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TITLE PAGE

Title

Sustainability transformations in the balance: Exploring Swedish initiatives challenging the corporate food regime

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Abstract

This paper explores to what extent organic initiatives that go beyond mainstream organic (so-called Organic 3.0) can challenge the corporate food regime and how they can push the food system towards sustainability transformations. We depart from the assumption that individual initiatives may differ in their potential to influence the corporate food regime and that this potential can be assessed by examining traits linked to reformist, progressive or radical food regime/food movement trends that they may possess. Rather than establishing a dichotomy between niche and food regime or categorising Organic 3.0 initiatives within one of these trends, we explore the nuances in niche-regime relationships within the food system from a multi-level perspective, using the cases of two Organic 3.0 initiatives in Sweden. The results show that relations between these initiatives and the food regime share key characteristics, but also differ in important respects. While a reformist strategy facilitates niche growth, progressive and radical approaches are more likely to challenge the regime. The choice of approach in both cases involves trade-offs between growth and organic values. We conclude that one of the primary roles of Organic 3.0 initiatives may be to illustrate the viability of alternative models.

Keywords

Organic 3.0 initiatives, food regimes, sustainable food systems, sustainability transformations, multi-level perspective (MLP), Sweden

Introduction

In the present context of compounded environmental, climate, socio-economic and geo-political crisis, there is a need for radical, systemic sustainability transformations (Olsson, Galaz, & Boonstra, 2014; Raskin et al., 2002), not least in the global food system (Hinrichs, 2014; Marsden, 2013). This system faces a ‘quadruple squeeze’ from anthropogenic climate change, increased population and development pressures, ecosystem crises and the risk of transgressing the safe operating space of the Earth system (Rockström & Karlberg, 2010). The requirement for a sustainable food system that meets the dietary needs of the world’s population will not be met by business-as-usual production in industrialised agriculture (IAASTD, 2008).

Organic agriculture challenges the conventional food system and suggests alternative, environmentally and socially benign ways of producing food (Allen & Kovach, 2000; Dantsi, Loumou, & Giourga, 2009; Goldberger, 2011). The first wave of organic farming, ‘Organic 1.0’, driven by organic pioneers and emerging about a century ago, led on to the emergence of a common organic movement from the 1970s and onwards. This movement, ‘Organic 2.0’, currently forms the organic mainstream and is characterized by reliance on organic standards and certification. It constitutes a niche in the overall food system, but this niche is growing and diversifying. Mainstream organics is being challenged by ‘Organic 3.0’, which aims for a new level of sustainability, complementing previous approaches with a stronger focus on systemic impact in terms of health, ecology, fairness and care (Arbenz, Gould, & Stopes, 2015; Gould, 2015). A multitude of emerging Organic 3.0 initiatives are part of wider food movements to varying degrees, and embedded within the social economy (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). Thus Organic 3.0 can be seen as a ‘niche within a niche’, proposing reinterpretation of sustainability and of what organic agriculture should be about.

A sustainability transformation requires change on multiple levels (Olsson et al., 2014). In other words, macro, meso and micro levels need to be connected. Macro-level pressures such as climate change and resource depletion can be leveraged by micro-level niches in challenging dominant meso-level regimes (Darnhofer, 2015; Marsden, 2013). However, niches can also be challenged from within, as in the case of Organic 3.0 challenging mainstream organics.

The current global food system is dominated by a corporate food regime characterised by prevailing neoliberal and reformist trends (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). Mainstream organics occupies a niche within this system, whereas Organic 3.0 initiatives are linked to progressive and radical trends within the global food system that aim for “metamorphosis” (Gould, 2015, p. 140) of the organic approach and of the overall system.

Thus, alternative food practices are emerging within the global food system (Davidson, Jones & Parkins, 2016), creating a niche encompassing organic farming and organic food initiatives challenging mainstream conventional agriculture (Allen & Kovach, 2000; Dantsi, Loumou, & Giourga, 2009; Goldberger, 2011). However, such practices and initiatives struggle to influence the overall regime (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). The questions we explore in this paper are what potential influence Organic 3.0 initiatives can have on the corporate food regime, how they can push both the organic niche and the overall food system towards sustainability transformations, and whether various initiatives differ in their potential in this

regard. We operationalise these questions by analysing two Organic 3.0 food initiatives in Sweden along two dimensions: their position within major food regime/food movement trends (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011) and their transformational potential in terms of influencing the organic niche and corporate food regime (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). In turn, we operationalise the first dimension through analysing the basic orientation of the initiatives, their beneficiaries, their geographical scope, the solutions they provide and the types of food they advocate (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011), and the second dimension through analysing the potential of the initiatives to influence the organic niche and corporate food regime through growth, replication, learning and questioning the regime (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Our assumption is that individual Organic 3.0 initiatives influence the organic niche and corporate food regime differently by possessing traits attributable to more or less reformist, progressive and radical trends (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). We explore differences between cases by studying individual initiatives at the micro level, where contrasts can be discerned, making the link between the meso (regime) and micro (niche initiative) levels, applying a multi-level perspective (Darnhofer, 2015; Geels, 2011; Marsden, 2013).

Transformation of the corporate food regime

Acknowledging the urgent need for transformations to sustainability (Olsson et al., 2014; Raskin et al., 2002) raises the question of how change can come about. Within transitions thinking, the multi-level perspective (MLP) explains change in terms of interactions between landscape, regimes and niches (Darnhofer, 2015). Understanding the possibilities for change requires analysis of all three levels. While climate change, environmental degradation and food insecurity are central issues in the current food landscape, the role of niches in spurring transformation through social innovation and the introduction of novelties is a key concern in the MLP (Marsden, 2013; van der Ploeg et al., 2004). Transitional processes require “the gradual but persistent creation” of niches (van der Ploeg et al., 2004, p. 10). Situated between landscape and niches, the “regime level is of primary interest, because transitions are defined as shifts from one regime to another” (Geels, 2011, p. 26). The current food regime experiences pressure from the macro (landscape) and micro (niche) level, in terms of crisis and innovative disruption, respectively (Marsden, 2013). To identify ways in which niches could influence or shift the dominant food regime, closer analysis of the prevailing regime and its counter-movements is required.

The corporate food regime can be characterised as a “rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale” (Friedmann, 1993, pp. 30–31), underpinned by neoliberal policies and corporate domination (McMichael, 2014). Thus, in addition to the “tangible and measurable” components of a system, a regime also encompasses “intangible and underlying deep structures”, such as norms and beliefs (Geels, 2011, p. 31). Growing opposition to the corporate food regime can be seen as intrinsic to the regime, bringing with it the emergence of progressive and radical alternatives (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011), thus providing potential for transformation (Bernstein, 2015). According to Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) the corporate food regime is based on *neoliberal* and *reformist* trends, while emerging food movements represent *progressive* and *radical* trends (Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

The *neoliberal* trend is global in scope and dominates the corporate food regime. It is characterised by corporate concentration and deregulation of global markets, with its proponents advocating increased industrial production and high-input agriculture. The food

produced through the neoliberal model is industrial food for mass global consumption (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). The *reformist* trend supports partial regulation of markets, maintenance of agricultural subsidies and certification of niche markets, such as organic, fair trade and local food. Farmers of the Global North benefit from the reformist trend through subsidies. The geographical scope of the reformist approach is global, but also regional (e.g. European Union), national and local. It promotes industrial, quality food and food production under various forms of certification (2011). While it strives to modify the food regime through reform, it represents “a fine-tuning of the neoliberal project rather than a substantive change of direction” towards sustainability transformations (2011, p. 124).

The *progressive* trend advocates regulated markets and solidarity to enable empowerment of farmers, farming communities and agricultural workers. It has a focus on the local level and is promoted by food justice, family farming and agro-ecological movements. Key considerations include the right to food, sustainably produced local food and improved social conditions for workers and communities (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). In terms of food, it emphasises agro-ecologically produced, good, clean and fair food, pleasure, quality and authenticity. The *radical* trend aims at transforming the entire global food system. It “seeks deep, structural changes to food and agriculture” and demands “a radical transformation of society” (2011, p. 128). It is represented primarily by food sovereignty movements and its main beneficiaries are peasants, small-scale farmers and farming communities. It embraces the idea of local and regional food systems. Radical food movements support the dismantling of corporate monopolies and power, the introduction of democratic control over the food system, wealth redistribution, land reform, agroecology and climate action. In terms of food, the radical approach emphasises agro-ecologically and sustainably produced food.

Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) place the progressive and radical trends of global food movements beyond the corporate food regime, “not because they are separate, autonomous or somehow autarchic, but in order to assess their potential to influence the regime” (2011, p. 116). They argue that social movements part of progressive and radical trends within the food system need to exert joint “social pressure” and advance common political goals to bring about change (2011, p. 136). Similarly, Geels (2010) argues that transitions to sustainability in terms of resolving global environmental problems require the involvement of social movements and public opinion.

The categorisation by Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) of organisations striving for community benefit as progressive or radical movements closely relates to Seyfang & Smith’s (2007) notion of “the social economy” as an alternative niche where surplus is reinvested rather than appropriated by capital. From the MLP, the social economy can be understood as a niche where “the rules are different” (2007, p. 591). Niches offer protected spaces (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012) facilitating approaches based on alternative “social, ethical and cultural rules” (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). However, it is questionable whether rules can be truly different under a hegemonic regime, illustrating the paradoxical relationship between niche and regime. The niche can be seen as both separate from, and part of, the regime, since by building alternatives niches are intrinsically linked to the regime (Bernstein, 2015). Pressure from niches on the regime can take several forms (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Growth can occur through scaling up of individual initiatives within a niche, existing initiatives within the niche can be replicated and emergence of a multitude of initiatives can generate cumulative change. Furthermore, ideas and practices emerging within the niche can be translated into the regime. Finally, learning within a niche can be transferred to the regime or used to question its very existence (2012). Niche influence on the regime depends on the potential of alternative

niche initiatives to inspire other initiatives to follow their example and on their capacity to illustrate their viability as alternative models (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002).

Resistance to the hegemonic food regime is exerted by a multitude of food movements, including the organic movement. However, organics exists mainly within the reformist strand of the corporate food regime, where its transformational capacity is debatable (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). The heated discussion about conventionalisation of organic agriculture is a case in point (see Goldberger, 2011; Schewe, 2014, for reviews). The ‘conventionalisation hypothesis’ states that organic farming is moving away from ecological integrity, progressive values and transformational potential. Others report a bifurcation of the organic movement, with the part that remains non-conventionalised still celebrating artisanal production, local markets and deeply-held values (Goldberger, 2011). However, the validity of these claims and the usefulness of binary thinking have been questioned (Rosin & Campbell, 2009; Schewe, 2014). Instead, Rosin & Campbell (2009) call for more complex theoretical frameworks to analyse the worlds of organic agriculture, as attempted in this study.

A wide range of organic initiatives and enterprises claim to go beyond current organic standards towards Organic 3.0, which in a European Union (EU) context means exceeding EU organic regulations. Consequently, Organic 3.0 can be seen as an emerging ‘alternative within the alternative’, or ‘niche within a niche’. Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) describe food movements as alternatives to the corporate food regime. However, Organic 3.0 is not simply a food movement, but rather a multitude of alternative food initiatives that are part of wider food movements to varying degrees (Davidson et al., 2016). Shared features of Organic 3.0 initiatives are their positioning within the social economy, where surplus is reinvested within the initiative (Seyfang & Smith, 2007), and their commitment to deeper sustainability (Gould, 2015).

To enable transformations towards a sustainable food system, the Organic 3.0 niche needs to influence both the wider organic niche and the overall regime. Such influence may take the form of “linking” or “anchoring”, whereby novel practices are translated into the wider niche or regime (Elzen, van Mierlo, & Leeuwis, 2012). This transformational development has been described as turning organic farming into “the mainstream choice for agriculture (...) but also its leading edge” (Gould, 2015, p. 137), i.e. transforming the regime towards organic, while at the same time moving Organic 2.0 towards Organic 3.0. In analysis of this multifaceted, multi-level process, we move from the niche to the level of individual Organic 3.0 initiatives, which can be seen as niche ‘actors’. Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) argue that individual initiatives can exert meaningful (joint) pressure on the regime only through contributing to the joint social movement of progressive and radical initiatives. Thus the transformational potential of an individual initiative depends on its approach (cf. Bui, Cardona, Lamine, & Cerf, 2016). The potential of Organic 3.0 niche initiatives for growth, replication, learning and questioning the regime (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012) may therefore depend on their reformist, progressive and radical traits. Identifying reformist, progressive and radical features of different initiatives can reveal their potential to influence the food regime and help achieve transformations towards sustainability.

Organic farming in Sweden

Since 1970, the number of farms in Sweden has halved, farm size has grown significantly and production volumes and productivity have increased (Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2015). However, rural and regional development policies, partly linked to Sweden’s EU

membership, are bringing change and the emergence of a “new Swedish rurality”, characterised by farm diversification, increasing part-time farming, appreciation of quality food and expanding rural tourism and local food (Rytönen, 2014). The organic food movement emerged in the 1980s from recognition of escalating environmental problems and heightened food quality concerns. An important organic actor in Sweden is KRAV (founded 1985), which sets standards that go beyond EU organic regulations, especially in terms of energy efficiency, animal welfare and workers’ rights (KRAV, 2016).

In 2006, a policy stating that at least 20% of Sweden’s agricultural land should be certified organic by the end of 2010 was introduced (Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 2006). This target was not met and overarching political targets for organic production or consumption are currently lacking (Ekologiskt forum, 2014). In 2013, the share of organic land and land under conversion was 16.5% (Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2014), which is the second highest proportion in the EU (Willer & Schaack, 2015). The market share of organic food products was 7.7% in 2015, after two years of significant growth: 39% in 2015 (Ekoweb, 2016) and 38% in 2014 (Ekoweb, 2015). Growing demand for organic produce has led to shortages (2015). The organic movement in Sweden has consistently aimed for united action (using the KRAV label), linking up with retailers rather than developing separate organic systems for processing and marketing (cf. Ekologiskt forum, 2014). Apart from farmers’ markets and internet-based alternatives, fully organic food networks are rare. Consequently, large-scale retailers dominate, with three major retail chains accounting for over half of organic food sales (Ekoweb, 2015).

Methodology

The present analysis is based on empirical case studies on two organic food initiatives in Sweden: Ekolådan (EL) and Upplandsbondens (UB). A full account of the two cases can be found in Milestad and von Oelreich (2015a, 2015b).

EL is a KRAV-certified fruit and vegetable box scheme run by the non-profit foundation Biodynamic Products¹ (BP), based 40 km south-west of Stockholm. BP is the overarching business and decision-making unit. EL was launched as a project within BP and delivered its first boxes in autumn 2003, to its target group consisting primarily of households in the Stockholm region (Ekolådan, 2014). In the BP/EL food network farmers deliver fruit and vegetables to the BP wholesaler and EL buys some of these for its boxes. Thus BP/EL has sole control over the whole post-production network. Apart from EL, BP comprises three parts: a wholesaler, a trading company and two production units.

UB is a farmer-owned cooperative established in 2006. It has approximately 100 members, all KRAV-certified meat producers in Uppland province north of Stockholm. UB has no employees, but certain members have salaried positions on the board. Its main objective is to offer its members the best possible price for organic meat and ideally to sell it under its own brand, *Upplandsbondens*. It seeks to keep meat production, processing and consumption within the region and only such meat products can be labelled Upplandsbondens. UB negotiates prices and seeks market solutions for its members. It also cooperates with a number of KRAV-certified farmers in mid-north Sweden, bringing their products to market. The overall UB food network comprises: farmers, the UB cooperative (where only farmers are members), slaughterhouses, meat wholesalers, retailers and consumers. The largest volumes of meat are channelled via a national meat wholesaler to supermarkets throughout Sweden

¹ Stiftelsen biodynamiska produkter, in Swedish.

under a large retailer's own organic brand, and thus this meat cannot be identified as UB meat. A smaller volume is processed in cooperation with a local meat processor and sold in Uppland only. This meat carries the UB label. However, cooperation with the local processor has been compromised by diverging ideas on the importance of organic production. Limited volumes of UB meat are sold directly to consumers in meat-boxes, to a restaurant wholesaler or through public procurement processes.

Our research, conducted in 2014–2015, mainly consisted of semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) with central respondents within EL and UB, together with analysis of key documents and websites. We conducted 15 interviews with nine respondents holding key positions. The five respondents from BP/EL worked as: project developer for EL and chair of BP's board (abbreviated EL1); newsletter writer and former quality manager (EL2); senior purchaser (EL3); farmer delivering to BP/EL (EL4); and customer service manager (EL5). The four respondents from UB were: co-founder, farmer and treasurer of UB (UB1); CEO of UB's local processor partner (UB2); and co-founders and farmers (two respondents, UB3 and UB4). Having identified one important respondent for each case study, we used a snowball sampling technique to identify further interviewees (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), whereby the two central respondents were asked to identify other possible respondents, including people who might present contrasting information. This, in combination with repeated interviews with EL1, UB1 and EL4, allowed iterations and gave a rich picture of each initiative.

An interview guide was developed, covering questions on the organisation, aims, development and history of each case, and issues relating to the overall food system. Eleven of the 15 interviews were held in person and four by phone. Follow-up questions were asked by e-mail or telephone. All but two interviews were held in 2014, recorded and fully transcribed. The last two interviews were carried out in March 2015, at UB's annual meeting, where we took notes.

We analysed the empirical material collected in interviews and documents for the presence of main features of the food regime/food movement trends suggested by Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) (see Figure 1). To explore what food regime/food movement trends the studied initiatives can be attributed to, our analysis considered the basic orientation of the initiatives, the beneficiaries, the geographical scope, the solutions they provide and the types of food they advocate. To assess their transformational potential, the initiatives were analysed in terms of key ways in which niches can influence a regime, i.e. growth, replication, learning and questioning the regime (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

Results from the case studies

Ekolådan

EL experienced a process of initial growth in 2003–2009, followed by decline and stabilisation. It supplied 4500 home-delivered boxes per week at its peak before rapidly declining to half that level, for three reasons: i) some customers could not afford to continue buying boxes after the economic crisis 2008/2009; ii) improvements in the range of organic produce in mainstream supermarkets; and iii) increased competition from other home-delivery initiatives. The number of boxes has stabilised at around 2600/week (2015). Turnover rose from 7.4 to 25.5 million SEK/year between 2005 and 2014, with a peak of 33 million SEK in 2008. Thus, EL has not grown in pace with the overall organic market in Sweden.

In the 1990s, before EL was launched, BP was the only available supplier of organic food for a large mainstream retailer. However, as soon as the retailer developed its own organisation and supply network, it ended its contract with BP. Practices pioneered by BP were thereby transferred into the mainstream regime, while BP moved on to a new niche:

We pioneered organic meat... we were the first to pack [organic] vegetables to all wholesalers in Sweden... this is the way it has been with lots of things all the time, we pioneered organic bananas... then the big ones come and push [us away] and then you have to move forward... (EL1)

When EL proved successful, many other box schemes replicated its home-delivery model. However, most of the boxes in these schemes supply consumers with ingredients for pre-determined dinners or their own choice of produce. EL decided not to follow this path, instead cultivating its direct relationship with farmers and letting availability decide the content of its boxes:

A lot of trends emerged all the time and we looked at our competitors: 'Wow, they have dinner bags too, wow they have a raw food bag, they have a green drinks box', and this is when I felt 'no, this is not my thing... I want fresh produce... We wanted to keep the possibility to plan with our growers. (EL2)

EL seeks to control its own chain, from producer to consumer, and to guarantee full transparency along the entire chain. Customers receive a newsletter with every box, listing the farmer and farm location for all delivered produce and raising awareness on issues such as agroecology, sustainable food systems, environmental protection and concentration of agri-food power. Thus, the newsletter is partly used to question the corporate food regime. EL boxes contain only organic produce. While relying on niche market certification (BP is a KRAV-certified business), EL does not put organic or other labels on its boxes, aiming for independence from mainstream tools such as certification:

We have never wanted to bind ourselves to any label. For us as a specialist dealer, labelling has lost its significance since both KRAV and the Fairtrade label, oh – even worse – have actually become labels for the conventional industry. Then a small cutting edge enterprise like us, why should we have the same label as Chiquita? Dole Fruit, Philip Morris, whatever they are called, they all have these labels, so why should we have them? That gives us no profile. (EL1)

The non-profit foundation structure of BP/EL is a rare business model in Sweden. Its main goals are to avoid speculation and strive for long-term thinking (EL1). BP has built and maintains control over an independent food chain all the way from long-term farmer partners, via the BP wholesaler and distribution, to direct delivery to consumers' doors. Customers buy boxes directly from EL, without intermediaries. Thus, BP and EL have fully 'opted out' of the retail system and use their own supply chain where possible. For example, BP has established direct contact with banana farmers: "[BP/EL is] the only customer for 350 small-scale banana farmers in the Dominican Republic and that is a gigantic responsibility" (EL1). BP/EL is committed to buying from these farmers over the longer term, as a practical way of supporting sustainable livelihoods. There is awareness within EL of the power of major retailers and wholesalers and the increasingly fierce competition from retailers as they have expanded their

organic ranges. However, expanding access to organic products is considered positive, since it develops the organic market overall and is in line with BP's aims to support organic farmers.

State support for organic farming was crucial for the emergence of EL. Thus, a solution used by the mainstream agriculture sector was also used by EL: "That we could create Ekolådan in the first place built upon something quite historic – we received half the project budget [from the EU via the Swedish Board of Agriculture]" (EL1).

The BP foundation provided financial support for EL until it turned a profit. The foundation has launched several non-profit initiatives, e.g. an apple farm: "We have this apple farm ... that we try to save ... crazy in terms of profitability but enormously important culturally and ecologically, for [the foundation's] paragraph 1" (EL1). Pursuing ideologically motivated projects without the prospect of profits goes beyond mere business considerations.

EL strives to introduce social solutions to the food system, by "providing consumers with organic and biodynamic food of high quality, in a way that gives growers the possibility to continue to develop" (Ekolådan, 2014). Its parent, BP, aims to "support biodynamic/organic farmers by making their products easily available to all consumers, so that the farmers get a market and a serious and long-term partner" (Stiftelsen Biodynamiska Produkter, 2014). Thus, EL promotes high-quality organic food and highlights "freshness" and "quality" (EL1), "fairness" (EL2), and connectedness between farmers and consumers. It aims for authenticity by including the names of growers in the newsletter accompanying each box. It also aims at enhancing the quality of food in its boxes through a high level of associated "service and simplicity" (EL1) to customers, not least in terms of home delivery and a responsive customer service (EL5). EL's approach to quality relates to the 'high-end' segment of the market.

EL engages in trade beyond the local level, especially in fruit, but is committed to a local food systems model whenever possible. Our interviewees emphasised that farmers in both the Global North and the South should benefit from BP/EL operations. In terms of farmer benefit, EL is prepared to pre-finance farmers' production, facilitating their planning (EL3). Moreover, it pays farmers slightly above the reference prices for fruits and vegetables in Sweden (EL1). The senior purchaser of BP/EL seeks mutual benefit: "It is not a combat, I try to work with trust, so that [farmers] do not exploit me, or the opposite" (EL3). Furthermore: "I think in the long run getting the lowest possible price is not beneficial, it does not really work. Then [farmers] go to someone else and I have no security, so I might have no onions" (EL3). However, the farmer interviewed argued that prices do not cover the extra costs involved in biodynamic farming: "in fact it is an almost impossible situation since we never get the price that we would need considering the concept we have when we farm biodynamically" (EL4).

In conclusion, BP/EL follows an alternative approach and aims at controlling its own food chain, from producer to consumer, setting the initiative apart from the wider organic niche and the overall regime.

Upplandsbondens

UB reflects the trend of increasing organic sales in Sweden. It has grown from 11 to 107 members (2014), with most organic meat farmers in Uppland being members. Turnover rose from about 2 to over 24 million SEK/year between 2007 and 2013. However, UB has experienced significant obstacles in reaching consumers with its own local brand. The main

challenge has been finding suitable partners sharing UB's values and willing to use the UB label. Its local processor partner introduced UB's KRAV-certified products into its range not through sharing UB's commitment to Organic 3.0, but rather for pure market considerations: "[Marketing] conventional meat in combination with a KRAV-labelled range... is a significant advantage. We are much stronger as an actor on the market if we have both conventional and KRAV [products]" (UB2).

UB cooperates with a large mainstream wholesaler, through which it sells around 80% of its meat. Together with its partners in mid-north Sweden, UB has shown that scaling up has a tangible impact on the mainstream food system. The volumes of organic meat it provides to its wholesaler partner have increased the amount of organic meat available to consumers at retail. UB's national wholesaler partner requires delivery of at least 1000 animals per year and puts pressure on UB to increase this number, which decreases UB's possibilities to develop its independent brand. UB faces a conflict between delivering enough to its wholesaler partner and keeping enough animals to sell under its own label:

We cannot promise [our partner] more than 1000 to 1200 of our 2000 animals and they think this is bordering on too little... They tell us 'well, [if you cannot deliver] then we will buy animals from other producers...' (UB1)

Thus, UB tries to balance supplying the retailer with large volumes of meat and developing its own label, which decreases dependence on one wholesaler:

We have always had the principle that we should not end up in the lap of [our wholesaler partner], that is very risky. We need an independent brand... [Our aim is to]... create demand for our label... otherwise we are totally doomed. (UB1)

However, UB does not want to control its own food network, but prefers to specialise in primary production and collaborate with suitable market partners. Initial ideas about setting up an independent organic store selling members' products were abandoned due to lack of resources and capacity; "none of us farmers could cope with it, it would take an incredible amount of work" (UB1).

UB initially spread knowledge about organic production through cooperation with its partner wholesaler. When that partner ventured into the organic niche it had no expertise of its own on organic meat, but UB helped educate key people within the wholesaler in handling organic meat; "We taught them everything about KRAV, they did not know anything about KRAV and organics before" (UB1).

UB goes beyond EU organic regulations in being KRAV-certified. UB rests on KRAV-certified production, animal welfare and landscape stewardship through grazing natural pastures. These aspects are highly valued by UB members and are important elements of its profile beyond Organic 2.0:

Our philosophy has always been that what binds the farmers to Upplandsbondens is... the interest in creating an independent brand and the joy in seeing your animals treated well. This has been decisive for farmers joining Upplandsbondens. (UB1)

UB strongly promotes certification of its niche, both in terms of its regional organic label (Upplandsbondens) and the national organic label (KRAV).

While UB has quite weak links to wider food movements, it is connected to the farm cooperative movement in Sweden. Most UB members are members of the organic farmers' association and many are organic pioneers. As an organisation, UB is controlled through a cooperative structure. Everyone has one vote at the annual assembly. Cooperatives are a common organisational form for farmers in Sweden:

Traditionally we have used cooperatives among farmers and I think it is an unbelievably good form of association to engage in... We thought this was the best form, I think it is difficult with a company, there profits rule, here returning the most pay to the farmer is our main idea. (UB3)

However, values have sometimes been strained within the association, notably between those few members who want higher prices (which can be obtained through slaughter outside the region) and the majority for whom this would be unthinkable.

UB farmer interviewees emphasised the importance of solidarity with local farmers, since buying local products also benefits the wider rural community through feedback loops to local employment: "If Swedish farmers cannot sell [their organic products], if they do not get a good price, they will not buy any equipment, they will not buy any spare parts, and then you have no jobs... everything is connected" (UB3). As an organisation, UB networks with businesses such as restaurants, but also with other food actors, and some UB farmers have a long history of launching various organic food initiatives and of participating in farmers' markets.

In its early years, UB relied on state support from the EU, via the Swedish Board of Agriculture, which was decisive for its marketing endeavours. UB farmers' lack of resources and limited margins prevented them from investing in marketing and developing their own brand without state support:

That is a constant problem for farmers; bad economic conditions. Not many farms have the resources... we had too narrow margins and [without support] we could only have reached half-way... Thanks to the 'value-added support' from the Swedish Board of Agriculture, well the EU, we were able to invest money in [marketing], which was critical since it costs money to create a brand". (UB1)

The kind of food UB produces can be classified as 'high-quality food', sold primarily to consumers prepared to pay a premium for organic meat. UB meat is also sold as a high-end 'buy local' product to high-end restaurants in Stockholm. UB also focuses on meat quality and flavour and rearing animals on natural pastures:

When you buy meat from Upplandsbondens you get a tasty, high-quality meat, where the spice is the grass and herbs growing naturally, grazed in our beautiful landscape. The only additive we use is care for our animals. In summer our animals live and graze freely. In winter they often range outdoors, while having access to shelter from wind and rain. They have free access to hay or fodder made from grass and clover. (Upplandsbondens, 2016)

In terms of geographical focus, UB is committed to local production and a locally-oriented food system, where production and consumption take place within its geographical region. However, due to UB's dependence on mainstreaming, its local food system aspirations are only partly fulfilled in practice, as UB meat is sold all over Sweden. Thus, the intention to keep production, slaughter, distribution and consumption fully within the region has not been achieved, since some slaughter is done outside the region and since the bulk of the meat is sold beyond the region.

In summary, UB has achieved substantial growth through mainstreaming its products, securing benefits for its farmer members, while struggling to promote its own Organic 3.0 label.

Discussion

A transformational shift in the global food system is beyond the scope of individual food initiatives (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011), and requires political action (Scoones, Newell, & Leach, 2015). However, individual organic initiatives can contribute to change by pushing the organic niche and the overall food system towards sustainability transformations through demonstrating viable ways forward. The two food initiatives studied here share key characteristics in their relations with the corporate food regime, but also differ in important respects.

EL and UB operate in a food systems context where environmental landscape pressures are rising (cf. Marsden, 2013; Rockström & Karlberg, 2010). Both are alternatives to the dominant regime, spurring social innovation, but in different ways: EL has built a separate system based on social concerns all the way from producer to consumer, while UB farmers pioneered organic meat production in their region and the cooperative has managed to improve prices, and thus social conditions, for its members.

EL and its parent BP follow a progressive and partly radical approach and have kept their values over time. BP expresses its progressive approach through supporting organic growers, while EL has consistently followed an alternative 'separate niche' model. Although BP once tried to expand through mainstreaming, it has abandoned this approach. Being a foundation has facilitated investment in innovative projects, and BP has helped EL retain its ideals. EL's focus on quality food has helped it reach urban 'high-end' consumers, but it aims to introduce these consumers to Organic 3.0 food, demonstrating its progressive intentions. BP/EL questions both mainstream organic labels and the corporate food regime.

UB mainly follows a reformist approach based on mainstreaming, but with some progressive and radical traits relating to its ambitions for local production and consumption and its focus on solidarity within the cooperative, notably by securing the best possible price for its members. It could be argued that in trying simultaneously to follow reformist and (their preferred) progressive approaches, UB farmers have had to partly compromise their own values to reach profitability. Market possibilities push UB towards reformism, which is more profitable. Both dominant market actors and smaller partners to UB are conventional businesses and, in cooperating with such partners, the reformist logic limits UB's progressive and radical ambitions. However, UB has also actively chosen a reformist approach in terms of mainstreaming. It adheres to the idea that sustainably produced organic food should be found in ordinary supermarkets, to reach all consumers in society, which could be considered a

progressive stance. This explains UB's reformist approach, since building a separate food network would counteract its aim to mainstream into food chains already in place. Thus, UB can be said to apply a mainstreaming approach to achieve a progressive aim.

Although the food regime/food movements framework suggested by Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) provides analytical clarity and paints an overarching picture of the global food system and its contestations, its simplified representation of the system obscures some of the complexities involved. In one sense, alternatives such as EL and UB exist within the realm of the corporate food regime, regardless of their specific orientation, since they have to relate to the regime and its power relations and since the contradiction they express through building alternatives to the regime intrinsically links them to it (Bernstein, 2015). In another sense, EL and UB fall within the corporate food regime only when expressing neoliberal or purely reformist traits. EL and UB can be positioned beyond the corporate food regime, not because they are "separate, autonomous or somehow autarchic, but in order to assess their potential to influence the regime" (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 116). Furthermore, they can be positioned beyond the neoliberal trend, since they follow fully organic approaches and pursue social and environmental aims beyond profit. Making a distinction between EL and UB on the one hand, and the corporate food regime in general and the neoliberal trend in particular on the other, is illuminating. However, it is important to avoid over-simplification and recognise the hybridity of actual food initiatives. Both EL and UB show traits of several food system trends, but UB provides the clearest example of hybridity in straddling the reformist-progressive divide, showing that organic initiatives cannot be ascribed solely to one trend in the food system (cf. Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011).

Through their emphasis on a wider understanding of organic food, both EL and UB approach Organic 3.0, which overlaps with the progressive and radical trends in the food system (cf. Gould, 2015; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). From this perspective, they can be seen as part of a 'niche within the niche' of organic food production in Sweden. As pointed out by Marsden, "social and governance innovation" in food system niches challenging the mainstream "may be crucial for regime change" (2013, p. 124). In addition to innovativeness, in order to succeed transitional processes also need to result in "persistent" niche creation (van der Ploeg et al., 2004, p. 10). This raises the question of what EL and UB have contributed to enduring Organic 3.0 niche creation.

Niche impact on the regime can take the form of niche growth, replication, learning and questioning the regime (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Regarding niche growth, the trajectories of EL and UB differ. The approach based on mainstreaming used by UB has facilitated its growth, while EL's separate system approach has limited its growth, but questions the regime and represents an innovative alternative model. UB has significantly influenced supply by offering large volumes of organic meat to its mainstream retail partners, thus expanding consumer access to organic products. However, this has partly compromised the Organic 3.0 identity of UB meat, since those products are sold without the UB label. Thus, regime influence on UB outweighs UB's influence on the regime and the extent to which UB has managed to sustain its 'niche within a niche' can be questioned, despite its intentions. Although UB's operations are not marginalised by the mainstream (cf. Marsden, 2013), its 'niche within a niche' existence is partly unaccomplished. Regime shift requires persistent niche development, so the transformational impact of UB to date can be seen as limited. EL, on the other hand, has managed to consolidate its 'niche within a niche' existence, but on a modest scale and with no growth during the second half of its existence.

In the context of organic food and farming, Allen & Kovach conclude that “Fundamental change... is not likely to occur through the market alone” (2000, p. 221). Thus, the potential influence of EL and UB on the corporate food regime is wider than their direct market impact. The primary role of Organic 3.0 initiatives may be to illustrate the viability of alternative models, since the “true measure of these alternatives might be the inspiration they give to others to envision an alternate way of being in the food system” (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002, p. 366). As models of inspiration, EL and UB might induce food systems change through replication (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). EL has significant potential for niche influence through replication, as few Organic 3.0 box schemes exist in Sweden. An emergence of multiple organic box schemes, together influencing the regime, might be preferable to growth of a single scheme. In this regard, BP has acted as a forerunner, pioneering alternative business models and projects (including EL).

For UB, replication has taken the form of incorporating farmers in mid-north Sweden under its umbrella, simultaneously amounting to a scale-up of operations. However, production growth has been swallowed by mainstream organic, preventing Organic 3.0 values being realised. As proposed by Elzen et al. (2012), the degree of linking and “anchoring” of innovative practices helps explain niche impact on the regime: EL has managed to anchor home-delivery boxes into the regime, but its Organic 3.0 values have not followed, while UB has managed to link strongly to the regime by delivering large amounts of organic meat into the mainstream, but Organic 3.0 values are hidden on the way. To anchor, or more robustly link, innovative social and sustainable practices with the regime, EL would need to grow or spur the development of initiatives sharing similar values, while UB would need to sell its products under its own Organic 3.0 label.

Both EL and UB have had an impact on the organic niche and the food regime. Although limited in scale, EL represents an alternative approach, questioning both Organic 2.0 and the regime. Through its growth, UB has widened consumer access to organic products, but translation of Organic 3.0 values into the wider organic niche and the regime has been limited. Thus, linking Organic 3.0 values to the wider niche and the overarching regime remains a challenge. In the case of EL, its separate system approach does not link up with the niche or regime. In the case of UB, while promoting organic production, its Organic 3.0 values are masked by interaction with the mainstream. Further research is needed on how different niche strategies can be combined to achieve the transformational aim of Organic 3.0 becoming “the mainstream choice for agriculture (...) but also its leading edge” (Gould, 2015, p. 137). Such transformation will require persistent ‘niche within a niche’ creation (cf. van der Ploeg, 2004), building Organic 3.0 values and translating them into the organic niche and the wider regime.

Conclusions: Enlarging the space for Organic 3.0

This study departs from the assumption that individual Organic 3.0 food initiatives, as a ‘niche within the organic niche’, may differ in their potential to influence the corporate food regime and that this potential can be assessed by examining traits linked to reformist, progressive or radical food regime/food movement trends that they possess. Rather than implying a simplistic dichotomy between niche and food regime or categorising initiatives with reformist, progressive or radical trends, we explored the nuances, complexities, hybridities and overlaps in niche-regime relationships within the food system from a multi-level perspective.

Organic 3.0 initiatives differ from each other, as illustrated here through application of the framework suggested by Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011). However, that framework does not describe how initiatives influence the wider organic niche or the corporate food regime. As explained by the multi-level perspective, social innovation (Marsden, 2013), and persistence are key to long-term niche creation (van der Ploeg et al., 2004). Persistent pursuit of Organic 3.0 and its novel interpretation of sustainability is required to build a solid sub-niche that can push the wider organic niche and the overall food system towards sustainability transformations. Although individual Organic 3.0 initiatives can influence the organic niche and the overarching regime, it is difficult to assess their overall influence on the regime. Nevertheless, from a sustainability transformations perspective, even small-scale change is valuable. No individual initiative can shift the regime, but “alternative movements should not be overlooked for their real work of protecting existing spaces of action or for creating or enlarging those spaces” (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002, p. 366).

Organic practices are collective. In aiming for sustainability transformations, initiatives such as EL and UB need to work with partners that share their values and forge “strategic alliances” with other actors in the food system (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 136). Moving towards Organic 3.0 will involve maintaining and deepening the qualitative edge of organic, while at the same time translating innovative social practices and values into the mainstream. This poses a considerable challenge, not least since edge and mainstream are often at odds, as shown in this paper. Further research is needed on the potential of a transformed, and broadly sustainability-oriented organic movement to organise, grow and flourish in the gaps of the corporate food regime, while gradually advancing in the direction of regime shift.

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List of figure captions

Figure 1. Simplified representation of the food regime/food movement framework proposed by Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011).