- Gibt es andere Probleme, die für euch zwar nicht die Hauptzielsetzung des Netzwerks bestimmen, aber dennoch für die Ausgestaltung des Netzwerks eine Rolle spielen?

- Welches Ziel habt ihr als Netzwerk?

- Zu welchem größeren Ziel möchte das Netzwerk ihren Beitrag leisten?

- Gibt es Initiativen und Menschen die das Netzwerk besonders stark geprägt haben? Wenn ja, wer? Und wie macht sich das deiner Meinung nach bemerkbar?

- Wie hat sich die Zusammensetzung des Netzwerks und der Bewegung im Laufe der Jahre verändert?

- Versteht sich das Netzwerk als Teil einer größeren Bewegung? Wenn ja, welcher?

- Wen wollt ihr als Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft ansprechen, erreichen?

- Mit welchen Aktivitäten versucht ihr, die euch gesteckten Ziele zu erreichen? Mit welchen Aktivitäten adressiert ihr das zuvor beschriebene Problem?

- Engagiert ihr euch als Netzwerk politisch?

- Seid ihr mit anderen Bewegungen im Kontakt? Wenn ja, mit welchen? Auf welche Art und Weise?

- Habt ihr schon einmal von der Postwachstumsbewegung gehört? Wenn ja, was ist euer Eindruck davon? Wofür steht sie für euch? Welche Ziele verfolgt sie? Was ist das adressierte Problem?

- Kennt ihr Akteure/Initiativen der Postwachstumsbewegung?

- Wurde Postwachstum schon einmal während der Netzwerktreffen thematisiert/diskutiert? Falls ja, in welchem Zusammenhang?
- Würdet ihr euch als Initiative offiziell für Postwachstum aussprechen? Gegen Kapitalismus? Warum?
- In welchem Verhältnis steht das Netzwerk zu unserem globalen Wirtschaftssystem? Zur kapitalistischen Wachstumsgesellschaft?

English translation:

- What would you describe as the underlying problem that the CSA network seeks to address? To which problem does the CSA network seek to provide an answer?
- Are there other problems which are not reflected in the main goals of the CSA network, but nonetheless shape the network's orientation?
- What goal does the CSA network have?
- To which larger goals does the CSA network want to contribute?
- Are there initiatives and people who have had a particularly strong influence on the CSA network? If so, who? And how do you think this is noticeable?
- How has the composition of the CSA network and the movement changed over the years?
- Does the network see itself as part of a larger movement? If so, which one?
- Who is your target audience? Who do you want to address as the CSA network?
- With which activities do you try to achieve your goals? With which activities do you address the problem described above?
- Is the CSA network politically active/engaged?
- Is the CSA network in contact with other movements? If so, with which ones? What type of contact or alliance?
- Have you ever heard of the degrowth movement? If so, what is your impression of it? What does it stand for? What are its goals? What problems does it address?
- Do you know any actors/initiatives of the degrowth movement?
- Has degrowth been discussed during network meetings? If so, in which context?
- Would the network officially declare being in favour of post-growth? Against capitalism? Why?

- How does the network position itself to our global economic system? To the capitalist growth society?

On the level of the individual CSA initiatives

Original (German):

- Was würdet ihr als das zugrundeliegende Problem beschreiben, das eure Initiative adressiert? Worauf ist, für euch, Solawi die Antwort?

- Gibt es andere Probleme, die für euch zwar nicht die Hauptzielsetzung der Initiative bestimmen, aber dennoch für die Ausgestaltung eurer Solawi eine Rolle spielen?

- Welches Ziel habt ihr als Initiative?

- Zu welchem grösseren Ziel möchtet ihr als Initiative euren (kleinen) Beitrag leisten?

- Versteht ihr euch als Teil einer größeren Bewegung? Wenn ja, welcher?

- Versteht ihr euch als Teil der Solawibewegung? Wenn ja: Welches Ziel seht ihr für diese Bewegung? Wozu sollte die Solawibewegung beitragen?

- Wen wollt ihr als Initiative ansprechen, erreichen?

- Mit welchen Aktivitäten versucht ihr, die euch gesteckten Ziele zu erreichen? Mit welchen Aktivitäten adressiert ihr das zuvor beschriebene Problem?

- Engagiert ihr euch als einzelne Solawi politisch?

- Seid ihr als Initiative mit anderen Initiativen und Bewegungen im Kontakt? Wenn ja, mit welchen?

- In welchem Verhältnis steht eure Initiative zu unserem globalen Wirtschaftssystem? Zur kapitalistischen Wachstumsgesellschaft?

- Habt ihr schon einmal von der Postwachstumsbewegung gehört? Wenn ja, was ist euer Eindruck davon? Wofür steht sie für euch? Welche Ziele verfolgt sie? Was ist das adressierte Problem?

- Kennt ihr Akteure/Initiativen der Postwachstumsbewegung?

- Würdet ihr euch als Initiative offiziell für Postwachstum aussprechen? Gegen Kapitalismus? Warum?

English translation:

- What would you describe as the underlying problem that your initiative addresses? To which problem does your CSA initiative seek to provide an answer?

- Are there other problems which are not reflected in the main goals of your CSA initiative, but nonetheless shape your initiative's orientation?

- What goal does your CSA initiative have?

- To which larger goals would your CSA initiative like to contribute?

- Do you see yourselves as part of a larger movement? If so, which one?

- Do you see yourselves as part of the CSA movement? If yes: What do you see as the goal of the CSA movement? What should the CSA movement contribute to?

- Who is your target audience? Who do you want to address as an initiative?

- With which activities do you try to achieve your goals? With which activities do you address the problem described above?

- Is your CSA initiative politically active/engaged?

- Is the CSA initiative in contact with other initiatives and movements? If so, with which ones?

- How does your initiative position itself to our global economic system? To the capitalist growth society?

- Have you ever heard of the degrowth movement? If so, what is your impression of it? What does it stand for? What are its goals? What problems does it address?

- Do you know any actors/initiatives of the degrowth movement?

- Would your initiative officially declare being in favour of degrowth? Against capitalism? Why?

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Appendix C.I: Explanatory note on methods

This research agenda is informed by a literature review that originated within a reading circle on the recently published volume 'Food for Degrowth' by Nelson and Edwards (2021). We selected further relevant literature on degrowth and agri-food systems by running a query on Scopus and degrowth.info between May and July 2021 using the following combination of keywords: "Degrowth" AND "food" OR "agricultur*" OR "agri*food"; "Post-growth[50]" AND "food" OR "agricultur*" OR "agri*food". By drawing on these two databases, we included in our analysis both peer-reviewed journal articles as well as non-peer-reviewed publications such as book chapters, position and stirring papers. Initially, we found and read the abstracts of 200 publications.

We excluded the following types of publications from our subsequent analysis: (i) publications that mention the terms degrowth/post-growth or food/agriculture/agri-food, but in which these concepts and topics are marginal to the publication's theoretical approach or the analysis; (ii) content that was no longer available online; (iii) studies that refer to the degrowth of populations in biology studies; and (iv) search outputs consisting only of an (extended) abstract or PowerPoint presentation.

The sample was narrowed down to N=40 publications – 24 publications identified via the query and 16 book chapters from the volume 'Food for degrowth' (see full list of included publications below).

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[50] While we are aware and acknowledge the differences between the concepts of degrowth and post-growth, we used them as synonyms for the purpose of this query.

SUMMARY

Capitalist agri-food systems are heavily criticised for driving environmental change and social injustices. In response, a growing body of literature on the sustainability transformation of agri-food systems has advanced our understanding of related problems and their possible solutions, including the examination of alternative models of food production and consumption promoted by agricultural grassroots initiatives and movements. Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is one of the most prominent examples of these agricultural grassroots movements. In essence, CSA is a direct, long-term partnership between producers and consumers, wherein the risks and benefits of farming are shared. CSA has spread and grown considerably over the last decade, with CSA initiatives mushrooming across different geographical locations around the globe.

With its proliferation on the ground, CSA has also attracted the interest of the scientific community. However, the political dimension of CSA – beyond prefiguring alternatives to the conventional, capitalist agri-food system – remains largely unexplored. In addition, the large majority of studies on CSA have explored questions on societal change by investigating the internal dynamics at the initiative level through in-depth case studies, and detailed explorations of CSA as a social movement as a whole are largely lacking. Therefore, this thesis studied the political dimension of CSA at the level of the network organisation by conceptualising and analysing CSA from a social movement lens. Such a perspective broadened the view beyond local initiatives and shed light on the role that CSA can play as a collective political actor to bring about change towards more environmentally sound and socially just agri-food systems. This study focussed on the German CSA network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, as the main case study and asked to what extent and in what ways CSA networks form and act as a collective, political actor of societal transformation.

To answer this question, several chapters of this thesis drew on different strands of social movement studies: **Chapter 3** used the concept of boundary work to shed light on the process through which CSA networks become a collective actor. It illuminated how CSA networks collectively negotiate common values and core principles, how they frame their antagonists and protagonists, as well as who can(not) legitimately join their struggle. The chapter showed

that the construction of a collective 'we' is a fundamentally relational process; that is, CSA networks draw their identarian boundaries in relation to the capitalist agri-food system and other already existing movements. The chapter also shows that, considering the existing heterogeneity and co-existing views on what CSA should stand for, drawing boundaries is a process which bears tensions and difficulties, such as the factionalism between agricultural holdings and community-supported enterprises.

Subsequently, drawing on literature on political advocacy, **Chapter 4** analysed how CSA networks act via advocacy work to induce change within capitalist agri-food systems. It found that limited financial and human resources led to a prioritisation of a prefigurative politics. The study further showed that the organisational structure of the German CSA network, or, in some instances, the lack thereof, influenced its ability to advocate. Relevant organisational factors included potential tensions around member participation in decision-making, responsibilities and legitimacy of advocates, visibility and valorisation of advocacy work, and (mis-)matches between the internal structure and advocacy spaces.

Building on the literature on coalition building, **Chapter 5** then investigated how political action can be broadened by systematically analysing the potential of entering a coalition between the CSA and degrowth movements. The study argued that while a coalition is currently non-existent, forming a coalition in the future could be beneficial for both movements. In particular, it suggested that the strategies of both movements, practice-driven change for CSA and discourse-driven change for degrowth, are complementary. CSA could benefit from degrowth's structural perspective, which denounces the inherent flaws of capitalist society, many of which impede the CSA movement's flourishing. In turn, degrowth could benefit from entering a coalition with CSA by learning how to become more practically relevant and how to support struggles on the ground.

Finally, **Chapter 6** examined the transformation of agri-food systems more broadly through the lens of degrowth literature and identified pertinent avenues for future research. The chapter argued that the current injustice and unsustainability of capitalist agri-food systems are a product of the social imaginary of endless, capitalist growth and a product of the political-economic structures which reproduce this social imaginary. As such, the reader was

invited to reimagine transformations of agri-food systems in the context of and in connection with broader societal structures and other economic sectors. The research agenda connects to the broader narrative of this thesis in several ways. First, it encouraged investigations of a multiplicity of agents of change beyond single initiatives and greater attention to formal and informal grassroots networks (such as CSA networks). Second, the research agenda proposed to investigate these agents as political actors who operate in diverse ways in the political arena – from prefiguration to conventional politics. Finally, it encouraged conceptualising and studying degrowth as a social movement, including the possibility to build alliances with agrarian movements, a call that was responded to in **Chapter 5**.

Taken together, these chapters generate novel insights and positions on the German CSA network as a collective, yet heterogenous actor. Adopting a social movement lens was instrumental for exploring how CSA initiatives with differing values, ways of organising, and political goals are positioned towards each other, including how tensions and factionalism arise within the movement and how they are mitigated. Furthermore, this thesis showed that the German CSA network, apart from an outspoken distancing from the far-right, welcomes diversity – a pragmatic decision that has allowed the movement to grow and spread within different circles.

The heterogeneity of the German CSA network is also reflected in its politics; while the network engages predominantly in a prefigurative politics, different understandings of what it means to be political co-exist within the movement. In addition, it is politicised to different extents and the extent to which the movement wants to be political remains internally contested and debated. While further politicisation is necessary to support societal transformation processes, for a social movement that consists of a large number of heterogenous initiatives, this process is complex and problem-ridden. In sum, this thesis gave a nuanced view of the ways in which CSA networks can be understood as political and offered important insights into how a common identity, political strategies, claims, and struggles are negotiated and enacted. Such a view has remained obscured by most past studies on CSA, which have viewed CSA as a social innovation.

The thesis further argued that while the German CSA network primarily aspires to build alternatives on the ground, other strategies – namely, implementing 'non-reformist reforms' and building a counter-hegemony – are necessary to induce fundamental changes within the capitalist agri-food system. In light of the limited resources of the German CSA network and the resulting difficulty in pursuing all three above-mentioned strategies at the same time, the most strategic choice may be to build (and strengthen existing) alliances with movements pushing for radical reforms and building a counter-hegemony.

SAMENVATTING

Kapitalistische landbouwsystemen ondervinden hevige kritiek omdat ze milieuverandering en sociale onrechtvaardigheid veroorzaken. In reactie hierop wordt er steeds meer literatuur gepubliceerd over de duurzaamheidstransformatie van landbouwsystemen. Deze literatuur heeft ons inzicht in de problemen en hun mogelijke oplossingen bevorderd, inclusief in hun onderzoek naar alternatieve modellen van voedselproductie en -consumptie die worden gepromoot door grassroots landbouwinitiatieven en landbouwbewegingen. Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is één van de meest prominente voorbeelden van deze grassroots landbouwbewegingen. In essentie is CSA een direct, lange-termijnpartnerschap tussen producenten en consumenten, waarbij zowel de risico's als de opbrengsten van de landbouw gedeeld worden. Het CSA-model heeft zich het afgelopen decennium sterk verspreid en is aanzienlijk gegroeid, met initiatieven die als paddenstoelen uit de grond schieten op verschillende locaties over de hele wereld.

Met de verspreiding van CSA op het terrein heeft het ook de belangstelling van de wetenschappelijke gemeenschap getrokken. De politieke dimensie van CSA - naast het bieden van alternatieven voor het conventionele, kapitalistische landbouwsysteem - blijft echter grotendeels onontgonnen terrein. Bovendien heeft de overgrote meerderheid van studies over CSA vragen over maatschappelijke verandering onderzocht door te focussen op interne dynamieken op initiatiefniveau met diepgaande casestudies. Gedetailleerde analyses van CSA als een sociale beweging ontbreken dus grotendeels. Om deze redenen bestudeert dit proefschrift de politieke dimensie van CSA op het niveau van de netwerkorganisatie door CSA te conceptualiseren en analyseren vanuit een sociale bewegingslens. Een dergelijk perspectief verbreedt de blik voorbij lokale initiatieven en werpt licht op de rol die CSA kan spelen als een collectieve politieke actor om verandering teweeg te brengen in de richting van meer milieuvriendelijke en sociaal rechtvaardige landbouwsystemen. Deze studie concentreert zich op het Duitse CSA-netwerk, het *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, als de voornaamste casestudy en stelt de vraag in welke mate en op welke manieren CSA-netwerken zich vormen en handelen als een collectieve, politieke actor voor maatschappelijke verandering.

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Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, baseren verschillende hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift zich op concepten en stromingen in sociale bewegingsstudies. **Hoofdstuk 3** gebruikt het concept 'boundary work' om licht te werpen op het proces waardoor CSA-netwerken een collectieve actor worden. Het toont aan hoe CSA-netwerken collectief onderhandelen over gemeenschappelijke waarden en kernprincipes, hoe ze hun antagonisten en protagonisten framen, maar ook hoe ze onderhandelen wie zich wel of niet op een legitieme manier bij hun strijd kan aansluiten. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat de constructie van een collectief 'wij' fundamenteel een relationeel proces is. Dit wil zeggen dat CSA-netwerken hun identiteitsgrenzen trekken in relatie tot het kapitalistische landbouwsysteem en andere, reeds bestaande bewegingen. Het hoofdstuk toont ook aan dat, gezien de huidige heterogeniteit en naast elkaar bestaande opvattingen over waar CSA voor zou moeten staan, het trekken van grenzen een proces is dat spanningen en moeilijkheden met zich meebrengt. Deze uiten zich bijvoorbeeld in een tegenstelling tussen landbouwbedrijven en ondernemingen gesteund door de gemeenschap.

Op basis van literatuur over politieke belangenbehartiging analyseert **Hoofdstuk 4** vervolgens hoe CSA-netwerken via zulke belangenbehartiging veranderingen proberen teweegbrengen in kapitalistische landbouwsystemen. Uit dit hoofdstuk blijkt dat beperkte financiële en menselijke middelen tot een prioritering van prefiguratieve politiek leidden. Verder toont deze studie aan dat de organisatiestructuur van het Duitse CSA-netwerk, of in sommige gevallen het gebrek hieraan, invloed heeft op het vermogen om aan belangenbehartiging te doen. Relevante organisatorische factoren zijn hier onder andere potentiële spanningen rond ledenparticipatie in besluitvorming, verantwoordelijkheden en legitimiteit van pleitbezorgers, zichtbaarheid en valorisatie van belangenbehartiging, en (mis)matches tussen de interne structuur en ruimtes voor belangenbehartiging.

Voortbouwend op de literatuur over coalitievorming onderzoekt **Hoofdstuk 5** hoe politieke actie verbreed kan worden door een systematische analyse van het potentieel van het vormen van een coalitie tussen de CSA- en degrowth-bewegingen. De studie stelt dat, hoewel een coalitie op dit moment nog niet bestaat, het vormen van een coalitie in de toekomst gunstig zou kunnen zijn voor beide bewegingen. In het bijzonder wordt er gesuggereerd dat de strategieën van beide bewegingen – praktijkgedreven verandering voor CSA en

discoursgedreven verandering voor degrowth – complementair zijn. CSA zou kunnen profiteren van het structurele perspectief van degrowth, dat de inherente gebreken van de kapitalistische samenleving aan de kaak stelt, waarvan er vele de bloei van de CSA-beweging belemmeren. Op zijn beurt zou degrowth kunnen profiteren van het aangaan van een coalitie met CSA door te leren hoe het meer praktisch relevant kan worden en hoe het concrete uitdagingen voor maatschappelijke verandering kan ondersteunen.

Tot slot onderzoekt **Hoofdstuk 6** de bredere transformatie van landbouwsystemen door de lens van de degrowth-literatuur en identificeert het relevante lijnen voor verder onderzoek. Dit hoofdstuk stelt dat de huidige onrechtvaardigheid en onduurzaamheid van kapitalistische landbouwsystemen een resultaat zijn van een gedeeld sociaal denkbeeld van eindeloze, kapitalistische groei en een product van de politiek-economische structuren die dit sociaal denkbeeld reproduceren. Hiermee wordt de lezer uitgenodigd om zich transformaties van landbouwsystemen opnieuw voor te stellen in de context van en in samenhang met bredere maatschappelijke structuren en andere economische sectoren. De onderzoeksagenda sluit op verschillende manieren aan bij het bredere narratief van dit proefschrift. Ten eerste moedigt het onderzoek aan naar een veelvoud aan actoren voor verandering die verder gaan dan individuele initiatieven en meer aandacht schenken aan formele en informele grassroots-netwerken (zoals CSA-netwerken). Ten tweede stelt de onderzoeksagenda voor om deze actoren te onderzoeken als politieke actoren die op verschillende manieren actief zijn in de politieke arena - van prefiguratieve tot conventionele politiek. Tot slot roept het op om degrowth te conceptualiseren en te bestuderen als een sociale beweging, inclusief de mogelijkheid om allianties te bouwen met landbouwbewegingen (een oproep die werd beantwoord in **Hoofdstuk 5**).

Samen genereren deze hoofdstukken nieuwe inzichten en standpunten over het Duitse CSA-netwerk als een collectieve, maar ook heterogene actor. Het gebruik van een sociale bewegingslens is nuttig om te beschrijven hoe CSA-initiatieven met verschillende waarden, manieren van organiseren en politieke doelen ten opzichte van elkaar gepositioneerd zijn, alsook hoe spanningen en tegenstellingen ontstaan binnen de beweging en hoe deze gematigd worden. Verder toont dit proefschrift aan dat het Duitse CSA-netwerk diversiteit verwelkomt, met uitzondering van een uitgesproken distantiëring van extreemrechts. Het

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omarmen van diversiteit was een pragmatische beslissing die de beweging in staat heeft gesteld om te groeien en zich te verspreiden binnen verschillende kringen.

De heterogeniteit van het Duitse CSA-netwerk wordt ook weerspiegeld in haar politiek. Hoewel het netwerk zich voornamelijk bezighoudt met een prefiguratieve politiek, bestaan er binnen de beweging verschillende opvattingen over wat het betekent om politiek te zijn. Bovendien is de beweging in verschillende mate gepolitiseerd, en de mate waarin de beweging politiek wil zijn, blijft intern betwist en besproken. Hoewel verdere politisering noodzakelijk is om maatschappelijke veranderingsprocessen te ondersteunen, is dit proces complex en komt het met tal van moeilijkheden voor een sociale beweging die bestaat uit een groot aantal heterogene initiatieven. Samengevat geeft dit proefschrift een genuanceerd beeld van de manieren waarop CSA-netwerken als politiek kunnen worden opgevat en biedt het belangrijke inzichten in hoe een gemeenschappelijke identiteit, politieke strategieën, claims en uitdagingen worden onderhandeld en uitgedragen. Een dergelijk perspectief is afwezig in de meeste eerdere studies over CSA, die CSA eerder hebben beschreven als een sociale innovatie.

Dit proefschrift stelt verder dat, hoewel het Duitse CSA-netwerk in de eerste plaats streeft naar het uitbouwen van alternatieven op het terrein, er andere strategieën noodzakelijk zijn om fundamentele veranderingen teweeg te brengen binnen het kapitalistische landbouwsysteem. Deze alternatieve strategieën bestaan voornamelijk uit het implementeren van 'niet-reformistische hervormingen' en het opbouwen van een tegen-hegemonie. Gezien de beperkte middelen van het Duitse CSA-netwerk en de daaruit voortvloeiende moeilijkheid om alle drie de bovengenoemde strategieën tegelijkertijd na te streven, lijkt de meest strategische keuze te zijn om nieuwe allianties op te bouwen (en bestaande allianties te versterken) met bewegingen die zich inzetten voor radicale hervormingen en het opbouwen van een tegen-hegemonie.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonie Guerrero Lara (1993) is originally from Mönchengladbach, Germany. She earned a bachelor's degree in Political Economics at Heidelberg University, Germany, from 2012 to 2016. During her studies, she joined a student association called Real World Economics, which, as the name alludes, promoted the pluralism of economic theories in the university curriculum – especially, those that are fit to provide solutions to real-world problems. Thereby, she became increasingly interested in topics of degrowth, environmental protection, and social justice. In her bachelor thesis, she explored the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model for the first time and assessed its potential to reduce the 'foodprint' of its members.

After her bachelor studies, Leonie moved to Stockholm, Sweden, where she earned a master's degree in Social-Ecological Resilience and Sustainable Development at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University from 2016 to 2018. Her master's thesis explored a variety of agri-food initiatives in the context of Spain to assess the relevance and use of traditional ecological knowledge in contributing to more sustainable, equitable, and healthy agri-food systems. During both her bachelor's and master's programs she received a scholarship from the Heinrich-Böll foundation. In June 2019, Leonie joined the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development as a PhD Fellow with the ERC and NWO-funded project *UNMAKING*. In addition to her doctoral dissertation, she also volunteered in the German CSA network, the *Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e. V.*

Leonie is a nature lover who regularly engages in outdoor adventures, nurturing her passion for climbing, hiking, and surfing. On rainy days, she enjoys baking (showing her German side at its best), reading, and doing all sorts of crafting projects. Being raised bilingual (German and Spanish), Leonie early on discovered her passion for languages and became a polyglot: she speaks seven languages.

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