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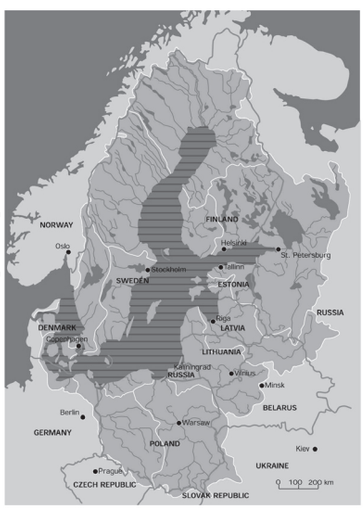
APPROACHES TO SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

Sumelius, J. & Vesala, K.M. (eds.)



Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society (BERAS) No. 6

Baltic Sea Region
INTERREG III B

Centrum för uthålligt lantbruk

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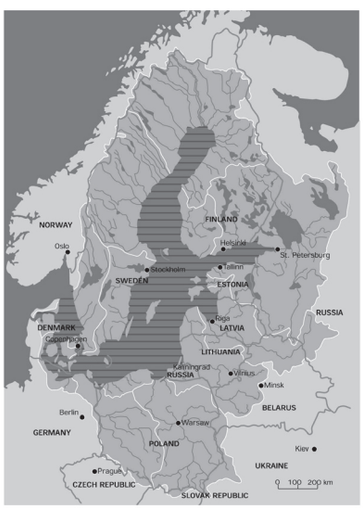

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BERAS PROJECT

Artur Granstedt

The serious environmental situation in the Baltic Sea is a consequence of agricultural specialisation, pollution from industries, incorrect waste management and the unsustainable lifestyle prevailing in the countries around the Baltic Sea (i.e. in its drainage basin). Reduced use of non-renewable energy and other resources and the elimination of pesticides would result in less pollution of air, water and soil. Increased recycling of nutrients within the agricultural systems through integration of plants and animals in the farming system would reduce leaching from fields. There is a need to analyse their environmental and socio-economic consequences as well as the opportunities and obstacles facing the various actors in the food system, i.e. producers, processors, traders and consumers. It is necessary to develop knowledge and skills in this area and to better understand the potential for and consequences of a larger-scale changeover to such systems throughout the region.

A knowledge base that can be used to reduce the negative environmental impactsof production, distribution, processing and consumption of food in the Baltic Sea drainage area will be developed. This will be based on case studies, complemented with scenarios and consequence analyses, of ongoing practical, local ecological initiatives to promote local food supply cooperation between consumers and ecological producers in rural villages in the eight EU and EU-candidate countries around the Baltic Sea. The aim is to learn about and promote more sustainable food systems. The project is an EU-funded INTERREG III B project.

Methodologically the project is based on studies of 50 selected ecological recycling farms representing different farming conditions and 10 examples of more or less local and/or regional food systems located in the eight partner countries. The first work package, (WP 1) builds on activities and cooperation with representatives from already established local ecological food initiatives and recycling farms in each country. It includes evaluation, promotion and exchange of experiences with other initiatives in and among the project countries.

The second work package, WP (2), will study and quantify the environmental benefits that can be achieved through local ecological consumption, processing and ecological, integrated,

recycling farming, in comparison with conventional food systems. The results will feed into the evaluation process and be made available to the actors. The third and fourth work packages, WP (3) and WP (4), will evaluate the economic and social consequences at the societal level including rural development and job opportunities. The final work programme, (WP5), will produce recommendations for implementation and disseminate this to concerned actors, including policy and decision makers.

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INTRODUCTION

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This volume consists of two papers approaching the question of social sustainability in the context of alternative food systems (AFS). Both papers originate from the Beras project, and consequently have their empirical base on case studies conducted within the Baltic Sea region. In the first paper by Markus Larsson and co-writers, the case is from Järna village in Sweden, and in the second paper by Marko Nousiainen and co-writers the case is from Juva municipality in Finland. The rationale in focussing on a single case is similar in both papers, namely to illuminate and analyse how the issues of social sustainability can be recognized and assessed at the level of practical relations and experiences of the actors involved in AFS. In addition, the description of these real cases serves as demonstration of the possibility of well functioning AFS.

Although both of the papers introduce qualitative studies on social sustainability, there are differences in the approaches employed. Larsson et al. frame their study by a wide systems perspective, emphasising the importance of maintaining resilience and diversity at various levels of ecological and social systems. They view social sustainability in terms of social capital that is maintained and generated in horizontal networks built on trust and reciprocity. At empirical level they use accounts given by interviewees concerning their own participation and the nature of relations between actors in a local AFS network. Nousiainen et al. start with a discussion on structural aspect of AFS by making a distinction between *organic* as a mode of production and *local* as a mode of distribution. They approach social sustainability in terms of equity and community viability, and focus on a detailed analysis of argumentation generated in interviews in which the issues of social sustainability and differences between conventional and alternative food systems were introduced as potentially controversial matters.

In spite of differences in approach – or rather because of them – we find it useful and interesting to set these two papers side by side. Theoretically, they complement each other. At the level of empirical results, the image of the Järna case appears more neat and "ideal" in terms of social sustainability while in Juva case certain voices of reservation were heard, pointing out to apparent bottlenecks and threats of discord. To interpret these differences is an intriguing task. Should they be attributed, for example, to the nature of shared values of actors, which in the Järna case were provided more by antroposophic ideas and in the Juva case by local identity, or to the differences in distance to wide markets? Or,

could they be something brought out by differences in methods? There are also other interesting differences, i.e. the emphasis on local food production seems to be much more salient in Juva case than it is in Järna case.

In both of these papers it is possible to find evidence supporting the view that AFS can and do contribute to socially sustainable development. At the same time, they point out problems and challenges. One example of a particular problem is the strict regulations for organic products and, as another, high consumer prices. One example of a challenge is the need to increase influence of own actions as well as the need for policies for green entrepreneurship. Finally, it may be concluded that the papers in this volume provide an excellent comparison for further case studies that are under preparation in the Beras project concerning the issue of social sustainability

TRUST AND RESILIENCE – A CASE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEURS IN JÄRNA

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Elin Andersson
and Sofia Enberg.

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Abstract

In this paper we study the importance of social capital in sustainable development in general and in sustainable social development in particular. A network of environmental entrepreneurs serves as case study. The results indicate that the network of entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development in ecological and social terms. The contribution to sustainable economical development was however more ambiguous.

Introduction

Globalisation implies that societies are undergoing constant change. This is evident not least in small communities, where changes happen fast and may cause social and economic stress. Societies that have relied on one or a few large employers might find it harder to cope with de-industrialisation than societies where individuals to a larger extent have relied on each other. Societies that are characterised by a high degree of trust have a higher potential for new forms of organisations, including networks and entrepreneurship (Brulin, 2002). Entrepreneurs cooperating in networks can be a much-needed and welcome alternative to traditional competition in business. This form of organisation could foster social development in society. It is built on creating relations which, in turn, leads to support and trust. This improves social relationships and contributes to work satisfaction and, to some degree, to higher quality of life.

The so-called Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) introduced the notion of sustainable development. The importance of local engagement, e.g. local environmental initiatives, is emphasised as is engagement at every level of society, ranging from governments and public institutions, to local business communities, individuals and NGOs. This message was repeated at UN conferences and in 1997, the Amsterdam treaty adopted sustainable development as a fundamental goal for the EU. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg in 2002, Sweden together with many other countries reported their national strategy for

sustainable development (Swedish government, 2004). Sustainability rests on three pillars; economic, ecological and social development (Cobb and Daly, 1994). Here, we focus on social development but we will touch on all three aspects. The social dimension of sustainable development includes social coherence and active participation in social life. In order to facilitate social development, measures to reduce social inequalities in society are encouraged (Ministry of Environment, 2003).

There are several studies on entrepreneurship and its consequences for social and regional development, but to our knowledge there is still no work on entrepreneurs specialised in production of products that are certified to be organic, i.e. on what might be called green entrepreneurship (Taylor and Waley, 2004) or environmental entrepreneurship. The aim of this study is to investigate how environmental entrepreneurs cooperating in networks in the Järna region outside of Stockholm are contributing to sustainable social development. This is done by in-depth interviews, mainly focusing on social capital, with eight entrepreneurs active in the region.

Theoretical foundation

Below we discuss globalisation, localisation and social and ecosystem resilience. This is followed by a description of social capital, of environmental entrepreneurship and of what has been known as the network society. Our closing discussion of sustainable social development lays the foundation for an analysis of the interviews.

Globalisation, localisation and "glocalisation"

Robertson (1995) defines globalisation as the process that connects the world by linking different localities. Globalisation is related to localisation in what Robertson calls "glocalisation". In terms of for example environmental governance, glocalisation implies that political power is being redistributed from the nation state both upwards to international decision-making bodies and downwards to grassroots movements and ordinary citizens (Lidskog and Elander, 1999). The diversity of the decision-making structure is a key factor in what has been termed adaptive co-management. Diversified decision-making is also critical in building resilience in social-ecological systems (Swedish Environmental Advisory Council, 2002) and can be applied locally (Olsson et al., 2004) as well as regionally and globally (Dietz et al., 2003).

Sustainable development – to maintain socio-ecological resilience

Social and ecological systems are dynamic and connected. They affect each other and are reciprocally dependent (Söderqvist et

al., 2004). The perspective of resilience offers a framework to facilitate sustainable development in a world undergoing constant change. Socio-ecological resilience describes the ability to develop a society that fights vulnerability by managing the biosphere instead of consuming it (Edman, 2004).

Ecosystem resilience

Ecosystem resilience is described as the capacity of an ecosystem to cope with disturbances, such as storms, fires and pollution, without undergoing permanent transformation of function. A resilient ecosystem has the capacity to absorb shocks and, if damaged, to rebuild and renew itself. Without resilience, ecosystems become vulnerable to the effects of disturbance. The new state may not only be impoverished - biologically and economically – but the damage may also be irreversible (Swedish Environmental Advisory Council, 2002).

Diversity is important for ecosystem resilience. It helps to distribute risks, to provide "insurance", thus making it possible for ecosystems to reorganise after disturbance. In an ecosystem with rich biodiversity, species can replace and/or compensate for each other in times of disturbance. Ecosystems become more vulnerable when humans favour monocropping or in other ways reduce biodiversity. Overuse or pollution increases these risks (Swedish Environmental Advisory Council, 2002).

There are several examples of environmental problems that can be described in terms of resilience or the lack thereof, e.g. in the Baltic Sea biodiversity has decreased due to pollution and over fishing (The Swedish Environmental Advisory Council, 2005). The result is an ecosystem with substantially decreased ability to generate the desired functions. The changes now being observed might very well be irreversible. The Baltic Sea may have entered a new equilibrium to the detriment of human welfare. To take another example, in January 2005 Sweden was hit by a strong storm, "Gudrun". The result was devastating for forests and forest owners, especially in the county of Småland. The large impact is partly explained by the cultivation of fast growing spruce, a species that is not accustomed to the area. Although the total economic value of stormed felled tress is estimated at SEK30 billion (Dagens Nyheter 2005:1), owners with more diverse forests holdings suffered marginal losses (Dagens Nyheter 2005:2). This exemplifies how social and ecosystem resilience are interconnected. Not only forestry but also industrialised agriculture is characterised by increased monocropping and thus lacks the insurance that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience provide.

Social resilience and creative destruction

One can also talk about social resilience in terms of the ability of human organisations and communities to withstand and recover from social, economic or political instability or environmental change (Swedish Environmental Advisory Council, 2002).

Rigidities can be accumulated in human enterprises to the point of crises and then being forced to reorganise. This can be observed in the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and in the restructuring of large corporations (Holling, 2001). The process of restructuring is often painful for involved actors. Recent Swedish examples are the downsizing of Ericsson and ABB where thousands of employees lost their jobs and shareholders saw their holdings shrink to a fraction of the previous value. The period of rapid reorganisation also opens up for novel re-combinations and unexpected experiments which can lead to innovations (Holling, 2001). When Schumpeter (1950) called this phase "creative destruction" he also touched upon resilience in social systems. He believed that old structures need to be torn down in order to build something new. Thus the process of rebuilding after disturbance promotes renewal and innovation – a process which is applicable to society as well as to ecosystems[1].

Globalisation offers opportunities for companies to move production abroad, or to other regions within a country, in order to minimise costs. Several regions in Sweden today suffer both economically and socially from de-industrialisation. Examples of low social resilience are found in regions which depend on one single employer. Recent examples from Sweden are the closure of regiments, the loss by SAAB Automobile in Trollhättan of a large contract to Opel and the German town of Rüsselsheim and Ericsson's decision to move production facilities to low-cost countries. In a globalised economy these processes will continue, but well diversified local economies could serve as buffers, or as insurances, against large social and economic changes. In his book "Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered", (1973) Schumacher saw small economic units in this perspective, i.e. as a way to practice the precautionary principle.

Regions where people trust and rely on each other instead on of large corporations are characterised by strong social connections and thus find it easier to survive the departure of a large employer. This can even lead to positive social development in a Schumpeterian process of creative destruction (Brulin and Nilsson, 1997).

1 Schumpeter didn't use the term resilience but the qualitative changes of societies that Schumpeter discussed are similar to the changes of societies and ecosystems according to resilience theory. A resilient society, or ecosystem, is much more likely to undergo a period of creative destruction caused by a crisis than a less resilient society. The reslilient society is likely to end up in a qualitatively better state after the change whereas the less resilient society might stabalise in a worse state than before.

Farm resilience and the resilient corporation

A resilient business does not necessarily contribute to social or ecological resilience or sustainable development. Hamel and Välikangas (2003, p. 54) describes a resilient organisation; "To thrive in turbulent times, companies must become as efficient at renewal as they are at producing today's products and services. Renewal must be the natural consequence of an organization's innate resilience." Focus is rather on adapting to external changes than to contributing to stability or positive changes.

Agriculture can build and erode social resilience as well as ecosystem resilience. Done wisely, agriculture production can be a powerful tool towards sustainable development. In her doctoral thesis "Building farm resilience. Prospects and challenges for organic farming" Milestad (2003) has suggested, with some reservation, that organic farming can enable European farms to be sustainable. One problem is that some farmers believe the principles of organic farming are being forced upon them from above, that they themselves have little to say, and that they are losing their independence. Subsidies, for example, make conversion to organic farming possible but at the same time they influence farmers in a certain direction that they have not chosen on their own. According to Milestad, growth of the organic sector is an important goal for Sweden as well as other countries of the European Union. Organic agriculture is expected to deliver several services to society, including environmentally friendly food production, thriving rural areas with small scale farms, and increased biodiversity. However, increasing the acreage of certified organic farmlands does not automatically lead to these services. The qualitative aspects of organic farming are just as important. One of these aspects is the role of nutrient cycles, regional and local, which today is not required to certify a production as organic. Milestad's conclusions are similar to the ideas behind ecological recycling agriculture (Granstedt et al., 2004)[2].

The ideal business in terms of sustainable development is one that in its production contributes to social, economic and ecological development while at the same time show flexibility. If not flexible and resilient to changed conditions, it might not be able to contribute to positive changes in the long run.

Social capital

Social capital is a key concept in this paper. Links are increasingly being made between national prosperity and the creation of social capital at the local level. Research has shown that strong social

2 In ecological recycling agriculture chemical pesticides and chemical fertilizers are not allowed. Instead animal and vegetable production are integrated. The manure from animal production is recycled and used as fertilizer in the vegetable production. See Beras 2004 or Granstedt et al. 2004.

capital leads to better health, less crime, faster economic growth and greater support for the government (Larsson et al., 1999; World Bank, 2004). At a first glance, it may seem odd to describe capital as "social", but capitalising, producing, and increasing a return is exactly what social capital can do.

When we probe the meaning of social capital, we can isolate four central aspects (Larsson et al., 1999; Pretty and Ward, 2001). The first is trust. Fukuyama (1995, p. 26) defines trust as "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and co-operative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community". It is sometimes divided into trust in goodwill and trust in competence. Sometimes "trust" and "social capital" are used synonymously. "Trust" probably describes the meaning of social capital better than any other word, but there is more that meets the eye behind this usage.

Secondly, norms, rules and sanctions create expectations that others will be trustworthy and will take part in activities that benefit the group. Norms here refers to more than just standards of behaviour as it also covers common ground and shared aims (Larsson et al., 1999).

Thirdly, if reciprocity is lacking, people often withdraw from relationships, no matter whether they are givers or receivers. We are not much concerned with transactions where one person reciprocates immediately. A market transaction in which one person supplies and another pays, may have very little to do with trust. Rather we are concerned with transactions where reciprocity is not immediate, since these are the transactions that rely on and create trust (Seligman, 1997).

Finally, networks are groups of people linked by direct or indirect ties which represent information or other resources. These are often separated into "strong ties" and "weak ties", corresponding to friends and acquaintances respectively.

One possible sequence of events is that people make connections that make them willing to do favours for the others. This reciprocity leads to trust. On the other hand may the social capital of unemployed people shrink because their networks shrink. Linked to this is a decline in their capacity to reciprocate, because they have fewer resources with which to do so. In practice, all four elements both rely on and nurture the other three.

Social capital is created when people interact. The creation of social capital has positive consequences for everyone, including those that did not interact. Social capital is connected to the actions of individuals but it only results in benefits, such as safety and comfort in one's networks, when people interact with other people. Thus, social capital can not be created by individuals acting alone but only in interaction with others. This explains

the name of Putnam's (2001) study "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital".

Destroying social capital

Trust is very fragile and much easier to destroy than to create. Fukuyama (1995) ends his book on trust with the comment "Social capital is like a ratchet that is more easily turned in one direction than another; it can be dissipated by the actions of governments much more readily than those governments can build it up again". An example of decreasing social capital is the decreasing proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted, from 58% in 1960 to 37% in 1993 (Putnam, 2001). Social trust is correlated with education (Smith et al. 1995), and as educational levels have risen, trust should also have risen in parallel. This trend is likely to be similar, if less extreme, in other countries.

Social capital and development

It has been demonstrated that social capital has a positive role in conserving and managing collective environmental resources (Pretty, 2002; Pretty and Smith, 2004; Folke et al., 2005). Research on social capital has however been focused on its potential for economic development (World bank, 2004; Putnam, 1996). The classic demonstration of the value of social capital is Putnam's study (1996) of the effectiveness of regional government in Italy. The results showed large differences in governmental effectiveness. "The explanation which eventually developed from the statistical analysis was that local government functioned best in the regions in which the 'civic community' was strong" (Wilkinson 1996, p 119). Such regions stood out, for example, on account of the high numbers of choral societies and local football teams.

Successful regions were situated mainly in northern Italy. By contrast, "Putnam found a stark dearth of civic community in southern Italy (…). Italians in the South were much less likely to read newspapers, belong to unions, vote, and otherwise take part of the life of their communities. Moreover, people in the South expressed a much lower degree of social trust and confidence in the law-abiding behaviour of their fellow citizens" (Fukuyama, 1996, p. 100). Thus, differences in local engagement, number of associations, i.e. networks, trust and social capital explain why northern Italy has developed into a much wealthier region than southern parts of the country.

The network society

According to Castells (1999) society, including corporations, governments and other institutions is being restructured. Hierarchical models of organisation have lost in importance and power has shifted from autocratic rulers to individuals who rule independ-

ently. Individuals are tied together through the networks they belong to. These networks can be professional or social in nature. Castells observes an upward trend for entrepreneurs. This can also increase the tendency of individuals to choose their profession according to their own interests since they no longer feel steered by others but are rather their own masters. Individuals in a network society experience a higher degree of work satisfaction and thus a higher degree of quality of life. This, in turn, leads to an accumulation of social capital in society.

Since the creation of trust is a part of the ultimate function of the network society this form of social organisation facilitates social development. Trust makes people cooperate and share knowledge and experience. Social development leads to cultural development which in turn leads to regeneration, economic development and, ultimately, institutional stability and trust (Castells, 1999). When we cooperate, we appreciate each other more, which increases our productivity and ability to learn. It also improves social relations, the propensity to take responsibility for other's wellbeing increases, as do our self-esteem and motivation to work.

There are examples of destructive networks, e.g. organised criminality, which do not contribute to the social development of the society. Vertical networks with unstable structures can reduce trust in institutions and destroy social capital (Robertson 1995). There is a great difference between networks built on reciprocity and those based on egoism, on those whose members care about each other and those that are characterised by competition. Thus, not all networks are constructive for either individuals or society as a whole (Aspers, 2001). When studying sustainable social development it is therefore important to study what values support the network, the relations in the network, and the individuals that act therein.

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are currently being studied by several academic disciplines, and are understood or described in various ways. Some see the entrepreneur as a risk taker, an innovator and a "doer", open for new opportunities (Landström, 2000). Other characteristics mentioned include toughness and persistence, a wish for independence, and an orientation to results (Landström, 2000). We are interested in aspects of entrepreneurship that create social development, and some of the characteristics are of more interest than others.

The importance of entrepreneurs is often emphasised in discussions of local and regional development. Of importance for network-based entrepreneurship is the feeling of reciprocity between actors: that they support each other, build contacts and

to some extent seek solidarity (Brulin, 2002). Some regions, e.g. northern Italy and Gnosjö in southern Sweden, have inherited a large amount of social capital in the form of norms for reciprocity and networks of social engagements. It is this, rather than calculating rationality, that has made possible the growth of an entrepreneurial society (Brulin and Nilson, 1997) in which citizens have influence and participate in public debate, can re-vitalise a network and can create well-functioning entrepreneurship at local and regional levels (Brulin, 2002).

According to Porter (1998), increased competitiveness in a global economy requires a well-functioning local and regional entrepreneurship and business life. The long-term competition advantages will be locally determined to an increasing extent – knowledge, relations and motivation created through close cooperation. Brulin (2002) believes, in line with thoughts on social resilience, that entrepreneurship and a vibrant, multifaceted economy will provide the only opportunities for a region to survive in times of de-industrialisation. It is on a local and regional level that companies can develop close relationships with customers, research institutes, competitors and suppliers, engage in educational and developmental projects and develop competitiveness as well as efficient cooperation. Globalisation will tie the world's economies together at the same time as the importance of close local and regional environments as entrepreneurship regions increase. Brulin (2002) sees a transition from a capitalistic industrial society to production in business networks as a foundation to meet the new needs of entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurs and environmental entrepreneurs

Social entrepreneurs use their entrepreneurial skills for the good of society. Community-based social entrepreneurs innovate within their own communities. "Just as architects and building surveyors look at the physical capital and see where it is damaged and in need of repair, so community-based social entrepreneurs look at a community's social capital. They are able to see a tear here, a hole there and places where the fabric of society has become threadbare. (…) they are able to devise remedies, fill voids, refurbish and renew (…) and are experts at making relationships work" (Thake and Zadek, 1997, pp. 25-26). If the barriers to peoples' ability to realise their potential arise due to a lack of trust, then many of the barriers to communities ability to realise their potential have a similar origin. Someone who believes in the community and gives it a sense of self-esteem can act as a catalyst for tremendous change, unlocking hidden potential.

Related to social entrepreneurship is community business entrepreneurship. It is described as "similar to, but distinct from, the traditional entrepreneurial process. (…) Within the setting of a

depleted community the entrepreneurial process can be modified to pursue community goals, thereby creating new opportunities and making new forms of development possible" (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004, p. 217). Kingdon (1995) emphasises the policy entrepreneur as central in making policy changes come about. The policy entrepreneur can serve as a link between a public opinion on a pressing environmental issue that needs to be solved and decision makers with formal power. She is a person that both observes when a "policy window" or "window of opportunity" is open and knows how to use this (Olsson et al., 2004). Eisenstadt (1995) characterized institutional entrepreneurs as individuals or groups who adopt leadership roles in periods of structural or institutional change. Both policy entrepreneurs and institutional entrepreneurs might act for the good of the environment and society at large, but on the other hand they might not.

What Hardin (1968) described as "the tragedy of the commons" is caused by economic agents – farmers in Hardin's example – acting rational in a strictly economic sense. Each farmer is assumed to maximizing her own utility even though the collective group of farmers - and at the end even herself – are losing from her behaviour. If entrepreneurs often act more like social entrepreneurs or community business entrepreneurs, then Hardin was wrong. Florida (2002) describes groups of people central for a region's development as "the creative class". The entrepreneurs described above do not necessarily run a business. Rather they are a creative class in a social and environmental sense.

By environmental entrepreneur we mean a combination of the entrepreneur according to Landström (2000) above, the social entrepreneur and the community business entrepreneur, but now with a focus on environmentally friendly production in our case organically certified food. Different notions have been used to describe similar types of entrepreneurship including ecopreneurship (Schaper 2003), environmental issue entrepreneurship (Albrecht 2002) and green entrepreneurship (Taylor and Walley 2004). For simplicity we use environmental entrepreneur throughout this text. If a rigid distinction between an entrepreneur and a manager or an owner of a small or medium sized enterprise is emphasized (Landström, 2000) some of the actors interviewed here would perhaps not be defined as entrepreneurs. However, following Johannisson (2002, p. 39) "Entrepreneurship aims at creating value for targeted groups in new ways. What value is created, how and by whom has to be defined locally (…)" or Steyaert and Katz (2004, p. 190) suggesting that "entrepreneurship can be seen ´taking place' in the everydayness of our life, in social interactions and everyday practices" most interviewees would qualify as en-

trepreneurs. In this study all but one entrepreneur are producers or retailers certified by KRAV and/or Demeter[3].

Community

The notion "community" is used here to describe a local well-functioning society, with the potential for sustainable development. To reverse today's unsustainable development all three aspect of sustainability must be given high priority. The human being exists as a social creature in relation to others. Social welfare can not be measured in purely monetary terms. The relations that create the sense of community in society are just as important measures of welfare as its monetary wealth. Thus, one person's wellbeing is influenced by the extent to which his or her society is developing successfully or by the extent to which it has a sense of community (Cobb and Daly, 1994).

Not all societies show community spirit. For a society to qualify as a community it needs to show (Cobb and Daly, 1994):

- Widespread participation and engagement on the part of its inhabitants in decisions that concern their everyday lives. Prugh et al. (2000) use the term "strong democracy" to describe a strong social participation.
- Responsibility for all individuals.
- Respect for individual diversity among individuals.

Positive sustainable social development

The Brundtland Report defines the social dimension of sustainable development as social cohesion and participation in civic life (Ministry of the Environment, 2003). Other sources use broader definitions of social sustainability. We have only studied networks of entrepreneurs and their cooperation and relations, and not larger societies. Our definition of social sustainable development is thus limited to networks.

Networks increase social efficiency. Cooperation and coordination of operations are facilitated. Individuals in such networks are often engaged, helpful and show trust for each other even if they have conflicting opinions in different issues. We argue that in order for a network to contribute to social sustainable development, a certain degree of engagement is required from the individuals in it and that they themselves can influence decisions that affect them. The individuals in the networks share values, conduct their affairs honestly and expect honesty in return.

Positive sustainable social development requires that cooperating individuals experience satisfactory work conditions. Although some researchers, e.g. Castells (1999), refer to quality of life, we choose to limit our discussion to work satisfaction, by

3 KRAV is the certifying organisation of organic products in Sweden and Demeter is the equivalent for biodynamic products. See www.krav.se and www.demeter.nu.

which we mean how satisfying the individuals find their work and whether they experience financial stability or not.

Environmental entrepreneurs in networks – a case study from Järna

Järna village and countryside

Järna is a small municipality in Stockholm County, with 8000 inhabitants. Järna has a long tradition of agriculture characterised by ideas of organic farming and nutrient recycling. In 1968 some of the farms were acquired by anthroposophic foundations and converted to biodynamic methods, which are still in use today. The Järna community offers similar services as the traditional society but with an alternative touch. Järna has a college that educates Waldorf teachers, a Waldorf school and Vidarkliniken, which is an anthroposophically inspired health clinic (Haden and Helmfrid, 2004).

Figure 1, shows several enterprises and institutions in Järna which are in some way involved in the production and consumption of biodynamically/organically and locally grown food. It also shows the entities that are in the network and how the co-operation is organised between the farmers, the processing industry, retailers and consumers. Not all entrepreneurs are called by name in the figure, instead we have chosen to give the entrepreneurs with similar activities one common name, for example "farm shops". In Appendix 1 the actors in Figure 1 are briefly described. For a more detailed description see Haden and Helmfrid (2004).

The farm products are delivered to the processors, which produce bread, milk, cheese, meat and fertiliser for the gardens and so on. Through Järna Odlarring the farmers transport their cattle to the slaughterhouse, and the meat to the consumers in Järna. Some of the gardeners sell their produce in their own shops. The rest is sold to Järna Odlarring and Biodynamic Products, which sell directly to consumers or to local stores.

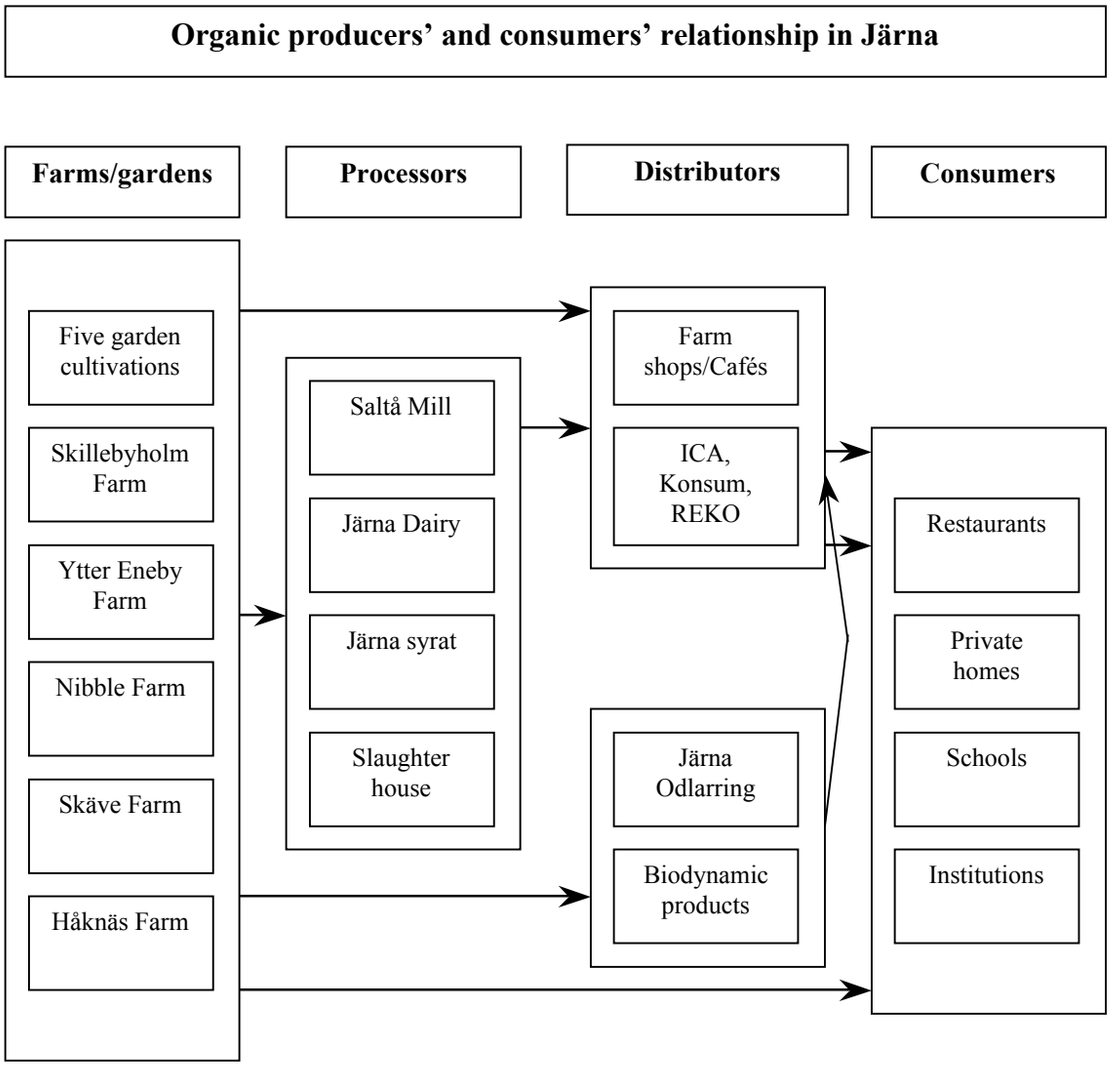

Figure 1. Relationships between producers and consumers of organic products in Järna. Adapted after Haden and Helmfrid (2004).

Products produced locally in the Järna region are bought by four major groups of customers: three Waldorf schools, other institutions (e.g. Vidarkliniken), restaurants, and private consumers. A good part of the population of Järna share anthroposophical values. Studies show that many who shop at Järna are loyal to biodynamic products and prefer them over other products, regardless of price. According to Hannula and Thomsson (2005), a reference group of 15 "environmentally conscious" households at Järna showed roughly 10-24% higher food expenditures compared to the Swedish average[4].

4 Per person the difference in expenditures was 10%. Per consumption unit factor the difference was 24%.

Studying sustainable social development – Method and analysis

Empirical data has been collected through semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1997) with eight entrepreneurs active in a network in Järna. The interviewees were randomly selected within different categories of actors; farmers / gardeners, processors and retailers / distributors, see Figure 1. The interviews were conducted at the workplace of the interviewee or elsewhere in the Järna region. All interviews were carried out in Swedish.

An interview guide with 36 questions, see Appendix 2, was used. However, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews implies that the guide was not strictly followed. There was for example room for follow up questions, discussions and explanations. The study was limited to the network of entrepreneurs. Focus was on the social aspect of sustainable development but economical and ecological aspects were touched upon. The results from the interviews are sensitive to interpretations of the response. There is also a risk that the delivered answers are skewed – that the respondents tried to answer in a way to please the interviewer or to look good. This problem of making a favourable impression has to be taken into consideration when judging the results. Table 1 in Appendix 3 presents a summary of the results of these interviews.

The network of environmental entrepreneurs, as represented by the interviewees, are assumed to contribute to a sustainable social development if:

- the network is created by individuals.
- cooperation in the network rests on trust in and respect for each other.
- the individuals in the network are dedicated and honest.
- there are common values and friendly relations within the network.
- a high level of work satisfaction in the network.

In the following section the data is analysed according to these five criteria.

Network created by individuals

The farmers and producers in Järna have created the network on their own and it covers the production, distribution and consumption of biodynamic food supplies. However, not all interviewed actors defined the cooperation in terms of their involvement in a network. Their cooperation was not initiated from above and was therefore not viewed as an organisation. We are also aware of the limitations of studying one single network, since several networks interact with each other.

According to Brulin (2002), networks that are initiated by the participants increase the likelihood of sustainable social develop-

ment. Previously, producers found themselves in competition with each other. Nowadays through the network of cooperation, the producers cooperate more, for example in joint transportation of vegetables and cattle.

Trust

In a professional network it is of utmost importance that the individuals show confidence in each other. The results of the interviews indicate a relatively high degree of shared trust. All of the interviewees reported that they more or less trust the others and that they have confidence in their competence. All of the entrepreneurs agreed that no one in the network regularly disagreed with the majority. Conflicting opinions in different questions occur but these views are respected in a spirit of trust.

Farmer/gardener 1 states that within the network there exists a high level of respect for each others' different ideas on farming procedures. "No matter what your opinions are, you are treated with respect" according to him. One could interpret this as an acceptance of diversity within the network cooperation of Järna. The results also indicate that the members of the network conduct honest business with each other and that they expect honesty in return from the others. Farmer/gardener 2 believes that the actors "do not violate the system", i.e. the network of cooperation.

Generalised reciprocity means that it is important that each member be able to both give and take, to help someone and receive help later on. The results of the interviews indicate a high degree of general reciprocity. Farmer/gardener 1 said that "the producers around here are pretty fair and just to each other". He noted that if he helps someone in one situation, he is most likely to receive help in another situation. Farmer/gardener 3 stated that the network of cooperation has only been positive on his behalf; more gardens have been created, but instead of referring to increasing competition he noted both a growing market and less pressure for him. He said that he trusts the others within the network and that he can rely upon them if he needs any help. Processor 2 said that he has great respect for the producers in the cooperation and trust their competence, however there are times when he would wish for more professionalism from the others. Distributor 1 noted that trust and confidence are fundamental for a fruitful cooperation. He is the only one who expressed a slight hesitation on this point. He had a problem in not being able to trust the producers to deliver their products on time.

Dedicated and honest individuals

We believe that engagement is of importance in efforts to achieve social sustainable development. In order to control your own life and business, it is important to be engaged. The members

of the network should also be active and take part in decisions that affect the cooperation. The interviews show that most of the entrepreneurs are active, engaged and voluntarily take part in the network. The results indicate that all eight entrepreneurs believe they are involved in decisions that affect their business and the cooperation. However, some interviewees point out that most of the time they delegate the responsibility for making decisions to the board of Järna Odlarring, but they all participate in making important decisions. Farmer/gardener 1 points to the fact that the entrepreneurs elect the board to explain why they are indirectly involved in all decisions. Two of the entrepreneurs in the network are also involved in other projects. Järna Odlarring was established as an initiative of six biodynamic farmers in Järna and this organisation today also includes the garden farmers. This cooperation could thereby be interpreted as an expression of the fact that the entrepreneurs run their businesses themselves. Distributor 1 has a negative attitude towards the pressure for centralisation from the ICA Food Group, a major corporation to which his store is connected. Distributor 1 does not want to be forced to have certain sorts of products. He wants his customers to be the only ones who can influence him to sell certain products.

All interviewees considered the others in the network to be honest, see Table 1 Appendix 3 and question 24 Appendix 2. This response should however be interpreted with caution since the socially desirable responding is "yes". Our impression is anyhow that the actors find each other dedicated as well as honest.

Shared values and a network built on friendship

The results of this study illustrate that the interviewees share some important common values. The environmental entrepreneurs do not literally choose to call themselves anthroposophists, however their human values and the belief in healthy food can be seen as anthroposophic.

Most of those interviewed made an active decision to move to Järna and to work there within the tradition of organic production. They arrived from different parts of Europe and all of them share the values of healthy food and organic thinking. Processor 2 claims that they share these values because they come from similar backgrounds. This facilitates the cooperation in the network. A fundamental historical weakness of networks is the difficulty of coordinating towards a common good (Castells, 1999). Cooperation between individuals that share the same ideals and values is often more effective because the network is then striving to reach the same goal. However, we would like to point out that the shared anthroposophic values do not prevent the entrepreneurs from having different ideas, for example on how to apply the biodynamic farming methods. Farmer/gardener 1 said that

the anthroposophic values that exist in his business come from biodynamic thinking in the farming methods, since the farm is licensed according to Demeter. According to farmer/gardener 1 it is hard to say that the network shares common values only because farmers are affected by Demeter's rules and regulations. How the regulations are applied is up to each individual. Farmer/gardener 2 believes that the anthroposophic values are expressed within the business, since Demeter accredits them. This has added to his knowledge of anthroposophy and its methods of farming.

All except one of the eight interviewees claimed that anthroposophic values more or less influence their business. Farmer/gardener 1 emphasised that his basic value is to "be human", which is also a basic thought in anthroposophy. Farmer/gardener 3 believes that the anthroposophical values are important. Demeter regulations are built on anthroposophical values. Farmer/gardener 3 reported that he also uses the biodynamic substances from Demeter in his production, and he noted that the anthroposophical values thus influence his business. Distributor 3 said that many people at Järna aim for the same goal: environmental goals that are good for the earth. He noted that the competitiveness that used to be found in the village has faded away since the creation of the network. Distributor 1 claimed that anthroposophic values don't influence his business. However he said that he feels a sense of belonging to the inhabitants at Järna and to satisfy their demand his business carries locally produced biodynamic food.

According to our definition of sustainable social development, cooperation should be based on relationships that are more than just professional. Five of the eight interviewees claim that they also have a personal relationship with their partners within the network, not solely a business relationship. Six out of eight entrepreneurs live in Järna and meet each other at other gatherings. Two of the interviewees express that they do not have a personal relationship with the others. One of them, processor 2, does not live at Järna, but in Stockholm, and it seems likely that he does not have much contact with the others except in connection with his work. Most of the entrepreneurs have been active at Järna for a long period of time, since the 70's and onwards, only two of them for a short period of less than five years. Even though the entrepreneurs have been involved in different businesses over the years, they still have somehow been involved in the network of cooperation. For example processor 1 was a gardener and distributor 2 worked as a farmer.

The results indicate that all of the entrepreneurs view the relationships to the others as businesslike, and that most view the relationships as being based on friendship. Since most of them

have been active at Järna for a long period of time they have been in touch with each other before. Distributor 1 reflects on the size of Järna: "With 8000 inhabitants, you recognise all of them and you immediately notice if someone has not been here before." Interviewee 1 states that the relationships he has with the others in the network differ depending on the person. Some of them he regards as his friends, however others he exclusively sees as his business partners. Processor 1 noted that he only has business relations to the others in the network. Distributor 3 explained that there are many different layers of relations that intersect with each other at Järna. Many of the partners in the network lived at Järna, and therefore they met each other casually, when shopping or attending meetings in their children's school.

Satisfaction with the work situation

All eight entrepreneurs said that they were satisfied with their business and their work. None of the entrepreneurs said that they felt limitations in their work because of a lack of cooperation. Farmer/gardener 1 was satisfied with his work but he missed the social interaction on the farm. Two of the entrepreneurs said that they feel exhausted on account of all the rules and the demands associated with their business. But the demands and rules are not forced on them by their network of cooperation, but by KRAV, Demeter, and other control organisations. Similar results were reported by Milestad (2003) in the above-mentioned study of Austrian organic farms. Farmer/gardener 2 also had a positive attitude to the network and its cooperation, and he also felt very content with his work. Farmer/gardener 2 said that his cooperation with Järna Dairy (Järna Dairy buys all the milk from his farm) is very important for the survival of his business. Farmer/gardener 3 is also satisfied with his work. Because the company is expanding, he is working more and more in the office and he misses not being able to work with farming as much as he would like. Farmer/gardener 3 does not believe that KRAV and Demeter are especially demanding. Processor 1, who is a manager, is quite satisfied with his work and he doesn't want to have another job. He would like to make some changes in the cooperation within the network, but he pointed out that it is difficult to influence the farmers.

Processor 2, who is a chief executive, was very satisfied with his work. He pointed out that if he were not happy with his work he would have only himself to blame, because he sets his own limitations. He said that it is "a responsibility you have as a person to create meaning in what you are doing, as a baker, a CEO or whatever you are". Distributor 3 was satisfied with his work, even if he sometimes misses farm work. He pointed out that he has accomplished a lot in his work and that he always

has been satisfied with it. Distributor 1, owner of a retailer, was happy with his working situation. He said that he enjoys meeting people on a daily basis. He pointed out that according to the parent company the store he is connected to is to be the "worst store in Sweden". This is because he buys many products from the local producers and not as much from the parent company, compared to other stores. But he said he wants to satisfy his customers and they request local products. Distributor 2 said that he feels content with his work, but that he also enjoys working as a farmer. He was not exclusively dedicated to his work, as he also had other projects. He said it is important to do the things that feel right. The interviewees generally reported that they like to take the initiative and that they believe in doing something positive for the health of others and for the environment.

Five of the interviewees expressed that they felt content with their economical situation, and all eight entrepreneurs gave us the impression that their business is not threatened economically. Some of the entrepreneurs said that demand is essential for their production of biodynamic products. Some of the entrepreneurs answered both yes and no when asked if they were satisfied with their economic situation, saying that the market is hard to predict. Farmer/gardener 2 said; "It is difficult to always feel economically safe in these times." But he believed that his economical situation was okay. Several respondents replied that economic factors were as important, or more important than other considerations (question 34 and 36). This response contradicts what's socially desirable. For farmer/gardener 2 the economical situation was more important than other factors in his work. Farmer/gardener 1 reported being satisfied with his economic situation except for the short period of time when he did not receive money on time from the Ministry of Agriculture. He said that the most important thing was to have a good social life and to feel that he can be away from work sometimes. For farmer/gardener 1 it was less important to earn a lot of money but he said that he would not have the farm if it wasn't economically remunerative. Farmer/gardener 3 said that his economic situation is good because he has more and more customers. He didn't really know whether the social or the economic situation is more important, but he placed a higher priority on biodynamic farming. He also argued that demand and profitability are essential for success as a gardener. Processor 1 noted that his economic situation was satisfactory but he was conscious of the possibility that his situation might change. He noted that the social aspect is more important than the economic aspect. The most important thing for him was to produce healthy food, and this meant organically produced food. Distributor 3 said that earlier in life his priorities lay with the social aspect of life but, now that he had children his priorities

had shifted to the economic aspect. Distributor 1 said that he is well situated economically and that his customers are faithful. Distributor 2 was not satisfied with his economic situation, but noted that creativity does not spring from feeling content; instead contentment can stand in the way of development.

With its geographical location and with the large share of its population buying biodynamic/organic products the area around Järna is well suited for environmental entrepreneurship. Farmer/gardener 2 said that the geographical location of his farm makes biodynamical farming more favourable than conventional production. Many of the other entrepreneurs also reported that the biodynamical production is more beneficial than conventional production. All entrepreneurs were satisfied with their work and they considered themselves to be in a good economic situation.

Measures towards environmental entrepreneurship regions

That organic/biodynamic products are on demand by the local and regional customers enables environmental entrepreneurs to cooperate in networks in Järna. It would be of interest to explore whether environmental entrepreneurship can be established elsewhere, in Sweden and abroad.

According to Gibb (2001) the overall challenge in creating an entrepreneurial society is to ensure that there are abundant role models for others to follow, good opportunities for entrepreneurs, local empowerment to enable things to happen, a belief in "trust" as a means of minimising regulations, and the encouragement of initiative at all levels. These general entrepreneurship policies are relevant for creating a nourishing environment for environmental entrepreneurship as well.

One example of a role model in influencing consumer demand could be Stefan Eriksson, Swedish "chef of the year 2005", who prefers local and organic products in his cooking (Dagens Nyheter, 2005:3). For producers, the network at Järna or the Farmer's Markets[5] could serve as role models for other environmental entrepreneurs wanting to develop their businesses.

In an attempt to tackle the rural crisis that followed in Britain after the outbreak of foot and mouth disease, Fischer (2001) asked "What can be done?" and continued "Clearly nothing short of a radical reorganisation of the food industry is sufficient", a reorganisation of the food industry that needs to be locally rooted to contribute to a revitalisation of local rural economies. Fischer's suggestions provide a concrete response to some of the challenges raised by Gibb. Fischer suggests a tax shift in order

5 The Farmer's Market (Bondens egen marknad) is a local market where farmers sell their own products. The aim is to stimulate local production for local consumption. See www.bondensegen.com or Carlsson-Kanyama et al. 2004).

to provide opportunities for local entrepreneurs. This includes a tax levy on all farm produce transported more than 50 miles (80 km) and "stopping the vast waste of agricultural subsidies, which mainly benefit large mass production farms. Subsidies should be targeted at producing positive change, most notably mass conversion to organic farming, and favour small farmers who can sell their produce locally." To encourage initiatives at local level Fischer (2001) proposes that a network of abattoirs be set up and that initiatives to establish direct links between farmers and local customers be supported.

During 2003 the agriculture ministers of the EU agreed on a reformation of agricultural subsidies. The new financial support is designed as an area subsidy. This implies that the subsidy is paid to farmers independently of production. A recent Swedish survey reveals that 45% of the consumers consider origin of produce the most important information when purchasing food (Trapp, 2004). If the survey is correct, the new subsidies would result in an increased demand for locally produced food.

A British study (New Economics Foundation, 2001) concludes that money spent on locally produced food generates almost twice as much income for the local economy as the same amount spent in a typical supermarket. Every £10 spent with a local food initiative is worth £25 for the local area, compared with just £14 when the same amount is spent in a supermarket. The reason for this is that money spent on locally produced food stays in the vicinity, where its value increases, as it is reinvested many times over. Similar products bought at a supermarket are imported, generating jobs elsewhere, and the profit made from the turnover is rarely reinvested locally. If the importance of consumer demand were better known perhaps more consumers would make an active choice. However, the high demand of locally produced organic food in Järna is not expected at most places.

If the findings from British conditions can be generalised to other countries this would support the argument for increased public procurement of locally produced food. Increased public consumption could be just as efficient as any investment in regional development. This might however conflict with existing EU regulations on public procurement.

Conclusions and discussion

In a global economy production and companies can relocate on short notice. Societies dependent on just a few employers are more exposed to changes than societies with a more well-diversified production. A reorganisation of local and regional production structures could result in stable social forms of cooperation, a larger degree of economic and social resilience and sustainable

social development. According to Brulin (2002), centrally organised production should be decentralised among entrepreneurs working in cooperative networks. Entrepreneurship in general and environmental entrepreneurship in particular could thus be a solution that would allow small societies to react constructively to a crisis, for example de-industrialisation or environmental degradation.

The local organic/biodynamic agriculture production that has been studied in the Järna region builds ecosystem and social resilience. A well diversified, environmentally friendly production free of pesticides and chemical fertilisers contributes to a resilient ecosystem. Many small and medium-sized producers are involved in the whole food chain – from cultivating crops to locally anchored supermarkets – in building social resilience.

Cooperation in networks and sustainable development

An increased share of locally produced organic food results in reduced environmental pressure, locally as well as globally (Granstedt et al., 2004). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the organic entrepreneurs studied contribute to a sustainable ecological development.

In Järna a large share of small scale environmental entrepreneurs cooperate in networks. This organisational model differs from those of traditional business in that it is less competitive. Many of the producers as well as consumers in Järna share common anthroposophic values. The producers are locally anchored, socially and economically, and a large part of the produce is sold locally. Loyal customers guarantee a stable demand of locally produced biodynamic products. The interviewed entrepreneurs in the network claimed to enjoy economic stability, which can be interpreted as a contribution to a sustainable economic development. However, the products produced are sold at a rather high price. A family purchasing the bulk of its food from local biodynamic/organic sources pays substantially more for their food basket than the Swedish average (Hannula and Thomsson, 2005). The Swedish ministry of agriculture suggests that for rural development in general and food production in particular to be characterized by economic and social sustainability that the agriculture "produces high quality food at reasonable price to the consumer" (Ministry of Agriculture, 2000, p. 108). This is of course subjective to ones values. In Järna higher prices for local organic food is accompanied with high demand. This also satisfies the Ministry's second criteria for economic sustainability – sustainable and reasonable income for producers within agriculture, horticulture and processing industry. Similar criteria are

suggested by Edman (2004). However, for a large-scale expansion of environmentally friendly food production, the price will probably be a restriction.

In their study of the Farmer's Market in Stockholm, Carlsson-Kanayama et al. (2004) concluded that probably the biggest gain from a sustainability perspective is that trust is built between producers and customers. The customers shop at the market primarily because the products are high in quality and, because they trust the producers. This is similar to the conclusions of the present study.

The studied network has been established at the initiative from the environmental entrepreneurs themselves. Within the network we observed trust and engaged and honest individuals. The network is also characterised by friendly relations, mutual respect and common values stemming from anthroposophy. The environmental entrepreneurs within the network have the power to make decisions affecting their own businesses and can influence decisions affecting their cooperation. This analysis also shows that the environmental entrepreneurs experience a high degree of work satisfaction. Based on this we argue that the network cooperation at Järna is characterised by positive social sustainable development.

The fact that the network cooperation at Järna contributes to a positive social sustainable development also implies that it contributes to social resilience, i.e. stable social and economic structures. This implies that the society can cope effectively with social and economic crises. If one crop fails or one or two companies go bankrupt, the local economy and the ecosystem can fill the gap. Since the entrepreneurs run their own businesses, they are less dependent on a single large company for their survival. The interviewed entrepreneurs said that there is a security in the cooperation - that they helped each other out when needed and if one entrepreneur ran out of business this would not threaten the network as such on account of its in-built stability.

Given that the organic entrepreneurs contribute to a sustainable ecological development, as other studies within the BERAS framework suggest (Granstedt et al., 2004), we arrive at the conclusion that the network cooperation at Järna contributes to at least two aspects of sustainable development. In terms of economic sustainability the results are ambiguous.

If we consider local organic production to be important in the struggle towards a sustainable food production, to reduce environmental pressure on the Baltic Sea and to achieve a sustainable rural development and other environmental and societal goals as

expressed by the Swedish government[6] efforts should be made to increase this share of the total production and consumption. Environmental entrepreneurs could make an impact. They can be supported both by a policy, supporting entrepreneurship in general and by measures aiming more specifically at them. Applied wisely these policies could facilitate attempts to establish green entrepreneurship regions. In these clusters environmental entrepreneurs could serve the function of a green "creative class" (Florida, 2002) catalyzing sustainable social and ecological development. It is however important to adapt measures to the conditions of specific areas where they are to be implemented. Järna and its surroundings are unique in their mixture of individuals sharing common values and the short distance to the large market of Stockholm consumers. A model that works in Järna might have to be modified in order to suit Finnish or Polish circumstances.

6 The Swedish parliament has decided on 15 environmental goals. These are: educed Climate Impact; Clean Air; Natural Acidification Only; A Non-Toxic Environment; A Protective Ozone Layer; A Safe Radiation Environment; Zero Eutrophication; Flourishing Lakes and Streams; Good-Quality Groundwater; A Balanced Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos; Thriving Wetlands; Sustainable Forests; A Varied Agricultural Landscape; A Magnificent Mountain Landscape; A Good Built Environment.
The government has listed goals on: Biological diversity; 20 % organically grown acreage; Ecologically, economically and socially sustainable food production; Ecologically, economically and socially sustainable rural development. The listed goals are found at www.regeringen.se, ministry of environment and ministry of agriculture.

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Appendix 1.

Table 1: Brief description of actors in the food production in the Järna region.

- Nine biodynamic farms and gardens operate directly in the Järna area and serve local customers with their products:
- Nibble Farm, owned by Nibble Foundation.
- Nibble Market Garden, registered as a limited company (AB).
- Skillebyholm Farm, owned by the foundation Skillebyholms Odlingar.
- Skilleby Garden, owned by the Agape Foundation.
- Skäve Farm, registered as an economic association.
- Skäve Garden, privately owned by an economic association.
- Ytter Eneby Farm, owned by the Ytter Eneby Foundation.
- Glasshuset at Skäve, owned by the Skäve Foundation.
- Håknäs Farm, a private farm owned by Åke Jonsson.

Several biodynamical processors are located at Järna. Those listed in Figure 1 are the following:

- Saltå Mill is a limited company (AB). As it is a major bakery and flourmill, it buys from all over Sweden and occasionally from abroad and sells throughout Sweden. Saltå Mill buys biodynamic grain in order to keep the brand image and Demeter certification, but organically grain is also used for KRAV certified bread.
- Järna Dairy is a local dairy managed by Thomas Stenius. Järna Diary buys all the milk produced by Nibble Farm and some from Ytter Eneby Farm.
- Järna Syrat is a small company owned and run by Achim Bäppler.
- Stigtomta Slaughterhouse is a small private company. Farmers from Järna send their cattle there.

Järna also has local retailers as well as wholesalers, stores and restaurants, which buy organic/biodynamic products and sell them to their customers:

- Järna Odlarring is a farmer cooperative. It represents the local biodynamic farmers and gardeners and owns two brands: Järna Grönt (vegetables) and Järna Kött (meat).
- Biodynamic Products is owned by a foundation, it is the only wholesaler at Järna and the biggest Demeter wholesaler in Sweden. It is a distributor of KRAV and certified biodynamic food products from all over the world. (Johan)
- Nibble Market Garden also runs a local shop where KRAV and Demeter products are sold, including their own production.

- Skillebyholm's Farmer Shop sells locally-produced biodynamic products. They also sell through the Farmer's Market in Stockholm.
- Saltå Mill Store and the Café sell local products including products from their own bakery.
- Café Linné cooks and serves biodynamic and organic food at a small restaurant.
- Vidarkliniken's Café serves patients of the clinic.
- The Skäve Farm Shop sells local products.
- Rudolf Steinerseminariet has a kitchen for students and teachers. It also sells food produced from local, organic and biodynamic products.
- Konsum buys local products from Järna Odlarring and from Biodynamic Products and sells them to its customers.
- The ICA store is owned by Thomas and Ann Lindberg. It buys local products from Järna Odlarring and Biodynamic Products and sells them to its customers.
- Hälsokost – REKO buys products locally and from Biodynamic Products.

Appendix 2: Interview guide

A. Demography

1. The gender? Age?
2. Origin? Raised in Järna?
3. Business? Profession?
4. Where is your business located? Where do you live? What is the history of the ownership of your business? How many employees do you have?
5. Is your business associated with Demeter or KRAV?

B. Stability within the network

6. Do you consider your business to be part of a network?
7. Are anthroposophical values important for you in your business? Do you think they are important for others within the network?
8. Whom do you consider as participants in the network?
9. What kind of relationships do you have with the people you cooperate with in the network? (family, friend, colleague)
10. For approximately how long have you been working in cooperation with other entrepreneurs in the network?
11. How often per month do you meet others in the network?
12. Do you think that you have enough time to meet the others who work within the network?
13. Do you think that the other entrepreneurs have enough time to meet you?
14. Where do you meet other entrepreneurs most of the time? (At home, workplace, stores, offices)
15. Do you often borrow things from the others within the network? Is your borrowing related to the business or done privately? Do you feel comfortable in asking?
16. Do others borrow often from you?
17. Do you feel that you agree with the others within the network? Why / why not?

C. Degree of participation in decisions about their business.

18. Do you actively participate in decision-making in the network in Järna? To what extent?
19. Are all entrepreneurs active in making decisions about cooperation in the network?

D. Degree of respect for individual differences

20. In your experience, can you and the others easily express your values, attitudes? Even if the values differ from the rest of the network's shared values? How often does this happen? Have you, ever expressed deviating values yourself?

21. Are there individuals in the network whose opinions always deviate from those of the majority? Do you believe that these individuals feel involved in the network?

E. Trust and confidence

22. Do you think that you can trust your partners in the network?
23. Do you have confidence in their knowledge?
24. Do you believe that the other entrepreneurs in the network are honest?

F. Reciprocity and to what degree the network takes responsibility for its members

25. Do you have someone in the network whom you can call upon when you need assistance?
26. Do you think that you assist the others in the network?
27. Do you think that they assist you?

G. Quality of life

28. Is the participation in the network mainly positive or negative for you? In what way?
29. If negative; what would you like to change in the way the network is organised?
30. Do you feel affinity with the others within the network?
31. Are you satisfied with your work?
32. If you would change something in your life, what would that be? (Work/home)
33. Do you feel satisfied with your economic situation?
34. Are economic considerations or social considerations more important for you, or perhaps some other aspect of life?
35. Do you believe that functional cooperation in the network benefits your economic situation?
36. What is most important for you - to produce environmentally friendly products or to increase your profit? Or do you believe that your profit relies upon organic production?

Appendix 3.
Table 2: Summary of interview results.

	Farmer/ gardener 1	Farmer/ gardener 2	Farmer/ gardener 3	Processor 1	Processor 2	Distributor 1	Distributor 2	Distributor 3
Background	From Norway. Active in Järna since 1993	From the Netherlands. Active in Järna since 2000	Raised in Järna. Works in a family enterprise	From Finland. Active in Järna since 1973	Lives in Stockholm. Active in Järna since 2002	Lives in Vagnhärad. Active in Järna since 1990	From Norway. Previously a farmer in Järna	From Germany and USA. Active in Järna since 1982
Are antroposophic values of importance	Yes.	Yes, through Demeter.	Yes	Yes, through Demeter.	Yes, more or less.	No.	Yes.	Yes, more or less.
Kind of relationship within the network	Friends and colleagues	Friends and colleagues	Mostly colleagues. Some friends	Colleagues	Colleagues	Colleagues	Friends and colleagues	Friends and colleagues
Frequency of contacts within the network	Now and then	Once a week	Not so often	During milk collection	Farmers once a year when delivering	Often, in the store	More often in winter than during the summer. During milk collection.	Often. In the store or casual visit
Trust in each other	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but wishes some were more professional	Not in terms of deliveries of products	Yes	Yes, but some delivery problems have occurred
Honesty	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helping each other within the network	Yes.	Yes.	Yes		Yes.	Yes.	Yes	Yes
Positive/negative towards cooperation within the network	Positive. Trusting and helping each other	Very positive	Positive. Other gardens keep the work load down for us	Positive with more control over the products	Positive, because we happen to be born from the same impulse	Positive. Enjoy very much to keep local products	Positive, everyone has better control over their products	Positive
Pleased with their work	Yes	Yes	Yes and no	Yes and no	Yes, very enjoyable	Yes, it is fun meeting people	Yes	Yes. Would sometimes prefer to cultivate
Limitations in their work	Deadlines from e.g. KRAV, Demeter and the EU		Work load concentrated to certain times of the year.	Limited by rules.	Only my own limitations	Demands from the parent company	Lack of capital for organic initiatives	Supply of biodynamic vegetables
Economic security	Yes	Yes and no	Yes	Yes	Yes and no	Yes	Yes and no. But insecurity creates development	Yes
High priority of economic or other factors	Social contacts are important	Economic	Biodynamic cultivation has priority over economic issues	Social and health aspects	Economic. Would like to increase earning capacity	Everything is equally important. The foundation in life needs to be solid	The economy is not as important as the animals and the soil. This is not an ordinary company.	Relations towards the farmers at Järna are important even though they don't affect the financial situation

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS VIEWED THROUGH ACTOR ARGUMENTATION

Abstract

The method of the study was qualitative attitude research, which is based on the generation and analysis of argumentation. The material was produced by presenting selected statements concerning different aspects of social sustainability to the interviewees, asking them to comment on the statements. Thus the material comprises of argumentation, where the actors' attitudes and experiences on the alternative food production were displayed. The interviewees represented different actor positions in the food chain.

According to the data, the attitudes towards alternative food systems were generally positive. The local and organic food production were seen more ecological, better for the economy of rural communities and more fair towards the farmer. They were also seen to produce safer food. However, the picture was rather multifaceted. The material also revealed threats to the social sustainability of the alternative food systems. It was considered unclear whether the alternative production is profitable enough, or whether the consumers are willing to pay extra for it. Alternative distribution chains were also regarded as laborious and difficult to manage. Also the point was raised that similar inequalities characteristic to conventional food system may also be present in the alternative food systems. However, the identified threats should be seen as challenges to be met in order to make the alternative food systems socially more sustainable.

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Introduction

The liberalisation of international trade and global competition have led to increasing vertical integration of the food chain. This trend, as well as environmental concerns, have raised critical voices towards the mainstream agrifood system. However, the dominant industrial and vertically aligned agrifood system has been blamed, for causing various kinds of damage to the environment, for its failure to provide wholesome and nutritious and safe food, inability to supply food for low-income people, as well as for various other social problems. (e.g.Vorley, 2003; Scialabba &

Hattam, 2002; Flora, 1995; Reganold et al., 2001; Allen, 1999) In consequence, alternatives to conventional food systems – such as organic production; local food initiatives, community supported agriculture or food circles – have become subjects of increasing interest. In some cases, such alternative food systems have been suggested as solutions to the shortcomings of the industrialised and increasingly global food systems.

In the Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society Project (BERAS) alternative food systems in the Baltic Sea region are put under an empirical study. The ultimate rationale for the project is pollution of the Baltic Sea, which, to a large extent, follows from intensive farming around the Baltic geographical area. In addition to ecological dimensions, the BERAS project also examines the economic and social aspects of alternative food systems.

What are alternative food systems?

The environmental awareness of the 1970s lies behind the interest in the alternative food systems. (Beuss & Dunlap, 1990, pp. 592). Alternative food systems, AFS, have their roots in organic farming. Historically organic farming has been characterised socioeconomically as being: local or community controlled, embedded economically into the local community/region (i.e. most products are grown and consumed locally), and structured to promote the interaction of producers and consumers (locally) in ways that familiarise each with the wants and needs of the other so that they promote cooperation, trust and social cohesion (e.g. cooperatives) (Saunders, 2004, pp. 5). In reference to the recent growth of organic production, its institutionalisation and industrialisation Saunders argues that organic farming in fact is being incorporated into the systems of finance, management and distribution of conventional agriculture (i.e. global distribution channels). In other words, convergence with conventional agriculture is resulting in a subsequent loss of 'localness', community values and control of organic farming. We understand in this study, that organic farming means, in its essence, a mode of production regulated by legislation and regulations at the EU level whereby separate regulations apply to plant production (EC Regulation 2091/91) and to organic animal husbandry (1804/99). Organic farming may, or may not, bear other features such as locality, but this is not by definition necessary.

Locally-produced food as a concept places emphasis on the spatial dimension of the whole chain related to food. The concept of food chain refers to a value-added, consumption continuum from primary production through processing to consumption (Seppänen, 2004, pp. 5-6). The food system refers to the entity of the food chain from the systemic perspective going beyond the

production-consumption chain by adding the use of inputs as well as the consequences for the natural environment as topics of interest. We understand in this study that local food involves, by definition, no restriction on the mode of production, such as the use of non-organic and external inputs. Hence, in essence, the local food system is an alternative to a globalised system with regard to the channel of distribution. By introducing a local and short connection between the production, distribution and consumption of food, a horizontal alternative is created as opposed to the conventional, vertically-structured food chain.

The above-established mode of production (organic/conventional) and the mode of distribution (local/vertical) may or may not overlap as depicted in Table 1. This study will illuminate how different actors perceive and value the two suggested alternatives: organic and local food, and their possible combinations.

Table 1. Mode of production and mode of distribution.

	MODE OF DISTRIBUTION Horizontal	Vertical
MODE OF PROCUTION Organic	Organic food, horizontal (local) distribution	Organic food, vertical distribution
Conventional	Conventional production, horizontal (local) distribution	Conventional production, vertical (global) distribution

Aims and approach

A study under work package four (WP-4) of the BERAS project aimed to clarify the social aspects of the two alternative food systems from the perspective of social sustainability. From the various conceptions of social sustainability in connection with agrifood systems as discussed for example by Saunders (2004), we chose to study social sustainability under two topics: equity (or fairness) between the actors and viability of the local communities. Equity was studied from the perspective of distribution of power and control, and the distribution of benefits. According to previous research, the conventional agrifood system has negative implications for both equity and viability. Our intention was to study how the organic and local food systems would compare to the conventional food system under these themes.

Since the social reality of any food system is something that is made up of actors involved in these systems, and the relations between the different actors and the wider social context, we thought it reasonable to approach AFS through the perspectives and perceptions of the involved actors. Hence, we interviewed actors involved in alternative food systems in the municipality of Juva in Finland. First, our questions concerned, the ways in which different actors viewed AFS in terms of social sustainability. Secondly, we were interested in the similarities and differences between perceptions of different actors of the food chain.

Our approach in studying the actor perspectives draws from rhetorical social psychology (Billig, 1996). According to Billig´s approach, social reality is essentially argumentative. Taking stands and argumentation on controversial issues are everyday activities in both social interaction and individual thinking. By studying argumentation it is possible to generate an understanding of how the social world, including different actor perspectives and relations, is being constructed.

Attitudes may be approached also through argumentation (Vesala & Rantanen, 1999). Attitude refers to the ways people value ideas or items. Viewing something positively or negatively is typically a matter which is prosessed and constructed in argumentation. Thus, our question was: how do the involved actors evaluate AFS in terms of social sustainability? What kinds of attitudes are being constructed when the actors argue on the issues related to the social sustainability of ASF?

We conducted 20 interviews which included farmers, public kitchen matrons, food traders, food processsors, local politicians and consumers as informants. In the interviews we asked the interviewees to give their view on selected aspects of social sustainability that were formulated in the form of predetermined arguments. In each interview eight statements were presented one by one to the interviewee who, after each statement, was asked to comment it. The role of the interviewer was to encourage the interviewee's own speech by asking for accounts, clarifications, examples and so on, but to refrain from expressing his/her own view on the statement.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim (i.e. word for word). The analysis involved two stages. At the first stage all the stands each interviewee took on the statements were identified and grouped into categories. The justifications supporting interviewees' stands were also identified and categorised. In this way it was possible to develop an overall picture of the comments on each statement. The unit of the analysis at this stage was a single comment, not an interviewee. In many cases one and the same interviewee presented several comments and took different stands on the same statement. At the second stage

the comments were analysed by interpreting the attitudes constructed in the argumentation: what is actually under evaluation in the comments? Quotations from interviews are used in the forthcoming analysis to illustrate typical or informative comments and attitudes of the respondents.

Findings

General attitudes toward the organic and local food

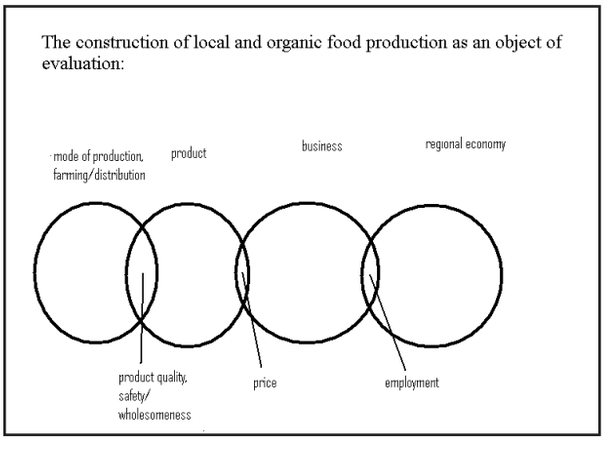
The first two statements that were presented to the interviewees, were:

1. In my opinion, organic food production is a good thing
2. In my opinion, local food production is a good thing.

These statements introduced the topic of discussion at a very general level, in other words, on a general positive-negative scale. The statements were formulated in the first person, calling for the personal involvement of the interviewees.

On the whole, the comments were positive. Most of the individual stands on the statements were in agreement with them. Every interviewee presented also at least one justification for their view. About one third of the interviewees brought up also arguments with disagreements or reservations, even though none of them ended up taking a clearly opposing stand on either statement. Reserved comments were in most cases expressed as potential counter arguments towards the positive stands, or they were introduced as perceived opinions of some other actors.

When looking into the justifications the interviewees presented for their stands, it appeared that AFS were constructed as at least four kinds of objects of evaluation. Some of the comments focused on the production method related aspects of the AFS; others focused on end products (foodstuff); some saw AFS as business strategies, and still some others looked upon AFS as a part of the local economy (Figure 1).



These objects of evaluation – in other words attitude objects – partly overlap in the data. In any case they show a considerable qualitative variation among the comments. This variation demonstrates that AFS can be approached from many perspectives. The statements as such did not suggest these perspectives, but the interviewees constructed them through their comments.

In the first case AFS were evaluated according to what kind of products they produce. In quote 1 the respondent talks about the quality of organic products and thus constructs the product as an object of evaluation.

Quote 1.

"e2: Yeah, I think in the organic food pesticides have not been used in the production, and that is why organic products are safer to use. And my own experience is that they remain fresh for a longer time and they are tastier. They are a bit more expensive though, but then again the quality is good." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, e2)

Another way to give meaning to alternative food was to examine it as a mode of production. In these evaluations, it was common to argue what kinds of impacts organic or local food were perceived to have on the environment. The most common (and also expected) argument of this type was to form a positive attitude toward organic food production on the grounds that it causes less damage to the environment. Farmer v7 pondered the question like this:

Quote 2:

"v7: In my opinion, organic production is a good thing. And of course, I subscribe to that statement, because I'm an organic producer myself. And the reason why I consider it a good thing is because it is an attempt towards more environmentally-friendly food production. Of course it isn't always a success, and there are studies that claim that organic production may be even more harmful for the environment, … but organic production is a good thing really, because its aspirations are to minimise the production inputs, as efficient nutrient production in the farm as possible, and, in general, efficient use of nutrients in the farming, and that is, of course, an advantage compared to conventional production. And another advantage, that may be even more important, is that no pesticides are used. Because of the diversity of nature, and water ecosystems, people's safety and farmer's occupational safety is a really big thing." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v7)

A third way to construct the attitude towards AFS was to discuss them as a business strategy. A common argument dealt with the toilsomeness or difficulties that accompany alternative food production. In quotation 3, the interviewee uses this approach to evaluate local food production:

Quote 3.

"v4: Well … Of course, the first thing to come into a producer's mind is the marketing question.
interviewer: Yes.
v4: For us it is a good thing that this theme comes up. If these issues appear in the headlines, it just opens up markets for us. In our farm, for example in vegetable production, we have tailored our selection in view of the local market. The same thing goes for small bakery etc." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v4)

The fourth way in which to construct alternative food systems as an object of evaluation was to emphasise their impacts on the local community. The most common argument of this type in the material evaluated their economic impacts. For example, in quote 4 the food processor j2 discusses the potential of local food production to improve the economy in the region:

Quote 4.

"j2: Well, if we think about the welfare of the regions, the regions are better the more there are healthy business activities. At least here in Juva we have a lot of food production, and we members of the community should use the services of these businesses, because that's the way we'll secure the jobs, which of course is a crucial thing for the viability of our municipality." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, j2)

The most common way to support organic food production was to claim that organic production is environment friendly, and it does not risk the health of people living and working on farms. Also local food was associated with the protection of environment in some comments for the reason that it involves less transportation and hence decreases pollution. Despite a couple of sceptical comments the positive impacts of the AFS on environment and health seemed to be taken for granted among the interviewees. Also ethical issues were brought up in some of the comments that focused on the production method.

The negative aspects of alternative food systems related to the workloads of producers and/or processors. In a couple of interviews organic production was viewed to be laborious and difficult to master, not least because of the many regulations concerning production and processing. In a few interviews the local

food system was seen to demand very much effort in marketing and delivery. Both arguments are relevant also for the business aspect, of course. Only farmers expressed such reservations.

There were several comments suggesting that organic products as foodstuff are healthy, clean and secure. In the case of local food, freshness was also mentioned. In a couple of critical comments a particular producer or a group of producers were said to be responsible for delivering occasionally low-quality products. However, the overall tone was very positive regarding the quality of products.

The question of price connects food to business. There were clearly divergent comments concerning this issue. Two of the interviewed farmers made a comment that organic food is a positive thing for producers and processors as it offers an opportunity to get a higher price for the products. On the other hand, a merchant, a consumer, and a processor claimed that the high price pursued by farmers decreases the sales of organic products making the overall business less profitable. These opposing views form the most prominent demonstration of the controversial nature of the issue within the data generated by the first two statements.

In the case of local food, on the contrary, farmers as well as consumers and merchants viewed the lower price of local food as a strength and an opportunity for business. The lower price was seen to follow from the shortened market chain and lowered transportation costs, and therefore it would not decrease the profit of farmers. The local food system was also praised for giving opportunities to farmers to establish new markets. However, counter arguments were presented as well. For example, according to one interviewed farmer, the markets for local food are very limited, and according to another, only small farms are really able to benefit from them.

Among the comments on the first statement, there were two referring to AFS as a part of the local economy. One was given by a local politician, according to whom the organic food system had had many important positive effects on the local economy of Juva, as well as on the community's public image, over a decade. The interviewee was referring to the organic production in general. One of the merchants also referred to the positive impact of organic food in the local economy, but he was speaking explicitly and exclusively about local organic food.

When commenting positively on local food instead (the second statement), three out of four interviewees referred to its positive impacts on the local economy. The difference is striking. Only one politician, who considered the municipality as a whole due to his position as a mayor, associated organic food production as such with positive implications for the local economy. While the rest of the interviewees did not make this connection

with regard to organic food, most of them did connect local food with the local economy. Employment opportunities as well as tax incomes for the municipality, along with some other benefits associated with money circulating within the local area, were mentioned as justifications in this context.

In all, the comments on the first two statements constructed an attitude in which AFS were viewed as beneficial for the environment and health as well as for the quality of food. AFS were also considered to be good for the local economy, but most of the actors constructed this attitude in relation to local food, not in relation to organic food as such.

Farmers and other actors constructed opposing attitudes towards the organic food system as a business. Especially the higher prices pursued by the farmers came up as a controversial issue. The local food system was viewed as a positive business strategy in a more consensual way than the organic food system, both by the farmers and other local actors. The key argument in this context was that negative effects and constraints associated with the vertical food chain could be overcome by the local food system. However, there were also perceived constraints to the local food system, such as increased workload, and the limited size of local markets.

Empowering the Farmer?

The topic presented in the next two statements was farmers' personal control, i.e., the chance for farmers to control and influence the success of their business. Instead of approaching equity as a general question covering all actor relations within the food chain, we decided to focus on the position of farmers. This has been the most widely-discussed issue regarding the social sustainability of AFS in terms of distribution of control.

The comparison between AFS and conventional food systems was made explicit in the statements. The statements were:

3. In organic food production, the farmer has more chances to influence his/her own performance than in conventional production.
4. In local food production, the farmer has more chances to influence on his/her own performance than in conventional production.

The interviewees took two different kinds of stands on the statement: They either subscribed to the statement or rejected it. A further distinction could be made among those who took a critical stand: some claimed that farmers' prospects are in fact worse in

AFS than in the conventional system, and some that there is no difference between the different food systems in this respect.

There were two types of justifications given for the stand that did not see a difference in farmers' personal control between alternative and conventional food systems. The first was to claim that the farmer is in both cases at the mercy of external factors like vertical chains, market forces, and authorities that regulate production. In these comments the farmer was viewed as an actor with altogether very little personal control over his/her performance. The second was to argue that the individual farmer remains always responsible for his/her own success, and the chances to influence depend on his/her capabilities and attitudes regardless of the nature of the food system.

Only farmers presented the former comments, emphasising the missing personal control and external constraints. It is also worth noting that these comments were all expressed as a response to the third statement concerning the organic food. When, in the fourth statement, attention was drawn to local food, such pessimistic comments no longer arose.

In several comments the farmers' chances were viewed to be even worse in AFS than in conventional production. Top-down regulations or vertical markets were seen as problems of the organic food production. Difficulties in local marketing or distribution were mentioned as problems of local production.

When discussing farmers chances to have an influence as an organic producer, in quote 5 a farmer used this argument in support of his reserved stand. In his comments he recognised the demands that the organic mode of production and its regulations mean for a cattle farm:

Quote 5.

"v5: Well, if we think in a realistic way regarding this question, in conventional production there are no such limitations for farms, there are no limitations on animals and so on. In other words, one can increase the number of animals, if one specialises, for example, in beef production. In conventional production there is no requirement regarding the self-sufficiency of fodder, and no other such limitation, as long as one can spread the manure somewhere. And in principle it is fair enough if the animals are taken care of well, it leaves no room for complaints." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v5)

It was also possible to see that some aspects of local production make the alternative food chain more difficult for a farmer to control. An example of this is evident in quote 6 by a farmer.

Quote 6.

"v2: -- But then again, in this area the markets for local products are so small that the ceiling comes quickly. One cannot sell large volumes, even if a farmer could get a better price for his products. In the local markets there are no possibilities for bigger profits. There are two sides to this. Through the wholesalers one can sell greater volumes, but the price is, of course, lower." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v2)

However, the most prevalent comments in the data were those in favour of the statements. Almost all the interviewees took a positive stand, even though some of them also made critical or sceptical comments. Product quality was often seen as a factor enhancing farmers' chances to influence his/her own performance in organic and in local production. The most common argument was that farmers have a more equal negotiation position with their customers in the local food system than in the conventional one. Instead of one buyer in a vertical chain, the farmer has several channels of distribution in the local market arena, which increases his/her freedom of choices.

In quote 7 a farmer uses this kind of an argument:

Quote 7.

" v2: Well it could be, that if locally-produced food is marketed in the neighbouring area, the price can usually be kept higher. -- Well, of course there are more chances to have an influence, if one supplies many buyers or shops. If there is one wholesaler who buys all the products, the wholesaler dictates pretty much what the price is, and when … one is supposed to sell the crop." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v2)

Curiously, in many of the comments supporting the third statement it was assumed that organic farming increases the farmers' personal control over performance, provided that organic products are marketed and distributed locally. This, again, demonstrates the crucial role that the mode of distribution has as a premise that shapes the construction of attitudes in the comments. Organic food is viewed positively in many respects, but the vertical distribution chain was thought to eliminate the positive effects the organic farming could otherwise have on the farmers' personal control. Acting locally was considered a solution to this problem.

For example, in quote 8 a consumer saw the horizontal food chain as a precondition for taking a positive stand. This stand was expressed in commenting on statement number three that dealt

with organic production, and explicit comments regarding the food chain were not asked in the statements:

Quote 8.

"a1: Well, if the production chain is such that the food goes, from the producer through a short chain to the buyer, the chances are of course, better. Conventional producers, those who produce for big corporations, have fewer possibilities to influence. But if we think of this kind of local food production and organic food, then it works, as long as the farmer knows what he/she is doing." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, a1)

A further observation pointing in the same direction concerns the role of the end product in the argumentation. When the end products were mentioned, they were usually presented to justify a positive stand on the statements. Organic products were considered more wholesome or safe, but so were local products, regardless of the production method. According to some interviewees, food is safe as long as it is produced in the local community.

The difference between the alternative and the conventional systems came up when modes of production and distribution were discussed. When the farmers' means of control were attributed to the food chain, local or horizontal markets were seen as a precondition for the farmers' increased possibilities to gain control over the system. This was taken up by the interviewees when they discussed both statements. The discussion on the statement that concerned local production revealed weak spots that cause difficulties also for local food. The limits of the local markets and laboriousness were arguments that were used to justify sceptical stands regarding the farmers' chances of control. These seem to be the downsides of local food that are often referred to throughout the data.

An interesting observation is that the farmers seem to be quite critical about the alleged chances to influence in the AFS. Other actor groups also doubt the outcome, but the farmers were among the most critical. The farmers also justified their positions with credible arguments that contained detailed descriptions of the regulations of organic production in connection to statement 3, and the difficulties of local marketing in statement 4. It seemed that the farmers have the most disillusioned view of the impact of the AFS on the farmers' power position.

Equity considerations on the distribution of benefits of AFS

With statements 5 and 6, we focused on the distribution of benefits in the organic and local food chains as compared to the conventional food chain. Earlier research literature (Vorley, 2002) has reported problems particularly in farmers' positions in

the conventional, vertically structured food chain. Our research question in this connection was to study whether the distribution of benefits is perceived as more equitable in the AFS than in the conventional food system according to different actors in Juva.

The statements we asked the interviewees to comment on were:

5. In organic production, the distribution of profits is no more equitable than in conventional production.
6. In local food production, the distribution of profits is no more equitable than in conventional production.

The respondents' views on the two statements can be divided into three categories according to what kind of a comparative evaluation they show. First, there were views that valued alternative food systems as more equitable than the conventional production and food system; second, there were stands that valued them as less than the conventional system, and third, there were views that saw no difference between the food systems.

Only a few actors considered alternative food systems more equitable when organic production was concerned, while the majority presented this view when the discussion turned to local production.

It appeared rare to consider the organic food chain as more fair than the conventional one. Just one farmer was of that opinion on the grounds that farmers get higher prices for organic products than for conventional ones. In all other comments respondents made either an implicit or explicit assumption that organic production also implies local processing and/or sales, in other words, the horizontal food chain, which makes it, at least potentially, more fair towards the farmer. This kind of a spontaneous assumption regarding local processing can be seen clearly in a consumer's quote 9:

Quote 9.

"a1: That must be related to processing, I guess. The question is who is the one that processes. Small producers, for example typically a honey producer or an organic grain producer has a lot of processing involved at the producer level. [Yes] So in that way the profit goes more to the production level [Yes] up to the primary producer. [Just so] But if it is of large scale, like Felix organic ketchup, I do not believe that in that case the distribution would be any more equitable. So it is only a matter of the scale of activities." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, a1)

It is remarkable that the producer's own processing and/or marketing of his/her production is the argument that is used to justify

the perceived greater equity of the organic food system. In other words, the interviewee attributed the more equitable distribution of benefits to the horizontal food chain. By refereeing to organic ketchup at the end of the comment, the respondent made it clear that he would not consider the regular large scale organic food chain as such any more equitable than the conventional one.

When the discussion turned to local food production, the distribution of profits was considered frequently to be more equitable than in the conventional food chain. The majority of those interviewed (14/20) were of the view that local food production is in fact more just than conventional food production.

The view that local food is more equitable was justified with various different arguments. The locally-sold product's higher end price or the farmer's larger share of the profit of the product were the most common reasons to evaluate the local food chain as more just than the conventional food chain. The farmers' greater share of the profit was seen to follow from fewer transportation costs as in quote 10 or from the shorter chain (understood as lack of intermediaries, i.e., wholesale traders' coverage), as in quote 11.

Quote 10.

"v1: What suddenly occurs to me is that perhaps the local food is a bit more equitable then. At least with local food there are fewer of certain expenses, or some are transferred to the producer, for example the freight. At least in my case, it went so that I delivered the products by myself so there were no external costs related to freight. In this regard the producer can get a bit more… "(BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v1)

Quote 11.

"v3: Here the chain usually gets shorter, in other words, as the organic food can also be local food [Yes], so, in this case the chain is getting shorter in which case the farmer perhaps gets a better price for it " (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v3)

In addition, in some other justifications attention was paid to better product quality that allows higher pricing, and to consumers' willingness to pay more for products whose origin is known (quote 12).

Quote 12.

"a1: - - And on the other hand, people are ready to pay more for local food. It is the same as in the organic food, that people who know that it is either organic or local food, they do not care if the cost is even 50 % higher. The difference in price means nothing, especially if we talk about products that one buys once a month, or once a week - -" (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, a1)

Quote 13.

p2: -- As a consumer I would not mind if a local product would cost three times the production costs. So if, for example, if there were two cauliflowers in the shop, and on one it reads "From the Sappio farm, Juva", I would buy that one even if it was more expensive. Not the one without the label…" (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, p2)

While most arguments dealt with the distribution of benefits (profits) of the local food, some actually referred to the distribution of negotiation power or the means of control as a source of perceived greater equity. In the latter case justifications were related to the possibility of negotiating with the traders face-to-face, or to the possibility of having an influence on how the products are marketed (quote 14).

Quote 14.

"v4: Well, in this case, I'd say that here is something that one can affect; there is a social side to it, even though I know that merchants have their own stress and they have to make a profit. But despite that, since we mix in the same circles and pay taxes to the same municipality, when we sit down and discuss (local food) the merchants also seem to accept that the interest of both parties must be considered. This means also the producer's interest. Therefore, I would in fact disagree with this statement." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v4)

The farmer's share of the profit, and its perceived fairness, was the predominant ground for valuing food systems. This interpretation of fairness applies even to many actors that are not farmers themselves. A way to sympathise with the position of the farmer is reflected in quote 15.

Quote 15.

"e3: Well, isn't it more fair anyway [yes] that there are fewer intermediaries in play, so that the money goes to whom it belongs in the end" (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, e3)

In other words, the above cited interviewee who represents an institutional kitchen, both a potential, and also an actual buyer of local food, constructed equity exactly in the same way as many of the farmers. The explicit view of the interviewee is that a larger share of the profit "belongs to the farmer". All in all, in the data several actors other than farmers seemed to assume that the position of the farmer is unfair in the conventional food chain. Likewise there was a common view that a local food system would improve the position of the farmer. Only a couple of

respondents considered the alternative food systems less equitable when local food production was considered, while some one third of the interviewed reflected this view when organic food was concerned.

The retail trade's high share of the price was the most widely stressed justification for the view that alternative food systems are less equitable than the conventional one. As in quote 16 it was often felt that the retail traders take an unfairly large share of the price of organic and local products and by doing so limit consumption with their high prices.

Quote 16.

"v6: Yeah, it isn't. In fact, it feels quite crazy, that traders take a higher margin for organic products, or they take more margin because it is organic. For example, when we sold meat, minced meat, the price that the shop paid us, was only one third of what the meat cost to the consumer. I really don't know the pricing basis, or how they count it. Maybe this kind of special product has a greater risk to remain unsold. But at least it won't increase the consumption of organic products, or any other products, if the margin is really high." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v6)

This type of an argument was frequently used by farmers who in most cases were able to draw on their personal experience in the organic food trade. A tension over margins between organic farmers and retail traders can easily be identified in the data and the level of retail margin is the most common ground for perceived injustice by the farmers. The notion of unfair treatment of farmers by traders is also known to third parties, such as consumers, although they do not necessarily always subscribe to it. It is notable that none of the actors who considered organic food production less equitable saw that they possessed any means of influencing the distribution of benefits in the food chain.

In another type of argument to support the claimed unfairness of organic food production reference was made to the regulations regarding organic production. For example, the control regulations applicable to organic food processing make it, in the opinion of the quoted food processor (quote 17), an unprofitable activity in which the real costs are not compensated by the somewhat higher grinding fees for the organic grain. From the point of view of the food processor this was considered an inequitable state of affairs:

Quote 17.

"j2: Well, it is also quite difficult to say. Let us think that I speak about our own activity. If we grind organic grain its' grinding is a bit more expensive than the regular, but it involves much more work for us, so I say that we wont get any more money. It may be

even less in the end, considering the excess work, as the difference (in grinding fees) is not very high. In our case we don't get any more; it is rather the other way round. I mean rather less, because there are the control fees and all you have to pay for the organics, so our net profit is less." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, j2)

About half of the interviewed actors concluded, sometimes implicitly, that there is effectively no difference in the food systems in terms of equity when organic production was discussed, and about one third when local production was discussed. There were actors in all the positions of the food chain who took this seemingly "indifferent" stand.

Stands that made no connection between organic production and equity were commonly justified with "the logic of the market system" that would treat all products in the same way. The market system was assumed to operate in the same way in any circumstances, and a free market must be procedurally equitable by definition. Quote 18 shows is an example of a typical comment in this category:

Quote: 18.

v2: " I do not think that there is any difference. The same market laws apply. That is, the buyers are the buyers whether they buy organic or conventional, or any. They purchase on the price that they can then add their own profit, and get things sold. So, there is no difference in the distribution of profits between the organic products, and the conventional – "(BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v2)

Besides referring to market logic, the argumentation behind a neutral stand on equity revealed counter arguments for those that criticised the "unfair margins of the retail trade level". Such arguments display understanding or justify the legitimacy of the higher than usual margins for organic products, as in quote 19:

Quote 19.

"v1: Well, it has been said that the retail trade takes too large a share from the price of organic products. [Mmm] I don't know whether it is so. It is true that the trader also has expenses: small quantities stay there on the shop counters. There is a lot of loss, the external quality is sometimes uneven as some deliver stuff that is below the market classification boundaries…-" (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v1)

The above actor, an organic farmer himself, identifies some reasons behind the behaviour of the retail trade, and shows a willingness to consider the position of the trader when conclud-

ing on the equity. He demonstrates a certain trust towards the retail trade, even though there is always a possibility for conflict of interest.

The interviewees representing the retail trade themselves came up with arguments to explain the behaviour of the trade as just or equally fair as in any trade, be it organic or conventional, as in quote 20:

Quote 20.

"k2: I do not think that it (organic food) is by any means being discriminated against. One should use the same marketing measures as for other products; it would not be rational to put extra price on it compared to some other product. If one wants to sell it the price has to be reasonable. At least I have come to this conclusion- -" (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, k2)

In quote 21, another trader is a bit more vocal in arguing that it is unfair to point the finger at the trader when it comes to high prices or the distribution of profits in organic trade when one could rather find the reason for high prices of organic goods in the producers themselves:

Quote 21.

"k1: I don't know exactly. Many questions come to mind. It is depending on the perspective from which one looks into it. Namely, according to my thirty years of experience in the retail trade, I can say that organic products are the least profitable business to the trade. And usually shopkeepers have kept organic products in their selection because of the image consumers associate with them. They have been available because of those values. And I feel, that at the production end of the chain, farmers have given them too much weight so that once they convert to organic, they can get a much higher price. In my opinion this is where something has gone wrong. The ideal situation would be if the price were the same for both organic and conventional products. There must not be a significant difference in price if one wants to increase volumes. It is not useful to explain the process by the costs of organic production, or smaller yields or other this kind of argument. The consumer just won't pay too much for organic products." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, k1)

In taking a seemingly neutral stand on the question of equity in the beginning, the trader gradually arrives at the conclusion that organic trade is not a lucrative business to the retail trade at all. It is in fact the farmers' expectations to earn more from organic products that turns unprofitable towards the farmers themselves

as the consumers are not seen as ready to pay for them and thus sales volume remains low.

When the discussion turned to local food, the "neutral" or reserved stands on equity were justified, besides the above discussed market logic argument, also with reference to extra work and other costs posed by local food processing and/or marketing. The price of local products is higher to compensate for the extra costs. This made some actors conclude that the distribution of profits in local food is no more equitable than it is in the conventional system, as discussed by a farmer-processor in quote 22:

Quote 22.

"j1: I would have the same opinion as before: local food does not come free, even if it is not, for example in our case, transported to the slaughter house. Yes, those expenses are out, but then we are running small volumes, and also relatively manually, as we cannot really afford any machinery investments so that we could automatise some stages of the work. And, I am not sure whether we even want to produce local food with a maximum efficiency, with huge machinery. [Mmm] - - So, the expenses will remain, meaning that if we get a better price for the pork when we produce it like this, even so when we do the final accounting we get the same amount as any pork producer. It won't change into anything more profitable." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, j1)

All in all, the most common interpretation of fairness in the distribution of benefits was to consider the farmer's share of the price even if this was not suggested in the given statements as such. Most of the arguments deal with the farmer's share, which shows that especially the farmer's position is widely seen as problematic as regards the distribution of benefits in the food system.

The fairness of the distribution of benefits in alternative food systems is a controversial question in the material. Whereas there appears a prevalent attitude that the local food system would seem more equitable than the conventional one, this does not go for organic food production as such. The organic food chain is considered more equitable, apart from one exception, on the condition that it is also localised. This reveals a significant aspect on the perception of equity in the food systems: the mode of distribution seems to be more relevant in this respect than the mode of production.

The price of the products at the retail stores, or the trader's share of the price, were the most common arguments according to which the equity of organic production was criticised. In this respect the local chain was often seen as better. However, the notion of unfairness or potential conflict of interests between

the farmers/processors and the traders was presented also in connection to local food.

The question of distribution of benefits and the distribution of the means of control showed to become deeply intertwined. Besides distribution of profits, many actors discuss their chances of having a say in decisions-making processes. In other words, the perception of fairness may follow as much from procedural involvement as from the desired distributional result. However, mere direct contacts between the producer and the retail trade levels did not result in a feeling of justice. It requires that both parties' interests be represented and taken into account. In this respect, it is noteworthty that the only farmer who was satisfied with the conventionally-organised organic food chain brought out elsewhere in the interview that there were ways for him to to influence the pricing of his products.

Alternative food systems and the viability of local communities

With statements seven and eight we aimed to study how alternative food systems relate to the viability of local communities as viewed by the interviewed actors. The conventional and vertically organised food system has been seen to fail the communities that support it (Vorley, 2003; Ikerd, 2002; Flora, 1995). In conventional systems of food production the role of rural communities is often only the production of raw materials for the food processing industry. When large-scale, mechanised industrial farming requires ever less local labour, and the food-processing plants are situated outside the communities, this leads the local communities to become impoverished. Challenging this global trend, horizontal food systems have been seen to return the money or the sources of improved livelihood to the local communities. Our aim was to study whether the alternative systems are seen to impact Juva in the same way.

The statements the respondents were asked to comment on were:

7. Organic production enhances the viability of local communities.
8. Local production enhances the viability of local communities.

Both of the statements provoked two kinds of stands: those that agreed with them, and those that questioned their validity. The comments that supported the statements were clearly a majority in both of the statements, while only about half of them presented any reservations. None of the interviewees ended up clearly

opposing the statements; however the reservations are worth considering seriously.

Looking at the justifications for the positive stands on alternative food systems we can distinguish two broad types of concerns: economy and community. These are the prevailing ways to approach viability. It is important to notice, that no definition of viability was given in the statements as such, i.e. the actors constructed these meanings spontaneously. This kind of construction of AFS as an attitude object could also be seen in the first two statements, which indicates that the question of viability of local communities is especially relevant in the case of Juva.

The impact on the local economy was the most obvious reason for which the local and organic food productions were seen to have positive consequences for the viability of local communities. In the comments concerning the economic state of the local community, the respondents' reasoning related the economic performance of the farms or companies producing, processing or selling local and organic food. Another important concern was employment. Organic farms were often seen as better for local employment since they require more labour than the ordinary farms. As a response to the statement dealing with local food production (and once in a statement related to organic food) defending local use and circulation of money was an important ground for a supportive stand. This kind of argument was used, for instance, in v7's comments (quote 23):

Quote 23.

"v7: - - And of course, it (the local production) can enhance (the viability of local communities) so that money doesn't flow outside the community. It doesn't go to the wholesale firms in the south or in the investors' pockets or to the transport firms, but it continues to circulate in the village. Thus, it can well enhance." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v7)

Here the interviewed actor saw that local production enhances viability if it helps to keep the money spent in the local area within the local community. This notion suggests that the point of local production is the enhancement of the local economy. This sort of defence of the local community in terms of economy is one of the most repeated attitude objects according to which alternative food production is evaluated, (even in other parts of the interview). This emphasis resembles so-called 'defensive localism' discussed in the research literature (e.g. Hinrichs, 2003; Winter, 2003). On the other hand, it may indicate that the lack of sources of livelihood and related impoverishment of the community is considered an acute problem in Juva, and the (re)localisation of the food system is expected to alleviate the problem.

The second major topic of argumentation was social interaction, cooperation or networks within the community. About half of the interviewed actors saw this as a positive consequence of alternative food systems in both of the statements. In other words, both organic mode of production and local distribution can be seen to increase social interaction or cooperation among the actors. In the organic mode of production the exchange of experiences and information among farmers was seen to be more common than in conventional production. On the other hand, local marketing or distribution of food was seen to increase the interaction between farmers and consumers i.e. the members of the local community. Both alternatives can be seen to build up social networks in the communities and thus help create social capital.

In a farmer interview (quote 24) increased cooperation was used to justify a positive opinion:

Quote 24.

"v2: Well, of course it has been enhanced. We have here in the village area six or seven farms, of which at least five are organic. It has enhanced the community spirit in our village because we have field exchange and a contract for manure delivery with one farm. I don't know whether there would be this kind of co-operation if we did not have organic production, the joint use of machinery and all that.

- -

v2: Well, here in the village we mix more often with these neighbours, particularly with those who have a hand in organic farming; we do communal activities, also activities that have nothing to do with farming." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v2)

Above the interviewee associates improved cooperation between farmers and organic mode of production with each other – co-operation seems to be the consequence of organic production. In v2's point of view the cooperation within the community goes beyond farming. Thus, organic farming seems to greatly enhance viability.

In addition to these two types of arguments, the image of Juva municipality as a community famous for its organic production, as well as the role of some organisations related to organic production were also emphasised. The local resource of argumentation is visible in these comments.

Reservations were also presented with regard to this type of argument. In these comments the actors discussed some conditions under which these positive impacts may not apply. In some cases the productivity of local or organic farms or companies was

questioned, with consequences to economic viability of local communities. Other similar arguments used to justify sceptical stands questioned the consumers' willingness to pay extra for alternative products. The third kind of reservation dealt with different lines of production in agriculture, whereby some lines were not seen as beneficial as the other.

In the following a farmer's typical reservations were expressed about the potential employment impact of organic farming (quote 25):

Quote 25.

"v7: But I don't see that in organic production as such. If, for example, there is no demand for organic products, or if only some organic grain is produced, or on an organic dairy farm, it doesn't employ any more people than a conventional dairy farm. I don't see the difference in the viability of local communities. … How would it enhance any more than if there was a vital conventional farm in its place". (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v7)

In quote 11 the interviewed farmer made a distinction concerning different lines of production. Even though he sees that organic production may generally enhance the viability of a community, this does not apply to milk or grain production.

Also arguments concerning social interaction received counter-arguments in the data. These, too, were explanations of conditions under which social interaction or network forming may not follow from alternative food production. For example, a small scale was presented as a necessary precondition for increased social interaction, or organic producers' willingness to participate in cooperative activities would be challenged.

An interesting (but human) reservation to the interaction-argument was presented by one of the interviewed food processors. In her comments on the statement dealing with local production the processor questioned its impact on social cohesion. The community might not always be supportive of the work of the entrepreneur, but rather envy him or her (quote 26). These comments are interesting also because the interviewee draws on her personal experience, a resource of argumentation.

Quote 26.

"j3: But we should be able to cooperate more, and to appreciate our own work more. In my opinion many lack the ability to appreciate their own work, to be proud of our own products, and if they are really good, be happy about it. There is a problem that one can't be very happy about one's success, because then envy starts to appear.

interviewer: Is it a real problem then?

j3: Well, yes it is. At least we have experienced that, especially if you have been publicised in the newspapers, some neighbours don't seem to know you anymore. I'd say that one should be happy about one's success, but it must happen somewhere else than here." (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, j3)

According to j3, success can provoke envious feelings in the neighbourhood. The same kind of argument was used in the only comment in which alternative food production was seen to have potentially negative impacts on the viability of communities. A farmer argued that the controversial nature of organic production may in fact rather divide the community into those for and against it, rather than unite it as one with trust and social capital (quote 27).

Quote 27.

"v1: - - On the other hand it (organic production) can a bit diminish it (the viability), because some people on the conventional side are so totally against the organic production. And they may not even be (conventional) farmers. At least here in Juva, some are against organic production, so it can even diminish it so that the people as split [int: into two groups] into the organic people and the ordinary people. " (BERAS WP-4 interviews 2004, v1)

Despite the above criticism, on the whole the attitudes towards AFS' possibilities to enhance viability of local communities were very positive. Even the farmer (v1) who presented the above comment did not take a clearly negative stand, but pondered the different aspects. All other reserved comments were reservations about some assumed positive impacts.

Local and organic production were seen to improve the employment and economic situation on the local scale thus enhancing viability. In addition to this, AFS were seen to increase local interaction in various ways, thus enhancing the accumulation of social capital. The consequences of local food seem to be clearly better than those of conventional.

On the other hand, there were also perceived threats to the positive consequences. Alternative food production was considered to be an ambiguous business strategy – the local markets in the Juva region were regarded as small or the consumers were indifferent about the viability by means of personal consumption choices. The enhancement of local interaction might be slowed down by opposition or envious feelings among the community members. Sometimes interaction was seen to increase only within a small scale activity, which is a constraint to the growth of business. Even though AFS on the whole could be considered more sustainable than conventional production, the risks or threats are

worth considering. They indicate learning challenges that have yet to be met in order to make AFS socially more sustainable.

Conclusions

All in all, both the alternative mode of production (organic food) and alternative chain of distribution (local food) have better prospects regarding social sustainability than the conventional food systems, according to the food system actors in Juva. If we look at all the data, most of the discussion on AFS was positive with regard to the dimensions of social sustainability chosen for the case study. The AFS are associated with environmentally-friendly production, improved safety of farmers' living and working conditions, more wholesome or safer food, more successful business strategies or improved welfare of the local communities in terms of economic or social viability. In other words, these perceived consequences of alternative production and/or distribution are grounds for the positive attitudes towards alternative food systems.

The principally positive argumentation is not surprising – all of the interviewed actors in this study are in one way or the other involved in organic or local food systems. To get a fuller picture of the potential contrast between attitudes it would have been interesting if actors representing only the conventional food systems were interviewed. However, since the aim was to increase understanding on the AFS the data and approach chosen in this study are relevant, the interviewed actors have experience in these systems. Also the argumentation tells about the relevance of the data: the interviewees draw often from their own experiences which is a credible rhetorical resource, and they also comment on the subjects at different levels and as different objects of evaluation. The material reveals not only a repetition of similar isolated arguments, but also some consistent patterns of argumentation. All things considered, the material can be argued to give a credible picture of the socially sustainable view of organic and local food production.

Despite the overall positive attitudes towards alternative food systems, also some criticism and reservations were presented throughout the data. When assessed critically the AFS were characteristically viewed as business strategies, not as end products. Organic production was blamed for its strict regulations, while the viability of local food production as a business strategy was questioned for its labour intensiveness as a result of farmers' wider roles in marketing and/or processing. In addition, the limited size of markets for local food was identified as a constraint. A point was also made that alternative food production can turn into a socially dividing factor in the community, as enviousness can emerge towards those active in the local production, processing

and marketing, and from the general phenomenon that organic production in particular divides the people into those for and against it.

Notwithstanding the promising implications of the AFS in terms of social sustainability, the AFS is not a panacea to improved social sustainability. The identified limitations of the AFS are particularly valid views from inside as they come from actors who draw from their personal experience and have a generally positive attitude towards AFS. The perceived limitations and bottlenecks translate into challenges to be duly managed if promoting AFS as strategies for environmentally and socially sustainable development. Similar conclusions were drawn by Kakriainen (2004, pp. 39) in a report related to the practical initiatives for the alternative food systems of the BERAS project.

Some interesting observations can also be made regarding the differences in perceptions concerning organic and local food production. The evaluation of local food production was always a bit more positive than the evaluation of organic food production. At several points local distribution was also set as a precondition for taking a positive stand on organic food production. This was the case, for example, in the merchant's comments on statement 1 where he associates the local and organic food as one object of a positive evaluation. Another example of this was in the discussion regarding statement three where several actors thought that a short (horizontal) distribution chain would increase the organic farmers' possibilities to influence their own performance. Further, this pattern appears consistently in connection to statement number six where the most common way to construct a positive attitude towards organic production, to consider it more fair than conventional production, was to assume that its mode of distribution is horizontal. In other words, attention was paid to the mode of distribution instead of the primary production. We also noted that conflicts among the different actor groups seem to be a bit rarer within the local than in the organic food chain.

The difference between local and organic production demonstrates the significance of the mode of distribution. Many of the critical assessments of organic production concern actually the distribution channel that does not have much to do with the actual production. If the perceptions of restrictive regulations of organic production are set aside, the main argument used in support of reserved or negative stands related to the vertical food chain. The farmer's position in the vertical food system was considered especially difficult. This pattern is most clearly visible in the question related to the distribution of benefits where only one actor attributed a positive assessment of the distribution of benefits to the vertical food chain. The most common suggestion towards a more equitable situation was localisation. The difficult

and inequitable position of the farmer in the vertical food chain appears to be a common notion among the actors and this to a large extent explains why local food in turn provokes such positive views.

Another difference concerns the notions of the viability of local communities. The most common argument according to which the local food was evaluated positively was to assume that it protects the rural community from flaws caused by the centralising food system. The local food chain was expected to offer more jobs and welfare to the rural communities which, in the conventional food system, would provide just raw materials for a processing industry outside the community. In comparison, the organic mode of production as such was rarely seen to improve the economic conditions of the community. However, when the economic impacts were discussed in connection to organic food, these were attributed to Juva's positive image as a pioneering municipality in organic production.

An important reason to support local food production was to assume that it protects money from flowing outside the community. The point here was to defend the viability of the local community. This idea resembles the notion of *defensive localism* by Hinrichs (2003) in her study on local food initiatives in Iowa.. When the promotion of locally-produced food turns into defensive localism it seems to function as an exclusive mechanism that is used to mark social divisions and to produce antagonism and opposition towards "outsiders" and their demands, as well as create cohesion and solidarity within the in-group (Hinrichs, 2003, pp. 6–7). Protecting the local community or defensive localism as a point of local food system is also noticed elsewhere. Winter (2003) in his study on rural localities in England and Wales has made observations similar to those that appear in the Juva material. In a way, defensive localism is present also in the case of Juva, there seems to be strong solidarity among the members of the community and the vertical chain outside the community is seen as a threat, at least in economic terms. But when we look at the situation of the vertical chain, the rural community may in fact be an underdog that actually needs protection from the vertical integration and centralisation of the food system. Looked in this way, what may seem as "local patriotism" in one context may, in another context, appear as empowerment of the abused. Also Marsden & Smith (2004, pp. 6) have made similar observations about the local scale action improving the condition of impoverished rural communities.

While the actors' defensive solidarity in Juva should not be interpreted as narrow-minded defensive localism in the sense of Hinrichs, it is yet noteworthy that the alternative food systems were occasionally seen as sources of social divisions also in our

data. According to two respondents, involvement in the alternative food systems could provoke envy in the neighbourhood and division into opposing groups, either for or against the AFS. This should be counted as a risk which in the worst case may lead into actual, narrow-minded defensive localism.

Finally, one can summarise the differences between the actor positions in the study. All of the actors in the study were interviewed as representatives of certain positions, i.e., either as farmers, processors, merchants, public kitchen matrons, local politicians or consumers. The differences in attitude construction are relatively modest between the different actor groups. On the contrary, the interviewees seem to be quite a homogenous sample. The coherence of the argumentation may also indicate small spatial and social distances between the different levels of the food chain in Juva. Also the solidarity between the actor-groups (for example the matrons' and the customers' willingness to support the local farmers) suggests this. Nevertheless, there are still some differences between the actor groups. First of all, the farmers seemed to be the most pessimistic group regarding their own power position in the food systems. At some points, as when discussing the farmers' chances to influence their own performance in organic production, this pessimism suggested that farmers have faced real problems, particularly as the general attitude towards alternative production was positive among the farmers. The view that the farmers in general have few chances to influence their own performance – regardless of the type of food system – was conveyed solely by farmers. This was the only clearly positionally-determined stand. The second positional feature in the argumentation was that the matrons were more concerned about the quality of the products, which is by no means a surprise, although respondents of other positions also used product arguments.

Another interesting finding related to the actor position was a conflict of interest between the farmers or processors on one hand, and the merchants on the other. The higher price of organic products was considered a positive factor among the farmers, but among the merchants the extra price of organic food was considered an obstacle to expanding organic business – what was considered an opportunity by the farmer, a bottleneck by the merchant. The same conflict of interest was present in the question of equitable distribution of benefits. Many of the farmers or processors accused the merchants of reaping unfair benefits at the cost of the organic farmers, while the merchants defended themselves from such accusations, even though the respondents were not aware of each other's comments. This indicates that these contrasting positions on the question of equity are part of a commonly-shared discourse among the food chain actors in

the Juva community. In this sense AFS can also be seen to cause some social division within the local community.

The mode of distribution seems to explain many of the conflicts of interest. The conflict was brought out more often when discussing organic production which is usually distributed in the vertical food chain. Also, the feeling of injustice was more often expressed in the context of the conventional rather than the local chain. In other words, when the local food chain was discussed the conflicts and feelings related to unfairness did not come up so often, even though they were occasionally present also in the context of local food production. The actors' chances to have an influence on the food system seem to be a key to understanding the conflict between actor groups. If the actor felt that there were some chances to influence the distribution process, the actual distribution was never considered unfair. The same would apply the other way round, if the respondents felt that the distribution of benefits was unfair, he/she saw no chances to influence the processes such as how and at what price his/her products were being sold to the final customer. The intertwined nature of the distribution of benefits and the distribution of the means of control showed in the discussions concerning horizontal and vertical chains. Most of the mechanisms that the actors felt can be used to improve the means of influence, and thus the feeling of justice, can be attributed to the short (horizontal) distribution chain. For example, the farmer's multiple marketing channels or possibility to negotiate with the buyer face-to-face were seen as such empowering processes. In both cases an actor has a say about what happens to the product after it leaves the field or the processing plant. Although personal contacts between the producer, the trader and the consumer were not always seen as equitable, both of the mentioned require a horizontal chain of distribution. This suggests that despite the counter arguments at the local level, there are better possibilities to resolve conflicts in a fair and sustainable manner in the horizontal system, provided that all parties' interests are taken into account.

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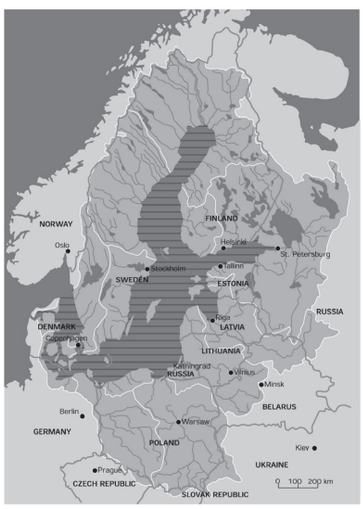

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