Values-based territorial food networks

Qualifying sustainable and ethical transitions of alternative food networks

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Abstract: This comparative literature review of local food systems, short food supply chains, and civic food networks, subsumed under alternative food networks (AFN), suggests converging them into the novel umbrella-term values-based territorial food networks (VTFN). Based on the analysis of specificities and shortcomings in the four concepts, VTFN aims to enhance conceptual clarity, while the current coexistence conceals structural and systemic commonalities—relevant for understanding pathways to ethical and sustainable food system transformations. Taking stock of issues in the four concepts, VTFN strives to be overarching and pragmatic. It qualifies AFN's "alternativeness" through social, economic, environmental and governance "sustainability values" and through the co-construction of "territoriality" in varying constellations. Thus, it fosters integrated scientific dialogue about conceptual determinations of emerging networks of food system transitions worldwide.

Keywords: civic food networks, comparative literature review, local food systems, short food supply chains, sustainable transitions

Localized, smaller scale, food-growing and livestock-rearing initiatives with shorter processing and commercialization structures have gained ground worldwide. They represent various types of alternatives to the current mainstream industrialized corporate food regime, which has widespread, globally unjust and highly detrimental implications in social, economic, political, and environmental terms (De Schutter, 2017).

What makes these niche innovations distinct from hegemonic agri-food regime is their redistribution of value through networks, enhancing "trust" between food producers and consumers and articulating novel forms of political association and market governance.

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) and farmers' markets make up the majority of scholarly articles (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019), but

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further examples are consumer-lead solidarity purchase groups, participatory guarantee systems, territorial structures or administrative organizations focusing on food policy (such as food policy councils or food labs) or food supply (such as food security safety nets), and so forth. They vary widely thematically, and their scope ranges from very small and informal food swapping activities to established territorial policies. While these alternatives are not always new, there has been growing scholarly interest in them since the mid-1990s.

I explore the following research questions: What are the most common concepts in sustainable food innovations, and how can they be consolidated in order to improve conceptual clarity and stress their systemic relevance? From the various terms used in literature, four main conceptual denominations prevailed over time: local food systems (LFS), short food supply chains (SFSC), civic food networks (CFS) and alternative food networks (AFN). As they seek to capture an immense heterogeneity of empirical phenomena, these four concepts have distinct foci and, at the same time, partial overlaps as well as varying theoretical and disciplinary contexts. They all mention values in sustainability but do not focus consistently on them—when in fact an overview of sustainability values at play would be key to efficient analysis.

Fundamentally, this coexistence of concepts conceals the fact that despite their differences, the empirical initiatives have a structural commonality at a systematic level. It is precisely this structural commonality that is relevant for understanding pathways to a sustainable food system transformation at territorial levels. Therefore, I propose that an overarching concept could absorb the existing ones: values-based territorial food networks (VTFN), which can take into account the diverse perspectives from the four main concepts in this field, classify their specificities, and address their shortcomings. The aim is to enhance conceptual clarity. But more importantly, it fosters a vision of the structural and systemic contribution that the different empirical initiatives make, despite their heterogeneity and despite their (mainly) small-scale, marginal power, and low economic weight: they should be understood as manifold, burgeoning facets of the same sustainable and ethical transitions in global food systems. Specifically, the social critique at their core—enabling transitions in food systems—is taking place at varying territorial scales and is constructed around values not only of "doing things differently" (Whatmore et al., 2003) but also of qualifying specific practices and justifying why they are essential.

To further specify the ethical values at stake, I draw from the four sustainability dimensions elaborated by the FAO's framework SAFA (Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems) (FAO, 2014)[1]:

environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience, and ethical governance. This framework presents the advantage of holistically assembling the dimensions of sustainability that are not always considered interrelated. These dimensions figure as sustainability values in the concept of VTFN. The more robust and authentic these sustainability values are, the more likely they are to be incorporated into practices, become more and more legitimate, and gain a voice at negotiation tables, ultimately resulting in the reorientation of the current corporate food regime.

This article proposes a comparative review of the four concepts of LFS, SFSC, CFS, and AFN by: (1) reviewing their strong and weak points as critiqued in the literature; and (2) qualifying them in light of the values they convey. Secondly, it introduces the overarching concept of VTFN.

Methods

I used multiple methodologies to gather the evidence for this comparative literature review. I took a workshop held at the 2019 ESRS congress in Trondheim[2] as a starting point for this conceptual research. At this event, scholars identified, in a participatory approach, the main empirical themes and indicated key references in this field. These main empirical themes were later clustered by myself and my two co-editors into the four sections that our special issue in *Sociologia Ruralis* is organized around[3]: social learning; agency and food governance; socio-economic struggles; socio-cultural environments.

Second, this initial snowball method was systematized by a conceptual literature review utilizing Google Scholar with the keywords "local food systems," "short food supply chains," "civic food networks," and "alternative food networks" to cross-reference and deepen results. My search strategy was completed by additional keywords of relevant derivative concepts (e.g., "values-based supply chains"). The selected articles underwent a "synoptic qualitative content analysis" (Mayring, 2007), consisting of condensing the material to the essential findings without restricting content.

Comparative literature review

The four main concepts describing alternative initiatives in food systems tend to focus on merely some of the characteristics of the networks or subsystems they are empirically grounded in. While they all convey some sets of values in sustainability or ideals for improving various conditions

within and around food systems, none captures them all. To enhance conceptual clarity, this article argues for a more encompassing analytical framework allowing to assess alternative innovations in food systems via all the sustainability values combined. Therefore, I first compare the four existing concepts by qualifying them in light of the sustainability values they convey.

Local food systems (LFS)

Description and context

In the 1990s, LFS was the first of concepts in use to approach socio-technical innovations from the mainstream food production and distribution channels, particularly in the United States. They were often located in rural areas (Feenstra, 1997) and linked to re-emerging practices, such as farmers' markets, CSA, locally produced and distributed box schemes, or consumer-lead solidarity purchase groups, such as *gruppi di acquisto solidale* (GAS) in Italy (Brunori et al., 2012). From an academic point of view, the main analyzed specificity of these initiatives has been their local inscription.

Elusiveness of defining localness, without romanticizing it

Defining localness is elusive both conceptually and methodologically. This is an empirical and highly subjective evidence, that cannot be theorized beyond this very subjectivity nor clearly delimited geographically. Methodologically, there are no metrics to coherently quantify localness. Even the supposedly straightforward spatial referential, measuring proximity through "food miles" (Raven & Lang, 1995), merely takes into account transportation and the carbon footprint as selective aspects of environmental impacts, and has been criticized for shifting the debate away from agricultural production methods. Spaargaren et al. (2012) have usefully highlighted the simultaneity of different scales involved in localness or regionality—theorized exemplarily in the multilevel perspective (MLP)—yet their conclusion of localness' inherent contextuality does not clarify a comprehensive definition of localness.

More distinctive features of localness are social connectedness and embeddedness (Winter, 2003) based on reciprocity and trust, particularly in direct interactions. Because the local dimension is a contextual construction, social proximity is at least as important as geographical proximity (Born & Purcell, 2006). Social proximity can be analyzed using social network analysis (Dunne et al., 2011), including that of local or regional governance structures.

Yet, conflating localness with sustainability, harmonious social networks, and heightened quality is problematic—why would local production methods be more ethical, less extractive, more equitable than distant ones?

Another, more rarely noted, critique of harmonious localness is its agricultural and domestic constraint: seasonal local produce has a certain invariable monotony; planning for, shopping, and cooking fresh unprocessed food requires extra time, effort, and skill in kitchen tasks (Reckinger, 2020). Consumers, historically, tended to be eager to escape this "tyranny of the local" and appreciated the liberating effect—especially for large sections of the female population—of new convenience foods from industrialized channels (Laudan, 2001).

Place-based values, yet occulting power asymmetries

That which is conveyed through the notion of localness—values, a shared vision, social constructions of quality, collective identifications, ways in which specific foods become locally embedded—is enhanced when it is associated with a sense of place, a certain cultural heritage, or terroir. Hence, protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG)[4]—to only name the official EU labels linking territoriality, in the form of origin and *savoir-faire* around a *terroir*, to quality—have also been termed "place-based foods" (Vandecandelaere et al., 2018). Denominations of origin are historically attested since at least Roman times, and countries such as France, Italy, Luxembourg, Japan, among others, legally formalized various forms of geographical origins from the 1930s onward to define, protect, and showcase specific quality products. They also strived to foster the hybrid socio-technical, cultural, and natural construction of hyper-localized and singularized terroirs for prestige foodstuffs, which are often transformed ones, such as wine, liquors, or cheeses. From the beginning of the 20th century on, such geographic origin has been linked to defined quality criteria in specification sheets.

Today, there is growing evidence that consumers also value the "local" attribute of daily, untransformed foodstuffs that do not necessarily have ambitious specification sheets—particularly animal products, such as meat, dairy, and eggs, followed by fruits and vegetables (Reckinger, 2016). This affective affinity for localness is generally interpreted as a concrete and often unquestioned projection surface for perceptions of homeliness, proximity, reciprocity, trust, and support to neighboring farmers. It is viewed as a reassuring contrast to large-scale, globalized food scandals since the 1990s mainly in the sanitary and processing domain as well as to reports of environmental degradation, soil impoverishment, biodiversity loss, and persisting social inequalities along food chains.

Countering such unsustainability by *familiarity* has been a common empirical consumer discourse and practice (and even a policy one), yet merely a *generic* one because this localness often remains unqualified, an emotional value in itself (in the case of consumers) or a protectionist one (in the case of policy)—but without defined, reliable, additional qualification criteria.

Therefore, subsuming localness to sustainability has been critiqued. Even if localness was qualified with additional, verifiable sustainability criteria, it is still not a stand-alone value: indeed, much-favored relocalizations can also perpetuate inequity, favor elitism in the access to highly differentiated local quality produce, or maintain a certain compatibility with neoliberal governmentality, still focusing on individual responsibility (Born & Purcell, 2006.) It has additionally been argued that the relocalization paradigm fails to address interdependencies in food systems and interrelations, contradictions, and power asymmetries between the food supply circuit and the concerned governance actors (Reckinger et al., 2020), due to its focus on direct producer and consumer links and on alternative actors, often overlooking more mainstream processing, retail, and distribution actors. I have shown elsewhere an empirical yet holistic synopsis of the complex range of such an interdependent system of heterogeneous actors in a given territory, conceptually including food supply circuit actors—*feeding* the system—and broader food system ones—*influencing* the system (Reckinger et al., 2020 and 2022).

Generally speaking, LFS as a concept emphasizes, maybe in an overly optimistic manner, reduced environmental impact through smaller physical distances, more added value and improved economic conditions by shorter supply chains, and tighter social bonds between producers and consumers. In LFS, the main themes revolve around agency, proposing alternatives to the dominant agri-food regime within rural development, social learning processes, and improved resilience by preserving flexibility that enables producers to persist in the face of change, increasing local economy activities triggered by the purchase of items, and thereby creating income, jobs, and wealth.

In fine, LFS as a concept is useful to policymakers to emphasize and possibly assess the dynamics of their territory of constituency, and to local food actors (be they producers, transformers, retailers, or consumers) to enact place-based identities. For food system academics, however, stating mere localness is an insufficient conceptual framework, as it does not convey inherent values of sustainability by itself, and therefore does not allow conclusions about further values. These have to be addressed by applying additional concepts to the specificities of non-mainstream produce.

Short food supply chains (SFSC)

While the concept of LFS stresses the local dimension of food networks, a new concept emerging in the 2000s, SFSC[5], focuses on the economic transactional aspects of these networks, particularly by connecting quality attributes of foodstuffs to the interrelations of (professional) actors involved in the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of foods.

Description and context

SFSC are seen as active attempts by producers to recapture value in the supply chain and ultimately to enhance the viability of small and mid-scale farmers, through creating alliances between producers and their supply chain partners (Ostrom et al., 2017). With its distinctive economic focus, it is used in numerous large cross-country EU-funded research projects. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) proposed six broad types of SFSC (2020); France, for instance, has formalized an official definition of SFSC[6] since 2009. Through these acknowledgments, it is a more institutionalized concept.

Renting, Marsden and Banks (2003) have shown that SFSC may be face-to-face, proximate but also extended. This means the geographic area is subordinate to the economic activity that unfolds and that the distinguishing criteria for SFSC are not the number of intermediaries nor food's transportation distance, but instead the fact that "the product reaches the consumer embedded with information" (Marsden & Banks, 2003, p. 399). The processes of "short-circuiting" the conventional chains take a wide diversity of forms over time and space; they should also be regarded as additional or superimposed on existing, long agri-food chains (Marsden & Banks 2003) and still subjected to capitalistic market logics.

The SFSC concept considers the search for new market opportunities for farm products as the main driver and looks at the specific quality of food products made and commercialized this way as well as at the performance of such new markets. Finally, it scrutinizes the relations of the involved actors and the values they co-create.

Quality conventions

First, regarding quality, SFSC as an economic concept logically suggests specific quality definitions and conventions based on the principle that the more embedded and differentiated a product becomes, the scarcer it becomes in the market. This product differentiation implies the construction of transparent market relations around specific sets of quality definitions that are shared by all parties involved and are sufficiently

communicated to consumers to convince them to pay (potentially) premium prices.

However, specific attention should be paid to the diversity of competing definitions of quality along these food supply chains, based on diversity in farming systems and in the organizational structures of territorial food supply chains, variations in consumer perceptions, and also on substantial differences in institutional and policy support (Renting et al., 2003).

Performance of shortened food supply chains

Besides delivering specific insights into the economic performance of the shortening of food supply chains, SFSC also reflect on their "re-socialization" and "re-localization" (Matacena & Corvo, 2020). Farmer/producer income, added value during chain transactions, product prices, the creation of maintaining of jobs, economic uncertainties, and market volatility are addressed in many studies (Chiffoleau & Dourian, 2020).

But the main remaining issues are the determination of a fair price both in direct sale schemes and in chains involving intermediaries or large retailers. Also, newer, emerging economic models that incorporate SFSC—for instance, social and solidarity economy, circular economy, or the platform/sharing economy challenging property rights, but also auctioneer-driven models based on the use of biotechnologies—have not yet been sufficiently analyzed (Chiffoleau & Dourian, 2020).

The process of shortening food supply chains with the active construction of networks by farmers, food processors, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers, at least partly, engenders new market relationships which are built around new forms of association and institutional support. The underlying new and reconstituted spatialities are being built and shaped around new types of comparative advantage, competition, and power structures (Renting et al., 2003). SFSC appear to be mainly taken up by medium-sized farm businesses: a minimum production level is often necessary to make the activity viable and to generate sufficient income to finance investments, whereas large volumes are sometimes at odds with the specific and differentiated processing and marketing structures involved (Renting et al., 2003).

A recurring question, for SFSC to gain a foothold and represent a reorientation of the food system that is more than just exemplary, is how to move from niche production to volume while maintaining integrity and trust, or on how to combine production volume with values. There is an ongoing debate between growing in size ("upscaling") versus multiplying small-scale initiatives ("mushrooming"). In these processes, some topics

within SFSC remain largely unexplored, such as the facilitating/hindering role of intermediaries, or potential sanitary risks arising from implying non-professionals (Chiffoleau & Dourian, 2020).

Co-creation of values

The strengthening of ties between consumers and producers, as the third feature of importance in SFSC, allows for the circulation of values, knowledge and ideas of socio-economic solidarity, but also of value judgments about the relative desirability of foods. The focus of analysis lies in the type of relationship between producers and consumers in supply chains, and the role of this relationship is constructing value and meaning.

A longitudinal approach focusing on underlying social processes—and in particular attention to tensions, to choices, to negotiation between different values, to compromises between economic and non-economic objectives, and even to sacrifices—may be useful to grasp power relations that exist in systems which may otherwise be idealized (Renting et al., 2003). These more difficult social processes are the co-constructed outcome of transparent and long-term business relationships based on shared values, such as trust, transparent decision-making, communication, and a commitment to furthering equity among all supply chain participants (Lev et al., 2015). More research needs to be done on those structuring conflicts to analyze the potential stability or instability of non-monetized values[7] (Ostrom et al., 2017).

The derivative concept of values-based supply chains (VBSC) is mostly used in US scholarship (Lev et al., 2015). The VBCS model involves partnerships between actors within the regional food system that operate at a larger scale, and in particular, actors who share environmental, economic, and/or social values and insist on transparency of these. VBCS prioritize integrity, innovation, quality, cooperation, inclusiveness, equity, sustainability, and health (Hardesty et al., 2014) as well as profitability connected to these values. The values are socially constructed within physical, relational, moral, and discursive spaces, influencing meanings and interpretations, which will vary by product, season, and geography, and are communicated as "stories" to create consumer demand for such products.

However, the main critique toward VBFC is its under-theorization of the relationship between VBFC and territoriality (Ostrom et al., 2017), whereby territoriality is understood as "a collective dynamic that organizes local resources and integrates food supply chains within a region" (Fleury et al., 2016, p.3). VBSC remains inspirational for the reflections on values but insufficient for a systemic territorial approach at different scales—such as put forward by the concept of VTFN.

To conclude, SFSC have pushed the development of new inclusive economic models with a variety of intrinsic social values (including, among others, fair trade, equity, participation, transparency, and food and employment relocalization). Their concrete impacts still need to be further researched, especially as they might preserve power structures or even foster new power imbalances when highly specific knowledge is required.

In a word, this concept focuses on economic processes but underexposes governance questions.

Civic food networks (CFN)

The concept of CFN, emerging in the 2010s in various European countries, consciously fills this gap in research by putting civil society organizations as a governance mechanism for such initiatives in the foreground. Thus, CFN are complementary to LFS and SFSC—which both have a specific, yet partial angle. Likewise, CFN assume the preferential analysis of social movement commitment in food-related innovations by developing new relationships between consumers and producers, thus fostering food citizenship.

Description and context

CFN places a sensible focus on societal influences and, specifically, social movements with typical food activism concerns, such as food sovereignty, food democracy, and food citizenship (Counihan & Siniscalchi, 2014; Renting et al., 2012).

CFN are usually seen as not very formalized groups of disintermediation of the supply chain, oftentimes directly and reciprocally managed, collaboratively and collectively, by groups of consumers (or consumers and producers) who act together based on common values and reciprocal trust, while enacting specific civic values in the innovative partnerships they set up.

However, a turn to market-oriented organization, particularly by upscaling, affects trust and impacts the motivation of volunteers and consumers (Renting et al., 2012)—which shows that CFN display the same vulnerabilities as other initiatives captured by the concepts of LFS and SFSC (as well as AFN, as we shall see in the next section). Like for the other concepts, CFN regroup a wide diversity of empirical realities. The Italian-initiated (but by now internationally spread) GAS, are "organized networks of consumers that trigger ethical entrepreneurial response" (Renting et al., 2012). This-strong "prosumer" involvement in CFN is a key difference with, for instance, consumer cooperatives, which can delegate

assignments to employees but, in turn, charge running costs to their members. Generally, the instability and contingency of maintaining volunteers or finding additional ones for new tasks are structural challenges in such initiatives (Reckinger, 2018).

Governance by civic processes

A focus on citizen-consumers' governance potential can address unanswered theoretical perspectives among LFS, SFSC, and AFN, specifically regarding the interplay of market, state and civil society actors. CFN's main contribution consists in considering voluntary, associational principles and participatory forms of self-management by citizens, rooted in civil society (Wiskerke, 2010), as governance mechanisms.

There are two main areas of action of CFN: the active (re-)construction of alternative systems of food provisioning, on one hand, and the civic engagement into shaping public opinion, culture, institutions, and policies through communication, lobbying, and political activism, on the other hand. CFN engage wider networks than actors from the food supply chain and consumption to also include various other stakeholders (cf. Reckinger et al., 2020). CFN are also an "expression of a process of change in the agri-food governance mechanisms" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 292), stressing both the importance of long-term approaches and a holistic approach to the changing empowerments of civil society in comparison to market forces and national states.

CFN are presented as building upon "linkages with other new social movements and conceptual innovations related to different societal and economic spheres, such as de-growth, transition town movements, solidarity economy districts, place-based development, ecofeminism, etc." (Renting et al., 2012, p. 293), enhancing new discourses and forms of citizenship. This discursive and practical alliance with other social movements is quite a distinctive feature.

A less convincing argument put forward by the authors is the idea of changing urban-rural relations with a supposed inversion and "shifting the starting point and locus of innovation of food networks from production/countryside to consumption/city" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 292). Such a framing denotes a dichotomy between two reified, clear-cut units (the city versus the countryside), which does not account for empirical hybrid spatial interlinkages (urban sprawl, peri-urbanization, metropolization, regionalization, etc.) nor for overlaps in practices in all of these spacialities. More fundamentally, though, the rural/urban debate is not specific to CFN but can also be found in the other concepts discussed here. Finally, Renting et al. (2012) argue that CFN embody new discourses, knowledge, and symbolic frameworks that lead to "important new 'traditions' and

references in agri-food system dynamics." Again, I view this feature as important indeed, but it is not only specific to CFN.

Focus on processes of negotiation around values more than on the values themselves

The concept's strong point is its emphasis on analyzing new alliances, rules, institutional arrangements, and organizational models for sustainable agri-food systems. CFN set those up by rebalancing state and market actors' influence, often by gradually participating in urban and territorial food strategies, in finding an entry point into sustainable procurement strategies (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008), or in combining forms of social or solidarity economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006) to the food provisioning they initiate.

CFN is the first concept among the presented ones that explicitly takes into account the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions that these processes of (re-)creating linkages with state and market actors entail in the medium and long term. Yet it also highlights the politicization of successfully spreading "a new discourse on food and food practices by forging linkages with other social movements. This creates pressure for suitable food policies and changes in regulatory frameworks aimed at creating more favorable conditions for small-scale farming systems, organic farming and innovative food-provisioning initiatives" (Gibson-Graham, 2006, pp. 302–303).

The concept of CFN goes beyond a linear, chain-model of food supply (as LFS and SFSC tend to do). By including civic processes, it sheds light on influences from changing consumption practices but also from the wider socio-political context, which can be enabling or inhibiting. On one hand, such growing public concern can lead to values-based, ethical considerations, resulting in "systemic ethics and inclusive governance" in a given food system (Bui et al., 2019). On the other hand, the risk of co-option, instrumentalization, or greenwashing by dominant regime actors also needs to be addressed. The framing of CFN as pressure by civil society groups toward a more democratic food citizenship and a more sustainable food governance structurally allows for such an analytical acuity on socio-economic processes with their conflicts and strategies.

Alternative food networks (AFN)

The term AFN is by far the most commonly used in literature, starting from the 1980s, to the point that it became an umbrella category. It does not presuppose concrete yet conceptually elusive localness as LFS does; it does not predominantly focus on the economic supply chain as SFSC does; it does not mainly highlight members' political motivation (linked or not to social movement involvement) as CFN does.

Description and context

Instead, and more simply, it puts forward the idea of a distinction from the principles of distance and standardization in the mainstream agri-food system (Allen et al., 2003). This *alterity* is conceived of as "an alternative," meaning a different option, but there tends to be a semantic shift toward "alternativeness" in the literature, which is a reformist if not transformative claim—that should not be taken for granted (as already shown for LFS, SFSC, and CFN). Also, some authors have challenged the explanatory usefulness of a binary framework that opposes alternatives to mainstream/conventional (Matacena & Corvo, 2020): instead, food systems tend to dip into, or borrow from, diverse logics over time. Still, the advantage of the concept of AFN remains its more abstracted level and hence its versatility to include, conceptually, a wide range of empirically extremely heterogeneous initiatives. Watts et al. (2005) categorize AFN as "weaker" or "stronger" depending on the extent to which they challenge principles of conventional food networks. On the one hand, "weaker" AFN are those whose alternativeness rely on qualities of the products, such as fair trade, organic, and denomination or origin. By contrast, "stronger" AFN are those that involve networks that do not conform to those of the conventional food system, such as social and spatial proximity, community-supported agriculture and box schemes (see Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).

By valuing social and spatial proximity over distance, diversity over standardization, human-scale over industrialization, extensive over intensive production methods, place-based embeddedness over anonymous interchangeability, AFN have been analyzed as virtuous per se, particularly from the 1980s to the 2000s, when they emerged as a niche (see for an early review Brklacich et al., 1991).

Integrative values

In their empirical qualification, AFN can have some of the following elements—in turn, or simultaneously: a strong local component; a reformist/transformative stance; being driven by civil society or social movement actors; striving to reshape supply chains to be shorter, with the aim of distributing added value fairly among all involved actors while operating in an economically viable way.

Hence, the concept of AFN incorporates most elements that the other main concepts in the literature highlight in a partial (or specialized) way. AFN include different social constructions and equations with ecology, localness, quality conventions, and consumer cultures; their inherent diversity is key.

The concept has been framed as a variegated set of actors involving civil society, small independent businesses, some farmers and landowners, and is based upon more cooperative and collaborative models of governance. Yet, most academic attention has been given to consumers and producers, at the expense of other involved actors such as managers, activists, organizers, researchers, officials, retailers, distributors etc. (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).

As movements opposing global capitalism, AFN are, in most cases, underpinned by reflexive localism (whereby processes of political decision-making are aiming at democratic outcomes). Their social, economic and ecological benefits include their anchorage in specific places and contexts, and their orientation toward not only economic viability for the actors involved but also a fair distribution of added value. They follow an ideal of ecological sustainability and try to reconfigure relations between producers and consumers, bringing these actors into closer proximity, thus hoping to foster more democratic participation of actors in food provisioning (Goodman & DuPuis, 2005).

Questioning of the dominant system via a socio-cultural exemplification

Regardless of whether they succeed (or not) in achieving these goals, and if they are (or not) a true alternative to the hegemonic agri-food regime or remain a subordinate part of it, AFN at the very least bring about a questioning of the dominant system (Deverre & Lamine, 2010). This questioning happens via the socio-cultural exemplification they represent (Reckinger, 2018). This exemplification consists of a hands-on, practical critique of mainstream production and commercialization methods, by demonstrating that alternatives are possible (in terms of methods in production and commercialization), desirable (for consumers), and viable (for producers) (Reckinger, 2018).[8]

The visibility of such exemplifications is increased, on one hand, if AFN have a voice in local/regional policy. This generally is a process ranging from merely consultative stakeholderism to a more collaborative governance participation. Such a governance engagement is dependent on AFN's perceived legitimacy by institutional actors, on their own ideological and strategic orientations aiming at specific modes of governance engagements, and also if political decision-taking spaces are open to them (Andrée et al., 2019).

On the other hand, this exemplification is linked to the strengthening of consumers by the politicization of their involvement, namely by their public as well as private communications on this new or enhanced participation. Again, this consumer commitment ranges on a continuum

from a simple, yet discursified membership (e.g., in a local, organic box scheme) to more active roles as prosumers, involved in decision-making and various organizational processes, leading to increased food democracy or citizenship. The work of consumers is highly relevant and can take various forms (paid/unpaid; formal/informal; autonomous/dependent). However, a focus on the political dimensions of AFN has frequently noted a redistribution of power toward consumers and communities but less toward producers (Deverre & Lamine, 2010); also, the reliance on consumers as the source of change can be seen as re-centering the individual, which furthers the neoliberalist model (idem).

Table 1 sums up the various attributes of the presented concepts:

Table 1 • Main attributes of the umbrella concept AFN, and of the three other most common sub-concepts in current literature (own analysis and representation)

Main attributes of the umbrella concept 'Alternative Food Networks', and of the three other most common sub-concepts in current literature				
	Local Food Systems	**Short Food Supply Chains**	**Civic-Food Networks**	**Alternative Food Networks**
Base logic	Territory	Market	Social mobilization	Incorporates most attributes that LFS, SFSC and CFN highlight in a partial or specialized way. AFNs include social constructions and equations with sustainability, localness, quality convention, governance and consumer cultures.
Ethical values	Reduced environmental impact due to geographic proximity; reciprocity and trust due to social proximity	Added-value in economic shortened chains through quality conventions: fairness, equity, participation, quality, transparency environmental stewardship	Shared governance by civic processes, with the double aim to foster ethical and sustainable products, and to shape public opinion with political activism	A combination of the attributes of LFS, SFSC and CFN, with a focus on general sustainability values (but without systematizing social welfare, ecological integrity, ethical governance and economic resilience) (FAO, 2014)
Spatiality	Local (difficult to define)	Shortened chains, but with a certain territorial flexibility	Interpersonal relations, but with a certain territorial flexibility	A combination of the attributes of LFS, SFSC and CFN

Main actors	Local producers (difficult to define) and individual consumers	Professionals organized in networks also including consumers	Prosumer-initiated entrepreneurial and public partnerships	A combination of the attributes of LFS, SFSC and CFN
Public institutions	Rarely included in the analysis	Rarely included in the analysis	Analyzed as strategic partners at territorial level	A combination of the range within LFS, SFSC and CFN
Civic association	Rarely included in the analysis	Rarely included in the analysis	Analyzed as driving force	A combination of the range within LFS, SFSC and CFN
Market dynamic	Individual producers and consumers	Construction of transparent market relations around specific sets of quality definitions	Solidarity networks among producer groups and organized consumers	A combination of the attributes of LFS, SFSC and CF
Main criticism	Elusiveness of localness; place-based values occult power asymmetries and can perpetuate inequity; localness is not a sustainability value in itself, but merely provides generic familiarity	Focus on economic processes underexposes the possible dynamics of perpetuating inequity, and undertheorizes governance questions	Focus on societal processes of negotiation around values more than on the values themselves; the focus on civic processes, neglects more institutional or corporate initiatives	Unspecific meaning of the concept (positing an artificial dichotomy between mainstream and alternativeness, which is preempted); uncertain impact of sustainability values claimed by AFN; lack of scrutiny on interactions with more conventional stakeholders; lack of specificity regarding values and territorial negotiations

Discussion

Necessary reframing of the umbrella concept of alternative food networks (AFN) toward values and territoriality

To sum up, LFS is conceptually elusive and empirically insufficient to provide guarantees of sustainability; SFSC, while being quite flexible, has a more economic focus that is less acute for grasping social and governance processes; CFN further specifies governance dynamics, but only regarding the specific social movement implications, and thus neglect initiatives of a more institutional or corporate kind; AFN as the most encompassing um-

brella concept merely states that these networks are "different" (in many heterogeneous ways). Yet, they all carry partial dimensions that contribute to a much-needed qualification of emerging phenomena in food systems worldwide.

The comparative literature review has revealed that over time scholars have treated AFN as an umbrella concept. In this discussion, I take a closer look at the unsolved issues and ambiguities of AFN from social, economic, and environmental viewpoints, which leads me to suggest adopting a pragmatist approach, focusing prominently on shared ethical values and territoriality. Also, examining which are the values that are conveyed as a viable alternative to the dominant extractive and exploitative food system, and which are the values that remain shaky, even in these alternative models, shows the need for a conceptual reframing. I then argue why the concept of AFN would not only gain in being enriched by the specification of values and territoriality but altogether renamed.

Uncertain impact of sustainability values claimed by the concept AFN

Unsolved issues and ambiguities of AFN revolve mainly around the overall impact of the general sustainability values that they claim—which are analyzed inconsistently due to a lacking conceptual framework.

Some consistent features of AFN are that they refer to place-based initiatives, are based on developing "shorter supply chains", are non-corporate in their organization, and define themselves by being outside the dominant food regulatory regime. Theoretical underpinnings are embeddedness, trust, reciprocity, solidarity, quality, and care (Kneafsey et al., 2008). Yet, these values can be fueled by reactionary and nostalgic motivations, insularity and defensiveness, rather than by progressive, open ones, and also by feelings of obligations. They are also likely to remain, at least partly, rooted in self-interest with vendors seeking optimal margin or profit, or with farmers involved not necessarily adopting sustainability production methods regardless of their shift to local channels, especially if these channels are insufficient to sustain their income.

The prevailing scientific approach to study AFN in isolation has not favored an understanding of the interactions between these AFN and other initiatives, including those that emanate from more conventional stakeholders (Lamine et al., 2019). Furthermore, scholars tend to take insufficient account of the wider political and economic forces shaping AFN (Goodman & DuPuis, 2005) and hence might overlook underlying inequalities and injustices (such as the exploitation of certain groups, in particular immigrant farmworkers or the informal labor of women). Thus, AFN can maintain as much as overturn preexisting inequalities and power

imbalances between participants (Allen et al., 2003), particularly in terms of labor, gender, and income. Also, value-adding practices of farming-centered initiatives perpetuate preexisting commercial connections with affluent consumers. Inequalities can also be viewed in terms of actors' skills in pushing through their agenda over other ones. Actors pursue certain agendas and outcomes, such as social justice or economic viability, which are not specific on food operating on a determined scale (local or not), but they rather depend on the orientation of the actors putting the strategy in place, their interaction and modes of working.

Furthermore, AFN may propose an idealized vision of localism, community, and solidarity, which possibly imposes an unrealistic burden upon participants in terms of skills, dispositions, and so on (Tregear 2011).

Some authors have also questioned the positive environmental impacts of AFN (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008), particularly in terms of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions via carbon dioxide. I would argue here that this indicator is insufficient to assess environmental impacts, as, in particular, the restoration of biodiversity and regeneration of water quality and soil life would need to be considered too—but this requires stronger interdisciplinary collaboration with natural sciences than what is done usually in sociology.

Generally speaking, there is a need to develop more transparent and comparable frameworks to establish a common language of sustainability for the study of AFN. Particularly, adopting more holistic research approaches that allow the evaluation of trade-offs and balance among the social, economic, and environmental sustainability would be helpful, as would be the comparative investigation of the sustainability of AFN in developing countries (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).

Umbrella concept "Values-based Territorial Food Networks" (VTFN)

The necessity of a pragmatist approach, systematically focusing on values and territoriality

A consistent focus on the values that are conveyed through AFN will help keep in mind that AFN are not transformative by themselves—but only if certain conditions are met in terms of shared values among the co-creations of the actors in the involved networks. These shared values have to be systematically defined, as is done in the framework of environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience, and ethical governance (FAO 2014). Such a consistent focus allows one to avoid romanticized definitions as well as formal or substantive ones, where various dimensions

are conflated with "alternativeness": formal approaches consider certain spatialities as specific to AFN (face-to-face relations, spatial proximity, or spatially extended ones); substantive approaches focus more on quality and values, yet they posit a priori "'substantial' differences, in other words, what makes them perceived as unique compared to conventional forms of production and consumption" (Dansero & Puttilli, 2013, p, 629), thereby perpetuating a falsely simple dichotomy between globalized food systems and alternative practices (Winter, 2003).

In order to avoid those pitfalls, adopting a pragmatist approach with heightened sensitivity to the negotiation of ethical values and territoriality issues appears to be helpful. It "considers in a dynamic and pragmatist perspective the diverse actors and institutions involved in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food products in a given territory" (Lamine et al., 2019, p. 160). The use of "territory" here goes beyond usual geographic connotations and "is considered as an ensemble of complex material and immaterial relations involving the spatial dimension, the relations among actors (at all scales) and between the latter and local resources" (Dansero & Puttilli, 2013, p. 631). Specifically, a pragmatist ethical and territorial approach addresses local power dynamics, to overcome the frequent framing of the "local" as a place of harmony and social cohesion. It also addresses the interrelations of all actors of a food system of a given territory, including mainstream ones (Lamine et al., 2019; Reckinger et al., 2020), instead of idealizing AFN studied in isolation.

Rather, being focused on both spatial and social relations, a territorial approach is useful to "overcome the limit of considering AFN as monolithic objects, anchored to the local scale and featured by the sole relations of solidarity and trust. Multiple territorialities are available at the same time and at different scales: from the little niche highly embedded in communitarian and local relations to more standardized and spatially extended productions distributed through mainstream channels" (Dansero & Puttilli, 2013, p. 633). This shifts the focus of analysis to the way different AFN are shaped by territorial relations, how AFN as a whole redefine the relationship between food and territory and, finally, to reinterpretations of AFN' sustainability: it cannot be taken for granted but must be empirically qualified according to "spatial organization (how many food miles and emissions are related to different models of food production and distribution?), resources (how are local values, tradition and cultures reinterpreted and reshaped by food networks?) and relations (how much are AFN's relations just and equal for different categories of people?)" (Dansero & Puttilli, 2013, p. 633). It links the systems thinking approach (Béné et al., 2019) to AFN by holistically extending (Reckinger et

al., 2020) rural sociology's claim to consider production and consumption jointly—but in territorial contexts.

VTFN as a more specific overarching concept

The need for an overarching concept stems from the temporality of the concepts in simultaneous use: LFS came first, and the others were developed gradually to address various shortcomings that the previous ones had. According to authors' perspectives, cultural context, and empirical findings, they prefer one concept over others, thus leading to simultaneous use of the different yet partly overlapping concepts. AFN has over time become the most commonly used one of the four, which ended up making it an umbrella concept—by default of a more stringent denomination. This comparative concept review has shown that the legitimate criticisms addressed by scholars to various concepts would often also concern other ones; yet the scientific dialogue seems a little separate between LFS, SFSC, CFN, and AFN.

For this reason, I argue that it would be helpful to have a more *specific* denomination for the overarching concept, in order to avoid parallel, sometimes doubled-up criticisms of LFS, SFSC, CFN, and AFN, and instead foster a more integrated and more coherent scientific dialogue on what I propose to term VTFN as a common denominator of various alternatives that are being set up within the general food system:

- **"values-based"** is used for the reason that ethical values are the attributes that hold together, in an affirmatively defined way, the manifold alternatives to mainstream food systems; as interrelated sustainability values, they encompass environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance (FAO, 2014).
- **"territorial"** is used to stress that those networks pragmatically consider some kind of "place-basedness" as an essential part of their endeavors—which they enact and co-construct through their practices and their interactions with other actors of that territory (also established and conventional ones, of various scales). The resulting specificity of concrete territorial contexts is seen as formative and enriching, not as a by-pass product.
- **"food networks"** is used to highlight the fact that in those groupings, it is the human relational component that is central, not in an individualized way, but in forming specific alliances. "Food systems" could have captured this dimension as well, but I prefer to reserve the term "food systems" (Béné et al., 2019; FAO, 2018) to

holistically designate all types of actors in the food domain, also non-sustainable, globalized and corporate ones (see Reckinger et al., 2020 and 2022 for an empirical example for one EU country). By contrast, "food networks" represent a smaller portion of this general food system, and are based on relational interlinkages, not anonymized chains. "Chains" has a more economic value-chain connotation, whereas I argue in favor of a more open term that describes the main action of the involved actors: co-constructing meaning and ethical, ecological, social and economic values, in particular contexts, via networks in which values of preservation, fairness and care are central. However, only scientific scrutiny of the impacts of these values can assess their efficiency for sustainability; it cannot be pre-emptied.

Renaming the umbrella concept of AFN into VTFN allows for the qualitative affirmation of what makes up this fundamental "alternative" to the mainstream: the fact that these heterogeneous innovations are driven by inclusive, ethical values, specifically in the four domains of environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance (FAO, 2014)—and not merely by productivist imperatives, efficient scale-effects, and profit-orientation as is the case in the industrialized corporate food regime.

Bui et al. have named these values "systemic ethics" (2019, p. 277). VTFN unite reformist and innovative subsystems, made up of empirical networks of the general food system. Above all, this values-based approach permits for a more holistic view on the various dimensions that agri-food innovations have, instead of preempting which ones they are by using concepts that favor from the beginning certain dimensions over others: local over other types of territoriality (in LFS); supply chain over more general food system interactions (in SCSC); civil society interventions over interactions among other actors (in CFN); alternative assemblages over other types of collaboration with existing stakeholders (in AFN).

Moreover, the VTFN concept enables academics to recognize and study these initiatives' aims and claims, which are values-based, but without idealizing them: the analysis of tensions, the rearrangement of governance regulations and, ultimately, power relations that may prevent the successful implementation of some values are just as central as the analysis of success stories of synergies and virtuous alliances.

Through the sharing of societal goals beyond merely economic exchange (as is the case in the corporate food regime), VTFN should be considered as *potential* agents of change, exerting pressure on the food system

in several ways. They may do so by pointing out contradictions and limitations of the mainstream food system and thus fostering new public awareness around food issues and the introduction of new questions on political agendas. Concretely, they may for example:

- promote (agro-)ecological production methods (though not necessarily with formal organic certification);
- favor local, fresh and seasonal foods, thereby contributing to the diversification of local production systems, job creation and rural development;
- offer fair remuneration to producers and other persons involved in different stages of the food system;
- provide access to quality food for all income levels and not only for wealthy citizens (idem), etc.

Applied criteria are of an integrated nature, often combining ecological, social, and other ethical concerns with food quality; also, informal, flexible forms of coordination and control systems based on direct relations and mutual trust are preferred to formal arrangements (Bui et al., 2019). But all of these attributes are values that may or may not be achieved, within a particular territorial setting; they are not an a priori value in themselves.

In those processes, hybridity and mixed impacts are the norm rather than the exception: a holistic view on the strategies of the analyzed alternatives is important—something Andrée et al. (2019) term the interconnected struggles of warriors (interventionism), builders (creating alternatives), and weavers (developing strategic and conceptual linkages).

Indeed, values-based food-related innovations are embedded both in non-anonymous, retraceable social relations or larger social networks (as specific sub-section of the overall food system) and in various constellations of territories, which mutually co-construct each other. Thus, the territorial contexts, specificities and scales remain essential (as opposed to global flows), but they are not preempted as "local" or "regional". Instead, territoriality is viewed as a set of contextual, case-specific, and place-based co-constructions, which take place continuously and simultaneously, and vary according to the interdependencies of involved actors, governance levels, scopes of power, access to resources, supply circuits, and the concerned, specific foods—but also according to the socio-cultural meanings attached to them.

Table 2 synthesizes how VTFN has a wider yet more specified scope than AFN.

Table 2 • Gained qualifications by renaming the umbrella concept AFN into VTFN (own analysis and representation).

Gained qualifications by renaming the umbrella concept 'Alternative Food Networks' into 'Values-Based Territorial Food Networks'		
	Alternative Food Networks	**Values-Based Territorial Food Networks**
Base logic	Incorporates most attributes that LFS, SFSC and CFN highlight in a partial or specialized way, be they territory, market or social mobilization. AFNs include social constructions and equations with sustainability, localness, quality convention, governance and consumer cultures.	Like AFN, VTFF incorporates most attributes that the sub-concepts LFS, SFSC and CFN highlight in a partial or specialized way, be they territory, market or social mobilization (see Table 1). AFNs include social constructions and equations with sustainability, localness, quality convention, governance and consumer cultures. This stems from the fact that both AFN and VTFN take the role of overarching concepts.
Ethics/ Values	A combination of the attributes included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, with a focus on general sustainability values (but without systematizing social welfare, ecological integrity, ethical governance and economic resilience (FAO, 2014)).	A systematic overview allowing for critical acuity of the specific types of values at play / in competition / in contradiction in the empirical settings in question. Enacted values should be scrutinized according to the systematic framework of social welfare, ecological integrity, ethical governance, and economic resilience (FAO, 2014). Depending on which values are more central within VTFN, the literature around the sub-concepts LFS, SFSC or CFN might be more relevant (see Figure 1).
Spatiality	A combination of the attributes included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, ranging from elusive localness to shortened chains and interpersonal relations with a certain territorial flexibility.	Pragmatic and flexible scope of the various empirical initiatives' core actors with a territorial logic, that is not pre-determined by any given scale of territory, but rather by the co-construction of collaborations.
Main actors	A combination of the attributes included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, ranging from local producers to professionals organized in networks also including consumers, or prosumer-initiated entrepreneurial and public partnerships.	In VTFN, the analyzed main actors are not pre-determined as fixed groups, as they are in AFN, but they are included according to: –their roles in regard to the interrelated four core sustainability values sets, encompassing environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance; –their co-construction of territoriality, through their practices and interactions with other actors.

Public institutions	A combination of the range included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, ranging from not involved to strategic partners at territorial level.	In VTFN, the analyzed public institutions are not pre-determined as fixed groups, as they are in AFN, but they are included according to: –their roles in regard to the interrelated four core sustainability values sets, encompassing environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance; –their co-construction of territoriality, through their practices and interactions with other actors.
Civic association	A combination of the range included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, ranging from not involved to being a driving force.	In VTFN, the analyzed civic associations are not pre-determined as fixed groups, as they are in AFN, but they are included according to: –their roles in regard to the interrelated four core sustainability values sets, encompassing environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and ethical governance; –their co-construction of territoriality, through their practices and interactions with other actors.
Market dynamic	A combination of the attributes included in LFS, SFSC and CFN, ranging from individual producers and consumers to the construction of transparent market relations around specific sets of quality definitions, and solidarity networks among producer groups and organized consumers.	Seeing as the critique of AFN lies not in its encompassing scope but in its lacking conceptual qualification, this attribute remains similar in VTFN.
Main criticism	Unspecific meaning of the concept (positing an artificial dichotomy between mainstream and alternativeness, which is preempted); uncertain impact of sustainability values claimed by AFN; lack of scrutiny on interactions with more conventional stakeholders; lack of specificity regarding values and territorial negotiations.	While VTFN addresses the main criticisms raised against AFN (see on the left), AFN is such an established overarching concept that its renaming into the more specific proposition of VTFN might not conveniently be taken on.

Conclusion

The goal of this article is to contribute to the literature on alternative food networks (AFN) by introducing the novel concept of values-based territorial food networks (VTFN). It suggests a specification of the claimed

yet fuzzy alternativeness of AFN in a qualified and affirmative way by the dimensions of values and territoriality—and renames the concept accordingly.

The comparative literature review shows that the existing concepts local food systems (LFS), short food supply chains (SFSC), and civic food networks (CFN) can be viewed as specific perspectives situated within VTFN. By substituting a clearer defined overarching concept to AFN, VTFN reaffirms that the existing concepts LFS, SFSC, and CFN remain as valuable, specific perspectives of food networks for scholars.

Figure 1 summarizes qualifications and enhanced acuity gained by renaming AFN into VTFN, encompassing four core sustainability values sets and anchored in co-constructed territoriality:

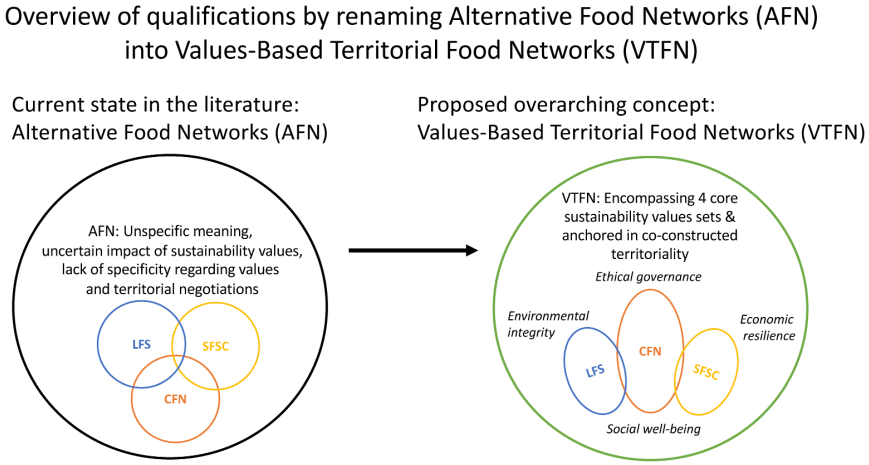

Figure 1 • Overview of qualifications by renaming AFN into VTFN (own analysis and representation)

At the core of the argument is that these food initiatives—despite their empirical differences and despite different conceptual perspectives with which to approach them—have a structural commonality at the systemic level, relevant for understanding pathways to a sustainable and ethical food system transformation at territorial levels.

Qualifying sustainability values in these negotiations and innovation processes, and specifying the relevant territorial scopes, actors, and scales at play is essential for this understanding. Always taking a close look at the unsolved issues and ambiguities of VTFN—and both at their strong values and those that remain shaky from social, economic, environmental and governance viewpoints—leads to a pragmatist, deep understanding.

Thus, we need a multi-faceted approach to food system transformation, a holistic view of the transformation strategies that these VTFN propose, continued research into consumers' well-being needs and how the various alternative food models address those. It is fundamentally embedded in a food systems approach, to address other challenges in "values" areas such as environmental degradation and social injustice.

For successful consolidation of VTFN, we must prominently focus on governance questions—particularly its conditions and strategies—within which the various food system initiatives and networks are being negotiated:

- reconfigurations of governance and regulatory conditions to make VTFN part of the central decision-making structures of the existing multilevel, state-based regulatory and policy frames (allowing them to gain in legitimation via new collaborations and coalitions while maintaining their integrity and resisting co-option);
- the development of new social, physical, and distributional infrastructures that can scale out their impacts (such as more physical hubs for the more distributed rather than concentrated or retailer-lead nature of their food networks, logistics and shorter supply chains);
- the enrollment of conventional farmers and their unions into the food sustainability debates and policy framings; the embeddedness in a more reflexive governance context that is both supportive and spatially sensitive to their diverse conditions (adapted from Marsden et al. 2018).

Above all, a resilient and resourceful territorial food system, made up of a continuum of VTFN and of various degrees of mainstream actors, needs to be understood and addressed with its contradictions and complex interrelations, including the actors from the supply circuit that feed it and the ones from the broader food system that influence it. It also needs to be examined through its governance structures which co-create ethics in food democracy structures, leading to food sovereignty[9] in the longer term.

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NOTES

1. This framework is designed to assess and foster sustainability values in food systems for an urgent transition (see, among many others, Andrée et al., 2019; IPES Food, 2020; UNCTAD, 2021). For a definition of each of the four core sustainability value sets, see FAO, 2014, p. 79, 108, 146, 176.
2. Co-organized by Gusztáv Nemes, Veronika Lajos, and Rachel Reckinger as convenors of WG 31 "Benefits, challenges, social learning and controversies around local food systems" at the XXVIII European Society for Rural Sociology Congress "Rural futures in a complex world" (Trondheim, Norway, June 25–28, 2019), and uniting international scholars in the field of sustainable food systems (https://esrs2019.no/workgroup/wg31-benefits-challenges-social-learning-and-controversies-around-local-food-systems/).
3. Some of the WG participants contribute as authors to a special issue in *Sociologia Ruralis*, co-edited by Reckinger, Lajos and Nemes: "Benefits, challenges, social learning and controversies around Values-Based Territorial Food Networks (VTFN)" (forthcoming). A condensed version of some findings from my article in *Regions & Cohesion* will be published in the joint editorial of our special issue, which was developed based on my article.
4. Based on the legal framework provided by the EU Regulation No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs (European Parliament, 2012) (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2012/1151/oj/eng).
5. Some authors, such as Kebir & Torre (2013), name this concept "short supply food chains", but this is not the mainstream denomination in the literature.
6. Called in French *Circuits courts et de proximité* (Commission des affaires économiques, 2015).
7. ". . . such as health, quality of life, and connections to nature, place, and community [that] are enacted relationally, rather than through market mechanisms" (idem: 10).
8. LFS, SFCS, and CFN also arguably do this critique, but in a less encompassing form, by focusing on their specific subthemes.

9. Understood as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations" (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

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Redes alimentarias territoriales basadas en valores: calificando las transiciones sostenibles y éticas de las redes alimentarias alternativas.

Resumen: Esta revisión bibliográfica comparativa de los sistemas alimentarios locales, las cadenas cortas de suministro de alimentos y las redes alimentarias cívicas, comprendidas en las redes alimentarias alternativas (RAA), sugiere englobarlas en el novedoso término redes alimentarias territoriales basadas en valores (RATV). Basándose en un análisis de especificidades y deficiencias, el RATV aporta claridad conceptual, en contraste con la coexistencia de los conceptos analizados que oculta puntos estructurales y sistémicos en común relevantes para entender las vías para transformar los sistemas alimentarios éticos y sostenibles. Reflexio-

nando sobre los cuatro conceptos, la RATV busca ser global y pragmática. Califica lo "alternativo" de las RAA a través de "valores de sostenibilidad" sociales, económicos, medioambientales y de gobernanza, y de la co-construcción de la "territorialidad" en constelaciones diversas. Por ello, fomenta el diálogo científico integrado sobre las determinaciones conceptuales de las redes emergentes de transiciones de los sistemas alimentarios en todo el mundo.

Palabras clave: cadenas cortas de suministro, redes alimentarias cívicas, revisión de literatura comparativa, sistemas alimentarios locales, transiciones sostenibles

Réseaux Alimentaires Éthiques et Territoriaux – Values-Based Territorial Food Networks (VTFN) : Une qualification pour les transitions durables et éthiques des Réseaux Alimentaires Alternatifs

Résumé : Cet article se consacre à une revue de littérature comparative des concepts de Systèmes Alimentaires Locaux (*Local Food Systems – LFS*), Circuits Courts et de Proximité (*Short Food Supply Chains – SFSC*), Réseaux Alimentaires Civiques (*Civic Food Networks – CFN*), rassemblés sous le concept ombrelle de Réseaux Alimentaires Alternatifs (*Alternative Food Networks – AFN*). Il propose ensuite de les converger en un nouveau concept ombrelle, nommé Réseaux Alimentaires Éthiques et Territoriaux (*Values-Based Territorial Food Networks – VTFN).* Basé sur l'analyse des spécificités et des faiblesses des quatre concepts courants dans la littérature scientifique, la notion de VTFN apporte une clarté conceptuelle, car la coexistence actuelle de plusieurs concepts masque des points communs structuraux et systémiques – pourtant essentiels pour comprendre les processus de transformations éthiques et durables des systèmes alimentaires. Tout en puisant dans les apports des quatre concepts courants, la notion de VTFN aspire à être englobante et pragmatique. Elle qualifie les aspects "alternatifs" des Réseaux Alimentaires Alternatifs (*Alternative Food Networks – AFN*) par un cadre de quatre ensembles-clés de "valeurs de durabilité" – que sont l'intégrité environnementale, le bien-être social, la gouvernance éthique et la résilience économique –, ainsi que par une co-construction de "territorialité" en constellations variables. Ainsi, le concept de VTFN favorise un dialogue scientifique intégré sur les déterminations conceptuelles de réseaux émergents de transitions des systèmes alimentaires mondiaux.

Mots-clés : Circuits Courts et de Proximité, Réseaux Alimentaires Alternatifs, Réseaux Alimentaires Civiques, revue de littérature comparative, Systèmes Alimentaires Locaux, transitions durables