Hierarchies, overlaps and conflict of values in alternative food networks: experiences and perspectives from producers and suppliers in Castile and León, Spain

MORO GUTIÉRREZ, Lourdes <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2009-0413>, LAMARQUE, Muriel <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4149-2334> and TOMÉ MARTÍN, Pedro <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5380-5994>

Hierarchies, overlaps and conflict of values in alternative food networks: experiences and perspectives from producers and suppliers in Castile and León, Spain

Moro Gutiérrez, Lourdes[a]*, Lamarque, Muriel[b] and Tomé Martín, Pedro[c]

[a]*Department of Social Psychology and Anthropology, University of Salamanca, Spain;* [b]*Institute of Law and Social Sciences, Sheffield Hallam University, England;* [c]*Institute of Language, Literature and Anthropology (ILLA), Spanish National Research Council, Spain.*

*Corresponding author: moro@usal.es

[a]Dr Lourdes Moro Gutiérrez: Associate Professor of the Department of Social Psychology and Anthropology at the University of Salamanca (Spain). Author and co-author of numerous publications, mainly related to the following lines of research: (a) the relationship between cultural diversity and the health-illness-care process; (b) the analysis of practices linked to sustainable food networks, with special emphasis on the study of social, economic and environmental values promoted by stakeholders in these initiatives and their links with the construction of individual and collective identities and with their interest in the promotion of healthy lifestyles; (c) community intervention in a neighborhood setting through the Service-Learning methodology; and (e) humanization in healthcare for cancer patients and their environment. She is currently engaged in the following research projects: "Sustainable food networks as chains of values for agroecological and food transition. Implications for territorial public policies" and "The (In)visibles of Pizarrales".

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2009-0413
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lourdes-Moro-Gutierrez
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?hl=es&user=0HA4mO0AAAAJ

[b]Dr Muriel Lamarque: Anthropologist and Senior Lecturer in Public Health at Sheffield Hallam University, Fellow of the Higher Education Academy of the United Kingdom. Her research areas include minority health, social inequalities, gender and identity within a Critical Medical Anthropology and Social Epidemiology approach. Much of her work has focused on the application of ethnographic and qualitative methods to understanding the illness experiences and

related practices of marginalized populations, such as people from low socioeconomic status or racial/cultural minorities. She also has experience in the field of sustainability studies, particularly in the areas of nutrition and population well-being, where she explores the individual and collective drivers behind organic, local and socially responsible food products and the potential disparities between farmers/suppliers' perspectives and consumers' motivations. Throughout her career she has worked in numerous community settings evaluating the impact of social programs, as well as in governmental institutions and third-sector organizations conducting research on social determinants of health and civic initiatives. She is member of several scientific and specialized networks, such as the Global Research Network on Migrants in Big Cities and the Interdisciplinary Climate, Culture, Health and Gender Network (INTERCLIME). She is currently involved in two research projects: "*Sustainable food networks as value chains for agroecological and food transition. Implications for territorial public policies*" and "*LAHUK (Latin American Health in the UK). A qualitative study of health practices and health-seeking behaviors after migration*".

Web: https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-profiles/muriel-lamarque
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4149-2334
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Muriel-Lamarque
Web of Science: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/1999510

[c]Dr Pedro Tomé Martín: Scientific researcher at the Institute of Language, Literature and Anthropology (ILLA-CSIC). His scientific career has centred on the relationship between cultural processes and socio-environmental sustainability, mainly from the point of view of cultural-political ecology. He has focused most of his work in cattle-raising cultures of the mountains of Castile and León and northwestern Mexico. He is the current vice-director of the Centre for Human and Social Sciences of the CSIC, where he has also been Head of the Department of Anthropology. He has directed *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología* and participates in several committees of other national and international journals, as well as editorial collections. He has also been president of the Federation of Anthropology Associations the Spanish State (in Spanish FAAEE). He is currently involved in two research projects: "*Sustainable food networks as value chains for agroecological and food transition. Implications for territorial public policies*" and "*EULAC for Energy Transition: Research Infrastructures Cooperation for Energy Transition Between Europe and Latin American and Caribbean Countries"*.

Web: https://www.cchs.csic.es/es/personal/pedro-tome-martin
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5380-5994

Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=6QGOwwEAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao

Scopus: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=55315056200

Hierarchies, overlaps and conflict of values in alternative food networks: experiences and perspectives from producers and suppliers in Castile and León, Spain

Abstract: In recent decades we have witnessed, from numerous academic fields, an exponential growth in studies on sustainable food practices, focusing on aspects as diverse as the organization of community initiatives, new agricultural techniques, food security and sovereignty, emerging dietary patterns and change-promoting social movements, among others. Within the cultural aspects that intersect in these practices, the ethical-moral components —i.e., the core values that underlie their participation and development—, remain largely unexplored, demanding greater attention from disciplines such as anthropology. Values play a fundamental role in shaping sustainable food practices, influencing individual choices, community behaviors, policy decisions and the expansion of new ways of understanding supply chains. The different actors involved in these emerging food cultures hold and exercise several types of values, according to their needs, backgrounds and contexts of participation.

This article presents an ethnographic exploration of the value-sets identified within Alternative Food Networks, more precisely the drivers and narratives of farmers, producers and suppliers involved in sustainable initiatives in the region of Castile and León, Spain. The findings will examine the social, environmental/ecological and economic/political dimensions present in their experiences, with special attention to the possible hierarchies, overlaps and conflicts that may exist between the different identified attributes.

Keywords: alternative food networks; values; anthropology; sustainability; ethnographic research

Introduction

Food and eating behaviors are framed within specific contexts, expressing various lifestyles and conditions dependent on numerous factors. If we wonder why we eat what we eat, the answer will have to consider not only the biological aspects of nutrition, but most importantly the underlying sociocultural and historical determinants behind it.

Among the variety of foods to which we have access to and that can nurture our bodies, we select those that are preferable for their social, economic and/or ecological meaning (Rozin 2007). Culture influences the nature of our food, when and with whom to eat it, alongside other aspects such as its origin, level of processing, preparation, roles and distribution of goods, rules, ideals and beliefs, associated traditions, status differences, trends, etc. (Contreras 1992; Gracia 2010; Espeitx and Cáceres 2011). In the words of Montanari (2006: xii), "food takes shape as a decisive element of human identity as one of the most effective means of expressing and communicating that identity".

Despite the advancements taking place in multiple subjects, several authors have pointed out how certain cultural aspects within food studies remain neglected (De Solier and Duruz 2013; Medina and Aguilar 2022). The moralities of food production, provisioning and consumption —particularly in urban and rural landscapes—, for example, have only recently received attention from the social sciences, revealing a prevailing need for additional exploration on the matter. Such aspects include beliefs, virtues, ethical dispositions and guiding principles associated with food choices, that is, the frame of values and motivations recognized by the social actors involved in eating practices. As Onorati and d'Ovidio (2023) point out, values are inseparable from practices, since they are normative-affective constructs that guide actions and present people with constant dilemmas. These values are difficult to categorize because, in addition to being mutable and flexible, they are interrelated and transversal, linked to the social, moral, economic, political and health-related spheres.

In the last decades, many regions around the world have witnessed the growth of divergent, ethical or sustainable movements, spaces and practices around food, introducing their own ways of understanding and exercising the whole feeding process (Paddock 2015). Among them, those commonly referred to as Alternative Food Networks

(AFNs)[1] encompass a wide corpus of actions, frequently founded on a critique to industrial or mainstream systems, while proposing a different relationship between food provision, consumption culture and sustainability (Renting, Marsden and Banks 2003; Barbera and Dagnes 2016; Holloway et al. 2016). These experiences[2] aim to engage people with each other and with nature following three common objectives: to be economically viable, ecologically sustainable and socially just (Edwards 2016). AFNs are linked to consumers' interest in knowing the origin of food and production processes, as well as their concern about food safety, health, and the negative consequences, both social and environmental, of dominant global food systems (Goodman et al. 2012; Jarosz 2008; Michel-Villarreal et al. 2019). They can include the adoption of local, small-scale projects and sustainable production methods entailing minimal use of external supplies, short distribution distances, lower greenhouse gas emissions, limited processing, elimination of intermediate steps between producer and consumer, and a focus on quality over productivity. Distribution usually takes place through different initiatives in the community —cooperatives and organic supermarkets, proximity stores, consumption

[1] Recent conceptual revisions have pointed out the persisting ambiguity around the definition of AFNs, and therefore a lack of consensus around its meaning (Tregear 2011; Reckinger 2022). According to Michel-Villarreal et al. (2024), most conceptualizations revolve around the attributes of “alterity”, “connectedness”, “proximity” and “sustainability”, present in various degrees and combinations across diverse spaces. The analysis of underlying values can help gain further understanding on the way AFNs are defined —especially by the participating social actors—, and how these definitions coincide or diverge from academic interpretation.

[2] Such initiatives have also been referred to in the literature as *short food-supply chains* (SFSCs) (Chiffoleau and Dourian 2020; Marsden, Banks and Bristow 2000; Renting, Marsden and Banks 2003), *civic food networks* (CFNs) (Giovannini, Forno and Magnani 2023; Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012; Renting, Schermer and Rossi 2012), *sustainable food networks* (Sánchez-Hernández 2024) or *local food networks* (Guzmán et al. 2013), in an effort to emphasize the nuances among experiences. In all these cases, however, similar principles of environmental concern, social/territorial cohesion and critique of large-scale production models tend to coexist.

groups, box schemes, solidarity purchasing groups, social-orchards, etc.— that connect all the actors in the food chain (De Bernardi et al. 2020).

In most cases, involvement in these experiences is a "moral issue" (Carlisle 2015) and symbolizes a shared philosophy of life that stands for a close relationship of these people with the environment and the community. Some of these initiatives stem from the principles of autonomy, solidarity, food security, social justice and respect for local culture and traditions, as well as the desire to support the rural economy and the connection between producers and consumers. Likewise, the food items are accompanied by symbols and narratives on "healthy", "local", "natural" and "fresh", among other attributes (Aguiar, DelGrossi and Thomé 2018; Mastronardi et al. 2019). The motivations for participation can be both individual and collective and vary depending on the type of activity and the agents involved (producers, distributors and consumers). Aspects such as food quality, improving the local economy or environmental preservation could be listed as regular concerns among supporting actors (Zoll et al. 2018). These spaces can also bring together people who are committed, socially active and who emphasize the communitarian component of such projects for association and exchange (Corsi and Novelli 2018).

This markedly moral component, together with the multiplicity of actions, sectors and interests involved, makes it relevant to inquire about the value schemes embedded in AFNs, not only at a conceptual level but also at an empirical one, capturing the real motivations (and underlying hierarchies, overlaps, divergences) of the different agents in the food chain. Producers, distributors, and consumers may hold differing priorities, which can lead to tensions in their shared goals and ideals. For instance, while some producers may highlight sustainability, environmental regeneration, and fair revenues, suppliers might focus on logistical efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and scalability, which

can sometimes conflict with the ecological practices championed by farmers and manufacturers. Similarly, consumers may value accessibility and affordability, which can lead to challenges in ensuring that the ethical values upheld by producers/distributors are maintained without compromising economic feasibility.

Therefore, this paper addresses two research questions: What ethical, social, environmental and economic-political values are endorsed by producers and suppliers within AFNs? How do such values manifest, overlap or come into conflict in the everyday practices of these food arrangements? This research will thus contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities intrinsic to AFNs by examining the entangled values of producers and distributors, and by exploring how these values converge or diverge within AFNs and enhance or undermine their transformative potential.

Considering these movements as increasingly prominent in the Spanish context —and stemming from questions about the influence of values in AFNs organization and performance—, we propose to explore, through an ethnographic approach, the experiences and narratives of individuals involved in short supply chains and sustainable food initiatives in the region of Castile and León, Spain.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing values: from anthropology to the study of AFNs

The intersecting nature of human values has elicited their study from different disciplines across time. In the field of anthropology, theoretical explorations can be traced back to the early and mid-20th century, establishing two main approaches to the concept. The first of them, of a structuralist underpinning, conceptualizes values as objective phenomena, entrenched in cultural systems and independent of subjects (Robbins and Sommerschuh 2016). Examples of this are the seminal work of Clyde Kluckhohn (1951: 391) —who defined values as action-guiding "conceptions of the desirable", both

individual and communal— and Louis Dumont (1986), who focused on value hierarchies and "paramount" principles that organize cultural elements as part of fixed ideological structures. The second approach, on the other hand, conceives values as something derived from human activity, and therefore produced and modified collectively (Robbins and Sommerschuh 2016). David Graeber (2018) is one of the contemporary representatives of this action-oriented interpretation, believing in values' subjective nature and therefore, mutability.

In the realm of AFN studies, most value-focused literature seems to have steered in this last direction, highlighting the motivational or goal-oriented drivers that are present and reproduced across these initiatives (Kallio 2020). For authors such as Gruvaeus and Dahlin (2021), for example, values can only be understood in their spatial-temporal context, as part of specific cultural models of action and meaning. Considering this, values can be pragmatically used to assess the ambiguities and unsolved issues of AFNs, helping to make better classifications and distinctions based on the shared ethical principles that emerge in each practice (Reckinger 2022).

Given that most AFNs arise as responses to the perceived failings of conventional food systems, the analysis of their underlying ethical and cultural values can be viewed through the lens of moral economies. This concept, firstly introduced by Thompson (1966) in his study of British working class, refers to systems of exchange or production that are not solely driven by profit motives, but also by social norms and expectations about fairness, solidarity, justice, and community well-being (Carlisle 2015; Galt 2013; Leiper and Clarke-Sather 2017). Such beliefs, therefore, gain special prominence in the organizational analysis of these networks, as they shape both the practices of food production and the expectations of participating consumers. In this sense, values can be interpreted positively as something to be promoted and achieved, or negatively as

something to be avoided. Finally, values can have different meanings for people even if they share the same environment and can be presented differently according to gender, age, social position, etc.

Below, we propose a classification of values that will help us examine and identify their presence and articulation in the AFNs under study. This is a merely analytical categorization based on previous contributions on the subject (Rokeach 1973; Barnes et al 2011; Ferguson and Hanson 2013; Michel-Villarreal et al. 2019; Lamarque, Tomé and Moro 2023). In practice, however, values present themselves as interrelated and can be often difficult to differentiate, even within the same experience. Due to people linking them and using some terms interchangeably, these value-based categories can be fluid, changing and even contradictory. For instance, the same element can have different attributes (i.e., a *product of the land* can be *healthy* and generate *identity*) and certain values can be double-sided, so that in some contexts they are considered positive and in others, negative (Espeitx 2011). In addition, groups may share the same ideals but name them using different terminology.

Based on reasons that are commonly argued for the consumption of some foods over others and the features traditionally associated with AFN-type activities, predominant values can be grouped around three broad areas: (1) social, (2) environmental/territorial and (3) economic/political. These categories also coincide with the dimensions for evaluating sustainability proposed in the Three Bottom Line Framework (Elkington 1994); a broad approach that promotes businesses and organizations to consider their long-term contributions in terms of 'people, planet, and profit' (Cacciolatti et al. 2024). In the context of AFNs, this tool can help analyze how these initiatives are operating within the scope of sustainability, a crucial concept in addressing those complex challenges they aim to solve.

(1) Social values. This set includes the following sub-categories:

a) Values related to *social justice* and *equity.* These values focus on fairness, inclusion, and the distribution of resources and opportunities across all community members (Alkon 2008; Gómez Mestres and Lien 2017). They emphasize horizontal relationships and promote equitable decision-making. This category includes principles such as *solidarity*, *empathy*, *respect* and *altruism*.

b) Values that shape a sense of *community* (feeling of belonging to a group). These are based on participation, co-responsibility, collaborative work, shared deliberation, knowledge and mutual learning. *Trust* among AFN actors/members, close relationship with producers, cooperation, support and interdependence between organizations are also relevant identity-building aspects (O'Kane and Wijaya 2015; Pétursson 2018).

c) Values that connect food and *health*. In this sense, there would be, on one hand, all those linked to the organoleptic properties of food and its nutritional content (quality, taste, freshness, authenticity, naturality, nutritional content, absence of preservatives) and on the other hand, all those that refer to the wellbeing of people, their care and benefit (Hall 2011; Escobar-López et al. 2017)

(2) Environmental and territorial values. In this group, two principles stand out as fundamental properties, *ecological sustainability* and *locality*. The first one is linked to the commitment to reduce further damage to the environment and the recovery of natural surroundings, implying productive practices that protect ecosystems and paying special attention to the controlled utilization of renewable and non-renewable resources (Feenstra 2002; Grasseni 2014). Locality, a widely employed concept in relevant literature, is not officially regulated and can have different connotations for different actors (Eriksen 2013). It can be a distance measure (food grown/produced within a given radius of inclusion) or based on geographic/political boundaries (regional production, designation

of origin (PDO) (Trivette 2015). It can also hold relational meanings, linked to social connections between producers and customers (Dunne et al. 2011).

(3) Economic-political values. This group encompasses ideas and principles about *economic justice*, supporting family businesses, fair prices and small-scale producers. It also questions hegemonic consumerist thinking, promoting a respectful economy, at the service of people and the planet (Parkins and Craig 2009). At the same time, it includes certain activist ideals around *redistribution*, *food security* and other critiques to capitalist productive and social models.

It should be clarified that although most pre-existing literature (Kallio 2020; Lamarque, Tomé and Moro 2023; Sánchez 2024), concur on a relatively shared value system within AFNs —in alignment with the categorization we have just proposed—the existence of some disagreement in this area should also be acknowledged. For example, Baldi et al. (2019), in their work with Solidarity Purchase Groups (SPG) in the metropolitan area of Milan, showed how certain initiatives do not necessarily meet an expected or traditional value set. For example, some actors are more prone to engage in AFNs out of interest for food safety and healthiness than to altruistic motives, such as environmental sustainability or solidarity towards small-scale producers. Other users do not consider peri-urban and local food particularly desirable, seeming more prone to look for products that are not locally produced. Finally, it is imperative to recall that some people engage in these networks as a form of personal differentiation (status marker) and to practice increasingly widespread and fashionable modes of consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Grosglik 2017). For this reason, it should be emphasized that the classifications and organizational schemes outlined here ought to be considered and contrasted in the specific social and cultural context of each initiative, since structural, community and

political conditions may generate diverse experiences that do not necessarily conform to what occurs in other environments.

An ethnographic exploration of motivating values in AFNs: the experiences of producers and distributors in Castile and León, Spain.

This paper presents an anthropological assessment of the most significant values in the AFNs of the Spanish region of Castile and León, based on an exploratory study with an ethnographic approach. The data produced comes from analyzing the experiences and testimonies of multiple representatives of these food networks, particularly those linked to the production and distribution of ecological and sustainable food in the nine provinces of the region.

Materials and methods

The selection of Castile and León as a research location was based on three main considerations. First, this study is situated within a broader research project that identifies this region as a relevant case study for improving the design and implementation of public policies aimed at fostering a sustainable transformation of the food system. Second, Castile and León is the largest region in Spain, covering more than 18.6 per cent of the national territory, yet it is home to only 4.83 per cent of the population. Consequently, it has a very low population density—25.4 inhabitants per square kilometer—approximately half the national average. Its economy, landscape, and regional identity are strongly rooted in agriculture, food processing, and the production of highly valued specialties (such as wines, Iberian ham, and cheeses) by a large number of small-scale farms and artisanal producers, which together account for ten per cent of Spain's food production in value terms (Junta de Castilla y León, 2024). Third, despite the central role of food in the region, Castile and León remains underrepresented in qualitative research

on alternative forms of food production, distribution, and consumption, particularly with regard to the motivations and value systems of actors involved in alternative food networks (AFNs).

The data from the AFNs was compiled using various research techniques. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with owners and managers of AFNs. In-person observational data was obtained from researchers' repeated participation in community spaces where actions linked to these networks regularly take place, such as farmers' markets and organic food fairs (either in urban locations like Ávila, Burgos, Salamanca and Zamora, or in rural settings across the region). Additionally, the research team browsed the content of initiatives' websites and social media to obtain complementary information on the origin and structure of the networks, the type of activities involved, their historical development and their connections with other associations and initiatives related to food. Interview transcripts, observational notes and memos from online research were combined to create the corpus of empirical data.

Out of a total of 92 interviews, 20 of them were selected for the purpose of this article. These cases (covering at least two for each of the 9 provinces of the region) correspond to producers and promoters of AFNs (9 women and 11 men), linked to initiatives related to livestock farming (cows, pigs, poultry), heliciculture (snails), agriculture, apiculture, organic/naturist stores and the manufacture of cheese, beer, snacks, oil and jam. Of the 20, 16 participants were farmers/manufacturers, 2 were coordinators/managers of consumer groups, and 2 were organic grocery shop owners, to also include the narratives and insights of suppliers and consumers [See Table 1].

The script designed for the interviews included questions related to the following topics:

- Historical conformation and organizational characteristics of each AFN or activity (marketing channels, suppliers/buyers, decision-making processes within the organization, governance, use of technology, etc.).
- Social participation and motivations.
- Underlying values given to the activity, products and participants.
- Sustainable practices, certifications and alternatives. Characteristics of the region and productive market.
- Communal and political aspects (relations with the local population, other AFNs and the public administration).

All the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interlocutors and transcribed verbatim using Transkriptor™, for their subsequent coding and analysis with ATLAS TI™ software. The same applies to the content of their websites and social media.

For the treatment of the information, thematic analysis was performed (Guest, Namey and MacQueen 2012). This is particularly useful for examining the discourses of AFNs participants, highlighting commonalities as well as differences in their messages and practices. The specific procedure of this method, based on the stages defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), allows rigorous results to be obtained. At the same time, its flexible nature makes it possible to adapt the codes and categories created and to revise and restructure the analytical work according to possible needs or findings that arise in each study (Moro and Lamarque 2019).

This work complies with the deontological guidelines for the practice of professional anthropology of the Association of Anthropology of the Spanish State and the code of ethics of the American Anthropological Association. All participants were informed of the characteristics of the research prior to their involvement and were

required to sign an informed consent before the beginning of the interviews. In order to preserve the participants' identity, the identifiers presented next to the testimonies only refer to the type of activity conducted by the person and the province to which it corresponds.

Results

The ethnographic exploration allowed us to delve into the different values, conceptions and visions held by AFNs producers and suppliers in Castile and León. When defining their practices, the people involved started by recognizing a component of distinctiveness in the idiosyncrasy of their projects, linked to an interest in establishing meaningful commercial and community relations. In all the cases explored, the members self-identify as people with a different philosophy of life, attached to a rural lifestyle, that favors sustainable values about the environment, nature and life in general, and implies a convivial and collaborative participation in society. As two participants pointed out:

> *"We are talking about economic circuits that are supposed to have other values and that are alternative, sustainable and therefore, the relations between supplier and customer are not only commercial, but behind or underneath there is a series of values"* (Farmer, Salamanca)

> *"The families that buy have a different philosophy of life, in addition to wanting to eat healthy and a quality product, they understand life in general with more sustainable values"* (Consumer group representative, Burgos, whose website also emphasizes this standpoint: *"This manifesto presents a project related to the land, the beings that inhabit it, and the people it reaches. We frame our human activity within a context that encompasses much more than just working the land"*)

This identification with a "different" mindset, however, referred mainly to a position outside of mainstream consumer culture, without necessarily taking on specific parties or explicit political overtones.

Environmental/territorial values were also widely emphasized in the discourse of AFNs participants, especially when discussing food production and distribution processes. The concept of *sustainability* appeared mostly in reference to ecological aspects, linked to debates concerning official organic certifications, product labelling, and their implications for both manufacturers and consumers. Among the producers and manufacturers analyzed in this paper —including a consumption group with their own orchards—, 14 of them had organic certification granted by the CAECyL[3] , while 3 did not count with an official stamp for their products. However, in all cases, production involved the use of ecologically responsible practices, whether through the chosen materials (avoiding plastics, using only recyclable cardboard or reusable packaging), farming techniques (not employing heavy machinery) or soil conservation practices (composting and fertilizing with manure, rotating crops, etc.). For this reason, when talking about their food, all participants employed the term "sustainable", while the attribute of "organic" was solely reserved for those producers who had an official certification. In all cases, this respectful approach to the environment was highlighted by the participants for its overall benefits, as well as for its ability to show the consumer the honest origin of food.

[3] The CAECyL (Organic Agriculture Council of Castilla y León) is the public authority for the control of organic production in the autonomous community, according to Regulation (EU) 2018/848.

"We plant potatoes and remove the bugs from the potatoes by hand, because we don't... The only thing we use is the manure from our chickens. That is what we put in the garden, nothing else" (Farmer, Palencia)

"We are people who take care of the environment, that we care about it because it is ours and we feel it as such" (Cheese manufacturer, Salamanca)

"We respect and support our planet's sustainability by using local and ecological inputs. All together for a sustainable world" (Jam manufacturer's website, Zamora)

The initiatives that opted for the organic stamp did so because it provides an administration-mediated authenticity to their goods, their production techniques and the ingredients and materials used. For these producers, the official recognition was perceived as an added value, giving a formal frame to the *trust* of customers. Due to long distances from rural Castile and León to large urban markets (Madrid, Basque Country), this choice is justified as an opportunity to reach distant but committed consumers. Fieldwork in markets has confirmed the symbolic value of this stamp, which is displayed prominently on packages and stalls. Conversely, those enterprises without organic certification diminished the importance of the stamp, while heightening the *local* origin of their food and the *trust* that is placed in the producer, as a guarantee of *quality* and production *transparency*.

"The important thing is not the stamp but that there is confidence that you are doing well" (Farmer, Burgos)

"There are products that don't have a stamp at an organic level, but they are trustworthy. So sometimes we put it ahead of the organic ones. There are very small manufacturers that do not have a seal. Those of cosmetics, for example. But we know how they produce and that is what we say, trust" (Consumer group representative, Palencia)

> *"Customers say: «I buy your eggs because I know how you take care of the hens». In other words, I really believe that this is because of a concern about how producers take care of the animals and where they come from.* (Poulterer, Palencia)

This component of trust and closeness to communities was also promoted by regularly organized visits to farms, orchards and factories, to display the production and processing environments of their food. This was done by both certified and non-certified producers and is posted on websites and social media (reels, pictures) to appeal to potential customers:

> *"(...) we organize gatherings, we have one event a year with a visit to a farm and an assembly meeting... We also try to hold a training day, one afternoon, where we bring one of the farmers or someone else"* (Consumer group representative, Palencia)

> *"We sometimes have lunches, we invite people to go for a walk through the orchards, or to see the hayloft we have made, and we have a meal so that people from the group can come and share. We do that from time to time, probably once a quarter"* (Consumer group representative, Burgos)

When talking about the attributes of products, in many cases there was a re-signification of the symbolic nature of the values: those currently considered *ecological* and *sustainable* were partially the same as those regarded as *traditional* (local, artisan, homemade), perhaps the attribute most highlighted by the regional authorities' marketing campaigns outside Castile and León. In this sense, the quality of food was enhanced by its resemblance to "products from before", linking sustainability with a nostalgic image of pre-modern food systems from a well-known rural region whose landscape is repeatedly showcased in most AFN's digital spaces. The almost individualized, *artisanal* treatment that farmers and manufacturers give to their goods was widely emphasized,

repeatedly referring to the small scale and the dedicated attention paid to each finished product:

> *"Well, I would say that it is a high-quality artisan product, because in the end it is a small-scale product, it is a product where the fruit, for the most part and when possible, is bought directly in the fields. I look a lot, I select all the fruit, I do it almost piece by piece, choosing it. It is 100% fruit, it has very little sugar, because I think it is important to show that the product is 100% fruit, and the sugar must be minimal so that it is not too sweet, so that it tastes like the fruit it is. It is made entirely by hand, it is a product of very few jars, it is a limited production. So, I think it's of the highest quality, of course"* (Jam manufacturer, Zamora)

> *"(...) everyone says that when you receive a box of my produce, you can smell the leeks, the onions… that is, besides the type of production, because it has been recently harvested. Everyone says, wow, the quality is very noticeable"* (Farmer, Salamanca)

> *"The way the older folks would seriously tell us that producing food was one of the most important things a person could do"* (Farmer's website, Valladolid)

Among the attributes that defined food quality, participants also included *proximity* and *locality*, focusing on the interest of consumers to know what they eat and where it comes from. Despite the nuances between them, in practice both terms were used almost interchangeably, showing how they are conceptualized and entangled by participants. When referring to these values, both producers and distributors adhered to a mixed understanding, integrating the element of short distances in the food chain, knowing food's geographical origin and establishing a proximal relationship among actors:

"It is necessary to recover the practice of eating as local as possible, that the produce are local varieties, that it is good, that it is of proximity" (Farmer, Burgos)

"(...) in the end we are what we eat. And it helps people to be more sustainable and to be able to eat a product that they know where it really comes from, and that is better, of higher quality. But, above all, I think that by being here, the project contributes to people coming to know us, to put our town on the map" (Farmer, Palencia)

Locality was also underlined to emphasize the quality of products that have a traditional/historical geographical linkage (chickpeas from Pedrosillo, lentils from Armuña, asparagus from Fuentesaúco), similar to the "*appellation d'origine contrôlée-AOC*" system so well established across other regions. Besides the identity component, this was also related to economic-territorial values, by promoting a revitalization of the rural environment and its population:

"I think it is setting an example that another kind of life is possible... let's see, life in the countryside is hard, it is difficult, you must work hard, you must be entrepreneurial, you have to make investments, but it is viable. So, I believe that we have been able, in some way with our example, to influence other people to do the same […]. A little of that essence of things well done, of things done with love, of small productions, everything very detailed […]. It is to be able to support those who are closest to you..." (Jam manufacturer, Zamora)

"I have always wanted to do something in the village [it is the village of his grandparents]*, in the countryside...to revitalize the village, to be able to hire someone from the village"* (Snail farmer, Zamora)

[Explaining the reasons for settling in the town] *"There was already a group of young people here with projects linked to the territory, sustainable with the environment... So wanted it to be my livelihood so that I could stay in the area. And I also wanted to be able*

to promote the consumption of products that were already being produced here, such as veal..." (Organic shop owner, Soria)

"We came to firmly believe in the tremendous potential of small-scale agroecological projects to create real opportunities for life and dignified work in rural communities" (Farmer's website, Valladolid)

Lastly, the attribute of locality sometimes conflicted with other values, as in the case of those *organic* foods that are produced thousands of kilometers away. Among participants, the responses to this dilemma were not uniform: some producers justified long distance supply chains and considered them occasionally necessary for getting or keeping their organic certification (for example, by bringing raw materials from afar). Others, however, were hesitant about choosing certain organic goods due to the environmental damage caused by their provision:

"For example, the other day I had raspberries that came from a northern country, I do not know which one... Why do we need to eat a product —even if it is organic— from so far away, if in the end it is polluting a lot?" (Farmer, Palencia)

"(...) we prefer to opt for a product that is not organic before buying from large organic distributors. It is no longer sustainable if you bring a product from Italy or wherever, no matter how organic it is" (Consumer group representative, Palencia)

The consideration for local products, therefore, is based on relative definition with respect to other attributes, depending on the context and the guiding principles of each initiative. It must be also noted that the large size of the region (94,225 km^2) turns *"local"* or *"regional"* sourcing/selling into a rather fluid and undefined term.

The ecological/sustainable and traditional dimensions of food were linked in all the AFNs to a mostly predominant social value: *health*. Participants in these initiatives,

regardless of the type of activity, opt for products that take care of both the body and the environment. As a livestock farmer from León pointed out:

> *"There is only one body, and those of us who produce organic goods are dedicated to taking care of it"*

The quality attributed to these foods was associated with better health and positive well-being, especially in relation to a seasonal diet, natural (without preservatives), fresh, as little processed as possible and from eco-friendly, local agriculture. This was enhanced in the websites and the testimonies of participants, acknowledging the increase of consumers with pre-existing health problems (chronic diseases, allergies, intolerances...), as well as people who prefer these products from an illness-prevention standpoint.

> [Speaking of customers] *"They are people who are concerned about health, about healthy food"* (Farmer, Salamanca)

> *"In the end, it is better to eat a little more sustainable and healthier"* (Farmer, Palencia)

> *"We deal a lot with vegan products, because the vegan product, when it comes to intolerances, milk, egg, is great for us"* (Organic shop owner, Ávila)

> *"(...) something that cannot go wrong is organic food. In fact, some doctors and some institutions are betting on it because there are diseases nowadays that are rare, possibly derived from food"* (Farmer, Valladolid)

> *"Agroecological practices make it possible to produce healthy, high-quality food in abundance and at affordable prices, without the use of any chemical inputs* (Farmer's website, Valladolid)

Besides *health*, the thematic analysis of the interviews did not show a strong presence of other social values, such as *equity, social justice*, *cooperation* and *solidarity*.

The enunciation of these attributes was sporadic and seems to be surpassed by the promotion of environmentalism, customer-producer relations based on trust and healthiness as core categories, which constitute the main axis of values in the surveyed AFNs. From the perspective of participants, there were frequent references to low public commitment to these initiatives, due to factors such as higher food prices, a more complicated purchasing process and rejection to "radical" ideologies associated with organic goods.

> *"I completely agree that the problem of organic products is more an issue of convenience, because the people who buy from me have to make an effort that the rest of the people don't need to make"* (Farmer, Salamanca)

> *"My product, as it is more expensive, people buy it when they can or want and that's it. «This month I buy from you, next month I don't buy from you» and there is no further commitment"* (Poulterer, Valladolid)

As already noted, social/community concerns were somewhat evident in the narratives about revitalization of deprived and neo-colonized rural environments and in the attempts to make visible the work of small-scale local producers, who compete with the pressures of the conventional market and the inclusion of organic and sustainable products in large supermarkets:

> *"We refuse to see farming as disconnected from defending our land and fighting for social justice. That's why we will keep […] actively joining networks and movements to resist destructive development and protect our territories from threats like fracking"* (Consumer group's website, Burgos)

However, in most cases, these social components appear as ancillary to the economic/productive ones, pointing towards a beneficial outcome of alternative initiatives rather than a primary motivational driver for their development.

Discussion

The personal and digital testimonies presented in this paper highlight people's growing concern about the ecological impact of industrial, capitalist methods of food production and their negative consequences on landscapes and communities. Such critical trends have motivated, for several years now, the foundation and development of different sustainable food initiatives all over the region of Castile and León, as well as in other parts of Spain and the world.

Our ethnographic research aimed to shed light on the principles that govern AFNs, particularly the motivations behind producers and distributors in a rural region mostly comprised of small landholdings. The analysis of the selected initiatives reveals the complex, ambivalent and mutable nature of the values held by these actors, where environmental, economic-political and social components intermingle, overlap and even confront or compromise each other.

In the context of Castile and León, respect for the environment and interest in ecological sustainability emerge as guiding principles that underpin productive practices and participation/consumption interests above other attributes, such as social justice, solidarity or group membership. These results are consistent with recent contributions from Strauser and Stewart (2024) or Leduc et al. (2023), who emphasize the concern of farmers and manufacturers on promoting the conservation of natural habitats and using productive techniques that minimize the impact of climate change and overexploitation of land. This primacy of the environmental component can be understood in the context

of these AFN initiatives, where more than 85% of producers counted with organic certification for their food. The efforts to achieve and maintain this accreditation, together with the regulatory framework it establishes, make the environmental aspect one of the most significant attributes for farmers and manufacturers, since it adds additional value to their products and brings assurance to —mostly distant— urban customers concerned with quality. Furthermore, several of the farmers interviewed were members of cooperatives and associations for agroecological production, which also reflects the prominence given to this principle.

Environmental values were accompanied by a special interest in favoring local supply chains, not only for their reduced carbon footprint but also for supporting declining rural economies through the establishment of sustainable food landscapes and geographical indications of quality, which strengthen the connection of certain territories/populations with the goods produced there (Sanz-Cañada and Muchnik 2016; Vandecandelaere 2010). In this sense, 'locavorism', as described by Rudy (2012) and Azevedo (2015), not only demonstrates an activism or initiative linked to the provenance of food production but also promotes relevant social and cultural aspects, by seeking close, trust-based relationships between consumers, products and producers (Kessari et al. 2020; O'Connor et al. 2024) and celebrating rural knowledge and traditions threatened by depopulation and industrialization. The narratives constructed and displayed by our participants revealed their desire to recover former "ways of doing" based on caregiving and artisanal manufacture, while promoting the revitalization of rural spaces and attracting other people to become involved in local projects or to develop their own.

As Fernández Álvarez (2013) indicates, these are rising neo-ruralist trends, in which some level of social protest, nostalgia about a fulfilled rural past, naturalistic outlooks and renovation projects coexist. However, these associations between the local,

the traditional and better food quality can end up having a more idyllic emotional/reactionary character than a critical one, presuming most of the times that “old ways” or shorter supply chains are free of self-interest, power asymmetries and are inherently sustainable (Reckinger 2022). Similarly, the enhancement of the local can sometimes conflict with other more pragmatic values, such as productivity or subsistence. This is the case for some organic producers that rely on distant markets or supplies for their own profit. As Hammer (2022) points out, the logic of capitalist markets and the practicalities of alternative farmers embedded in them lead to frequent negotiations on certain aspects of sustainability, distancing from clear-cut, rigid understandings of the concept and its exercise.

In a second axis of the scheme of values, we identified the prominent position of health as a motivating factor for both the production and consumption of these foods (Escobar-López et al. 2019; Rana and Paul 2020). Besides recognizing "healthiness" as an attribute sought by their customers, in the case of the farmers and manufacturers interviewed, it was interesting how they describe themselves as agents of care, in charge of bringing safe, beneficial and body-friendly options to the public. This aligns with findings from Stock (2007), who highlights the reflexive character of many current producers, with explicit moral concerns about the health and welfare of the population. At the same time, it highlights the role of producers as potential agents of change, not merely as individuals guided by pecuniary interests (Leduc et al. 2023; O'Connor et al. 2024). This element of health also relates to the aforementioned component of conservationism and rural idyll usually associated to AFNs, where consumers and producers perceive “traditional” rurality (in opposition to industrialized farming) as healthy and beneficial (Goszczyński and Wróblewski 2020).

Regarding social values, the interviews demonstrated the interest of producers and distributors in strengthening the rural fabric and establishing relationships of trust and proximity with consumers and with each other, without an explicit mention to other concerns such as social justice, equity or redistribution of wealth. This contradicts other definitions and discourses which place socio-community aspects on a par with environmental and productive motivations (Brinkley 2017; Moragues-Faus 2017). However, authors such as Shreck, Getz and Feenstra (2006) have pointed out the distance between the expectations placed on the ecological/territorial and the weight given to labour and social/structural concerns affecting these sectors. From the institutional point of view, for example, certification processes present unclear guidelines regarding the social components within sustainability standards, focusing mainly on the restrained use of agrochemicals in production. Moreover, the balance between regulatory factors, the maintenance of a profit margin and other market pressures can lead to a concentration of efforts and concerns in certain issues rather than others, ignoring, for example, underlying injustices and inequities that require equal attention (Allen et al 2003; Reckinger 2022). From the perspective of the participants and stakeholders themselves, therefore, it is necessary to further explore the point of contact/divergence between the ideal or philosophical constructs regarding the social commitment of AFNs and their actual impact at empirical-pragmatic levels, translated for example into fairer labor relations, more horizontal decision-making structures, reduction of social and gender inequalities, abolition of exploitative regimes and other elements within these transformative proposals (Weiler et al. 2016).

Concluding remarks

Through an ethnographic immersion into the narratives of producers and distributors, this research provides critical insights on the internal tensions within AFNs in Castile and

León. While these initiatives build upon a radical critique of industrial food systems, their internal drives are mainly articulated through environmental, territorial, and health-related discourses, often rooted in the distinctive geographical and socio-economic context of the region. Although AFNs define themselves as spaces of solidarity and equity, the empirical evidence suggests that social values are secondary to environmental/local and health concerns, the core categories of engagement. Social outcomes -such as strengthening rural communities or supporting smallholders from market pressures- are frequently framed as "beneficial externalities" rather than primary drivers of engagement. This finding aligns with ethnographic critiques of the "de-socialization" of the ecological discourses, where labor concerns and structural social inequalities are often subordinated to environmental aesthetics.

Environmental stewardship and ecological sustainability emerge as the ‘guiding ethos’ for both production and participation. This environmental primacy reflects a contemporary concern about landscape conservation and the mitigation of anthropogenic climate change. These goals are entangled with territorial attachment to these endangered rural areas, thus promoting local supply chains as strategies to re-localize rural economies. Participants’ narratives underscore a strong will to reclaim traditional know-how (*formas de hacer*) based on artisanal practices respectful of landscape, thereby re-signifying ecological procedures as "traditional" and reinforcing the rural imaginary, two key elements of the self-representation of this region.

This geography-sensitive moral economy is not void of ambivalence, fluidity, and even conflict, because ecological, politico-economic, and social components overlap and sometimes clash with each other. For instance, health is a battlefield between individual benefits and environmental implications. Claims for health allow producers to position themselves as "agents of care" who supply safe and healthy food. They construct a direct

link between food quality and holistic well-being, prioritizing seasonal, fresh, and low-processed foodstuff. However, this moral hierarchy is contested when organic inputs from distant suppliers, a practice that entails a significant carbon footprint.

Therefore, in theoretical terms, our analysis unveils a complex and shifting moral economy within the AFNs of Castile and León, whose dominant ecological values and health-centric narratives are legitimized by institutionalized certifications, held by 85 per cent of the producers surveyed; these stamps enable access to markets and revenues that finally contribute to making a living. All in all, AFNs are economic arrangements too, so the economy -even conceptualized otherwise- plays a crucial role in their inception and performance. These more individualistic values and narratives overshadow ideals of solidarity or social justice, much more demanding in terms of interpersonal cooperation, community engagement, and time investment.

When it comes to building a moral economy via AFN development, the case of Castile and León suggests that economic constraints -the need to make a living- bias producers' daily practices: environmental defense, territorial/local attachment, and health care are not only self-standing values, but food attributes that may provide income as well in capitalist markets. From this perspective, making a living out of AFN engagement seems to be a safer and sounder way to achieve a more sustainable, localized, and healthy food system, connecting rural and urban environments.

The social dimension of sustainability, which entails higher investment in bond making and probably fewer individual rewards in the short run, plays a secondary role in the AFN mindset and practice. This finding provides a more nuanced anthropological perspective on the shortcomings of these networks to fully address the issue of transformative social justice they claim for. These between ideological aspirations and

pragmatic realities must be accounted for in sustainability policies for successful design and implementation.

Limitations and future research directions

As mentioned before, this contribution is framed in a larger research project still in progress. The activities selected represent a small part of the total number of cases under research, mostly focused on the narratives of producers, distributors and organizers of consumption networks. Future lines of research propose to broaden the perspectives and analysis from new angles, to incorporate variables such as gender, education, background and age of participants, or AFN type, as well as other elements that account for power relations and potential inequalities within (or between) initiatives (Qi, 2024; O'Connor et al. 2024). At the same time, this paper acknowledges the need to contrast the experiences, motivations and values of non-organizer consumers (customers) to these results, in order to explore dynamics and potential conflicts between collectivist/altruistic values, on one side, and interests and standpoints linked to individual or hedonistic benefits (Escobar-López, 2019; Onorati and d'Ovidio 2023; Pascucci et al. 2016), on the other. Finally, we consider it necessary to continue deliberating on the ambivalent nature of values and to scrutinize aspects that are only tangentially addressed, as is the case of the relationship between food and health from a gender perspective, which is scarcely collected in academic literature on AFNs.

References

Aguiar, L., DelGrossi, M.E. and Thomé, K.M. 2018. “Short food supply chain: characteristics of a family farm” *Ciencia Rural,* 48 (5). DOI: 10.1590/0103-8478cr20170775

Alkon, A. 2008. “From value to values: Sustainable consumption at farmers markets”. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 25 (4): 487-498. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-008-9136-y

Allen, P., FitzSimmons, M., Goodman, M. and Warner, K. 2003. “Shifting plates in the agrifood landscape: the tectonics of alternative agrifood initiatives in California”. Journal of Rural Studies, 19 (1): 61-75. DOI : 10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00047-5

Azevedo, E. D. 2015. “Food activism: the locavorism perspective”. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 18 (3): 81–98. DOI: 10.1590/1809-4422ASOC740V1832015

Baldi, L., Bertoni, D., Migliore, G. and Peri, M. 2019. “How alternative food networks work in a metropolitan area? An analysis of Solidarity Purchase Groups in Northern Italy” *Agricultural and Food Economics*, 7 (20). DOI: 10.1186/s40100-019-0139-3

Barbera, F. and Dagnes, J. 2016. “Building Alternatives from the Bottom-up: The Case of Alternative Food Networks” *Agriculture and Agricultural Science Procedia*, 8: 324-331. DOI: 10.1016/j.aaspro.2016.02.027

Barnes, A.P., Willock, J., Toma, L. and Hall, C. 2011. “Utilising a farmer typology to understand farmer behaviour towards water quality management: nitrate vulnerable zones in Scotland”, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 54 (4): 477–494. DOI: 10.1080/09640568.2010.515880

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2006. “Using thematic analysis in Psychology” *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2): 77-101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brinkley, C. 2017. “Visualizing the social and geographical embeddedness of local food systems”. *Journal of Rural Studies*, (54): 314-325. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.06.023

Cacciolatti, L., Lee, S. H., Sacchi, G. and Lee, J. 2024. “Guest editorial. Revisiting the Slow Food Movement: Three Cases of Heritage, Innovation, and Sustainability in Alternative Food Networks”. *Economia Agro-Alimentare Food Economy*, 26 (2): 83-102. DOI: 10.3280/ecag2024oa18190

Carlisle, L. 2015. “Audits and agrarianism: The moral economy of an alternative food network” *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 3. DOI: 10.12952/journal.elementa.000066

Chiffoleau, Y. and Dourian, T. 2020. “Sustainable Food Supply Chains: Is Shortening the Answer? A Literature Review for a Research and Innovation Agenda”. *Sustainability*, 12 (23): 9831. DOI: 10.3390/su12239831

Contreras, J. 1992. “Alimentación y cultura: reflexiones desde la Antropología”. *Revista Chilena de Antropología,* 11: 95-111.

Corsi, A. and Novelli, S. 2018. “Determinants of Participation in AFNs and Its Value for Consumers”. In *Alternative Food Networks. An Interdisciplinary Assessment*, edited by Corsi, A., Barbera, F., Dansero, E. and Peano, C. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

De Bernardi, P., Bertello, A., Venuti, F. and Foscolo, E. 2020. "How to avoid the tragedy of alternative food networks (AFNs)? The impact of social capital and transparency on AFN performance", *British Food Journal*, 22 (7): 2171-2186. DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-07-2019-0537

De Solier, I. and Duruz, J. 2013. "Food cultures: Introduction." Cultural Studies Review, 19 (1): 4-8.

Dumont, L. 1986. *Essays on individualism : modern ideology in anthropological perspective*. Chicago: University Press.

Dunne, J., Chambers, K., Giombolini, K. and Schlegel, S. 2011. “What does ‘local’ mean in the grocery store? Multiplicity in food retailers' perspectives on sourcing and marketing local foods”. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 26 (1): 46-59.

Edwards, F. 2016. “Alternative food networks”. In *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*, edited by Thompson, P. and Kaplan, D. Dordrecht: Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-6167-4_513-1

Elkington, J. 1994. “Towards the sustainable corporation: Win-win-win business strategies for sustainable development”. *California Management Review*, 36 (2): 90-100. DOI: 10.2307/41165746

Eriksen, S. 2013. “Defining local food: constructing a new taxonomy – three domains of proximity”. *Acta Agriculturae Scandinavica: Section B, Soil and Plant Science*, 63 (1): 47-55.

Escobar-López, S., Espinoza-Ortega, A., Vizcarra-Bordi, I. and Thomé-Ortíz, H. 2017. “The consumer of food products in organic markets of central Mexico”, *British Food Journal*, 119 (3): 558-574. DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-07-2016-0321

Escobar-López, S., Espinoza-Ortega, A., Lozano-Cabedo, C, Aguilar-Criado, E. and Amaya-Corchuelo, S. 2019. “Motivations to consume ecological foods in alternative food networks (AFNs) in Southern Spain”. *British Food Journal*, 121 (11): 2565-2577. DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-01-2019-0051

Espeitx, E. 2011. “Productos de la tierra y alimentos transgénicos: tradición e innovación como atributos valorados y como factores de riesgo” In *Sabores culturales. Ensayos sobre alimentación y cultura,* edited by Espeitx, E. and Cáceres, J. Barcelona: Montesinos.

Espeitx, E. and Cáceres, J. 2011. *Sabores culturales. Ensayos sobre alimentación y cultura*. Barcelona: Montesinos.

Feenstra, G. 2002. “Creating space for sustainable food systems: Lessons from the field”. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 19: 99-106.

Ferguson, R. and Hansson, H. 2013. “Expand or exit? Strategic decisions in milk production”, *Livestock Science*, 155 (2–3): 415–423. DOI: 10.1016/j.livsci.2013.05.019

Fernández Álvarez, O. 2013. “Entre la evasión y la nostalgia. Estrategias de la neoruralidad desde la economía social”, *Gazeta de Antropología*, 29 (2). DOI: 10.30827/Digibug.28501

Galt, R. 2013. “The Moral Economy Is a Double-edged Sword: Explaining Farmers’ Earnings and Self-exploitation in Community-Supported Agriculture”. *Economic Geography*, 89 (4): 341–365. DOI: 10.1111/ecge.12015

Giovannini, M., Forno, F. and Magnani, N. 2023. “Practicing sustainable eating: zooming in a civic food network”. *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-023-10526-3

Gómez Mestres, S. and Lien, M. 2017. “Recovering Food Commons in Post Industrial Europe: Cooperation Networks in Organic Food Provisioning in Catalonia and Norway”. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, 30*: 625–643. DOI: 10.1007/s10806-017-9691-6

Goodman, D., DuPuis, E. M. and Goodman, M. K. 2012. *Alternative food networks: Knowledge, practice, and politics*. New York: Routledge.

Goszczyński, W. and Wróblewski, M. 2020. “Beyond rural idyll? Social imaginaries, motivations and relations in Polish alternative food networks”. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 76: 254-263. DOI : 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.04.031

Gracia, M. 2010. “Alimentación y Cultura en España: una aproximación desde la antropología social” *Physis: Revista de Saúde Colectiva,* 20 (2): 357-386. DOI: 10.1590/S0103-73312010000200003

Graeber, D. 2018. *Hacia una teoría antropológica del valor*. Buenos Aires: Editorial FCE.

Grasseni, C. 2014. “Seeds of Trust. Italy’s Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (Solidarity Purchase Groups)”. *Journal of Political Ecology, 21*: 178–192. DOI: 10.2458/v21i1.21131

Grosglik, R. 2017. “Citizen-consumer revisited: The cultural meanings of organic food consumption in Israel”. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17 (3): 732–751. DOI: 10.1177/1469540515623609

Gruvaeus, A. and Dahlin, J. 2021. “Revitalization of Food in Sweden—A Closer Look at the REKO Network”. *Sustainability, 13* (10471). DOI: 10.3390/su131810471

Guest, G., Namey, E. and MacQueen, K. 2012. *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Guzmán, G.I., López, D., Román, L. and Alonso, A.M. 2013. “Participatory action research in agroecology: Building local organic food networks in Spain”. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 37 (1):127–146. DOI: 10.1080/10440046.2012.718997

Hall, S. 2011. “Exploring the “ethical everyday”: An ethnography of the ethics of family 785 consumption”. *Geoforum, 42* (6): 627–637. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.06.009

Hammer, A. 2022. “Negotiating Sustainabilities. Navigating Organic Practices in Capitalist Markets”. Ethnologia Fennica, 49 (2): 9–35. DOI: 10.23991/ef.v49i2.112999

Holloway, L., Cox, R., Kneafsey, M., Dowler, E., Venn, L. and Tuomainen, H. 2016. “Are you alternative? ‘alternative’ food networks and consumers’ definition of alterity”. In *Interrogating Alterity: Alternative Economic and Political Spaces* edited by Fuller, D., Jonas, A.E.G and Lee, R. London: Routledge.

Jarosz, L. 2008. “The city in the country: Growing alternative food networks in Metropolitan areas”, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 24: 231–244. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2007.10.002

Junta de Castilla y León. 2024. *Plan Estratégico de la Industria Agroalimentaria de Castilla y León 2024-2028*. Junta de Castilla y León. https://agriculturaganaderia.jcyl.es/web/es/cadena-alimentaria-agroalimentacion/plan-estrategico-industria-agroalimentaria.html

Kallio, G. 2020. “A carrot isn’t a carrot isn’t a carrot: tracing value in alternative practices of food exchange” *Agriculture and Human Values, 37*: 1095-1109. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-020-10113-w

Kessari, M., Joly, C., Jaouen, A., and Jaeck, M. 2020. “Alternative food networks: Good practices for sustainable performance”. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36 (15–16): 1417–1446. DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2020.1783348

Kluckhohn, C. 1951. “Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification”. In *Toward a General Theory of Action*, edited by Parsons, T. and Shils, E., 388-433. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Leduc, G., Billaudet, L., Engström, E., Hansson, H. and Ryan, M. 2023. “Farmers’ perceived values in conventional and organic farming: A comparison between French, Irish and Swedish farmers using the Means-end chain approach”, Ecological Economics, 207 (107767). DOI: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.107767

Leiper, C. and Clarke-Sather, A. 2017. “Co-creating an alternative: the moral economy of participating in farmers’ markets”. *Local Environment*, 22 (7): 840–858. DOI: 10.1080/13549839.2017.1296822

Lamarque, M., Tomé, P. and Moro, L. 2023. “Personal and community values behind sustainable food consumption: a meta-ethnography”. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7, (1292887). DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2023.1292887

Marsden, T., Banks, J. and Bristow, G. 2000. “Food supply chain approaches: exploring their role in rural development”, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 40 (4): 424-438. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9523.00158

Mastronardi, L., Romagnoli, L., Mazzocchi, G., Giaccio, V. and Marino, D. 2019. “Understanding consumer’s motivations and behaviour in alternative food networks”, *British Food Journal, 121* (9): 2102-2115. DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-01-2019-0032

Moragues-Faus, A. 2017. “Emancipatory or Neoliberal Food Politics? Exploring the “Politics of Collectivity” of Buying Groups in the Search for Egalitarian Food Democracies”. *Antipode, 49* (2): 455-476. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12274

Medina, F. X. and Aguilar, A. 2022. “¿Hacia sistemas alimentarios sostenibles en contextos culturalmente coherentes?: debates en torno a la cultura, la sostenibilidad y la dieta mediterránea” In *Gastronomía, cultura y sostenibilidad* edited by Conde, D., Mariano, L. and Medina, X., 25-40. Barcelona: Icaria.

Michel-Villarreal, R., Hingley, M., Canavari, M. and Bregoli, I. 2019. “Sustainability in alternative food networks: A systematic literature review”. *Sustainability,* 11 (3): 859. DOI: 10.3390/su11030859

Michel-Villarreal, R., Vilalta-Perdomo, E., Hingley, M. and Canavari, M. 2024. “Rethinking alternative food networks: unpacking key attributes and overlapping concepts”. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems,* 49 (3): 415-442. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2024.2420831

Montanari, M. 2006. *Food is culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Moro, L. and Lamarque, M. 2019. “El estudio de las prácticas económicas alternativas a través de una metodología multitécnica” In *Espacios y prácticas económicas*

alternativas en las ciudades españolas edited by Sánchez Hernández, J. L., 299-317. Pamplona: Thomson Reuters Aranzadi.

O'Connor, G., Reis, K., Desha, C. and Burkett, I. 2024. "Valuing farmers in transitions to more sustainable food systems: A systematic literature review of local food producers' experiences and contributions in short food supply chains". *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-024-10601-3

O'Kane, G. and Wijaya, S. 2015. "Contribution of farmers' markets to more socially sustainable food systems: A pilot study of a farmers' market in the Australian capital territory (ACT), Australia". *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, 39* (10): 1124–1153. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2015.1081858

Onorati, M. G. and d'Ovidio, F. D. 2023. "Sustainable eating in the 'new normal' Italy: ecological food habitus between biospheric values and de-globalizing gastronationalism. *Food, Culture & Society*, 26 (5): 1134-1153. DOI: 10.1080/15528014.2022.2096971

Paddock, J. 2016. "Positioning Food Cultures: 'Alternative' Food as Distinctive Consumer Practice". *Sociology*, 50 (6), 1039-1055. DOI: 10.1177/0038038515585474

Parkins, W. and Craig, G. 2009. "Culture and the Politics of Alternative Food Networks". *Food, Culture & Society*, 12 (1): 77-103. DOI: 10.2752/155280109X368679

Pascucci, S., Dentoni, D., Lombardi, A, and Cembalo, L. 2016. "Sharing values or sharing costs? Understanding consumer participation in alternative food networks". *NJAS Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 78: 47-60. DOI : 10.1016/j.njas.2016.03.006

Pétursson, J. 2018 "Organic intimacy: emotional practices at an organic store". *Agriculture and Human Values, 35*: 581–594. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-018-9851-y

Psarikidou, K. and Szerszynski, B. 2012. "The Moral Economy of Civic Food Networks in Manchester", *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 19 (3): 309–327. DOI: 10.48416/ijsaf.v19i3.207

Qi, M. 2024. "Beyond social embeddedness: probing the power relations of alternative food networks in China". *Agriculture and Human Values*, 41: 701–713. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-023-10510-x

Rana, J. and Paul, J. 2020. “Health motive and the purchase of organic food: A meta-analytic review”. *International Journal of Consumer Studies,* 44: 162–171. DOI: 10.1111/ijcs.12556

Reckinger, R. 2022. “Values-based territorial food networks. Qualifying sustainable and ethical transitions of alternative food networks”. *Regions & Cohesion*, 12 (3): 78-109. DOI: 10.3167/reco.2022.120305

Renting, H., Marsden, T. K. and Banks, J. 2003. “Understanding alternative food networks: Exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development”. *Environment and Planning A* 35 (3): 393–411. DOI: 10.1068/a3510

Renting, H., Schermer, M. and Rossi, A. 2012. “Building food democracy: Exploring civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship”. *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* 19 (3): 289–307.

Robbins, J. and Sommerschuh, J. 2016. “Values” *In The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* edited by Stein, F., Lazar, S. Lazar, Candea, M., Diemberger, H., Robbins, J., Sanchez, A. and Stasch, R. DOI: 10.29164/16values

Rozin, P. 2007. “Food choice: an introduction”. In *Understanding Consumers of Food Products* edited by Frewer, L. and van Trijp, H., 3-29. Sawston: Woodhead Publishing.

Rudy, K. 2012. “Locavores, Feminism and the question of meat”. *The Journal of American Culture*, 35 (1): 26-36. DOI: 10.1111/j.1542-734X.2011.00795.x

Rokeach, M. 1973. *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: The Free Press.

Sánchez-Hernández, J. L. 2024. “Sustainable food networks, hybridization and values: a case study in Castilla y León (Spain)”. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems,* 8 (1392013). DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2024.1392013

Sanz-Cañada, J. and Muchnik, J. 2016. "Geographies of origin and proximity: Approaches to local agro-food systems", Culture and History Digital Journal, 5 (1): 1-19. DOI: 10.3989/chdj.2016.002

Shreck, A., Getz, C. and Feenstra, G. 2006. “Social sustainability, farm labor, and organic agriculture: Findings from an exploratory analysis”. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 23: 439–449. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-006-9016-2

Stock, P. V. 2007. “Good farmers as reflexive producers: An examination of family organic farmers in the US Midwest”. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *47* (2), 83-102. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9523.2007.00429.x

Strauser, J. and Stewart, W.P. 2024. “Moving beyond production: community narratives for good farming”. *Agriculture and Human Values*. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-024-10550-x

Thompson, E. 1966. *The making of the English working class*. New York: Vintage Books.

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

Trivette, S. 2015. “How local is local? Determining the boundaries of local food in practice”. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32: 475-490. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-014-9566-7

Vandecandelaere, E. 2010. “Geographic origin and identification labels: associating food quality with location”, In *Woodhead Publishing Series in Food Science, Technology and Nutrition*. *Innovations in Food Labelling,* edited by Albert, J., 137-152. Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing.

Weiler, A., Otero, G. and Wittman, H. 2016. “Rock Stars and Bad Apples: Moral Economies of Alternative Food Networks and Precarious Farm Work Regimes”. *Antipode*, 48: 1140–1162. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12221

Zoll, F., Specht, K., Opitz, I., Siebert, R., Piorr, A. and Zasada, I. 2018. “Individual choice or collective action? Exploring consumer motives for participating in alternative food networks”. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 42: 101–110. DOI: 10.1111/ijcs.12405

Appendix

Table 1: Detail of participants

	Participant (Identified by role/activity)	**Province**	**Gender**	**Duration in the role**	**Additional information**
1	Farmer	Salamanca	Male	Since 2019	Organic certification. Production is managed entirely by hand, without the use of machinery. They have never sold their products in the conventional market.
2	Cheese manufacturer	Salamanca	Male	Since 2007	Organic certification. Concerned about the reduction in the profit margin.
3	Poulterer	Palencia	Female	Since 2017	Uncertified. Production of free-range eggs following principles of animal welfare.
4	Farmer	Palencia	Male	Since 2020	Organic certification. Member of a network of production and distribution in Valladolid.
5	Consumer group representative	Palencia	Male	Since 2011	Participates in educational activities and debate forums. They deal directly with local farmers and producers to distribute their products within the affiliates to the group. They also coordinate with other groups to place large commercial orders. The space also discusses issues related to energetic consumption and ethical banking.
6	Farmer	Burgos	Female	Since 2014	One of the members in a cooperative for land management. Organic certification.
7	Apiculturist	Burgos	Male	Since 2009	Organic certification. Family business. Due to personal philosophy, they refrain from selling their products in supermarkets.
8	Consumer group representative	Burgos	Female	Since 2013	Besides distribution, the group also owns some orchards and sell boxes with their produce.
9	Farmer	Valladolid	Male	Since 2015	Organic certification. Member of a network of production and distribution in Valladolid
10	Poulterer	Valladolid	Female	Since 2015	Organic certification. They have another job to maintain themselves financially. Member of a network of production and distribution in Valladolid.
11	Snail farmer	Zamora	Male	Since 2017	Organic certification. Member of a periodical farmers' market, that gathers different producers in the area.
12	Jam manufacturer	Zamora	Female	Since 2005	Uncertified. Their product in well known in the area for its quality and handmade manufacture.

13	Apiculturist	León	Male	Since 2018	Organic certification. Owner is a biologist. Member of an association of agroecological producers.
14	Livestock farmer	León	Female	Since 2015	Organic certification. Member of an association of agroecological producers. Define their production as traditional and concerned with animal welfare.
15	Organic shop owner	Avila	Female	Since 2014	Sells both certified and uncertified products. Member of a network that is mostly focused on producers but provides her with a "stamp" that helps publicize the shop.
16	Oil manufacturer	Avila	Male	Member since 2003	Member of a cooperative and an association for oil manufacturers. They have products both with organic certification and without.
17	Farmer	Segovia	Male	Since 1995	Organic certification. They sell their products exclusively in local networks.
18	Beer manufacturer	Segovia	Female	Member since 2012	Member of a cooperative. Organic certification. Big focus on packaging reutilization and composting waste materials.
19	Snack manufacturer	Soria	Male	Chief of production since 1998	Organic certification. Aim to produce with local raw materials and to sell locally as well. Concern with carbon footprint.
20	Organic shop owner	Soria	Female	Owner since 2013	Sells both certified and uncertified products. Their objective is to promote local production and consumption. They also complement with a larger distributor of organic products, to satisfy demand of clients.