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**“Power in the Short Food Supply Chain:
An exploration of Community Supported Agriculture’s
Producer Empowerment Capacity”**

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Abstract

The dominance of the current status quo in the global food landscape, which is characterized by intensive and industrialized agricultural systems and long food supply chains, functions as a source of severe environmental and socioeconomic issues. Therefore, a transition of the global food system is needed. In order for this to happen, the antipode of this aforementioned regime comprised by alternative food networks, with its most promising representative category being short food supply chains (SFSCs), needs to engage in a power struggle with the first. Nevertheless, the literature on SFSCs lacks depth when it comes to power, as the systematic use of power theory in the field is yet to be adequately explored. Given the above, this research focused on applying power theory to explore one of the most alternative SFSCs type; community supported agriculture (CSA). Specifically, the research aimed to identify the ways in which CSA is able to empower producers in solidifying their transition from the conventional food system (CFS), assuming this was their goal. To do so, a dedicated CSA empowerment framework was devised based greatly on the work of Avelino and Rotmans (2009). The framework conceptualized empowerment, as the ability to mobilize resources, thus exercising power, in a transformative way, meaning a way which challenges the status quo described above. Depending on the kind of resource mobilized an actor can exercise one of the four power types: Ideological, Physical, Political and Economic. The empowerment framework was contextualized in the CSA and different scenarios regarding what can be deemed as transformative exercise for each of the four power types were devised. This contextualized empowerment framework was then applied to 9 CSA farms in the Netherlands, which functioned as the case studies for this research. After the collection of data through semi-structured interviews and desk research, a discourse analysis took place. The results of this analysis were used to answer the main questions of this research, while in addition the farms were evaluated based on their transformative potential, meaning their possible impact to a transition of the food system. The research concluded that despite the significant empowering pathways CSA can provide producers with, including visibility, political influence and independence, the structural obstacles posed by the dominance of the current status quo often prohibit their use, indicating that empowerment needs to be earned through an unfair struggle, in which CSA can only be an enabling tool but not the solution.

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To Christos and Lina, who I always curry with me.

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1. Introduction

Though unnoticed by most, the world is shaped by constant battles aiming to establish the dominance of a given status quo. Willingly or not, through reoccurring frivolous daily choices, we all take sides in this aforementioned race for dominance between the various configurations of actors, structures and practices which define each economic sector. It is therefore important to ask oneself; which side are you on?

Food, which is the focus of the paper at hand, is no exception to these battles and as any other sector this too is characterized by a specific configuration which “dominates the societal system and defends the status quo”, or in other words a regime (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 545). This when it comes to food, presents itself in the form of a configuration of actors, structures and practices which supports and promotes a type of agriculture which is heavily mechanized and input driven while also being characterized by long global networks of distribution (Kalfagianni & Skordili, 2018). The Empire, as van der Ploeg (2012) calls the aforementioned regime, has succeeded through its various parts, namely large agri-food businesses, retailers, legislation and academic knowledge, to dominate the global landscape of food, thus forming what can be called the conventional food system (CFS) (Maye, Kneafsey, & Holloway, 2007).

Although the dominance of a regime is not negative by default, the “reign” of the Empire has resulted in a modern-day agrarian crisis. Product of the interaction between the ongoing industrialization of agriculture, the global financialization of food products as well as the hegemonic type of power concentration by certain actors in the food sector (Van der Ploeg, 2010), the said crisis is a source of severely adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts. On the basis of environmental sustainability, food provision is characterized as the human activity with the single largest impact (Smil, 2000). Modern agriculture is a key driver for the majority of the current environmental concerns, including biodiversity loss, water, air and soil pollution. Specifically concerning climate change, agriculture alone is credited with a contribution to global greenhouse gases which is up to 11% (Campbell et al., 2017).

In regards to the socioeconomic impacts of the Empire’s dominance, the high concentration of power amongst only a handful of actors (large processing, trading and retailing businesses) has created a highly uneven playing field in the food sector today, resulting in a monopolistic influence of these “big players” over any other actor in the supply chain (McMichael, 2009). In addition, the link between production and consumption has been severely weakened, both geographically and cognitively, since the point of production can now be anywhere in the world (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003). In this way, food supply chains increased in length, leaving producers, who traditionally capture the smallest percentage of the total added value of their products, with an even lower income (Kizos & Vakoufari, 2011; Kneafsey, Venn, Schmutz, & Balázs, 2013). Producers in the CFS are also characterized by the lowest level of power in the sense of decision making and bargaining ability in comparison to other supply chain members, which as a result causes their living to be highly uncertain since they are often considered “expendable” (Carbone, 2017, 2018). Finally, apart from the aforementioned rural development associated social impacts, the dominance of the given regime has caused, through the financialization of the food system, a price volatility of products greatly compromising food security, while the diet promoted by the CFS is linked with the obesity epidemic the world faces today (Clapp, 2014; Sage, 2013).

Given the above, there is a clear indication regarding the need for a transition in the current food system. Whether this means a significant change in the current regime or even its dethroning, such a transition can only be product of a power struggle between the regime and other configurations “in which non-conformism and innovation can develop”,

named niches (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 545). Despite the Empire's effort for total dominance over the food sector, various such niches pose a noteworthy resistance through often bottom-up and highly creative methods, the totality of which forms the antipode of the Empire, known as the Peasantry (van der Ploeg, 2012). The clash between Empire and Peasantry for dominance is a key thematic for this research, whose focus lies in one of the most promising movements of the latter; short food supply chains (SFSCs) (Fabbrizzi, Menghini, & Marinelli, 2014).

Opposed to the anonymous and long food supply chains of the CFS, SFSCs are characterized by an effort to shorten the supply chain (Renting et al., 2003). Either by shortening of the physical distance between production and consumption, like in farmers' markets (Rucabado-Palomar & Cuéllar-Padilla, 2018), minimizing the intermediaries in the supply chain, allowing the producers to capture the complete added value of their products (Kneafsey et al., 2013), or even shortening of the cognitive distance between producers and consumer through information, the goal of SFSCs is to mend the weak link between production and consumption caused by the CFS (Renting et al., 2003). From farmers' markets and box schemes to geographical indications and quality labels, SFSCs is a term that gathers many different types of food provision initiatives.

SFSCs are often credited in the literature with the capability of fostering rural development, specifically through being an empowerment tool for producers, which is why they serve as an epicenter for this research (Kneafsey et al., 2013; Renting et al., 2003; Rucabado-Palomar & Cuéllar-Padilla, 2018; Van Der Ploeg et al., 2000). However, contrary to this prescribed identity as an empowerment tool, the same literature neglects power as a theoretical lens, often solely focusing on the ability of SFSCs to re-spatialize and re-socialize consumption and production through the transfer of value laden information between producers and consumers. When it comes to power, the literature seems to be lacking depth, as it is limited to the importance of empowerment as a basis for a SFSC definition (Rucabado-Palomar & Cuéllar-Padilla, 2018); or discusses the bargaining power of producers in various supply chains with studies similar to Carbone's (2018). Therefore, the literature concerning SFSCs presents a significant knowledge gap concerning the notion of power. What is lacking, is a systematic approach to power, using dedicated power frameworks in order to explore the assumed producer's empowerment capacity, which is of vital importance if SFSCs are to be considered an adequate "opponent" for the Empire and the CFS.

Another shortcoming of SFSC research is that of generalization of results from case studies on heterogenous SFSCs initiatives, like farmers' markets or geographical indications, to conclusions regarding SFSCs in total. The term SFSCs, as operationalized by the mainstream body of literature on the field, groups together almost any initiative of a supply chain, which differentiates from the average conventional one. This is due to the highly inclusive nature of the currently most used definition of SFSCs, which regards them as supply chains that include "products embedded with information...which enables the consumer to confidently make connections and associations with the place/space of production, and, potentially, the values of the people involved and the production methods employed" (Marsden, Banks, & Bristow, 2000, p. 425). Although there is nothing wrong with this definition, as it aims to map all the initiatives that could belong to the SFSCs movement, it is important that research it done to all different SFSCs initiatives categories separately, before any generalization is possible. The category chosen here is community supported agriculture (CSA).

Community supported agriculture or CSA, refers to a unique type of direct connection between food producers and consumers in a spirit of solidarity (Cone & Myhre, 2000). Basically, consumers become members of a farm by paying a subscription fee in the beginning of each season and in return receive weekly shares of the harvest for that season

(Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). In this way, producers and consumers share risks as the quality and quantity of the share that consumers receive depends on whether the farm had a good year or not. Even in the case of a bad year, the producer will still receive a fair wage, which is groundbreaking considering that in any either case all the risk would lie with the producer (Paul, 2019).

This paper aims to explore the supposed capacity of CSA concerning producers' empowerment by constructing and applying a dedicated empowerment framework on different CSA cases in the Netherlands. Here it is important to note that for this research, empowerment refers to the enablement of producers to solidify their transition away from the CFS, meaning not returning or fleeing to conventional market channels, which is vital if SFSCs are to ever be considered as an adequate response of the Peasantry against the Empire.

Below, the main research question of this paper and its sub-questions are presented.

“In which ways is CSA able to empower producers to solidify their transition away from the CFS?”

- a) How does the CSA initiative (in each case) function, what are its goals and what is its strategy?
- b) What are the types of power which producers exercise through their CSA initiative and how are these exercised?
- c) How can these different types of power be useful for producers in their effort to solidify their transition away from the CFS?

2. Theoretical Context

2.1 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Japan 1974; a group of housewives concerned with the health consequences of agrochemicals being widely used in what was then the recently modernized agricultural sector, join forces with farmers to create the first *Teikei* projects, forerunners to modern day CSA (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015; Henderson, 2010). Almost half a century later, these concerns remain as relevant as ever, something indicated by the many different CSA initiatives sprouting all over the world (Pole & Kumar, 2015). But what is CSA exactly?

As part of the local food movement, CSA aims to connect food producers and consumers directly (Cone & Myhre, 2000). However, unlike farmers' markets or other local food initiatives, here producers and consumers form a partnership. What this means is that consumers subscribe to a certain CSA farm by paying a fee or "membership" in the beginning of each season (Brown & Miller, 2008). The amount of this fee is decided beforehand by the farmers, who take into account the relevant and expected costs for the year, including all the necessary farming inputs as well as a decent wage for themselves (Cone & Kakaliouras, 1995). In return, consumers get a weekly share of the farm's harvest, containing local, seasonal and usually organic goods which are produced under complete transparency (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019). This way producers possess a significant financial capital in advance, allowing them to plan ahead and make necessary investments, while members provide them with a fixed demand. Thus, the high risks usually involved in the profession of farming (in the market channels of the CFS) are minimized (Paul, 2019).

What is most interesting when it comes to CSA, especially in the context of this research, is the aforementioned partnership between producer and consumer through which, risks are shared between the two parties. While in the CFS producers are expected to curry these risks alone, in CSA consumers are the ones who are bearing the risks (Bloemmen, Bobulescu, Le, & Vitari, 2015). In the case of a bad season, producers will have a secure income from the membership payments, while the consumer-member will receive a poor return for his/her investment, meaning the purchase of their CSA membership for that season. This way consumers pay the "real price" of food and a special bond is shared between the two parties through the community that is created (Cone & Myhre, 2000).

This bond is not only symbolic though, since along with food safety and the economic viability of small farms, the element of a vibrant community is usually one of the main goals of such initiatives (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019). Therefore, apart from their potential impact concerning the food sector, such initiatives should be credited with achievements which are related to the communities they create or are embedded in. These can range from organizing educational events around food, sustainability or health to providing food for low-income families and fundraising for local issues (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). In addition, CSA members often express experiencing a change in their lifestyle and worldview due to their participation. Most of them limit significantly the intake of processed food while including more and more fruits and vegetables in their diets (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). At the same time, participating in their CSA community has sparked a change in some, transforming them from passive disconnected consumers to sensible citizens, understanding that their choices have an impact on society and on the planet (Brown & Miller, 2008)

The above put an effort to describe what the archetype of CSA looks like. Nevertheless, CSA has many faces as different initiatives, driven by their own philosophy and goals, conceptualize the concept in various ways, thus creating differentiated business

plans (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). Every initiative differentiates its strategy regarding the involvement of their members (active or passive participation of the members in the agricultural activities), the way the “weekly shares” reach the consumers (self-harvest, pick-up food basket from the farm or delivery), the type of products involved (only vegetables or a wide variety of products including milk, eggs, honey and meat) and the communication techniques (newsletters, social media or scheduled member meetings) (Cone & Kakaliouras, 1995; Cone & Myhre, 2000; Paul, 2019).

All these different faces, make up the economic and political movement that is CSA (Bloemmen et al., 2015). A movement which reinvents the role of the farmer, turning him/her from a distant and anonymous member of long and untrustworthy supply chains of the CFS, to an important and trusted link of households to their food. In other words, CSA is proposing a future where families will have a “family farmer whom they can trust just as they once had a family doctor” (Cone & Myhre, 2000, p. 188).

This reinvention of the relationship between consumer and producer as well as of the producers’ role in the food system in general, is exactly why CSA presents a very interesting case for a research focusing on the empowerment of producers as this one. Especially the fact that CSA strongly challenges the status quo in the food sector, presents a fit for exploring the way such initiative could empower producers towards a transition away from the CFS.

2.1.1 Critiques on CSA

Advocates of CSA often discuss the above mentioned benefits, especially highlighting the movement’s significant transformative potential for the food sector (Paul, 2019). The literature however, also recognizes certain weak points that function as sources of criticism when it comes to CSA. These, mainly revolve around the following two issues; member inclusiveness and farmers’ livelihood.

Concerning the first, various authors through research on the field agree on the fact that CSA members belong to a certain demographic group, they are mostly white, rich and highly educated (Cone & Kakaliouras, 1995; Cone & Myhre, 2000; MacMillan Uribe, Winham, & Wharton, 2012; Russell & Zepeda, 2008; Sharp, Imerman, & Peters, 2002). This does not simply state a preference of such groups towards CSA initiatives, but rather indicates that certain features of such initiatives exclude in one way or another different social groups. For instance, most farms collect the necessary membership in the beginning of the season, usually in the form of an one-time payment (Waltz, 2010). Even if long term its economically beneficial, low-income consumers may not be able or willing to simply give away such a significant percentage of their salary. Apart from not being able to afford to become a member, many may ignore the existence of CSA altogether. “CSA people”, as Salladarré et al. (2018) refer to the type of consumers that would typically join such an initiative, are usually sensitized regarding the environment, food sustainability and nutrition due to their high level of education. It is thus more likely for them to find out about CSA and join one, concerning that the movement of CSA is not, until now at least, known to the masses (Cone & Myhre, 2000). Finally, participating in a CSA can be time consuming, even in the case where one only has to pick the product baskets from the farm. It is quite common that an adult householder with more time in his/her hands, deals with participating in the CSA farm to which the household is subscribed to (Cone & Myhre, 2000). A working-class household however, might not possess the necessary time flexibility to participate and it is therefore excluded. The first point of criticism presented here, is highly significant when considering the goals of CSA as a movement, since the part of the population which is able to participate is not the one most affected by the industrialized

system CSA supposedly challenges (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Grauerholz & Owens, 2015; Matzembacher & Meira, 2019).

CSA is also supposed to foster rural development, which entails improving the livelihoods of producers. Therefore, the second criticism here which refers to the fact that CSA is not able to provide producers with a decent income, is of high importance in this discussion. Nevertheless, this point of criticism is not characterized by a consensus among the scientific community studying CSA. On the one hand, farmers are found to be living on “modest to very modest incomes, making it hard to pay for adequate health insurance and save for their children’s education and their own retirement” (Cone & Myhre, 2000, p. 196). According to a study conducted in the USA, 34.4% of former CSA farmers, left due to insufficient income (Lass, Bevis, Stevenson, Hendrickson, & Ruhf, 2003), while case studies in Germany find that farmers seem to consider necessary to look for secondary sources of income next to their CSA farm activities (Blättel-Mink, Boddenberg, Gunkel, Schmitz, & Vaessen, 2017). On the other hand however, the fact that CSA producers belong to alternative food provisioning systems, has not changed the fact that they are farmers, meaning that the expectations regarding their income need to be realistic, considering how farmers are treated in the CFS. Although their income is lower than the average citizen, when compared with the income of conventional farmers, CSA farmers present higher incomes (Paul, 2019). This is even more exceptional when considering that conventional farmers rely heavily on subsidies and state funding for their income, while this is not a possibility for CSA farmers (Peterson, 2009). Therefore, when it comes to CSA farmers and low incomes the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Lastly, another key issue which is problematic when it comes to CSA and producers’ livelihoods, is self-exploitation. Self-exploitation in alternative food provision networks such as CSA, is defined as “not earning revenues equal to the cost of one’s own labor” (Guthman, 2004, p. 83). CSA farmers put themselves through self-exploitation purposefully, as it seems the only way to continue challenging the dominant regime of the Empire or as (Galt, 2013, p. 347) put it, “many CSA farmers personally bear the weight of internalizing the negative externalities of industrial agriculture on their shoulders”. Given the fact that burn-out (working too hard without adequate compensation) was found as to be an important motivation for CSA farmers to leave their farms (Lass et al., 2003), self-exploitation is a point of criticism towards CSA that deserves attention.

2.2 Power and Empowerment

As mentioned earlier, this research aims to devise a dedicated analytical framework in order to explore in which ways is CSA actually able to empower producers. Before diving into defining empowerment and in which ways is CSA able to grant it however, it is important to set the theoretical base for the main element around which this discussion will unravel; power. The approach followed here concerning power, is based on the “power in transition” framework by Avelino and Rotmans (2009). Its focus is on actors, since they are the ones exercising power. Unlike other conceptualizations, power here is not defined in a relational manner (A has power over B) but rather as a social medium potentially exercised by anyone at any moment (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009). The framework especially suits the study of transitions due to the fact that it does not face power as something stable or predefined, like in structural approaches, but theorizes it as being exercised constantly (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009). These characteristics deem the framework highly suitable for the purposes of this research, which is why it was chosen.

Power therefore is defined here as “the ability of actors to mobilize resources to achieve a certain goal” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 550). Resources are power neutral and only when mobilized by actors can they become power-laden and they can be anything.

There is no inherent hierarchy between them, as any of them may be more or less influential depending on the context of the power exercise. The different types of resources are categorized below into different groups of capital:

Resource Type	
Mental Capital	“Mental resources, refer to information, concepts, ideas and beliefs” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 551).
Human Capital	“Human resources refer to manpower or human leverage, i.e. personnel, members, voters, clients, supporters, fans etc.” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 551).
Artifactual Capital	“Artefactual resources comprise apparatuses, products, construction and infrastructure, but they can also include a dance, a painting a photography or a movie” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 551).
Monetary Capital	“Monetary resources are funds, cash and financials stock” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 551).
Natural Capital	“Natural resources refer to raw materials, physical space, land and organic life” (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009, p. 551).

Table 1: Resource Types

Since power refers to the mobilization of resources by actors, distinguishing between different types of power can be done on the basis of “the resources which are mobilized” (Avelino, 2017, p. 508). Therefore, the kind of power exercised by an actor at a certain time, depends on the specific type or types of resources he/she is mobilizing at that time. Avelino and Rotmans (2011), combined the above with Mann's (1986) distinction between ideological, economic, military/physical and political power and came to the following conceptualization (Figure 1) concerning the categorization of the different types of power which could be exercised by an actor at a certain time.

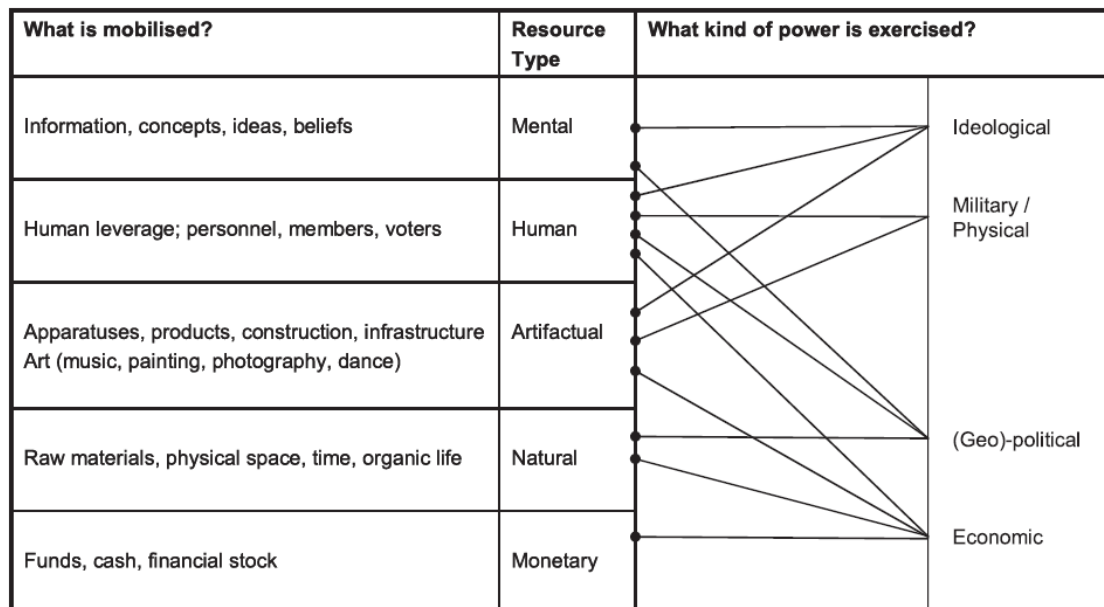


Figure 1: Typology of resource mobilization and power type (Avelino & Rotmans, 2011)

As seen above, different types of power are exercised depending on the resources which are mobilized. For example, an actor could exercise ideological power through the mobilization of mental (spreading an idea), human (influencing a social group through an

idea) and artifactual capital (communicating a message through a work product e.g. a book). Exercising a certain type of power can be done either by mobilizing a combination or simply one of the proposed resources. In other words, an actor is able to exercise for example political power simply by mobilizing natural resources, but also through a combined mobilization of natural, human and mental resources. It is important to note that categorizing the type of power an actor is exercising by mobilizing a resource is strongly contextual, while it is not uncommon for an actor to exercise more than one type of power simultaneously.

Nevertheless, whichever is the type of power being exercised, what is also of high significance is the “nature of this exercise in relation to stability and change” (Avelino, 2017, p. 508). Exercising power can be either innovative, reinforcing or transformative. Power exercise is reinforcing when actors, through exercising power, defend and favor the status quo by “reproducing existing structures and institutions” (Avelino, 2017, p. 508). Transformative exercise refers to the exercise of power which challenges the status quo, through “the development of new structures and institutions be it a new legal structure, physical infrastructure, economic paradigm or religious ideology” (Avelino, 2017, p. 509). Finally, innovative exercise refers to the “capacity of actors to create new resources” (Avelino, 2017, p. 509). This type of exercise however, will be ignored in this research as deciding what constitutes a new resource within CSA, which is a new resource in itself when it comes to the food sector landscape, would be throwing the focus away from the main objective. Thus, any exercise of power can challenge or favor the status quo of a given sector, in our case the food one, favoring or disrupting in this way a transition, here being the complete reform or even the fall of the CFS and the Empire.

Now, having defined power as well as the different types of power and power exercise, it is time to discuss the key element for this research which is empowerment. Empowerment here refers to producers’ empowerment and is conceptualized as the enablement of producers to solidify their transition away from the CFS. Producers involved in CSA schemes, have already made a mindful decision to divert from the CFS. This research assumes that their goal, meaning the reason for mobilizing resources as described above, is to maintain this shift. Therefore, producers solidifying their transition, means that they will not be forced to abandon their CSA farms or participate in conventional market channels on the side (for example selling their products to big retailers). Following this thread of thought, producers are empowered by mobilizing resources to exercise power in a transformative manner, thus challenging the status quo (CFS) and actually increasing their chances to establish their current state.

The decision to adopt this definition, was based on the fact that many times in rural development literature empowerment is thought of in economic terms only, usually merely as an income increase (Sirdey & Lallau, 2020). However, evaluating alternative food movements’ empowering capacity simply on the basis of such terms is unfair and shows the influence of the Empire even in academia (van der Ploeg, 2012). Producers participating in movements as CSA are initiating a resistance of the Peasantry against the Empire and therefore, do not share the same goals as conventional farmers which usually are purely economic. This is evident through fact that alternative farmers are often self-exploiting themselves, as mentioned earlier, in order to serve the cause for which they became part of the alternative movements to begin with (Galt, 2013). Surely, income is a vital factor for them, who like all citizens need to experience a “normal” life in the current capitalistic system (Block & Rainwater, 1976) and this paper’s definition includes this to a degree as there can be no transformative capacity with no longevity and no longevity with no financial capital. Nonetheless, minimizing empowerment to such terms only, especially when it comes to CSA producers, which are of interest here, would not have been fair. Finally, if any alternative food provision system like CSA is ever to achieve its goals of

challenging the current regime and bring some much needed change in today's food sector, its producers certainly need to be able and willing to continue their activities in such networks, which speaks of the validity of the empowerment definition given here.

2.3 An Analytical Framework for Empowerment

At this point, the theory analyzed above will be combined with the reality that is CSA, resulting in an analytical framework concerning its producers' empowerment capacity. Before presenting the framework though, there are some modifications necessary to the theory in order for it to be suitable to function as a base for a CSA dedicated framework, meaning that it needs to be consistent with the CSA literature and the way such initiatives actually operate. To begin with, Mann's (1986) types of power need some re-examining. Military and geo-political power are not relevant for the purposes of this paper. Therefore, the four types of power which will be used are Ideological, Physical, Political (instead of geo-political) and Economic. These four types of power, refer to the mobilization of certain resources or combinations of resources by certain actors or in this case CSA producers. For greater clarity, some changes are also proposed regarding the five described type of resources. Artifactual capital needs to be divided into cognitive and physical. Cognitive artifactual capital refers to intangible artifactual resources like websites, social media or photos while physical artifactual capital concerns concrete apparatuses, products, construction and infrastructure. The other change, concerns the distinction between manpower and leverage when it comes to human capital. Human manpower refers to labor force, while human leverage includes any kind of followers or supporter as well as connections and business partners.

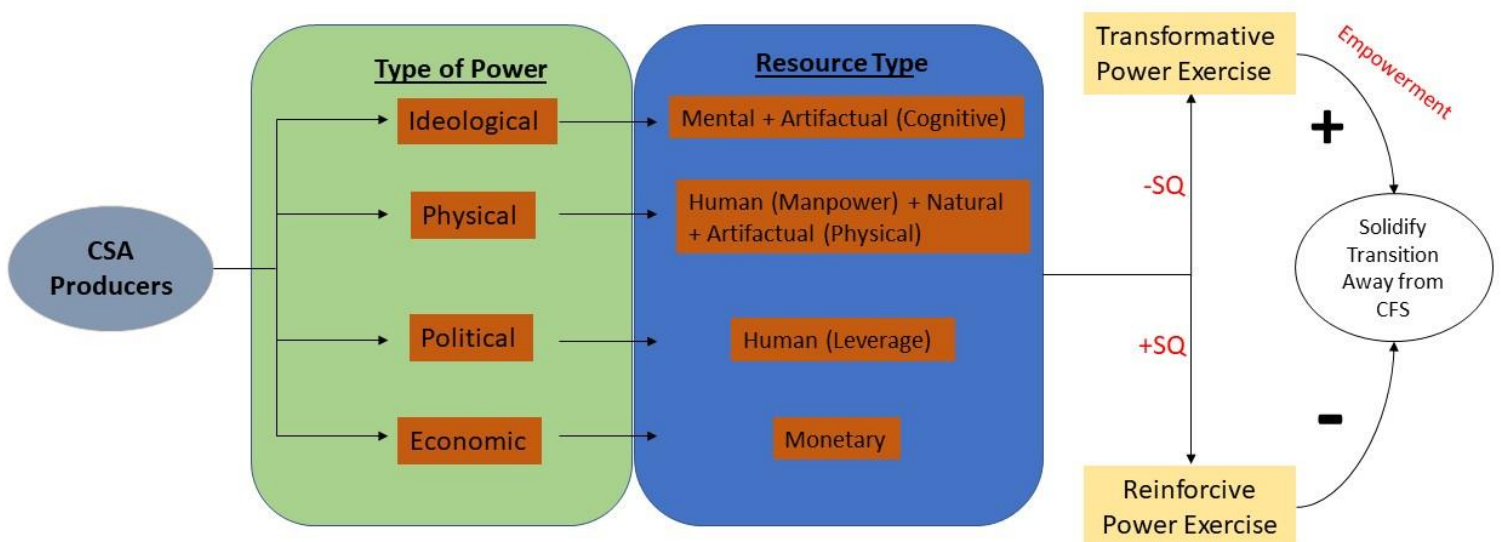


Figure 2: The Analytical Framework

Based greatly on the work of Avelino & Rotmans (2009) presented previously, the schematic representation of the paper's proposed definition of empowerment is depicted in the analytical framework seen above (Figure 2). CSA producers can exercise any of the four power types. Since power is defined as the mobilization of resources, the type of power they are exercising at a given time depends on the combination of resources they are mobilizing. For example, a producer is exercising physical power when through his/her CSA farm is able to mobilize human (manpower), natural and artifactual capital (physical). The way in which resources are mobilized and therefore the way power is exercised, can either favor (+SQ) or challenge the status quo (-SQ). In the first case, producers are exercising reinforcing power and decrease their chances to solidify their transition away from the CFS. In the second, they exercise transformative power and are thus more likely, at least according to this conceptualization, to solidify the said transition. When exercising transformative power, producers are considered to be empowered by their participation in the CSA movement as they are given the "tools", meaning the CSA strategies and market channels to achieve their goal, which is to challenge the Empire and propose a different future for the food sector. But what makes power exercise transformative or reinforcing?

2.4 Reinforcing or Transformative?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to put the devised empowerment framework in the context of CSA. Putting the theory and the analytical framework in context, is especially important for the type of research conducted here as alternative food initiatives tend to deviate from generic power and transition theory, mainly due to their strongly case-specific nature (Rossi, Bui, & Marsden, 2019). Therefore, at this point an operationalization of the framework will take place, which will allow the recognition of the relevant normative elements and their assumed relationships in the field. Specifically, this operationalization will clarify under which conditions does the exercise of one of the four power types presented in the analytical framework above favors the status quo (reinforcing power exercise) or challenges it (transformative power exercise)

Before this however, it is important to gain some insight regarding the transformative potential of alternative food networks (AFNs) and the factors that hinder or favor it. Transformative potential here, refers to the chances of an AFN as CSA to challenge the status quo or in other words to exercise power in a transformative manner. Below, agrifood power and transition literature is explored in order to discover the key factors of transformative potential of such initiatives and potentially of CSA.

2.4.1 The transformative potential of AFNs

As alternatives, such initiatives have a better chance in challenging the current status quo when they draw clear boundaries between them and the CFS (Rossi, 2017). This goes to say that their transformative potential is higher when they stand for strong ideological beliefs and aim to increase the consciousness of their consumers (Grasseni, 2018). Nevertheless, while taking distance from the CFS is important, these systems increase their transformative potential when they are able to provide consumers with a similar experience to the conventional market channels. This way, participation does not require a major lifestyle change for consumers, which is highly important as the higher the number and diversity of consumers the better, as drawing in citizens previously affiliated with the CFS increases the transformative potential of AFNs (Bui, Cardona, Lamine, & Cerf, 2016; Rossi et al., 2019). Following the same logic, the range of products offered by alternative initiatives need to be diverse, meeting the needs of all consumers and minimizing as much

as possible the need to participate in conventional market channels on the side (Lamine, Garçon, & Brunori, 2019). Finally, when talking about any transition, longevity is key, since in order for a movement to succeed its goals and significantly challenge the status quo, a lot of time is needed. In the case of agrifood systems, this would mean that transformative potential is higher when an initiative meets the criteria, which often are refer to economic variables, for it to continue operating (Rossi et al., 2019).

The key factors for an AFN to be characterized of high transformative capacity listed above, will be the base of the following operationalization of the analytical framework regarding what kind of power exercise can be deemed as transformative or reinforcing. However, one cannot fail to notice that all these factors are basically prompting alternative food initiatives to resemble to some degree the CFS. Therefore, what we have here is a case of fear about becoming the monster whilst fighting the monster, with the monster being the Empire. These concerns are completely valid and important, raising questions regarding whether or not the dominance of the Empire is so strong that it is impossible for scholars to imagine the success of any highly differentiated food provisioning system. On the other hand, considering the fact that most of these initiatives are still on the grassroot phase where they do not receive support or acceptance from major actors currently affiliated with the CFS such as the State, these proposed factors are logical since their main focus should be to gain acceptance thus enlarging the movement they represent. Still, the concerns remain and it is important for alternative initiatives to maintain the balance between offering a comfortable experience for mass consumers and not losing view of their ideals and goals.

2.4.2 Operationalization

As the framework suggests, CSA producers exercise power by mobilizing resources. The type of power they are exercising (ideological, physical, political or economic) depends on the combination of the resource types they are mobilizing. Therefore, the operationalization of the framework, follows a resource-based approach. First, the most striking CSA-specific resources for each of the power types were recognized based on CSA literature. After the recognition of these resources, two possible scenarios were devised for each; a scenario for their mobilization, and thus power exercise in a reinforcing manner and another one referring to transformative power exercise. These scenarios were proposed based on the theory previously analyzed regarding AFNs and their potential role in the transition of the food system, as well as various sources focusing on CSA.

Below, the contextualization of the framework takes place, by analyzing a type of power at a time, mapping the CSA-specific resource combinations for this type and proposing a transformative and a reinforcing scenario for each of them.

Ideological Power

Ideological power is exercised when actors mobilize mental and artifactual (cognitive) resources. In the context of CSA, such resources refer to the following:

Food sustainability information

A common characteristic of most CSA initiatives, is raising the awareness of their members, and in general of the communities which surround them, concerning food and sustainability, through mobilizing mental resources (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Matzembacher & Meira, 2019). According to Rossi et al. (2019), in order for food grassroots to maintain a high transformative potential, they need to clearly define the boundaries between themselves and the CFS. These initiatives challenge the status quo mainly in a normative way, performing what Grasseni (2018) calls “poiesis intensive innovation”, where the focus is on cultural elements. Thus, initiatives such as CSA can “function as symbols of larger cosmic awareness...potentially transforming instrumental activities into ones with ritual significance” (Cone & Myhre, 2000, p. 188).

Combining the above, the transformative scenario for food sustainability information refers to initiatives which strongly differentiate themselves from the CFS, specifically focusing on cultural elements and political messages. These initiatives, refer to food sustainability not only in instrumental terms, such as healthy and environmentally friendly food, but also include elements as activism, political discussions and community building, thus embracing a spiritual element to food provisioning which the CFS could never provide. The solely instrumental characteristics of food sustainability on the other hand, could potentially be provided through the CFS, therefore an initiative that focuses only on such elements in its food sustainability rhetoric represents the reinforcing scenario.

Farm's Business Plan

A farm's business plan, refers to the way a given initiative internalizes the values of CSA or more simply how does it function. There is a great variety when it comes to the different business plans of CSA farms (Paul, 2019). A main point of differentiation for these initiatives, especially important for the transformative capacity of CSA, is the amount of effort which is required by the members of an initiative. Either this refers to the duties that come with being a member or simply the process consumers need to go through to get their weekly basket of products. A recognized risk for the transformative potential of CSA are the high intensity actions that are needed by the consumers (Rossi, 2017). A CSA farm which is not consumer-friendly is more likely to attract only devoted and already aware members, who would probably belong to the usual type of CSA members described above (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Grasseni, 2018). However, if CSA is to challenge the status quo, it cannot rest on this elite type of members. On the contrary, it needs to include more and more actors, in this case consumers, that so far have been through their actions exercising power in a reinforcing manner (participating in CFS market channels), thus repositioning them (Rossi et al., 2019).

Therefore, initiatives which represent the transformative scenario, are the ones that minimize the effort needed by their members, making it possible to compete with the CFS market channels. In the context of CSA, this would mean initiatives that include pick-up points in the centers of the cities close to them or home delivered box-schemes and initiatives where volunteering expectations are low. It is important to note, that the transformative scenario proposed here does not suggest that CSA should become more like the CFS, but rather for it to be more inclusive addressing in this way food justice,

another source of criticism for CSA and alternative food initiatives in general (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Lamine et al., 2019). On the other hand, radical CSA initiatives in terms of volunteering or initiatives which demand their members to pick the products from the farm or even harvest them themselves, are part of the reinforcing scenario.

Communication Techniques

Communication techniques refer to pathways which CSA initiatives use to communicate the above-mentioned information, drawing the attention of potential members. These include the website of the initiative, its social media (Facebook and/or Instagram) and its newsletters. In some cases however, CSA initiatives organize various events and actions which impact positively the communities they belong to, thus acting as strong marketing tools (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). The latter, is a pivotal point for the transformative scenario of the given element. The transformative potential of alternative agrifood system initiatives, is increased when actors involved are of relatively high diversity (Bui et al., 2016). In the context of CSA, this means that the members of an initiative should be of a diverse background, rather than the usual concerned politically active and highly educated upper class citizens, which is usually the profile of a CSA member (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019), in order for an initiative to be characterized as of high transformative potential. In this effort, websites, social media or newsletters, though important, mainly act as “vehicles” of information rather than marketing tools to make the initiative known to a larger variety of people. Therefore, increasing the chances for a more diverse member list, calls for other marketing tools such as the aforementioned activities in the communities CSAs belong to or the advertisements in mass media as for example newspapers, which are more likely to increase the visibility of an initiative even to unsuspected citizens.

Therefore, the ideal scenario for the transformative potential of CSA, would be an initiative which extends its communication techniques beyond the basics, meaning a website, social media and newsletters, thus including communication techniques which raise the visibility of the initiative and with it the awareness of the people who previously would never consider CSA as an option. In this way, there is a higher chance of a CSA initiative reaching a higher diversity of members, compared to the reinforcing scenario where the communication techniques rest on the basic ones mentioned above.

2.4.2.1 Physical Power

Physical power is exercised when actors mobilize human (manpower), natural and artifactual resources. For CSA the main resources of this kind are:

Volunteers

The level at which a CSA initiative is depended on its members for its functioning is in fact of high significance when it comes to transformative capacity. The highest risk a CSA initiative faces is losing its members if they do not re-enroll for another season (Peuker, 2018). If an initiative is highly depended on its members for carrying out a large part of the agricultural labor, losing even a relatively low percent of them could lead to its malfunctioning and the further loss of more members. Therefore, by relying heavily on its members a CSA initiative runs a higher risk of closing down, making the longevity of such initiatives unreliable.

The literature regarding alternative food networks and their transformative capacity, shows that longevity is an important factor, as initiatives need to be rooted deeply in their

communities to be characterized by a high transformative potential (Bui et al., 2016; Rossi et al., 2019). Following this logic in combination with the above, initiatives which rely heavily on their members represent the reinforcing scenario since their longevity is at risk. In the transformative scenario, initiatives do not rely heavily on their members. On the contrary, members' participation is voluntary and merely serves as part of the experience, while these initiatives mainly rely on the farm's owners and gardeners for the necessary agricultural labor.

Products

A crucial point of criticism for the majority of alternative food networks, is the fact that they may not be able to provide consumers with all the necessary products for their diet (Lamine et al., 2019). The same is true for CSA initiatives. If they cannot provide the consumers with a satisfying diversity of products, they will have to turn to the CFS for the rest. Diversity in this context of course cannot and should not match the one seen in the CFS, as CSA's philosophy focuses on local and seasonal products, which have been produced through environmentally friendly practices. However, it is important for CSA farms to be able to cover the nutritional needs of their members and therefore weekly baskets should include, in moderation, other food types apart from vegetables like eggs, dairy, honey or even meat. This would reduce the need of CSA members to turn to conventional food channels, thus increasing the transformational capacity of CSA.

Given the above, in the transformative scenario initiatives include a wide range of products in their weekly baskets apart from vegetables which is the usual. Initiatives which stick solely to vegetables, are assumed to represent the reinforcing scenario.

Land

Land is undoubtedly one of the most, if not the most, vital resources for any type of farm and CSA farms are no different. However, the price of land and especially peri-urban land, which is where most CSA initiatives must be located to be functional, is high. This, makes it difficult for newcomers in CSA to own land (Ostrom, 2008). As many CSA cases show, owners that do not own land are forced to rent land from other parties or even the state. However, building once more on the importance of longevity for a high transformative capacity ((Bui et al., 2016; Rossi et al., 2019), a CSA initiative that does not own the land where it is located, is depended on the land's owner wishes for its longevity. Therefore, in the transformative scenario CSA initiatives own the land where they operate or own a long-term rent contract, while in the reinforcing one land is not owned but rented under a short-term contract.

2.4.2.2 Political Power

Political power is exercised when actors mobilize human resources (leverage), the most important of which are the following in the context of CSA.

Members

The higher the number and the diversity of enrolled actors, the higher the transformative potential of a niche (Bui et al., 2016). This can be said for CSA initiatives also. As mentioned previously, CSA is often strongly criticized for elitism, as its members usually fall under certain demographical characteristics; they are rich and highly educated. Factors concerning social exclusion in CSA include the lack of visibility and time-

consuming CSA activities, which were addressed on communication techniques and farm's business plan respectively. On top of these however, simply the membership fee itself is already excluding for lower income populations.

Some CSA initiatives in the USA have incorporated in their goals social inclusion and in an effort to achieve it some have implemented appropriate mechanisms (Grasseni, 2018). Initiatives which recognize the issue of social inclusion and put any effort to address it represent the transformative scenario, while the ones that do not the reinforcing one.

Collaborating Parties

CSA initiatives do not stand in isolation, but rather are part of the food system in their localities together with alternative actors as well as with more conventional ones (Lamine et al., 2019). The collaboration of CSA initiatives with a diverse group of actors is important for their transformative capacity, especially with the traditionally more conventional actors, since this way they have a chance in repositioning them through their interaction (Bui et al., 2016; Rossi et al., 2019). Examples of such interactions are CSA that sell part of their yield to restaurants, thus creating a food hub (Horst et al., 2011) or school nutrition programs that source the necessary food commodities through CSA initiatives (Lang, 2010).

The reinforcing scenario here, refers to CSA initiatives that act in isolation, meaning that the only actors they collaborate with are their members. While the transformative one concerns initiatives, which are collaborating with a diverse set of actors and most importantly with actors who until now were part of the conventional system.

At this point, it would be helpful to note the distinction between “volunteers”, “members” and “collaborating parties”. “Volunteers” include any person who contributes in terms of agricultural labor to the farm. Many times, these are members, but this is not necessary always the case. “Members” refer to people who pay the subscription fee and thus are enrolled with a given CSA farm. Finally, concerns other actors as businesses or state actors for example, with who the CSA farm might be in contact for any form of collaboration from simply exchanging products to lobbying for their rights as small-holders.

2.4.2.3 Economic Power

Economic power is exercised when actors mobilize or concentrate monetary resources. Here the focus is on the latter looking into the sources of income of CSA initiatives.

Income

A stable membership cannot be guaranteed even for the most successful initiative, since as mentioned above, losing members is the most important risk in CSA. However, in order for an initiative to be economically resilient, which is important regarding transformative capacity since longevity is an important factor, it needs to have other sources of income apart from the membership fees. However, this does not mean that a CSA farm should diversify its activities towards the CFS. Other sources of income could be participating in farmers' markets, agritourism activities in the farm or selling excess products to local shops, restaurant or even the public sector (schools). This way, even in bad seasons regarding the number of members, the farm will not run the risk of closing down. Therefore, initiatives that solely rely on their membership for their income represent

the reinforcing scenario, while the ones with diversified sources of income the transformative one.

Below, Table 2 summarizes the transformative (**T**) and reinforcing (**R**) scenario for each resource of the four power types, which were presented above.

Power Type	Resource	Scenarios
Ideological	Food Sustainability Information	T: Farm strongly differentiates itself from the CFS.
		R: Farm focuses only on instrumental sustainability characteristics (health, taste, ecology) and not political.
	Farm's Business Plan	T: Farm offers a comfortable and not highly demanding experience.
		R: Farm is characterized by highly demanding members' obligations.
	Communication Techniques	T: Farm extends communication techniques beyond website, newsletters and social media (e.g. newspapers, TV).
		R: Farm limits its communication techniques on website, newsletters and social media.
Physical	Volunteers	T: Farm does not rely heavily on its members for the agricultural labor and the food production.
		R: Farm does rely heavily on its members for the agricultural labor and the food production.
	Products	T: Farm includes a wide range of products in its weekly shares.
		R: Farm focuses solely on vegetables.
	Land	T: The land is owned or rented under long-term contract.
		R: The land is rented under a short-term contract.
Political	Members	T: Farm possesses strategy to be more inclusive concerning its members.
		R: Farm does not possess strategy to be more inclusive concerning its members.
	Collaborating Parties	T: Farm collaborates with a wide range of actors.
		R: Farm focuses only on its members.
Economic	Income	T: Other sources of income apart from membership fees.
		R: Membership fees are the only sources of income.

Table 2: Summary of the T-R Scenarios

3. Methods

In an effort to shed light upon the ways CSA is able to empower producers in solidifying their transition away from the CFS, thus answering the objective of this paper, the research at hand was structured as a comparative case study analysis. This is a strategy commonly used in the field of alternative food networks (Uchiyama et al., 2017), since although it surely lacks data quantity, it has the advantage of in depth analysis which highly suits the like of such research, under which the one at hand also falls under.

Specifically, the previously presented dedicated analytical empowerment framework was applied to 9 different CSA farms in the Netherlands, which served as the thesis's case studies. The selection of the Netherlands was far from random, as the country presents a really interesting opportunity for research on alternative food networks and transition in the food sector, given the fact that it is considered as one of the frontrunners of neoliberal agriculture, where the Empire's regime is strongly rooted (Bos, Smit, & Schröder, 2013; Woods, 2012). Therefore, studying how initiatives of the Peasantry like CSA function in such a context could provide some valuable insight in the relevant literature. Finally, location also was not an issue as the physical presence of the researcher was not needed and therefore the farms could be anywhere in the country

The case studies were chosen after preliminary research with one of the key criteria for selection being for these CSA farms to possess adequate and up to date mediums of publicity, meaning at least a website and social media. This was vital as the research was mainly based on text analysis for its results. In addition, it was necessary that the operators of these initiatives accepted and were able to give an interview through videocall or other distant means of communication (due to the Covid-19 pandemic). As for the business models of the cases, uniformity was not a criterion as different models would suit better the goals of this research to explore the different ways CSA can empower producers.

Out of the 10 farms which accepted to participate in the research, only 9 met the criteria presented above. After the selection of the 9 case studies, the data collection was based on the following two methods; desk research and semi-structured interviews. Concerning the first, desk research was conducted on the websites, the Facebook pages and when available the newsletters of the 9 farms. The Instagram accounts of the farms were not taken into account due to lack of significant amount of text. Concerning the Facebook pages and the newsletters, when their content was found to be significantly extensive, a limit of two years had to be put on the collection of posts and newsletters respectively. During the collection of the text from these three sources no selection was made, but rather any information in text form was collected to be analyzed during the data analysis stage. A total of 165,800 words was collected.

As for the semi-structured interviews, these, as mentioned earlier, were done through videocalls of approximately 35 min, apart from one which was conducted through email. All of the interviews took place from April to May of 2020. In total, 9 interviews were conducted, one per case study. The interviewees were usually the owners or co-owners of the given CSA farm, except from three farms in which an employee of the farm was interviewed (gardener/secretarial duties). No issue was faced concerning language barriers with the interviewees and thus all of them were conducted in English. Semi-structured interviews were chosen specifically due to the fact that a certain level of guidance was needed in order for the researcher to retrieve information relevant to the scope of the research. Of course, the questions were not in specialized scientific language, since questions like for example "what kind of resources do you mobilize?" would be pointless to uninvolved with the research parties. Thus, the same information was retrieved through questions regarding the role of producers in the farm, their market strategies and so on. The interview guide can be found in Appendix I. The interviews were all conducted under

the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679. What this means practically is that, every interviewee was given a form of consent to sign, which informed him/her regarding the intention of using the collected data for academic purposes, which could even result in their publication. The statement (Appendix II) made clear that the interviewees have the choice of remaining anonymous and that at any moment of the processing of the data, the subject, meaning the interviewee, has every right to revoke it. Following the same logic and in an effort to maximize the ability to be as critical as possible, the interviewees remained anonymous.

All the data collected, after first having been translated (from Dutch to English) and transcribed, were put under a thorough discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a method suitable for this kind of data, since it focuses on the subtraction of information and meaning from language-in-use which is not always straightforward, like in the case of this research. This analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 (Nvivo, 2018). Nvivo, is a program which allows the systematic analysis of text data by “coding”. A set of codes, or in other words thematic groups, is created and then sections of text are categorized in any of these groups. Taking advantage of this method, the analytical empowerment framework of this paper was transformed into a set of codes and sub-codes in order for its applications on the data to be possible. Specifically, each power type was a category under which there were the sub-categories of the relevant case specific CSA resources which were listed in section 2.4.2. Then, each of these CSA resources had two sub-categories which were used to group the text sections proving the reinforcing or transformative exercise of power through the mobilization of the given resource. The list of the codes used can be found in Appendix III.

The results produced by the above described method, were further analyzed and studied by power type, in order to gain insights regarding the way each of these types of power are exercised in the field. On top of that, an evaluation of the 9 cases took place, which was based on their transformative potential. For this, only the scores of each farm concerning its 9 CSA specific resources were considered. Specifically, the method used was to construct an indicator of transformative potential by examining the rate of transformative/reinforcing (T/R) scores on these said resources for each farm. The higher the T/R score of a farm, the higher its transformative capacity. In the case of a farm scoring a perfect T/R score (9/0), 9 was to be divided by 0.1. Thus, after calculating the T/R score of all 9 farms they were divided in a high (the 3 farms with the highest T/R score), a low (the 3 farms with the lowest T/R score) and a medium (the intermediate 3 farms) transformative potential group. In this way it was possible to recognize patterns between the different groups and highlight characteristics that each of these three different groups share.

4. Results

4.1 CSA in the Netherlands

The Netherlands, as mentioned earlier, is a “proud child” of the Empire when it comes to its agricultural and food provisioning sector. The country ranks as one of the most important food export forces globally for the majority of agricultural commodities (Viviano, 2017). The dominance of the Empire has been continuously strengthened by the Dutch state as well as the country’s academic research, mainly due to its significant economic benefits. At the same time however, the social or environmental issues such a system causes, have been largely neglected, leaving grassroot movements in taking the initiative to proceed in actions for a sustainable food system to (Urgenci, 2016).

Such a movement is CSA or else known in the Netherlands *Pergola*. According to Urgenci (2016), one of the largest and most important CSA global networks, the first CSA in the Netherlands started in 1994 and since then the number of CSA farms has been growing. The Dutch CSA initiatives are organized in a bottom-up manner as the state has yet to recognize and provide support to the movement., while a Dutch national CSA network is yet missing (although not for long as the interviews conducted here show, more below). Today, there are 47 known Dutch CSA farms, although this may be a low estimate according to the interviewees of this research. Taking into account this number by Urgenci (2016) however, the 9 farms studied in this paper would account for almost 20% of the CSA farms in the country, making the sample examined here significant. The 9 case studies provide a representative picture of CSA in the Netherlands. They range from big to small, from established to new and from highly popular to less known ones, while at the same time they are scattered all over the country. Thus, they comprise a diverse sample which can provide a clear picture for the many “faces” of CSA in the country. Many of the farms are operating close to urban centers and their general philosophy includes environmentally friendly practices concerning the production of food, which with a few exceptions refers solely to vegetables. Despite the country’s small size, the different initiatives are all internalizing the values of CSA differently and have thus come up with a wide variety of business models, as the case studies of this paper show.

4.2 The Farms

At this point, the selected 9 CSA farms which function as the case studies of the research will be presented shortly.

De Ommuurde Tuin

De Ommuurde Tuin is an organic horticultural company, located in the greater area of Wageningen. The farm, initiated by two friends who grew tired of working behind a computer screen during their studies at Wageningen University, is certified organic and a long-term partner of Slow Food. Among its other economic activities, as selling products directly in its farm shop and supplying restaurants, De Ommuurde Tuin offers a CSA subscription (De Ommuurde Tuin, 2020; Self-employed gardener in Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). In addition, the farm functions as a learning center for aspiring organic horticulturalists, where the values of CSA are promoted, as students are taught how to increase their profits being small-holder farmers. The initiative is also an ergotherapy center for people with special needs (De Ommuurde Tuin, 2020). One of the gardeners of the farm, the interviewee for this research, can be characterized

as a CSA innovator, since in collaboration with Wageningen University, she is trying to come up with a new CSA structure which will be more sustainable and will provide a fair income for farms (Gardener in Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020).

Tuinderij De Stroom

Located in a wooded area south of Arnhem, Tuinderij De Stroom is an organic farm which aims to grow fertilizer and chemical free vegetables (Tuinderij De Stroom, 2017). Meeting during their horticulture internships, the two thirds of this farm's (wo)manpower, joined forces to create what is today Tuinderij De Stroom. The third came as an intern and ended up never leaving. The farm collects monthly subscriptions and offers vegetable bags, as the three women find it managerially frustrating to run the initiative as a traditional CSA, which is what they did originally. Thus, this farm can be deemed as a hybrid CSA farm since it does not function under the classic CSA principles, meaning having members paying for the whole season in advance. In addition, the farm is selling its products directly through their farm shop every Saturday. The contact with the customers as well as the passion for growing vegetables is the main driver of this initiative which has been running for 15 year. During these 15 years, all three women and the business plan of the farm has matured. Now, every action is more efficient as the main goal is to be able to produce fresh and tasty organic food while being able to secure a decent hourly wage (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020).

De Wilde Peen

The two women running this dedicated self-harvesting CSA farm in the area of Ede, would like one day to turn their farm into a “commons organization”, meaning co-owning the land and the business/organization itself with all their members (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020). This is how they described their goals for De Wilde Peen, as in their minds the initiative should be something bigger than themselves and thus belong to its members with them simply being the stewards of this common asset. For them, by running a farm the way they do, one makes more than money as the community building as well as educating the members to be aware of how their food is produced is vital for them. The farm is open to all its members, for them to come use the tools available and harvest their share. The two women are only responsible for growing the vegetables and letting the member know what is available for harvesting in any particular week and how should they harvest the different varieties of vegetables (De Wilde Peen, n.d.).

Eemstadboerderij

This CSA farm located in municipal land close to Amersfoort, has recently changed managers, as the latest manager retired. This was not uncommon for this particular CSA farm, as two year previously the farm had change hands again. The current manager who recently took over this farm, was motivated by his realization that small-scale farming is possible with the correct business model. Although he is keeping the farm as a CSA, he is planning to put his own touches to the existing strategies, as for example home delivery for the members (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Nevertheless, he is in accordance with the goals of the farm concerning urban farming and promoting a healthy lifestyle for the citizens of Amersfoort by producing healthy and organic vegetables, adding in its own manner a piece to the effort for a more sustainable

Amersfoort (Eemstadboerderij, n.d; Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020).

LandinZicht

LandinZicht, is situated in the area of Hilversum. This CSA self-harvesting project, focuses on healthy and sustainable food production. The main goal, according to the owner of the initiative, lies in the idea of people taking responsibility for their own food. Following this logic, through the community building of the farm, one of the owner's goals is to educate the farm's members on how food is produced and the importance of sustainability in the food sector (LandinZicht, 2020; Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 11, 2020). Apart from the self-harvesting project, on the farm grounds members can also find other local products as dairy or meat, through the cooperation of LandinZicht with regional producers ("Full Speed [Newsletter]", 2019; "Pizza! [Newsletter]", 2018; "Summertime-Wintertime [Newsletter]", 2018; "Work [Newsletter]", 2019). Lastly, the farm is sometimes involved in educational projects (LandinZicht, 2020).

Pluk! Groenten van West

This CSA farm in the outskirts of Amsterdam, can be characterized as symbiotic. This is due to the fact that the land it uses for its operations is the spare land on another bio-dynamic farm. Specifically, since the host farm is focusing mainly on trees, there is a significant amount of land beneath these trees that the Pluk! Groenten van West after a deal with the owners of this farm use (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 4, 2020). The farm sees itself as the embodiment of the possibility of agriculture done differently. Their small-scale approach is, according to them a good alternative to the current large-scale food industry. Pluk! Groenten van West, is a self-harvesting CSA project focused on urban agriculture as it aims to provide urban dwellers with local organic food (Pluk! Groenten van West, 2020). Self-harvesting is deemed especially important by the gardeners of the farm, as it promotes community building, one of the key goals of the initiative (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 4, 2020). This synergy between these two sustainable initiatives, Pluk! Groenten van West and its host, is an innovative strategy considering the issue of land, which around urban poles as Amsterdam is highly unaffordable, an issue which halts aspiring CSA farmers

De Stadsgroenteboeren

The group behind De Stadsgroenteboeren, has a particular story to share. All five members comprising the project, met during their studies in Italy, which ranged between food sustainability, agrarian and culinary studies. After their studies, two of them moved back to the Netherlands and came across the opportunity of taking over a farm. The couple then, contacted their old friends who all together had the vague dream of starting a farm. The rest of the group then also moved to the Netherlands and De Stadsgroenteboeren was born. This CSA farm, located in the suburbs of Amsterdam, was started by the group as a learning project, for them to get to know as much as they can about growing food in a sustainable way. The driving force behind the project lies in the idea of being able to do something that contributes to a better world, in this case through sustainable food production, while their passion around food in one way or another, is a great factor as well (Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 4, 2020). The farm

uses biointensive techniques and aims to improve and not only sustain the health of its soil. The farm operates with a yearly subscription which grants members a weekly food package that they can pick up from the farm or from certain delivery points in Amsterdam (Stadsgroenteboeren, n.d.).

De Tuinen van Hartstocht

This CSA farm, is run by three ecologists who met in University. De Tuinen van Hartstocht, is the expression of their desire to apply their knowledge in the field. The farm located close to Amsterdam, offers two different subscriptions. One of them concerns a weekly share of self-harvested vegetables, while the other a share of flowers. The two subscriptions are independent from each other though. Their goal is to produce vegetables (and flowers) in a way that is not harmful for the environment (De Tuinen van Hartstocht, 2020; Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 17, 2020). One of the main personal concerns for the team however, is the ability to provide for themselves a wage which is at least close to the minimum one. For this, they employ various strategies in combination with their CSA business model, as for example the plans they have for renting two properties in the farm grounds through Airbnb (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, personal communication, 2020).

Us Hof

Last but not least, this CSA farm in Friesland, can be fairly characterized as an expression of political CSA activism. Run by a married couple who owns the 2ha land their farm is located upon, Us Hof's business model is a mix between self-harvesting and picking-up vegetable bags from certain points for those who wish to (Us Hof, 2020b). The man is responsible for the agricultural production, which is done under the values of permaculture. The woman is in charge of the organizational activities. However, these activities are not restricted within the farm grounds as she is part of educational initiatives promoting sustainable local food production and food sovereignty in neighboring villages. On top of that, she is the president of the newly founded first national Dutch CSA network. In addition, on the side of its CSA scheme, the farm has created the first food cooperative in Friesland, where members of the farm can pre-order products by mainly local producers, that the farm cannot provide in its weekly shares. After the delivery is done, the products arrive at the farm where the members collect them. The couple believes that this combination of a local food cooperative and CSA is the solution to the issues of food sovereignty, a model which the woman preaches in the sensitizing activities she is involved in, which aim to spread the word and move others to join the CSA movement (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

4.3 Farms in Power

As stated in the Methods section, the analytical empowerment framework devised earlier in this paper was applied to the 9 case studies presented above. This took place in the form of a thorough discourse analysis of the collected data, which was done through Nvivo. The results of this analysis, are elaborated below in an effort to understand the ways CSA enables producers to exercise power in a transformative way, thus empowering them. The results will be listed by power type (ideological, physical, political and economic) and by the CSA specific resources of each types (see section 2.4.2). Thus, the sum of the different ways these 9 farms are mobilizing each of the CSA specific resources and whether this leads in exercising the given power type in a transformative or a reinforcing manner, will help comprise a greater picture concerning producers' power exercise through CSA.

4.3.1 Ideological Power

4.3.1.1 Food Sustainability Information

Food sustainability information, refers to the mental resources mobilized by CSA producers in an effort to showcase their position concerning the current state of the food system. Such resources are mainly mobilized to state the goals and philosophy of a farm and what is to be contributed through its operation. Through this resource, producers can either strongly distance themselves from the CFS (transformative power exercise), thus educating others on the wider spectrum of flaws the current food system is characterized by, or use it as a marketing tool simply praising their ecological friendly production methods or other instrumental sustainability characteristics (reinforcing power exercise).

All farms which mobilized this resource in a **reinforcing** manner did it mainly through the “who we are” section of their websites. Such were Tuinderij De Stroom, Eemstadboerderij, LandinZicht, De Stadsgroenteboeren and De Tuinen van Hartstocht, which focused on the enjoyment of harvesting your own food, the importance of connection with the customers or continuously highlighting the ecological and healthy practices characterizing them (De Tuinen van Hartstocht, 2020; Eemstadboerderij, n.d.; LandinZicht, 2020; Stadsgroenteboeren, n.d.; Tuinderij De Stroom, 2017). This, is also reflected in the interviews conducted with the operators of these farms, by statements like: “the exchange between the farmers and the costumers. makes it more personal for us. If we only sell to the wholesale it would be less fun. It is mostly for fun and it’s a good feeling to sell directly” (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020) a view which draws a picture concerning the stance of the aforementioned farms.

On the other hand, the farms which mobilized this resource in a **transformative** manner, although they also highlighted their environmentally friendly practices and the quality of their products in their websites, they kept coming back to information which strongly criticized the Empire and the CFS through their newsletters and Facebook pages. These farms were De Ommuurde Tuin, De Wilde Peen, Pluk! Groenten van West and Us Hof. This type of political information could be either found in a Facebook post concerning events or sources of information which criticize heavily the Empire’s regime, as in the case of De Ommuurde Tuin (De Ommuurde Tuin, 2019) or personal stories through newsletters highlighting how this regime oppresses small-holder farmers like De Wilde Peen (“March 2020 [Newsletter]”, 2020). Particular is the case of Pluk! Groenten van West, which in what was simply the initiating sentences of the “who we are” section in its website, it mentions CSA as “a good alternative to the current large-scale agrifood system” and continues to explain the importance of avoiding “brokering” as well as prompting people to “support local agriculture instead of “multinationals and

supermarkets” (Pluk! Groenten van West, 2020). This, is supported by the interview with one of the four gardeners there who stated: “the food system is the expression of capitalism. Capitalism is about exploiting the land, exploiting the people only to make profit. The main concept of Pluk! Groenten van West is basically to show that it is possible to fight this system and it is possible to show that there are alternatives” (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). Finally, Us Hof’s mobilization of this resource is also notable. It can be characterized as an effort to increase awareness through the publication of various initiatives which are promoting the spread of the CSA and the local food movement in the area of Friesland, in which one of the co-owners is strongly involved (Us Hof, 2020a). A raise of awareness which wishes to convey that «our system should be much more robust... and our society more resilient” (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

What can be noted regarding food sustainability information, is that CSA grants producers with an audience. They can sensitize this audience concerning the necessity for a food transition and therefore transform them into allies of the Peasantry as the farm’s representing the transformative scenario do. But they can also simply treat them like customers, transforming the movement of CSA into merely a business strategy.

Food Sustainability Information		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Criticizing the Empire through its social media.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Solely marketing its “organic, healthy and tasty” vegetables in its website.	Reinforcive
De Wilde Peen	Strongly criticizing the CFS and highlighting the struggles of small-scale farmers through its newsletters.	Transformative
Eemstadboerderij	Through its website: Focuses on urban sustainability and the importance of growing your own food Also focuses on the food being healthy. Does not take a political position in concerning the food system	Reinforcive
LandinZicht	Through its website: focuses on the healthy, educational and sustainability benefits of participating in a CSA farm. Does not pose firm political views concerning the food system.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Strongly criticizing the CFS in the homepage of its website.	Transformative
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Mentioning through its websites the highly sustainable production practices that characterize it and the important relationship which is cultivated with the farmer. No criticism towards the CFS.	Reinforcive
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Focus on the ecological values the farm is characterized by.	Reinforcive
Us Hof	Strong criticism against the CFS through social media.	Transformative

Table 3: Summary of “Food Sustainability Information”

4.3.1.2 Farm Business Plan

Each CSA farm operates in a certain manner which represents its business plan. A business plan is a cognitive apparatus that a farm mobilizes in order to fulfil its main task of providing food to its members. This apparatus can either provide a comfortable and not highly demanding experience for the consumer (transformative power exercise) or the opposite (reinforcive power exercise). In the first case the CSA farm is in a position to challenge conventional market channels like supermarkets, thus increasing its chances to attract consumers previously affiliated with the CFS. In the second, the initiative can expect to only attract highly dedicated consumers which would probably match the demographic CSA is criticized for (see section 2.1.1).

Concerning the 9 cases, it came down to them being self-harvesting initiatives or providing pick-up points services to consumers. Farms which exercised power in a **reinforcive** manner, thus relying on self-harvesting for the products to reach their members, were actually the minority with only LandinZicht, Pluk! Groenten van West and De Tuinen van Hartstocht falling into this category (De Tuinen van Hartstocht, 2020; LandinZicht, 2020; Pluk! Groenten van West, 2020). Self-harvesting is strongly unappealing for the average consumer as it is really time consuming. In the case of Pluk! Groenten van West members are even asked to bring their own tools adding to consumers' inconvenience (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). In addition, the co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht actually acknowledged the exclusive nature of this practice as she said: "in our case where the members harvest the products themselves, which really takes time, I mean you cannot come and be done in 10 minutes you are really harvesting...and I think if you are poor and you don't have much per hour and you spent a lot of hours working, you might not really have the time to spend a whole Saturday harvesting" (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, personal communication, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the fact that a self-harvesting business plan is categorized here as reinforcive mobilization of the given resource, the motive behind it is legitimate and is even recognized by farms that do not belong in this category. According to the co-owner of De Wilde Peen harvesting is a highly time-consuming agricultural activity, surprisingly it represents half of the hours of agricultural labor for CSA farmers (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020). Therefore, self-harvesting, though time consuming and exclusive, is for some producers a strategy to avoid self-exploitation by saving half of the agricultural work time.

As for the initiatives representing the **transformative** mobilization of this resource, De Ommuurde Tuin, Tuinderij De Stroom, De Wilde Peen, Eemstadboerderij, De Stadsgroenteboeren and Us Hof, they all include in their business plan several pick-up points in the main city or villages that surround them. Shops that are allies to the CSA farms usually function as pick-up points in the cities as in the case of De Stadsgroenteboeren (Co-owner of Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 4, 2020), while Tuinderij De Stroom mainly delivers its products to the backyards of several dedicated members which serve as pick-up points (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020). However, Tuinderij De Stroom collaborates also with companies which wish for their employees to have access to fresh and healthy food, delivering the weekly food packages in their premises (Tuinderij De Stroom, 2017). Other notable ways of mobilizing this resource are presented by Eemstadboerderij, De Wilde Peen and Us Hof. In the case of the first, the owner is willing to deliver the weekly packages directly to the members' homes, if they agree to pay a small extra fee (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). De Wilde Peen and Us Hof, although self-harvesting initiatives themselves, offer the possibility to members to have their weekly packages delivered for an additional weekly charge, representing a hybrid

mobilization of the resource which was still nonetheless categorized as transformative (De Wilde Peen, n.d.; Us Hof, 2020b). In the words of the co-owner of Us Hof, “for some the harvesting is too much time consuming...that is the reason why we started with the bags” (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020). Therefore, De Wilde Peen and Us Hof are not excluding the average consumer, while simultaneously putting in use the willingness of the dedicated ones, limiting their self-exploitation by reducing harvesting time, which maybe is the most effective and smart strategy.

Farm's Business Plan		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Provides pick-up point service.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Provides pick-up point service.	Transformative
De Wilde Peen	Self-harvesting project which also offers pick-up point service for a small extra fee.	Transformative
Eemstadboerderij	Provides option of home-delivery with a small extra fee.	Transformative
LandinZicht	Self-harvesting project.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Self-harvesting project.	Reinforcive
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Provides pick-up point service.	Transformative
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Self-harvesting project.	Reinforcive
Us Hof	Self-harvesting project which also offers pick-up point service.	Transformative

Table 4: Summary of “Farm’s Business Plan”

4.3.1.3 Communication Techniques

In order for a CSA farm to have members, these potential members must first be aware of its existence. Communication techniques refer to the mobilization of mental resources through cognitive artifactual resources like social media pages or newspaper articles and videos, with the goal to attract consumers to become members to the various CSA initiatives. These techniques, can be either simply information which potential members need to actively research like social media or websites (reinforcive power exercise) or information which reaches citizens who were not aware of CSA’s existence, like promoting an initiative on the local radio or newspaper (transformative power exercise).

Here, six of the farms represent the **reinforcive** scenario and these are Tuinderij De Stroom, Eemstadboerderij, LandinZicht, Pluk! Groenten van West, De Stadsgroenteboeren and De Tuinen van Hartstocht. These farms rely solely on their social media and websites, while some of them, as LandinZicht and De Tuinen van Hartstocht, claim that their members are “the best ambassadors” (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, personal communication, 2020; Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 15, 2020). During the interview with De Stadsgroenteboeren and Pluk! Groenten van West, the co-owners and gardener respectively both stated that they feel lucky that their initiative is the first to pop up when “CSA” or “organic farms” are

searched in Google and thus they attract consumers interested in this type of agriculture (Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 4, 2020; Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). Following a similar trail of thought the co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht stated that their location puts them in a favorable condition as the residents surrounding it are curious about it and thus tell their neighbors or friends (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, personal communication, 2020). However, De Tuinen van Hartstocht is located in the suburbs of Amsterdam and certain geographies come with certain demographics of residents, in this case older and of higher class (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, personal communication, 2020). Nevertheless, approaching the rich neighborhoods surrounding his farm seems to be one of the marketing plans for the owner of Eemstadboerderij as well (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). It seems that most of these farms are satisfied with the number of their members and do not feel the need to continue pursuing more. This is seen in the case of Tuinderij De Stroom, where the three women originally published advertisement in local newspapers, but as their members' number grew in the first years of their 15-year existence they eventually stopped (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020). However, it is important to note again here, that communication techniques are not judged solely on their ability to attract people, but also on the fact that the people that are attracted are not all "CSA people".

Concerning the farms representing the **transformative** scenario, these are De Ommuurde Tuin, De Wilde Peen and Us Hof. De Ommuurde Tuin due to the fact that it is located in a historical estate, famous for its beauty, has many times starred as background for TV shows including cooking TV shows using the products of the farm (De Ommuurde Tuin, 2020). As for De Wilde Peen and Us Hof, both of these initiatives have taken advantage of the willingness of local mass media like radios and newspapers to support local initiatives (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020). Especially noteworthy is the case of Us Hof, the co-owner of which has succeeded in securing a weekly column in the local newspaper, thus not only spreading the word for the farm but also having the possibility to shape the views and opinion of local citizens around food sustainability.

Communication Techniques		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Featuring on cooking TV shows and local-TV and newspaper advertisement.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
De Wilde Peen	Local newspaper and local radio advertisements.	Transformative
Eemstadboerderij	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
LandinZicht	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Website, social media and word of mouth	Reinforcive
Us Hof	Free advertisement through the local newspaper, featuring in various newspaper articles and a permanent column in a regional newspaper.	Transformative

Table 5: Summary of "Communication Techniques"

Overall, CSA grants producers with a unique tool concerning the exercise of ideological power, as it provides them with a “stage”. Unlike any other alternative food provisioning system and surely unlike any conventional one, CSA creates a space where producers are visible and their voices can be heard. However, as the results from the 9 farms show, not all CSA producers take advantage of this rare opportunity. Many fail to communicate the struggles and issues they experience daily, which are mainly caused by the dominance of the Empire. Instead, they face their granted “stage” as a means of advertisement to market the quality of the services they provide, not creating allies of the Peasantry and themselves but rather acting as any other food market channel. However, even the ones who realize this great opportunity CSA offers, using their voices to criticize the CFS, fail to realize that rhetoric and ideas are of no use without the right “audience”. Although the majority of the farms provides a business plan which is inviting even for citizens who are not “CSA people”, as their operation is not radical, most of them are not sensitive concerning the type of citizens they actually refer to. Therefore, they fail to sensitize the average consumer who represents the majority, as they do not actively make their initiatives and the concept of CSA known to unaware but potentially interested citizens. In this way, they waste a chance to normalize CSA and create the circumstances for it to strongly challenge the Empire, thus losing a great leverage for their empowerment. CSA producers need to realize that they are the ones responsible for their empowerment and make use of the strategies CSA offers for exercising ideological power in a transformative manner.

4.3.2 Physical Power

4.3.2.1 Volunteers

It is common for members of CSA farms to volunteer helping with the agricultural labor, thus supporting the producers with whom they have created a strong bond of solidarity. This section, refers to volunteers as manpower human resources which CSA farms are able to mobilize. The reinforcing mobilization of the resource at hand refers to CSA farms where volunteers are vital for the agricultural labor and thus the production of food for its members. On the other hand, in the transformative mobilization, volunteer help is welcomed but not necessary. This is important as a farm which relies heavily on volunteers has its longevity constantly at risk.

The farms which mobilize this resource in a **reinforcing** manner are Tuinderij De Stroom, Eemstadboerderij, LandinZicht, Pluk! Groenten van West and Us Hof. None of these farms obligates its members to participate in the agricultural labor apart from Us Hof, which states in its contract that a member is obliged to help in the farm at least three times in a year and even this, barely can be defined as forced agricultural labor (Us Hof, 2020b). Nevertheless, these farms seem to agree that although they could still function without the help of volunteers, they would have to completely rearrange their way of operating and increase their workhours (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 11, 2020; Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Characteristic is the statement of one of the gardeners in Pluk! Groenten van West as he states: “could we keep this project alive without volunteers? There are different opinions to be honest, but mine is no... we would have to work way more hours” (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). Which leads to the point that again, like we saw earlier in the farm business plan section with self-harvesting, relying in volunteers is for some farms a way to avoid self-exploitation and even if such a

mobilization of this resource is categorized as reinforce, the motive for it needs to be noted as it signifies an obstacle to transformative exercise.

The farms mobilizing the resource in a **transformative** manner are De Ommuurde Tuin, De Wilde Peen, De Stadsgroenteboeren and Eemstadboerderij. While all of these farms actually have volunteers in their premises often, their mobilization is simply an extra help and mainly functions as an opportunity to offer the experience of farming to members who wish to. The stance of all these farms towards members volunteering can be concentrated in the following statements by Eemstadboerderij and De Stadsgroenteboeren: “we want to be able to make the minimum wage without volunteers, if volunteers come it’s a bonus. That is the goal” (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020) and “the members serve simply as an income source, they are not necessary for the production” (Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 4, 2020).

Therefore, though all CSA farms mobilize volunteers in one way or the other, it all comes to whether they are depended on them or not. They can rely on them to address the issue of self-exploitation, which characterizes producers of alternative initiatives as CSA, but in return be vulnerable to the possibility of them leaving the farm or not participating as volunteers anymore. Alternatively, they can build their operation in a way that the lack of volunteering would not have significant effects on the farm’s production and functioning.

Volunteers		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Volunteers are present but are not necessary.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Current operation of the labor structured around the help of volunteers.	Reinforce
De Wilde Peen	Volunteers are present but are not necessary.	Transformative
Eemstadboerderij	Volunteers are present but are not necessary.	Transformative
LandinZicht	Current operation of the labor structured around the help of volunteers.	Reinforce
Pluk! Groenten van West	Current operation of the labor structured around the help of volunteers.	Reinforce
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Volunteers are present but are not necessary.	Transformative
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Current operation of the labor structured around the help of volunteers.	Reinforce
Us Hof	Member obliged to help in the farm at least three times a year and current operation of the labor structured around the help of volunteers.	Reinforce

Table 6: Summary of “Volunteers”

4.3.2.2 Products

The most vital resource for any farm is its products and CSA farms are not an exception. CSA farms often offer only vegetables to their members (reinforcive power exercise). However, some farms include also other products in their weekly share such as milk, honey, eggs and even meat (transformative power exercise). A greater variety of products puts CSA farms in a position to challenge conventional market channels as their members will not have to be depended on them for a complete diet.

The farms representing the **reinforcive** scenario when it comes to products are De Ommuurde Tuin, Tuinderij De Stroom, De Wilde Peen, Pluk! Groenten van West and De Tuinen van Hartstocht (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020; Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020; Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, April 17, 2020). Although all these farms provide a wide range of vegetables, many times previously unknown to their members as the co-owner of De Wilde Peen claims, they can only function as a supplementary addition to their members' diet.

Nevertheless, there are CSA farms which put an extra effort in providing a greater variety of products for their members, in our case these are Eemstadboerderij, LandinZicht, De Stadsgroenteboeren and Us Hof which are mobilizing the natural and physical artifactual resources which are products in a **transformative** manner. Eemstadboerderij and De Stadsgroenteboeren are both in the process of introducing chickens into the farm and include their eggs in their weekly baskets for their members to enjoy (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020; Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 4, 2020). Specifically, the owner of Eemstadboerderij wishes to maybe slaughter the egg-laying chickens in the end of the season to provide some meat for the farm's members. Significantly more noteworthy however, is what LandinZicht and Us Hof have going on to provide their members with as much variety of products as possible. Although both farms produce only vegetables, they have set up a food cooperative which operates in the grounds of the farms. These cooperatives collect local products from the respective areas around these farms (Friesland and Hilversum), which range from fresh milk, to meat and even packaged goods. The one of LandinZicht is not official as it connects local producers with its members ("Full Speed [Newsletter]", 2019; "Summertime-Wintertime [Newsletter]", 2018). The one of Us Hof however, is completely embedded with the operation of the farm as its members can order online what they wish and the products arrive in the farm where they can get them. According to the co-owner of Us Hof, this way their members hardly need to go to the supermarket anymore, since this way they have access to all the products a household needs including international sustainable options for imported goods like rice (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

The example of Us Hof presents an ideal strategy for a CSA providing its members with the greater variety of products possible. Even if a CSA farm cannot produce some commodities, which will always be the case, it can challenge the status quo by joining forces with its alternative allies of the Peasantry. Us Hof, shows that the mobilization of the products resource to its maximum potential is possible. Actually, Us Hof is promoting this strategy to other CSA farms as the co-owner is participating in CSA and local food sensitizing movements across the Netherlands (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

Products		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Offers only vegetables.	Reinforcive
Tuinderij De Stroom	Offers only vegetables.	Reinforcive
De Wilde Peen	Offers only vegetables.	Reinforcive
Eemstadboerderij	In the process of providing eggs and meat alongside with vegetables.	Transformative
LandinZicht	Alongside vegetables, it connects its members with local dairy and meat producers.	Transformative
Pluk! Groenten van West	Offers only vegetables.	Reinforcive
De Stadsgroenteboeren	In the process of providing eggs alongside with vegetables.	Transformative
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Offers only vegetables.	Reinforcive
Us Hof	Alongside with the CSA membership which offers only vegetables, the farm operates a local self-organized cooperative with a wide variety of products.	Transformative

Table 7: Summary of "Products"

4.3.2.3 Land

Land is the most vital resource for a farm to be able to operate. When it comes to CSA farms in particular, where their position ideally needs to be close to an urban center or a cluster of villages, land becomes an even more rare and expensive resource, making its acquirement and mobilization extremely difficult. A CSA farm can operate in a piece of arable land which is rented by the initiative temporarily (reinforcive power exercise) or alternatively own the land or possess a rent contract of indefinite time where the tenants are legally protected (transformative power exercise). A CSA initiative which hold the right to operate in a piece of land for as long as its owners wish to is characterized by a high longevity possibility which is vital if an initiative aims to have any significant impact.

The results of this resource draw a really clear picture concerning the stance of the Netherlands towards small-holder farmers and alternative food provisioning systems. Out of the 9 CSA farms researched, eight are categorized as representing the **reinforcive** scenario as the only farm which can be characterized as representing the **transformative** scenario when it comes to land is Us Hof. According to the gardener interviewed in De Ommuurde Tuin, who is an expert on this topic as she is currently in collaboration with Wageningen University to come up with what could be a new model of CSA, the policy surrounding land in the Netherlands considerably favors large scale agriculture. Specifically, in order to be considered a farmer one would need to possess land above 1 ha. Being considered a farmer in the eyes of the state is highly significant as in this way one is entitled to subsidies and other benefits such as legal protection for his/her land. As most CSA farms operate on lands below the 1ha standard they basically have no rights as farmers. This leads them to rent land under what is called a liberal contract which grant them no protection and leaves them vulnerable to their land owner's decisions (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). The farm owners therefore, more often than not own the farm, meaning the business, but not the land. Both De Ommuurde Tuin and De Wilde Peen specifically referred to the flaws of the legal

system, while all farms apart from Pluk! Groenten van West, De Stadsgroenteboeren and LandinZicht specifically mentioned and recognized the difficulties of owning a farm under the uncertainty of land ownership (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020; Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 17, 2020). Tuinderij De Stroom and De Tuinen van Hartstocht rent their land off a big scale organic farmer and a dairy farmer respectively, while Eemstadboerderij rents a land which is property of the state (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 4, 2020; Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, May 15, 2020; Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Maybe the most interesting case is the one of Pluk! Groenten van West, which functions as a symbiotic organism of a bigger biodynamic orchard farm and therefore rents the spare land of this farm for a really low price (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 4, 2020). The obstacle of land is so severe that De Wilde Peen is planning to change into a “commons organization” and buy a piece of land together with all its members, while De Ommuurde Tuin is lobbying together with La Via Campesina Netherlands for the protection of the land rights of small-holder farmers (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). When a farm is operating under such a level of uncertainty where its managers are not even aware if they can still operate in this land for the next year, investing in strategies or different products seems many times futile, while farmers are not able to create a healthy and sustainable soil. Thus, the above described situation concerning the land and CSA farms in the Netherlands, is one of the most significant obstacles CSA farmers face towards exercising power in a transformative manner.

The only farm which represents the **transformative** scenario is Us Hof which owns 2ha of land. Nevertheless, the farm owners also wish to create a “commons organization” and co-own the land with their members as they find that the land should belong to the Us Hof, which is bigger than them. In that way, even if they decide to stop, Us Hof would be able to continue (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

Land		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
Tuinderij De Stroom	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
De Wilde Peen	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
Eemstadboerderij	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
LandinZicht	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Does not own the land and rents it under low security.	Reinforcive
Us Hof	Owens 2ha of land.	Transformative

Table 8: Summary of "Land"

A CSA farm's main role is to function as a food provisioning system. Therefore, the exercise of physical power is naturally of high significance. Many CSA farms take pride in specializing in a great variety of vegetables that for many of their members may even be unknown. It might be true that a vegetarian diet agrees with the sustainability philosophy which characterizes many of these farms, however the truth is that the average consumer cannot sustain his/her diet on vegetables alone and needs other food types as well. As long as a CSA farm cannot provide this, it has no chances to have an impact, as its member will continue to strongly be dependent on the market channels of the CFS. In addition, many of the farms try to avoid self-exploitation by depending more and more to their members' volunteering. Although this might be necessary and a temporary solution to the issues CSA farms face, if it is the basis of a farm's operation then it is impossible for it to escape the fringe of the food system CSAs belong to and challenge the status quo. Finally, the huge issue of access to land, which almost all 9 farms struggle with, creates a huge hurdle for the exercise of physical power in a transformative manner, something to be expected in an institutional environment shaped by the Empire. The above, indicate the issue of the dual role that CSA farms need to play, especially in their exercise of physical power. First of all, they need to operate as a farm and provide a high quality of diverse products, through heavy and time-consuming agricultural labor. At the same time however, they need to function also as community builders and food sustainability activism and sensitization poles, another time-consuming activity. As a result, many of the producers are constantly self-exploiting themselves, desperately trying to make a minimum wage, which leaves them no freedom to exercise physical power in a way that could challenge the status quo and empower them.

4.3.3 Political Power

4.3.3.1 Members

Members refer to the human capital in the form of leverage that CSA farms possess through the consumers that are subscribed to them. CSA farms can mobilize this resource promoting a membership characterized by elitism (reinforcive power exercise) or by creating mechanisms and strategies that ensure inclusiveness when it comes to their membership (transformative power exercise). It is important that not only what has been characterized in this paper as "CSA people" participate in CSA farms, but rather citizens of various demographics, especially those often affiliated with the CFS and the conventional market channels.

Only a minority of the farms represents the **reinforcive** scenario, since only 3 out of 9 were found to not possess any kind of mechanism to allow citizens of lower incomes to participate. These farms were Tuinderij De Stroom, Eemstadboerderij and LandinZicht. One of the three women running Tuinderij De Stroom, when confronted with the issue, responded by claiming that for buying organic vegetables their prices were relatively low, while the fact that many students participated in their veggie bags signifies some sort of inclusiveness (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020). The owner of Eemstadboerderij, did not see the point of being inclusive and although he admitted that since he operates on state land the initiative maybe should be more inclusive, he has not yet thought the ethics behind it (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Finally, LandinZicht when asked stated the following: "I would like to, but it's the biggest difficulty I face in the garden. Food in supermarkets is to low price to convince "poor" people" (Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 11, 2020).

As for the farms representing the **transformative** scenario, these were De Ommuurde Tuin, De Wilde Peen, Pluk! Groenten van West, De Stadsgroenteboeren, De Tuinen van Hartstocht and Us Hof. There are three strategies recognizable adopted by the farms to be more inclusive: the pricing scale, the workhour pays and the quarter subscription. The first is adopted by Pluk! Groenten van West, De Stadsgroenteboeren and De Tuinen van Hartstocht which have costumers decide what they are able to pay between a minimum price and a maximum (De Tuinen van Hartstocht, 2020; Pluk! Groenten van West, 2020; Stadsgroenteboeren, n.d.). This way citizens of lower income can choose the lowest price, while more well-off members can still support the farm if they wish to by choosing the higher fee. The strategy of the workhour pay, is adopted by De Ommuurde Tuin and De Wilde Peen, which actually openly got inspired by the first (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; De Ommuurde Tuin, 2020). By this strategy, the CSA farmers put down and publish how much work goes into one of the weekly shares including every agricultural or secretarial job necessary and then the members decide what to pay them per hour. Ideally, they pay them what each member makes in an hour. Although the interviewee of De Ommuurde Tuin doubts that a CEO would pay the amount which is equivalent to his/her “150 per hour”, she hopes that this way they can reach the minimum wage and that this strategy show the work producers put into products and thus shows the real cost of food (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). Finally, the quarter subscription is adopted by Us Hof and has members pay their membership per quarters during the season instead all at once in the beginning of it (Us Hof, 2020b). This way, citizens of lower income who are not able to possess a capital equal to the whole subscription to pay in one go can still participate. The co-owner of Us Hof stated that they even have a member which pays per month since even paying per quarter is not an option for her (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020). These three strategies show that there are ways to include citizens of lower income as members of CSAs and therefore there are ways for CSA farms to answer to the most common criticism against them, which is that they represent elitist initiatives.

Members		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Members pay what they think the hourly wage of the farmers should be.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Does not possess any kind of mechanism to allow citizens of lower incomes to participate.	Reinforcive
De Wilde Peen	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Members pay what they think the hourly wage of the farmers should be.	Transformative
Eemstadboerderij	Does not possess any kind of mechanism to allow citizens of lower incomes to participate.	Reinforcive
LandinZicht	Does not possess any kind of mechanism to allow citizens of lower incomes to participate.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Membership fee price scale.	Transformative
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Membership fee price scale.	Transformative
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Membership fee price scale.	Transformative
Us Hof	Possess strategy to be more inclusive: Option for members to pay subscription in quarters throughout the season.	Transformative

Table 9: Summary of "Members"

4.3.3.2 Collaborating Parties

Collaborating parties refers to the actors the CSA farm are in collaboration with for various operations or for secondary sources of income. Such actors can be for example restaurants or schools which an initiative provides food to. A CSA farm can either operate in isolation and only deal with its members (reinforcive power exercise) or include other actors to its operations (transformative power exercise). Including a great diversity of actors in the operations of a CSA initiative, especially actors usually affiliated with the CFS, increases the chances of such initiatives to challenge the dominance of the Empire.

The farms which represent the **reinforcive** mobilization of this resource are De Wilde Peen, LandinZicht and De Stadsgroenteboeren. These farms, although might sell their excess to restaurants once in a while, a common practice amongst CSA farms, do not collaborate with external parties systematically but only periodically and their sole focus are their members (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 11, 2020; Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 3, 2020).

On the contrary the rest of the farms represent the **transformative** scenario. De Ommuurde Tuin, has a strong cooperation with a high-end restaurant in Nijmegen. Culinary actors are important as they can function as ambassadors for CSAs and the quality of their products, specifically when taking into that they are highly influential in creating food trends (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). The Tuinderij De Stroom is in collaboration with student organization in Nijmegen and Wageningen (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020), while the Eemstadboerderij collaborates with some restaurants and an organic shop

(Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). The case of Pluk! Groenten van West is worthy of attention as the farm collaborates with an NGO and together create and participate in activist and educational actions around food sustainability, while in addition the farm recently got a fund from the EU for incorporating undocumented refugees (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). De Tuinen van Hartstocht has a deal with a restaurant nearby though the co-owners are hesitant to extend such a partnership with other restaurants as well, it being quite time consuming and distracting (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 17, 2020). Finally, Us Hof collaborates with restaurants, but most importantly with local institutions and state actors on the municipal level on spreading the word in regards to food sustainability and the local food movement through various seminars (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

Collaborating Parties		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Cooperation with high-end restaurant in Nijmegen.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	In collaboration with student organizations in Nijmegen and Wageningen.	Transformative
De Wilde Peen	Main focus on members no other systematic collaborations.	Reinforcive
Eemstadboerderij	Collaboration with restaurants and an organic shop.	Transformative
LandinZicht	Main focus on members no other systematic collaborations.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Collaboration with a Dutch NGO and the EU through a fund for the social inclusion of undocumented refugees.	Transformative
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Main focus on members no other systematic collaborations.	Reinforcive
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Collaboration with neighboring restaurant.	Transformative
Us Hof	In contact with local institutions and state actors on the municipal level for spreading the message of CSA and the local food movement.	Transformative

Table 10: Summary of "Collaborating Parties"

Political power is probably the most important power type in a discussion concerning the transition of the current food system. By exercising political power, CSA producers are able to re-position actors previously affiliated with the CFS into their ranks, weakening the first while strengthening their initiative's transformative potential. Together, the members and the collaborating parties of a CSA initiative decide its political influence. The more average consumers participate in such initiatives the more these are normalized and accepted as a fair challenger of conventional market channels, while the more diverse and powerful their allies are, the more political leverage points the CSA movement gains. Although the results from the 9 cases suggest that the majority of the farms actively engage with such actors (or set the conditions to do so), certain efforts are more significant than others. This especially refers to the involvement of state actors and businesses by some of the cases presented earlier, since such a mobilization of the "collaboration parties" resource can be considered of high transformative potential, given the fact that it

legitimizes CSA and puts it on the map as a sustainable alternative of the CFS. The freedom CSA grants producers with when it comes to their political power exercise, is highly empowering as it allows them to claim visibility for their initiatives and most importantly for the CSA movement, they are part of.

4.3.4 Economic Power

4.3.4.1 Income

Monetary resources, are the most important and strategic for actors to possess as they give them access to almost all other resources and types of power. Here, the focus is on the sources of monetary resources CSA farms depend on. Farms can either depend on their membership for their income (reinforcive power exercise) or make up their income through various sources (transformative power exercise). Due to the fact that the main obstacle to longevity many CSA farms face is their members quitting, farms which aim to have a significant impact and challenge the status quo cannot rely only on their members for their income, since there might be year of low numbers of memberships.

The farms which represent the **reinforcive** scenario are De Wilde Peen, LandinZicht, Pluk! Groenten van West and De Stadsgroenteboeren. These farms although might from time to time organize an event or a fundraiser, lack a continuous source of income which is rooted in the way they operate (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Co-owner of De Stadsgroenteboeren, personal communication, April 3, 2020; Gardener in LandinZicht, personal communication, May 11, 2020; Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020). Therefore, they rely only on their members for their income which puts them in a vulnerable position.

On the contrary, the farms which represent the **transformative** scenario are characterized by various different sources of income, these are De Ommuurde Tuin, Tuinderij De Stroom, Eemstadboerderij, De Tuinen van Hartstocht and Us Hof. Maybe the champion among these farms, when it comes to sources of income is De Ommuurde Tuin, which apart from its CSA membership possess also a farm shop, provides the space and caters for events such a wedding, is an educational center and collaborates as stated previously with restaurants (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). Tuinderij De Stroom, hold a farm shop in its grounds where non-members can every weekend purchase fresh vegetables (Co-owner of Tuinderij De Stroom, personal communication, May 15, 2020). Eemstadboerderij, apart from selling systematically to a number of restaurants also collaborates with an organic shop and is also part of a food cooperative (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). As for De Tuinen van Hartstocht, apart from collaborating with a restaurant in its area, it is now ready to operate two Airbnb properties on the farm grounds, a highly innovative income strategy focusing on the agritourism qualities that a CSA farm can offer (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 17, 2020). Finally, Us Hof has been collaborating with three restaurants so far, but the owners now plan to include in the activities of the farm a restaurant which will operate in its grounds. In addition, one of the owners often gets payed through the educational activities she participates in order to raise awareness around food sustainability (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

While restaurants were a common strategy for almost all CSA farms, even the ones which were categorized as representing the reinforcive scenario, each farm came up with various different source of income apart from the membership fee. This goes to show that these initiatives are struggling making an average wage solely on membership and thus need to be creative with their income sources. In this sense, there are no different than

rural households which need to often diversify their economic activities to survive (Woods, 2012).

Income		
Farm	Strategy of Mobilization	Type of Power Exercise
De Ommuurde Tuin	Operates a farm-shop, caters and provides its space for social events, is an educational center for horticulture and small-holder farming and is in collaboration with a high-end restaurant.	Transformative
Tuinderij De Stroom	Operates a farm-shop in the weekends	Transformative
De Wilde Peen	Memberships are the sole source of income for the farm.	Reinforcive
Eemstadboerderij	Selling systematically to restaurants and is in close collaboration with an organic shop.	Transformative
LandinZicht	Memberships are the sole source of income for the farm.	Reinforcive
Pluk! Groenten van West	Memberships are the sole source of income for the farm.	Reinforcive
De Stadsgroenteboeren	Memberships are the sole source of income for the farm.	Reinforcive
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	Selling to one restaurant and is in the process of starting to rent 2 Airbnb apartments in the farm grounds.	Transformative
Us Hof	Is in collaboration with three restaurants and is now in the process of opening its own. One co-owner also gets paid through the educational projects she organizes.	Transformative

Table 11: Summary of "Income"

Economic power is key if CSA producers are to continue their efforts in the long term, increasing the chances of this movement to be transformative. Nevertheless, almost all CSA-actors who were interviewed stated that achieving a minimum wage is a constant struggle and for many not always successful. In an ideal world, CSA producers would be able to rely completely on the income they gain from their members but in reality, this is not possible. The reason for this, is that the playing field in a food system built to support the Empire's dominance is uneven. Therefore, initiatives on the fringe of this system such as CSA, face constantly indirect hurdles blocking their way to significantly challenge the current status quo. This is clearly indicated by the lack of state aid in the form of subsidies, for which unlike conventional farmers CSA producers rarely qualify for. Given the above, it is vital for CSA farms to be flexible and gain the monetary resources necessary for the exercise of economic power from various sources. In this sense CSA producers are no different than small-holder farmers who belong in the conventional system, who often are forced to diversify their economic activities to survive. Nevertheless, there is a big difference between the two groups. CSA producers can diversify much easier and more efficiently, as a result of the strategies they have in their hands through CSA. to exercise the other three types of power in a way which can secure extra sources of income. Thus, although CSA producers also need to diversify their economic activities to survive, unlike conventional small holder farmers, they have significant tools in their hands and the freedom to use them, as they are not attached to the system that oppresses them.

4.4 An Evaluation of CSA's Transformative Potential

The performance of the 9 farms regarding the type of power exercise (transformative or reinforcing) which characterizes their mobilization of each of the different CSA specific resources, is summarized in Table 12. These results and specifically the T/R score of the farms (see Methods section), were used to evaluate the farms on the basis of their transformative potential by categorizing them into three different groups of high, medium and low transformative potential. Such a categorization was constructed in an effort to recognize patterns between the three different groups and thus gain some insight into what is it really that makes a CSA farm potentially transformative or not.

Farms	Ideological Power			Physical Power			Political Power		Economic Power	T/R Score
	Food Sust. Infor.	Farm B. Plan	Com. Techniques	Volunteers	Products	Land	Members	Collab. Parties	Income	
Us Hof	T	T	T	R	T	T	T	T	T	8
De Ommuurde Tuin	T	T	T	T	R	R	T	T	T	3,5
De Wilde Peen	T	T	T	T	R	R	T	R	R	1,25
Eemstadboerderij	R	T	R	R	T	R	R	T	T	0,8
De Stadsgroenteboeren	R	T	R	T	T	R	T	R	R	0,8
De Tuinen van Hartstocht	R	R	R	T	R	R	T	T	T	0,8
Tuinderij De Stroom	R	T	R	R	R	R	R	T	T	0,5
Pluk! Groenten van West	T	R	R	R	R	R	T	T	R	0,3
LandinZicht	R	R	R	R	T	R	R	R	R	0,1

Table 12: The Overall Performance of the CSA Farms

The three farms with the highest T/R scores and thus the ones belonging in the high transformative potential group are Us Hof, De Ommuurde Tuin and De Wilde Peen with scores of 8, 3.5 and 1.25 respectively. This large difference between Us Hof and the rest of the farms does not indicate an equally large difference in the first's transformative potential, as De Ommuurde Tuin which comes next only scores as reinforcing in only one more resource than Us Hof. This difference is rather the result of an anomaly of the arbitrary indicator devised for this evaluation. The three farms that follow, representing the medium transformative potential group, are Eemstadboerderij, De Stadsgroenteboeren and De Tuinen van Hartstocht, all of which scored 0.8. Finally, Tuinderij De Stroom, Pluk! Groenten van West and LandinZicht were the ones with the lowest scores of 0.5, 0.3 and 0.1 respectively and therefore these comprise the group of low transformative potential. The ranking of the 9 different farms was visualized, in the graph below (Figure 3). A farm's transformative potential and also its empowering capacity, according to this research's conceptualization of empowerment, are stronger the higher and more to the left a farm is located in the graph. This combination suggests more frequent transformative power exercise and less frequent reinforcing power exercise concerning the mobilization of the different CSA specific resources.

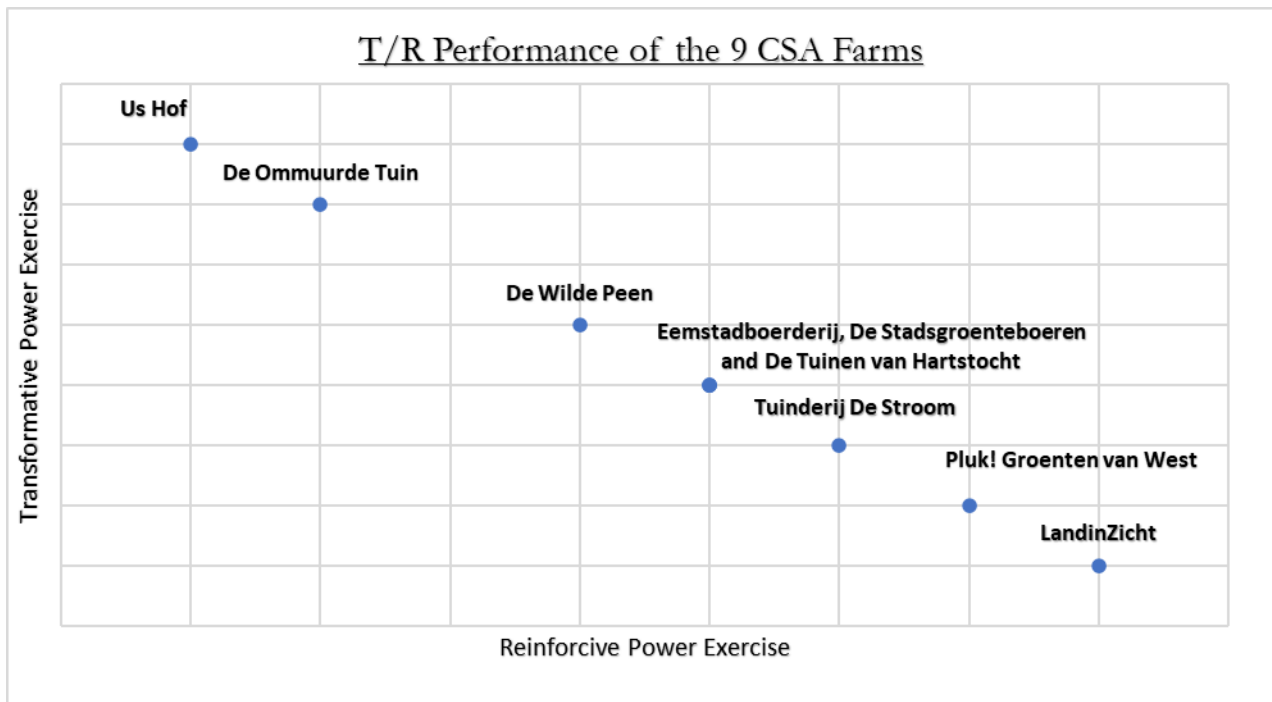


Figure 3: T/R Performance of the 9 CSA Farms.

4.4.1 High Transformative Potential

The CSA farms of this group can be characterized as farm-activists. The responsible parties of each farm do not simply rest on operating the CSA farm as a business, but rather put an effort to spread the word concerning CSA, food sustainability and the flaws of the Dutch and global food system often openly criticizing the Empire’s dominance. Most importantly, their intention to create change does not simply rest on raising awareness but translates into political action as well. These characteristics are especially evident when it comes to Us Hof and De Ommuurde Tuin which also are the two highest scoring between the 9 cases. The first’s co-owner is the president of the newly found Dutch CSA network, while at the same time she is heavily involved in educational and activist projects around food sustainability as well as local food sovereignty for which, in her opinion, CSA is key (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020). Us Hof, does not rest in its own success, but rather wishes and is actually striving for other communities in the area to adopt this way of food production and provision. As for De Ommuurde Tuin, the initiative is strongly affiliated, through one of its gardeners with Wageningen university, aiming to create a new structure of CSA, which will be more effective for producers to make use of without them risking self-exploitation and not securing the minimum wage. In addition, the owner of the farm is in collaboration with the Dutch Via Campesina (global NGO focused on rural development) lobbying for addressing the issues of Dutch land law for small-holder farmers, which were elaborated upon above (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). Both Us Hof and De Wilde Peen, show further their commitment to the movement that is CSA by their efforts to transform their farms into a “commons organization”, meaning sharing ownership of the land and business with their members, thus investing in the longevity of the initiative itself which should belong to its community (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

Another important common characteristic when it comes to these high scoring three farms is that although they are surely alternative and strongly distance themselves away

from the CFS, they do so without being in isolation from potential members or collaborating parties which would usually side with the CFS. The farms do not fall into the common trap of elitism solely relying on people which are interested in alternative food networks and food sustainability, but rather engage with their communities putting the extra effort to explain and sensitize potential members that are not “CSA people”. At the same time, they are structured and operate in a way which does not alienate consumers previously affiliated with the CFS, offering a comfortable experience. Us Hof however, surely reigns over the rest, especially due to the fact that it offers its members the ability to completely depend on it for their diet with the strategy of the co-existence of a CSA farm and a local self-organized cooperative which was described above. This is a significant limitation of the other two farms, concerning their transformative potential, as their members are forced to continue being depended on the CFS to a lower but still significant level.

4.4.2 Medium Transformative Potential

This group of farms represents a type of CSA initiative which is more business orientated. Here, the owners and co-owners are involved mainly due to a passion for growing food sustainably and being involved with their local community. Although the involved parties are interested in sustainability and are excited to be part of the local food movement, they do not openly showcase strong political concerns regarding the current food regime and its dominance. In this way, they resemble other sustainable or organic producers who focus on the production methods and are often absorbed by the CFS (e.g. products of local farms in the racks of big supermarkets). These farms are innovative and highly attractive which highlights their business orientated character. This is evident by the Airbnb idea of De Tuinen van Hartstocht (Co-owner of De Tuinen van Hartstocht, personal communication, April 17, 2020), the gastronomic character of De Stadsgroenteboeren (Stadsgroenteboeren, n.d.) and the home delivery possibility of Eemstadboerderij (Owner of Eemstadboerderij, personal communication, May 4, 2020). Nevertheless, while the majority of them (Eemstadboerderij and De Stadsgroenteboeren) offer a comfortable experience for their consumers, these farms do not put an effort to engage with unsuspected to CSA citizens. In this way, they fall into the trap of elitism for which CSA is so often criticized, as the members they attract are already sensitized in matters of food sustainability and are aware of initiatives as CSA. Therefore, consumers currently affiliated with the CFS which could potentially be interested in participating are excluded, due to poor mobilization of communication techniques.

It is important to note that all of these farms have been recently initiated and thus they might be still experimenting with their strategies. Their high attractiveness, can gain them a strong support which later can be used as a leverage for political action aiming to challenge the Empire. Therefore, although currently their transformative potential is not significant if they decided to be more inclusive and actively support the movement of CSA, they all have high chances for higher transformative capacity.

4.4.3 Low Transformative Potential

Interestingly enough, the farms of this group are not less dedicated than the ones of the first, with the exception of Tuinderij De Stroom which shares a more similar stance with the farms of the second group. Though both the other two farms can be characterized as strongly distant from the CFS, this distancing takes place in isolation from the average consumers as their poor communication techniques do not allow for members that are not “CSA people” to participate. Therefore, in contrast with the activist farms we saw in the high transformative potential group, these farms which to a great extent share the same values and philosophy as the first, fail to translate them into strong political influence mainly due to the elitism their way of functioning is nurturing. In addition, unlike the farms of the medium transformative potential group, the two farms are not offering a comfortable experience for the consumers as both are self-harvesting projects with no option of pick-up points, which increases their exclusiveness (LandinZicht, 2020; Pluk! Groenten van West, 2020). Furthermore, both farms are not innovative enough concerning their business strategies, since they are focusing solely on their members as an income source, something which leaves their longevity vulnerable, as does their high dependency on volunteers. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Pluk! Groenten van West showcases a remarkable mobilization of the “collaborating parties” resource, as it is involved in some EU projects thus involving state actors (Gardener in Pluk! Groenten van West, personal communication, April 14, 2020), while LandinZicht offers a variety of products to its members by connecting them to local producers, similarly to some degree to Us Hof (“Full Speed [Newsletter]”, 2019; “Summertime-Wintertime [Newsletter]” 2018; “Work [Newsletter]”, 2019). As for Tuinderij De Stroom, although it is found in this category, it shares more characteristics with the farms of the second group, which can explain why it is the one with the highest T/R score of the three farms in this group.

All in all, the common patterns observed here were between the two lowest scoring farms, Pluk! Groenten van West and LandinZicht. Both of these two farms while passionately distant from the CFS are invisible to the average consumer which lowers significantly their transformative potential. At the same time, these farms are completely focused operating as a traditional CSA and miss to acknowledge other opportunities, which could increase their transformative potential as secondary income sources and a more creative business plan which would be more friendly for the average consumer.

5. Discussion

CSA has proven capable of empowering producers in solidifying their transition away from the CFS, challenging in this way the Empire and thus achieving their assumed by the author goals which have been verified to a great extent through the conducted interviews. Nevertheless, this inherent ability of CSA is not used by all CSA producers, as the evaluation of the 9 different case studies clearly indicated. The reason could be that some producers are simply unaware of the key leverages highlighted by this research for increasing a farm's transformative potential. Though there must be some truth in this being (partially) the source of the problem, to which this research could function as a relief, there seems to be specific external factors which hinder the transformative exercise of power by CSA producers.

These hindering factors stem from the legal and political system, which through various mechanisms, strives to secure the dominance of the Empire. Such mechanisms were also uncovered in this research, specifically concerning the impediments the Dutch system poses, when it comes to small-scale producers' access to land and state funding. Concerning the first, although the high price of land around peri-urban areas surely is a significant obstacle for producers to access and own land, this is not only a Dutch phenomenon and does not seem to be the most crucial. As this research suggests, owning land is not the only means for a CSA farm to be of high transformative potential as one can also be qualified for this characterization if it secures a long-term renting contract. In the Netherlands however, mainly due to a history of the state supporting large scale agriculture, farmers which operate on land which is under 1 ha do not qualify for protection under the law, as they do not meet the "farmer" definition. The lack of this protection leaves CSA farmers, and other small-scale farmers for that matter, vulnerable to be taken advantage of by landowners who now have the freedom to rent their land in high prices under what is called a liberal contract. This type of contract also grants landowners the ability to drive the renters away from the land when their contract is over, something farmers of land above 1 ha are protected against (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020; Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). All farms without an exception stated in one way or the other that land and specifically the uncertainty around it, hinders a farm's performance and does not allow for significant investments which could potentially increase their transformative potential. This happens due to the fact that producers are simply unaware if they can continue to operate in the same piece of land next year or not.

As for the second hindering mechanism recognized, this 1 ha criterion plays also a key role in the distribution of subsidies between Dutch farmers, highlighting even further the institutional challenges small-scale or alternative producers have to face in the Dutch political landscape. Farmers who operate on lands under the 1 ha standard, do not qualify for subsidies. This creates an ironic situation where the state argues that it wishes to support sustainability in agriculture but supports financially the actors who actually contribute to such issues. In addition, as most of the CSA owners are self-employed, they are expected to pay 21% of their annual income as tax, but receive no returns though subsidies. Thus, their tax money goes into supporting the farmers of the CFS, forcing them to indirectly support the very same regime they wish to challenge (Gardener in De Ommuurde Tuin, personal communication, April 16, 2020). The above are in accordance with the criticisms towards the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP), whose criteria for subsidies are based solely on land (per hectare) or production quotas, thus leading to the blind support of many times highly unsustainable practices. The main beneficiaries of CAP's financial support are industrial farms and big landowners with about "80% of farm aid going to about a quarter of EU farmers – those with the largest holdings, creating

serious imbalances, and favoring an industrialized and large scale type of agriculture”, which leads to the continuous loss of small-scale agriculture (Anskaityte & Pantzer, 2020). The new CAP reform (post 2020), promises to tackle the above-mentioned issues and specifically aims to grant small-scale farmers with a higher per hectare support, while setting a limit for large scale farms at 100.000 euros (“Future of the common agricultural policy | European Commission”, n.d.). However, although the above surely are a positive step towards the recognition of small-scale farming’s importance, it seems that the EU cannot escape the blind per hectare payments mindset, a remnant of its productivism influenced past.

This lack of subsidies and state aid conventional farmers often receive, drives CSA farmers in acts of self-exploitation in order to survive and be economically viable. A characteristic example is how slowly the newly founded Dutch CSA network is progressing, due to a complete lack of free time by its key operators (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020). This example shows how in indirect ways, the dominance of the Empire “ties the hands” of actors siding with the Peasantry who dare to organize themselves and collectively challenge it. In addition, self-exploitation leads many CSA actors into practices and resource mobilization strategies which are counterproductive in terms of their transformative potential. One example is the necessity of CSA producers to rely on volunteers for a significant part of the agricultural labor in order to gain some time to do other vital tasks for the operation of the farm, like tasks of secretarial nature. Another, is the choice many CSA farmers make to turn their initiatives into self-harvesting projects, as harvesting according to the De Wilde Peen co-owner takes 50% of the time devoted to agricultural labor (Co-owner of De Wilde Peen, personal communication, May 15, 2020).

The above, draw a clear picture of the systemic obstacles present in the Dutch and global food sector landscape that the Empire has directly or indirectly created, thus securing and nurturing its dominance. CSA or other alternative food provision systems like it, constantly struggle to prove themselves on an uneven playfield which keeps favoring their “opponents”. Given the above however, the fact that some of the case studies have succeeded to operate in a manner which brings them in a position to be characterized as highly transformative, is far more impressive. Some CSA initiatives manage not only to survive, but to succeed in such an unfriendly environment, something which can only serve to highlight the great potential this specific SFSC strategy holds in a future where the state and other key actors, currently affiliated with the CFS, would stand by its side. Any success that CSA farms have showcased is to be credited to the relentless efforts of their operators, who in defiance of their self-interest sacrifice their time and energy to the cause they so passionately believe in. Together, CSA and other alternative food networks actors need to form synergies and demand an equal playing field for themselves. In the Netherlands, such steps are slowly happening with the initiation of the first national CSA network, the president of which wishes to lobby for the rights of small-holder farmers and lead people in regaining power over their food system (Co-owner of Us Hof, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

Finally, before elaborating upon the conclusions of this research, is it important to self-reflect on its limitations. The fact that the author lacked the ability to be physical present in the farms during the interviews, deprived the opportunity for the triangulation of the collected data, through the additional data collection method of observation. In addition, a bigger number of case studies would benefit greatly the quality of this research, while future research could focus on surveys concerning the members of the 9 farms selected here, thus cross-examining the results and assumptions made here regarding their profile and choices. Lastly and most importantly, the analytical framework of this research and particularly its conceptualization was based on literature regarding the transformative

potential of alternative food networks. What these sources deemed as transformative however could be characterized as resembling to some extent the CFS. The reason behind this is justified as a transition calls for the inclusion of a large number of citizens, especially the ones previously affiliated with the status quo, which in the case of the food transition, would mean that an initiative should be attractive for the average consumers and not be too radical in their eyes. Even so, it is important to address this bias that the literature might hold and highlight the need for future research to focus on how can alternative food initiatives be of high transformative potential without sacrificing their “alternative nature”.

6. Conclusion

The research at hand was the outcome of the observation that the theoretical notion of power is relatively absent in the field of alternative food networks and specifically SFSCs. While SFSCs functioned as the greater field for this research to fit in, the conclusions which will be presented here are not to be generalized for SFSCs in total. This reflects the belief of the author that each of the alternative food network initiatives which belongs to the category that is SFSCs, should be researched independently due to the complete lack of common ground between some of these initiatives. That is why the research focused solely on CSA, devising an analytical framework for exploring empowerment, based on the assumption that the goal CSA producers wish to achieve through the exercise of power CSA is able to grant them, is as simple as solidifying their transition away from the CFS. Though surely one-sided, taking into account that CSA is considered to be highly idealistically driven and more of a movement than a business strategy, such an assumption was justified.

Following this assumption, the research meant to shed light in the ways CSA is able to empower producers in solidifying their transition away from the CFS. CSA presents producers with opportunities that are not common in other conventional or even alternative market channels. First and foremost, CSA farmers are presented with a space where they can regularly be in contact with their members either physically or digitally potentially influencing them and spreading the word regarding food sustainability and the need for a transition. In this way, producers are in a position to exercise ideological power to achieve their assumed goal. Members of CSA farms though, are mainly interested to receive a service, namely the provision of food. Through the exercise of physical power, CSA producers are able to provide their members with food outside the conventional market channels, reducing their participation in the CFS and thus challenge the dominance of the Empire. In addition, a CSA producer, due to the independence characterizing him/her, is free to further disempower the current food regime by siding with actors previously affiliated with the CFS, forming synergies and gathering allies, exercising in this way political power. Finally, CSA farmers have a much higher bargaining and decision-making freedom compared to conventional farmers, making it easier for them to diversify their income sources through various activities apart from the membership fees, which provides them with a higher chance of improving their livelihoods.

Although the above different pathways in which CSA is able to empower producers are certainly true, they function more as possibilities for CSA farmers rather than actual opportunities. What is meant by this, is that often the legal and political structural obstacles CSA farmers face, as well as the need to self-exploit themselves to be productive, do not give them many choices but to misuse the opportunities CSA offer for exercising power in a transformative way. When producers are empowered by CSA, it is mainly because of themselves and not the mechanisms that CSA grants them, since they are the ones that think of innovative new ways to make use of them. Even the success of a few CSA initiatives in such a hostile environment though, is a sign of hope for what CSA could help

producers achieve in a future where this strategy is accepted and promoted by the state as conventional farmers are today.

All in all, CSA does indeed offer producers mechanisms to exercise power in a manner that is able to challenge the status quo. In order for them to do so however, they must most of the times sacrifice their personal interests (self-exploitation), many times through creating new strategies to mobilize the relevant available CSA resources. Therefore, the truth is that CSA farmers can only be guerilla fighters in the “impossible” battle for dominance between the Peasantry and the Empire, but unlike other market channels, CSA gives them the ability and freedom to actually fight.

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8. Appendixes

Appendix I

1. What is your role in the farm?
2. What was the reason for starting “farm name”?
3. What are the goals/philosophy of the farm?
4. In which ways are you trying to make the farm known to a larger audience (marketing)?
5. If I was to become a member, which would be my obligations?
6. How do the products reach the members?
7. Who is responsible for the heavy agricultural labor in the farm?
8. To what extent are members necessary for the farm to produce food (practically in the sense of labor)?
9. What types of products do members receive? Vegetables only or also other?
10. What is the situation with the land on which you function (owned, rented)?
11. Do you try in any way to make the farm accessible to people with a lower income?
12. Apart from members, does the initiative collaborates with other businesses or people (e.g. restaurants)?
13. Apart from the membership fees, what other supplementary sources of income does the initiative have (if it has any)?

Appendix II

The information from our interview will be used for the academic purposes of my research, which could even result in their publication. During this process you have every right to remain anonymous and even revoke (cancel the use) of the data.

If you agree, please send as a response “I agree”.

Appendix III

- Ideological Power
 - Food Sustainability Information
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative
 - Communication Techniques
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative
 - Farm’s Business Plan
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative

- Physical Power
 - Land
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative
 - Volunteers
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative
 - Products
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative

- Political Power
 - Members
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative
 - Collaborating Parties
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative

- Economic Power
 - Income
 - ◆ Reinforcive
 - ◆ Transformative