The “Quality Turn” Agenda in Agribusiness

Challenging the *hegemonial* status of the standard quality convention in the Norwegian grocery market

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‘When King Lear asks the blind Gloucester how he sees the world, Shakespeare has him say, “I see it feelingly”’

Dan Barber, “*The Third Plate*”

A mia sorella,

Per tutto l’amore e la protezione che mi hai sempre dato.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis has been to produce insights on the agendas on sustainability that are empowered by social actors as a result of a "quality turn" in food practices in the Norwegian context. I described the quality turn process consisting in a shift towards more sustainable food practices where food products embody traditional values, ecological worth, and animal welfare standards. The food qualities resulting from a quality turn are framed as "novel" food qualities and discussed in opposition to the "standardised" food qualities concerned with efficiency and low price. Norwegian authorities have invested considerable economic resources in the last 30 years to promote niche products in the domestic market with little success of seeing their market share increasing through the years. I argued that one of the reasons for such a slow development was attributed to the *hegemonial* status that standard quality convention covers in the Norwegian grocery market which frames conventionally produced food as "good enough" and Norwegian agriculture as almost organic. Nevertheless, I pointed out that the quality turn in agribusiness carries great relevance for the rural development, environmental sustainability and the sustainment of local food economies. Hence, the idea to look at actors that are trying to implement the quality turn in their business provided insights about more concrete constraints derived from establishing quality production as a successful practice of food production and food consumption. Therefore, I focused on organic farmers and some of their strategic partners' who are subject of this study, such as food retailers and chefs, to see how they have tried to varying degrees to challenge the hegemonic status of the standard quality convention. I used Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory for developing an actor-sensitive analytical framework where actors aim to challenge social structures. The insights provided from this formwork led to argue for major policy interventions that aim at improving the market infrastructure for innovation to take place that will make more feasible for non-standard products to effectively challenge the hegemonic status of the standard quality convention in the Norwegian food market.

Key words: The “quality turn”, sustainability, local food systems, embeddedness of food chain activities, innovation, local food, organic farming, animal welfare, Convention Theory and Social Practice Theory.

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List of Abbreviations

AFNs	Alternative Food Networks
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
Bioforsk	Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
CO2	Carbon Dioxide Emissions
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
GIs	Geographical Indication
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LSFs	Local Food Systems
Mattilsynet	Norwegian Food Safety Authority
NAPA	Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance
NCA	Norwegian Competition Authority
Norges Vel	The Royal Norwegian Society For Development
SFSCs	Short Food Supply Chains
SIFO	Norwegian Institute for Consumer Research.
URGENCI	International Network of Community Supported Agriculture
VKM	The Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment
VSP-mat	The Value Creation Programme for Food Production

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1 Introduction

While deciding to write for and on food, a student's thoughts are concerned mainly with the reasons why someone should dedicate so much attention to food. Behind subjective reasons such as those related to taste and pleasure, one finds that food is one of the most powerful political and economic battlefields. Food, as framed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948), is a fundamental human right and need, and as such, can address many of the sustainability challenges for environmental and human health. For the French lawyer, political activist, and gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (Brillat-Savarin 1999 qtd. in Schneider 2008, 384), 'the destiny of nations depends on how they nourish themselves.' For the environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer Wendell Berry (1990, 145) 'eating is inescapably an agriculture act,' a statement which reveals the importance that food has for individuals as well as for the State, for nature, as well as for the human body. However, the current trends in the food sector are highly influenced by the problems related to the industrialisation of agriculture. Murdoch et al. (2000, 109), write that today's agro-food systems are *globalized* and in many aspects, the globalisation of food systems is similar to that of other economic sectors, where transnational corporations control the production chains. In addition, efforts to "outflank" or "circumvent" nature in the food production process by replacing natural production with industrial activities and natural food with processed food, has enhanced nature's "boomerang" qualities , i.e. the ability of nature to bounce back as a consequence of human modification (Beck 1990 qtd. in Murdoch et al. 2000, 108). The most visible examples of these boomerang qualities have been a number of food safety scandals – such as the mad-cow disease (BSE), the E.coli contaminations and the fipronil-tainted eggs, – which have increased consumers' concerns about health and food safety in food provisions.

However, this portrayal does not capture the many counter-reactions to agricultural industrialisation and food chain globalisation. Re-localising food production and food supply chains has been considered one of the solution for responding to many of these concerns and the overall negative effects of the global food system on human health (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). Nevertheless, re-localising food systems is not a straightforward process and different scholars have underlined the difficulties

in defining what re-localisation consists of (O'Neill 2014). Throughout this thesis, the re-localisation of a food system will refer to farmers' attempts to rebuild social and environmental relations for reconstructing more sustainable, local food chains through the production of enhanced food quality. The re-localisation of food systems also brought to attention the need for a "turn" to quality in food production and consumption – a "turn" that as asserted today 'is closely linked to nature and to local embeddedness of local food chains' (Murdoch et al. 2000, 107). Therefore, new conventions, understood as 'constructing agreements between persons and institutions in situations of collective action' (Salais and Storper 1993, 17 qtd. in Amilien et al. 2007, 9), have been established for shifting to practices of food production that will embody ecological worth, traditional values, and animal-friendly practices (Murdoch and Miele 1999, 481). Such qualities are described as "novel" food qualities as opposed to the "standardised" food qualities concerned with efficiency and low price (Borgen 2009). It is argued in this thesis that for the benefits deriving from the "quality turn" in food production, overall agricultural policies that focus on quality rather than bulk production can better guarantee the sustainment of land resources and strengthen state independence from the globalised food system while supporting sustainable local food systems.

With such premises at hand, a "quality turn" in food production and food consumption carries a symbolic and practical value for a country such as Norway where the cultivated land consists of only 3 percent of the total land area compared to many European countries, where the cultivated area covers on average 10 percent of the total land. In addition, conserving the land is essential for the sustainment of all five pillars upon which the Norwegian agriculture policy is built: guaranteeing a level of food security in the country, maintaining rural settlements, securing an income for farmers, guaranteeing equality between farmers and other groups, and finally, protecting the environment and natural resources (Almås 2004 qtd. in Vinge 2015). However, Vinge argues that Norway is said to have a particular challenge in the availability and management of agricultural land due to the country's constitution, climate conditions, and changes in the agricultural policy (ibid., 87). Particularly, agricultural policy has been the subject of many changes consisting of cuts to subsidies for farming, partly as because of WTO agreements and partially because of the change in the domestic political climate with the right-wing

governments advocating for the liberalisation of the agricultural sector (Storstad and Bjørkhaug 2003, Vinge 2015). It is argued that in a context of reduced protectionist policy towards agricultural products, domestic production will meet strong competition from imported products (Storstad and Bjørkhaug 2003). Thus, competing in the agricultural sector through quality food production and innovation will strengthen the competitiveness of Norwegian food in the domestic market, which is considered crucial for the support of the local food economies (Jervell and Borgen 2004, Stræte 2004).

This thesis will then focus on Norwegian farmers' endeavour to 'recapture rural spaces' (Sonnino 2007, 6) and other food chain actors, such as food retailers and chefs to 'turn the contemporary political rhetoric on sustainable agri-food and rural development into practice' (ibid., 11). In addition, it adds to the literature that argues that the sustainability of a food system is closely linked to sustainable quality production where the economy, society, and environment are considered equally (Bjørkhaug 2006, 123).

1.1 Motivation, Rational and Key Questions

The idea to build a framework for studying the interrelationship between a sustainable local food system and quality production was developed when I joined the EU-funded project *Strength2Food*, led by Forbruksforskningsinstituttet (SIFO) at OsloMet, in February 2018. I participated in work package 7, task 7.2, which aims to provide an assessment of economic, environmental and social impacts of short food supply chains (SFSC) by collecting, analysing and comparing quantitative data from 12 SFSC case studies in six different countries — France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland and the UK.[1] Early in my fieldwork, I understood that the sustainability of food systems is not easy to assess without taking states' context or states' regulations are into account and that the outcome from localising food systems can be very different. In addition, following Born and Purcell's suggestion (2006, 196) to avoid the "local trap" based on the assumption that local is inherently good, I decided to focus instead 'on the actors and agendas that are empowered by the particular social relations in a given food system'. Far from wanting to dismiss the positive benefits of

[1] The deliverable report is forthcoming.

local food systems, the authors wanted to add insights about how these food systems can be more consistent in achieving sustainable targets within different areas or sectors that involve food chain activities.

In the same fashion, I have always struggled to understand the balance between the roles of consumers and the system of food provision for transitioning towards sustainable food systems. However, extensive literature has focused on the role that consumers can play through political consumerism to enable sustainable food systems, perhaps underestimating the role of food producers and other actors in it. Bringing attention to the role of food producers is essential to understand their efforts to challenge the neoliberal trend in the agro-food system, which has been accused of hindering sustainability. Therefore, I chose to look at how notions of quality and sustainability play into Norwegian farmers' production practices in order to see how actors in local food chains implement the process of "quality turn". Furthermore, it is meaningful to see how farmers' strategic partners such as food retailers and chefs are adapting to new food qualities, bringing insights to actors' agendas on future sustainable production. For this purpose, this thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

Main question and sub-questions:

- How do Norwegian farmers implement the "quality turn" process in their farming activities?
- What practices of food production and food distribution emerge as a result of farmers' strategy to keep quality and sustainability in their farming business?
- How do farmers motivate/justify their actions*?*

Second research question and sub-question:

- How do food producers' strategic partners adapt to the "novel" food quality conventions originating from the quality turn phenomenon?[2]
- How are these adaptations contributing to increasing the market share of the Norwegian speciality food products in Norway?

[2] This second research question draws from Borgen's questions put forth in his paper: "*Competing conventions: The Big Branders' struggle to incorporate new quality conceptions in the Norwegian food market*" (Borgen 2009).The aim is to provide an update to most recent developments in the food sector that have taken place as a result of the process of the "quality turn" in Norway.

1.2 Embeddedness, the "Quality Turn" and Sustainability

Towards Sustainable Food System

Following the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) definition, a 'food system encompasses all the stages of keeping us fed: growing, harvesting, packing, processing, transforming, marketing, consuming and disposing of food' (CFS 2016). Penker (2006, 369) argues that 'whereas globalization is often equated with the process of disembedding, localisation or regionalisation is referred to as (re)-embedding food systems,' hence drawing these sides of the food sector – consumption and production – closer. Strongly relying on Polanyi's insights where 'economic activities are constructed by their social-institutional environment and not "naturally" given' (Polanyi 1944 qtd. in Penker 2006, 369), the concept of embeddedness links the economic activities of the food chain with three contexts or type of embeddedness. The first two forms of embeddedness refer to the social and spatial context respectively, named as social and local embeddedness of food supply chains. These two concepts of embeddedness are widely used in agro-food studies 'to analyse the interplay of the economic and the social' (Hinrichs 2000, 33). This is based on the assumption that 'capital accumulation always and everywhere depends on a precarious and changing balance between commodity relations and other forms of social organization' (Jessop 1994, 4 qtd. in Murdoch and Miele 1999, 117). In addition, it is argued that the spatial proximity between producers, consumers and food processors enables new social and economic relations where trust and regard assume a great significance within a food system (Sage 2003). In this context, Sage argues that food chain actors are 'willing to offset purely personal financial incentives against social criteria involving collective, community or environmental benefits' (ibid, 48).

While the social and spatial embeddedness of food chains has been largely studied, and in many occasions criticized for equating '"alternativeness" [of food supply chains] with embeddedness in a deterministic way' (Winter 2003, 25), Murdoch et al. (2000, 116) argue that the 'notion of embeddedness can […] be extended to include natural, as well as social, relations.' The authors argue that 'nature is not a mere

backdrop to economic action, but symmetrically entangled with the economic' (ibid.,116). Therefore, the third form of context and embeddedness is that of nature, 'including issues and linkages surrounding organic food, environmentally friendly production, and eco-labels' (Penker 2006, 369).

Particularly, the above-mentioned problems deriving from the industrialisation of agriculture as linked to food safety and nutrition have developed a food context where quality 'is coming to be seen as inherent in more "local" and more "natural" foods' (Murdoch et al. 2000, 108). The process of re-embedding quality food production in local ecologies has shaped new forms of food production and distribution, better expressed in "alternative", as opposed to "conventional", food networks, which are defined as

> organized flows of food products that connect people who are concerned with the morals of their consumption practices in some way with those who want a better price for their food, or who want to produce food in ways counter to the dominant (or conventional) market logic. (Whatmore and Clark 2006 qtd. in Maye and Kirwan 2010)

Alternative food networks (AFNs) thus represent the context where a new material and social construction of quality emerges in which

> […] quality is understood less in terms of global standards and in terms of a focus on efficiency, efficacy and or price, but rather on the basis of environmental, nutritional and health qualities (Milne 2013, 166)

Consequently, quality associates with characteristics as naturalness, tradition, heritage, welfare and sustainability, which make space for the development of new forms of production that stay in contraposition with highly processed and industrialised food products (ibid.). As Ponte pointed out,

> […] until the early 1970s, quantification was the main criteria for arbitrating exchange of relatively homogeneous products, while the current economic dynamic is based on "an obsession with quality." (Ponte 2016, 14)

In agro-food studies, this process, described earlier as quality turn, and the food products traded through these AFNs are labelled according to different qualities including local, organic, fair trade, regional and speciality food, and sold mainly through food chains that aim to put consumers and producers in closer contact with each other (Maye and Kirwan 2010). Better captured by Murdoch and Miele, in the quality turn, production and consumption activities move in a direction where

> No longer is price the only guide; now ecological, health and animal welfare issues combine to reconfigure both consumption demands and production practices in the food sector. (Murdoch and Miele 1999, 480)

In this way, the social, local and ecological embeddedness of food chain activities link food quality, ecology and locality through the production of local food specialties or more commonly denominate as speciality food (Halkier et al. 2017).

The heterogeneous meaning of quality, as embedded in food specialties, strongly calls for sustainable agriculture production. Therefore, I will explore how the heterogeneous meaning of quality includes sustainability, following primarily farmers' visions on sustainability as reflected in their practices of food production and food distribution. The concept of sustainability was first defined in 1978 by the leader of United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, the eventual Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Strongly preoccupied with the negative effects of unsustainable economic development on environment and society, the Brundtland Commission, in the *Our Common Future* report, defined sustainable development as

> [a development] that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987, 8).

The Commission thus contended that sustainable economic development refers to the triple bottom line definition of sustainability, where the economy, society and environment are considered equally (Bjørkhaug 2006). It can be argued that the three contexts of embeddedness of food chain activities - social, spatial and ecological - aim to pursue a triple bottom line concept of sustainability in agricultural production (Bjørkhaug 2006). It follows that, generally speaking, sustainable food supply chains

can be defined as those that constantly achieve high standards of environmental performance and animal welfare while operating within the biological limits of natural resources in order to sustain future land resource and guarantee rural development (DEFRA 2002 qtd. in Smith 2008, 850 see Appendix I). However, as Oosterveer (2012) points out, defining sustainability of food on the basis of a strict definition seems elusive because 'definitions and dimensions of sustainability are not homogenous, standard, universal or given, but dynamic, evolving and depending on specific contexts', actors and networks where it develops (ibid., 158).

Likewise, given the wide and diversified definitions of quality and sustainability, the embeddedness of food chain activities cannot be limited to the analysis of the AFNs (Penker 2006), but should expand to include conventional food chains, which are more 'willing to seek alternativeness' (Maye and Kirwan 2010). The aim then is not to assess sustainability, but rather to see which dimensions of sustainability can be improved through practices of food quality production in the context of local food systems.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework to study the development of the quality turn process and the sustainability of local food systems has been hard to determine, given the growing and often confusing definitions of food networks within which these non-standard food products travel. So far, the two main conceptual frameworks used by scholars are Local Food Systems (LFSs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs). Kneafsey et al., for instance, start with a narrow definition of local food systems as

> systems where the production, processing, trade and consumption of food occur in a defined and reduced geographical area (depending on the sources and reflections of about 20 to 100 km radius). (Kneafsey et al. 2013, 13).

Farmers markets, farm-gate sales, vegetable box delivery schemes, community supported agriculture (CSA), and public procurement schemes are some examples and expressions of local food systems. However, the authors add that, today we do not have a legally agreed upon definition of an LFS and of the geographical scale that the "local" describes (Kneafsey et al. 2013, 23). The problems with finding a

common definition relate to the different meanings that local area can have in different national contexts. According to a country's characteristics, such as density of populations, accessibility to the area, and rural or urban character of it, it can be hard to say when a geographical scale at the "local" ends and a geographical scale at the "regional" or "national" level begins (ibid.). In addition, given the strong interdependency of food chains, a food product can move through different geographical areas from its processing to packing, to where is sourced and consumed, which adds ambiguity to the definition of a local food system. Considering the difficulties to geographically defined food systems, food researchers have developed other definitions, such as Short Food Supply Chain, which does not exclusively focus on the distance food has travelled, but rather on the number of intermediaries involved in the food chains and 'the fact that the product reaches the consumer embedded with information' (Marsden et al. 2000, 426). For Marsden et al. (2000), information 'enables the consumer to confidently make connections and associations with the place /space of the production *and potentially the values of the people involved and the production methods it employed'* (425, authors' emphasis). Within this definition, the authors distinguish different forms of marketing from "face-to-face" contact between food producers and consumers to "spatial proximity" and "spatial extended" types of SFSCs. In the case of spatial proximity, farmers sell products through local market channels like local food retail markets or supermarkets, while in the latter case, food products are sold to consumers of other regions outside of the production locality. The struggle to define these food networks and their development highlights the need to apply a more fluid reading between "conventional" and "alternative" food supply chains. Especially because, as Maye and Kirwan (2010) mention, a binary opposition between conventional and alternative supply chains does not reflect a reality where supermarkets are more interested in local niche products and where food producers can be present simultaneously in both types of food supply chains (Maye and Kirwan 2010). I, therefore, will use the terms local food supply chains and local food systems interchangeably as defined by community nutritionist Gail Feenstra that describes local food systems as systems that

> are rooted in particular places, [which] aim to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, use ecologically sound production and

> distribution practices production and enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community. (Gail Feenstra 1997, 28 qtd. in Hinrichs 2000, 297)

This definition given by Feenstra speaks about the social, territorial and natural embeddedness of food chain activities. However, the local food system I refer to –, the distribution and consumption of food products – can expand beyond the area of production, including spatially extended types of SFSCs. This operationalisation is necessary in a context such as Norway where the grocery market is predominately controlled by three powerful retailers that have fostered a "restrictive, prescriptive view of food distribution" (Amilien et al. 2007, 15) leaving leave little space for the development of AFNs. In addition, combining aspects of both narrow and broader definitions of a local food system is necessary for following Born and Purcell (2006, 197) rationale who claim that any geographical scale – local, regional, national, or global – is socially constructed and the result of 'particular political struggles among particular actors in particular times and places'. Thus, for the authors, localisation is a scalar strategy with outcomes, such as environmental sustainability, sustainable diets or food security, that will depend on which agenda is advanced by social actors as a result of the strategy.

1.4 Thesis Outline

I have organized this thesis into six chapters. Chapter 2 gives a brief description of the quality turn in the Norwegian niche food context and the current state of development of quality food products. Chapter 3 outlines the analytical framework used for the analysis, which is a combination of Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory. Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach and discusses the challenges and the limitations of this study and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of empirical data in order to answer the first research question and its sub-questions that seek to explore farmers' strategies for implementing the quality turn process in food production and their underlying motivations. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the empirical data in order to answer the second research question and its sub-question regarding the response of food retailers and chefs towards local niche food production in order to understand the achievement reached so far from the collaboration between these two groups of actors for building

sustainable local food systems. Chapter 7 I discuss the findings from my data and conclude with providing insights on what can be improved for a successful implementation of the quality turn process in agribusiness while adding prospects for further research.

2 The Quality Turn in Norway

The *Hegemonial* "Standard" Quality Convention versus the "Novel" Food Quality Convention

As presented in the previous chapter, the quality turn consists of the development and production of new food products that differ significantly from conventional, mass-produced, industrial food. Recognised through different adjectives such as "speciality", "niche", "quality" or "local", these food products 'focus on what they are not, namely standardised industrial products aimed at mass market in which price is the main competitive parameter' (Halkier et al. 2017). Rather, their "novel" or non-standard attributes such as origin/terroir, environmental sustainability, or ethics are the competitive parameters that guide their way in the food market (Borgen 2009). Halkier et al. (2017, 1124) argue that the existence of a "Scandinavian model" of speciality food governance that is based on an extensive interaction between central governments, local governments, and private firms for increasing the market share of speciality food. Indeed, the Norwegian government has largely invested both human and economic resources for the past 30 years in promoting and supporting quality food production in Norway (Amilien 2012). According to Amilien (2011), the turning point in Norwegian agricultural policy was the White Paper (1996-1997) *"On Food Quality and Consumer Safety"* (Om matkvalitet og forbrukertrygghet) that had a focus on quality for leading the competition in Norwegian agribusiness. This first initiative was then followed by other programs including the *"National action plan for Norwegian culture and food"* (Handlingsplan for norsk matkultur) that was launched in 1999 'to raise the profile and increase the processing of, and demand for, food products and traditions' (ibid., 91). Yet, the most comprehensive program that focused on developing quality food firms that are competitive and profitable was the 10-year program launched in 2001 *"The Value Creation Programme for Food Production"* (Verdiskapingsprogrammet for mat) established by the Ministry of Agriculture (VSP-mat) (Bjørkhaug and Kvam 2019). One of the results of this initiative was the creation of the "*Foundation for Norwegian Culture and Food*", which aim to promote the pleasure of eating Norwegian (Amilien 2011, 91).

However, regardless of the strong government involvement in designing quality as the future competitive strategy in Norwegian agribusiness, introducing speciality food products into the Norwegian market is still a challenge. Moreover, the political goal to increase the share for these products by 20 percent of the total market by 2020 is still far from reach (Amilien 2012). One of the reasons behind this impasse is the *hegemonial* position that the "standard" product quality holds in the Norwegian food market as opposed to "novel" quality associated with topics already explored such as origin (terroir), environmental sustainability, and ethics (Borgen 2009). Hegemony, with its roots in Antonio Gramsci's school of thought, has 'traditionally signified the domination of a sort or another' (Bates 1975, 352). However, for a hegemonic project to succeed, meaning to dominate over another, it has to 'reckon with mass the quotidian common sense', which can be its supportive or undermining force (Hopf 2013, 317). For Linger (1993, 3-4) *common sense* is 'embodied knowledge, an amalgam of thought and sentiment' which is trademarked by its resistance to critical scrutiny. In the context of this thesis, *common sense*, or the general popular belief which sustains the hegemonic status of a "standard" quality, is that conventionally produced food in Norway is "good enough"; that Norwegian conventional agriculture is "almost" organic, as it is less industrialised than other European countries and Norway has few problems with food-borne diseases (Storstad and Bjørkhaug 2003). While the lack of food scandals in Norway is not a contradictable fact, the level of agricultural industrialisation can be debatable given that a productivist paradigm exists in Norway as well as in other European countries. As Amilien (2011, 93) writes, after 60 years of increasing standardization, Norwegian agribusiness is dominated by centralised mass production that is organised by regional cooperatives, powerful retailers and wholesalers. Indeed, three dominant supermarket chains – Norgesgruppen, Coop, and Rema 1000 – control almost 99 percent of food sales in the grocery market (Kvam et al. 2014, 724), thus creating a 'restrictive and prescriptive view of food distribution' (Amilien et al. 2007, 6). The result has been a food market that develops within a 'socioeconomic framework built around price, standardization, simplicity and speed' (Amilien 2011, 93). Consequently, the author notices that high-volume domestic products have an unfair advantage over low-volume products. On the other hand, '[t]he consumers – often tacitly – endorse the "standard product quality" convention' (Borgen 2009, 5). To conclude on Borgen's note is to say that standard quality 'seems to serve as an

effective, low-cost coordination mechanism for several categories of actors that have diverse and conflicting interests (producers, retailers, regulators and consumers)' (ibid.).

Attempts to challenge the hegemonic position of standard quality have also fallen short as a process of innovation i.e., the new combination of resources and food production that focus on quality (Stræte 2004, 228), has been carried out through *top-down* rather than *bottom-up* initiatives for developing a new agriculture strategy that is concerned with quality (Hegnes 2012). These *top-down* initiatives have seen from one side, government authorities, instead of producers, as the protagonist of the process of the quality turn. From the other side, the process itself strongly inspired by the European guidelines on food quality, disregards the differences in food cultures between northern and southern-Europe. As Amilien (2011, 89) points out, Europe, is divided into two distinct food cultures by a "silk curtain"[3] that separates the food cultures of north and south, with a southern European interpretation that links quality with origin, culture, typicity and taste and a northern European interpretation that links quality with technique, health, nutrition, animal welfare, and hygiene. I will discuss how these northernen European qualifiers stem from *top-down* initiatives and examine these initiatives through a closer look at the introduction process of the "local" and "organic" quality schemes in the Norwegian market and the challenges faced by producers as they attempt to establish themselves in the Norwegian food context.

2.1 Local Food and Rural Development

As in the EU, the promotion of local products in Norway corresponds to the socio-economic benefits connected to rural development. It is argued that while Norway saw an increase in production of local food products since the 1990s, the stated goals of increased profit, settlement and employment in rural areas have not been met (Bjørkhaug and Kvam 2019). More effective communication to consumers about the alternative character of local food and offering further support to small and medium

[3] Amilien (2011, 89) says to use the term "silk curtain" by relying on the term "iron curtain" formulated Winston Churchill for describing the divided Europe during the Cold War. However, the author mention that the context "silk curtain" applies is more cultural and less political and it 'marks the boundary between two distinct food mentalities and two quite different gastronomic approaches.'

producers in developing entrepreneurial capacities could lead to an increase of the market share of local food products (ibid.).

Generally speaking, 'a local food product is a food that is typically linked to an identified location either through geography, know-how or tradition' (Amilien et al. 2007, 2). In this way, the "local" quality associates twofold to the concept of "space" and "place": First, it relates to the physical aspect in terms of closeness or spatial proximity between the place of production and consumption of the food products. Secondly, it relates to the origin of the products, which 'includes geography, tradition, producers know-how and *cognitive* [proximity],[4] although not necessarily purchasing proximity' (ibid., 7). The latter aspect of local food – the origin-linked product – is better captured by the French term and concept of *terroir*, described as a 'dynamic process that helps and represents the link between time, human and space' (Bérard and Marchenayin 2004 qtd. in Amilien et al. 2007, 2). This twofold understanding of the "local" aspect shows that there is not a unified way to describe the qualities of "local food". Rather, local food is more likely 'a chameleon concept that changes meaning as it moves through different networks and contexts' (Amilien et al. 2007, 11). Thus, perceptions of local food may change as we move from a rural to an urban context. Rural consumers, for instance, use aspects of proximity and affinity to or trust in the producers to determine the quality of local food. The urban consumers, lacking proximity to producers, rely more on the legislative framework and marketing discourse around local food that recognizes origin and terroir as important aspects of local food (ibid.).

In order to define, protect and promote these territorial products, the European Union (EU) established in 1992 the quality schemes that help consumers appreciate and easily recognise these products' enhanced qualities. Today, these quality schemes are part of the Signs of Identification of Quality and Origin (SIQO) that are considered pillars of the new European agricultural policy (ibid, 2). In summary, SIQO labels give the following information to consumers:

[4] In Amilien et al. (2007), the term *cognitive* is used as an adjective referring to the quality categories that consumers recognise as important for classifying a food product as a "local" product. However, the proximity – understood as the distance between a place of production and consumption – is perceive in different way if consumers refer to the distance between the physical place of production, or the distance with the products, thus the *cognitive* element of proximity.

- a guarantee of the origin of food products with the Protected Designation of Origin (AOC/PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) food labels
- a guarantee of superior quality recognisable Label-Rouge food-label,
- a guarantee of a traditional recipe recognisable through the Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) food-label ,
- and a guarantee of the respect for the environment referring to organic farming and recognisable through the organic food-label (INAO [2019])

Figure 1: Food Labels on Quality and Indication of Origin (SIQO)

However, as Hegnes (2012) notices, while the EU labelling system was developed according to specific national systems, such as the Italian DOC (Denominazione d'Origine Controllata) and the French AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée), the Norwegian system was developed according to the European system. In 2002, the regulations for PDO, PGI and TSG were applied in Norway according to the EU regulations and they were grouped under the Beskyttede Betegnelser labelling scheme (Protected Designations: BB labels) (ibid.). These food labels were designed in order to provide consumers with accurate information about a product's geographical attachment, special quality and traditional methods of production (Matmerk.no 2018). In addition to BB-labelled food products, two other labels guarantee the Norwegian origin of food products for Norwegian consumers. These are Nyt Norge (Enjoy Norwegian food) and the Spesialitet (Speciality). The former is a voluntary scheme that guarantees the Norwegian provenance of a product's raw commodities and ingredients (Borgen 2009), while the latter is equivalent to the French label Label-Rouge that refers to products that use ingredients of high-level quality such as animal breed etc. (Amilien et al. 2007).

Figure 2: Local food products labels in the Norwegian food context

Nyt Norge and Spesialitet-labelled products have larger visibility in the food market compared to the food products with BB-labelling, under which only 27 products are registered (Matmerk.no 2019). The fact that Norway does not have a tradition of connecting food to a specific geographic area partly explains the rather limited success of origin-linked products (GIs) in the country. The narrative on local food has rather put nature – described as 'strong and unspoilt' – before culture (Amilien 2011, 103). This narrative is argued to have left little room for a concept of *terroir*, which instead needs 'a cultivated version of original Nature' that transforms a local product into a terroir product as a result of the dynamic between nature and culture (ibid.).

However, as explored so far, local food products play a minor role in the Norwegian food market, which can explain the rather modest socio-economic success achieved in rural areas. Kvam et al. (2014) suggest that in order for speciality food to grow in the future, producers, described as "rural traditional idealists" (ibid., 731), need to develop more knowledge about the preferences of a target group of consumers described as "urban idealists who are willing to change" (ibid.), to whom these qualities can appeal more. However, categorising consumers in such duality as rural vs. urban does not reflect the reality of those urban citizens for whom the proximity or face-to-face interaction with the food producer is an important aspect while purchasing food. This latter group of consumers frequently points to reducing the distance with food producers and the product by doing their grocery shopping in different AFNs such as farmers' markets or box schemes. Thus, rather than referring to a division between rural and urban, it is more accurate to speak about local/close

and distant consumers and the need for local food producers to develop communication strategies that will target the distant consumer as well.

This last recommendation conforms to that of Bjørkhaug and Kvam's (2019) insight that farmers should include the prospect of national distribution and not limit their focus to the local level if they want to grow their business. None of five farmers I interviewed has certified their products through GI quality schemes. However, they have attempted to improve food traceability have been made, showing that the producers agree on the need to communicate more effectively the territorial embeddedness of their products. Nevertheless, while the GI quality schemes are lacking, four of the farmers are certified as either organic or biodynamic producers, while one of them is in the process of converting to organic farming. Thus, I explore organic/biodynamic production as the next "novel" food quality.

2.2 Organic and Biodynamic Farming

Organic and biodynamic farming developed worldwide early in the 20th century as farming practices that pointed toward sustaining land productivity and its usefulness to society over time by avoiding chemically intensive methods of food production (Ikerd 1993). A wider definition of these two farming practices illustrates the principles upon which they are grounded, showing which dimensions differentiate them from industrial agriculture, starting with organic farming defined as

> […] a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. Also, it emphasises the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. (Semos 2002, 54)

Similar to organic farming, biodynamic farms

> […] stress biological methods in regard to humane treatment of animals, food quality and soil health (such as green manures, cover crops and composting). However, biodynamics takes it a bit further. In addition to organic biological practices, biodynamic practices also incorporate metaphysical aspects of farming. (Trimarchi 2009)

As described in these quotes, organic and biodynamic farming consist of developing new values and interests in agriculture that secure and enhance ecosystems, marking a break from the productivist model of modern agriculture (Tomlinson 2008, 134). Since the development in the 1930s, organic and biodynamic farming have seen the increase of certified cultivated area internationally. By 2015, the total global organic agricultural area (including land in conversion) was 50.9 million hectares, marking an almost five-fold increase compared to 1999 estimations (FiBL-IFOAM 2017, 25). The region with the largest area of organic agricultural land is Oceania, with 22.8 million hectares, followed second by Europe, with a total area of 12.7 million hectares (ibid.). Today, in the European Union, organic agricultural land represents only 6.7 percent of the total utilised agricultural area (Eurostat 2017a). The certified biodynamic area has also grown steadily, moving from 87,000 hectares in 1997 to 164,000 hectares in 2016, and the number of farms, during the same period, have increased from 2,785 to almost 5,000 (Castellini et al. 2017, 4).

In Norway, the year 1986 marks the beginning of the commercial and political institutionalisation of organic farming with the designation of the Debio national certification scheme for organic food (Terragni et al. 2009, par.13). Debio is also the certification and inspection body that certifies all organic methods of production. In addition, it implements the official national standards for organic farming which are subject to EU regulations (Flaten et al. 2006, 175). Since the 1990s, the development of organic agriculture has received large support from the Norwegian public authorities allocating grants to farmers that want to convert to organic farming in order to increase organic production. Increased public support for the organic sector was further a result of governmental policies focusing on environmental issues (Terragni et al. 2009, Vittersø et al. 2005). Thus, the aim was to achieve 10 percent organically managed agricultural area in Norway by 2009 (Flaten et al. 2006, 175) and by 2020, 15 percent of food consumed in Norway should be organic (SSB 2017, 17). However, these political goals are not yet met: from 2010 to 2015 the consumption of organic produce has only risen from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of total food consumption (ibid.). In terms of agricultural land, Norway initially registered an increase in organic farmland, which would include both the area that was certified as organic and the area that was under conversion to organic. The growing trend continued until 2012, and then declined annually starting in 2015, and since then the

area has remained stable, covering today the 4.8 percent of the total agriculture area (Debio 2018, 8). Overall, it can be said that since 2000, Norway has seen its organic farmland double, albeit in a context where the total agriculture land is diminishing (ibid.). While the biodynamic area is smaller in size compared to organic, it accounts for around 685 hectares of cultivated land comprising of 23 farms (Demeter 2019).

Figure 3: Organic and biodynamic labelling in Norway

Flaten et al. (2006, 175) suggest that the land area target set by public authorities should be compatible with the adequate development of the organic market. Consequently, for the authors, increasing organic farmland will be more realistic in countries that register both a 'higher degree of industrialised agriculture and/or problems with food-borne diseases than in Norway' (ibid., 176). However, to state that political goals should align with the market response to the same politics might overlook the structural and cultural forces that create barriers to attaining these targets. While I discuss forces or limitations that have an impact on the performance of organics in the Norwegian food in detail in the analysis chapters, it is useful to give a small introduction here as well.

Bjørkhaug and Blekesaune (2012) for instance find that one of the reasons for registering a low rate of conversion to organics is related to the differences in attitudes and motives between organic and conventional producers for choosing (or not) organic farming. Organic farmers, the authors say, believe that organic farming has a lower "organic footprint", offers better welfare standards to animals, and in general, organic food products are healthier (ibid., 202). Non-organic farmers, on the other hand, disagree with such claims by stating that 'Norwegian agriculture is already almost organic' (ibid.). Finally, organic farmers strongly reject such a claim, showing that organic farmers' ideologies remain anchored in principles that are in contradiction to industrial agriculture (ibid., 203). For Bjørkhaug and Blekesaune, there is a general cultural resistance to organic conversion grounded in the idea that

there are no differences between organic and conventional farming in Norway. Furthermore, consumers seem to agree. Storstad and Bjørkhaug (2003) explain that consumers generally imagine agriculture in Norway as small-scale Norwegian farms, which affects their ability to realise the gap between conventional and organic farming, and consequently their (dis)incentive for buying organic food.

Vittersø and Tangeland (2015), however, suggest exploring the Norwegian consumers' willingness to purchase organic food in a wider framework where competing interests from different stakeholders, promoting (or not) organic food consumption, has affected consumers' perceptions on the quality of organic food products. These competing interests have established what the authors call a "lock-in" or "path dependent situation" where vested interests '[…] "talk back" to the intentions and interests pursued by groups of actors' (Vittersø and Tangeland 2015, 97). A lock-in situation for the development of organic food first manifested when government initiatives to promote the organic food sector were scaled back at an early stage in 1998 due to the farmer organisations' dissent to such initiatives. Farmer organizations thus played a major role in this endeavour as they considered 'that the promotion of organic food should not be at the expense of conventionally produced food' (Vittersø and Tangeland 2015, 93). Furthermore, the retail sector showed limited interest in promoting organic foods, keeping organic food at the margins of the Norwegian grocery market (Terragni et al. 2009).

At the same time, while marketing of organic food met resistance from these powerful stakeholders, the development a new marketing strategy aimed at promoting 'the so-called natural advantages of Norwegian agriculture' blurred the differences between conventional and organic produce. This latter strategy saw the launch of a new food label – the Good Norwegian label – which 'suggest[ed] that the Norwegian conventional food could be regarded as "natural" and environmentally friendly' (Terragni et al. 2009, par. 13). Vittersø and Tangeland (2015) follow by saying that this strategy was more successful given the strong trust of Norwegian consumers' in Norwegian food and, as mentioned earlier, it overshadowed the differences between organic and conventional production. Indeed, in their quantitative survey that monitored the consumer perception of organic food in a period of 13 years from 2000 to 2013, the authors found that the perception of the benefits deriving from the consumption of organic food had the strongest effect on

the purchase frequency (ibid., 96). However, the *no benefits* barriers, namely consumers' lack of perceived benefits deriving from purchasing organic food, had increased significantly through the years (ibid.). By stressing the finding that consumers see no benefits from purchasing organic food, the authors point to the fact that the central role given to consumers for transitioning to more sustainable food consumption is ineffective if a major conflict of interests between powerful actors, namely food retailers and farmer organizations, is not mitigated.

This frame of a conflict of interests is useful in looking at the process of a quality turn in food production for exploring factors that can contribute in establishing local niche food as a successful practice of food production and consumption within a local food system. In my second analysis chapter, Chapter 6, I will take two empirical examples showing how conflicting interests in the food sector can achieve targets of food chain sustainability, such as animal welfare and protection, and preservation of cultural landscapes. I illustrate these examples through the designation of the first animal-protection food label in Norway and a renewed focus of environmental policies on the economy of the coastal heathlands in Chapter 6.

3 Theoretical Framework

In order to develop insights on factors that both support and preclude the successful implementation of a quality turn process in agro-food business, I combine two theoretical approaches to construct the theoretical framework for this study: Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory.

Social Practice Theory (SPT) will serve as a backdrop to illustrate the practices of food production that have emerged from farmers' motivations to incorporate quality and sustainability in their production, mainly by focusing on their farming *habitus*, understood as 'a system of disposition for thought and action that is constantly confronting and mediating new experiences' (Sahakian and Wilhite 2014, 27). In addition, SPT provides tools to understand how food quality itself is 'a fluid and socially constructed concept that is created and recreated through the discourses and actions of key actors within the agro-food system (Morris and Young 2000, 104). Framing food quality as a by-product of particular social practices can provided insight on attitudes and values that key actors comply and the following tensions and power relation undergoing between them (Domaneschi 2012, 104). Convention Theory (CT) will explore the process of defining quality by explaining what values or criteria ("orders of worth") inform my informants' decisions in the specific situational context of local and organic food production. Although not initially developed as a theoretical framework in agro-food studies, this theory has largely been used in the past two decades for 'examining alternative food networks, coordination and governance of agro-food value chains, and the so-called quality turn in food production and consumption' (Ponte 2016, 12). Its main value rests on the fact that it moves 'towards a pluralistic (and sociological) understanding of "quality" as a tool for structuring production, exchange and distribution'(ibid.). In a context where a principle of qualification coordinates actions, CT is useful for displaying the less visible power dynamics that characterize relations between producers and buyers (ibid.), and thus understanding how quality conventions become more normalised and subsequently applied as a social practice. Hence, the combination of these two theories seeks to find a balance between 'structural theories which ignore individual action on the one hand, and actor oriented approaches which overlook the structural factors surrounding action on the other' (Bjørkhaug 2007, 5).

This means developing an actor-sensitive perspective (ibid., 7) that aims to challenge the hegemonial position of the standard quality convention within a social structure, where conflicting interests maintain the stability of this position.

3.1 Social Practice Theory

SPT relies on the work of many scholars including Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984), and Schatzki (1996). However, the most accredited author remains the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu,

> The theory of practice as practice insists […] that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, […], the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring, dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical function (Bourdieu 1990, 52 qtd. in Bjørkhaug 2006, 125).

According to this conceptualisation of social practice, Bourdieu understands different practices of human beings 'through the combined effect of objective conditions, internal interpretations and social action' (ibid.). Rather than being accidental, an individual's practice is a *doxical*[5] experience which is localised in time and space (Jenkins 2002 qtd. in Bjørkhaug 2006, 125). Thus, Bourdieu builds a conceptual framework that positions practices as the outcome of reflexive and creative individual actions while at the same time, acknowledging that this degree of reflexivity and creativity can be subject to constraining forces within social structures (ibid.).

In order to develop this on-going dialogue between the individual's internal interpretation and social structures further, Bourdieu introduces two other core concepts of SPT– *field of disposition* and *habitus.*

Field of disposition, or more broadly known as *social space*, is defined as 'a limited domain where people or institutions struggle for access and resources' (Bjørkhaug 2006, 125). The field is described as external to the human body, characterized by 'competitiveness between different players that try to secure their own positions and

[5] Doxical coming from *doxic* meaning: 'of, relating to, or based on such intellectual processes as belief or opinion'(Merriam-Webster)

who work to either conserve or transform the field' (ibid.). Within the food sector, the field of dispositions is the food market where different market players from producers to consumers and retailers struggle for different forms of access: from the access to land resources, to the access in the grocery market, to access to food products with reasonable prices. Bjørkhaug (2006) suggests that farmers attempting to act outside the dominant field or that fail to adopt the dominant logic of the field might face consequences. In a globalised food system dominated by mass production, producing quality and sustainable local food challenges the dominant logic of industrial food systems where food is mostly cheap and anonymous. Likewise, food producers have taken into consideration these risks, and I will illustrate in the analysis, have tried to challenge the dominant logic of the social space they are part of through quality production strategies. This process has been the outcome of not only of the farmers' resources, and therefore their *economic capital*, but most importantly, a result of their *cultural capital* [6] with farming and marketing. Bourdieu argues that different forms of capital inhabit the field that can influence our practices, which are expressions of our *habitus.*

For Sahakian and Wilhite (2014), habitus is one the most powerful concepts introduced in the social sciences in the post-war period, as it has revolutionised the way of thinking about the relationship between actors' agency – 'the capability or power to be the sources and originator of acts' (Ortner 1989 qtd. in Sahakian and Wilhite 2014, 28) – and the social structure. As mentioned earlier, habitus is defined as 'a system of dispositions for thought and action that is constantly confronting and mediating new experiences' (Sahakian and Wilhite 2014, 27). Bourdieu (1998) argues that at the individual level, it is our life experiences that constitute grounds for habitus. Our previous life experiences produce thoughts and actions 'that tends to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms' (Bjørkhaug 2006, 125). However, on a societal level, habitus stems from the different positions they social actors occupy in the social space (Salvesen 2014, 50). Habitus thus adapts to different forms of capital

[6] In Bourdieu's practice theory, cultural capital refers to the intellectual skills and knowledge that the individual accumulated during life time and often inherited by their families, which provides them advantage positions for attaining higher social status in society (Bourdieu 1985 qtd. in Richardson 1986) . Similarly, I argue that the knowledge and skills developed in the farming and food business by the group of farmers I interviewed have been essential for farmers to position themselves in a better power relation towards other powerful market players.

i.e., economic, cultural and social capital, resulting in different dispositions for acting and understanding (ibid.). This view of social practices as systematically influenced by the individual's social position or class has received criticism from scholars mainly focused on consumers' consumption patterns. Warde and Southerthon have argued that the class homogeneity in Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus is highly exaggerated (Warde and Southerthon 2012 qtd. in Salvesen 2014, 50), while Wilhite argues that it understates individuals' agency and the subjective meaningfulness of action (Wilhite 2014 qtd. in Salvesen 2014, 50).

However, it is important to note that Bourdieu does recognise a dynamic character to habitus when he differentiates between *habitus* and *habit*. According to Crossley (2013, 139), with habitus, Bourdieu implies a flexible disposition that requires knowledge and skills; this is in clear opposition to a 'mechanical behaviour, a stimulus–response reflex' – which is how habit is described. It is within this routinised and dynamic character of the habitus that I will explore the practices through which farmers are trying to challenge the dynamic dominant logic of the field by producing local, organic food. However, as field works only through an agreement between social actors about how to interpret the rules of the field (Spigel 2013), it is relevant to notice the way in which farmers' strategic partners such as retailers and chefs are responding to food producers' effort to challenge standard quality conventions. This will help to understand how much approval or disproval non-standard quality conventions are receiving within wider social circles.

Food Quality as a Field of Social Practices

Drawing from SPT, Domaneschi (2012) suggests that quality is understood as something made, not given, but rather a by-product of food social practice. The actors that participate in food chains as food producers, food retailers and consumers also participate in the process of food "valorisation", which has taken the shape of a process of "qualification" (ibid., 308). Within this process, *quality* becomes a category to assess different and competing food systems for the delivery of food, 'as well as new procedures that should provide food standards and different criteria for selecting and judging foodstuff used by consumers' (ibid., 309). If we view the process of qualification in this perspective, Domaneschi (2012) argues that we should then explore this process according to two different analytical dimensions. By

strongly relying on a concept borrowed from Social Practice Theory, *field dispositions*, the author suggests that the first dimension should indicate 'a field of mutual positioning of human subjects and non-human objects and materials involved in this process' (ibid., 309). The second dimension should involve the competing forces that are responsible for governing the process of food qualification in question (ibid.). The author then summarises that

> …food quality as a (battle)field of social practices consists in *a given coordination of human and non-human resources in a particular place and time that is open to a change according to the mobilization of such resources due to the power relations that emerge from this coordination*. (Domaneschi 2012, 309 author's emphasis)

The framing of food quality as a by-product of social practice offers a new venue to studying food compared with classical sociological approaches to food that focus on either the final consumers or agribusiness (ibid., 310). Similarly, Stræte (2008, 65) argues that, for example, a producer to market cheese as a local product, the consumer should also agree that a specific place of origin is a sign of a product's quality. He follows that, in a wider circle of relations between different actors in the food chain, the consumer's preferences do not develop in a "vacuum", but "local" as a favoured quality develops through the interrelation with other actors. It is from this interplay between different actors that the different dimensions of quality emerge that are necessary to organise and categorise food products. By taking the local embeddedness as one food quality dimension, Stræte argues that products promoted or marketed with the local embedded feature are designed to be speciality foods. However, without this kind of marketing, the product might be lost amongst the standard fare. Likewise, organic/biodynamic food products are promoted for their embedded ecological worth and animal welfare ethics that strongly differentiate these products from conventionally produced ones. Therefore, in order to promote any specific dimension of quality, such as local or organic, we have to associate quality with specific agreements between different actors regarding its meaning. However, while Social Practice Theory explains how food qualification is a by-product of social practice according to individuals' inspirations, it explains less how actors in the food chain negotiate between competing definitions of food quality. It further lacks explanation of which definition prevail and how quality production can

take the shape of a "collective coordination" (Stræte 2008), meaning to be shared by a growing numbers of farmers, consumers, and food retailers. To examine this, I utilise Convention Theory, which has been largely applied in agro-food studies.

3.2 Convention Theory

Convention Theory (CT) is a theoretical framework developed by French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot as part of the ''pragmatic turn'', i.e. 'wherein a structural theory of reproduction was rejected in favour of a social theory attentive to the dynamic of action' (Thévenot 2007, 410). The pragmatic turn introduces that both Boltanski and Thévenot have developed their theory 'in an effort to overcome the perceived shortcomings of Bourdieusian "critical sociology"—namely, the relative neglect of the perspectives of social actors' (Stoner 2012, 37). As described here, Convention Theory wants to replace Bourdieu's Social Practice Theory for studying human behaviour. However, these two theories, rather than being opposite to each other, are quite complementary.

In his work "*Pragmatic Regimes Governing the Engagement with the World",* Thévenot (2001, 2) states that while the social sciences have benefited greatly from the elaboration of the concept of "practice", theories of practice typically do not provide good accounts of our dynamic confrontation with the world, and fall short in underlying the "moral element" of the practice that shapes our actions. Therefore, the author introduces the concept of pragmatic regimes, or regime of engagement, which 'are social devices which govern our way of engaging with our environment inasmuch as they articulate two notions: a) an orientation towards some kind of good; b) a mode of access to reality' (Thévenot 2001, 14).

Simply put, regimes of engagement, divided into "regime of familiarity", of "planned and regular action", and "regime of justification" (see below), intend to "recast" a concept of practice by renewing the approach to action and agency. As Thévenot states, through CT, the idea is to encompass in a single theoretical framework a variety of relations to the world where

> Such a comprehensive framework should pay attention to the role played by evaluation in shaping the dynamics of action in the world

> and delineating regimes of valued engagement between a human agent and her counterpart in the material environment. (Thévenot 2006, 3-4)

Emphasising the role played by evaluations, or *justifications*, in shaping action helps build a bridge between Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory rather than seeing them as opposite theories, or the attempt of one theory to overcome the other. Evaluations thus make space for what Bourdieu qualified as one of the elements of social practice, namely the individuals' internal interpretations. As Truninger (2011, 47) notices, Boltanski and Thévenot's Convention Theory relies on the 'vitality and variety of practice theory.' However, it is in the loose internal connection of Social Practice Theory that there is space for the inclusion of Thévenot's work of pragmatic regimes.

The connection of these two theories is further visible in Thévenot's notion of engagement that '[…] draws attention to the correspondence between a capacity or power of the agent and the appropriate preparation of the environment' (Thévenot 2006, 4). Similarly, the idea of illustrating farmers' engagement in the production of local and organic food is seen in confrontation with the preparation of the environment i.e., retailers and chefs in appropriating these food qualities. Hence, while SPT makes the practice of food production the unit of analysis and defines quality as the outcome of the social practice**,** CT gives a "voice" to the process of negotiation of these food qualities between my informants by providing some categories of evaluation, or "orders of worth" upon which various actors justify their actions. However, one must add that according to the regime of engagement, there will be more or less need for reflective argumentation, or justification, from the social actors for their actions. I explain these differences in the three pragmatic regimes illustrated below.

3.3 Regime of Familiarity and Planned Action

Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) argue that many situations in social life can be analysed by their requirement for the justification of action. While many of our actions rely on routines in our lives and do not require much of reflection nor an explanation, in "critical moments" – or moments of disagreement or dispute – social actors provide justifications for their action in order to move from a situation of

disagreement towards a state of agreement. This differentiation between moments of little reflexivity versus moments of high reflectivity of one's own actions is better explained in the type of regime of engagement in which the social practice takes place. As described earlier, Thévenot (2001) conceptual construction of a regime of engagement is divided into "regime of familiarity", "regime of regular planned action" and "regime of justification." In "regime of familiarity," our actions are embodied and informed by our surroundings, while in the "regime of regular planned action," actions are taken according to instructions (Truninger 2011, 42). The regime of familiarity 'rests on the accustomed dependency with the neighbourhood of things and people' (Thévenot 2001, 16), while the regime of planned action 'refers to the felicitous exercise of the will by an individual endowed with autonomy and capable of projecting herself successfully into the future' (Thévenot 2007, 417). In these two regimes, practice elements are linked at a 'localized and intimate level', and 'human agency engages in local or individual circumstances,' although it must be added that at the regime of planned action, 'human individual willing agency [is related as well] to the functional preparation of the world' for its fulfilment (Thévenot 2001, 18). However, in these two regimes, the 'absence of conventional markers, or qualifications, is an obstacle to generalized evaluations which are needed in public disputes involving critique and justification' (ibid.).

Hence, these two regimes could have been useful to explain farmers' involvement in producing local niche food products, but they do not account for a confrontation with the outside environment and the response that comes back to the agents from the environment. To achieve quality production is not only the outcome of the planned action of the single individual; rather, it includes a confrontation with a set of other actors that have the economic and social capital to decide what quality production should consist of and subsequently, which dimensions of food supply chain sustainability will be enhanced.

Therefore, in order to better explain this dynamic between individuals' will and the response of the environment, I will move to the third regime of engagement, namely the regime of justifications where the individual move from "personal convenience" to "collective conventions" (Thévenot 2001, 7), which coordinate markets in general and food markets in particular as the focus of this thesis. This type of engagement with the environment based on justification is also of most interest as the data that I

have gathered consists of interviews in which social actors – farmers, food retailer and chefs – provide motivations (justifications) for their interests in local niche production, often confronting different views amongst each other.

3.4 Regime of Justifications

The heterogeneous meaning of quality includes ideas of safety, healthy, naturalness or localness, and represents a typical situation of disputes between different food chain actors regarding which of these quality characteristics should dominate. As mentioned earlier, CT describes that in situations of disputes, 'there exists an imperative to justify stances and actions' (Evans 2011, 110) as 'publicity puts a strain on the judgment which guides action' (Thévenot 2001, 18). Within this process of disputes, individuals rely on modes of justification for their action called conventions or "orders of worth" that are

> constructed groupings of 'forms of valuation that refer to particular views of the common good [with] different principles of qualification' (Ponte 2016 qtd. in Dumbauld 2017, 9).

Conventions are thus defined as 'ways of thinking, evaluating and acting in a social situation' (Diaz-Bone 2008 qtd.in Borgen 2009, 3). As Borgen (2009, 3) emphasises, without common framework, i.e., constituent conventions, interactions between social actors will be impossible. However, Evans (2011, 110) points out, that Boltanski and Thévenot abstained from constructing a universal set of conventions, but rather argued that exists a plurality of orders of worth that individuals draw upon for justifying their actions and stances. Boltanski and Thévenot's general idea for building this theoretical framework for studying human behaviour is illustrated in the following quote:

> By emphasizing the justification process, we want to take *seriously* the question of the legitimacy of the agreement, rather than set aside in favour of an explanation exclusively styled in terms of contingency, deceit or force. We certainly do not underestimate the importance in social life of domination, force, interests and even deceit, delusion and self-depiction. But a representation of the social world which would be completely grounded on *deception* and *delusion* would no longer

> be able to give account of the experience of the social actors themselves. (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 364 my emphasis)

As contented in this quote, through a focus on the process of justification, CT aims indeed to "recast" the concept of practice by highlighting its dynamic confrontation with the world. The way how this dynamic confrontation takes place is displayed through the moral element that guides action, encapsulated in the six "orders of worth". The different orders of worth that Boltanski and Thévenot suggest, are the "inspired", "domestic", "civic", "opinion", "market" and "industrial", respectively. The authors follow, saying that "orders" 'can be seen as utopias when confronted with the diversity of the situations in which members of a complex society are involved' but nevertheless they are 'sufficient to describe justifications performed in the majority of ordinary situations' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 369). Being situational, the conventions that define "orders" are also dynamic, which means that they can change over time as a result of a process of debate transforming the social norms where they are embodied. Finally 'although there is an internal coherence in each world, there are also qualifications that "bridge" different worlds' (Ponte 2016, 14). Therefore, individuals can justify their stance on the basis of more than one order of worth, which offers a new venue to study human action that, according to the authors, 'enable[s] us to escape having to choose between a formal universalism and the kind of unlimited pluralism' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 365). In the section below, I will go more into detail of each order of worth, giving also an interpretation of them related to the data gathered from my informants. In the analysis chapter, I will look at how different conventions can coordinate action in the local food market and which quality conventions dominate.

As an introduction, the table below summarises the ways in which worth is estimated (mode of evaluation), how worth can be conveyed (format of relevant information), how individuals establish relations between one another (elementary relation), and worth as attributed to an individual (human qualification) (Dumbauld 2017, 36).

'ORDERS OF WORTH'	INSPIRED	DOMESTIC	CIVIC	OPINION	MARKET	INDUSTRIAL
Mode of evaluation	Grace Creativeness	Esteem Reputation	Collective interest	Renown	Price	Productivity, efficiency
Format of relevant information	Emotional	Oral Exemplary Anecdotal	Formal Official	Semiotic	Monetary	Measurable criteria Standards
Elementary relation	Passion	Trust	Solidarity	Recognition	Exchange	Functional links
Human qualification	Creativity Ingenuity	Authority	Equality	Celebrity	Desire Purchasing power	Professional competency

Table 1: "Orders of Worth" Boltanski and Thévenot (1999)

The World of Inspiration

The *world of inspiration* is concerned with imagination, passion and creativity (Swaffield et al. 2018, 45). Worth is 'viewed as an immediate relationship to an external source from which all possible worth flows' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 370). In this order, actions are justified and evaluated on the basis of their originality (Swaffield et al. 2018, 45). In my thesis, this refers to overall goals that farmers want to achieve through organic and biodynamic farming. This order of worth will be useful to also elaborate on food retailers' and chefs' respective interests in purchasing and cooking local niche food products, not only as part of their profession but as part of their past experiences and actual aspirations.

The Domestic World

The *domestic world* is based on costumes, social ties and traditions (Swaffield et al. 2018). Worth 'depends on a hierarchy of trust based on a chain of personal dependence' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 370). Trust is an important requirement for governing coordination between food chain actors. In my thesis, informants evaluate and justify their actions based on of their trustworthiness in relation to their community, customers and each other.

The World of Renown

In the *world of renown*, worth 'is nothing but the result of other people's opinion' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 371). It differs from the domestic and inspiration

orders of worth as worth here is 'unrelated to the realm of personal dependencies and it is not linked to the person's self-esteem [but rather] people's recognition constitute its reality'. Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) specify further that this order of worth may create more situations of dispute in case of a gap between one person's self-esteem and public recognition. This order of worth is thus useful to study the confrontation between considerations that farmers make in regard to producing organic/biodynamic food or conventional food and the different ways in the broader Norwegian food market perceives the benefits of organic farming.

The Civic World

In the *civic world*, worth is based on solidarity, responsibility and collective interests (Swaffield et al. 2018, 45). Inspired by Rousseau's ideas in "*Contrat social*", Boltanski and Thévenot argue that actions are relevant and worthy as 'citizens give up their particular interests and direct themselves towards the common good' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 371). The concern for the common good that triggers social actors' actions strongly resonates with the fundamental principles of sustainable development that advocate for fair development that does not compromise the ability of future generations to equally prosper. Therefore, I use this order of worth to look at the dimensions of food supply chain sustainability that my informants aim to tackle through quality production.

The Market World

The *market world* is concerned with price, competition and wealth (Swaffield et al. 2018). In this order, individuals connect 'through the mediation of scarce goods, the acquisition of which is pursued by everyone' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 372). The coordination between actors, such as buyers and sellers, is governed through their qualities of 'being opportunistic in spotting and seizing opportunities of the market, to be unhampered by any personal link and to be emotionally under control'(ibid., 372). Actions are evaluated and justified in terms of their financial impact. In my thesis, this concerns the discussion regarding the financial impact of producing organic and my informants' collaboration with each other based on the economic advantages or disadvantages from this collaboration.

The Industrial World

The *industrial world* is concerned with productivity, competencies and performance (Swaffield et al. 2018). Worth is based on efficiency and 'it can be measured on a scale of professional capabilities' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 372). Given that worth is based on the level of efficiency, 'coordination between different actors can be said to be harmonious when organized, measurable, functional, standardized' (ibid., 373). Similarly, my informants evaluate and justify their actions according to the level of efficiency, in terms or little or high efficiency (convenience), deriving from the collaboration with each other.

3.5 Bridging Between "Orders of Worth": the Reality Test

As illustrated so far, each order of worth is governed by a convention between social actors regarding the "right thing" to do. However, Thévenot (2001, 5) claims that in Convention Theory, the moral element of the practice 'means various conceptions of the good […] where social scientists usually identify causal factors such as interests or dispositions and not only in "morality" in the narrowed sense.' According to the author, although sociologists remain deeply concerned with political and moral issues, they distance themselves from political and moral philosophy by replacing moral philosophy with concepts such as "norms" or "values". The latter gives the opportunity 'to examine the reduction of the good to a law-like regularity within the frame of a classical conception of social practice' (ibid., 6). Of most interest here is to study conventions that assume a position of "law-like regularity", hence becoming hegemonic (Borgen 2009) over time, as this gives a picture of the contemporary constructed reality. This is important for seeing social practice not as a reproduction of the social order, but rather in continuous transformation according to the conventions that govern the collective interest; what is said to be *right*, *good* or *legitimate* in an historical time might not be valid over time. Thus,

> The notation of good needs to be put to a reality test where it is realized in the evaluation of some performance. Symmetrically, the capture of the relevant piece of reality depends on the outline of some good. This interdependence is precisely what turns a mode of adjustment into a common régime. (Thévenot 2001, 7)

Based on this, the predominant position that a social norm or convention assumes during a period should be evaluated in the context it is performed in order to grasp its validity or legitimacy. For example, the promotion of the globalised food systems and intensive industrial farming with the intention of "feeding the planet", does not meet the reality test when statistical data shows that approximately 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide (FAO 2018), and about 1,3 billion tonnes of food is lost or wasted each year (FAO 2019). Hence, the moral concerns about the environmental and social implications deriving from food waste question the actual coordination of food supply chains and push for those in power to take more action on this issue. Swaffield et al. (2018) used Convention Theory to investigate the motivations of the major retailers in the UK for challenging food waste. The authors found that retailers' representatives justify their actions based on a combination of three conventions: moral, financial, reputational. Furthermore, the authors state that while relying on such different conventions can facilitate some action in the current food system, 'the dependence of ethical motivations on their financial and reputational auxiliaries may actually prevent a long-term solution to the problem' (ibid., 50).

Similarly, in my analysis chapters, I look at the ways farmers in which, farmers, food retailers and chefs, bridge between different orders of worth/conventions for motivating their interests towards quality production and speciality food. The idea is to develop insights on how these actors are trying (or not) to challenge the hegemonic position of standard quantity convention for enabling more sustainable practice in food production and food consumption. For a visual model of different the realities of production that can result from committing to certain orders of worth for coordinating action, I rely on Salais and Storper's (1992) work, "worlds of production" strongly inspired by Convention Theory.

3.6 Production in Action

According to Borgen (2009, 3), 'convention-based actions construct the economic objects and quality definitions.' Therefore, following the value placed in each order of worth around which actors coordinate their actions, we are able to assess food qualities and the main principle of qualifications around which their value is built.

Murdoch et al. introduce five different sets of conventions[7] that include different valuations and considerations related to food and food systems:

- *'commercial conventions*, which include evaluations by price and the commercial quality of goods;
- *domestic conventions*, which are largely based on trust and involve goods which can draw upon attachments to place and traditional modes of production;
- *industrial conventions*,' in which goods are evaluated according to standards of efficiency and reliability';
- *public conventions*, such as the recognition consumers give to trademarks, brands, and packaging;
- civic/ecological conventions, which refer to the worth of certain goods in terms of their general societal benefits' (Murdoch et al. 2000, 114).

Thereafter, a 'bundle of conventions creates a possible world of action' (Stræte 2004), namely a "world of production" that reflects 'coherent combinations of technologies and markets, product qualities and quantitative practices of resource use' (Salais and Storper 1992, 171). In Salais and Storper's work, the formulated model of four worlds of production is structured around two dimensions: the one that relates to the supply of technology, information and skills available to a community for carrying out production discerning if these are 'restricted to a community of specialists or not'; the other one that relates to demand and distinguishing between 'anonymous and uniform or not' (ibid.).

[7] Murdoch et al. (2000, 114) argue as well for the introduction of another set of convention, namely *ecological conventions* 'one that stands in sharp opposition to those motives forces that are thought to lie behind globalization'. In general, this kind of convention refers to organic production, short transport distance, and animal welfare. However, since farmers link organic agriculture with general societal benefits, then I decided to use these two notations interchangeably rather than separately.

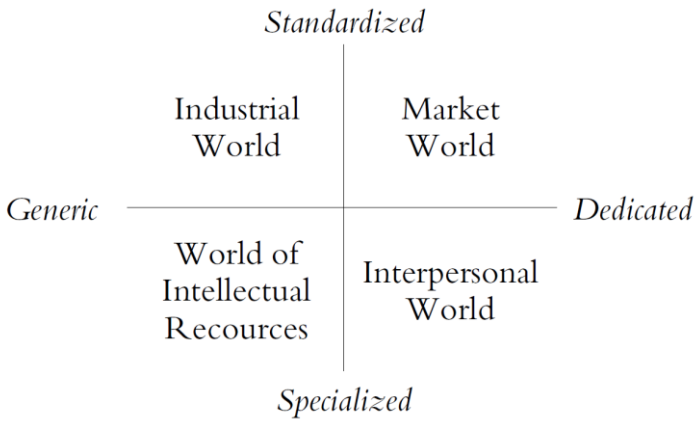

Figure 4: Two dimensions of production following Murdoch and Miele (1999) in Vittersø et al. (2005)

From the combination of these two dimensions we have a representation of the four worlds of production where we can anticipate the products' qualities in each of them as follows:

1. The Industrial World of standardised-generic products (world of mass production)
2. The Interpersonal World of specialised-dedicated products (world of specialties production)
3. The Market World of standardised-dedicated products (world of industrialised niche production)
4. The World of Intellectual Resources of specialised-generic products (world of high-tech production) (Salais and Storper qtd. in Stræte 2004, 230-231).

From the distinction between *standardized* vs *specialized* product, we learn that the formers 'is made with a known, widely diffused production technology in which quality is so widely attainable that competition comes to be inevitably centred on price', while the latter 'is made with technology and know-how that are restricted to a community of specialists' (Salais and Storper 1992, 175). On the other hand, a *generic* product 'can be sold directly on the market, because its qualities are so well known', while for a *dedicated* product, 'market is characterised by interpersonal negotiations rather than supply and demand curves and the product's qualities are adjusted to a particular type of customer' (ibid.,).

As presented through these extremes, we will have from one side the Industrial World where *commercial* conventions are dominant quality conventions around which food consumption and production is organised. On the other side, we will the Interpersonal World of production where *domestic* and *civic/ecological* quality conventions will instead be the dominant ones.

As presented so far, the Industrial World (standard-generic) and interpersonal world (specialized-dedicated) incorporate the discussion of the quality turn as we move from a world of production where competition is mainly focused on price, as in the former case, to that where competition is based on quality, as in the latter case (Vittersø et al. 2005). However, as some quality conventions dominate in each world, other conventions run across worlds of production, making the arrangement of resources more complex in each world. Murdoch et al. (2000, 119), for instance, sustain that food products that are strongly embedded in their domestic and ecological system will hardly be able to increase their market share as they are unable to reach the marketplace outside of the immediate area of production (ibid.). On the other hand, food products that are disembedded from their ecological systems might reach more marketplaces but still carry strong industrial criteria that is not appreciated by customers concerned with aspects of sustainability in food production (ibid.). In this regard, the authors emphasise that

> […] forms of embeddedness require critical evaluation. We need to assess how food quality can be asserted in ways which substantively challenge the conventional, industrialized chains that drive processes of globalization and which bring so much environmental and medical harm in their wake. (Murdoch et al. 2000, 122)

As contended in this quote, it is the embeddedness of the quality criteria in food production and distribution as expressed in each of the five conventions mentioned above, rather than the scaler arrangement, that makes a food system more sustainable from a socio-economic and environmental point of view. Therefore, a successful strategy will be to find a good combination between different quality conventions. In my analysis, I place farmers in worlds of production according to the main set of quality conventions upon which they organise production and distribution in order to explore their practices and their processes of negotiation of these quality conventions with other actors.

Summary

Trying to summarise vast and complex theories such as Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory the context of this study, I find the figure below useful (Fig., 5). This figure shows how successful practices can influence social norms and restructure the power relation in the field. Similarly, I have argued that successful quality production achieved through the re-localization of food chain activities can challenge unsustainable food systems. As explained earlier, field is a domain where people and institutions struggle for access and resources, and which is governed by an agreement between social actors regarding the "the rules of the game" in the field (Spigel 2013, 807). The dominant logic of the field can influence our habitus and produce practices that might correspond to this dominant logic. However, the field 'does not ordain that actors select certain practices in response to a given situation, but rather it creates a context for habitus-informed practice to play out (ibid., 809). The different ways in which individuals evaluate the "rules" of the field will result in different practices that might need to transform the field rather than conserve it. This strong response of the individual to the environment was largely illustrated through Convention Theory and the six "orders of worth" that constitute individuals' common forms of public evaluation that are grounded on particular ideas of the common good (Thévenot 2001). The justifications provided from agents about their actions aim to highlight the legitimacy of the agreement reached for what is the "right thing to do" in the field.

This dynamic between agents and the filed shows the power relation involved in the field, where the outcome is determined not only by the stock of the capital of each actor but also the actors' ability to control the value of different forms of capital in a field (Spigel 2013, 809). The quality turn in agribusiness has the merit to reposition *cultural capital* in farming as a more valuable type of capital when compared to *economic capital*. However, whether this results in more sustainable food supply chains will depend on if domestic and civic/ecological conventions establish themselves as successful practices in food production.

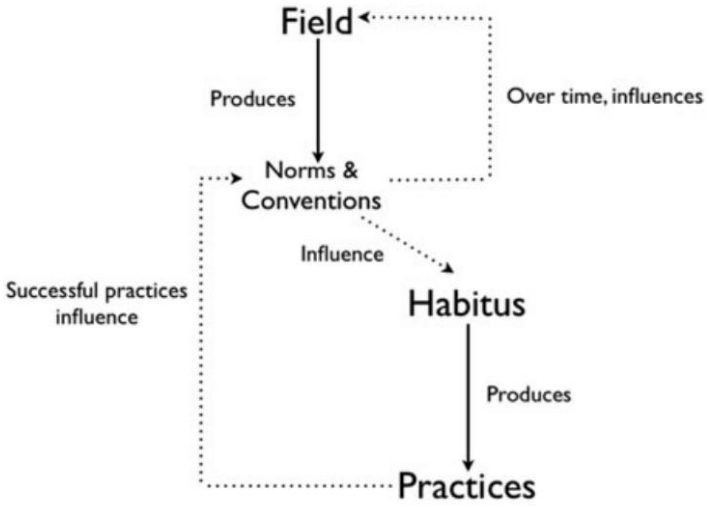

Figure 5: The dynamic nature of norms and conventions within a field (Spigel 2013)

4 Methodology

4.1 The Relevance of Qualitative Case Study

My initial interest in this thesis was the understanding of how food chain actors can enable the development of a sustainable local food system through production and distribution strategies where the leading criterion is quality rather than quantity. Such a link between quality food production and sustainable LFS can be empirically explored by first investigating the implementation of a quality turn process initiated by farmers who aim to produce food products embedded with domestic and ecological worth. Secondly, this link can be analysed by exploring the process of adaptation to these novel qualities from some of the most representative food chain actors in Norway, such as retailers from the supermarket chain, speciality food stores and chefs. Furthermore, the process of adaption provides insight on how much approval these novel food qualities receive in the grocery market and how much they are able to challenge the hegemonic position of standard quality conventions.

As presented so far, my thesis is an explorative study, and therefore I find it useful to use a qualitative case study as a research method for exploring the contemporary phenomena of a quality turn in agribusiness. Case study research has been recognised as an important approach in studies of the agribusiness sector, as it can provide the necessary tools to identify, explore, describe and understand a complex phenomenon, situation or event (Yin 2014). According to Schramm's definition,

> The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. (Schramm 1971 qtd. in Meyer 2001)

This definition fits both of my research questions. My first research question and its sub-questions (i.e., how are Norwegian farmers implementing the quality turn process in their farming activity, what strategies are they following and how do they motivate their actions), seek to understand the set of decisions made by this group of actors to achieve successful food quality production. It points both to the practices of food production and to the values that have informed these practices/strategies. In

addition, inquiring on the strategy that combines food quality and sustainably is useful for clarifying the criteria used by farmers/food producers to evaluate quality of food. According to Parga-Dans and Alonso González (2017, 5), there is a need to deepen the analysis of quality and its understanding, as the actual trend has seen the proliferation of a multitude of products and market segmentation which does not necessarily translate in better food quality. Likewise, the definition of case study fits with my second research question and its sub-question, i.e., that pertaining to the inquiry on food retailers' and chefs' adaptation process to the novel food qualities that illustrate these key actors' set of decisions and interests for collaborating with local niche food producers. The process of adaptation shows a dynamic process of negotiation between these two groups of actors, which gives insight to the resulting quality conventions that assume a dominant position within these food networks: supermarkets, speciality food stores and restaurants. Therefore, in the analysis chapters, I discuss these three-step decisions (i.e. decisions, implementation and results), in order to understand in depth what can be done to facilitate quality food production and establishing non-standard quality conventions as dominant conventions in the grocery market.

As we speak about a set of decisions taken by social actors and their underlying motivations, qualitative research seems to be the most appropriate form of research as it

> […] calls on inductive as well as deductive logic; appreciates subjectivities; accepts multiple perspectives and realities; recognizes the power of research over both participants and researchers; does not necessarily shy away from political agendas. (O'Leary 2004, 142)

Focusing on actors' subjectivity and their multiple perspectives on food and sustainability is in line with my approach to the study that aims in its analysis to be one side actor-sensitive, that is, exploring individuals' action and framing sustainability as an outcome of social practice. On the other side, I seek seeks to not underestimate the structure within which social practice is expressed, and thus does not hesitate to focus on a political agenda that addresses the problem of conflicting interests within the food sector.

Finally, the advantaged to using case study as a method for a deep analysis is that it can offer different sources of evidence for data collection, such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts (Yin 2014, 103). From this group of sources, I have mainly relied on semi-structured interviews, documentation, archival records and observation, which I use to triangulate the data collected in order to build a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon of a quality turn in the Norwegian food sector. Before illustrating how I have used these sources, it is important to look into the design of case study research.

4.2 Designing Case Study Research

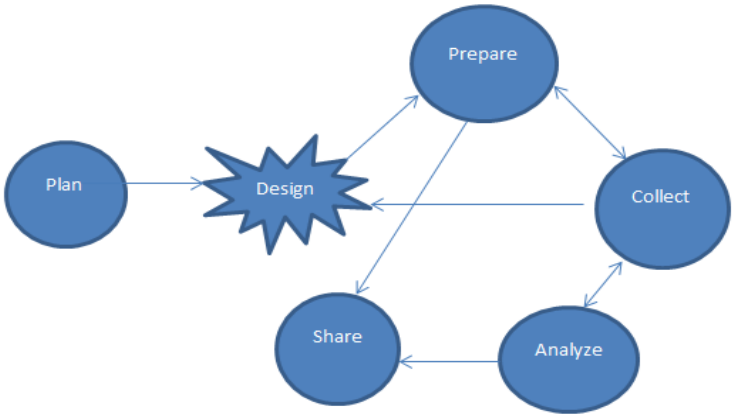

Figure 6: Designing Case Studies Yin (2014)

For Yin (2014, 26) 'a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn), to the initial questions of the study.' Every empirical research, says the author, has a research design that helps the researcher to build a logical plan to get from *here* (question posed) to *there* (conclusions) (Yin 2014, 28). However, it is important to build a research design where the empirical data addresses the initial research question, while taking care to avoid producing a biased conclusion (ibid.). Building good theoretical propositions – 'articulating "theory" about what is being studied and what is to be learned' – can help strengthen the research design (ibid., 26). When I started planning this research project, SIFO provided the overarching theoretical framework, where Convention Theory and

Social Practice Theory are used to describe the quality turn in food production and food consumption within the European project Strength2Food. These two theories, therefore, provided the preliminary elements that I used to design my own research project, i.e. 'what should be examined within the scope of the study' (ibid., 30). I achieved this achieved by defining the case and its units of analysis. Thus, the "case" to study is the quality turn process in agribusiness studied through two case studies: the quality turn within organic/biodynamic farms and the quality turn within supply chains. Within the group of farmers, the unit of analysis is the practice of food production and distribution that farmers have chosen to follow according to their underlying motivations in order to keep quality and suitability in their production. Within the group of food retailers and chefs, the unit of analysis is the process of adaptation to the novel food qualities – local and organic food – as underlined by their interests in local niche food production. Within case study research, using multiple case studies instead of a single case is considered more beneficial as it allows for comparison and contrast between cases, which has the possibility to add confidence to the findings and reduce biases (Meyer 2001). Now that I have defined my units of analysis, I will outline the way in which the data was gathered.

4.3 Filed Work and Data Collection

Entering the field to interview my informants was challenging overall. I perceived myself as an "outsider" both in terms of the cultural context (non-Norwegian citizen) and, to a certain extent, to the activity/subject that I was inquiring about: food production and food retailing. However, the most challenging interviews were the interviews I conducted with farmers. Kuehne (2016) says that it can be anxiety provoking for any new researcher – let alone for a master student – to conduct interviews with farmers. Kuehne suggests even more importantly that

> Research interviews with farmers are unique events because farmers are a sub-cultural group located in a particular landscape, which means that they have quite different experiences, behaviors, and motivations to academic researchers. (Kuehne 2016, par. 25)

In addition,

> Farmers are different to other groups because of their complicated relationship with their land, how the environment and their occupation influence their identity and behavior, their focus on families, and the multigenerational character of their family farms. (Kuehne 2016, par. 26)

Given these differences between the researcher and farmers, Kuehne suggests that it is important to account for the farmers' approach to dialogue. Moving within a different cultural context than my own, understanding this approach to dialogue was also difficult from the cultural point of view. However, I tried to adapt, never imposing myself, nor forcing the conversation. This approach allowed for new topics of study to emerge in a more fluid way. Likewise, keeping in mind my non-familiarity with the cultural context and, to a certain extent, the topic, made me think about the tools that were most appropriate for collecting data. As I mentioned earlier, I chose to combine the use of semi-structured interviews with secondary data and observation, which I discuss briefly after introducing the strategy used for selecting informants.

Sampling and Navigating the Field

The sampling of my informants corresponds to my initial hypothesis in this thesis, i.e., that sustainability is not the realm of the "local" scale understood both in terms of very short food supply chains and only small-scale food producers; it is rather the outcome of the social interaction between food chain actors and state policy. Starting from this initial position, as it concern farmers, the selection of informants was purposeful rather than random. I decided to contact a wide number of farmers, but particularly targeted those who supply both alternative food networks, which are generally short food supply chains, as well as conventional ones that distribute nationally. Furthermore, the aim was to have a group of farmers that spanned from large to small-scale food producers.[8] In order to gather such a group of informants, I navigated through different websites of alternative food networks and conventional ones and crosschecked farmers' profiles. I contacted them through emails and phone and finally managed to have a group of five farmers including two medium-scale

[8] Regarding the parameters that I have used to classify farmers in large, medium and small-scale producers see Appendix 2.

producers (Linn and Anne), one large-scale (Karl) and two small-scale (Jan and Mari) (Appendix II).

Snowball Sampling

For exploring the quality turn within different food chains, I applied a mixed strategy targeting informants both purposefully and randomly. Having an informant from the supermarket chains was a goal since the beginning of this thesis. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, supermarket chains, although historically focused on generic products of mass production and mass consumption, are becoming more willing to seek alternativeness (Maye and Kirwan 2010). Looking at these chains' process of adaptation to novel food qualities is relevant to see what food qualities are particularly appreciated and if the market share for local niches within the supermarket chain increase. While I chose my informant from the supermarket chain purposely, the selection of chefs and the food retailer from the speciality shop as informants was prompted by my initial findings in the fieldwork. From the conversations with farmers, it emerged that speciality food stores and restaurants are becoming key food chains[9] for promoting niche local food products. Likewise, following the response of this speciality food shop and restaurants to local niche food production provides insight to new forms of collaboration that farmers are seeking outside the narrow circle of conventional chains. In total, I had four informants from the supply side: a retailer from the supermarket chain, one from the speciality food store and two chefs (Appendix III).

Semi-structured Interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews was essential for the logical linking of the empirical data and its contextual analysis. As Wilson points out,

> The general goal of the semi-structured interview is to gather systematic information about a set of central topics, while also allowing some exploration when new issues or topics emerge. (Wilson 2014, 24)

[9] Other key actors were bakeries with which one of the farmers, Anne, collaborates mostly but including it as we this would have been more time consuming and I felt that I already had enough data to work with.

Through a semi-structured interview guide, I could address both the topics that were relevant for this study, as well as give the opportunity to my informants to elaborate on topics that he/she found important to highlight. Furthermore, using semi-structured interviews, I gathered similar data from different informants that I later used to analyse pre-planned issues as well as new ones that emerged from the fieldwork. In total, I conducted nine semi-structured interviews during March-June 2018 which varied in duration from one hour and a half to two hours. All the interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the interviewees and then transcribed by me. By having the chance to record these interviews, I could focus better on the conversation and develop follow up questions. Because of the characteristics of my informants – their long experience in the field of food production and food retailing – these semi-structured interviews fall under the category of elite interviews. Following Richards's definition,

> […], the whole notion of an elite, implies a group of individuals, who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, […], are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public. (Richards 1996, 199)

Instead of *elite* I could have used the term *key informants* to define the category of my informants. Key informants are defined as,

> […] those whose social positions in a research setting give them specialist knowledge about other people, processes or happenings that is more extensive, detailed or privileged than ordinary people, and who are therefore particularly valuable sources of information to a researcher, not least in the early stages of a project. (Payne and Payne 2004, 135)

However, as Shaw and Holland (2014, 134) argue, elite status is strongly context specific and 'unlike elite interviews […], key informants are not necessary people who have power, but those whose judgment, through their expertise, carries authority'. I argue that in the Norwegian context all of my informants, from farmers to food retailers and chefs, detain not only the specialist knowledge regarding the food sector, but they have the power to influence policy decisions. As I described in the Background chapter, the Norwegian government initiated the quality turn in Norway. However, farmer organisations and retailers (as well as large cooperatives)

have, in many ways, furthered or prevented the promotion of Norwegian speciality food within mainstream food chains or public debate, having thus a direct impact on the future development of this food sector. This demonstrates that these categories of informants have more influence than members of the public (e.g., consumers) do and therefore fall within the category of the elite. Throughout this experience, as I anticipated, one of the main problems of conducting elite interviews was that sometimes they were hard to access. This was more evident in accessing farmers to interview. In order to increase the chances to get an interview with farmers who I was interested in, I followed Richards's (1996, 202) suggestion to mention 'individuals of importance, who are supporting you in your research as it provides credibility and legitimacy to your work.' Therefore, I mentioned SIFO and the importance of food projects like Strength2Food for deepening insights on quality food production and sustainable food chains. I had very few positive replies, but I noticed that farmers who agreed to be interviewed were happy to contribute and dedicated a good amount of time to the interview. Farmers' positive attitudes during our interviews helped me to establish, as mentioned, a good network for accessing other informants, such as chefs and food retailers, who agreed to be interviewed immediately.

Observation

Yin (2014, 113) suggests that since case studies take place in the real world, the researcher creates opportunities for direct observations. These observations can serve as a source of evidence and eventually increase the validity of the study, as the researcher can have a more complete understanding of the context and the phenomena under study. However, the case study as a research method considers observation as part of the protocol inquiry rather than the ethnographic method, and makes a distinction between observation and participant observation. Participant observation happens when the researcher takes a more active role in the field instead of being a passive observer, but this method might not fit the case study. According to Schensul et al. (1999, 91) participant observation is described as 'the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting.' In order to answer my research questions about quality production and sustainable local food systems, I did not consider it necessary

to participate to day-to-day actives to understand these dynamics, but rather found it more adaptable to assume a role of an external observer and collect data through interviews as mentioned previously. This planning was also necessary because of my background in political sciences and the fact that my method of study to this point had been deskwork through secondary data. I was hence very cautious to use a method such as ethnography, which, according to my personal opinion, requires more research training in order to gather valid data.

I managed to visit four farms and due to time constraint with one of the farmers, I had to do the interview on Skype. Before starting our interviews, which took place inside of the farmers' houses, they would show me their farm, the stable, the chicken house and extensive fields that surround their farms, used for vegetable production and animal pasture. It is important to notice that I had not previously asked the farmers to show me these sites; it was a spontaneous initiative from the farmer's side. I reflected on this detail after our interviews and while transcribing, I noticed the sense of pride that arose in farmers when describing how the production structure reflects their vision about sustainable farming. I took pictures of these farms, having obtained the farmers' consent first, and these pictures became data upon which I reflected about the connection between the farm organization and farmers' visions expressed during the interviews.

Desk Work and Secondary Data

Desk work has consisted of collecting secondary data to help understand the study context and, to an extent, the primary data collected during my interviews. To start with, I read different articles that describe the quality turn in the Norwegian context and the challenges that non-standard quality conventions encounter in the grocery market. I must add that it was challenging to build a good understanding of the topic given the lack of articles on local niche production in Norway, compared with the amount of articles written in the UK regarding local and organic food. Furthermore, on two occasions, I came across findings in my fieldwork that, although it was clear their relevance to sustainability, I could not fully understand the mechanism that linked these elements together. I had to read scientific reports in order to understand, for instance, the link between animal breed and animal welfare, as in the case of organic broiler production, and the link between breeds, traditional methods of

rearing and the preservation of cultural landscapes, as in the case of the Norwegian wild sheep, *villsau*. However, as it will be illustrated in my analysis, the reading of these scientific reports, although challenging and time consuming, has helped greatly to a gain a deeper understanding of the interrelation between quality production and the sustainability of a local food system. Furthermore, I have used personal email communication with the NGO Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance (NAPA) in order to confront further my findings with other sources external to my informants.

4.4 Data Analysis

Meyer suggests that one way of analysing data when using case studies as a research method is to go through the stages by which data are reduced and analysed. According to the author,

> This involved establishing the chronology, coding, writing up the data according to phases and themes, introducing [the case] into the analysis, comparing the cases, and applying the theory. (Meyer 2001, 341)

I start establishing a chronology in my data both when farmers have turned to organic and biodynamic farming and when food retailers and chefs have started collaborating with niche producers. Setting a chronology led me to an understanding of the time frame of the events and built a history of the *habitus* of my informants in relation to niche food production and food retailing. After having established a chronology in my data, I start coding the transcribed interviews by using theoretical categorisation grouped under the "orders of worth" framework provided by Convention Theory. Through theoretical categorisation, I start gaining the first insights on my informants' modes of evaluation for engaging in niche production and retailing. Furthermore, coding through theoretical categorisation, made possible that relevant topics such as animal welfare, environmental suitability, trust, financial security, good reputation emerged which further expand the understanding on my informants' motivations for promoting niche products as well the challenges that they met for doing so. However, I decided not to develop my analysis through larger topics or themes but rather to give space to each of my informants' process of

articulation of the evaluation and action framework and describe the process of a quality turn within the two case studies. As Goffman notices,

> When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary. [A] primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful. (Goffman 1986, 21)

Displaying each of my informants' primary framework or schemata, and most importantly confronting them with each other, has provided the tools for not missing the meaningful aspects in the process of establishing quality production as a successful practice of food production and food consumption. In the final part of this thesis, I compare my two case studies after describing the process of the quality turn in each of them. I then re-introduce theory to suggest ways of overcoming critical situations between actors and re-organizing the power relation in the field of agro-food in order to include a more pluralistic view on quality compared to unanimous one reflected on standard quality convention.

4.5 Positionality and Ethical Considerations

For fulling the ethical considerations I followed the auxiliary steps for conducting ethical research. These steps included providing to my informants a letter of information and consent forms that will explain the aim of my research and more broadly the background of the Srength2Food project. Furthermore, I followed the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) guidelines for anonymising my informants' names by giving them new names in order to protect their identity. The new names and other information regarding the interview are reported in Appendix III. In a couple of occasions, I have sent part of the questions from the interview guide to farmers that asked about it so they could get acquainted with the research project and the type of data that I was collecting. Such communication before to the interview has given me the possibility to start establishing trust and openness with informants, which has been beneficial at the interview stage with the interview assuming more the form of an informal conversation. Moreover, for establishing

openness and mutual trust (Kezar 2003) I start explaining about my education background and shared personal information with my informants such as the fact that I worked part-time in speciality food store in Oslo[10] during my studies which has provided me a first-hand experience with the Norwegian speciality food products and consumers' approach towards them. All these steps were made in order to establish authentic trust with my informants that that does not seek to obtain information from the elite but aims to understand the elites' perspective (ibid., 400). Moreover these steps were necessary to assure my informants my role as a researcher; I was a master student very curious about the dynamics the development of speciality food in Norway that has as many food treasures as many other European counties but struggle to reach a broader market.

4.6 Challenges And Study Limitations

I encountered several challenges during my thesis. I already anticipated the difficulties of building a deep understanding of the study context due to the *novelty* of the subject itself: niche food production in Norway. Furthermore, it was challenging to operationalise a cross-fertilisation between Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory. To achieve a degree of cross-fertilisation was necessary to understand these theories in light of their historical/national and academic context. Calhoun (2002, 19) mentions that Bourdieu, through his political critique of neoliberalism, 'call[s] for an objective analysis of the conditions of creativity, and the pressures that resisted it, rather than an idealization of it as a purely subjective phenomenon.' As the creativity of social action is argued to be subject (limited by) of a pervasive and unsustainable economic system, I understood Boltanski and Thévenot's need to develop a theory that strongly accounts for social action in order to not depict a world 'completely grounded on *deception* and *delusion* '(Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 364, my emphasis). However, as Truninger (2011) points out, in order for CT to express the powerfulness of social practice, its analytical insights strongly rely on the vitality and variety of SPT. Under these terms, I could develop a cross-fertilisation between these two theories, rather than seeing one as more

[10] The speciality food store where I have worked in Oslo is different from the one I have included in my thesis.

accurate than the other for explaining social behaviour, they could be complementary to each other.

My language abilities in Norwegian are yet another challenge that affected my position as a researcher. I am an Albanian citizen who has spent several years living and studying in Italy, before moving to Norway in 2016. I have always prioritised learning the language of the countries I live and study in, such as Italian, which is my second language (I have also studied in Spain and Turkey under the Erasmus program). Likewise, during my first year of the Master program, I completed the first and the second levels of Norwegian language in order to learn Norwegian. However, due to my short years of residence, my language skills in Norwegian remain limited. Considering this fact, it was helpful to have informants that have a very good level of English, even among the farmers that were in their 60s, which gave me the possibility to conduct these interviews that I would have not been able to carry out otherwise. I suppose that speaking Norwegian would have helped me to connect better with my informants and be perceived less as an outsider. On the other hand, I noticed that my limited language skills in Norwegian sometimes required farmers to elaborate more on terms in Norwegian and what they meant by using those terms. This provided me with more insight on the aspects of sustainability that were relevant for the farmer to highlight. In this regard, one of the farmers (Linn) mentioned how important the "sporbarhet" was for her, meaning traceability in Norwegian in reference to food traceability. I did not understand the term, so the farmer started explaining the steps that she has taken to make visible to consumers the link between her farm and her food products in order to establish trustful relationships also with the distant consumer.

The hardest challenge I encountered was managing the thick data that I was able to gather during my fieldwork. My informants' knowledge of the field I was studying was massive and therefore coding and choosing the analytical framework under which to present my data was difficult. I felt the pressure, and the responsibility, of not having included all the important insights from my data. The theoretical framework in this regard was helpful to reduce and convey my data into analysis.

Similar to these challenges, the study has limitations. To start with, while I discuss the process of adaptation to novel food qualities from the retailers' and chefs' sides

to both “local food” and “organic food”, I do not have the food producers’ side of this discussion – producers that carry origin-linked (GIs) certifications for their food products. In the group of farmers I contacted for the purpose of this study, two of them carried the Spesialitet (Speciality) food label, but could not participate in my research due to their time constrains. In this way, I have only one “representative group” of the quality turn process: the organic/biodynamic producers. However, even though organic producers do not have GIs quality certification, it is also worthy to mention that they have been at the forefront of promoting quality/food/local, organic food products and distribution through AFNs among farmers in Norway (see Terragni et al. 2009, Vittersø et al. 2005). For this reason, this group of farmers can be considered one of the most representative group of food producers that are implementing the quality turn in food production.

5 Presenting Farmers' Perspective on Quality and Sustainability

This analysis chapter will focus on my first research question and its sub-questions:

- How do Norwegian farmers implement the "quality turn" process in their farming activity?

- What practices of food production and food distribution have emerged as a result of their strategy to keep quality and sustainability in their farming business?
- How do farmers motivate/justify their actions?

Through these research questions, I will explore more in detail the process of the quality turn in the Norwegian food context by illustrating Norwegian farmers' narrative regarding their strategies to keep quality and sustainability in their production and challenge the hegemonic standard quality convention. I go on to discuss how their plans for action within food chains have facilitated a process of innovation that aims to separate local niche production from industrial mass production. For this purpose, I allocate farmers in "worlds of production" in order to look at the quality conventions around which production and distribution are organised. Later, I will highlight farmers' motivations for engaging in organic/biodynamic food production based on the six "orders of worth" that illustrate farmers' evaluations about the "right thing to do" within the agribusiness as informed by their long expertise in farming. As I highlight farmers' motivations for pursuing organic/biodynamic farming, I give a short description of farmers' "biographical and professional trajectories" (Domaneschi 2012) that set a historical timeline of their experiences as well as their ambitions within farming. Throughout this analysis, the overall goal is to initiate the analyst approach that combines both the structural and actor-sensitive perspective in challenging the hegemonic position of standard quality conventions. This means confronting farmers' aspirations for quality food production with the structural forces that support or constrain the development of a sustainable local food system.

5.1 Strategic Production and Distribution

The implementation of the quality turn process within the group of farmers consists of the farmers' decision to employ a competitive strategy in their food business that points towards the production of a dedicated, rather than generic, food product, thus aiming to move from a world of mass production to a more specialised one. Farmers achieve this strategy by relying on a complex combination of forms of embeddedness and disembeddedness for organising the food chain activities (Murdoch et al. 2000). From my data material, embeddedness emerged as stemming of farmers' choice to pursue organic and biodynamic farming practice that aims enhance the ecological and domestic quality attributes of food products. Production was thus organised around *civic/ecological* and *domestic* conventions where goods are evaluated respectively in terms of their general societal benefits and attachment to place (ibid., 114). Disembeddedness, on the other hand, is organized around *commercial* and *industrial* conventions where actions are evaluated in terms of their financial impact and their level of efficiency, and have consisted of farmers' efforts of to spot and seize market-places that expand beyond the immediate local area. Framed in this way, embeddedness differs when it refers to production and when it refers to distribution. In production, embeddedness refers to farmers' efforts of to pursue more "natural" ways of producing that are less susceptible to "malign human interference" in the agro-food systems (Nygard and Storstad 1998 qtd. in Murdoch et al. 2000, 108), which aim to sustain land resources and establish a trustful relationship with their community. In distribution, embeddedness refers to farmers' efforts to reach new market places in order to gain more visibility and market power, but without losing their distinctive character of alternative niche products. The first empirical example of how this strategy has been put forward, as I mentioned previously, will is visible by placing farmers in "worlds of production" that explain farmers' action and evaluation framework, specifically around which quality conventions production and distribution are organized. Murdoch et al. (2000) and Hinrichs (2000) argue that a production-distribution framework organised around strong *commercial* and *industrial* conventions, responds to the logic of a productivist paradigm where profit, rather the social aspect of the economic activity, is taken into consideration. On the contrary, a production-distribution framework organised around strong *civic/ecological* and *domestic* conventions links the economic activity with the

sustainment of the ecosystems services, setting a limit to the exploitation of natural resources. However, strong embeddedness might curtail to the possibility of speciality food to challenge the hegemonic status of standard quality convention, as these food products rarely reach new marketplaces. Therefore, as argued thus far, bridging between conventions in a way in which food producers can successfully manage to balance embeddedness and disembeddedness of food chain activities will lead to an effective implementation of the quality turn process.

5.1.1 Placing Farmers in Worlds of Production

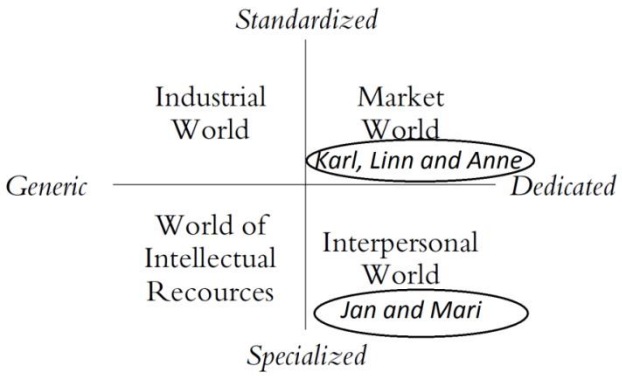

Figure 7: Allocating farmers in worlds of production

At a first attempt of placing farmers in worlds of production, we can say that Linn, Karl and Anne belong to the Market World of Production, while Jan and Mari are part of the Interpersonal World of production. This division is based on the way distribution is organised, namely the food chains where farmers sell most of their product (see Table 2). Linn, Karl and Anne, as medium and large producers, distribute primarily through conventional food chains, such as supermarkets and bakeries, which do not provide a direct line of communication between producers and consumers. Based on this consideration, it is argued that this group of farmers is part of the Market World, that as described in Chapter 3, is characterized by socially disembedded relations (Vittersø et al. 2005). In this world of production, producers rely on brands and labels as an important means of communication with their customers (ibid.). Farmers explain that their choice of distributing to conventional food chains strongly connects to the level of efficiency that these food networks offer for allocating large quantities of food products. In turn, an efficient allocation reduces the financial risk of their production remaining unsold. Jan and Mari, as

small-scale producers, sell primarily through alternative food networks, such as REKO-ring, farmers' markets, on-farm shops, that are characterised by direct contact between producers and customers. Farmers explain that interpersonal communication enabled by face-to-face meetings is essential for establishing trust with customers who are concerned with the moral and environmental considerations in food production. We can assert that Jan and Mari's products carry strong *domestic* quality conventions, while Karl, Linn and Anne's products carry *industrial* and *commercial* quality conventions.

However, as we look at the farmers' market approach, we see that both groups of farmers point to the production of a dedicated product. This represents qualities defined by the needs of a particular type of consumer, contrary to a generic market approach where a good's qualities are designed to attract a broad number of consumers at any time (Salais and Storper 1992, 175). This difference between a *dedicated* versus *generic* market approach is of great significance because, as state, Salais and Storper (1992, 175) state, in a capitalist system, the competitive process is strongly influenced by this double opposition between generic and dedicated products. A superfluous and conspicuous consumption, which sustains a capitalist system, is obtainable within a production framework where competition is mostly centred on price as the good's qualities are widely predictable. In the case of a dedicated product, competition is instead based on product diversification and qualities are negotiated between producers and costumers previous to production (ibid., 176). Qualities are not well known and thus 'cannot be sold independently of tight (social and spatial) linkages between producer and client'(ibid.,). While the generic product market is very predictable as it appeals to a vast number of consumers, the dedicated product market is uncertain as qualities are redefined and negotiated in the context of each transaction (ibid.,). The implication of this assertion is that competing through quality rather than quantity creates a situation of market uncertainty for the food producer, which makes it less appealing to abound in markets with "anonymous" products sold through "anonymous" market mechanism (ibid.,). However, one can argue that a competitive process that points only to product diversification can also contribute to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption when producers continuously aim for new target segments of the market without having an overall strategy that points to quality and sustainability. A

similar process of a redefinition of the competitive process, and therefore of the strategy of production, that points to quality was described by one of the farmers, Anne, who distributes to bakeries. As she mentions,

> Initially [referring to the year 2008] we were supplying only regular flour to the bakery. A few years later, the bakery decided to introduce whole grains in their bread production, so we started with spelt farming. Recently, the bakery came with the idea of working on product diversification and to introduce spelt porridge in their shops. Therefore, we invested in buying a machine that we could use for the steel-cut. It has been a long journey and while the first six years things were very "quiet", the last five years our workload has increased. However, now we are focusing mainly on making our farm more sustainable and convert to organic farming. (Anne, Farm 5 'late converter'[11])

Based on what Anne said, initially, she belonged to the Industrial World of production: selling regular flour, with well-known qualities, for a vast number for potential buyers. Through close collaboration with her main strategic partner, Anne moved to the Market World of production by focusing on product diversification and targeting a segment of the market where consumers are concerned with healthy and nutritious food. Finally, through organic production, Anne points to quality as the competitive strategy, similar to farmers in the Interpersonal World. I argue that organic production is a competitive strategy that focuses on quality because this production strategy, as will be discussed later, represents a vision for the farmer on responsible farming and its benefits, rather than only being a strategy of product development.

So far, I have argued how farmers that belong to the Market World rely on a combination of *commercial-industrial* and *civic/ecological* conventions for organising their production and distribution. Similarly, small-scale farmers rely on a similar combination of conventions when spotting market opportunities to deliver their products. In this regard, Jan argues that from a financial point of view, the collaboration with renowned chefs in Oslo has been essential for guaranteeing him financial security beyond self-reward. Therefore, one positive result of the process of

[11] 'Late converter' refers to the year of conversation of the farmer to organic farming. I elaborate further in the next section this distinction.

embeddedness and disembeddedness of food chain activities is that today, farmers have a higher number of food networks through which they can sell their products, and in many occasions, receive a premium price. Table 2 (Appendix II) gives an overview of how distribution is arranged and the main qualities emphasised by farmers regarding the products they carry as a result of their strategy to maintain quality and sustainability in their farming. However, in order to understand the actions framework in more detail and how forms of embeddedness and disembeddedness can increase the sustainability of a local food system, we need to focus on how orders of worth motivate farmers' actions.

5.2 Embeddedness in Production and The "Organic Turn"

Organic and biodynamic farming have been presented with many advantages for the environment, humans and animal welfare (Tomlinson 2008). Larssæther (2011) argues that in Scandinavia, there are established conventions of what categorises agricultural production as organic, such as animal welfare and avoiding pesticide use and chemical fertilizers. The author explains that beyond these "formal specifications", organic farming is pursued with the idea of a 'system of production and consumption where nature is respected beyond its ability to supply input to the economic activity' (ibid., 410). As Domaneschi (2012, 310) reminds us, '[a] social definition of quality emerges empirically from a transformation of a bunch of material *qualities* of food (biological, organic, etc.) into a unique symbolic value named *quality*'. Similarly, a social definition of organic and biodynamic quality emerges empirically from a transformation of the use of resources for food production that aims to challenge the dominating values within conventional agriculture. The organic and biodynamic quality is thus strongly anchored in the *domestic* and *civic/ecological* conventions where goods draw their value from attachment to place and local community and are evaluated in terms of their general societal benefits. However, the conversion to organic and biodynamic farming has not occurred the same across the group of Norwegian farmers I interviewed. While Jan and Mari have always pursued a biodynamic/organic farming since establishing their farms, Karl, Linn and Anne converted to organic later in their farming.

Following Flaten et al.'s (2006) example investigating Norwegian organic dairy farmers' motivations for converting to organic according to their year of conversion, the group of farmers I interviewed can be divided as:

- "Early converters" = conversion in 1995 or earlier (Jan and Mari);
- "Mid converters" = 1996–1999 (Karl);
- "Late converters" or "newcomers" = 2000 or later (Linn and Anne)

According to this division, organic and biodynamic farming practices can be considered a *typical farming habitus* or a *traditional practice* (Bjørkhaug 2006, 126) for mid and early converters, or as "old guard" farmers (Flaten et al. 2006). The adjective *typical* in relation to *farming habitus* refers to its official definition i.e., 'being or serving as a representative example of a particular type; characteristic' (Collins Dictionary [2019]). Having spent an average 40 years in organic and biodynamic agriculture, "early" and "mid" converter farmers have a considerable amount of accumulated knowledge in organic and biodynamic farming, which makes them representatives of these farming practices. Using tools from Social Practice Theory, organic and biodynamic farming can be seen as a part of these farmers' embodied history. Late converters are in a different position. Linn, for example, switched to organics in 2017, and Anne, who is in the midst of converting to organic, a process that will take up to three years. In the case of late converters who have been running their farms for more than ten years, the conversion to organics represents a break with the old practice of conventional farming, thus forming an *independent farming practice* (Bjørkhaug 2006, 127). I use i*ndependent* here to refer to a new and innovative approach to farming that marks a separation from conventional farming.

It is within this division between "old guard" farmers and "newcomers" that I will discuss farmers' motivations for pursuing organic and biodynamic farming. The reason behind this choice is that it has been argued that newcomers to organic farming might pursue farming practices that are more commercially minded, which would undermine the ecological ideologies on which organic/biodynamic farming is based (Flaten et al. 2006, 180). Studying the values that inform the new generation of farmers entering the organic sector will be important to anticipate the future development of the organic sector.

5.2.1 "Old Guard" Farmers: Early Converters and Mid Converters to Organic/Biodynamic Farming

Jan (Farm 1, 'early converter')

Jan is one of two biodynamic producers, together with Mari, that I interviewed. He has 46 years of experience in biodynamic farming since he started as a trainee on one of the first biodynamic farms in Norway in 1973. Jan is a full-time farmer and has always wanted to be a farmer. His concerns about biodynamic farming are the following:

> I have a biodynamic farm and the main idea behind it is to build a self-sufficient farm which means that we rely as little as possible on outside inputs. This is mainly reached through a diversification of production. We produce animal products which go mainly for domestic consumption, and then we have 50 different varieties of plants and vegetables for selling. (Jan, Farm 1 'early converter')

As it is visible with Jan, and later with all of the farmers I interviewed, farmers' involvement in organic and biodynamic farming is motivated by the functions that these farming practices perform. The outcomes that farmers can achieve through organic/biodynamic agriculture constitute the meaning and value of their commitment to these types of farming. Framed in this way, the *inspired* order of worth, as concerned with creativity and originality (Swaffield et al. 2018, 45), is claimed here to be the primary source of justification for action for the farmers. Jan presents the idea of having a small-scale and biodynamic farm as part of a life philosophy, which corresponding to the inspired order. As he mentions,

> Introducing such a wide variety of vegetables in our biodynamic farm makes it hard for me to work rationally. And I do not like to work rationally; I just want to try new things all the time. (Jan, Farm 1, 'early converter')

While the *inspired* order explains the farmer's first approach to biodynamic farming, other orders of worth display how targets that the farmer wants to achieve through this farming practice are linked to the concept of sustainability. In Jan's case, the aim of building a self-sufficient farm is linked to the *civic/ecological* order of worth, where actions are justified on the basis of their concern for the common good

(Swaffield et al. 2018, 45). Indeed, a self-sufficient farm is reported to have a lower environmental impact, which is beneficial for a healthy ecosystem. Lebacq et al. (2015) find that input self-sufficiency is relevant to promote farm sustainability, as farmers are faced with an increase in energy and input costs. The authors argue that the greater use of on-farm resources and the non-use of mineral fertilisers and pesticides leads to low environmental impact per hectare (ibid., 551).

Therefore, the *inspired* and the *civic/ecological* orders of worth assume a central role in Jan's ideas of farming, overshadowing the *market* and *industrial* orders of worth as a source for his motivations for pursuing biodynamic farming. In reference to the *market* and *industrial* orders of worth, where actions are evaluated respectively in terms of their financial impact and level of efficiency, Jan explains,

> Of course I get a higher price for my products compared to conventionally produced ones, but is it financially profitable? I am not sure because I could work more rationally, grow more lettuce, buy a bigger car where I could carry 100 boxes of lettuce and drive it to Drammen where Bama has its warehouse. Finally, coming back home and grow more lettuce. (Jan, Farm 1 'early converter')

The farmer follows saying that for him, it is a not matter of choosing between small-scale or large-scale production, but rather following a method of agricultural production that prioritises environmental values over financial aspects and productivity.

Finally, Jan mentions that the fact that the biodynamic quality of food products is receiving more approval from a wider number of Norwegian consumers, his farm is becoming a brand. This has developed an enthusiastic reaction from the local community, which, as Jan mentions, is now taking pride in saying that his farm is part of their neighbourhood. The second positive development has been the promotion of culinary tourism together with local chefs, which brings economic revitalisation to the local area.

Similar visions and concerns about biodynamic farming are shared by the next farmer, Mari.

Figure 8: Biodynamic farm in Buskerud. Photo credit: Sabina Kuraj

Mari (Farm 2, 'early converter')

The prevalence of environmental values over financial aspects of agricultural production was a topic discussed with Mari as well, who accounts, like Jan, for more than 40 years of experience with biodynamic farming. Mari took over her family farm, and like Jan, she is a full-time farmer who always wished to be a farmer. Similar to Jan, her motivations for following a small-scale biodynamic farming practice is built on arguments linked to the *inspired* order of worth and later elaborated through the *civic*/*ecological* and *domestic* orders of worth. A farmer's motivations for relying on a farming system that prioritises ecological and social-economic sustainability over capital accumulation displays how these three orders of worth link to her actions. Mari illustrates this easily in her comment:

> Aiming at earning as much money as possible is a wrong kind of development of our times. The economic aspect of an activity shall develop itself out of the contact with each other, but money shall not be the main reason why I am selling my products. The most important thing in farming should be the relation it recreates between humans and nature and how we can bring a change for the future. Money has no future! (Mari Farm 2, 'early converter')

From this quote, we can infer that the wrong type of development refers to a market context where food, and land resources in general, are commodities rather than as a

common resource. Therefore, a renewed approach towards nature and the economic system place food's value on dimensions that bring security and health to the forefront rather than it's "tradable features" (Vivero-Pol 2017, 2). From this perspective, it came as no surprise to me that out of the five farmers I interviewed on sustainable local food systems, Mari was the only one who is a part of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The International Network of Community Supported Agriculture (URGENCI), describes CSA as

> Local solidarity-based partnerships between farmers and the people they feed […] a framework to inspire communities to work together with their local farmers, provide mutual benefits and reconnect people to the land. (URGENCI [2018]-a)

Reconnecting to the land and to the local community while establishing a mutual responsibility between food producers and consumers for farming are the founding principles of an alternative economic system as represented through the concept of *Associative Economy* or *Altruistic Stakeholder-Managed Economy* that inspired the founder of biodynamic farming, Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (Karp 2008). The word "altruistic" in the CSA context refers to 'an economic activity where the primary motivation is not profit, but rather the desire to meet human needs, strengthen communities, and care for the planet' (ibid., 26). It follows that profit is a "natural by-product of economic activity", rather than the motivating force (ibid.). Therefore, an altruistic approach to economy enables the system change Mari mentions, which can address the root causes of a 'wrong kind of development' based on the commodification of agriculture.

While the first modern CSA originated in Japan in 1971, the concept soon spread to other continents including the USA and Europe. In Norway, it was first introduced through a pilot project led by The Royal Norwegian Society for Development (Norges Vel) from 2004-2006, and today there are 78 CSAs around the country (Andelslandbruk Norge 2019). The Norwegian term for a CSA is *andelslandbruk* which can be translated as "shared farming" (ibid.) Although the sharing of risks and benefits of farming is organised differently from farm to farm, it generally consists of shareholders covering all the costs of farming by paying a fixed price in advance to the farmer. The farmer in return is committed to providing food products from the farm throughout the year to consumers that participate in the partnership. While CSA

offers financial stability for the farmer, the overall aim is to make people aware of food origins and increase consumers' trust in food. In a CSA, consumers can acquire agricultural knowledge from farm personnel and self-exploration of the agricultural landscape (Chen 2013, 40). Mari, through her biodynamic CSA,[12] sought to bring this task forward:

> The relation of humans with nature is important, as without such a relationship we are capable to destroy nature. Therefore, I want people to come and experience the life in a farm, see the animals pasturing in the fields so that they can learn how food is sourced and where it comes from. (Mari, Farm 2 'early converter')

The emphasis put in this quote on the benefits deriving from an improved human-nature relationship further illustrate the link between farmer's ideas of agriculture and concepts of ecological and socio-economic sustainability. Indeed, informed consumers are more likely to appreciate food qualities such as local, seasonal, fresh, fair and short-travelled, which are crucial for a sustainable diet with low impact on the ecosystem.

As illustrated so far, similar to Jan, the *domestic* and *civic/ecological* orders override the *market* and the *industrial* orders of worth as a source of motivation for pursuing biodynamic farming that inspire the farmer to promote a local community that pursues altruistic goals. In these terms, we can state that biodynamic agriculture, in both of the biodynamic farmers' views, is considered more than just an economic activity; it is a 'cultural and creative action, and the farmer should play a role in all these areas' (Castellini et al. 2017, 2).

[12] It is not a requirement for a CSA to be organic/biodynamic. However, the organisational principles of a CSA resonate with the organic/ biodynamic farming philosophy, as CSA advocates for a 'healthy production that is adapted to the natural rhythm of the seasons and is respectful of the environment, natural and cultural heritage and health'. (URGENCI [2018]-b)

Figure 9: CSA in Hedmark. Photo credit: Sabina Kuraj

Karl (Farm 3, 'mid converter')

Like Jan and Mari, Karl has spent over 40 years in the agricultural sector. He purchased his own farm in the late 1990s but has been in agriculture since 1976. Similar to Jan and Mari, he is a full-time farmer who always wanted to be a farmer. His motivations for producing organic strongly relate to the values that this farming practice carries when seen in opposition to conventional agriculture. Karl particularly emphasizes the higher animal welfare standards that organic livestock production requires compared to industrial livestock farming. Millstone and Lang (2013, 36) notice that industrial livestock production follows a productivist logic where intensive production-line methods are pursued to maximise the output of meat, milk and eggs while reducing costs. In addition, intensive farming inhibits animals from behaving naturally, often causing them pain and serious health problems (ibid.,). Allowing animals to perform natural behaviour was indeed a central aim in Karl's motivations for pursuing a farming practice in line with organic philosophy. Furthermore, the farmer underlines how, idealistically, he follows a farming method that goes beyond the organic minimum standards and explains that

> In meat production, we go further than what the organic regulation requires. We follow a free-range method of farming husbandry where the single animal has 200 square meters of space, while the minimum according to Debio standards is one square meter of space allowance per animal.[13] This is ridiculously little. In addition, we do not use zinc

[13] According to Commission Regulation No 889/2008, Annex III, that governs organic production, the minimum indoor space allowance for fattening pigs in organic production should be 0.80 m2 per

> in the production and we are now working on a system that shows that we are not using antibiotics. We do not use soya in the feed and we are using as much as possible Norwegian feed. So, I have a quite long list of standards we want to achieve and that is a lot more than the minimum, which is required by Debio (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter').

The list of standards that Karl aims to include in his farming touches upon health concerns related not only to animal health but to human health as well, expanding the scope of his actions. In fact, following Millstone and Lang's (2013, 45) arguments, the extensive use of antibiotics on animals may contribute to antibiotic resistance among humans, while growth hormones have been, in some countries, linked with human infertility. In this context, it becomes visible how the *civic/ecological* order of worth, concerned with collective interest for a better human and animal health, constitutes one of the sources of justification for action for the farmer.

However, the positive benefits argued to be provided by organic farming regarding human and animal health are debated in the Norwegian context where, as mentioned earlier, there is the dominant idea that 'Norwegian agriculture is almost organic' (Bjørkhaug and Blekesaune 2012, 202). Claiming that there are no compelling differences between organic and conventional agriculture underplays the role of the *civic/ecological* order of worth for justifying farmers' involvement with organic farming. Still, Karl's involvement with organic farming, and in particular in organic livestock production, goes beyond the technical differences in terms of regulations that organic farming offers when compared to conventional farming. His approach is rather similar to the one described by Flaten et al. (2006) where producers that go beyond the organic minimum standards in their farming might prefer stricter regulations to signal a more idealistic type of farming. In Karl's approach to farming, the idealistic vision becomes even more visible when he explains how, through organic livestock production in particular, he wishes to establish a trustworthy relationship with the local community and reduce people's scepticism of the benefits of organic farming. He described this saying,

> I feel that the local community trusts me, especially when they see how I treat the animals in my farm. Everything in my farm is

animal < 50 kg, 1.10 m2 per animal < 85 kg and 1.30 m2 per animal < 110 kg. In addition, fattening pigs should have access to an outdoor area. (Haugen et al. 2014)

> transparent. If you pass by a field of carrots, you will not notice the difference between organic and conventionally produced, but if you pass by a farm that offers outdoor freedom to its animals, you can see the difference in how animals are treated. I also got a prize from Innovasjon Norge [14] for my involvement in organic farming and this is rewarding. (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter')

From this quote, it can be argued that the *domestic* and *renown* orders of worth are yet two other sources of motivation for Karl's actions. It has been mentioned previously that the *domestic* order of worth is concerned with customers and social ties and that actions are justified on the basis of their trustworthiness, while the *renown* order is concerned with reputation and actions that are justified based on the opinion of others. It follows that for the farmer building trustful relationships with his local community through his farming and feeling worthy of peoples' trust are far-reaching goals that aim to increase consumers' trust in food and in sustainable farming practices.

Figure 10: Organic farm in Hedmark. Photo credit: Sabina Kuraj

[14] As described in their website 'Innovation Norway is the Norwegian Government's most important instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry. It support companies in developing their competitive advantage and to enhance innovation'. (Innovasjon Norge.no)

5.2.2 "Newcomers" to Organic Farming

Linn (Farm 4 'late converter')

Linn is the fifth generation of farmers in her family, but she turned to the farming activity only 11 years ago when she took over the farm from her father. Previously to that, Linn had another job where she continued to cover part-time once she moved to the farm. However, as the workload on the farm increased throughout the years, she is now becoming a full-time farmer and wishes to continue being a farmer.

Contrary to the group of "early" and "mid" converters who have been organic and biodynamic producers for an average of 40 years, Linn accounts for only 2 years of experience with organic farming. However, similar to the above-mentioned group of organic and biodynamic farmers, she explains her decision to convert to organic farming related to her concerns with conventional farming and its unsustainable methods of production. She states

> I took over the farm 10 years ago from my father who would produce conventionally. We followed that practice for a while and produced wheat and barley conventionally. We had also a chicken house and we used conventional methods for broiler production. However, I did not like the perspective of animal welfare in conventional production, so I thought that producing in a more responsible way that will *represent us* would be a better choice. (Linn, Farm 4 'late converter')

As mentioned in this quote, Linn's evaluates her actions on the basis of their originality (*the inspired order*), namely her wish to renew her farm's image by introducing a new method of production that would better convey her ideals of farming. Similar to the previous group of farmers, while the *inspired* order, concerned with creativity and originality, can be a catalyst for pursuing sustainable farming practices, Linn elaborates on other orders of worth that inform her decisions, illustrated below:

> My aim was to produce a product that we could feel proud of. Now we have built a chicken house which conforms to regulations that provide animals to perform natural behaviour, and during spring/summer time, the animals have outdoor freedom. However, we do more than what Debio requires. (Linn, Farm 4 'late converter')

The aspects that make Linn feel pride, and hence make her actions trustworthy (*the domestic* order), are strongly linked with actions that prioritise principles of solidarity and collective interests – in this case, represented through animal welfare (*the civic/ecological* order of worth). In addition, farmers' emphasis on the need to increase the level of animal welfare standards beyond the organic regulation goes in the opposite direction of a commercially mined farmer, who is more critical towards the constraints of organic farming. In this way, Linn's approach to organic farming is similar to Karl's ('mid converter'), even if they turned to this farming practice at different periods of time.

Furthermore, Linn's concern for animal welfare in broiler production is of great significance given that the global production of poultry meat is claimed to have grown faster than any other meat in both developed and developing countries (OECD-FAO 2016). The Norwegian organic inspection and certification body, Debio, reported a similar trend in the Norwegian food market that registers an increasing demand for poultry meat and pork (Debio 2018). In addition, the organization reports that there are very few farms committed to organic animal production (ibid.). Hence, Linn's commitment to organic broiler production, situated in a context of higher demand for this product category, can have a greater impact on food supply chain sustainability.

Figure 11: Organic broiler production. Photo credit: Sabina Kuraj

Anne (Farm 5, 'late converter')

Similar to Linn, Anne had another job before turning to farming and becoming a full-time farmer, as the workload on her farm also increased. Contrary to Linn, who took over a family farm, Anne purchased one of her neighbour's farms once she decided to dedicate her time to grain cultivation and milling. However, milling has a long tradition in Anne's family, as her father is a miller.

Similar to the farmers discussed so far, Anne's aim in following an environmentally sound method of production also informs her motivations for initiating a process of converting to organic agriculture (*the inspired* and *civic/ecological* orders of worth). As Anne explains, she plans to build a self-sufficient farm with the purpose of reducing carbon dioxide emissions (CO2) from her farming activity. She sees organic farming as a possibility to do so, but in order to equate organic farming with sustainable farming, she also mentions other necessary practices. For instance, besides cereals (spelt and oat) and grain cultivation, Anne and her husband are engaged in forestry, which they consider beneficial for carbon sequestration while offering them additional financial security through the selling of timber. Turning to organic is additionally motivated by her idea that this is the best farming practice to guarantee a healthy soil

> […] so far, we have been producing spelt conventionally, but my aim has been to convert to organic as soon as we would become more stable financially. Most of the organic farms in Norway are small-scale farms and converting a big farm (85 hectares) [like] ours to organic production is a risk we take. I think, however, that organic farming is the future. As farmers, we should be more careful in protecting the soil and learn how to cope in advance with weeds and pest disease instead of relying on the use of pesticides. (Anne, Farm 5 'late converter')

As mentioned in this quote, Anne is concerned with the financial impact (*the market* order of worth) of turning to organic farming and the risks that it might entail. However, she seems determined when emphasising that 'organic farming is the future.'

The elements that contribute to her determination, similar to Linn, stem from her concerns for the impact of conventional agriculture on the environment, of which the adverse effects touch upon human health as well, given the high interdependence of food chains. Indeed, The Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment (VKM) writes that 'both animal and human studies have shown that pesticides may have a negative impact on reproductive health' (Haugen et al. 2014, 43). The report continues to state that although organic food 'seems to not be completely free of pesticide residue, due to contamination from conventional agriculture or fraud, [it has been convincingly] demonstrated that it exposes consumers to fewer and lower levels of pesticide residues' (ibid., 44). For Anne, soil quality is essential for growing quality grains and cereals. Therefore, she seeks a new approach to farming that includes environmentally friendly management practices in order to prevent environmental pollution from an early stage.

To conclude, with Anne's concerns about the future of sustainable farming, the context of embeddedness dealt primarily with the motives and evaluations for farmers in choosing a farming practice that touches upon the "triple bottom line" of sustainability where environment, society and economy are equally considered. Overarching concerns such as building self-sufficient farms that could produce healthy and nutritious food while respecting animal welfare standards run across this group of farmers, strengthening the *civic/ecological* and *domestic* quality conventions of food products. In the next section, I will focus on how the process of disembeddedness is carried out in farmers' attempts to gain more market share while still working to emphasise the ecological and spatial provenance of their products.

5.3 Disembeddedness and Market Considerations

Disembeddedness, as mentioned earlier, deals with farmers' considerations for choosing marketplaces that will guarantee economic benefits, and in the case of medium and large food producers, also guarantee efficient performance. In this regard, farmers' actions are justified according to *market* and *industrial* orders of worth through their financial impact and level of efficiency that the food chain offers in terms of distribution. Explained within these terms, the process of disembeddedness consists of spatial disembeddedness, specifically distributing

outside of the immediate local area, while the social and ecological forms of embeddedness are constantly negotiated. Overall, it is useful to operationalise the way the process of disembeddedness is carry out under the influence of *market* and *industrial* orders of worth, as extensive disembeddedness negatively influences the sustainability of food supply chains. In order to deepen the discussion, I draw a parallel between *commercial* and *industrial* orders of worth as sources of motivation for action and the concepts of marketness and instrumentalism introduced by Block (1990) and later quoted in Hinrichs (2000), which are considered qualifiers of embeddedness in food chains. Although Hinrichs uses these concepts to evaluate the social embeddedness of alternative food networks, they are also useful for analysing niche food producers' efforts to contain a more pervasive process of disembeddedness that takes place within the conventional food chain. Block argues that marketness and instrumentalism are related dimensions and move in tandem. While marketness expresses the relevance and the supremacy of price in a transaction, instrumentalism expresses the supremacy of self and opportunistic behaviour (Block 1990 qtd. in Hinrichs 2000, 297). Similarly, as argued in the theoretical chapter, actions based on *market* and *industrial* orders of worth consist of qualities of being 'opportunistic in spotting and seizing opportunities of the market, to be unhampered by any personal link and to be emotionally under control' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). It follows that actions based on *market* and *industrial* orders of worth focus on profit rather than being concerned with the social aspect of the economic transaction. Therefore, economic behaviours that cope under conditions of high marketness and high instrumentalism are directed to the pursuit of economic goals, while economic behaviours expressed under conditions of low marketness and low instrumentalism pursue non-economic goals and concerns, as morality or spirituality, family or ethnic ties and friendship (Hinrichs 2000, 297). Within alternative food networks, high levels of instrumentalism and marketness undermine the responsive and reflective behaviour of responsible consumers which is reinforced by the social ties between producers and consumers (ibid.). Likewise, in conventional food chains, where social ties between these actors are absent, high levels of instrumentalism and marketness undermine consumers' trust in the alternative character of food products sold through these chains. In fact, Murdoch et al. (2000) suggest that if niche products come weighed down with industrial and commercial criteria, they will fall short in their aim of earning the trust of consumers

concerned with health and ecology. Acknowledging the rather complicated balance that farmers need to sustain their farming livelihoods and be loyal to their visions on sustainable farming, Hinrichs (2000) suggests that instead of considering concepts as marketness and instrumentalism in purely antagonist terms with the concept of solidarity, we should consider that all economic transactions instead take place along a continuum of marketness (ibid., 297). It follows that economic considerations are also part of the actors' considerations of local food systems instead of only being part of 'powerful, but faceless players' in dominant global systems (ibid). For the author, the problem is that researchers have the tendency to minimise the economic consideration of the actors involved in local food systems while emphasising the social embeddedness in its aspects of trust, familiarity and civic engagement (ibid.) . For this reason, the author mentions that while all markets are then characterized by fluctuating mixes of social embeddedness, marketness and instrumentalism, one needs to explore the "gray terrain" where marketness and instrumentalism meet (ibid.). I explore this gray terrain as we delve into farmers' perspectives and strategies for keeping a balance between economic and non-economic considerations in food production and distribution, starting with farmers of the Market World and following with farmers of the Interpersonal World. Intuitively, food producers who are part of the Market World are also protagonists of this process, as industrial and commercial conventions tend to dominate within conventional food chains. However, additional insights have emerged from small-scale producers on how this process is carries out and the binary that exists between alternative and conventional food chains has become a more fluid distinction.

5.3.1 Disembeddedness in Conventional Food Chains

Karl (Farm 3, 'mid converter')

After having explored Karl's idealistic vision of farming, we move into his considerations of how distribution should be organised in order for him to realise his goals within organic agriculture. Karl's considerations for delivering to supermarket chains further explains how his choice is closely linked to the market structure of the grocery sector in Norway:

> …Access to the market in Norway is very limited, as three supermarket chains control 99 percent of food sales. Therefore, it felt reasonable that with the quantity that I am producing, this was the most appropriate way of selling large quantities. I will not manage to sell 250 tonnes of carrots [at the] farmers' market. I need many shops [referring to supermarkets] for selling and the only chains that offer this system are supermarket chains (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter').

Karl continued, saying how his choice is not driven primarily by price considerations, as he gets a better price in alternative food networks, but rather, the efficiency aspect leads his choice of distribution networks and AFNs lack the efficiency required for improving sales. However, Karl acknowledges that the price he receives now has increased the last eight years in line with an increase in consumer interest in organic products. He argues that the positive, yet slow, consumer response toward organic food has contributed to improving farmers' bargaining power with wholesalers and in negotiating the general power dynamics between these two actors, as Karl explains:

> The price we used to get for organic produce was very low but [in] the last eight years; supermarkets are paying more realistic prices. I feel that now, in 2018, there is a completely different approach of the wholesaler towards the producer compared to…20 years ago. There has always been…stratified power relations where the wholesaler was allocated at the upper level and the producers at [the] end of the spectrum. But with the organic initiative, we have a feeling that either we manage this project together or we will not succeed, and this is very promising. (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter')

As seen in this quote, Karl links the instrumental decision for choosing conventional to his idealistic goal of grasping the efficiency of these supply chains for making organic food mainstream. Karl elaborates on this idea in the following comment:

> About ten years ago, 50 percent of supermarkets in Norway did not have organic pork in their shops, but this year I will distribute to two other supermarkets chains in addition to the one I already distribute [to]. This is an attempt to make organic products far more accessible to consumers and we can achieve this faster and in a more effective way by supplying to supermarkets instead of having this small

> window of specialised shops or markets (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter').

However, after having explained how supermarkets can be instrumental for increasing the availability of organic food, Karl adds that if alternative food networks grasped some of the supermarkets' efficiency in food distribution, the goal of increasing the market share of organic food could be reached through these chains instead. Furthermore, Karl concludes by describing his ideal supply chain:

> In my ideal world, I would have a number of families and individuals who will buy their products with a high degree of reliability on the farm. This will be perfect because I could avoid all the restrains and lack of flexibility that comes with the supermarket chain (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter').

I argue that the ideal world that Karl describes first requires individuals to shift towards shopping habits that reflect more proximity and affinity to producers. Secondly, it would require a profound policy intervention aimed at regulating the grocery sector in a way that makes it possible for other market players to access the market.

Linn (Farm 4, 'late converter')

Similar to Karl, Linn mentions how marketness and instrumentalist considerations make delivery to supermarket chains the most rational choice for her. As she mentions,

> The reason for choosing to cooperate with a supermarket is because we thought that if we want to make organic food mainstream in Norway, we have to increase production. In this context, the cooperation with the supermarket chain was useful as through them we could start a big production with lower costs. If we want to make a living out of our business, we need to increase our scale of production as we do now by supplying 800 to 1000 chickens per week to the supermarket. (Linn, Farm 4 'late converter')

For Linn, selling at the supermarket is efficient and responds to her vision of removing organic food's "niche" labelling. In this case, the price that Linn gets from the chain is not a justification for collaborating with the supermarket because similar

to Karl; she gets a premium price in other food supply chains such as speciality shops or restaurants. The level of efficiency offered by the supermarket and its ability to reduce the chance for a negative financial impact on her farm makes this chain attractive. In this regard, Linn mentions how collaboration with the supermarket has been pivotal for targeting consumers that are interested in buying organic chicken. Being able to find customers that choose organic has reduced the financial risk she is exposed to in the case of low sales. However, Linn considers quality and animal welfare to have improved the power relation between her and the retailer:

> We cannot influence the price neither the supermarket shops [meaning the area in the city] the chain decides to allocate our products …so in these terms, the system is quite rigid. For the supermarket chain, we are still small producers and probably not such relevant actors for them. But on the other hand, our unique position as organic chicken producers gives us a bit more…power within the food chain as there are not so many alternatives if [the] supermarket chain wants organic chicken meat in their shops. (Linn, Farm 4 'late converter')

As can be seen from this quote, while Linn recognises the rigidity of conventional food chains, she believes that fighting for quality can balance the power relation between producer and retailer within the food chain.

Anne (Farm 5, 'late converter')

Similar to Karl and Linn, Anne also finds her collaboration with a big retailer essential for the positive performance of her business. In addition, she mentions that the bakery has been instrumental for their family business to take a leap in the first place as a result of the financial security that they offered them to initiate grain cultivation. Anne initially had a very small production and used to rent a mill from one of her neighbours before purchasing their own mill and the equipment necessary for milling. As Anne explains,

> The reason why we started this business and [to] invest in it is because the bakery reassured that they wanted us as their supplier. We then sold our production a year and a half before we could even have the product. This is an important bakery that has many [franchises] and we thought that we could build a small business around this. If we did not have this kind of agreement with a big customer, we would have

> never started farming, as it would have been too risky to invest in it. (Anne, Farm 5 'late converter')

The economic security was thus a precondition for Anne to move production to a larger scale. Furthermore, the positive financial impact that she experiences from collaborating with the bakery comes with the possibility to increase their market share by finding new customers through the bakery. In addition, the bakery has been helpful in increasing Anne's professionalism by sharing its expertise in the milling process. Therefore, all things considered, unlike the other two farmers, Anne excludes the possibility for collaborating with supermarkets, as supplying to these chains might instead undermine her current economic benefits:

> We have decided that we will…not supply to supermarket[s] because they can squeeze you. We decided that we [would] produce less and have better clients rather than being competitive in shops all over Norway but having to get out of the shops when we are [no longer] appealing [to] the customer. In this way, all the investments made in equipment to serve the supermarket would be a loss. (Anne, Farm 5 'late converter')

As Anne concludes, farmers' decisions to distribute to conventional food chains is made under a blend of marketness and instrumentalist considerations, which is to say that choosing instrumental marketplaces allows for a delicate balance between the pursuit of economic and non-economic goals. I explore similar considerations with farmers that are part of the Interpersonal World that deliver primarily through alternative food networks.

5.3.2 Disembeddedness in Alternative Food Networks

Alternative food networks such as farmers' markets, box-schemes or REKO-ring are supply chains where the three forms of embeddedness of food chain activities are best represented: food products consist in small quantities that come with an ecological embedded character defined by locality or origin, and naturalness of raw materials, which producers generally sell through face-to-face meetings with the customers (Sage 2003). The alternative character of food products and the immediate and personal relations between producers and consumers have qualified these food chains as antagonists of industrialised systems of distribution. It will then be natural

to say that AFNs respond less to the logic of marketness and instrumentalism, and *commercial* and *industrial* conventions are marginal. However, marketness and instrumentalist considerations are present as well within alternative food networks. For Jan, these considerations are part of his choice to find new marketplaces for delivering, while Mari claims that marketness and instrumentalism are concepts around which few of the AFNs are organised and to which the farmer has had to adapt. Jan, therefore, emphasises the economic benefits as a result of his strategy of spotting new marketplaces outside of the immediate local area, while Mari is critical toward the fact that AFNs are becoming more socially disembedded by following a logic of profit.

Jan (Farm 1 'early converter')

In illustrating his arguments about the market venues Jan has decided to supply, he first mentions the places where he has decided not to supply to:

> I do not sell to conventional food chains because when it comes up to vegetables, their demand is much focused on the standard shape that these products should have. Partially, that is attributed to the fact that consumers, on the other hand, make their decision on what is visually appealing. My products, instead, are the opposite of standard; they are [as] natural as they come from the field. (Jan, Farm 1 'early converter')

Whereas conventional food chains do not represent an attractive option for Jan, restaurants and speciality shops are becoming strategic partners. Jan, nevertheless, emphasises his struggle in finding a balance between delivering socially embedded chains that allow for connectivity, reciprocity and trust with his customers, and securing the economic benefits:

> I try to prioritize selling to marketplaces where I can have direct contact with the customer because I love meeting people. But of course, it is important as well finding a place that is willing to take our prices because it is the price that make[s] our living. (Jan, Farm 1, 'early converter')

Although Jan mentions that the delivery to different restaurants and small speciality shops in Oslo is inefficient in terms of the time invested and the quantity purchased

by these retailers, this arrangement is profitable in its economic aspect. Jan's market considerations are very relevant as they offer the farmer the possibility to sustain his farming livelihood. In this regard, Jan's collaboration with renowned chefs in Oslo has been essential for improving his financial situation, as they are willing to take the price that he sets. In addition, Jan mentions that chefs and retailers in speciality shops have contributed to making the local and biodynamic qualities of food products appealing to a larger public, as they work constantly to promote local farmers' work inside of their restaurants and shops. On the other hand, food retailers and chefs see that in the development of an efficient local food system, there is an opportunity to sell and cook fresh and seasonable food and promote themselves as sustainable entrepreneurs. What is relevant in these considerations is that in Jan's case, the market and the public conventions work together to strengthen the farmer's position within the market. While market considerations had no relevance in his pursuit of biodynamic farming, marketness expressed in the relevance of price in transaction assumes an important role in his decisions regarding the right supply chain for delivering. In the case of small producers like Jan, being attuned to marketness is necessary for the interest of economic viability, as is an awareness of instrumental decisions that balance rational self-interest with a concern for non-economic goals (Sage 2003). However, as new supply chains become more profitable for the farmer, another relevant food chain considered a symbol of local food systems, such as farmers' markets, is "declassed" as a less relevant chain for the farmer to deliver to. Jan justifies the choice to not prioritise selling to farmers' markets as it is quite demanding and has unforeseen sales. Farmers' markets, however, holds a strong symbolic and practical value for developing less commodified relations between consumers and producers as well as emphasising the social context of the economy. Therefore, the necessity of keeping this supply chain as an instrumental marketplace for farmers is crucial for making sustainably produced food part of the consumption practice. The next farmer, Mari, adds more insight to what should be improved within AFNs in order to do so.

Mari (Farm 5, 'late converter')

Contrary to Jan's enthusiasm about spotting new marketplaces, Mari mentioned that the increased number of food chains where customers could find quality food is

preventing them from visiting farms or getting acquainted with the farmers and their products in traditional food markets such as farmers' markets. Mari used the concept of space to express how the blend of marketness and instrumentalism that drives, according to her, the farmers' market in Oslo has played a role in deteriorating the social embeddedness of this supply chain:

> When [the] farmers' market started its activity in 2003, we were selling our products directly to the customers at Youngstorget – a square in downtown Oslo. They asked us if we would like to join them and I said that it would better if they would join us in Youngstorget, because this is a big square where other farmers were selling their products through [out the] years. They did not agree because Youngstorget is located closer to the east part of Oslo and therefore not frequented by wealthy customers. We had no other choice but to join them and they moved us in a narrow street in Bogstadveien where more wealthy customers could come by. Therefore, [the] farmers' market was organized according to a profit logic: again earning as much as possible. (Mari, Farm 5 'early converter')

For Mari, the choice of the farmers' market to move its venue from Youngstorget to Bogstadveien reflects the tension between embeddedness, on one hand, and marketness and instrumentalism on the other. As Hinrichs (2000, 295) claims, this tension suggests how power and privilege sometimes rest with the well-educated, middle class and well-to-do customers. Similarly, Mari finds that in the attempt to target wealthy customers, the social ties between the farmer and consumers remain rooted in commodity relations, even within AFNs that were meant to be an alternative to the conventional market.

As we moved further in our conversation, Mari recalled the power of space for enabling more socially embedded food networks while criticising the fact that other AFNs are moving towards a process of disembeddedness.

> Many different food networks are developing now and the last one we have tried is REKO-ringer. It is positive that there is a direct contact between farmers and customers, but, here in our area, we meet in a parking lot with the customers where we hand in the bags with food products and the customers make the payment. Yet the relationship evolves within a space that does not remind…the customer anything about the past. (Mari, Farm 5 'early converter')

This link with the past was yet another time better embedded in Youngstorget square which, as Mari noted, has strong political connotations as manifestations for women's and farmers' rights have taken place there. Historically speaking, Norwegian agriculture was based on a "social contract" between the government and the rural population (Forbord et al. 2014, 2). The social contract consisted of state intervention through subsidies in order to maintain agriculture as productive, efficient and self-sufficient, while farmers committed to keeping an active farm that secures rural employment and rural settlement (ibid., 2-3). However, as introduced at the beginning of this thesis, the social foundations upon which Norwegian agriculture settled are threatened by a shift in the discursive framing of the Norwegian farmland policy (Vinge 2015). According to the author, this shift consisted of the replacement of the concept of food sovereignty with that of food security as the main principle of the Norwegian farmland policy. The critical point of this shift, arguments Vinge, is that the food security concept sees all food as equal and focuses mainly on quantity, whereas food sovereignty frames food as peoples' right concerning distribution, access and control over production. Such a passage, explains the author, is relevant as it shows that the Global North is no less immune than the Global South from a weak interpretation of the food sovereignty concept – especially in a context where governments are pushing for increased trade liberalisation (ibid., 89-100). It can be argued then that connecting to the past becomes important for securing the identity of the farmer as one who relies on governmental supports rather than depending on market forces (Forbord et al. 2014).

Finally, I argue that marketness and instrumentalism are not necessarily morally negative and that farmers' markets might need to choose the venue where customers are willing to pay a higher price in order for this venue to continue functioning. This is especially accurate in a national context of a highly concentrated grocery market that has emphasised improving efficiency and offering low-cost food with the result of customers focusing on low-cost food (Kvam et al. 2014). However, rethinking embeddedness within such an important and symbolic food chain as farmers' markets can be an option for reconsidering more coherently the triple bottom line definition of sustainability where the economy, society and environment are equally considered.

6 Negotiating the "Territorial" and "Ecological" Qualities of Food Products

As demonstrated, farmers' actions and mode of evaluations provided by orders of worth build a framework that aims to implement the quality turn process successfully in their farming activity. The second part of my analysis looks at the ways in which other food chains actors, such as retailers and chefs, are responding to the new competitive strategy in food production concerned with quality and ecology. Hence, I will answer to my second research question and its sub-questions:

- How do food producers' strategic partners adapt to the "novel" food quality conventions originating from the "quality turn" phenomenon?
    - How are these adaptations contributing in increasing the market share of the Norwegian speciality food products in Norway?

Through these research questions I confront the farmers' frameworks with those of other food chain actors by exploring the process of adaptation of these actors to novel food qualities. This approach helps to illustrate how the environment i.e., some food chains are responding back to farmers' engagement in the production of local niche food. The way the environment responds to the individual and the way the individual takes into account this response has already been argued to constitute the "realism" of a social practice (Thévenot 2001). This gives a mode of access to the reality of the development of speciality food within these food networks. The process of adaptation to novel qualities includes actors' claims and counterclaims regarding quality conventions that prevail within these food chains. However, retailers' and chefs' claims regarding quality do not represent only these actors' ambitions in the field of food, but also their customers' preferences, thus enlarging the circle of negotiation of quality conventions. A confrontation of claims and counterclaims on quality illustrates a process of negotiation that is dynamic and makes space for the establishment of new quality conventions. I explore two empirical examples with regard to the establishment of new quality conventions in food production: First, development of the first animal-friendly food label in Norway that clearly distinguishes the superior ethics of animal welfare in niche production from

conventional products. Second, the renewed focused on the economy of heathlands that had lost its economic value through the development of conventional farming (Kvamme et al. 2004, 4). Following this discussion, I illustrate which orders of worth motivate retailers' and chefs' interest in local niche food to understand how these actors support farmers in implementing the quality turn agenda. Furthermore, I rely on the biographical and professional trajectories (Domaneschi 2012) of these actors that have led to their interests in local and organic food.[15]

6.1 Supermarket Chain

Supermarket chains are the most representative supply chains of the Industrial World of production, characterised by products of standardised quality, relatively low price and large sales volumes (Borgen 2009, 4). Supplying these food chains with local sustainable produced niche food products carries great importance for challenging dominant *industrial* and *commercial* quality conventions, around which food procurement and food consumption are organised in supermarket stores. In order to introduce customers to the "novel" qualities offered by speciality products more effectively, retailers at the supermarkets chains have set up different marketing strategies that aim to display the alternative characteristics of these food products. From a cursory inspection of the websites of three supermarket chains, Norgesgruppen, Rema 1000 and Coop, it seems that, from the retailers' side, an emphasis on local niche food and the story of the producer behind it, on the preservation of the natural landscape, and a special focus on animal welfare. All three chains have tried to underline the territorial embeddedness of food niche products showing the regional provenance of speciality food products such as "Lofotlam" or "Rørosmariet", while at the same time, underlying the social and economic dimensions of sustainability that local niche food embodies for the local communities.

From my data material, I found that within the supermarket chains I investigated, there is growing interest for "local foods". Thus, there is a positive adaptation process towards the *domestic* quality attributes of food products such as regional

[15] The illustration of the biographical and professional trajectories will apply only to the retailer from the speciality food shop and chefs as a deeper look at the biographical and professional trajectory of the retailer from the supermarket chain might undermine this informant anonymity.

provenance and traditional methods of production, even though a notion as *terroir* still continues to be a "terroir-izing" concept (Amilien 2011, 3) for the retail chain that calls for a more pragmatic adaptation of this concept within this food network (see below). Secondly, I noticed that the retailer carefully assessed the embeddedness of the *civic/ecological* quality attributes of food products, especially with regard to the ethics of superior animal welfare in organic production, which shows a dedicated approach of the retailer for these quality attributes. I discuss these two quality aspects separately in the two following sections.

Local Food

Regarding "local food", the retailer from the supermarket chain, Stig, mentioned that he disagrees with what he classifies as an "academic narrative" that claims that supermarket chains started to show interest in local food only after local food became fashionable/popular. This supermarket chain, in particular, he added, started working to develop local food products and promote them strategically since the establishment of the VSP-mat program, "*The Value Creation Programme for Food Production"*, in 2001. Stig mentioned that in his work, he primarily refers to the Norwegian official definition of local food[16] when considering the relevant qualities that need to be embedded in food products in order to be defined as such. However, he also calls for a pragmatic attitude toward "local food" in Norway given the lack of a concept of terroir in Norwegian food culture, which links food products with the geographic area of production. Stig elaborated on the quality aspects that he considers crucial for qualifying a food product as "local", as mentioned in the following quote:

> Local food is a kind of big pot with lots of different meanings depending on each person's point of view. For me, the most important thing is that the food product has a higher quality than the standard product in the same category and that it has a local identity.
>
> […] local identity, or traceability, refers to the place of the production in terms of where the raw material has been processed. However, the raw material such as meat or milk, for instance, can come from every

[16] In the Norwegian official definition, local food is 'food and drink products with local identity or a distinctive origin or especially qualities related to production methods, tradition or product history' (Matmerk 2016 Halkier et al. 2017, 1115)

> part of Norway but preferably, that should be a precise location/region.
>
> […] The definition of a good food quality at the end will depend on the food category that we referring [to]. In general terms, a sign of a higher food quality can be animal's breed, like ancient breeds used for milk or meat production, the method of rearing, and feeding. Food quality can also be linked to the place of origin, the method of production and/or of processing through the use of a special and/or traditional recipe. It can consist [of] a process of innovation. And finally, it can be a mix of the things mentioned above. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

As these quotes tell us, from one side, the retailer makes it clear that the interrelation of food, place of production, producers' know-how and nature confers special qualities to local products. However, the notion of *terroir* – understood as a 'dynamic process [that] represents the link between time, human and space' (Amilien et al. 2007, 2) – is experienced as 'implicit, never stated out loud, sensed more than felt'(Amilien (2011, 103). Stig illustrates the latent status of terroir in the following quote, strongly differentiating niche products from standard ones in terms of qualities:

> TINE's milk from farms in the Eastern part of Norway is the same standard milk as from the rest of the country, and therefore it does not represent any distinguished quality to call it "local food" as we have described it so far. The organic milk from Rørosmeieriet, instead, has added values compared to TINE's milk because in the former case, we can trace the region where the raw material is coming from as well as where [it] is has been processed, which is Røros regions. In addition, it is organic milk. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

In distinguishing between TINE and Rørosmeieriet's dairy products, Stig highlights another instance where quality attributes, typical of the *domestic* conventions, are essential for classifying products as local. However, what is missing in this quotation is the link to the cultural aspect of dairy farming in the Røros region – that, as described earlier, is necessary to transform a local product into a terroir product (Amilien 2011, 103). Indeed, as Amilien states, the dairy products from Røros region such as *tjukkmjølk* (thick sour milk) or *sjørost* (sour cream cheese) are part of the

local culture since time immemorial (ibid., 101). However, we can infer the reason for such a missing link from the following quote:

> The academic rhetoric around the concept of *terroir* is kind of interesting at the intellectual level, but still, it is more a turning word; it is not real business. By following strict definitions, we risk [being] too narrow. What really matters is that [aside from] all these definitions, we need to sell these products. For me, this is the most important thing because speciality food is still an underdeveloped sector in Norway. Therefore, we need to help local food producers to develop quality categories that attract customers. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

Stig attributes consumers' modest enthusiasm for origin-linked products to the need for a pragmatic adaptation of the concept of terroir in the Norwegian food context. However, he underlines that it is essential that local food producers gain more knowledge on how to properly differentiate and communicate novel qualities to distant consumers, which is a new phenomenon in the Norwegian grocery context. From a conversation with farmers that distribute to this supply chain (Karl and Linn) regarding the definition of "local food", Stig's observation seems accurate. Indeed, from the food producers' narrative, a concept as terroir was missing, as demonstrated in the following quotes:

> Is lam from Lofoten [Lofotlam] local food? I think it will be hard to define [as] so because the distance that the product needs to travel to Oslo is the same distance as Oslo-Naples. I think we have to accept that in Norway, we have longer distances and we cannot compare with central Europe where you have a slaughterhouse at every second corner. In Norway, we have different conditions. (Karl, Farm 3 'mid converter')

Linn's considerations of the "local" aspect of food products were similar to that of Karl's:

> Local food is normally food that is produced in a certain region and sold not too far away from this region. To call the chicken we produce as "local food" when we distribute nationally, maybe it is not the right thing. (Linn, Farm 4 'late converter')

In the farmers' view, the territorial embeddedness of food products is reflected in short travelled, small-scale food production where the *domestic* quality attributes are mediated through the proximity and affinity between the producer and the consumer (Amilien et al. 2007). This is compatible with a definition of "local food" made by the rural consumer in Norway (ibid.). However, for the distant consumer, territorial embeddedness is mediated through quality schemes given the lack of proximity to the producer or place of production. Thus, added values such as tradition and nature are linked to the food origin 'at an imaginary level or through a "borrowed" reality' (ibid., 11). While farmers' visions on the local aspect of food as mediated through proximity and affinity between food producers and consumers might be the most ideal pattern for a sustainable local food system, distant consumers play an important role in increasing the demand for these products, which is fundamental in this transitional phase. In this regard, retailer's professionalism and knowledge of the distant consumers' preferences can be instrumental in increasing the market share for these food products. I argue that in regard to local food, it is not only the *national* origin that is of interest for this supermarket chain but the *regional* origin, which is closer to a concept of terroir that links the geographical location with a specific product (Amilien et al. 2007, 8). However, to have such embedded territorial products is a challenge for the supermarket chain.

Organic Food

While it seems there is agreement within the chain in accepting *domestic* quality attributes as a competitive quality attribute of particular interest for the retailer, disputes arise concerning the *civic/ecological* quality attributes of organic food. According to the retailer, the acclaimed societal benefits deriving from organic farming are not always properly embedded in these farming practices, nor are they always reflected accurately in organic certification. Stig expressed this with the following:

> I do agree that the organic certification helps consumers in making their choices if want to eat organic. Organic production in any [case] represents many dilemmas, as this method of food production might not be suitable [for] every food category. We have many food products in Norway that are produced organically and they should not be produced [as] so, while other food products…are produced

> conventionally but… [it] would be more reasonable to have them produced organically. The problem with the organic certification is that if you put this certification on every food product, you remove then all the critical thinking of the consumer. (Stig, Food retailer 1)

In order to illustrate his idea that organic farming might not be suitable to all food categories, Stig gave an example of organic broiler production in Norway, stating that the claims of superior animal welfare in organic broiler production are not well grounded within the current system of organic broiler production in Norway.[17] The purpose of this analysis is not to argue the accuracy of Stig's statement that organic production is not suitable for every food category, but it is important to elaborate more on the example that Stig brings into discussion in order to understand how *civic/ecological* attributes of food products can be diluted in a context where *commercial* conventions dominate. During my conversation with Stig, he revealed an important detail that was missing in my conversation with the organic chicken producer, Linn – the link between poultry breeds and hybrids (animals' genetic material) and animal welfare. The food retailer added that the fact that Norway does not have a national selection program of breeds and hybrids suitable for organic production directly affects the status of animal welfare in the organic system of production. As confirmed with other sources, genetic material available for poultry production in Norway is supplied by international breeding companies, leaving Norwegian producers having 'close to no influence on available genetic material' (Brunberg et al. 2014, 7). In order to understand the significance of having organic poultry breeders in Norway the relation to animal welfare, it is important to introduce some of the parameters that illustrate the regulations on organic broiler production. The organic regulation sets a minimum slaughter age of 81 days for chickens, compared to 31-32 days required in conventional production. Furthermore, the organic regulation suggests the use of indigenous or slow-growing breeds in organic production, as they are more suitable for organic farming. This recommendation is explained by the fact that commercial broilers, or fast-growing breeds, grow too fast and therefore become too heavy if kept for 81 which poses serious health issues such as leg problems and high mortality rates of the flock (ibid., 8). However, the requirements sets by the organic regulation are not mandatory which means that the farmer can both slaughter the animal earlier than 81 days and is free to use to

[17] Referring to the interview took place in 31.05.2018

commercial broilers in organic production. The mandatory requirement instead is that since organically produced chicks are not available, the legislation demands a 70-day waiting period where chickens are fed organic feed until slaughter, which is then the normal age of slaughter (Haugen et al. 2014). However, as confirmed by the Norwegian NGO, the Norwegian Animal Protection Alliance (NAPA), 'luckily, at the moment, no organic producer in Norway uses such intensive breeds in organic production' (NAPA personal communication May 8. 2019). Nevertheless, Norway did not have slow-growing breeds available for organic producers until 2009. In 2009, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet) approved the Ross Rowan hybrid as a slow growing breed, which was the same breed that Linn, the organic broiler producer, was using at the time my interview took place in April 2018. The introduction of a more suitable hybrid for organic production was a positive development, but, according to the results of a study conducted in 2014 by the Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research (Bioforsk), the Ross Rowan breed still grows too fast, creating a dilemma between the withdrawal time and animal welfare (ibid., 21). According to Bioforsk, the development of a national selection program for organic production will eliminate the need for a withdrawal period, which means that the producer can slaughter the animals earlier and avoid the animals growing too heavy (Brunberg et al. 2014, 20). The study further claims that more research is needed to investigate how large the problem is; however, their results confirm Stig's concerns regarding animal welfare in organic broiler production. What the report adds to Stig's observation is that 'the limitations in developing a national selection program for organic production do not lie within genetics, but within economics' (ibid., 21). In the following quote from NAPA, which I contacted for clarification, given the complexity of the topic:

> The main reason why commercial broilers are used even though they are not optimal for ecological production is the economic loss that comes with slow-growing breeds. With a slower growing hybrid, you have less meat. It is a sad truth and it has a lot to do with the low prices that supermarkets have on chicken meat. However, if one has to consume chicken meat, organic production, although not free of problems, still offers a better platform for animal welfare when it comes to the rules governing the environment and animal management on a farm. (NAPA personal communication October 11. 2018)

This quote touches on how *civic/ecological* quality conventions can be diluted by strong *commercial* conventions, mainly evaluations on price and on the commercial quality of goods. Furthermore, it explains that even though organic production faces challenges, it still offers higher standards of animal welfare as it provides access to an outdoor range, increased space allowance for animal and natural lighting, which are all parameters that influence animal welfare as much as the breeds used in production. However, given the dynamic nature of conventions, in 2016, two other slow-growing breeds became available in the Norwegian food market, broadening the possibility for producers to choose a hybrid that is better suited to organic production. These are the Ross Ranger [18] and the Hubbard JA 57, which NAPA confirms are more suitable for organic broiler production. This increase in availability of animal genetic material for organic production made it possible for NAPA to designate the first animal-protection label for food in Norway, launched in September 2018 that aims to guarantee the highest level of welfare to farm animals in Norway (Eurogroup for Animals 2018).

Figure 12: Animal Protection Label for Food in Norway

The designation of a quality scheme that clearly differentiates standard from non-standard quality conventions in regard to superior animal welfare standards is a clear sign of the dynamic nature of conventions that have changed as a result of a process of negotiation between different actors regarding sustainable food production. In addition, the development of a more coherent system of food labelling reflects the reality of a production process, namely, properly embedding *civic/ecological* quality attributes like animal welfare, and contributes to increasing consumers' trust in food labelling. As mentioned in the Background chapter, consumers' lack of perceived benefits derived from the consumption of niche products such as organic food is one

[18] In June 2018, two months after our interview, Linn switched to the Ross Ranger breed, which is the one she is still using today.

of the barriers to consuming organic food. Therefore, having a food label that clearly states a quality attribute such as superior ethics of animal welfare is a positive development for a consumer who is trying to construct an identity as a responsible consumer (Borgen 2009).

The supermarket chain I investigated collaborates with farmers that carry this food label and stated that it is their priority to guarantee high levels of animal welfare standards in their supply chains. As these processes of adaptation are analysed, the question remains whether this is enough to challenge to the hegemonic position of the standard quality convention and contribute to increasing the market share of local niche-products in these chains.

Is the Adaptation Process Challenging the *Hegemonial* Position of Standard Quality Convention?

Based on my findings, I argue that local niche products continue to play a marginal role within the supermarket chain where the hegemonic position of the standard quality convention is quite solid. Such claims are grounded with the evaluation framework that justifies, the retail's chain interest in speciality food as displayed in the following quote:

> There are several reasons why local niche food is important for us [the supermarket chain], but at a strategic level, local niche food plays two different [roles for] our customers. First, in a location [such] as Valdres for instance, it is important that our local stores…have their regional products, as it gives a good shopping experience to the customers by offering traditional food. The promotion of local food in this region is driven by the local community and is done to attract not only the local consumer but tourists as well. And the second [role] of local niche food products is to target the top customers at the supermarket chain. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

The introduction of local niche products is instrumental in promoting rural development in a local area where the production of traditional food is located. Thus, the first source of motivation for collaborating with local niche food producers stems from the *domestic* order of worth that is concerned with traditions, customs and social ties (Swaffield et al. 2018, 45). However, the aim of sustaining rural development led by the local community seems hard to achieve when marketing

strategies for local food are directed toward "top customers" at the retail chain. With this consideration, local niche products play a symbolic role in the retail chain, namely promoted for their own reputation, while also contributing to the chain's reputation of adhering to speciality food. It then follows that the second order of worth that justifies the retail chain's involvement in local niche food stems from the *renown* order of worth that is concerned with recognition and reputation, and actions are evaluated on the basis of the opinion of the others (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 371). It was mentioned in the theoretical chapter that justifications anchored in the *renown* order of worth can create a firm situation of disputes between actors, leading to an impasse. This is because, contrary to the *domestic* order of worth where "worth" – or the *validity* of an action – is related to the realm of personal dependencies, in the *renown* order of worth, it is others' recognition of the validity of that action that constitutes its reality (ibid.). As such, consumers' appreciation and recognition of the *domestic* and *civic/ecological* attributes of niche products, rather than the intrinsic attributes of these food products, constitute the fundamental precondition for the introduction of these food products in the supermarket chain. Nonetheless, farmers' (Karl and Linn) motivations for supplying to supermarket chains are justified primarily based on efficiency in distribution offered by supermarket chains, which is instrumental in reducing financial risk for medium and large-scale production, as well as for increasing the market share of organic food in this supply chain. The goal of increasing the market share of organic food might not be achieved if, for example, reputational concerns are the main source of motivation. This relates to the fact that reputational concerns that prompt the retail's engagement with local niche food can easily provide the basis for not doing so if customers dislike these qualities. Stig expands on this dynamic in the following quote:

> Successful strategies of marketing and distribution of local food within these chains (supermarket chains) are necessary to attract customers because if the customer does not like the products, they will not stay [on] the shelves. So, the customer is the boss! (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

The centrality of consumers' appreciation for the "novel" food qualities jeopardises farmers' aspirations to make local niche food mainstream in the Norwegian food market. A context where a *hegemonial* standard quality convention overshadows

domestic and *civic/ecological* food quality attributes supports this claim. With a strong standard quality convention, it is the commercial quality of goods rather than the aspect of sustainability in food production that is the main aspect taken into account by customers in the supermarkets. Such an argument is detectable in the retailer's following statement

> There are people who want to pay for the traditional or organic food but that percentage might be between 3 and maximum 10 percent of the consumers. The problem is that if you buy the standard pork chops for 39, 90 NOK, the local food producers' price will be 10 times that price. The gap in price is too big, but the gap in terms of quality is not as big because Norway does not have such…industrialised agriculture compared to other European countries. Therefore, in Norway, we produce standard products which are still of high quality and produced through good farming practices. So only customers very interested in food quality that are sensitive towards the environmental issues and/or not so sensitive to price, will buy the local niche food products. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

The general belief, or the *common sense,* as defined in the Background chapter, that conventionally produced food is "good enough" (Storstad and Bjørkhaug 2003, 151), remained unchallenged by the hegemonic position of the standard quality convention. It is unclear though the reason why the price in the supermarkets is 10 times higher for niche pork chops compared to standard pork chops if there is very little difference in terms of quality. As illustrated in this quote, price and quality are not connected, which requires additional understating in the future about the modality of how prices are set for local speciality food within the supermarket chains.

As contended so far, there is tension between different orders of worth that motivate the supermarket chain's interests in local niche food products, which leads to situations of impasse for the development of speciality food. The inclusion of the *reputational* and *commercial* considerations alongside the *domestic* and *civic/ecological* ones impedes a meaningful movement within the supermarket chain from a world of mass production to a world of dedicated production.

Furthermore, increasing the market share of local niche products in the supermarket chain is limited due to another "typical" tension between values noticeable in this type of food supply chains: the need to support more niche food producers to access the chain and the logistic barriers involved in the marketing (Milestad et al. 2017). This tension is visible in the following quote from Stig, the food retailer:

> We have had an increase of selling each year and our goal is to increase more, but now the market is very slow. In addition to that, it is challenging to find good local food producers that can help in this development. In order to promote a food product in our stores, the food producers should be innovative and not copying other local food producers. We also seek producers that are capable to supply a volume that covers 200 of our stores so that the customers should find his product available after we have been marketing it. But to be able to deliver to 200 stores, you need to be a quite big producer and you are not getting big until you are marketed. This is a Catch-22 situation: a paradoxical situation where a food producer, in order to grow, should be somehow a big producer. (Stig, Food Retailer 1)

This quote demonstrates that it is Stig's aim to include as many small and medium-scale food producers as possible within the supermarket chain. However, contradictions inherent to the structure of the supermarket chain and/or within the logic of profit rationalisation will make the "market window" (Borgen 2009, 7) of strongly embedded food products inaccessible for big food retailers as many of the niche food producers that carry origin-linked food labels are small and medium-size businesses (ibid.). However, it is important to remember that supermarket chains in Norway control 99 percent of food sales and not accessing these chains for any of the reasons mentioned above affects the overall market share of these products and subsequently the possibility to establish quality production as a successful practice of food production and consumption. Therefore, other food chains provide an infrastructure where less tension exists between values where food producers of varying size have equal opportunity in the market. As argued earlier, new food chains such as restaurants and speciality food assume more relevance for farmers, especially for small-scale food producers, with different outcomes surrounding the development of local niche food.

6.2 Chefs

Chefs have been key actors in implementing the process of the quality turn in Norway. On this matter, in 1998, the Norwegian Chefs' Association launched a manifesto for "the Norwegian kitchen" that put an emphasis on the preservation and future development of Norwegian food culture and natural resources (Amilien 2012, 164). Still today, chefs are at the forefront of the quality turn process and their increased visibility in mass media is claimed to have further contributed to making Norwegian speciality food more mainstream (ibid.,). Furthermore, the recent bronze medal won by Norwegian chef Christian André Pettersen at the world's most renowned gastronomic competition, Bocuse d'Or, has become a matter of national pride placing Norway as 'the country with the highest number of medals – even more than France!' (visitnorway.com 2019).

In the conversations I initiated with chefs Stein and Lars, they acknowledged that chefs have gained more power and visibility in the Norwegian foodscape, which is a clear indication of increased interest in speciality food in Norway. Stein also recognises a similar development where chefs have become influential actors:

> I think chefs have become more like celebrities and I think this is a worldwide trend. In the main airport in Oslo, you will find a big picture of Esben Bang[19] that seems like he is actually welcoming people to Norway. That tells you quite a lot how influential chefs have become. (Stein, Chef 1)

As chefs' notoriety in the media increases, chefs' capacity to influence eating habits also increases. As it concerns the Norwegian context, Amilien (2012, 161) writes that Norwegians' eating habits are very much related to an important 'cultural duality that differentiates between everyday life and leisure/special event.' Thus, *home dinner*, says the author, signifies everyday life, while restaurant dining is reserved for *special* occasions (ibid.). As chefs reported, due to this cultural duality, the favourite form of restaurant dining among Norwegians has been the fine dining, consisting of 'a style of eating that usually takes place in expensive restaurants, where especially good food is served to people, often in a formal way' (Cambridge Dictionary [2019]). Lars and Stein mentioned, however, that this cultural duality is becoming more fluid and

[19] Co-owner and head chef of the three Michelin stars restaurant Maaemo in Oslo.

eating out is now a more diffused practice. Lars attributes this change to the fact that *pleasure* has become part of the eating experience while previously this link between the *sensorial* experience and eating practice was absent. As pleasure becomes part of the eating experience, the attitude towards food has changed and fine dining is no longer the preferred form of dining, as Lars explains,

> Norwegians want to eat [out more] and cheaper. So "street food" style, or more affordable restaurants, are [becoming] more diffused. (Lars, Chef 2)

However, to make this change in eating habits possible, an important development in the food area has taken place, with farmers producing more quality food. Both chefs claim that the quality turn has taken place in food production in Norway and this "turn" has made it possible for them to offer sustainably sourced local food. As Lars explains,

> I have always been working in restaurants and I remember that 15 years ago there was not such a great focus on local food. I remember we had to import so many products from France. Now we have many local producers that produce good vegetables and a good quality of meat that includes a focus on animal welfare. So, there has been a very nice development. (Lars, Chef 2)

The quality turn desired by chefs has been the result of a close collaboration between chefs and food producers. Their interest in speciality food stems primarily from the *inspiration* order of worth as demonstrated by the chefs' biographical and professional trajectories. In this regard, Stein recalled:

> I have been a chef all my life. I got my first summer job at age 12 at a restaurant and have been working in the kitchen since then. Moreover, I grew on a farm and the concept of…life [on] a farm is very much represented in my restaurant. We did not have animals [on] our farm, so we would get the milk and meat from the neighbour next door, not because it was organic or [closely] produced, but it just made much more sense and it was much cheaper that way. In return, our neighbour [would] use our fields for pasture. (Stein, Chef 1)

Stein's childhood farm is represented in his restaurant through a *farm-to-table* philosophy of purchasing and cooking food. This representation describes a new

food movement that, by emphasising seasonality, locality and the direct relationship with the farmer is presented as an alternative to conventional food systems (Barber 2014, 9). In this way, the "local" and "organic" aspects of food quality are understood as by-products of the acquired system of personal relationships of trust between farmers and chefs (Domaneschi 2012, 318). For this reason, chefs neglect the need for food products to carry a food label that confirms the method of production or the originality of the products as Stein stated:

> The Debio/Demeter certification is foolishness, is nonsense. I see people's concern in carefully choosing their food products according to these labels […] I do not pay attention to the fact of [whether] a farmer has this certification or not; I rather search for good quality. If you know your surroundings, it helps because you can drive in the countryside and see how the single farm treats its animals or what chemicals they are using in their farming – and the word travels fast: *Buying local here in Scandinavia is almost always a safe choice.* (Stein, Chef 1)

Lars shared the same thought, adding

> I do not look at the organic certification when I choose the farmer I want to get supplied from. Sometimes they are small farmers and cannot afford the certification. What I search for [are] producers that follow a farming method that offers to the animal a good life. (Lars, Chef 2)

As argued by the chefs in these quotes, food labels that express the ecological embeddedness of food products are unnecessary because of the personal trust between chefs and food producers. However, I argue that chefs' negligence of organic/biodynamic food labels in their narrative can have a counter-effect. By categorising organic produce under local produce, they fall short in differentiating the benefits of organic farming from conventional farming. In the Background chapter, I mentioned the launch of the Good Norwegian food label meant to reinforce Norwegian consumers' trust in Norwegian food had similarly framed Norwegian food as "good enough", leaving little space for consumers to evaluate the added benefits derived from organic farming. Therefore, if chefs' influence has grown to that of "opinion makers" (Syse 2015, 166), this negligent approach of chefs toward

food labels may increase consumers' distrust in quality schemes, which is yet another barrier to increasing consumption of organic produce.

On the other hand, chefs advocate for creating lifestyles that reconnect to the natural process of food production, which are beneficial both for the environment and human health (Syse 2015, 180). In this way, starting from the chefs' standpoint on food labels, we can make space for advancing the need for policies that introduce a set of norms aimed at transitioning all food production to be sustainable (Vittersø and Tangeland 2015, 98). This has the possibility to erase consumers' anxiety toward walking into "the label jungle" (Heidenstrøm et al. 2011).

As explained so far, it the intrinsic values of these food products rather than their reputational status that informs chefs' motivations to collaborate with food producers. Consequently, I argue that with their focus on speciality food, chefs are advancing their agenda with the idea of creating a market space for local producers where non-standard quality conventions assume the hegemonic position:

> I am a chef and not a wholesaler, and farmers are not salesmen. It is challenging for a small producer to produce quality food and I have seen that they do not dare to do it if they do not sell it. By offering good prices, we give them financial security and we, as chefs, are sure to get premium quality…local products. (Lars, Chef 2)

As contended in this quote, the increase of production and market share of quality food is possible in a food chain context where *commercial* conventions are strongly challenged. The next food supply chain – the speciality food shop – also links financial support to small-scale farmers with the successful implementation of the quality turn agenda.

6.3 Speciality Food Stores

Small speciality food stores can be both a "new" and an "old" type of food chain. The "novelty" of a speciality store is linked to the quality turn taking place in Norway where the territorial and ecological quality features of food products are the precondition for the retailer to introduce these products in their store. The "old" part links to the idea of having a small-sized grocery store which was more similar to the

commons size of food chains in Norway, before food retailers and wholesalers moved to form large supermarket chains (Olsen 2011, 96). As Olsen recalls, Norway had around 700 small supermarkets chains across the country, before three, 'integrated food-chains gained control over 99 percent of the food retailing industry by the mid-1990s' (ibid.). The speciality food store, owned and managed by the food retailer Siri opened in 2015, is thus an alternative food network that seeks to challenge the hegemonic position of the standard quality convention – an outcome of a highly standardised and concentrated grocery market. The food retailer's biographical and professional trajectory informs her decision to run a speciality food store:

> I worked for many years as a commercial photographer and it was particularly during Christmas time when I had to photograph around 300 products in two shopping malls, while at the same reading the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report on climate change, that I grew concerned about the impact that our eating habits and lifestyles are having on the environment. I thought changing direction in life because of that and I quit being a photographer and opened this food store. It helped also the fact that I lived in Valdres for [a] long time, where I got to know farmers, cheesemakers and how important [agriculture was] for…preserving the landscape. (Siri, Food Retailer 2)

This quote tells us that Siri's decision to open a speciality food store was a result of a deeper knowledge regarding the interrelationship between food consumption, food commercialisation and changes in production systems. Indeed, the IPCC's (2014, 24) report states that the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector 'accounts for about a quarter (~10 – 12 GtCO2eq/yr) of net anthropogenic GHG emissions mainly from deforestation, agricultural emissions from soil and nutrient management and livestock' (ibid., 24). This report recommends that the most cost-effective mitigation options for greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) within the agricultural sector is the development of agricultural practices that focus on sustainable cropland management and grazing land management and restoration of organic soils (ibid.). It is within this frame that Siri's collaboration with Norwegian local farmers evolves and the relevant quality attributes of food products she selects

are the result of a sustainable agricultural practice that the retailer interprets as the following:

> What distinguishes our products from products in other stores is that food must have been sourced in a responsible way. That means that the farmer shall have taken care of the soil and have managed land in a responsible way that can guarantee land resources for the next generation. (Siri, Food retailer 2)

The world of *inspiration* that initially motivates Siri to collaborate with local farmers is further explained through the *civic* order of worth, as she advocates for a form of development that, agricultural sector, pursues collective interests. Food products are thus embedded with strong *domestic* and *civic/ecological* quality attributes. Like in the chefs' case, food quality is a by-product of the acquired system of personal relations of trust and affinity with the food producers. Thus, the concept of the speciality store was to create a market space for local farmers that strongly challenge *commercial* conventions and promotes quality production in its intent to achieve environmental and socio-economic sustainability. In order to illustrate the link between financial support to farmers, quality production and sustainability, Siri gave an example of her collaboration with a producers' association that breeds the Norwegian wild sheep (villsau) and follows a traditional method of grazing. Villsau is one of the most ancient sheep breeds still in existence in northern Europe (Slow Food [2018]). In Norway, this breed has been farmed in the coastal heathlands, which are landscapes that represent 'irreplaceable contributions to the Norwegian biodiversity' (Kvamme et al. 2004). The history of villsau and heathland is one of the best representations of the dynamic link between nature and culture that transforms a local product into a *terroir* product. Heathlands are man-made habitats obtained from land management consisting of year-round grazing of this old sheep breed and regular and planned burning of the vegetation (ibid., 21). However, today the preservation of the heathlands is at risk as a consequence of the low profitability of this traditional method of land management (ibid., 4-5). The Slow Food foundation writes that new breeds have been introduced becuase of economic pressure from slaughterhouses on farmers to switch to bigger lambs. Ancient breeds produce less and tougher meat than the modern breeds – an unappreciated quality by the majority of consumers' today. However, while the villsau does not face extinction as a result

of a systematic rescue action from the local community, the traditional method of rearing is still unattractive to many breeders because of its low profitability (Slow Food [2018]). Thus, financially sustaining farmers that follow this traditional method of rearing is instrumental for the future in preserving cultural landscapes. Indeed, preserving these landscapes was confirmed by the Norwegian government in 2015 when the heathlands along the Norwegian coast received the status of "select habitat" (Wehus 2015). This mean recognizes these landscapes as part of national interest and cultural heritage (ibid.).

From this example, it becomes visible, similar to the case of organic broiler production, how strong *commercial* conventions manifested in both powerful retailers' orientation towards profit and consumers' focus on low prices can hinder dimensions of food chain sustainability, such as animal welfare, sustainable land management and rural development. In this speciality food store, Siri's concern for conserving and protecting regional identities corresponds to farmers' commitment to "recapturing rural spaces" (Sonnino 2007) through sustainable farming practices, where environment, economy and society are equally considered. As such, I argue that in this chain, there is a successful adaptation to novel food qualities from the retailer's side. Furthermore, this specific case leads to the idea that a retailer's action framework is built around orders of worth that are not in conflict with each other (unlike the *domestic* and *renown* orders of worth in the case of the supermarket chain), and will be more efficient in triggering long-term change in making sustainably produced food more mainstream in the food market. Thus, I give final thoughts in the next chapter regarding structural adjustments necessary for building a sustainable local food system and establishing sustainably produced food as a successful practice in food consumption and food production.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have presented a broad theoretical approach and analysed how quality food production, resulting from the re-localisation of food chain activities, can contribute to the development of sustainable local food systems (LFS) in the Norwegian context. In doing so, I first followed Born and Purcell's suggestion to avoid the "local trap" in the discussion of sustainable food systems that considers local-scale as inherently better than the global-scale. The authors instead recommend looking at outcomes such as ecological and socio-economic sustainability of a food system as dependent on how particular social relations empower various actors and agendas in a given food system (Born and Purcell 2006). A new focus on quality has guided Norwegian agribusiness policy since the beginning of the 1990s, providing the context to investigate which actors and agendas have been empowered as a result of the quality turn in food production and food consumption. Hence, in this final chapter I will follow these prepositions to answer my research questions on how the implementation of the quality turn process within farmers, food retailers and chefs has led to targets of local food chain sustainability. I go on to discuss the relevance that holds for the sustainability of LFSs, a study that follows an actor-sensitive perspective for challenging structural forces that convey a hegemonic status to the standard quality convention within the agribusiness sector. After having answered to these research questions, I argue about the implementation at the policy level of measures that are necessary for establishing a new agreements between food chain actors that will include a more pluralistic and inclusive understanding of food quality conventions. To conclude, I provide insights for further research inspired by the findings in this thesis and the two theories used for the analytic framework: Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory.

7.1 The Quality Turn Among Farmers

In order to look at the agendas on sustainability that have been empowered as a result of farmers' initiatives to implement the quality process in their business, I construed the following research questions:

- How do Norwegian farmers implement the "quality turn" process in their farming activities?

- What practices of food production and food distribution emerge as a result of farmers' strategy to keep quality and sustainability in their farming business?

- How do farmers motivate/justify their actions?

The implementation of the quality turn process within the group of farmers I interviewed has been achieved by employing a competitive strategy that points towards the production of a dedicated, rather than a generic, food product, thus aiming to move from a world of mass production to a more specialised one. For the implementation of this strategy, farmers rely on a complex combination of embeddedness and disembeddedness of food chain activities that carefully balances their wish to pursue economic and non-economic goals within farming. Embeddedness is achieved through organic and biodynamic agriculture where food products embody *civic/ecological* quality attributes as a result of farming practices that work to increase biodiversity on the farm and guarantee animal welfare standards. Furthermore, farmers aim to be transparent in how they manage their farms and how food is sourced in order to establish a trustful relationship with the local community. Justifying actions based on their trustworthiness has conferred strong domestic quality attributes to food products and led to positive developments such as joint initiatives between farmers and the local community to promote the local area. Disembeddedness, on the other hand, is organized around commercial and industrial considerations where actions are evaluated in terms of their financial impact and their level of efficiency, and consist of farmers' efforts to spot and seize marketplaces that expand beyond the immediate local area. Large and medium food producers see big retailers (i.e., supermarket chains) as instrumental both for their financial support as well as to increase the market share of their organic produce. Small producers, on the other hand, see supplying to new market places such as restaurants and speciality food shops as a positive development where they receive premium prices.

However, studying embeddedness and disembeddedness together has provided insights on the fact that there is tension between orders of worth that explain farmers'

engagement in quality production. In the case of large- and medium-scale food producers, the high levels of efficiency offered by the conventional food chains have as downside low levels of flexibility and low levels of possibility to monitor the quality performance in these chains. Small-scale food producers emphasise their struggle to find a balance between delivering to chains that are socially embedded, meaning that allow for connectivity, reciprocity and trust with customers, and securing the economic benefits. As one farmer mentioned, AFNs such as the farmers' market in Oslo moved their venue to an area where they could target more wealthy customers and the consequence, according to the farmer, was that the social ties between the farmer and consumers remain rooted in commodity relations similar to conventional markets. However, it is worth noting that AFNs struggle to survive as well, as food supply chains in the Norwegian food market context are built around price, standardisation, speed and simplicity (Amilien 2011). Therefore, we can see that AFNs aim to move their venue to an area where consumers are willing to pay a higher price for niche products in the current difficulties faced by farmers to challenge consumption concerned exclusively with price. Nevertheless, since I argue, following Murdoch et al. (2000) ideas, that a successful quality production relies on a successful combination of forms of embeddedness disembeddedness, more attention should be directed at a policy level for reducing the tension between orders of worth that enable strategic actions in the grocery market.

The new competitive strategy employed by farmers compared farmers classified as "old guard" (late and mid converters to organic/biodynamic) and those classified as "newcomers" to organic farming. The old guard group, who account for an average of 40 years in organics and biodynamics, consider these farming practices as an expression of a *typical farming habitus*, meaning that the practices represent farmers' embodied history (Bjørkhaug 2006). For the newcomers to organics, this farming practice represents a break with the old practice of conventional farming, thus forming an *independent farming habitus* (ibid.,). I argued that in both groups of farmers, their decision to be organic and/or biodynamic producers came as a result of an informed habitus concerned with the negative effects of conventional agriculture on the environment and animal welfare. Conventional agriculture has thus created the context for a "habitus-informed practice" (Spigel 2013, 809) that aims to challenge the dominant logic of the field organised around profit and standardisation.

Following this argument, I conclude that within farmers' action and evaluation framework, the *civic/ecological* and *domestic* orders of worth will prevail over the *commercial* and *industrial* orders of worth as these farmers justify their commitment to organic/biodynamic farming. Concerning newcomers, this finding was of particular relevant because as argued by Flaten et al. (2006) argue, a new generation of organic farmers who are non-commercial minded will foster the development of the organic sector and are less likely to abandon organic farming even when economic times become harder.

Furthermore, producing quality food supports Murdoch at al.'s (2000) claim that fighting through quality can establish new forms of power relations within food chains. Likewise, in my findings, all of the food producers mentioned that their power position within food chains have increased as a result of producing niche food. Large and medium food producers that deliver at the conventional food chains added that the prices they receive for their products in recent years are more realistic prices than compared to ten years ago. Farmers attribute this positive development to an appreciation of organic and biodynamic food quality by consumers and, subsequently, from retailers. As Born and Purcell (2006) would suggest in this regard, the power gained by farmers within the food sector has made possible for these actors to advance their agenda on different dimensions of sustainability. I found that through organic and biodynamic farming, farmers have managed to promote and enhance biodiversity and animal welfare standards. Less noticeable at a first glance, but very relevant for sustainability, farmers have managed to "recapture rural spaces" (Sonnino 2007), while promoting new economic systems that frame profit as a natural by-product of economic activity rather than the motivating force (Karp 2008). Furthermore, as visible with the newcomers to organic farming, Linn and Anne, farmers have succeeded in sustaining both farmland and farming activity in their local area, through successful family farm succession and farm purchasing respectively. This represents a positive development in a context like Norway, which Vinge (2015) mentions faces challenges with the future availability and management of agricultural land resources. Furthermore, both Linn and Anne, as the new generation of farmers in their families, preserve the *cultural capital* of generational tradition and knowledge of farming, while at the same time working to innovate their farms' organization. These new positive developments within the group of

newcomers to organics, as mentioned earlier, give hope that this sector will expand in the future

7.2 The Quality Turn Within Food Networks

The quality turn within food networks examines the process of adaptation to novel food qualities within the supermarket chain, speciality food shops and restaurants. In this regard, I was particularly interested to see which quality conventions these actors adapt to, if they strongly challenge the hegemonial position of standard quality conventions and how their efforts contribute to increasing the market share for local niche products. In order to understand these dynamics, it was important to look at these informants' action and evaluation frameworks that highlight their interests with regard to speciality food and address the following research questions:

- How do food producers' strategic partners adapt to the "novel" food quality conventions originating from the "quality turn" phenomenon?

- How are these adaptations contributing to increasing the market share of the Norwegian speciality food products in Norway?

7.2.1 New Marketing Venues for Niche Products: Restaurants and Speciality Food Shops

Within the group of chefs and the retailer from the speciality food shop, I noticed that food qualities negotiated between these actors and farmers are a by-product of their acquired system of personal relations of trust. This meant that disputes between them and farmers regarding the quality attributes that food products should incorporate tend not to rise. Rather, food products come strongly embedded with *civic/ecological* and *domestic* worth. This strongly challenges the standard quality convention within these food chains. The choice of challenging the standard quality convention was justified by the world of *inspiration*, which is concerned with creativity (Swaffield et al. 2018). In this regard, the retailer and chefs see their collaboration with niche food producers as instrumental in addressing their need for originality in their shop and restaurants, as well as addressing their concerns for different dimensions of sustainability. The first two dimensions of sustainability that

these actors address by collaborating with farmers are the social and economic sustainability of small-scale producers. The relevance of such initiative highlights the challenges that these farmers face in finding marketplaces that offer prices that sustain their farming livelihood. Therefore, in their agenda, the retailer and chefs give priority to financially support small-scale, so they are able to continue producing quality food. Likewise, the retailer and chefs address the dimension of environmental sustainability by carefully selecting farmers who, through their work, contribute to preserving land resources for future generations. This was represented by the case of the collaboration of the food retailer, Siri, with an association of food producers who breed the old Norwegian sheep, villsau, and follow traditional methods of grazing, which carries great importance for preserving cultural landscapes such as coastal heathlands. Heathlands, as mentioned, contribute in a unique way to the Norwegian biodiversity. However, these habitats were not at the centre of Norwegian environmental policy until 2015 when they received the status of "selected habitat" and became an official part of national interest and cultural heritage (Wehus 2015).

It was conclude in relation to restaurants and speciality food shops that these new emerging marketing food channels carry great potential for elevating the market share of speciality food in the future. Based on these findings, although Winter (2003) suggests that local-scale should not be equated in a deterministic way with sustainability, I determined the proximity and the affinity of food producers with food retailers and chefs have been essential for sustainability. This relationship has given rise to an economic system where relations of regard and trust among these make financial support for small-scale food producers possible, and the development of relevant targets for environmental sustainability that are of great national interest.

7.2.2 The Dilemma of Embeddedness Within the Supermarket Chain

Within the supermarket I investigated, there is a growing interest in local niche products. In this regard, the retailer at the supermarket chain, Stig, mentioned that not only the national, but also the regional origin of food products is of particular significance for the chain. The distinction made by the retailer marks a contrast to the general approach within the standardised food market, which by did not consider regional identity a relevant competitive quality attribute ten years ago (Borgen 2009).

This development also explains why the food retailer prioritises collaborating with food producers who are able to grow and develop food products that attract also the distant consumer within conventional food chains, where the proximal relation of producer-consumer is missing. As Kvam et al. (2014) and Bjørkhaug and Kvam (2019) argue, food producers' capacity to develop knowledge about the food qualities that generate added value in conventional food chains, as well as to distribute nationally, can play a key role in niche producers' growth. On the other hand, growth for niche food producers is instrumental in achieving goals such as rural development and sustainment of future land resources (Bjørkhaug and Kvam 2019).

However, while it seems there is general agreement within the chain in accepting *domestic* quality attributes such as food products' attachment to place and traditional methods of production as competitive quality attribute, disputes arise concerning the *civic/ecological* quality attributes of organic food in relation to organic farming. These disputes stem from the idea that the societal benefits claimed to derive from organic farming are not always properly embedded in farming practices, and therefore are not reflected properly in the organic certification. The case of the organic broiler production, however, illustrates that organic farming, rather than failing to embed the *civic/ecological* quality attributes in food production, suffers from the pressure of strong commercial considerations that impede its development in concert with its ethical principles. Thus, rather than dismissing these farming practices as inappropriate, efforts should be directed to free this alternative method of production from economic pressure.

Furthermore, despite the positive development of growing interests in niche products, speciality food has a marginal extension in terms of market share within the supermarket chain. Consequently (but also due to), the hegemonic status of the standard quality convention remains unchanged. These claims are based on two considerations. First, a strong tension between orders of worth is visible within the action and evaluation framework that displays the retail chain's interests in speciality food, where the *domestic* and *renown* orders of worth constitute the primary sources of motivation informing the chain's interest in niche products. Following Swaffield et al.'s (2018) suggestions, I argue that an evaluation and action framework based on these orders of worth, although it produced some positive results in the short-term

with regard to the promotion of the Norwegian speciality food in the Norwegian grocery market, is not sufficient in the long-term for increasing the market share of these food products. The *renown* order of worth, as concerned with reputation and the opinion of the others, confers centrality to consumers' preferences in making this transition towards the consumption of more sustainably produced food. Within food chains such as supermarkets, where the standard quality convention holds a hegemonic position, the commercial quality of goods rather than sustainability in food production is the most important aspect taken into account by customers in grocery stores. Therefore, in a situation where the higher benefits derived from the consumption of food embedded with domestic and ecological worth are overshadowed by the standard fare, it is unlikely that the consumer will make decisions for reasons that fall outside of price consideration. Furthermore, a food consumption and procurement framework organised around strong *commercial* conventions will continue to sustain the low-cost mechanism of coordination between food chain actors and resist critical scrutiny of the conflicting interests at its fundamentals – preventing the establishment of a new mechanism of coordination for action based on ecological values.

Secondly, the marginal market share of niche products, especially for highly embedded food products, links to what I describe as a "typical" tension between the values embedded in supermarket chains in general: the need to support more niche food producers to access the chain and the logistical barriers involved in the distribution of small quantities (Milestad et al. 2017). As the retailer mentioned, promoting a small-scale producer within the supermarket is difficult, due to what he framed as a 'Catch 22 situation: a paradoxical situation where a food producer, in order to grow, should be somehow a big producer' (Stig, Food Retailer 1).

Under these considerations, I conclude that supermarket chains are instrumental for increasing the market share of niche products coming from large and medium-scale food producers who are part of the Market World of production. This is argued based on the fact that niche industrialised products are more suitable to a distribution structure as supermarket chains as they are produced in larger quantities through standardised technology that does not require the use of special craft-based skills. In addition, I argue that this goal is only achievable if the supermarket chains justify their future commitment to sustainably produced food products beyond the

reputational status of these food products. As Oosterveer (2012) suggests, retailers' engagement and consumers' involvement in the consumption of sustainably produced food should be combined and considered part of social practice. The concept of social practice, according to Oosterveer, introduces new ways the retail chain can commit to sustainable products, that capture the complexity of routine behaviour such as shopping activity, and directs it towards more sustainable patterns of consumption. One example is the direct involvement of the supermarkets that support consumers' concern for sustainability through the management of information on sustainability inside their shops (ibid., 160). Supermarkets also help to increase the market share of sustainable niche products indirectly through public media discourse and their collaboration with different NGOs that bring forward campaigns on ethical consumption. Finally, the supermarkets can also do this "behind the consumers back", by reconsidering their relationship with suppliers and introducing new suppliers that point to sustainable food production (ibid., 162).

However, concerning the majority of niche products that are strongly embedded territorial products, production is under the domain of very small and medium-size specialised producers (Borgen 2009). As such, this typical tension between values will exclude these producers from these food supply chains. Nonetheless, the exclusion from food supply chains that control 99 percent of the food sales carries a strong relevance for the future development of the niche sector and can comprise the achievement of the targets of sustainability mentioned above.

Similar to farmers within the supermarket chain, there is a high level of tension between orders of worth that constitute actors' evaluation and action framework for implementing the quality turn process. According to the theoretical framework applied in this thesis – Social Practice Theory and Convention Theory – tension between orders of worth speaks to a critical moment that needs to be overcome in order to establish a new platform of coordination that will not lead to a deadlock situation. We can achieve this by establishing a new legitimate agreement for the allocation of resources and power within the field of agribusiness. Indeed, Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) suggest that reaching new agreements between (social) actors will require actors to transcend personas and situations and focus rather on the tensions that are at stake. I argue that in the case of the quality turn, it requires political intervention to investigate the "observable economic transactions" that give

powerful actors the opportunity to consolidate their own position through future investments in a way that builds structures not easily changed or moved (Olsen 2011, 95).

7.3 Reaching for a New Agreement: Increasing Competition in the Grocery Market

> 'Markets are tools which efficiency in the production of wealth and well-being is unequaled to this day. But they must be organized for their social yield to be optimal, and their organization must be the object of thorough reflection.'(Callon et al. 2009, 234)

In an attempt to further investigate the observable economic transaction that solidifies the monopolistic position of powerful retailers (and wholesalers), I discovered that political intervention along with the Norwegian Competition Authority (NCA) has initiated and implemented measures to increase competition in the Norwegian grocery market. These measures consist of new prerogatives that the NCA monitors, such as the ability to review price negotiations between retailers and suppliers in order to guarantee that competition law is not violated. This initiative is designed to prevent big wholesalers or cooperative such as Orkla, Tine or Nortura, from applying advantageous prices to the big retailers precluding, hindering the possibility of new and smaller market players to enter the grocery market (Berglund 2018). Furthermore, the NCA plans to look into practices like "pay for the shelf placement" within the supermarket chains, given that grocery stores charge higher prices to suppliers for "prime" display space (ibid.,). The director of the competition authority, Lars Søgard, reports that these measures were implemented as a result of the need to examine the supply side as well as the retail side of Norwegian grocery business (Søgard qtd. in Berglund 2018) as Norway has the second most expensive groceries in Europe and a less varied selection of products than other European countries (Eurostat 2017b). NCA describes the legal measures implemented to increase competition as positively affect the entrance of new market players in the grocery sector and prevent few larger actors from assuming monopolistic positions. Furthermore, these measure aim to strongly increase consumers' welfare (Konkurransetilsynet 2018). Likewise, Kjærnes (2008, 4) have largely discussed the need to address consumers' welfare through state regulations that aim to 'counteract

existing imbalances of power in the food market.' I argue that the presence of market players in the food sector opens the possibility for a more pluralistic understanding of quality that is not uniquely concerned with profit and efficiency. Nevertheless, the link between higher competition in the grocery market and quality production is less noticeable at first sight. Insight to this link was given by the Minister for Trade and Industry Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, provides, who provides justification for these governmental interventions:

> [l]imited competition in the grocery market is damaging […] in the form of inefficient use of resources, high prices and a lack of innovation. (Isaksen qtd. in Berglund 2018)

I discussed how these three elements – the inefficient use of resources, high prices and lack of innovation – could compromise the establishment of quality production as a successful method of food production and consumption. To summarise, the case of organic broiler production was a typical example of the inefficient use of resources, where Norwegian producers did not have access to slow-growing breeds suitable for organic farming until 2009. This led to a paradoxical situation where fast-growing breeds used in conventional production were also used in organic farming, though these farming practices differ in many aspects regarding environmental and animal management regulations. This resulted in compromised animal welfare standards in organic chicken production. The introduction of slow-growing breeds in 2009 and 2016 increased and improved animal genetic material suitable for organic production and gave farmers access to resources to implement a farming practice congruent with the ethical principles of animal welfare in organic production. However, Brunberg et al. (2014) attribute this slow development in improving the efficient use of resources and animal welfare to the fact that slow-growing breeds are not as profitable for big distribution, as these breeds are more expensive in production while producing less meat, thus reducing motivation to implement these breeds sooner. In this regard, I found that *commercial* conventions concerned with evaluations on price and commercial quality of goods negatively affect ethical considerations in for production and food consumption. Nevertheless, a positive development has been achieved lately, in 2018, through the designation of the first animal-welfare food label in Norway which aim to guarantee animal welfare standards in niche production.

Regarding price considerations, Vittersø and Tangeland (2015) found that price statements[20] for niche products such as organic food were an additional barrier, together with the lack of perceived benefits deriving from purchasing organic food, which explains the limited consumption of organic food by Norwegian consumers. Thus, I argue that more friendly prices on niche products within the retail chain will lower the negative impact that price has in any case on the purchasing frequency of sustainably produced food.

Finally, in regard to innovation, Hegnes (2012), mentions the need for *bottom-up* initiatives coming from producers for implementing, for instance, the process of adaptation of the origin-linked food labels (GIs) to the Norwegian food context. The author follows saying how the Norwegian quality turn process has been characterised by *top-down* initiatives. These initiatives have seen the Norwegian government applying southern European guidelines on food quality schemes to Norway, ignoring the differences in food culture that exist between southern and northern European countries. Accounting for producers' knowledge, both on food products' properties as well as the cultural food context while introducing novel food qualities in a food market can facilitate and accelerate the quality turn process in Norway (Hegnes 2012). However, in the Norwegian context the lack of bottom-up initiatives is also a result of producers being absorbed within the net of rationalisation that covers the entire production chain in Norway (Amilien 2011). Thus, improving the market infrastructure for innovation to take place from the bottom-up will make it more feasible for non-standard products to effectively challenge the hegemonic status of the standard quality convention in the Norwegian food market and reconstruct the production, distribution and exchange of sustainable food.

7.4 Prospect for Further Research

The way in which increased competition facilitates quality production can be the subject of further research in agribusiness studies and will make valuable contributions to the field. For instance, the interrelationship between increased competition, innovation and quality production can be followed up through case studies (see Stræte 2004, Kvam et al. 2014)

[20] Price statements i.e.,, "Organic food too expensive" (Vittersø and Tangeland 2015, 95)

This subject will assume even greater relevance, probably with very different outcomes, on what is considered higher/better/more sustainable quality, as we move to the fourth world of production, which I did not delve into in this thesis: the World of Intellectual Resources of specialized generic products (world of high-tech production). By using the model of "worlds of production" developed by (Salais and Storper 1992), I focused on how strong commercial and industrial conventions within the Industrial World of production have led to superfluous and conspicuous patterns of food practices. One of the counter-movements to this unsustainable productivist paradigm is the re-localisation of food systems, with producers pointing to quality as their competitive strategy in their business. I studied this process of turning to quality among farmers who were part of the Market World and Interpersonal World of production. Furthermore, I argue that food producers that employ quality as a competitive strategy, convey more value to the *cultural capital* within farming, namely to the generational knowledge of traditional and local methods of food production. I follow saying that as cultural capital within farming assumes more value, the logic of profit rationalisation within the food sector is strongly challenged. Moreover, in my findings emerged that as holders of this form of capital, farmers have gained more power to confront other powerful market players. Within the fourth world of production, the World of Intellectual Resources, which is becoming more relevant every day due to our society's reliance on technology for adapting to endangered ecosystems, the question remains as to what forms of capital will assume more relevance and how will power be distributed between food chain actors.

As I conclude this thesis, I received an email notification about a workshop on future food production organised by the Norwegian Biotechnology Advisory Board (Bioteknologirådet), The Norwegian Institute of Food, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Nofima), The Institute for Rural and Regional Research (Ruralis) and NAPA with a question as its title: "Trenger vi dyr for å få kjøtt?" Do we need animals to have a meat supply? (My translation from Norwegian). The question is of great relevance for the future system of food provision and animal welfare. Some of the research questions suitable for the future are, for instance: Will farming practices as we know them today disappear as we continue to rely on technological promises for dealing with adverse consequences of a productivist paradigm? Furthermore, as

sourcing food becomes the domain of technological innovation, which quality convention will assume a hegemonic position and with what consequences to the sustainability of food systems and democracy?

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Appendix I: What Is A Sustainable Food Supply Chain?

Smith (2008) points out that one of the most holistic definition of sustainable food chains is the one provide by The UK Sustainable Development Commission (SDC; DEFRA 2002) which has combined many different stakeholder views to produce an internationally applicable description of "sustainable food supply chains'" as those that:

- 'Produce safe, healthy products in response to market demands and ensure that all consumers have access to nutritious food and to accurate information about food products.
- Support the viability and diversity of rural an urban economies and communities.
- Enable viable livelihoods to be made from sustainable land management, both through the market and through payments for public benefits.
- Respect and operate within the biological limits of natural resources (especially soil, water and biodiversity).
- Achieve consistently high standards of environmental performance by reducing energy consumption, minimizing resource inputs and using renewable energy wherever possible.
- Ensure a safe and hygienic working environment and high social welfare and training for all employees involved in the food chain.
- Achieve consistently high standards of animal health and welfare.
- Sustain the resource available for growing food and supplying other public benefits over time, except where alternative land uses are essential to meet other needs of society.'(Smith 2008, 850)

Appendix II: Introducing Farmers[21]

Farmers	Established	Farmland (ha)	Sales NOK M	Products	Market	Qualities emphasised by farmers	Chains
Jan (small-scale)	1982	11	1	Vegetables	Regional (Buskerud); Oslo area	Organic/biodynamic, traceable, fresh, seasonal	Speciality shops, restaurants, box schemes, REKO-ringer, Farmers' market , on-farm shop
Mari (small-scale)	1994	48	N.A	Vegetables, meat and dairy products	Regional (Hedmark); Oslo area;	Organic/biodynamic, traceable, traditional recipes and processing modes, pasture-based and outdoor-reared animals	Farmers' market, few speciality shops, box schemes, REKO-ringer, on- farm shop
Karl (large-scale)	1990	80	12	Meat and vegetables	Regional (Hedmark); Oslo area; National	Organic, traceable, outdoor-reared animals	Supermarkets, speciality shops, box-schemes
Linn (medium-size)	2007	85	8	Broiler production, other small speciality products	Regional (Hedmark); Oslo area; National	Organic, traceable, outdoor-reared animals	Supermarket, speciality shop, box schemes, restaurants
Anne (medium-size)	2003	85	1,6	Cereals and grain cultivation	Regional (Hedmark); Oslo area; National	Healthy, nutritious, traceable, old variety of spelt	Bakeries, speciality shops

Table 2: Summary of food supply chains and food qualities emphasised by farmers

[21] Categorizing farmers as large, medium and small-size food producers have been challenging given the lack of an official definition of "smallholding" in Norway (Heie 2003). I relied on articles that have previously made such a categorisation where the first element taken in consideration is the farm-size. According to Bjørkhaug et al. (2012), small-size farms are those farms with 10 or less hectares, medium-seize 10-30 hectare and large size above 30 hectares. However, from a personal communication with Øikos it was mentioned to consider also the number of animals in the farm and the farmers' income from the farming activity (Øikos personal communication November 12. 2018). Thus, Karl who owns a farm land of 80 hectare and has an income of 12 million NOK and more 300 pigs in his farm was classified as large producers. Linn and Anne with an income respectively of 8 and 1, 6 million NOK and a farmland of 85 hectares were classified as medium-scale producers. Jan with an income of 1 million NOK and farmland of 11 hectare was considered as small producer. Lastly, Mari who owns a farm of 45 hectare is still considered as a small-scale producer as the number off animals in farm (14 diary caw and 29 dairy goats) is still small number compared to other large producers.

Appendix III: Interview Guide and List of Informants

Informants	Profession	Duration of the Interview
Jan (Farmer 1)	Farmer	1. 40 hrs.
Mari (Farmer 2)	Farmer	1.20 hrs.
Karl (Farmer 3)	Farmer	2 h.
Linn (Farmer 4)	Farmer	1.40 hrs.
Anne (Farmer 5)	Farmer	1.22 hrs.
Stein (Chef 1)	Chef	53 min.
Lars (Chef 2)	Chef	50 min.
Stig (Food Retailer 1)	Responsible for local food (Supermarket chain)	1.30 hrs.
Siri (Food Retailer 2)	Food Retailer (Speciality food store)	40 min.

Table 3: List of informants

Interview guides with:

Farmers

Background information

- How would you describe the farm operation? (conventional / organic, …)
- Area of agricultural land (ha)
- What do you produce on the farm?
- Through what type of supply chains do you sell?
- Education level
- Number of people working on the farm / business
- Family members. Working time and gender.
    - full time males…… females ……
    - part time males …….. females ……

- Hired workers (full time males … females / part time males ….. females……)
- Seasonal labour (males …. females…….)

Other background questions

- What is your age, and for how long have you had this farm /fish business?
- Did you inherit your farm?
- If not, when did you purchase it?
- Do you have other professions/work besides being a farmer? If, yes please list.

Motivations for distributing food products through their supply chains

- When and how did you first learn about this particular food chain?
- What are some of the most important reason for why you choose this particular supply for distribution of your product(s)?

Challenges

- What would you say have been the most difficult or challenging aspects associated with distributing? How is different distributing to non-conventional supply chains?

About the product

- What do you think distinguishes your products?
- What do you mean with quality?
- How would you define a local food product?

Supply chain governance

- How are the prices decided for products you sell through each of your supply chains?
- How do you perceive your bargaining power in relation to retailers/purchasers within your supply chains? In which of them do you feel you have more power?
- To what extent do you influence decisions on prices, deliveries, etc.?

Public support

- Have you received any kind of support from national or local authorities?
- If yes, what kind of support? How has this helped you and your business?

Social networks and communication

- With whom do you cooperate (closet) within your supply chains?
- How important is the cooperation with other food chain actors?
- Have you received any attention from local community?
- Have you profiled the business locally (besides ordinary marketing)?

Evaluations

- How will you compare your experience with supplying to one supply chain with your experiences with other distribution channels? What are the main differences both positively and negatively?
  - Other SFCS-initiatives?
  - Long / conventional supply chains?
- Have you thought of quitting selling through in any the current supply chains?
  - If yes, what have been the main reasons, worries, barriers, etc.?
  - If no, what are the main arguments for continuing?
- What future plans do you have for production and distribution of your products through your supply chains?

End of the interview

- Are there important issues that you want to add that we have not touched upon so far?

Food Retailer from the Supermarket Chain

- What is your education background and how that relates to your job position?
- When did this supermarket chain started to develop interests in "local food" and "organic food"?
- How would you define quality in relation to:
  - Local food?

        - What do you mean for regional identity? Does this definition have anything similar to the Italian or French term *terroir*?
    - Organic food?
- How are food prices set for speciality food in your stores?
- Farmers that collaborate with the supermarket chain say that if they want to make niche food mainstream in Norway they have to increase production. Thereafter, in order to sell it and to promote it to a larger scale they see as instrumental the collaboration with supermarket chain. What do think about this?
- Did you see an increase of sales when the promotion of speciality was implemented as a marketing strategy within this food chain?
- How do you consider the fact that three supermarket chain control almost 100 percent of food sales in Norway? Do you think that might change or should change in the future?
- What are your future plans?

Restaurants and Speciality Food Store

- How old are you? What is your education background?
- When did you open your restaurant/food shop?
- How has your life experience influenced your interests for speciality food?
- How is the collaboration with local food producer?
- Why do you find this collaboration relevant?
- Has the relationship between chefs/speciality food store-food producers changed during time? If so, how has it changed?
- What has been the most challenging aspect?
- What is your definition of food quality?
- How does you that relates to sustainability? What is sustainable for you?
- Why do you think food producer would like to collaborate with chefs/speciality food store?
- What do you costumers think regarding your collaboration with local food producers?
- Do you think eating habits have changed in Norway? How have changed?

- Have you received attention from media, local authorities follow at your restaurant?
- What are your future plans?