Creation of legitimacy in grassroots organisations

An empirical study into community supported agriculture in the Netherlands.

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PREFACE

Before you start reading my thesis I would like to use this space to provide some background and context regarding my master's thesis. I would also like to acknowledge those who contributed to the overall project.

This thesis on the creation of legitimacy in Dutch community supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives knows a long history. The combined experience of being an exchange student at Wageningen University (WUR) and traveling through South-Africa, Myanmar and Thailand eventually made me choose this specific topic. Whilst the courses at the WUR provided me with a profound understanding of organic agriculture, my international experiences really created my enthusiasm for grassroots innovation. In all three countries, we travelled 'off-the-beaten' track to experience rural life. I honestly was surprised by the level of innovativeness in these rural communities that were experimenting with solar cooking; organic farming and water storage; and introducing novel distribution models. Challenges such as energy- and water shortages (South-Africa); or increasing pesticide use (Thailand) arguably inspired citizens to introduce 'do-it-ourselves' solutions to these intensifying problems. Heading back home, I concluded I had a distorted definition of innovation – in most of my courses at Utrecht University I focused on commercially-driven technological innovation. As such, I challenged myself to choose a thesis topic to uncover the potential of social and bottom-up innovations. After my travels, I studied as an exchange student at the WUR. Here, I was enrolled in several courses related to sustainable food production and consumption. I did research on a French food waste initiative; agro-forestry in China and free-range pigs in the Netherlands – all social innovations rather than technological innovations. During one of the courses, we went on a field trip to 'De Nieuwe Ronde', one of the oldest Dutch CSAs in the Netherlands which inspired me to study alternative food networks and CSA in particular.

And here we are. As of now I can proudly call myself an expert on CSA and my knowledge on the breadth innovation has grown significantly. It has been a challenging but very rewarding project. In particular, it was challenging to understand how my acquired knowledge on innovation processes could be translated to the grassroots realm. Fortunately, I had a supervisor who assisted me throughout the project. Ellen Moors, I am very grateful for the fact that you supported my decision to study grassroots innovation in the agro-food sector. Our discussions and your continuous reflection on my subject and its relation to innovation studies have greatly benefited my thesis project. During the course of my masters' thesis project, you have challenged me and made it possible for me to present my final work at IST2017 – an event I am really looking forward to. Wouter Boon, thank you for your valuable remarks on my research proposal. In addition, I would like to thank my supervisors at RVO: Mark Leunissen and Ida Smit. You have both supported me during the ups and downs of this thesis project and showed a great deal interest in my work. RVO was very open towards the idea of acquiring knowledge on grassroots innovations. During my internship, which lasted almost a year, I was able to be creative and work on my thesis how I saw fit. Moreover, I would like to thank all my colleagues, particularly the ones associated with the agro-food team. Thanks to you, my time at RVO was very informative and I enjoyed being of part of such an innovative team. Herry Nijhuis, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be an intern at RVO.

During the data collection phase of my research I saw much of the Netherlands and visited many farms. Above all, I met very inspiring, smart and humble people who have a very positive attitude towards change. Driven by idealism, they show that something is possible by actually doing it and through that, they contribute to a better world. I would like to thank all interviewees that contributed to this study. Your willingness to give your time so generously is very much appreciated. To me, your work cultivates hope – please keep on doing what you do. With this thesis I also hope to ensure academic and political recognition of grassroots entrepreneurs. Because, as Anil K. Gupta nicely says: minds on the margin are not marginal minds! Moreover, my thanks go out to Maria van Boxtel and Elisabeth Hense. Our meetings to reflect on my results were very insightful. In the same vein, I would like to thank Marijtje Mulder for sharing her knowledge on CSA in the Netherlands with me.

Finally, my friends and family deserve to be acknowledged as they have supported me in this project and made valuable comments on earlier versions of this thesis.

ABSTRACT

Global societal challenges, such as climate change and food security, emphasise the need for more sustainable modes of production and consumption in various sectors. Current strategies tackling these challenges reflect the dominance of market-driven technological innovations. This top-down approach designates a key role for commercial firms in the innovation process and regards citizens as passive agents. More recently, the grassroots is emphasised as novel site for sustainable innovation. Grassroots innovations are bottom-up, community-led innovations which create societal value. Previous research has predominantly focused on understanding the potential of grassroots innovation to outgrow their niche and trigger societal change. Hitherto, the patterns and conditions for grassroots organisational survival have far less been researched. This thesis starts from the assertion that survival is dependent on a grassroots organisation's ability to acquire a legitimate status. A legitimate status is inevitable to mobilise resources; acquire regulatory support and articulate demand. This thesis aims to understand how the creation of legitimacy occurs in grassroots organisations. Building on organisational literature, this thesis highlights the importance of entrepreneurial actions to get the innovation accepted as legitimate alternative to incumbent substitutes.

25 qualitative interviews with Dutch CSA entrepreneurs have been executed. In particular, this thesis studied how and why grassroots innovation obtain pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy and which legitimation strategies i.e. conform, select and manipulate they employ. The results indicate that legitimacy for CSA can be described as value-pragmatic *or* morally grounded pragmatic legitimacy. In particular, normative moral legitimacy and pragmatic legitimacy seem to moderate each other. As the result of positive feedback loops, pragmatic appreciation coincides with the assessor's moral understanding in ways that go beyond economic exchange. As such, a 'moralisation' of food provisioning is witnessed. Specific features of CSA, such as open communication, authenticity and being approachable aid the build-up of moral legitimacy. In a similar vein, the creation of social networks that build on reciprocity, trust and collective gains allow members to appreciate the CSA's immaterial benefits. This thesis shows that CSA entrepreneurs predominantly work to garner legitimacy from their members. In contrast, external audiences remain at a distance and as they search for tangible deliverables, misunderstand CSAs and their societal value. These dynamics explain why CSAs garner legitimacy locally and become successful within their own locality, hitherto encounter difficulties in scaling-up or triggering of socio-technical change.

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INTERNSHIP

This thesis was supported by 'de Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland' (RVO) (English: the Netherlands enterprise agency). RVO encourages sustainable, agrarian, innovative and international entrepreneurship. The agency provides business owners with information regarding legislation and regulation and helps them to find business partners and/or access grants (RVO.nl, n.d.). Most of the work executed at RVO is done on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (EZ). This Ministry is committed to create "an excellent entrepreneurial business climate [in the Netherlands] by creating the right conditions and giving entrepreneurs room to innovate and grow" (EZ, n.d.). More recently, EZ has voiced the need for supporting organisations that have "an eye for sustainability" (ibid).

Start from the presumption that people are competent interpreters of their own lives and competent solvers of their own problems.

— Geoff Mulgan

Every truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

— Arthur Schopenhauer

CONTENT

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Previous research shows that incremental changes in established socio-technical systems do not suffice to cope with pressing environmental, social and economic challenges (Elzen et al., 2012; Grin et al., 2010; Markard et al., 2012). Instead of improving existing systems, a systematic transformation is required to establish sustainable modes of production and consumption that are "more enduring, self-reliant and less vulnerable to external forces" (Brown et al., 1987:175). Such a transition needs to come from radical innovations that challenge established regimes. Transition scholars have identified different drivers and contexts for the introduction of radical innovations for more sustainable systems (Fressoli et al., 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2013; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013). The predominantly described logic is market-driven development of new technologies[1] (Baldwin and Hippel, 2011; Gambardella et al., 2017; OECD and Eurostat, 2005; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). In particular, this top-down approach to innovation designates a key role for commercial firms in the innovation process and regards citizens as passive agents.

More recently, civil society-led initiatives that empower local actors are recognised as a significant societal movement with the potential to speed up the transition towards sustainability (Blanchet, 2015; Hermans et al., 2016; Fressoli et al., 2014; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; de Vries et al., 2016). The literature on grassroots innovation[2] as pioneered by Seyfang and Smith (2007), acknowledges the innovativeness of such bottom-up responses to sustainability challenges. As such, the authors conceptualise the grassroots as a promising site of innovation hitherto largely neglected in traditional innovation studies and policy. In particular, grassroots innovations deviate from frequently studied market introduced innovations as they are not driven by firms' commercial motivations, but are the result of concerned citizens who wish to challenge efficiency-based conceptions of highly globalised and industrialised systems (Fressoli et al., 2014; Hatzl et al., 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Grassroots responses are especially apparent in those sectors where problems are intensifying; existing business models are failing and new possibilities are not adequately exploited (Levidow, 2011; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Taylor Aiken, 2012). Rather than waiting for existing parties to come around with sustainable solutions, grassroots initiatives position themselves in society from the bottom-up, offering innovative re-organisations of production and consumption systems.

A major example of a sector with high grassroots activity is the agro-food sector where sustainability issues have become increasingly apparent (Kirwan et al., 2013; Seyfang, 2006; White and Stirling, 2012). Co-initiated by farmers, these agricultural grassroots innovations entail local bottom-up solutions that aim to counterbalance 'big food' developments i.e.: "profit-driven, agro-industrial monoculture systems disrupting resource cycles, making farmers dependent on external inputs, undermining their knowledge and distancing consumers from agro-production" (Levidow, 2015:78). Farmers have seen their added value being captured by intermediaries in the supply chain and are looking for more fruitful ways of marketing (Kneafsey et al., 2013; Roep and Wiskerke, 2012). On the other hand, consumers have become estranged from farming and have increasing demands regarding the quality, traceability and environmental friendliness of food products and processes (Elzen et al., 2012; Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld, 2012). In attempt to challenge conventional food systems, farmers and consumers have united in local food networks (or food communities) based on

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[1] In their 2011 paper, Baldwin and Hippel cite two articles that endorse the market-based approach to innovation. "Innovations are undertaken by firms that can aggregate demand or not at all. In the 1930s, Joseph Schumpeter (1934, p. 65) placed producers at the center of his theory of economic development, saying, "It is the producer who as a rule initiates economic change, and consumers are educated by him if necessary." Sixty years later, Teece (1996, p. 193) echoed Schumpeter: "In market economies, the business firm is clearly the leading player in the development and commercialization of new products and processes" (Baldwin and Hippel, 2011:24).

[2] Seyfang and Smith (2007) define grassroots innovations as "networks of activists and organizations generating novel, bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interest and values of the communities involved" In contrast to mainstream business greening, grassroots initiatives operate in civil society arena and involve committed activists experimenting with social innovations as well as using greener technologies" (Seyfang and Smith, 2007:585).

alternative values, principles and organisational patterns (Brunori et al., 2016; Kneafsey et al., 2013; Roep and Wiskerke, 2012). In particular, these grassroots initiatives aim to re-connect producers and consumers; and re-localise agricultural and food production (Hermans et al., 2016; Letty et al., 2012; Roep and Wiskerke, 2012). The overall goal is to ensure sustainability while also providing economic and social benefits. The last two decades, such initiatives have significantly re-shaped food culture and production-consumption practices (Rossi, 2017). Major examples are the AMAP[3] movement in France (Urgenci, 2016a) and the GAS[4] groups in Italy (Grasseni, 2014).

Community-led food projects and grassroots initiatives in general could be regarded as *niches* or alternative spaces to dominant practices within wider unsustainable regimes (Hargreaves et al., 2013; Kirwan et al., 2013; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016). As such, grassroots innovations often face a mismatch with regard to existing systems of norms, values, beliefs and definitions; and are incapable of immediately competing on mainstream markets (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Suchman, 1995; Witkamp et al., 2011). Consequently, founders of such unconventional activities need to cope with this 'liability of newness' in resource mobilisation (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Bergek et al., 2008). Grassroots initiatives have to constitute themselves and attract members; they need to raise funds, and secure permission to operate (Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Smith and Stirling, 2016). Throughout, grassroots entrepreneurs have to safeguard commitment and solidarity of their members. Principally, grassroots organisations need to cultivate support and legitimacy from people within the community (Cashore, 2002; Smith and Stirling, 2016). However, if they wish to endure and to be influential, the initiative needs to seek approval from actors outside the network (ibid). By nature, grassroots innovations rely on people with limited resources and power; and generally run on voluntary activity. Moreover, as grassroots innovation usually stems from knowledge and experience of actors outside the formal institutions responsible for innovation, 'being taken seriously' is a fundamental issue when trying to create momentum (Hassink et al., 2013; Middlemis and Parrish, 2010; Smith et al., 2015). In light of these characteristics, this thesis aims to study why and how grassroots initiatives 'survive and keep going'. This thesis turns to literature on organisational sociology that perceives legitimacy as an inevitable resource for organisational survival (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). In particular, rationality and efficiency as explanatory variables are put into perspective by emphasising legitimacy as the crucial factor in organisational survival (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983).

Amongst others, a legitimate status is *sine qua non* to mobilise resources, to articulate demand and to acquire regulatory support. A key tenet is that legitimacy can be enhanced by strategic actions of entrepreneurs or organisations (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). In this light, organisations seeking legitimacy are not passive, yet actively employ legitimation strategies that conform to, select or manipulate specific audiences (Cashore, 2002; Suchman, 1995). This thesis focuses on grassroots organisational survival and aims to understand the role of grassroots entrepreneurs to get their innovation accepted as a legitimate alternative to incumbent substitutes. The theoretical roots of this thesis draw on legitimacy and legitimation strategy distinctions made within organisational sociology (Suchman, 1995). The following research questions are addressed:

RQ: How does the creation of legitimacy occur in grassroots organisations?
Sq1 – What type of legitimacy is sought?
Sq2 – What legitimation strategies are used to acquire these types of legitimacy?

The case of community supported agriculture (CSA) in the Netherlands is used as the empirical background. CSA is an example of agricultural grassroots innovation that is gaining popularity in the Netherlands. Currently, 37 Dutch CSA initiatives are known. CSA refers to a partnership between one or more farmers and a community of members (Balázs et al., 2016; Flora et al., 2012; Levidow, 2011). It proposes a novel business model that advocates "local and communal stewardship of land through jointly growing food, investing in and managing space, and the redistribution of risk between growers and consumers" (White and Stirling, 2013:3). Generally, CSA members help to ensure the operating budget of farming via subscription to units of the harvest season (Kneafsey et al., 2013; Levidow, 2011).

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[3] AMAP = Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne (EN: *Associations for the Preservation of Peasant Agriculture*)
[4] GAS = Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (EN: Solidarity Purchase Groups)

CSA in the Netherlands is an interesting case as it presents a bottom-up induced niche in the highly locked-in, industrialised Dutch agro-food system characterised by a narrative of economic-technological progress. Hence, this thesis starts from the presumption that CSA entrepreneurs need to engage in legitimacy creation to convince potential members, policy makers, the broader agro-food sector and other interest groups of the desirability and necessity of CSA. Furthermore, as this type of grassroots innovation highly depends on its community for survival – *or* without the community a CSA cannot continue operations, it is an interesting case to study the legitimation process from community members.

Consequently, this thesis provides insights into a novel system of food provisioning based on a bottom-up, community-led innovation process. As such, this thesis contributes to recent endeavours in understanding innovative activities outside the traditional realms of the market economy (Gambardella et al., 2017; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Warnke et al., 2016; Witkamp et al., 2011). In particular, this thesis builds on previous work that aims to understand the innovation process of grassroots innovations (Hargraves et al., 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). This strand of literature has predominantly studied how grassroots responses contribute to a transition towards sustainability. While scholars agree that intrinsic challenges make it difficult for grassroots innovations to scale-up or trigger socio-technical change, research on the dynamics of organisational survival remain scarce (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Hermans et al., 2016). Hence, this thesis contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics that enable grassroots organisational survival by introducing the concept of legitimacy into the grassroots realm. Subsequently, this thesis shows what legitimation activities grassroots entrepreneurs employ to stimulate member participation, governmental support and to access necessary resources. These analyses have been neglected in earlier studies on community participation in grassroots innovations (Feola and Nunes, 2014; Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). Furthermore, this thesis contributes to organisation- and innovation studies by opening-up the concept of legitimacy creation. While both theoretical strands have extensively studied legitimacy at the level of commercial organisations, technological innovations and industries, research on the legitimation process of grassroots equivalents remain scarce. As this thesis shows, fundamental differences between grassroots innovations of civil society and market-based innovations of firms result in deviating legitimacy achievement strategies.

A better understanding of grassroots innovations also bears practical relevance. The future of food and agriculture has become an inevitable question for policy makers. Adverse public reaction to the dominant system of food production and consumption is forcing governments to re-think post-war policy objectives (Levidow, 2015). To fight such complex and persistent challenges, policy makers must look towards civil society and eventually build bridges between the informal and the formal sector (Gupta, 2013). For example, grassroots groups know "what works in their localities and what matters to local people. They present sustainability issues in ways more meaningful, personal or directly relevant" (Seyfang and Smith, 2007:593-594). As such, grassroots initiatives have shown to provide sustainable benefits where top-down measures struggle (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2015). Subsequently, much can be learned from these grassroots experiments including what possible future food provisioning systems might look like and which values are deemed important. Currently, grassroots activity largely remains below the radar of formal institutions that promote innovation. As such, innovation is primarily sought within commercial firms and citizens are rarely consulted directly (Smith and Stirling, 2016). Moreover, a better understanding on the creation of legitimacy in grassroots innovation also provides grips for grassroots entrepreneurs to acquire social acceptance for their novel activities – and through this stimulate the transition towards a sustainable agri-food regime from the bottom-up.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 starts with a description of grassroots innovation and elaborates on legitimacy types and legitimation strategies. Chapter 3 further elaborates on the selected case and covers the methodology. Subsequently, chapter 4 and 5 present the main findings from this explorative research. Chapter 4 provides descriptive data regarding CSA in the Netherlands. Chapter 5 describes and analyses the creation of legitimacy in Dutch CSAs. Chapter 6 draws the main conclusions from this thesis. Finally, chapter 7 discusses the work and indicates theoretical as well as practical implications of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter explains the theoretical background of this thesis. Before elaborating on the concept of legitimacy (2.2), its typology (2.3) and legitimation strategies (2.4), this chapter starts by briefly outlining the grassroots innovation context (2.1). Finally, sub-section 2.5 models the legitimation process in the grassroots context.

2.1. Grassroots innovation

This thesis departs from research on grassroots innovation as pioneered by Seyfang and Smith (2007) who have defined grassroots initiatives as "networks of activists and organizations generating novel, bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interest and values of the communities involved. In contrast to mainstream business greening, grassroots initiatives operate in civil society arena and involve committed activists experimenting with social innovations as well as using greener technologies" (Seyfang and Smith, 2007:585). As this definition implies, the literature distinguishes between (I) grassroots innovations of civil society and (II) market-based innovations of firms.

Grassroots innovations are outputs of the social economy rather than the market economy (Boyer et al., 2015; Hatzl et al., 2016; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2014). In the market *context*, innovation is *driven* by commercial motivations of rent-seeking firms that strive for a competitive advantage over their competition. In contrast, grassroots innovation is *driven* by an ideological commitment to do things differently, aspiring to address unmet human and social needs (Boyer et al., 2015; Hatzl et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2016; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). As such, grassroots responses are characterised by a strong normative impetus: citizens co-creating and developing "do-it-ourselves" and localised solutions that create value beyond the interest of private individuals. Grassroots innovation is a bottom-up induced process with networks of neighbours, local communities and activists as the main protagonists of innovation (Fressoli et al., 2014; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). These actors are *organised* in various forms of arrangement such as voluntary associations, cooperatives and informal community groups (Fressoli et al., 2014; Herman et al., 2016; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Subsequently, grassroots innovation generally relies on voluntary collective endeavour that goes beyond individualistic reforms (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016).

The main *resource base* for innovation in firms is their income from commercial activity (Hatzl et al., 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). On the other hand, grassroots innovations build on a variety of fragile resources such as voluntary work and financial loans and only limited commercial activity (Boyer et al., 2015; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013). Predominantly, these resources are provided by community members - grassroots organisations strongly rely on their members' involvement as active supporters of the community project; volunteers and financial investors (Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Wirth, 2014). Moreover, grassroots innovations depend on structural resources including "national or local traditions, pre-existing practices and competences and small interpersonal networks […] that may explain why grassroots innovations emerge and grow only in specific territorial spaces while the same landscape factors are not able to initiate grassroots activities elsewhere" (Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013:862). In addition, grassroots innovations build on contextualised knowledge bases in the process of innovation (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). This access to indigenous, tacit forms of knowledge, elsewhere coined "sticky knowledge" (see Von Hippel, 2005), allows for a more accurate determination of existing needs and the development of suitable solutions accordingly (Fressoli et al., 2014; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Von Hippel, 2005). According to a recent literature review by Hossain (2016), grassroots innovation usually "stems from the knowledge, experience and skills embedded in communities and individuals who lie outside the formal institutions of education, research and industry for solving local problems" (Hossain 2016: pp.974-975).

Innovation at the grassroots predominantly centres on social innovation (rather than technological); that promotes new form of social and economic life; and challenges, alters or replaces dominant institutions in the social context (Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010; Mulgan, 2006; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Hence, the 'social' is the object of change itself – innovation occurs through the medium of new forms of social

arrangements and practices. Grassroots innovations generally propose new organisational forms that challenges conventional relationships and allows for new roles and responsibilities (e.g. farmer and host). In general, the pursuit of a social objective or mission is placed in the forefront of grassroots innovation: they constitute a "a novel solution to a social problem […] for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals" (Windrum et al., 2016:6). The development around a common core of environmental sustainability, social justice and ethical principles are central for grassroots innovations (Rossi, 2017).

Finally, grassroots innovations and market-based innovations differ in terms of *process* and *outcome*. The innovation process of grassroots innovation is open and participatory, with an innovation culture that is based on "democracy, openness, diversity, practical experimentation, social learning and negotiation (Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013: 20). Grassroots actors are often socially embedded – their relationships involve trust based on kinship, friendship and experience, and mutual commitment rather than contractual agreements (Boschma, 2005). Risks and benefits (i.e. outcome) are generally shared collectively among local actors (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Typically, members of grassroots communities have control over both the innovation process and outcomes (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Moreover, grassroots innovators are likely to encourage imitation and dissemination of their activities to spur wider social change i.e. open innovation (Windrum et al., 2016). On the other hand market-based innovations are characterised by a closed and institutional innovation process that leads to distant and private outcomes. **Table I** displays an overview of aforementioned characteristics of both grassroots and market-based innovation.

Table I – Characteristics of market-based innovation and grassroots innovation

Characteristics	Market-based innovation	Grassroots innovation
Context	Market economy	Social economy
Driving force	Profit: Schumpeterian rent	Social needs, Ideological commitment
Organisational structure	Firms and mainstream STI actors (universities, R&D / knowledge centres)	Voluntary associations, cooperatives and informal community groups
Resource base		Predominantly social capital: voluntary work, mutual exchange,
▪ Capital	Predominantly financial capital: Income from commercial activity	grant funding and limited commercial activity
▪ Knowledge	Scientific and technological, codified	Localised, situated, tacit
Innovation focus	Technological	Social
Innovation process	Closed and institutional Top-down	Open and participatory Bottom-up
Outcomes	Distant and private	Local and collective

Source: Based on Seyfang and Smith (2007: 591) and completed with insights from Fressoli et al., 2014.

In light of these characteristics, this thesis aims to study why and how grassroots initiatives "survive and keep going" – thereby addressing a key challenge as put forward by Seyfang and Smith (2007:596). This thesis turns to literature on organisational sociology which highlights the importance of acquiring a *legitimate* status to mobilise resources and to acquire support necessary to survive.

2.2. Legitimation process

The theoretical roots of this thesis draw on the concept of legitimacy. Legitimacy originates from organisational literature and describes the credibility and stability of an organisation and its activities. Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (1995) as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate with some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman 1995:574). In the same year, Scott (1995) asserts that "legitimacy is not a commodity to be possessed or exchanged but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support and consonance with relevant rules or laws" (Scott 1995:45). A key tenet of legitimacy is that it constitutes a constructed meaning of observers to the organisation 'as they see it' – legitimacy ultimately exists in the eye of the observer (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002).

Some organisational scholars argue that organisations have a passive position in legitimacy acquisition (e.g. Di Maggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). In particular, they advocate that organisations are constructed by widely accepted institutions that are beyond the control of any single organisation (Suchman, 1995). On the other hand, authors from the strategic school (e.g. Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Ashfort & Gibbs, 1990) view legitimacy as an operational resource that can be acquired from the organisation's environment (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). Here lies the important recognition that an organisation "actively seeks legitimation through "achievement" strategies" (Cashore, 2002:516). As such, this strategic perspective on legitimacy is relevant for an entrepreneur as it emphasises how conscious actions garner societal support. Subsequently, legitimation could be considered as a parallel process to institutionalisation (e.g. Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). An example of this type of research is the work of Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) who describe the legitimation process as a as a set of actions to obtain legitimacy (see **Figure 1**). Through this process, an organisation has better access to strategic resources such as financial resources; quality managers and employees; technologies; and government support that allow organisational survival (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). In particular, organisations that initiate a new activity face difficulties due to low levels of legitimacy: "with no external evidence, why should potential trusting parties "trust" an entrepreneurs claims that a relationship will work out, given that an entrepreneur may be no more than ill-fated fool?" (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994:650). Consequently, entrepreneurs of novel activities need to engage in behaviours related to acquiring support.

More recently, innovation scholars have also embraced the legitimacy concept and argue that legitimacy creation is one of the key functions that needs to be fulfilled for radical innovations to gain momentum (e.g. Hekkert et al., 2007). According to Markard and colleagues (2016), an innovation that is "well understood, compatible with established practices, socially accepted and perhaps even endorsed by regulation, possesses a high degree of legitimacy. Conversely, if there are conflicts and institutional misalignment, its development may be hampered" (Markard et al., 2016: 330). In line with Zimmerman and Zeitz (200), innovation scholars conclude that any innovation needs to be considered worthy by relevant actors to mobilise resources, create demand and acquire (political) support (Bergek et al., 2008; Geels and Verhees, 2011; Markard et al., 2016).

Figure I – Legitimation process
Source: based on Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002:415).

This thesis starts from the assertion that entrepreneurs should work to get their innovation or organisation evaluated as a desirable and appropriate alternative to incumbent substitutes by their key audiences. As such, the desired state is to be perceived legitimate in order to mobilise resources necessary for organisational survival. In particular, this thesis explores the process through which such a legitimate status is built. Back casting from this set goal, this chapter successively addresses legitimacy types and legitimacy strategies. As such, the legitimation process studied in this thesis describes strategic actions (strategies) of an entrepreneur to reach relevant audiences who grant a specific type of legitimacy (legitimacy type).

2.3. Legitimacy type

The evaluation whether an organisation or innovation is legitimate can be based upon different legitimacy sources (Zimmerman and Zeith, 2002). Over the years, several delineations of the legitimacy concept have been proposed. For example, Aldrich and Fiol (1994) distinguish among cognitive and socio-political legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy refers to whether the activity is known, understood or taken-for-granted. Socio-political legitimation refers to the process by which key actors "accept a venture as appropriate or right, given existing norms and laws" (648). In reaction, Hunt and Aldrich (1996) advocate to split socio-political into a regulatory and a normative-based category. Scott (1995) proposes a similar framework including the three pillars of the external environment from which legitimacy may be derived: regulatory, normative and cognitive. Suchman (1995) translates (socio-political) normative and regulatory legitimacy

into a value-oriented moral legitimacy that asks whether an innovation is 'the right thing to do'. Moreover, he introduces pragmatic legitimacy – an interest-based variant of legitimacy. Later studies (e.g. Cashore, 2002; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002) usually comply with Suchman's delineation. This thesis does the same and focuses on the following legitimacy sources:

I.   **Pragmatic** legitimacy – Whether the activity has expected value based on the self-interest of a specific audience.
II. **Moral** legitimacy – Whether the activity is the right thing to do, based on:
     a.   … a wider normative system of norms, values and beliefs (i.e. normative).
     b.   … laws and regulations (i.e. regulatory).
III. **Cognitive** legitimacy – Whether the activity is known, understood or taken for granted.

The following sub-chapters elaborate on the aforementioned types of legitimacy in the order proposed by Suchman (1995). In particular, this thesis aims to explore dynamics that focus on organisational *actions* i.e. "operating in a desirable, proper and appropriate manner" (Suchman, 1995:583). Consequently, dynamics that focus on an organisation's *essence* i.e. "the organisation being desirable, proper and appropriate in itself" (ibid) fall outside the scope of this thesis and are not evaluated – notwithstanding that these factors have influence. The rationale behind this choice is that entrepreneurs are more likely to influence operations rather the organisation's essence in a bid to acquire legitimacy.

2.3.1. Pragmatic legitimacy

Pragmatic legitimacy is the most straightforward type of legitimacy: support for an organisation is given based on self-interested calculations of an organisation's expected value to the audience who is conveying legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). As such, for an organisation to achieve pragmatic legitimacy, it must meet the instrumental needs of its audience(s) (Tost, 2011). Following Cashore (2002) "[pragmatic] legitimacy granting rests on some type of exchange between the grantor and the grantee that affects the audience well-being, giving it a direct benefit" (Cashore 2002: 517). Hence, pragmatic legitimacy predominantly boils down to *exchange legitimacy,* i.e. does the organisation offer specific favourable exchanges? However, Suchman (1995) further points out *influence* legitimacy as another subtype of pragmatic legitimacy. Influence legitimacy is attributed not on the basis of what the organisation actually does for the audience, but instead on how responsive the organisation is to its larger interests i.e. is the organisation committed to try and serve your interests? (Suchman, 1995). Hence, the main source of pragmatic legitimacy lies within an organisation's immediate audience that benefits from the organisation or its activities.

2.3.2. Moral legitimacy

The second type of legitimacy is moral legitimacy that does not rest on "judgments about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator but rather on whether the activity is the right thing to do in general" (Suchman, 1995; 579). In particular, it demands activities to respect societal institutions – if there are conflicts its development may be hampered (Markard et al., 2016). Scott (1995) describes institutions as the normative and regulative structures of society that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. In a similar vein, moral legitimacy is based on a positive *normative* or *regulatory* evaluation of the organisation and its activities (Cashore, 2002; Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). Normative legitimacy (or socio-political normative (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994)) is derived when an organisation is assessed appropriate or desirable in terms of visibly endorsing and implementing "the norms and values of society or from a level of the societal environment relevant to the new venture" (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002:419; Suchman, 1995). Consequently to access resources, it is important that an organisation addresses the norms and values held by resource-holding parties. Moreover, regulatory legitimacy is a "generalised sense that the new venture is operating according to the letter and the spirit of laws and regulations" (Scott, 1995:418). In particular, governments, credentialing associations, professional bodies and even powerful organisations create such rules and standards (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002).

In general, actions of an organisation can be evaluated according to two sub-types of moral legitimacy: *consequential and procedural* moral legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). *Consequential* moral legitimacy refers to

the assumption that "organizations should be judged by what they accomplished" (Suchman, 1995:580). These outputs are socially defined and do not exist in a concrete sense (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). For example, it is not the pollution of the agricultural sector but rather the evaluation of such a pollution by its audience. For some this can be assessed in terms of standards or regulation, while others evaluate it on a more normative basis. *Procedural* moral legitimacy focuses on an organisation's routines and whether these are socially accepted and just. This type of moral legitimacy is most significant when outputs are hard to measure or when cultural beliefs praise certain methodologies (Suchman, 1995).

2.3.3 Cognitive legitimacy

In addition to pragmatic interests and moral motivations, organisations can acquire knowledge-based cognitive legitimacy. Markard and colleagues (2016) argue that the cognitive dimension of legitimacy refers to the accepted understanding of an innovation and its purpose. Suchman (1995) describes two sources of cognitive legitimacy: *comprehensibility* and '*taken-for-grantedness*'. An organisation is comprehensible when the audience understands the organisation's activities (Cashore, 2002). Taken-for-grantedness is achieved when "for things to be otherwise is literally unthinkable" (Suchman, 1995:583). Here, the evaluator does not have to support the organisation, but it accepts the organisation or activity as being inevitable – the existence of the organisation is taken for granted.

Given the importance of legitimacy and subsequent legitimacy types for organisations and innovations, scholars have explored means through which entrepreneurs can cultivate legitimacy (Cashore, 2002; Markard et al., 2016; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). This thesis sets out to explore pre-defined legitimacy 'achievement' strategies or *legitimation strategies* in grassroots innovations that conform to, select and manipulate stakeholders (Suchman, 1995).

2.4. Legitimation strategies

Previous sections describe the various types of legitimacy audiences can ascribe to an organisation or innovation. Furthermore, the literature describes three so-called 'legitimation strategies' by which organisations can pro-actively increase their legitimacy: conforming to the environment, selecting amongst environments and manipulating the environment. These environments are not stable, and organisations have to adapt and anticipate to environmental developments (Suchman, 1995). Moreover, the nature of these strategies depend on whether the organisation seeks pragmatic, moral or cognitive legitimacy (Suchman, 1995)

Conforming to existing environments is the easiest and less strategic way to acquire legitimacy (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). In its most general form, legitimacy is the social acceptance resulting from adherence to existing norms, values, expectations and definitions (Bergek et al., 2008). As such, a conformity strategy is comparable with the concept of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977) and refers to adhering to pre-existing institutional regimes and 'following the rules' (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). Conforming can either occur through coercive or mimetic isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism occurs when an organisation is forced to adopt certain procedures by other organisations, e.g. laws. Mimetic isomorphism refers to consciously studying and copying other organisations that is "by mimicking the most prominent and secure entities in their field" (Suchman, 1995:589). In particular, organisations choose to conform when rules, norms, values, procedures, structures and so on are well established and legit (ibid). An organisation can garner pragmatic legitimacy through conformity by meeting instrumental demands and moral legitimacy by conforming to altruistic ideas or regulations. Moreover, organisations can acquire cognitive legitimacy by aligning their innovation to established modes or standards (Cashore, 2002; Suchman, 1995). As such, cognitive legitimacy can be achieved through "formalisation" i.e. codifying informal procedures or "professionalisation" i.e. linking activities to external definitions of competence (Suchman, 1995:589).

If an organisation is reluctant or unable to conform to the existing environment, an organisation can also **select** a favourable environment to acquire legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). In particular, this refers to catering a selective group that grants the organisation legitimacy "as it is" without demanding changes (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). According to Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002), organisations can either

locate themselves in a favourable market or at a geographical location. Acquiring pragmatic legitimacy through selection is commonly a matter of market research. Or, as put by Suchman (1995) an organisation "must identify and attract constituents who value the sorts of exchange that the organisation is equipped to provide" (589). The acquisition of moral legitimacy through selection depends largely on the goals an organisation sets for itself. Cognitive legitimacy can be achieved by selection of e.g. certifications or accepted definitions in communication (Suchman, 1995).

Finally, an organisation can **manipulate** their environments. In particular when an innovation differs substantively from prior practices manipulations is a viable strategy (Suchman, 1995). In order to garner a legitimate status, innovators must actively disseminate new explanations of social reality and new ideas of what legitimate behaviour (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Cashore, 2002; Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). In this case, organisations must work on achieving consistency between the organisation and its environment. Pragmatic legitimacy through manipulation is predominantly achieved by means of advertising i.e. persuading specific audiences to value particular offerings (Suchman, 1995). Manipulating moral grounds is more difficult (Suchman, 1995). Performance demonstrations (e.g. technical success) may establish new grounds for moral legitimacy (ibid). More promising is collective action of organisations that jointly preach for a morality in which the innovation is evaluated as socially desirable (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). For example, rules and regulations can be manipulated through (collective) lobbying efforts. Organisations can also acquire cognitive legitimacy through manipulation (Cashore, 2002; Suchman, 1995). For example, comprehensibility can be promoted through "popularisation" and taken-for-grantedness by means of "standardisation" (Suchman, 1995). In this way, organisations seek to create new myths in society and become institutional entrepreneurs (Aldrich, 2011; Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

2.5. Modelling the legitimation process of grassroots organisations

As shown in the previous section, the perceived legitimacy of an organisation can be interest- (pragmatic), judgement- (moral) or knowledge-based (cognitive). This theoretical background is relevant to answer sub-question 1. In addition, this thesis explores the legitimation strategies as mentioned in section 2.4, (conforming, selecting or manipulating) to answer sub-question 2.

Principally, legitimacy is a stakeholder driven process. Consequently, organisations cannot take legitimacy but must instead be granted legitimacy by relevant parties. Conferring actors can be individuals as well as groups, such as the media or government (Bitektine and Haack, 2015). A major audience by whom a grassroots innovation needs to be perceived legitimate are community members (Cashore, 2002; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Grassroots community projects largely depend on their member's involvement to survive (Cox et al., 2008; Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Wirth, 2014). In general this engagement boils down to two active participation types: volunteering and investment of private financial resources (Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). In addition, grassroots initiatives need to attract members to ensure growth or to cope with people leaving (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Feola and Nunes, 2014). Moreover, they need to seek approval and acquire support from actors outside the network in order to endure and be influential (Kalkbrenner and Roosen, 2016; Smith and Stirling, 2016).

Altogether, this thesis starts from the following assumptions:

➢ Legitimacy is important to acquire critical resources necessary for grassroots organisations to survive.
➢ Grassroots entrepreneurs employ various strategies to acquire legitimacy from key audiences
➢ Grassroots organisational survival depends largely on community members' involvement and hence grassroots entrepreneurs need to garner legitimacy from community members.
➢ Grassroots organisational survival also relies on external audiences and hence grassroots entrepreneurs need to garner legitimacy beyond the community.

Legitimation strategies

- Conform
- Select
- Manipulate

Legtimacy types

- Pragmatic
- Moral Normative
- Moral Regulative
- Cognitive

Legitimacy

- Members
- External audiences

Access to resources

- **Members:** Financial resources + volunteering
- **External audiences:** Attract new members + support from local/national governments, foundations etc.
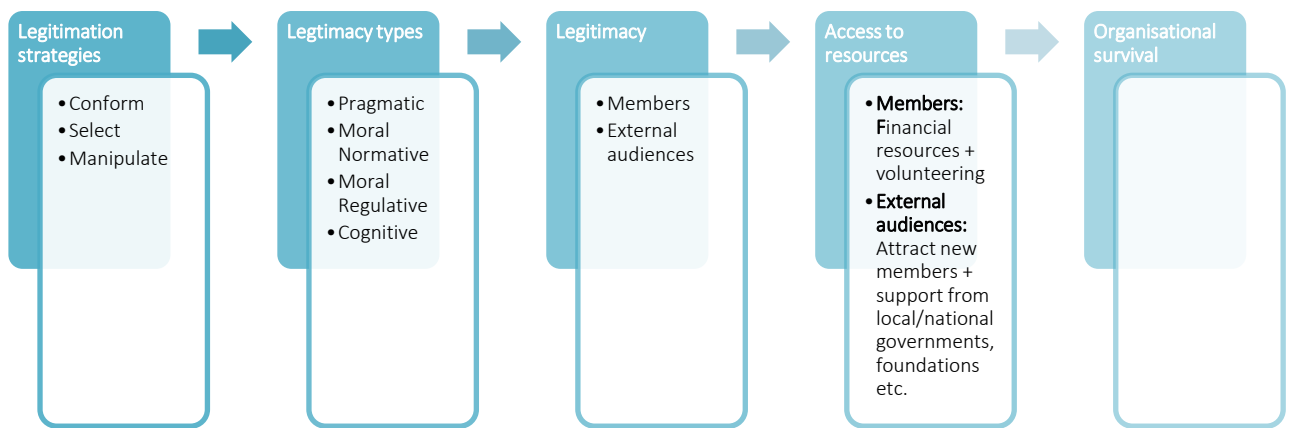
Organisational survival

Figure II – Legitimation process of grassroots organisations

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research methods that have been used in this thesis. First, section 3.1 further elaborates on the selected case: community supported agriculture (CSA). Section 3.2, describes the research design and the operationalisation of aforementioned theoretical concepts. Section 3.3 describes the data collection process and section 3.4 presents a clarification of the coding process and data analysis.

3.1. Case description – Community supported agriculture

Community supported agriculture (CSA) – or sometimes referred to as community *shared* agriculture endeavours to shorten food supply chains and re-connect farmers and consumers (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Flora et al., 2012). CSAs are community-based food cooperatives based on long-term partnerships in which farmers and members work together and share the risks and benefits of farm production. For example, if there is a poor harvest e.g. due to unfavourable weather conditions or other physical stress (plant diseases, pests and pollutions) everyone gets less – not just the farmers (Bàlazs et al., 2016; Bloemmen et al., 2015; Cone and Myhre, 2000; Kneafsey et al., 2013).

Either the CSA farmer has his/her own land or he/she works as a hired grower on land collectively owned by the shareholders (Kneafsey et al., 2013). These 'shareholders', 'subscribers' or, in this thesis, 'CSA members', purchase shares of the harvest before the start of the growing season – and through this ensure the operating budget of the farmer (Bàlazs et al., 2016; Bloemmen et al., 2015; Brown and Miller, 2008; Cone and Myhre, 2000; Kneafsey et al., 2013; Levidow, 2011). Moreover, these shares are indicative of the production volume and therefore ensure limited food waste (Bloemmen et al., 2015). The shares generally cost several hundred euros (Brown and Miller, 2008). In return, members receive a portion of weekly available fresh produce and have access to the farm. Depending on the organisation of the specific farms, members assist the farmer in various ways e.g. plant, harvest and deliver food produce (Cone and Myhre, 2000). Moreover, members can also assist in matters such as organising community activities, making financial decisions for the farm or getting out newsletters (ibid). In some cases, this commitment is part of their membership, while other organisational forms imply working with non-member volunteers.

CSAs attempt to build social communities around the growing and eating of food (Bloemmen et al., 2015; Kneafsey et al., 2013). Following Bàlazs and colleagues (2016), this implies building "reciprocity-based social relations where conventional economic roles (such as producer and consumer) turn to social ones (members of a community) and, consequently, non-price considerations take on greater importance than in conventional market exchanges" (Bàlazs et al., 2016: 101). Producers and consumers gain multiple benefits from participation in a CSA (Flora et al., 2012). For example, CSAs provide a local arena where citizens can learn about food and are empowered to act against the values of the global, industrialised food system (Cox et al., 2008; Kneafsey, 2015). (Urban) citizens regain access to farmland, are able to spend leisure time in a green environment and build social relationships during harvesting or meet-ups (Bloemmen et al., 2015). In addition, Kneafsey and colleagues (2013) show that CSAs can have an effect on member's health, skills and well-being. For farmers, CSA allows them to work in good, secure conditions and produce high quality vegetables against a fair price (Bàlazs et al., 2016; Bloemmen et al., 2015). In general, CSA farmers employ ecologically sound production methods. Farmers work within the natural capacity of the land and invest in soil fertility and agro-biodiversity. Amongst others, they refrain from synthetic pesticides and fertilisers; employ practices such as no-till, mulching and crop rotation; and produce local, seasonal varieties only (Bloemmen et al., 2015; Kneafsey et al., 2013; Levidow, 2015).

3.2. Research design and operationalisation

This thesis takes a qualitative approach in exploring legitimacy creation in grassroots innovations. Its theoretical roots draw on legitimacy type and legitimation strategy distinctions made within organisational sociology, while its empirical focus is on the case of community supported agriculture (CSA). Case study methods enable researchers to closely examine data within a specific context and to understand phenomena through the actor's perspective (Yin, 2013). In particular, this thesis aims to explore how legitimacy creation

occurs in Dutch CSAs (RQ). Such an explorative case study is suitable to investigate phenomena characterised by a lack of detailed preliminary research (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Bryman, 2012).

The main research question is addressed through two sub-questions. First, this thesis aims to understand what type of legitimacy is sought (Sq1). Here, this thesis focuses on the pragmatic, moral (normative and regulatory) and cognitive distinction explained in the theoretical framework. In addition, this thesis aims to uncover what actions grassroots actors undertake to acquire this type of legitimacy. Subsequently, sub-question 2 explores which legitimation strategies actors use i.e. conform, select or manipulate. As such, these questions are inevitably linked: CSA entrepreneurs need to deploy a certain strategy to garner legitimacy of a certain type. **Table II** and **Table III** present the operationalisation of both questions and describes how legitimacy type and legitimation strategies with regard to community members and external audiences, are studied in this thesis.

In order to gain an understanding of legitimacy creation, founders of 25 Dutch CSAs have been interviewed. Their answers have been compared by way of synthesising patterns in legitimacy creation of the individual CSAs. In addition to complementing each other, this provides a means to triangulate collected data. Cross-checking the results of each interview enhances the construct validity of a research i.e. "the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (Bryman, 2012:700). As a prelude to the interviews, respondents were requested to complete a questionnaire (**Appendix II**). This initial questionnaire helps to understand present-day characteristics of the Dutch CSA sector. CSA in the Netherlands is an interesting case as it presents a bottom-up induced niche in the Dutch agro-food system characterised by a narrative of economic-technological progress. After the USA, the Netherlands is the world's second largest exporter of agricultural and food products (Holland Trade, n.d.). As such, trajectories that safeguard this position and aim at productive efficiency and global economic competitiveness are currently prioritised. As an alternative, socio-economic model in the agro-food sector, CSA entrepreneurs need to create legitimacy to convince key audiences of the desirability and necessity of their CSA.

Table II – Operationalisation of legitimacy type (Sub-question 1)

Pragmatic	The expected value of a CSA based on self-interest of the evaluator
Exchange	What the CSA can do for community members
	What the CSA can do for external audiences
Influence	Whether the CSA is committed to try and serve the interest of community members
	Whether the CSA is committed to try and serve the interest of external audiences
Moral	Doing the 'right thing' based on regulatory and/or normative guidelines.
Consequential	Whether the outputs of a CSA are in line with the community members' perceptions
	Whether the outputs of a CSA are in line with external audiences' perceptions
Procedural	Whether the procedures of a CSA are in line with the community members' perceptions
	Whether the procedures of a CSA are in line with external audiences' perceptions
Cognitive	The spread of knowledge about a CSA
Comprehensibility	Whether community members understand the CSA and its activities
	Whether external audiences understand the CSA and its activities
Taken-for-grantedness	Whether community members can think of a viable alternative for the CSA / perceives the CSA as inevitable
	Whether external audiences can think of a viable alternative for the CSA / perceives the CSA as inevitable

Table III – Operationalisation of legitimation strategies (Sub-question 2)

Conforming	Aligning the CSA to pre-existing demands, values, rules and procedures
Selecting	Selection of an environment that accepts the CSA "as it is"
Manipulating	Create new demands, values, rules and procedures to achieve consistency between the CSA and its environment

3.3. Data collection

Data is primarily collected through semi-structured interviews with open questions. This type of structure gives direction to the interview, but simultaneously leaves room for the interviewer to add questions and for the interviewee to introduce new topics (Bryman, 2012). While the data gathered from these interviews

represent a single point of experience, the collective view of all interviewees allows for the identification of patterns (Walker, 1997). In addition, other sources of information are used e.g. scientific literature, 'grey literature' (i.e. books, policy papers) and informal outputs (such as websites, blogs or newspaper articles). Furthermore, several meetings on the CSA topic were attended to gain deeper insights (**Appendix IV**). Together this allows for a rich description of legitimacy creation in Dutch CSAs.

Data was collected in the course of three months i.e. January, February and March 2017. During these months, activity on the farms is relatively low as growing seasons generally start late March and interviewees had more time to participate in this research.

The interviews were conducted with CSA founders. All respondents have been part of the CSA since its inception and are still active. As such, this allowed for a comprehensive picture on legitimacy creation along the CSA's operation. Identification of interviewees was a two-tier process. First of all, a broad list of all active CSAs in the Netherlands was assembled using existing databases (e.g. Urgenci, 2016[b]), previous (scientific) studies, newspaper articles, online searches and social media. Interview requests were sent to participants of the CSA projects via e-mail and were conducted face-to-face when accepted. The purposive sampling of these initial interviews was complemented by means of 'snowball sampling' – additional respondents were indicated by the interviewees. Along the course of the project, 37 CSAs and their founders were identified as valuable respondents (**Appendix I**).

The interview guide (**Appendix III**) was based on the operationalisation tables (**II** and **III**) as presented in sub-section 3.2. The interviewees were posed a series of questions regarding legitimacy creation in their CSA. The interview guide largely consists of three parts. The first part of the interview generally addresses legitimacy creation in CSAs. Thereafter, part II and III more specifically address legitimacy type and legitimation strategies. Preceding the interview, each interviewee received a short introduction regarding the research and its aim. This allowed the interviewee to ask questions and clarifications beforehand and think about the subject. In addition, background information regarding the specific CSA was sought online in order to better understand the interviewee's responses.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the interviewees' first language (Dutch). For the sake of the research, parts of transcripts have been translated in English by the researcher. Moreover, I attempted to visit each farm to conduct the interview as this provides a better understanding of the CSA and enables direct and participant observation (Bryman, 2012). In total, 25 qualitative interviews with CSA entrepreneurs have been conducted. On average, each interview took 55 minutes. Data quality and reliability of research is ensured by recording all interviews and transcribing immediately after the interview (Bryman, 2012). This would allow other researchers to perform similar research. Given that the interviews are conducted by one researcher, there is a risk of biased interpretations (Flick, 2009). In order to prevent this bias the interviews have been transcribed verbatim.

All respondents indicated consent to recording of the interview. Moreover, all respondents were given the opportunity to respond to their transcript before data analysis. Finally, no statements regarding specific CSAs are made and all quotations are presented anonymous – all respondents are assigned an A-Y randomly[5]. As such, this enabled the respondents to speak freely on the topics addressed. Chapter 5 presents the results of the interviews.

In addition to the interviews, descriptive data was collected through questionnaires. The *questionnaire* was developed for the purpose of gathering information on CSA in the Netherlands (**Appendix II**). In particular, its design allows for a descriptive analysis of sectoral and organisational features. Predominantly, standardised answers were formulated to enable simple data compiling (Bryman, 2012). However, an 'open answer' category was always included to allow self-formulated answers. The questionnaire concluded with two open questions regarding the motivations and set goals of the CSA. These questions were posed to acquire a first understanding of legitimacy in light of the studied CSA; and to get the respondents acquainted with themes in legitimacy creation.

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[5] Please note that these letters do <u>not</u> correspond with numerical orders put forward in this thesis

The questionnaires have been administered through printed hand-outs during the interviews and via an online programme. In total, 27 CSA entrepreneurs completed the questionnaire including all 25 respondents from the interview. Two additional entrepreneurs responded to the online questionnaire that was send to the remaining CSAs. Of the studied CSA entrepreneurs, 15 are female and 12 male. On average their age is approximately 46 years. Regarding their education, 40.74% (i.e. 11 respondents) completed college (Dutch: HBO) and another 11 graduated from university – six have a master's degree and five completed a bachelor programme. Five respondents indicated secondary vocational college (Dutch: MBO) as their highest level of education. As should be noted, most respondents have also been students at the 'Warmonderhof', a Dutch institute for organic and bio-dynamic agriculture (MBO). Chapter 4 presents the results of the questionnaire.

3.4. Coding process and data analysis

After data collection, the aim is to uncover insights from the collected raw data through the successive process of data reduction, data comparison, drawing conclusions and reflection. First of all, 'Nvivo coding software' was used to *reduce data*. Coding is a way to break down and prepare the data for analysis (Flick, 2009). In particular, it entails the systematic collection of relevant pieces of information regarding legitimacy type and legitimation strategies. Codes (or *Nvivo nodes*) are developed in advance in accordance with the concepts in the operationalisation **tables** (**II** and **III**). More specifically, four 'parent nodes' were created, corresponding with each legitimacy type. Subsequently, three 'child nodes' have been created for each legitimacy type in order to store information regarding achievement strategies (**Figure III**). In this process of theoretical coding, all relevant parts of the interview have been marked and labelled according to their content by means of these codes (Bryman, 2012). As such, an overview of strategic actions of an entrepreneur per legitimacy type was created. Henceforth, all coded data were manually coded in terms of the perceived evaluator i.e. community members or external audiences. This category was not included in the initial coding process as not all actions need to evidently direct towards a single audience. Moreover, adding an addition category would double the number of codes and complicate the coding process.

During the coding process, I remained as close to the data as possible in order to ensure in-depth understanding of underlying processes of legitimacy creation. Such an 'interpretivist' approach "helps to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions" (Bryman, 2012:694). Once all interviews had been coded, topic biographies per code were made to examine coherence among respondents i.e. *data comparison.* Here, all quotations that receive the same code are listed. Once in the same place, one can easily look for similar or conflicting opinions; uncover issues or generate new ideas. As such concepts and emerging patterns of legitimacy creation can be deduced from the interviews. Similarities and differences have been searched for by way of constant comparison (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This step is argued essential to draw generic *conclusions* and avoid theoretical deductions that are distinctive to a specific CSA under study (Bryman, 2012). Comparison continues until theoretical saturation is reached – as this research sets out to understand new phenomena, the researcher carefully has to decide when no new theoretical insights are generated.
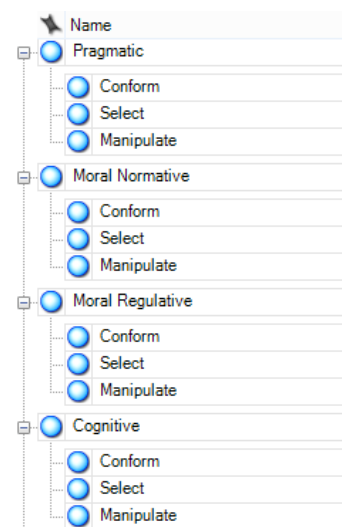
Figure III – Nvivo nodes

Finally, as this research is carried out by a single researcher, the main findings and conclusions have been discussed with two experts[6]. These experts were carefully selected based on their experience with CSA in the Netherlands. Resonance with these experts increased the *reliability* of this research as it aims to counter biased interpretations.

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6 **Expert 1**: Maria van Boxtel, consultant at Land&Co https://www.landco.nl/home/onze-adviseurs/ ; **Expert 2:** Elisabeth Hense, assistant professor of spirituality at Radboud University Nijmegen with an interest in new alternatives for communal life. Both have co-edited a recently published book entitled Volle Oogst [English: Full Harvest] on the CSA movement in the Netherlands.

CHAPTER 4. COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS

This chapter provides the results of the questionnaire on Dutch CSAs and their characteristics (**Appendix II**). Based on the acquired answers, this chapter aims to draw the current situation of CSA in the Netherlands and provides a basic description of sectoral (4.1) and organisational features (4.2). Sub-section 4.3., summarises the results.

4.1 The Dutch CSA sector

The total identified population of CSA organisations in the Netherlands consists of 37 organisations [7] (**Appendix I**). This population includes four CSAs that have recently commenced with their first season. In this thesis, information on 29 CSAs was gathered – one respondent answered the questionnaire for three individual CSAs that fall under the same foundation. Table **IV** provides an overview of the studied CSAs including their name, year of initiation and location.

#[8]	Name CSA	Start CSA	Location CSA	#	Name CSA	Start CSA	Location CSA
1	De Nieuwe Ronde	1998	Wageningen	14	Kansrijk biologische zelfoogsttuin	2016	Groenekan
2	Het Zoete Land	2015	Leiden	15	De Oosterwaarde	1997	Diepenveen
3	De Volle Grond	2010	Bunnik	16	Boer Sil	2014	Dwingeloo
4	Birkenhof	2008	Soest	17	Tuinderij de Groenteboer	2015	Kamerik
5	Herenboeren Wilhelminapark	2016	Boxtel	18	Samen Telen[9]	2014	Warmenhuizen
6	Tuinderij de Ark	2015	Bloemendaal	19	Stadstuinderij Noordoogst	2017	Amsterdam
7	Amelis'hof	1998	Bunnik	20	Het Proefveld van Haren	2015	Haren
8a	Moestuin Leyduin	2012	Heemstede	21	Tuinen van Hartstocht	2015	Abcoude
8b	Stadstuinderij WTG	2013	Haarlem	22	Tuinderij 't Wild	2014	Rosmalen
8c[10]	Kweektuinkas	2014	Haarlem	23	De Moestuin[11]	2017	Utrecht
9	Eemstad-boerderij	2016	Amersfoort	24	De Kraanvogel	2007	Esbeek
10	In het volle leven	2006	Vortum-mullem	25	LOCOtuinen	2014	Maastricht
11	Us Hof	2014	Sibrandabuorren	26	De Stadsgroenteboer	2017	Amsterdam
12	Stadstuinderij Buitenleeft	2013	Delft	27	De Vrije Akker	2010	Grubbenvorst
13	CSA Landinzicht	2016	Hilversum				

Table IV – Studied community supported agriculture (CSA) organisations
Source: based on data from own questionnaire

4.1.1. Initiation of CSA in the Netherlands

CSA has gained increasing popularity in the Netherlands. Based on data gathered from the sample, **Figure IV** shows the cumulative number of CSAs that have been initiated since the set-up of the first CSA in 1997. As is clearly visible, the CSA sector has witnessed extreme growth after 2012. This might be subscribed to a combination of the economic crisis and decreases in food prices; and the increases in food scandals and regulation. Moreover, the studied sample provides information on six consumer-initiated farms (of which three belong to the same consumer-initiated CSA foundation) and 21 farmer-initiated CSA initiatives.

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[7] As of April 2017
[8] These numbers correspondent with the numbers on the map in figure II
[9] Has shut down end of 2016
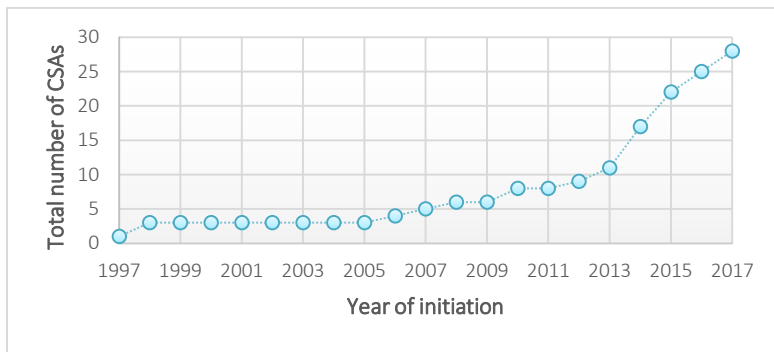[10] All three CSAs with the number 8 fall under *De Nieuwe akker* foundation

Figure IV – Cumulative number of CSAs in the Netherlands
Source: based on data from the questionnaire

4.1.2. Geographical spread of CSA in the Netherlands

Figure V shows the geographical spread of CSA in the Netherlands. Most of the studied CSAs are located in the *Randstad* area (between Utrecht – Amsterdam – Rotterdam). Another observation is that most CSAs are situated in or nearby a large city. It has become clear that most CSA members live within a small range of the CSA. Especially for self-harvest it is essential that members can easily reach the farm. Consequently, having a location nearby a city provides strategic benefits as it allows for more potential members. Most of the CSAs have 2 or less hectares of farmland, starting from as small as 0.25 ha. The three largest CSA farms (14; 14; 20 ha) deliver vegetable boxes and additional products such as eggs and/or meat and are located further away from a city. Almost all respondents indicated that they do not own the land. Many farm on land that is owned by either the municipality, a foundation or another farmer. Farmland in the Netherlands is very expensive which makes leasing a compelling option.

Figure V – Geographical spread of CSA in the Netherlands
Source: based on data from the questionnaire
Designed by GIS competence centre - RVO

4.2. Organisational characteristics

The questionnaire also entailed questions on organisational characteristics including CSA members; CSA income; distribution of produce and CSA deliverables.

4.2.1. Members

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of members at the start of the CSA; current amount of members and the maximum number of members. This latter question appeared to be challenging and some respondents outlined the difference between the maximum amount of members that could fit the farmland and the maximum amount of members that the farmer would be able to cope.

Studying the amount of members at the start, some observations can be made. On average, the studied CSAs commenced with approximately 50 members. Four respondents indicated that they started with 90+ members, including two farmer-initiated delivery box CSAs and two consumer-initiated self-harvest farms. The current amount of members is considerably higher, with an average of approximately 120 members. However, this varies considerably among farms. In total, 10 farms have indicated to have more 100+ members. In addition, almost all Dutch CSAs work with non-member volunteers. In some cases, members help out on the farm or assist in other tasks.

4.2.2. Distribution models and subscription

The sample includes 22 self-harvest farms and six farms that work with boxes or bags for delivery of their produce. One farm offer both options. Respectively, **Figure V** portrays these two types as an orange circle (self-harvest) and a blue square (delivery boxes). Depending on the distribution model, members can either collect their vegetables at the farm or at private distribution points. Most farmers, however, invite members to visit their farm. Generally, boxes can be collected once a week, while self-harvest farms allow members to come and get their produce multiple times a week at set dates or at the member's convenience.

Price per subscription was difficult to compare as some CSAs charge per person, while others for small families. Moreover, most CSAs are able to supply vegetables during the course of approximately 35 weeks. However, some deliver products year-round. Overall, most aim for a price between eight and ten euros a week. This budget is generally used to secure farm operation e.g. to purchase seeds; plants and tools. Only a few CSAs also specifically secure funds to build capital.

4.2.3. Products and events

All respondents indicated to grow large varieties of vegetables (at least >30). Many also offered herbs and some small fruits (e.g. berries). Only three CSAs indicated to supply animal products. All of the studied CSAs employed organic agricultural practices and several also incorporated biodynamic practices[12]

Organising events for CSA members is a common phenomenon – all respondents organise member-events more than once a year. In general, these are seasonal events such as collective pumpkin or strawberry harvest; celebration of the start of the harvest season; an Easter egg hunt; final harvest day or seasonal diners at the farm. In addition, several CSA entrepreneurs organise workshops to educate their members on e.g. cooking with herbs.

Organising events for other audiences generally has a lower priority – with the exclusion of three farms that organise more non-member events as opposed to member-events. Events for external audiences commonly include open days or farm tours. Moreover, most entrepreneurs take part in local events such as markets. A few CSAs have indicated to offer educational services to schools or organise work excursions.

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[12] "Biodynamic principles and practices are based on the spiritual insights and practical suggestions of Dr. Rudolf Steiner […]. Biodynamic farmers strive to create a diversified, balanced farm ecosystem that generates health and fertility as much as possible from within the farm itself. Preparations made from fermented manure, minerals and herbs are used to help restore and harmonize the vital life forces of the farm and to enhance the nutrition, quality and flavor of the food being raised. Biodynamic practitioners also recognize and strive to work in cooperation with the subtle influences of the wider cosmos on soil, plant and animal health" (Biodynamic Association, 2016)

4.3. Community supported agriculture in the Netherlands

Aforementioned descriptives provide a compelling picture of CSA in the Netherlands. In summary, CSA is a growing sector in the Netherlands that has recently undergone severe growth – especially in urban regions. The majority of Dutch CSAs is farmer-initiated and requires self-harvest. Individual CSAs vary in the number of members and participation costs. In general, all CSAs deliver a large variety of vegetables and additional produce. Furthermore, all CSAs organise events for their member and the majority also invests in events for other audiences. These sectoral as well as organisational CSA characteristics provides the base for this thesis' study on legitimacy creation.

CHAPTER 5. LEGITIMACY CREATION IN COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

This thesis was designed to gain an understanding of legitimacy creation in Dutch CSAs and the role of grassroots actors to garner legitimacy for their CSA. This chapter addresses the research question: *how does legitimacy creation occur in grassroots organisations*? More specifically: *what type of legitimacy is sought and which legitimation strategies are used to acquire these legitimacy types*? This chapter describes the qualitative results of 25 interviews with key actors. The three legitimacy types under study, i.e. pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy are discussed, respectively in section 5.1 - 5.3. For each legitimacy type, it is argued why it is granted to CSAs and consequently how this legitimacy type is acquired through legitimation strategies, i.e. conform, select and manipulate.

5.1. Pragmatic legitimacy

CSAs offer favourable exchanges for their members as well as audiences outside the community. Initially, CSAs provide members with fresh and organic produce including vegetables, fruit and herbs. These food products have better taste and come in unique variations which cannot be found in supermarkets. In general, respondents argue that their members value quality over quantity. In particular, the importance of delivering quality produce is highlighted as an important aspect of the CSA's continuity. As a ground rule, vegetables and other products are delivered at a fair price for both farmer and consumer – in some cases even cheaper when compared to organic supermarkets due to fewer intermediaries in the supply chain. Inherent to organic farming, all respondents indicate to diversify their food production to ensure that not all harvest is lost due to e.g. persistent frost and thus always have something to offer to their members. Additionally, CSAs allow people to experience growing of food without having to invest in; and being responsible for the maintenance of e.g. farmland and tools. However, these tangible offers are not the sole reason why people convey pragmatic legitimacy to CSAs. Though necessary to survive, CSAs go beyond being mere food suppliers and offer additional benefits to their audience. Intangible benefits such as 'being part of a community'; 're-connecting with nature'; 'being outdoors'; and 'learning about food and farming' are argued to generally ascend the expected value of having access to organic produce and are often mentioned by the interviewees as prime reasons for participation. This is nicely illustrated in the following quote:

> *"Nature does something to you. Harvesting your own food does something to people. I never have to explain how this works, they [CSA members] just feel it" [Interview I]*

In general, respondents argue that these immaterial benefits are especially clear to those members who have a personal connection with the farm. Consequently, CSA entrepreneurs should invest in activities that promote relationships and community building to ease the conveying of pragmatic legitimacy. For example, one respondent indicates:

> *"We gradually put the farmland to use in order to limit the influx of new members per year. As such we ensured for processes such as community building to emerge" [Interview E]*

While the decision to participate is often based on the expected value of having access to organic, local and fresh produce, most members continue participations for the social benefits the CSA offers. Many respondents argue that these social benefits have even shown to make up for poor harvest. In other words, pragmatic legitimacy of the CSA does not decrease in case of poor harvest resulting from unexpected events, such as bad weather conditions or diseases – as long as the other benefits are still in place. Besides members, many CSAs also work with non-member volunteers who primarily benefit from the CSA's social benefits that motivate them to give their time and resources to the initiative. Altogether, obtaining pragmatic legitimacy entails more than adhering to investor profits in conventional innovation. This is exemplified in the following quotes:

> *"At a certain moment we asked our members: why are you a member? Because we want to eat organic vegetables they said. So I responded: you can also get organic vegetables at the supermarkets. As such, we asked them again: why are you*

a member? Finally, we discovered why: it is the combined value of being connected to a farm; being able to voice your opinion and the possibility to support a small and local farm" [Interview G]

"You have to bear in mind that at first instance, people calculate how much they get for what they pay. Those other benefits become visible when they are members" [Interview P]

"It is a certain moment of realisation when our members truly comprehend that we deliver more than just produce and their enthusiasm for other benefits grows" [Interview F]

Besides the *exchange* of both material as well as immaterial benefits, i.e. what the CSA actually does for its audience, CSAs also acquire pragmatic legitimacy as they contribute to members' larger interests. Members have reportedly joined CSAs for more abstract, pragmatic reasons other than direct benefits. Examples that have been mentioned by the interviewees are *"being part of a transition" [interview A; Interview B; Interview O]; "supporting local food / local entrepreneurs" [Interview O; Interview F; Interview U];* and *"doing something positive / useful" [Interview W; Interview Y].* These respondents describe their CSA as a local alternative that empowers local citizens to act upon their interest and believes. For example, most CSAs allow consumers to have influence over the produce and farming methods.

According to the respondents, the largest threshold for participation in a CSA is either the financial contribution or time. Both make it harder for a CSA to attain pragmatic legitimacy. As further described in sub-section 5.2 on moral legitimacy, CSA have a poor institutional fit with dominant cultural paradigms in food provisioning e.g. supermarkets. Participation in a CSA generally requires the participant to pay several hundred euros in advance. Time constraints have also been mentioned, especially for CSA farms that employ self-harvest as this type of distribution model requires members to harvest (and clean) their own products at least once a week. Moreover, none of the CSAs can deliver all the groceries and most do not have the facilities to grow popular vegetables such as paprika or aubergine. Respondents also commented on the reasons why members leave the CSA. In general, these are personal reasons such as moving to a new city or novel family arrangements. In addition, some members leave as they cannot get accustomed to certain features of the CSA. For example one respondents argues:

"Some people quit after the first year as the CSA doesn't suit them. They want to be able to choose their own vegetables. At our farm they have to make do with what they get. For some members this is a burden, for others it is part of the charm as it stimulates creativity" [Interview G]

Examples of pragmatic legitimacy beyond the CSAs immediate audience seem to abound when CSAs prove to be continual and consequently, municipalities, foundations and other parties want to know 'what is in it for them'. Beneficial direct exchanges to local municipalities that have been mentioned are *"restoring cultural heritage sites" [Interview G; Interview X]* and *"reviving fallow grounds" [Interview V].* Many CSAs had to constitute themselves as a serious party within their locality. According to the respondents, it takes a couple of years for actors outside the network to understand what favourable exchanges the CSA offers or how its activities adhere to larger interests of e.g. local or regional agenda setting regarding *"urban agriculture" [Interview F]; "green and social development of the suburbs" [Interview A]* or *"stimulating social cohesion" [Interview D].*

"Now it becomes interesting, because now the local mayor wants to come over to see what we are doing here. So yes, I feel like they are starting to understand the value of our farm yet it apparently takes three years of demonstration to get there" [Interview I]

"They [local municipality] have become familiar with our foundation and our ambitions. Even better: we have even shown to realise our ambitions. That is why we recently received an invite from them to join a meeting and explain what we can do for the municipality" [Interview M]

In addition, several farms have an additional branch and offer direct value to other interest groups such as care institutions *[e.g. Interview Q; Interview S; Interview X].* Again, these CSAs felt they had to demonstrate their capabilities in order to be perceived as a legitimate party. In this light, legitimation of CSA activities proves to be more difficult as is the case with CSA members. While aforementioned benefits of the CSA are swiftly understood by CSA members because of their close relation to the CSA farm, these benefits remain largely invisible to external audiences. In particular, social benefits and the societal function of the CSA are

valued insufficiently. As an explanation, such immaterial benefits can only be understood by way of experience and prove to be difficult to translate in concrete results. In addition, respondents mentioned that they have to challenge initial framings such as 'romantic'; 'idealistic' or 'adorable' in attempt to acquire serious attention from those outside the community. Altogether, it is important for CSA entrepreneurs to build a good, mature reputation and involve external audiences in order to be acknowledged as a legitimate party. Moreover, in order to garner support for the CSA and its activities, CSA entrepreneurs should understand the plurality of reasons that motivate different audiences such as local, national governments or foundations and frame their activities accordingly.

In conclusion, CSAs acquire pragmatic legitimacy from both members within the community as well as audiences outside the community. This first group predominantly conveys pragmatic legitimacy based on direct, personal experiences. In general, respondents argue that this 'internal legitimacy' as granted by members is the most important source of pragmatic legitimacy. As a result, many CSA entrepreneurs do not actively engage in strategies to convince external audiences. In addition, a large share of recruitment lies with the CSA members – new participants are predominantly reached via existing members.

"Sometimes we have too many lettuce so I tell my members please take some more and give it to your neighbour. As a result, some of these neighbours became members as well" [Interview U]

"We told our members that we needed more members in order to survive. Many of our members started lobbying and introduced friends to our farm" [Interview T]

Persuading external audiences to value CSA offerings exemplifies pragmatic legitimacy creation through **manipulation**. Manipulation as a strategy to a garner pragmatic legitimacy is hardly mentioned. Advertising as a tool seems to be limited to the first years of initiation. In most cases, the CSA substantively differed from prior practices in the near area. In order to get people acquainted with their CSA farm or CSA in general, local media was often sought to create awareness in the region. However, as one respondent nicely clarifies, marketing becomes less central throughout the years of operation.

"I rather want to invest in maintaining current members, marketing very time consuming and requires a lot of energy" [Interview K]

While CSAs receive positive reactions in general and many applaud the initiative, it requires additional effort to motivate actual membership. In some cases, people decided to participate and subsequently contribute financially, without prior experience with the farm or farmer. In general, the focus of CSA entrepreneurs is on informing rather than persuading. As one respondent emphasises:

"There is a growing need for authenticity and genuine communication that goes beyond slick marketing or propaganda. People want something that is real" [Interview A].

When informing external audiences, many respondents underline the importance of telling a consistent story with a positive and personal message. These stories address broader topics regarding dominant food production and consumption practices and explain how the CSA can contribute to a more sustainable system of food provisioning. Increasingly these stories evolve not only around food but also stress what their CSA farm delivers in terms of economic and social benefits.

"One precondition is that you have to tell your story. You have to take the time to explain why you do it, why it needs to be different. Eventually that's why people joined our CSA". [Interview I]

In another example of manipulating or informing, farmers also try to provide insights into the true cost of conventional farming i.e. estimates of hidden costs to natural environment and human health. Many consumers have become estranged from food and farming and lack an understanding of food pricing. Hence, CSA entrepreneurs hope to show that their financial contribution is not expensive but inevitable for a sustainable food system. After the first year, most CSA members seem to agree with their contribution as they can personally experience the amount of work it takes to grow organic produce of high quality. In

addition, other agricultural organisations might also be persuaded by the fact that CSAs show that a fair food system is possible.

Besides education on food pricing, CSAs also explain the looks of their vegetables and why they look different from regular products in the supermarkets. Aforementioned conceptions of food and food production are strongly embedded in dominant food systems. In order to safeguard pragmatic legitimacy, it is important for CSA entrepreneurs to explain and, when necessary, educate their audiences in order to manage expectations. However, whether legitimacy is conveyed also strongly depends on whether these norms and values of society can be affected to the extent that CSA is evaluated as socially desirable. This includes moral legitimacy (section 5.2.).

Finally, CSA entrepreneurs engage in activities that support bonding among members and the CSA farm. Examples that have been mentioned are recurring harvesting events and on-farm diners, but also regularly newsletters with personal stories or recipe exchanges. It is expected that these additional features of the farm aside from market-exchange, increase chances of legitimation by CSA members. In addition, CSA entrepreneurs should bear in mind that motivations to join the CSA differ from motivations to continue participation in the CSA.

In addition to manipulation strategies, CSAs can attempt to achieve pragmatic legitimacy by **conforming** to their audiences' needs. CSAs strongly endeavour to listen and take into account their member's needs and desires. For example, CSAs use classical feedback tools such as surveys to review aspects of the farm. These surveys can result in direct pragmatic legitimacy as farmers can consider changes for next year's cultivation plan. In addition, these built-in mechanisms of feedback and joint-decision making have been argued to increase legitimacy in general. Allowing members to voice their opinions, serves the overall aim of CSAs to involve members in the process. As one interviewee nicely states:

"I listen carefully to our members. If they dislike a specific vegetable I adjust our cultivation plan. Last year we changed from plastic to biodegradable bags which are more expensive and hence the subscription price of the CSA had to increase slightly. This was discussed with the members and agreed upon. I definitely think that by involving them in the process, our legitimacy increases [Interview Y]

In turn, as members are part of – and in some cases have control over processes on the CSA, their understanding on why their desires can or cannot be met, enhances. This makes that pragmatic legitimacy is more durable and CSAs do not have to constantly react to the environment from which it acquires legitimacy.

Finally, CSAs can locate friendly audiences that grant the organisation legitimacy "as it is" without demanding changes i.e. **selecting** (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). 'Friendly audiences' that have been mentioned by the respondents are for example a) parents with small children, as it allows them to educate their children on food and farming; b) people that used to have their own vegetable garden but were forced to stop due to time constrains or physical limitations or c) and advocates of sustainable lifestyles in general. In particular, respondents have argued the importance of attracting people who are committed to be community members instead of mere food consumers. All respondents commented on this duality and indicate that the desired kind of pragmatic legitimacy is generally derived from members. As such, this member/consumer dichotomy calls for a clear articulation of how the CSA operates and its vision.

"Members support your initiative and consumers get what they need - and that's what we do not want here. If somebody visits the farm and for example asks: can I also buy something here? My answer is: you have to go to the supermarket. We will not do that. That's not what it is all about. You can become a member and you will receive vegetables every week. Those who solely consume do not fit here. Consumers do not support you initiative, maybe financially but definitely not when something goes wrong or when help is needed". [Interview I]

Moreover, during the course of the CSA initiative selection occurs. For example the same interviewee argues:

"Those who do not understand what it takes to be a member leave after a bad year – I am glad they do"
[Interview I]

Likewise, another interviewee states:

"Remarkably, people either leave after the first year or they stay and commit to the farm for multiple years. The first year is always critical and those who want to solely consume leave" [Interview E]

Additionally, CSAs have indicated that being located within or near a city is most favourable. However, at any location, CSAs need to discover what works within their locality and notice unmet local needs.

"In this region we have a very large organic agricultural organisation that delivers vegetable boxes. That's very tough competition. As such, we decided to develop a self-harvest CSA" [Interview T]

A final example of this strategy type is to select other activities to complement the CSA farm. Complementary functions that have been mentioned are care, education and recreation. While this might feel like a strategy of diversifying, CSAs consciously make a decision to combine two or more functions on the farm to attract new audiences that value the sorts of exchange that the CSA offers. As such, multi-functionality of the farm becomes an important aspect to acquire pragmatic legitimacy.

5.2. Moral legitimacy

Moral legitimacy entails the evaluation of the CSA and whether it 'does the right thing' in light of general laws, rules and regulations (*regulative*) or norms, values and accepted societal routines (*normative*) (Suchman, 1995). This thesis has studied how CSAs assure such a positive evaluation in terms of *consequences* as well as *procedures* i.e. end and means. In contrast to previous sub-chapter, such an evaluation does not reflect whether the CSA benefits the evaluator but rather constitutes a general belief that the CSA promotes societal welfare (Suchman, 1995).

Normative moral legitimacy is derived as CSAs endorse and implement increasingly important norms and values of society. Dutch citizens have increasing demands regarding the quality, traceability and environmental friendliness of food products and processes. These novel consumer preferences put pressure on dominant food systems and hence create a 'window of opportunity' for CSAs. In particular, those who want to distance themselves from conventional practices, applaud initiatives such as CSA. According to the interviewees, moral legitimacy is derived as the CSA pioneers an alternative economic system that proposes new or renewed ways of organising; doing and thinking based on norms and values such as 'environmental sustainability'; 'fairness'; 'solidarity' and 'sharing'.

Environmental sustainability constitutes a large part of CSAs' moral legitimacy. As can be deduced from the interviews, direct and indirect audiences for example value that CSAs *"grow for real demand and thus limit food waste" [e.g. Interview J; Interview W]*; *"employ organic agricultural practices" [e.g. Interview C; Interview S]*; *"restore and recover (farm)-land" [e.g. Interview G; Interview X]* and *"provide 'green' in the city" [Interview A; Interview Q]*. To illustrate, the following statement on food waste was provided:

"Our business model allows to find a balance and produce sufficient. That is the nice thing about having a community of 200 members. We know what we have to produce – we do not need more" [Interview J]

In addition, social and economic sustainability aims are also sources for the CSA's moral legitimacy. Amongst others, respondents notice that their audiences applaud that *"the CSA works with volunteers who need extra care" [Interview Q; Interview R; Interview X]*; *"allows the farmer to get fair wages and gain independence of formal financial institutes" [Interview H; Interview U]* and that the CSA educates or *"opens eyes of those who lost all knowledge on food production [Interview S; Interview T]."* Likewise another interviewee points out:

"We make things understandable. Things have become incomprehensible, people do not know where potatoes grow – they come from supermarkets they say. And asparagus grow on a three? That's outrageous! [Interview S]

Finally, CSAs also endorse cultural norms and values. For example, respondents receive positive feedback on the fact that they work with traditional Dutch and regional varieties of vegetables.

Suchman (1995) states that in impersonal markets "organizations should be judged by what they accomplish" i.e. *consequential legitimacy*. By nature, exchange within grassroots initiatives is largely based on trust and personal relationships. Hence, outputs of production activity are reasoned to entail more than judgments of quantity and value in impersonal markets. In particular, measures of performance in grassroots organisations are morally prescribed. In general, CSA respondents argue that outcomes are more important than outputs. Instead of focusing on 'what the CSA accomplishes', it invites people to evaluate 'what difference does the CSA make'? As argued before, these CSA outcomes, which are not seen immediately after the end of the activity, prove to be difficult to translate in concrete results. Respondents argue that especially external audiences search for tangible deliverables that can be measured objectively. However, when solely assessing for example the percentage of the total sustainable food supply that can be generated by these local CSAs, the real potential of these initiatives is overlooked. Subsequently, it requires an understanding that the CSA's impact is not one-dimensional, but must be multi-dimensional.

Interviewees also mention that moral consequential legitimacy seems to grow along with the audiences' understanding of the CSA. In the course of their membership, members learn a lot about organic farming and the amount of work it entails. For example, they personally experience the effect of weather conditions on crops; that not all carrots have the same size, shape and colour; and the difference in taste compared to regular, supermarket's products. Moreover, outcomes of CSA predominantly affect local situations and therefore are especially visible to local audiences.

The absence of clear, tangible deliverables makes that *procedural* legitimacy is essential for CSAs. For these innovations, "sound practices may serve to demonstrate that the organization is making a good-faith effort to achieve valued, albeit invisible *ends*" (Suchman, 1995:580). For example, CSAs are unlikely to lose legitimacy if they have poor harvest due to e.g. plant diseases. However, it is likely to lose legitimacy when pesticides are used to safeguard production – thereby discarding its ideology. During the interviews, several distinctive characteristics of CSAs were mentioned that, according to the respondents, boost *procedural moral legitimacy* i.e. how and why things are done at the farm. Frequently recurring characteristics are: a) approachable farms and farmers; b) open and transparent communication; and c) democracy and mutual respect. These characteristics of CSA build legitimacy through honest relationships. As a result, members generally trust that CSA entrepreneurs 'do the right thing' and that their actions are authentic.

Typically, CSA farms and farmers are open and approachable to members as well as external audiences. As a result *procedures* on the farm can be experienced and observed directly.

"Members can always visit the farm and watch us while we're working. They can see exactly what we are doing and how we do it." [Interview R]

Respondents have argued that embracing such an open and inviting culture garners moral legitimacy. Members can directly observe farm routines e.g. what type of seed is purchased; how farmland is maintained and what measures are taken to enhance soil fertility or biodiversity. In addition all CSAs allow members to inspect financial documents.

In another example of moral legitimacy, respondents highlight the importance of open and transparent communication. As exchange on CSA farms is a continual process between farmer and members, respondents conclude that in order to be perceived legitimate, transparent communication regarding outputs is key.

"We explain everything. If for example there are lice in our lettuce because of the drought and we don't have any other, we explain it. We explain that they can still eat it but need to wash it in salt water. That we would have given them something else, but we do not have it. If we do not explain, and it happens again, people might start to wonder what kind of famers we are. The funny thing is, if we explain it, people don't care and have no problem eating it." [Interview O]

Being honest about what happens on the farm and explaining why things happen, promotes moral legitimacy. In particular, interviewees addresses the importance of keeping CSA members up to date on farm activities and by no means withholding information. As argued in the interviews, it is important that the actions of the CSA are deemed authentic.

"I try to explain everything. For example, on the asparagus field, I spray a garlic concoction with an herbicide spray tool. That looks strange and it always troubles me as people might associate such a tool with chemicals. Hence, I always update my members in our newsletter beforehand." [Interview K]

In addition, this also entails open communication towards members as well as external audiences during more difficult times e.g. when procedures and associated consequences backfire.

"We had some setbacks this year. For example we had a very rare plague. We ordered a net that protects cabbages from almost all diseases except this rare cabbage-moth. As a result, we lost a whole batch of various cabbages including cauliflowers, broccoli and sprouts. This happened in September – they were almost ready for harvesting. We really felt that we had to explain ourselves to our members […]. However, the funny thing is that members didn't notice it as there were still plenty of other vegetables." [Interview W]

"I have a nice example. We were one of the four agricultural businesses that were diagnosed with a chicken disease. The only thing that was communicated was the fact that it were four organisations. We could have stayed anonymous but we immediately contacted the media. We have no secrets – we were one of the four firms. This is our organisational record and as you can see we did everything we could. Every test that was required and yet the disease still occurred at our farm. Most remarkably, our community members still ate the chickens as the disease was not dangerous to humans […]. Our members really appreciated that we informed them: this is what we did, this is what happened, and we couldn't do anything about it." [Interview J]

CSAs build on democratic principles which garners moral legitimacy according to the respondents. In the studied CSAs, members attain an important position and share responsibility of the farm. They work together with the farmer in a personal and informal manner. Characteristically, CSAs members and farmer share the risks and benefits of farm production. According to the interviewees, this strengthens their relationship and allows for solidarity and mutual respect. As one interviewee puts nicely:

"We are all in this together. Members don't blame me when things go wrong but rather actively assist in finding ways to make sure it does not happen again." [Interview U].

Mutual respect also means 'taking members seriously' and 'appreciating their effort'. Many interviewees indicate to include members in the innovation process. For example, most CSAs allow for joint-decision making and organise general assembly meetings that enable members to voice their opinion.

"Our members really appreciate that we give them the opportunity to voice their opinion. Only a few actually come to our meetings but everyone finds it appealing that it is possible, that we openly discuss matters with them." [Interview X]

In another example of taking members serious, *respondent [F]* describes how they involve their members in choosing the best variety of a certain crop by means of vegetable-tastings.

Finally, respondents highlight the importance of creating a 'safe culture' that allows for e.g. experimenting; mistakes to be made and questions to be asked.

"If I make more mistakes than you, I win. Do you know that expression? We think it is very important to create a community culture where people render thanks by making mistakes and sharing their experiences instead of being penalised." [Interview J]

"Our members know that CSA is also new to us. We are still learning and experimenting. We do our utmost best but sometimes, things work out differently than we expected." [Interview W]

In aforementioned arguments, moral legitimacy is normatively evaluated and socially bestowed. In addition, organisations can acquire **regulative moral legitimacy** when operating according to the spirit of laws and regulations set by e.g. governments. In general, respondents argue that this type of legitimacy is not particularly relevant to CSAs as there are no set rules or standards they have to comply to. There is no set definition of what it requires to be a CSA. Most of the respondents are glad that there are no standards as this allows for CSAs to be creative in how they develop and to be *"adaptive to their own personality or own locality".* [Interview H].

During the interviews, respondents commented on several strategies that promote moral legitimacy. For example, CSAs **conform** to ideals that have become increasingly important to Dutch citizens. As argued before, CSAs endorse environmental, socio-economic and cultural norms and values. Moreover, CSAs are responsive to dynamics of decentralised governance and the participatory society. As a result of dissatisfaction with top-down measures, Dutch citizens increasingly wish to take matters into their own hand. CSAs encourage these citizens to find alternatives to conventional forms of food provisioning. As *interviewee [M]* nicely puts:

"People find it compelling that we decided to take matters into our own hands. That we not only comment on conventional practices but actually show that things can be different. In a very concrete way we show that it is possible to have impact." [Interviewee M]

In addition to self-sufficiency, CSAs reportedly conform to other growing societal values. Apparently in times of alienation, values such as 'supporting inclusion' or 'bringing people together' and 'bridging population groups' are much appreciated.

Finally, respondents mention few examples of conformance to rules or regulation. Some CSA entrepreneurs indicate to have established an association or official committee. In this context, mimicking established institutions is argued to be beneficial for external support or resource mobilisation. This is further elaborated in sub-chapter 5.3 on cognitive legitimacy as such strategies are more likely to support professionalisation rather than moral desirability.

Next to conforming, interviewees indicate the importance of deciding on a specific vision or goal and staying loyal to the ideals that underline them. In particular, such a **selection** ensures that the CSA appeals to the sentiment of relevant audiences. In line with aforementioned arguments on member/consumer dichotomy, goal-setting also aids expectation management – a CSA is more than a food outlet. As such, the extent to which CSA garners legitimacy also depends on whether the evaluator is open to new ideas. During the course of the initiative, most CSAs devote great attention to ensuring that its members have a solid understanding of the CSA's goals. Some respondents have emphasised the importance of e.g. introspection and reflection on the CSAs goals. In other words, continuous stressing of ideals appears to be important – why are we doing this and what do we want to achieve? The challenge is to remain faithful to initial principles while managing growth.

In addition, multi-functionality of the CSA is also expected to harness moral legitimacy. For example, some (care) farmers argue that their members value the fact that they contribute to an organisation that look after those in need e.g. *[Interview I; Interview Q]*

Finally, CSAs achieve moral legitimacy through **manipulation** strategies. In particular this describes how CSA entrepreneurs convince their audiences of the desirability of the CSA's morality. CSAs propose new 'rules of the game' that have to gain value. As aforementioned findings on pragmatic legitimacy show, it is important for CSA entrepreneurs to explain and, when necessary, educate their audiences in order to manage expectations. As such, in the case of CSA, emergence of new morals also affects the level of pragmatic legitimacy that is conveyed to the organisation. Interviewees argue that evaluators need to understand new cultural paradigms to allow for a fair evaluation of the CSA's 'righteousness' in terms of procedures and outcomes. In other words: moralities behind choices on the farm should be understood by CSA members as well as external audiences. This requires CSA entrepreneurs to intervene in moral believes of what is the right thing to do. The following two quotes exemplify this:

"We had a very good first season and people were very positive. The second year was less good and although disappointing it allowed me to explain the core of CSA. One year you can harvest a lot while other years you have to settle with less. But you will always have something to eat – that's how nature works. That's what's wrong with the current food system [Interview I]

"Supermarkets offer French Beans[13] year-round however in reality that is not possible. Here [at the farm] we work with the seasons. During the course of the harvest season it becomes less and less. That's it. Most of our members understand it and enjoy it" [Interview X]

Next to education, respondents have mentioned several ways through which they encourage members to appreciate new norms and values. For example, most CSAs have a few basic rules to regulate activities at the farm – trust among members and between the farmers is highly important. Another strategy that was mentioned multiple times is to empower people and make them responsible for their own choices. As a result, people feel less inclined to evaluate the CSA farm based on what it delivers in turn for financial contribution – it is more than an input-output balance. For example, some CSAs completely refrain from communicating the amount of weekly produce per prescription.

"We invite people give it a moment's thought: what do I need? What do I want? Instead of calculating: what am I entitled to?" [Interview W]

"Certain crops are limited, such as red cabbage. As a result we commonly have people asking: how many crops can I have? I never answer that question. I never tell them: you can take home three per person. Because if I would do so, people believe that they are entitled to three pieces even though they don't feel like eating red cabbage this week." [Interview K]

Moreover, respondents also argue that throughout the CSA membership, member's relationship to food changes. In general it is argued that the closer members stand to the farm, the more they value the produce and the less they throw away.

"I think that the strength of self-harvest lies in the fact that when you harvest your own, let's say parsnip, you accrue more value to that parsnip and you think twice before throwing it away." [Interview C]

"They really are their [CSA members] vegetables. That is what we aim to accomplish. That members understand that it is their garden with their vegetables." [Interview S]

Many respondents stress that it takes time and effort to create such new moral grounds for evaluation. However, once established, people have a healthier understanding of farm procedures and outcomes. For example, *Interviewee [W]* proudly states:

"You really see that people become more aware of the total picture. For example, multiple members told us that they started to study weather forecasts differently – rain again? That's not good for our carrots!" [Interview W]

Another interesting finding is that many respondents propose that they do not create *new* moral but rather re-invent or re-introduce norms and values that we have lost along the path of industrialisation – *"back to the old days when cooperation and communities around a farm where the standard."* [Interview X]

As argued before, it takes several years for actors outside the network to understand what favourable exchanges the CSA offers (pragmatic). In the same vein, respondents indicate that demonstrating success is necessary for external audiences to righteously interpret whether the CSA promotes societal welfare. A fruitful way to create new moral grounds is through collective actions of CSAs that jointly preach for a morality in which the CSA is evaluated desirable (Suchman, 1995). However, little indication of such effort was provided presumably due to absence of a Dutch CSA network or other networks that to marshal public support or forge political alliances. Nevertheless, CSA in the Netherlands is characterised with high-connectivity and all respondents are very open to other CSAs. They freely share knowledge; endorse one another and stimulate the imitation of new CSAs at other locations. Yet it remains questionable whether the endorsing CSA's legitimacy spills over into the recipient CSA given the local specificity of CSAs and the lack of legitimacy based on cognition (section 5.3). However, CSAs can benefit from highlighting positive correlations – links between actions and the achievement of certain results at other CSAs.

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[13] Dutch: Sperziebonen

5.3. Cognitive legitimacy

Finally, this thesis has studied why and how Dutch CSAs acquire cognitive legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy is knowledge-based rather than interest- or judgment-based. Respondents were asked to comment on the *comprehensibility* and *'taken-for-grantedness'* of CSAs. In the case of CSA there appear to be a few examples of cognitive legitimacy being granted. All respondents acknowledge that CSA is a relatively new phenomenon and rather unfamiliar term in the Netherlands. Beyond specific circles, CSA still requires extensive explanation. In general, those who understand CSA are personally involved in a CSA. As such, cognition is intuitively established by means of experience (learning-by-doing).

In general, respondents argue miscues and misunderstandings hamper mobilisation of external audiences or at least require promotion of CSA – *"they do not even know that we exist, let alone what it is we are doing" [F]*. Subsequently, respondents encourage the growth of the CSA sector in the Netherlands and are positive towards the upsurge of new initiatives. However, several respondents emphasise the need to be attentive whether fundamental norms and values associated with CSA fade in the event of popularisation. Here, respondents underline the importance of protecting authenticity. When posed questions regarding popularisation of CSA, one interviewee nicely puts:

"I am not sure if it would have value if CSA gains popularity. As things get more popular, you always have many initiatives who claim to be it but really aren't. [Interview O]"

Respondents indicate several reasons for the low societal *understanding* among which a) absence of an official Dutch CSA network; b) small number of CSAs in the Netherlands – especially in rural areas and c) being too busy at their own farm to engage in popularisation have been mentioned most often.

As argued in the theoretical framework, cognitive legitimacy will be bestowed upon organisations or innovations that are understandable rather than considering if they are desirable. In this light, as can be deduced from the interviews, CSA is not likely to acquire a legitimate status purely based on cognition and requires closer evaluation. In a sense, this is precisely what CSA entrepreneurs want to accomplish, namely, to avoid generalisation and thereby protect authenticity. According to the respondents, the value lies in creating understanding on what - more importantly *"why we do what we do" [Interview J]*. Being acquainted with the CSA term is less significant.

"To me, they [our members] don't really need to know the word CSA – that is completely irrelevant. But if they can tell me that our farm is fair, that they understand that they have to pay more to provide a fair income to the farmer, I would like that" [Interview H]

"We are good at promoting what we do here. We have a good and coherent story. However it is not specified on CSA. We tell our own story and I don't believe it has value to classify it as CSA." [Interview X]

Moreover, respondents emphasise the importance of challenging pre-defined assumptions. Instead of compliance to generalised definitions or labels they prefer to explain. One respondents clearly states:

"I am willing to have a discussion with people. What is it that you want? To challenge such self-evident definitions. I always see it as an opportunity to have a discussion and not as a motive to attach a label which, to me, is old system-thinking. I want to stimulate people to reflect: what does it mean? Instead of thinking that you understand it based on a definition or label." [Interview J]

Likewise, another interviewee states:

"As a CSA farmer, you would want to explain it to your own members. How you see it, why you do things. Not just pointing towards a website that tells them how it works." [Interview C].

In addition to comprehensibility, respondents were questioned on the *'taken-for-grantedness'* of CSA which describes the embedding of CSA in society – the innovation is accepted reality. Consequently, this type of legitimacy is highly unlikely to be bestowed to a niche innovation such as CSA. As such, no indications of taken-for-grantedness were given by the respondents. However, CSA entrepreneurs mention to have

achieved a significant level of embeddedness in their own locality to the extent that *"locals, participants as well as city dwellers can't image our CSA not being here."* [Interview A].

As argued before, CSAs need to cope with the issue of 'being taken seriously'. They need to challenge initial framings such as 'romantic'; 'idealistic' or 'adorable' in attempt to acquire serious attention from external audiences. According to the literature, this entails *professionalisation* of organisational operations (Suchman, 1995). Consequently, organisations should aim at **conforming** their practices or innovations to established standards or definitions of competence (Cashore, 2002). As an example, *Interviewee [L]* highlights that part of their legitimacy as granted by external audiences is derived from having a professional look including an attractive and professional website and flyer.

At CSA sector level, the degree of professionalisation in the Netherlands is rather low due to absence of an official CSA network. Individually, some CSAs have formally organised themselves in an association or foundation. Such a formalised organisational form shows external audiences that the CSA has the ambition to be durable – a condition necessary to get (financial) support from foundations and governments.

> *"If I decide to stop, the CSA's foundation still owns the land. They will search for a new farmer and as such, our CSA can continue for decades."* [Interview G]

> *"One of the reasons to set-up an association was the fact that it is a stronger representation towards for example municipalities if you sent the chairman of an association involving hundreds of people instead of a farmer"* [Interview E]

In general, fitting into predefined frames of society is reported to be difficult. For example, respondents underline the difficulties in aligning to scientific standards. Methods that are considered useful and desirable by experts and professionals are not suitable to measure CSAs and their impacts. In addition, as one respondents puts nicely:

> *"Governmental organisations want to label us through a process of 'pigeonholing'[14]. And I tell them: don't try to change our system so we fit into yours instead wonder how our system can contribute to your system. I will keep doing my own thing."* [Interview J]

In addition to conforming, CSA entrepreneurs can also select definitions that locate them within favourable environments to acquire legitimacy. A classic example of **selection** as a strategy to garner legitimacy is certification. In this way, positive associations to a certain label build cognitive legitimacy. In practice, as CSAs sell their products to their own members, certification is not obligatory as is the case in conventional food supply chains [15]. Nevertheless, several CSAs are certified organic (i.e. SKAL) and/or bio-dynamic (i.e. Demeter). Arguments behind certification that have been mentioned are *"additional proof to external audiences that we are organic"* [Interview C]; *"to support and stimulate growth of the organic sector"* [Interview S; Interview B]; *"to be part of a movement"* [Interview O] and to *"change the sector from within"* [Interview S]. However, all CSA respondents argue that certification does not garner legitimacy from their members. For example, one respondents argues:

> *"The CSA is certified but I actually feel that it is unnecessary as I can explain that we employ organic agricultural practices to our members and they can experience and see it by themselves"* [Interview C].

In general, the integrity of the CSA's produce is guaranteed by trust as a result of direct relationships that counteract anonymity. As argued before, members usually trust that farmers 'do the right thing'. All studied CSAs employ organic and/or biodynamic production methods. On that account, members trust that farmers correctly execute routines and standards associated to these production methods. As a result, most of the studied CSAs are uncertified. Respondents that choose to withhold from certification criticise the complexity

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[14] Pigeonholing is any process that attempts to classify disparate entities into a small number of categories (Dutch: 'in een hokje plaatsen')

[15] As worldwide demand for organic food is increasing (a total market value of US$ 72 billion (Willer et al., 2011)), consumers are increasingly able to purchase organic food in supermarkets. Third-party certification systems ensure produce integrity and aim to counteract dishonest trading. Hence, in order to be able to sell to e.g. organic supermarkets or restaurants, food suppliers need to be certified.

of the certification process that is associated with high costs, many required paperwork and bureaucracy. Furthermore, some respondents argue that their view on sustainability is not compatible with certification standards. One respondent nicely formulates this as follows:

"I am not a fan of certification. People frequently ask us: are you organic? Then I react: what do you mean? What do you know about organic production? I don't have a SKAL certification. I don't want to be inspected based on their principles" [Interview J]

Moreover variations in how the CSA is described and what information is communicated is also mentioned to benefit societal understanding. For example, respondents indicated to choose specific words in external communications such as organic; Fairtrade; local; fresh; bonding and self-harvest. These words are familiar and have significance to certain audiences. According to one respondent:

"It has become easier to explain what we do. There is a growing societal understanding on farm-subscription systems and some even know self-harvest. In that sense it has become easier, you just have to refer to things people already know – it resembles … it is a bit like …" [Interview O]

Furthermore, in order to establish a cognitive base regarding aforementioned member/consumer dichotomy, respondents emphasise words in external communication that accentuate the power of participants such 'share-holder'; and refrain from words that remind people of mainstream food supply chains e.g. 'costs' and rather communicate 'contribution' instead of price.

Finally, CSA entrepreneurs can garner cognitive legitimacy through **manipulation**. According to the interviewees a major challenge is to discard initial beliefs of amateurism. As argued before, professionalisation of organisational operations (conformance) is one strategy to obtain respect from external audiences. In addition, manipulation has also been mentioned as a fruitful strategy. In attempt to acquire serious attention from external audiences, CSA entrepreneurs need to intervene in cognitive structures that steer people's perception of reality. For example this entails challenging understandings on 'how vegetables grow'; 'the effects of seasons on food production' but also on 'what organic in the supermarkets means'. As such, this highlights the importance of promoting and creating new knowledge about food and farming – shared within and outside the CSA's network. Consequently, this strategy resembles previously described manipulation to acquire moral legitimacy – they both challenge underlying cultural paradigms to allow for a righteous understanding of the CSA and its activities.

Moreover, entrepreneurs can promote cognitive legitimacy through popularisation. For example, several CSAs have voiced to take part in local events such as 'sustainability markets' or 'open farm days' to inform unaware audiences of their existence e.g. *[Interview I; Interview M; Interview W]*. Popularisation as a strategy to promote the comprehensibility of CSA is argued to cost a lot of energy – most respondents indicate that their own CSA demands all their time and effort. In addition, absence of an official Dutch CSA network is said to make it more difficult to engage in such activities. Many respondents applaud the quality of the Belgium CSA network – an overarching organisation for CSA farms that stimulates knowledge sharing and offers (practical) support to farmers. Finally, in line with aforementioned arguments on authenticity, many respondents emphasise that popularisation is difficult as *"no two CSAs are the same" [Interview I]*. As such, another downside of popularisation that has been mentioned during the interviews is the expectation that rules and protocols emerge that can never capture the breadth of CSA initiatives.

In conclusion, this chapter has described and analysed the legitimacy types that are sought by CSAs (Sq1) and what legitimation strategies are used to acquire these types of legitimacy (Sq2). As such, the creation of legitimacy in CSAs is explored. Main conclusions are drawn in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This thesis was designed to understand how grassroots initiatives safeguard access to resources thereby ensuring organisational survival. In particular, the following research question was addressed: *how does the creation of legitimacy occur in grassroots organisations?*

The literature on organisational survival highlights the importance of acquiring a legitimate status in order for resources to be mobilised and to garner support. This assertion was studied for the case of community supported agriculture (CSA) in the Netherlands. When examining legitimacy creation in CSAs, this thesis has addressed three specific legitimacy types – pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy – and studied three legitimation strategies to achieve these types – conform, select, manipulate. In addition, the decision to distinguish between CSA members and those outside the CSA network was made. This thesis shows that CSA entrepreneurs pursue different legitimation strategies to garner legitimacy from different audiences.

This thesis discovered that pragmatic legitimacy as conveyed by members is often socially grounded whilst external audiences have difficulties to understand such social benefits at first. In particular, the findings suggest that direct experience and involvement are essential to understand what the CSA delivers. Analysis shows that CSA members strive for benefits that exceed the scope of basic needs and profit and aim for higher level needs associated with social gains (see Maslow, 1943). CSAs go beyond being mere food producers. Immaterial benefits such as being part of a community and re-connecting with nature explain why people join a CSA to have access to fresh, local and organic produce. Hence, in the case of CSAs, pragmatic legitimacy is not simply assessed on material vs. profitability calculations and weakens the assumption that individual human behaviour is generally driven by self-interest and profit-maximizing behaviour (Suchman, 1995). As such, the member/consumer dichotomy, put forward in the results section, is an interesting finding which aids the understanding of the legitimation process in CSAs. In examining moral legitimacy the findings highlight the importance of collective outcomes which describes what difference the CSA makes besides individual gains. Members generally trust that CSA entrepreneurs 'do the right thing'. Characteristics that facilitate the build-up of trust have been categorised under a) approachable farms and farmers; b) open and transparent communication; and c) democracy and mutual respect. These characteristics encourage people to make value-judgements about the desirability of the CSA based on their own knowledge and experience. The findings show that CSA proposes 'new rules of the game' and changes cultural paradigms underlying food production that need to be understood to allow for a fair evaluation of the CSA's moral 'righteousness'. In particular, respondents addressed moral legitimacy from a normative perspective. Regulative moral legitimacy is deemed less relevant arguably because CSAs are niches that operate outside formal institutions thus innovate how they see fit. This 'niche' status also affects the cognitive legitimacy of CSAs – a type of legitimacy rarely granted to CSAs. In conclusion, legitimacy for CSA can be described as value-pragmatic *or* morally grounded pragmatic legitimacy. What has become clear is that normative moral legitimacy and pragmatic legitimacy moderate each other. As the result of positive feedback loops, appreciation of what the CSA pragmatically delivers coincides with the evaluator's moral understanding in ways that go beyond economic exchange. As a result, a 'moralisation' of food provisioning is witnessed.

CSA entrepreneurs predominantly work to garner legitimacy from their members. As such, organisational survival of CSAs is associated with social capital building – the creation of social networks, building on reciprocity, trust and collective gains. In contrast, external audiences remain at a distance and as they search for tangible deliverables, misunderstand CSAs and their societal value. These dynamics explain why CSAs garner legitimacy locally and become successful within their own locality, hitherto encounter difficulties in scale-up or triggering transitions. Subsequently, some evidence on 'motors' of legitimacy was discovered which needs to be explored in future studies. In general, the legitimation process varies with regard to the CSA's development stage. During initiation, CSA entrepreneurs need to position themselves locally and inform unaware audiences. They recruit members who've reportedly join for food-related deliverables. During the first years of operation, entrepreneurs focus strongly on internal legitimacy to attain long-term relationships with members. Appreciation of immaterial or social benefits becomes highly important and constitute the main source for pragmatic legitimacy. In particular, in this *initiation* phase new morals are created. Learning and demonstration of success are key in moving towards the *maturity* phase. As internal legitimacy is safeguarded through farm routines and the build-up of social capital, CSA entrepreneurs find

the time to invest in external legitimacy creation. Positive reputation and credibility of the CSA enables the understanding of the CSAs (immaterial) benefits and the acknowledgement of societal value by formal authorities. As such, it appears more important to invest in the community before external legitimacy and strategic positioning of the innovation is sought.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

This chapter critically evaluates aforementioned results. First of all, limitations are stressed (7.1) and henceforth avenues for future research are indicated. Subsequently, theoretical (7.2) and practical implications (7.3) are drawn.

7.1. Limitations and future research opportunities

This thesis was designed to acquire a solid understanding of legitimacy creation in Dutch CSAs. The response rate of this study was high – 31 CSAs were contacted for an interview and 25 positively responded (~80%). Moreover, this thesis included 27 out of the 35 identified CSA entrepreneurs (~78%). In addition, the respondents generally devoted much time to the interview (37 – 110 minutes excluding time to complete the questionnaire). In other words, the collected data is of high-quality and quantity which is essential to an explorative study. As such, it was possible to provide a rich description of a single case study.

7.1.1. Generalisability

A single-case design denotes that the applicability of results in other contexts (i.e. external validity) is inevitably limited. As a result of specific characteristics regarding CSA in the Netherlands, caution should be taken when generalising the findings. First of all, CSAs are alternative, socio-economic models in the *agro-food sector*. As such, unique features of this sector expectedly influence the legitimation process. For example, CSAs build continual relationships with weekly recurring meetings among farmer and members. Such an intensive and active relationship is not typical for community projects. In comparison, members in energy cooperatives have a more passive role and do not have to obtain their product(s) weekly. In addition, people arguably assign different meaning to food than to energy. Or as Fischler wrote: "food is central to our sense of identity" (Fischler 1988:275) – an assertion that has not been made for energy. Moreover, CSAs require a physical location, which positively increases visibility and accessibility of the initiative. In addition, this promotes regular interaction between members, making the farm a hub for social development. To this end, CSAs are community outputs that profoundly depend on their nearby local context – arguably more than other grassroots communities.

Secondly, this thesis has focused on CSA developments in the Netherlands. As such, *national characteristics* that could affect the legitimation process of CSAs need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings. For example, the affordability [16]; accessibility [17] and availability [18] of food are all high in the Netherlands. Moreover, produced and imported foodstuff need to comply with strict safety standards. As a result, this explains why necessity is not a prime motivation for CSA entrepreneurs to innovate as often is the case in developing countries. Rather, Dutch CSAs are predominantly driven by a desire to develop more sustainable lifestyles in a high-consumption context. These contextual features explain why pragmatic legitimacy in Dutch CSA initiatives describes the adherence to social benefits rather than basic needs such as access to safe food. This may additionally explain why the proportion of consumer-driven CSAs in the Netherlands is low – the urge for farmers find viable business models arguably ascends consumer needs for CSA. Interpreting the results, such consumer-driven CSAs are expected to garner legitimacy more quickly due to the presence of social capital from the start. Furthermore, the importance of immaterial and social value could also explain the large share of self-harvest CSAs in the Netherlands. Members of self-harvest CSAs engage in a demanding agreement as they have to harvest their own produce at a minimum of once a week. This CSA type is said to profoundly stimulate societal values that are deemed important such as 'community building' and 're-connection with nature'. For example, as many Dutch citizens live in cities, self-harvest allows them to (re)gain access to the farmland. Yet, another explanation for this phenomenon is the fact that distances in the Netherlands are short and one can easily reach the CSA farm by bicycle. Subsequently, in countries such as the U.S. or Canada where distances are larger, most CSA companies work with delivery

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[16] People can buy most or all of the healthy foods they want with the money they have available (MFC, n.d.)

[17] Sources for healthy food are easy to get at a manageable distance from home or work, using affordable and convenient personal or public transportation (MFC, n.d.)

[18] There are an adequate number of convenient food sources, offering a sufficient number and variety of healthy options in a community (MFC, n.d.)

boxes and self-harvest is rarely employed. As this thesis did not deviate among varieties in distribution models (i.e. self-harvest vs. delivery boxes) additional research is necessary to explore possible differences in legitimacy creation.

Moreover, varieties in national food cultures are also expected to influence the legitimation process. For example, Morgan and Sonnino (2007) compare Italy with the UK to understand the different approaches to public procurement. Whilst the Italian food culture has a strong emphasis on territoriality, the UK is characterised by "a mainstream food culture that has little or no connection to regional and local spaces" (Morgan and Sonnino, 2007:6). In this context, legitimacy creation in Dutch CSAs is also expected to be linked to cultural features such as local food appreciation or consumer expenditures on food. Finally, historic pathways of development in the Netherlands are also expected to influence the legitimation process. In essence, this thesis also adheres to the claim of Ornetzeder and Rohracher (2013) that grassroots activities depend on national-historic contexts. For example, their research shows that the deep-rooted presence of cooperatives in Switzerland strongly influenced the upsurge of grassroots car sharing initiatives. In a similar vein, the Dutch agro-food sector proudly embraces its position as the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products (Holland Trade, n.d.). As the Netherlands is particularly renowned for its innovative agro-food technology, social developments in the agro-food sector are arguably underappreciated.

Altogether, this thesis calls for contextual sensitivity when drawing conclusions. A comparative case-study of grassroots initiatives among various countries or sectors is desired to shed light on similarities and differences in legitimacy creation. However, as core characteristics of CSA are comparable to other grassroots sectors such as community energy, some deductions from this research can be expected. In any case, grassroots entrepreneurs need to convince various stakeholders to garner support. For example, Hense (2015) draws the case of 'care-cooperative Hoogeloon', a local network of citizens in the village of Hoogeloon who have organised care themselves. In particular, the cooperative wants to ensure that older people and people with reduced mobility can stay in Hoogeloon. The study shows how grassroots entrepreneurs actively had to convince local municipality officers; foundations and other villagers to secure resource mobilisation. In another example, de Vries and colleagues (2016) conclude that for civic energy cooperatives (CECs) amongst others, "community building activities provide a growing network of resources" (pp: 61), thereby emphasising the importance of members in organisational survival. Moreover, CSAs generally share the same values as grassroots responses in e.g. sustainable housing (Seyfang, 2010), care (Hassink et al., 2013) and energy (Martin and Upham, 2016). As can be deduced from literature, such grassroots initiatives endorse similar environmental, socio-economic and cultural morals as mentioned in the result chapter.

7.1.2. Reflection on methodological and theoretical choices

Some methodical limitations of this thesis can be pointed out. For example, the studied sample consisted of mainly active CSAs in the Netherlands. Only one cancelled initiative was studied. Subsequently, this research would have benefitted from a more varied perception on legitimacy given that cancelled CSAs provide better insight into hurdles in the legitimation process or 'de-legitimation'. However, given that CSAs generally leave no documented trace, it is arguably difficult to reach out to these entrepreneurs. In addition, this thesis has studied how legitimacy *creation* occurs and particularly how legitimacy is acquired through legitimation strategies employed by CSA entrepreneurs. Whilst evidence on legitimacy *maintaining* and *repairing* was found, such dynamics were not captured explicitly. Hence, future research should study these various challenges of legitimacy management separately i.e. gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) and as such grasp the entire life cycle of the legitimation process. Moreover, a desirable avenue for future research is to envision grassroots organisational survival (**Figure II**) as a variable that changes over time and that is affected by legitimacy type and strategies. In particular, this asks for longitudinal research that aims to understand which strategies or types lead to survival in various circumstances.

Regarding the theoretical foundations of this thesis, recommendations on *legitimacy type* can be given to future researchers. For example, regulative moral legitimacy appeared to be of limited use in understanding legitimacy creation in CSAs. Characteristically, niche entrepreneurs operate outside formal institutions and are not encumbered with established rules and regulations. Likewise, cognitive legitimacy was difficult to research as a result of CSA still being a niche in the Dutch food system. Compared to the other studied legitimacy types, cognitive legitimacy is largely determined objectively and according to the theory asks

whether or not an activity is understood and taken-for-granted or not. This thesis' interpretation of cognitive legitimacy shows overlap with normative moral legitimacy and thus resembles 'cultural legitimacy' as defined by Geels and Verhees (2011). These authors describe culture as "*a cognitive deep structure that constitutes people's perception of reality and provides the frames of meaning within which people act*" (Geels and Verhees, 2011:912). Consequently, cultural legitimacy is bestowed upon organisations that create linkages to such existing cultural frameworks. As such, how people interpret a certain situation affects the development of grassroots innovations. Future research should consider cultural legitimacy as a distinct legitimacy type.

In addition, two remarks on *legitimation strategies* should be made. During the course of the interviews, aversion against the 'manipulation' term was experienced at first instance. In general, manipulation is at odds with the CSAs ambition to be authentic as it suggests deceptive or misleading behaviour. However, after elaboration, respondents understood and answered questions on manipulation as preferred. Yet, formulations such as creating (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002) or informing (Cashore, 2002) would possibly better suit non-commercial contexts.

A second remark on legitimation strategies entails the sole focus on 'actions'. Dynamics that focus on an organisation's essence have been omitted in this study as entrepreneurs are more likely to influence organisational operations rather than their essence in a bid to acquire legitimacy. However, during the interviews some hints of personal[19] and structural[20] legitimacy were mentioned. For example, characteristics of the farm and farmer, such as likeability and familiarity, enhance legitimacy. In another example, several respondents argued that in essence, being a grassroots organisation garners legitimacy.

In the same sense, legitimacy creation is also depended on entrepreneurial competences. As became clear from discussion with experts, entrepreneurial skills (e.g. networking; taking initiatives and formulating strategies); communicative skills (e.g. pitching; education and framing), and practical skills (e.g. know-how to grow produce or manage diseases) should all be possessed by CSA entrepreneurs. To this end, future research on legitimacy creation in grassroots innovations need to incorporate such entrepreneurial characteristics.

7.2. Theoretical implications

Aforementioned findings have important implications for the theory in a number of areas. In the first place, this thesis has opened-up the concept of legitimacy by introducing the concept in the grassroots realm. Until now, empirical studies into the creation of legitimacy in grassroots organisations remain scarce. As this thesis has shown in unwrapping legitimacy creation, fundamental differences between grassroots innovations of civil society and market-based innovations of firms result in deviating legitimation processes. For example, in line with the characteristics put forward in our theoretical framework (**Table I**) interpretations of pragmatic legitimacy are expected to differ among market-based and grassroots organisations. Most commercial firms sell their products in "impersonal markets, where consumers' judgments of quality and value determine the level of rewards to each producer" (Suchman, 1995:580). In contrast, measures of performance in CSAs are morally prescribed such as contribution to food empowerment or healthcare. Moreover, as commercial income is replaced with mutual exchange and voluntary work, CSA entrepreneurs engage in legitimation activities that secure and sustain participation over time. In a more general sense, this member/consumer dichotomy is inevitable to understand the differences between the legitimation processes of market-opposed to grassroots innovations. For example, this thesis has shown that for CSAs, interest-based decisions of evaluators go beyond tangible offers and predominantly reveal through immaterial benefits. In addition, as outcomes are local and collective – rather than private and distant, CSAs are judged by what they accomplish for the community and how they transform local situations. As such, the findings suggest that CSA entrepreneurs need to legitimise their activities by framing them within central narratives in their locality. In addition, as people work in cooperatives or community groups, community-interest is argued to be of higher importance than mere self-interest. Finally, the innovation process also influences the legitimation process. For example, procedural moral legitimacy is deemed essential for CSAs. Due to an open

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[19] Personal legitimacy for example refers to the charisma of individual organisational leaders (Suchman, 1995)

[20] Structural legitimacy describe whether structural characteristics locate the organisation within a morally favoured taxonomic category or larger institutional ecology (Suchman, 1995).

and participatory innovation process, members can easily assess whether the organisation's activities are just. In most cases, this refers to the organisation being sustainable in terms of limited environmental impact whilst also creating social and economic benefits.

Moreover, this thesis has explored what legitimation activities grassroots actors employ to access resources, to stimulate member participation and to acquire governmental support. As such, this thesis has studied the creation of legitimacy as a multiple-tier process and shows that entrepreneurs pursue different legitimation strategies to garner legitimacy from different audiences.

In addition, this thesis has discovered some evidence on 'motors' of legitimacy which requires additional research. The idea of studying motors in innovation development is not new (Bergek et al., 2008; Suurs and Hekkert, 2009). Following Suurs (2009), "to understand a development process is to understand the logic of a sequence of events" (61). This thesis proposes that uncovering patterns of cumulative causations in legitimacy creation would further aid the understanding of organisational survival in grassroots innovation. In particular, future research should shed light on how the build-up of legitimacy may undergo an acceleration as the result of positive feedback loops (Jacobsson and Bergek, 2004; Suurs, 2009).

Subsequently, this thesis contributes to recent endeavours to understand innovative activities outside the traditional realms of the market economy. Previous studies have predominantly applied a multi-level perspective (MLP) to study the transformative power of grassroots innovations and their ability to outgrow their local niche status (e.g. Ornetzeder and Rohracher, 2013; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). In essence, these studies analyse *ex-post* how grassroots innovations bring about systemic changes in existing regimes. Hitherto, the patterns and conditions for grassroots organisational survival have far less been researched. Whilst organisational survival and transition are rarely linked in literature, their relationship is evident – a successful transition requires niches to survive and eventually break through. As such, the importance of organisational survival is emphasised yet remains understudied. This thesis has focused on the legitimation process as a view to understand organisational survival. In particular, the key role of grassroots entrepreneurs in the creation of legitimacy is emphasised. To this end, this thesis also contributes to literature on 'institutional work' – "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006:215). In this light, CSA entrepreneurs should be perceived as institutional entrepreneurs who transform existing institutions and introduce new social or cultural logics in society (Aldrich, 2011; Fuenfschilling and Truffer, 2016).

This research has shown that entrepreneurial efforts make a substantial difference in the extent to which their CSA is perceived as desirable, appropriate and understandable. For example, the findings shows that CSA entrepreneurs invest a large share of their time and effort to garner legitimacy from their members in order to survive. On the other hand, legitimacy bestowed by external audiences is limited due to misinterpretations regarding what the CSA delivers (pragmatic); what difference the CSA makes (moral); and how the CSA should be understood (cognitive). To this end, a focus on legitimacy allows for a better understanding on why grassroots innovations encounter difficulties in scale-up yet manage to become successful at their own locality. Therefore this thesis is a useful contribution to previous studies that aim to understand the role of grassroots innovations in transitions.

Throughout the course of this project, several emerging scientific themes were touched upon. In particular, this thesis supports the assertion that future researchers and policymakers should focus on understanding the 'breadth of innovation'. Multiple links were made to literature that endeavours to understand innovation democracy (e.g. Smith and Stirling, 2016), including the empowerment of local actors, participatory movement. Moreover, this thesis resonates with literature on the geography of transitions and sustainable place making (e.g. Baker and Mehmood, 2015; Truffer et al., 2015; Wolfram and Frantzeskaki, 2016) by concluding that CSAs are rooted in place-based needs and context. Subsequently, this thesis stresses the importance of place for managing the transformation of local socio-economic systems. For example, the findings indicate that the persistence of CSAs is strongly linked to local support and social network building.

Furthermore, by exploring an alternative business model based on novel producer-consumer relations, this thesis suits research and political attention on 'new economies' where new values and criteria of sustainability are proposed. Examples are the solidarity economy, the sharing economy and the circular economy (Frenken et al., 2017).

7.3. Practical implications

This thesis also has implications for practitioners in the emerging field. In the first place, this thesis has direct value for (future) CSA **entrepreneurs**. It highlights the importance of legitimacy creation and provides key lessons for entrepreneurs to acquire a legitimate status. In addition, this thesis has pointed out the differences between members and external audiences in legitimacy creation. As such, the findings should motivate CSA entrepreneurs to understand what various audiences deem important and how this influences the perception of their CSA.

Analysis of legitimation processes in CSAs shows many features and activities that garner legitimacy. These findings could also bear practical relevance for entrepreneurs other than CSA entrepreneurs. In essence, organisations search for ways to build durable customer relations to protect exchanges. In this context, CSAs are innovative as they e.g. involve members in the decision-making process; support bonding among members and the organisation; communicate genuinely about organisational routines and educate people on new 'rules of the game'. Consequently, this thesis exemplifies how to acquire legitimacy when rent-seeking behaviour is not the main motivation.

In addition to entrepreneurs, this thesis also stresses practical implications for **policymakers.** This thesis has studied how CSA entrepreneurs garner legitimacy from national and local policymakers. In particular, this thesis shows that the local government is often an important player for CSAs. The desirability of the CSA is often better understood within the local context and in similar a vein, CSAs generally transform local situations rather than national ones.

However, many respondents emphasise institutional misfits: as policy makers search for tangible deliverables; economic outputs and large-scale impact, the assessment of the CSA's desirability is off target. In particular, when compared to conventional food systems, CSAs are not the preferred option in terms of affordability and reliability – we cannot expect the whole food system to be set up this way. Rather, policy makers should make effort to understand the multi-dimensional impact of CSAs to capture real potential of these initiatives. For example, many CSAs work with volunteers to offer them a safe and healthy place to get better; stimulate social cohesion in neighbourhoods or inspire participants to rethink their consumption lifestyle in general. Subsequently, policy makers should consider how best to appreciate and reimburse CSA entrepreneurs. The challenge lies in adequately measuring such impacts as they are diffuse; distributed and not directly noticeable. Moreover, policymakers need to justify public spending and therefore, deliverables and impact should be clear. In this context, policymakers formulate targets that are "SMART" i.e. *s*pecific, *m*easurable, *a*cceptable, *and realistic* within a certain *t*ime period. In order to create a supportive atmosphere for grassroots innovations, policymakers should move beyond conventional input-output measurement and embrace a process-approach. For example, several respondents complain about the specificity of conditions upon which the initiatives is being assessed e.g. when applying for a grant. Likewise, CSA entrepreneurs are discontent with the fact that standards and regulations are generally imposed by external audiences rather than being responsive to the CSA's developments. Moreover, the interviews show that CSA entrepreneurs regularly run against institutional barriers. Such impediments are currently not documented or tracked, leaving opportunities for institutional learning. For example, policy makers should develop policy instruments that allow grassroots to diffuse lessons learnt (e.g. network activities).

Another drawn conclusion is that CSAs call for a close evaluation to adequately understand what they deliver and what impact they make. Much can still be learned from CSAs including what possible future food provisioning systems might look like and which values are deemed important. As such, this thesis resonates with previous research that plea for innovation democracy – citizens should not just be involved but should be driving the process (e.g. Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Smith and Stirling, 2016).

Consequently, for grassroots innovations such as CSA to flourish, national and local governments should experiment with their role in the innovation process and their relation with society. For example, a recent essay on "government participation in an energetic society" distinguishes four governmental roles (**Figure VI**) (van der Steen et al., 2015). A classic government is a *lawful government* – the relationship with society is vertical and primarily shaped through safeguarding rights and obligations. This role is succeeded by the promotion of a *performing government* – the belief in market forces takes precedence. In accordance, "political ambitions translate as much as possible into output-oriented and measurable objectives […] in implementation the focus is on the purposefulness and effectiveness of interventions" (van der Steen et al.,

2015:21). More recently, the *networking government* has come to the fore. A key tenet of this perspective is that the government does not operate in isolation, but works together with other parties in a more horizontal relationship (e.g. through public-private partnerships (PPPs)) (e.g. Klijn and Teisman, 2013). In this perspective, citizens are involved and participate within frames set by governments (van der Schot, 2016). Finally, a *participatory government* discards such frames and decisions are made in tune with what happens in society. Whilst all roles are necessary, this latter type is particularly inevitable to mobilise creativity in society and nourish grassroots responses to sustainability challenges. Citizens increasingly determine public value and governments should try to align itself with bottom-up initiatives (van der Schot, 2016; van der Steen et al., 2015). As such, a participatory government facilitates; is approachable and modest; and creates spaces for experimentation.

Performance

Performing government	Networking government
Lawful government	Participatory government

Government **Society**

Precondition
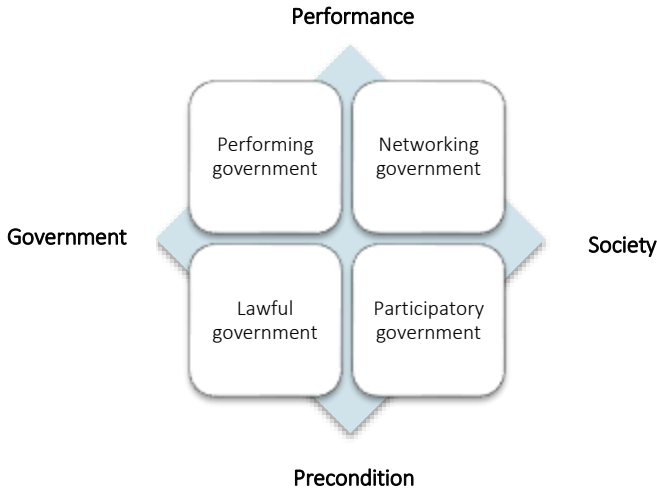
Figure VI – Four perspectives on governmental roles (NSOB model)
Based on van der Schot, 2016 and van der Steen, 2015.

In conclusion, this thesis advices policymakers to be more responsive towards societal dynamics and embrace participatory policy-making. Governments need to find ways to acknowledge the CSA's (immaterial) value and discover institutional barriers to improve the conditions for such grassroots initiatives to emerge, sustain and provide benefits to society. Confronted with bottom-up solutions for sustainability, governments should learn from grassroots initiatives as they address symptoms of deeper structural problems in production and consumption and present ways to reform them.

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APPENDIX I – CSA IN THE NETHERLANDS

Table IV – Dutch CSA organisations April 2017

#	Naam	Plaats	Contact	
	Started this year			
1	De **G**roentenakker	Odijk	info@groentenakker.nl	
2	De **M**oestuin	Utrecht	info@moestuinutrecht.nl	*
3	**N**oordoogst	Amsterdam		*
4	De **S**tadsgroenteboer	Amsterdam	wout@stadsgroenteboer.nl	**
	A			
5	De **A**ckerdijkse Tuinderij	Delft	info@deackerdijksetuinderij.nl	
6	**A**melis' Hof	Bunnik	info@amelishof.nl	*
7	Tuinderij de **A**rk	Haarlem	info@tuinderijdeark.nl	*
	B			
8	De **B**ioakker	Zutphen	jan@bioakker.nl	
9	De **B**irkenhof	Soest	grytdejong@telfort.nl	*
10	**B**oer Sil	Dwingeloo	Sil.oostendorp@gmail.com	*
11	**B**uitenleeft	Delft	info@buitenleeft.nl	*
	C			
12	**C**SA Land in Zicht	Hilversum	info@csa-landinzicht.nl	*
	D			
	E			
13	**E**emstadboerderij	Amersfoort	info@eemstadboerderij.nl	*
	G			
14	Tuinderij de **G**roenteboer	Kamerik	info@tuinderijdegroenteboer.nl	*
	H			
15	Tuinen van **H**artstocht	Abcoude	info@tuinenvanhartstocht.nl	*
16	**H**erenboeren Wilhelminapark	Best		*
17	**H**orsterhof	Duiven	info@horsterhof.nl	
	I			
18	**I**n het volle leven	Vortum-Mullem	inhetvolleleven@hetnet.nl	*
	J			
	K			
19	Biologische tuin **K**ansrijk	Groenekan	info@tuinkansrijk.nl	*
20	De **K**raanvogel	Esbeek	info@boerderijdekraanvogel.nl	*
	L			
21	**L**ocotuinen	Maastricht	info@locotuinen.nl	*
	M			
22	De **M**arsen	Landsmeer	mail@demarsen.org	
	N			
23	De **N**ieuwe Akker	Schalkhaar	info@nieuweakker.nl	
24 25 26	Stichting de **N**ieuwe Akker 3 tuinen *Moestuin Leyduin* *Stadstuinderij WTG* *Kweektuinkas*	Haarlem	info@denieuweakker.nl	*
27	De **N**ieuwe Ronde	Wageningen	info@denieuweronde.nl	*
	O			
28	De **O**osterwaarde	Diepenveen	info@oosterwaarde.nl	*
	P			
29	De **P**roeftuin	Delft	groen@groenkracht.nl	
30	't **P**roefveld	Haren	info@zelfoogsttuin.nl	*
	R			
	S			
	T			
	U			
31	**U**s Hof	Sibrandabuorren	michel@ushof.nl ; bregje@ushof.nl	*
	V			

32	Tuinderij de **V**eldhof	Gorssel	info@tuinderijdeveldhof.nl	
33	Tuinderij de **V**oedselketen	Oirschot	tuinderij@devoedselketen.nl	
34	Tuinderij de **V**olle grond	Bunnik	info@devollegrond.nl	*
35	De **V**rije akker	Grubbenvorst	info@devrijeakker.nl	**
		W		
36	Tuinderij 't **W**ild	Rosmalen	info@twild.nl	*
		X		
		Y		
		Z		
37	Het **Z**oete land	Leiden	info@hetzoeteland.nl	*

* Studied in this thesis (interview + questionnaire)
** Studied in thesis (questionnaire only)

APPENDIX II – QUESTIONNAIRE

CSA OPRICHTER

Uw naam: Uw leeftijd:
Man/vrouw

Hoogst genoten opleidingsniveau:
- ☐ Middelbare school
- ☐ MBO
- ☐ HBO
- ☐ Universiteit BA
- ☐ Universiteit MSc
- ☐ Anders, namelijk:

Naam van uw opleiding(en):

Beroep:
Aantal jaren werkzaam in dit beroep:

UW CSA

Naam CSA:
Locatie CSA [naam stad/dorp, provincie]:

Startjaar:
Totaal aantal hectares land:

Bent u eigenaar van het land? *Ja/Nee*
Indien *nee*, wie wel:

Hoe is uw CSA georganiseerd ? (Korte uitleg: stichting, vereniging, leden, donateurs, etc).

CSA LEDEN

Hoeveel leden had uw CSA in het begin?   Hoeveel leden heeft uw CSA nu?
Wat is het maximaal aantal leden dat uw CSA aan kan?

Wie zijn er werkzaam op de CSA? [meerdere antwoorden mogelijk]
Wilt u de (geschatte) aantallen aangeven.
- ☐ *Zelf*
- ☐ *Tuinder*
- ☐ *Leden*
- ☐ *Vrijwilligers*
- ☐ *Betaalde krachten*
- ☐ *Stagiaires*
- ☐ *Anders, namelijk:*

INKOMSTEN CSA:

Wat verdient u persoonlijk aan uw CSA [gemiddeld bruto per jaar]:

Heeft u nog off-farm werk? *Nee/ja*

Indien ja, wat:

Wat voor inkomsten heeft de CSA? [meerdere antwoorden mogelijk]
- ☐ Leden
- ☐ Subsidies
- ☐ Verkoop producten
- ☐ Anders, namelijk:

Wat kost een pakket / abonnement?

DISTRIBUTIE

Hoe vaak krijgen de leden producten?

Op welke manier krijgen de leden producten? [meerdere antwoorden mogelijk]
- ☐ Boxen / tassen
- ☐ Zelfplukmomenten
- ☐ Anders, namelijk:

Waar verkrijgen de leden hun producten? (op de tuin, in winkels etc.)

PRODUCTEN EN DIENSTEN CSA:

Welk type product/producten heeft u op uw CSA? [meerdere antwoorden mogelijk]
Wilt u een aantal voorbeelden noemen
- ☐ Groenten, namelijk:
- ☐ Fruit, namelijk
- ☐ Kruiden, namelijk:
- ☐ Dieren, namelijk:
- ☐ Overig, namelijk:

Welk type productie methode hanteert u?
- ☐ Conventionele landbouw
- ☐ Biologische landbouw
- ☐ Biodynamische landbouw
- ☐ Anders, namelijk:

Organiseert uw CSA evenementen/activiteiten voor uw leden? *Ja/nee*
Organiseert uw CSA evenementen/activiteiten voor niet- leden? *Ja/nee*

Indien *ja*:
Hoe vaak voor leden: Hoe vaak voor niet-leden:

Kunt u enkele voorbeelden van dergelijke evenementen / activiteiten benoemen:

OPEN VRAGEN:

Waarom heeft u de CSA opgericht?

Wat is het beoogde doel van uw CSA?

APPENDIX III – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

LEGITIMITEIT CSA

1. Welke aspecten van uw CSA / CSA in het algemeen maken het makkelijk om legitimiteit te verkrijgen (en te behouden)?
   - o Waarom deze aspecten?

2. Welke aspecten van uw CSA / CSA in het algemeen maken het moeilijk om legitimiteit te verkrijgen (en te behouden)?
   - o Waarom deze aspecten?

3. Hoe zorgt u er voor dat u de benodigde middelen krijgt voor uw CSA? [leden; financiële ondersteuning; steun van overheden etc.]
   - o Zijn er specifieke zaken waarvan u denkt dat ze invloed hebben op het verkrijgen van deze middelen?
     - ▪ Welke
     - ▪ Waarom juist deze?

4. Kunt u voor de verschillende deelnemers van uw CSA [vrijwilligers, leden, gemeente etc.] uitleggen waarom zij uw CSA als legitiem zien?

TYPE LEGITIMITEIT & LEGITIMACY STRATEGIES

Pragmatic:
"Pragmatic legitimacy" wordt verkregen wanneer een organisatie of innovatie, in dit geval de CSA, een directe meerwaarde heeft voor bepaalde partijen.

5. Welke partijen / wie zijn direct gebaat bij uw CSA? [overheden, leden, etc.]
   - o Op welke manier zijn deze partijen gebaat?

6. Wat kan uw CSA doen voor deze partijen? (EXCHANGE)
   - o Wat krijgen partijen terug van uw CSA?

7. In hoeverre probeert uw CSA aan te sluiten bij de wensen en behoeften van deze partijen? (INFLUENCE)
   - o Hebben partijen de mogelijkheid om hun wensen en behoeften aan te geven?
   - o Op welke manier?

Legitimiteit strategieën
8. Onderneemt u activiteiten om dit type legitimiteit te bevorderen?
   - o Welke?
   - o Waarom juist op deze manier?

9. Past u zich aan, aan de directe vraag van betrokken partijen? (CONFORM)
   - o Waarom wel of niet?
   - o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
   - o Op welke manier doet u dit?

10. Heeft u bewust een omgeving (locatie, doelgroep etc.) gekozen die de voordelen van uw CSA inziet? (SELECT)
    - o Waarom wel of niet?
    - o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    - o Op welke manier doet u dit?

11. Beïnvloedt/overtuigt u betrokken partijen van de voordelen van uw CSA (MANIPULATE)
    o Waarom wel of niet?
    o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    o Op welke manier doet u dit?

Moral

"Moral legitimacy" wordt verkregen wanneer men vindt dat de organisatie of innovatie, in dit geval de CSA, het juiste doet op <u>regulatief</u> en/of <u>normatief</u> vlak. Regulatief verwijst naar harde regels, zoals wetten en regelgeving. Normatief verwijst naar normen en waarden, manier van doen etc.

12. In hoeverre zorgt u ervoor dat de uitkomsten van uw CSA wenselijk zijn? (CONSEQUENTIAL)
    o Regulatief
      ▪ Kunt u voorbeelden noemen
      ▪ Op welke manier werken ze naar een wenselijke uitkomst?
    o Normatief
      ▪ Kunt u voorbeelden noemen
      ▪ Op welke manier werken ze naar een wenselijke uitkomst?

13. In hoeverre zorgt u er voor procedures op uw CSA wenselijk zijn? (PROCEDURAL)
    o Regulatief
      ▪ Kunt u voorbeelden noemen
      ▪ Op welke manier werken ze naar een wenselijke uitkomst?
    o Normatief
      ▪ Kunt u voorbeelden noemen
      ▪ Op welke manier werken ze naar een wenselijke uitkomst?

Legitimiteit strategieën

14. Onderneemt u activiteiten om dit type legitimiteit te bevorderen?
    o Welke
    o Waarom juist op deze manier?

15. Past u zich aan, aan bestaande normen, waarden en altruïstische ideeën? (CONFORM)
    o Waarom wel of niet?
    o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    o Op welke manier doet u dit?

16. Past u zich aan bestaande wetten en regelgeving? (CONFORM)
    o Waarom wel of niet?
    o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    o Op welke manier doet u dit?

17. Heeft u uw normatief doel van uw CSA zo gekozen dat het een specifieke groep mensen aan spreekt? (SELECT)
    o Waarom wel of niet?
    o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    o Op welke manier doet u dit?

18. Heeft u bepaalde keuzes gemaakt waardoor u onder specifieke regelgeving en wetten valt? (SELECT)
    o Waarom wel of niet?
    o In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
    o Op welke manier doet u dit?

19. Overtuigt u partijen van een bepaald moraal waarin CSA gunstig is (MANIPULATE)
    o Waarom wel of niet?

- o   In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
- o   Op welke manier doet u dit?

20. Beïnvloedt u huidige wet en regelgeving? (MANIPULATE)
- o   Waarom wel of niet?
- o   In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
- o   Op welke manier doet u dit?

Cognitive

"Cognitive legitimacy" wordt verkregen als de organisatie of innovatie, in dit geval de CSA en haar activiteiten begrepen wordt. Dit hangt ook af van hoe er gecommuniceerd wordt en welke definities en betekenissen er gekozen worden.

21. In hoeverre is CSA begrepen? (COMPREHENSIBILITY)
- o   Door wie?
- o   Onderneemt u activiteiten om hier aan bij te dragen?
  - ▪   Zo ja, welke?

22. In hoeverre wordt CSA gezien als onvermijdelijk?
- o   Voor wie?
- o   Onderneemt u activiteiten om hier aan bij te dragen?
  - ▪   Zo ja, welke?

Legitimiteit strategieën

23. Onderneemt u activiteiten om dit type legitimiteit te bevorderen?
- o   Welke
- o   Waarom juist op deze manier?

24. Sluit u uw CSA en activiteiten aan bij bestaande definities en betekenissen (CONFORM)
- o   Waarom wel of niet?
- o   In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
- o   Op welke manier doet u dit?

25. Heeft u bewust bepaalde betekenissen geselecteerd waarmee u uw CSA en activiteiten mee stroomlijnt? Bijvoorbeeld certificatie, of woordkeuze (SELECT)
- o   Waarom wel of niet?
- o   In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
- o   Op welke manier doet u dit?

26. In hoeverre zorg u ervoor dat CSA meer bekend en standaard wordt? (MANIPULATE)
- o   Waarom wel of niet?
- o   In dien ja, welke? En waarom juist deze?
- o   Op welke manier doet u dit?

OVERIG

27. Zijn er nog zaken die u kwijt wilt?
28. Heeft u toevallig nog voorbeelden van andere CSAs in Nederland voor een interview?

Bedankt voor uw tijd. Uw antwoorden zijn erg nuttig voor mijn thesis.

APPENDIX IV – EVENTS & ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Events

Table V – Attended events

#	Date	Location	Organised by:	Title	More information
1	22-06-2016	Mediamatic Amsterdam	Innovatie Agro & Natuur (ministerie van EZ), Courage, SIGN en STIRR	Van idee naar praktijk – cross-sectorale vernieuwingen in Agro & Natuur	http://www.greendeals.nl/agenda/van-idee-naar-praktijk-cross-sectorale-vernieuwingen-in-agro-natuur/
2	15-09-2016	Urban farm Den Haag	Schaal van Kampen, Provincie Zuid-Holland en Regiebureau POP	Workshop korte voedsel afzetketens in Zuid-Holland	http://www.deschaalvankampen.nl/korte-ketens-in-zuid-holland/
3	22-09-2016	Utrecht University International Campus, Utrecht	Prof.dr. Jeroen de Jong (Utrecht University School of Economics, U.S.E.), Dr. Wouter Boon (Geosciences / Innovation Studies)	Seminar: Free Innovation - Een nieuw paradigm voor onderzoek, beleid en praktijk	https://www.uu.nl/agenda/seminar-free-innovation-een-nieuw-paradigm-voor-onderzoek-beleid-en-praktijk
4	13-10-2016	Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht	Dr. Agni Kalfagianni	Dr. Agni Kalfagianni	https://www.uu.nl/en/events/short-food-supply-chains-as-an-antidote-to-crisis
5	22-11-2016	HAS, Den Bosch	Netwerk Natuurinclusieve landbouw	Netwerkdag natuurinclusieve landbouw	http://www.natuurinclusievelandbouw.nl/#!/intro
6	26-01-2017	Het Hof van Wageningen, Wageningen	WUR, prof.dr. Jan-Douwe van der Ploeg	The future of Peasant Studies	https://ruralsociologywageningen.nl/2016/12/08/the-future-of-peasant-studies-seminar-and-farewell-address-by-jan-douwe-van-der-ploeg/
7	04-04-2017	RVO Utrecht	RVO / Duurzaam Door	Lucas Simons: systeemverandering en transitie en de rol van de overheid / "changing the food game"	Internal event

Dutch Books

Hense, E.H., van den Berg, L. & van Boxtel, M. (Ed.). (2017). Volle oogst. Nieuwe waarden en voedselnetwerken. Utrecht: Jan van Arke

Stilma, E (2016). *Polyculturen in de Kas – ervaringen van pioniers. Den Haag.* Stichting Innovatie Glastuinbouw Nederland en Ministerie van Economische zaken.

Documentaries

The Real Dirt on farmer John (2007). Dir. Taggart Siegel. Perf. John Peterson. CAVU pictures. Documentary

Future Farmers in the Spotlight (2014). Joris van der Kamp & Juliane Haufe. Online documentary series. Retrieved online: https://future-farmers.net/from-the-field/ . Accessed on: 03-06-2016