

Article

# Between Imitation and Embeddedness: Three Types of Polish Alternative Food Networks

Wojciech Goszczyński <sup>1,\*</sup>, Ruta Śpiewak <sup>2</sup>, Aleksandra Bilewicz <sup>2</sup> and Michał Wróblewski <sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University, 87-100 Torun, Poland; [michal.wroblewski@umk.pl](mailto:michal.wroblewski@umk.pl)<sup>2</sup> Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development, Polish Academy of Science, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland; [ruta.spiewak@irwirpan.waw.pl](mailto:ruta.spiewak@irwirpan.waw.pl) (R.Ś.); [ambilewicz@gmail.com](mailto:ambilewicz@gmail.com) (A.B.)\* Correspondence: [goszczynski@umk.pl](mailto:goszczynski@umk.pl); Tel.: +48-694617565

Received: 10 October 2019; Accepted: 3 December 2019; Published: 10 December 2019



**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to present the specific character of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Poland as one of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). We refer to the issue increasingly debated in the social sciences, that is, how to translate academic models embedded in specific social contexts to other contexts, as we trace the process of adapting ideas and patterns of AFNs developed in the West to the semi-peripheral context of CEE countries. Drawing on the theory of social practices, we divide the analysis into three essential areas: The ideas of the network, its materiality, and the activities within the network. We have done secondary analysis of the research material, including seven case studies the authors worked on in the past decade. We distinguish three network models—imitated, embedded and mixed—which allow us to establish a specific post-transformational AFN growth theory. Particular attention should be paid to the type of embedded networks, as they highlight the possibility of local and original forms of AFNs. Mixed networks show that ideas imported from abroad need to be considered in juxtaposition and connection with local circumstances.

**Keywords:** sustainable food systems; Central and Eastern Europe; imitation and embeddedness

## 1. Introduction

The development of sustainable food systems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have had a unique character. Along with the political and economic transformation from the communist regime to liberal democracy and a market economy in the early 1990s, these countries began to introduce a framework of food production and consumption based on a neoliberal economic model and technocratically defined innovations. In agriculture, the modernisation paradigm [1] has defined a policy that favours farm enlargement and capital-intensive farming over smaller, labour-intensive farms. At the same time, CEE countries, at least to some degree, have retained their own historically grounded practices of localised food chains that endured during communist rule [2–7]. Local marketplaces, direct food sale along driveways, informal food provisioning chains, small-scale food production on allotments, and self-processing of food have been important and visible elements of the food landscape. Along with those traditional practices, new alternative food networks (AFNs) have been emerging in recent years, mostly based on patterns derived from Western Europe and the U.S., and more or less deliberately adapted to the local context [8]. The paradox of building alternatives to the dominant food system in CEE countries entails tension between traditional, partially forgotten practices and new patterns based on regulations, and practices derived from other cultural and social contexts [6–9].

During the last few decades, growing consumer movements have been seeking high quality and more environmentally sustainable foods. AFNs have been an important part of this trend [10–13], as they have been defined as practices opposed to the mainstream, industrial food system. They are

centred around the notions of quality [14] and spatial [15]/social [16] embeddedness. AFNs represent a variety of structures, in fact, based on different values defining their specific goals. The common feature of these diversified arrangements of food distribution is that they reconnect consumers and food producers in a more direct way, unlike in the mainstream food distribution system, thereby creating both economic links and social bonds that constitute new social and organisational practices. These initiatives relate to the whole system of production, distribution and sale. Another common feature is emphasis on quality and methods of production, but not on prices. Moreover, consumers as participants of AFNs have a much more active role than in the case of the conventional food system. Most AFNs are quite new entities (e.g., Community Supported Agriculture; CSA). However, some recreate old patterns of food production and distribution (e.g., farmers' markets, family allotments). Thus, AFNs, to some extent, overlap with the traditional food networks.

Many researchers and practitioners assumed that unconventional food networks inherently offer economically, socially, and environmentally desirable outcomes, thus meeting sustainable development goals. However, existing research has shown that the declared aims of sustainability and social justice are not always met in practice [17–20]. In time, various weaknesses of AFNs became apparent, such as issues related to various kinds of exclusions, mainly economic exclusions of disadvantaged groups, the overestimated economic effect of the networks, and unclear ties to regional development concepts [13]. AFNs also undergo an intensive process of mainstreaming, as supermarkets have been including “alternative” products in their offer, and many initially grassroots AFNs have become commercialised. Analyses of AFNs touch upon various aspects of food regime change and the creation of innovative pathways in production paradigms, technical norms, patterns of interactions and routines. Moreover, AFNs are also associated with raising citizens' activism in negotiating economic regulations (food citizenship), issues of consumer empowerment and new forms of governance around the food system.

In this article, we rely on a secondary analysis of qualitative studies performed by each of the authors on different types of alternative networks in Poland, undertaken between the years 2011 and 2019. The aim of this paper is to capture the process of adapting ideas and patterns of alternative food networks created in the West to the semi-peripheral context of CEE countries with particular emphasis on Poland. In the course of the secondary analysis, we identify three types of alternative networks established in a semi-peripheral context: Imitated, embedded, and the mixed type. Based on this typology, we want to unpack the dynamics of relations between imitation and embeddedness influencing selected characteristics of CEE AFNs. At the same time, we strive to form a conceptual balance between an attempt to understand the specific nature of alternative food networks in CEE, and the need to enter into relationships with the global scientific discourse on sustainable food systems. We are influenced by the notion of “provincialised cosmopolitanism”, understood as engaging in dialogue through a series of local perspectives and theories [21,22]. We treat our analysis as an epistemological attempt to strike a balance between universal and embedded investigative tools and the research theories used.

### *1.1. Development of Alternative Food Networks in Poland*

While Poland, similarly to other CEE countries, has focused on modernising its agriculture and getting rid of the remnants of traditional, peasant agriculture considered ‘backward’ and ‘inefficient’ [23], some space for sustainable food systems have reappeared. Western AFN theories mostly describe new initiatives that emerged during the last thirty years. However, traditional ‘alternative’ food chains have existed in many CEE countries long before the term was proposed. Some of them arose in socialist times to meet daily needs when food supply was scarce [5]. In the socialist shortage economy [24], access to food was based on direct social relations and was complicated, semi-formal, and often involved illegal networks. Jung, Klein and Caldwell [5] remark that informal networks between peasants and consumers were raised out of necessity under conditions of the shortage economy and recurring problems with food supply. The period of ‘real socialism’ with its ‘structural production of mistrust’ to institutions [25] made people rely on personal bonds rather than institutional signs of quality.

Following this came economic transformation which started in 1989 and entailed a ‘shock therapy’, switching from the state’s planned economy to a free market economy by means of disruptive liberalising reforms that played a tremendous role also in consumption and food provisioning. The novelty of the free market in food supply that suddenly provided consumers with plenty of variety and foreign brands, along with the convenience of supermarkets, made it feel natural for consumers from the former Soviet bloc to embrace the conventional food system as modern, attractive and desirable. The ‘Western’ conventional way of shopping and consuming was associated with “normality” and has dominated the food system. However, the abovementioned informal networks are still a vivid phenomenon also in the post socialist context. Many people buy food directly from family or friends owning small farms [26], some also produce their own food in summerhouses or urban allotment gardens [27,28]. As a result, everyday choices regarding food during both socialist and post socialist periods, were shaped by the general distrust towards the state and its institutions [5]. This resulted, for example, in wariness towards ecological certification and the strong role of personal bonds with the food producer in Polish AFNs [8]. Therefore, the minor role played by official certification systems is a specific feature of CEE [29]. Research conducted in countries such as Latvia [30], Lithuania [31], and Russia [5] shows that informal networks of food provision are still present, although often illegal again, as the food sold does not meet strict regulations on food production.

The informality of alternative food practices was described by Smith and Jehlička [27] in the context of Czechia and Poland as ‘quiet sustainability’, and confirmed recently by new research [32] describing short food chains in Poland and Hungary as small-scale and based on trust, family and tradition. On the other hand, ‘alternative’ networks that are market- and profit-oriented are also being developed in CEE [28]. As an example, in assessing the quality of food, Poles pay particular attention to features such as lack of additives, price, taste or local origin. Nature-friendly standards, fair trade, or product uniqueness are much less frequently mentioned [33,34]. This is probably conditioned by the lower level of trust in public institutions inherent in this part of Europe [35].

The results of the specific historical background of the region are the complex behaviours of consumers. On one hand, the cosmopolitan tendencies typical for developed countries can be seen in the shift towards food that is of high quality, is more diverse and acts as a strong status marker. On the other hand, self-provision of food remains essential [4,5], with informal exchange networks [36–38] and various forms of direct sale [39] being an important feature of the social food landscape.

The potential disparity between food networks is also affected by the existence of two models of farming. A number of large farms, leveraging EU tools, financial assistance and able to compete on international markets, has arisen. They are complemented by small semi-subsistence farms that are not able to compete in the EU market or abide by hygiene practices that conform to EU requirements.

In semi-peripheral areas, such as Poland, AFNs imported from the West have sometimes proved to be weak, and their development very slow due to their elitist character, as well as incompatibility with local cultural norms and established practices [8,9,38]. In consequence, their sustainability is more of a project than reality. A deeper understanding on this phenomenon could facilitate a critical rethinking of social, cultural, and economic complexity of AFNs in CEE countries to help them move in the direction of a system that could be better adapted to the local context, and therefore more inclusive and genuinely sustainable.

### *1.2. Originality and Imitation in the AFN Model*

One of the largest paradoxes of alternative and sustainable food networks is the divergence between the universal nature of the model and its proposed local character. On one hand, local character and reference to universal impact is one of the key AFN features [40]. These are meant to guarantee access to food perceived as being of higher quality and originating from specific locations. At the same time, both the academic model and the development policies partially related thereto [41,42] appear to confine sustainable food to conceptual schemas that disregard the importance of local context. The alternative networks concept is strongly embedded in Anglo-Saxon and Mediterranean culture.

The basic AFN typology is based on differentiation between Northern and Southern European network types [43]. Calls for the need for bridging alternative food studies, found in literature, focus instead on merging events such as consumption and production, neglecting the importance of geographical [11] or organisational divisions. This leads to a situation in which the analysis of complex and, by definition, varied systems of sustainable, alternative food production, are limited to a few models typical for societies best represented in academic discourse. For example, studies on the types of analysed food networks show that researchers are most often studying initiatives such as CSA, farmers' markets, cooperatives, community gardens and solidarity purchasing groups (e.g., [44,45]). However, concepts and methodology tools arising in a different context do not always capture the right vocabulary to analyse the activities specific to certain societies. Limiting our argument to CEE examples, researchers who use conceptual frameworks originating from the centre [46] devote much less time to studies of AFNs such as allotments [47,48], self-subsistence networks [4], informal networks of exchange with family or close friends [36], foraging [49], or top-down networks such as local brands.

The geographical and class bias in AFN studies and the relating conceptual framework and methodologies favour the rise of the social and geographical knowledge gap that hinders the analysis of potentials and risks of AFNs in regions such as CEE [9]. This does not mean that there are no attempts to engage in dialogue between universal academic models and situated knowledge. Two sample concepts originating from the region in question are the quiet sustainability idea noted in the Introduction [27] and works on the folk turn (e.g., [6]). The first concerns the transformative, sustainable potential of everyday informal food practices such as processing own food, exchange of food with significant others, and use of home gardens and family allotments. Their change potential is realised despite the lack of direct references to the politically embedded sustainable development idea, as well as organised forms of protest or pressure on the authorities. Mamonova [6], based on studies conducted in Ukraine, points to the slightly different nature of AFNs, noting that alternative networks do not need to function in a progressive, civic context. In the view of the author, these networks are aligned with the popular, national awakening and are an attempt to reconstruct national and ethnic categories lost during the transformation process. In fact, researchers from CEE countries have already noted this split between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in food production [27].

It appears that the key to understanding the potentials and risks related to alternative networks lies in the ability to strike a balance between a universal model, and the rooting of knowledge and concepts concerning various classes or geographical areas. In this sense, both the model and its operationalisations must be based on a delicate equilibrium between borrowing and uniqueness. Researchers must therefore demonstrate a modicum of sensibility. Those originating from the centre must be wary of reproducing dominating narratives and concepts which may suggest defining situations in class or geographical terms. On the other hand, researchers hailing from semi-peripheries and peripheries are faced with a difficult task of engaging in a discussion and introducing their conceptual apparatus into a discourse dominated by the centre.

The tension between local and global models is not only a problem of academic frames. It also applies to the construction and everyday operation of AFNs. Networks located in semi-peripheral countries such as Poland [50] are characterised by a rupture between trends to imitate initiatives from Western Europe/USA or to reinforce local production/consumption patterns. In Poland or CEE countries, both types of food networks can be found. As an example, the Polish foodscape is well saturated with long-established, developed networks, such as food markets, informal exchange chains and allotments. At the same time, an explosion of new, borrowed initiatives can be observed. Purchase groups and CSA become an essential part of sustainable food system composition in the region.

In the following, we have distinguished three basic network types: Imitated, mixed, and embedded:

- (a) **Imitated AFNs:** These AFNs refer to the idea, organisation and implementation of sustainable food systems from Western Europe or the USA. Imitated AFNs are a more or less accurate copy of the initiatives typical for other countries. Examples of such AFNs are CSA, urban gardening and some food cooperatives.

- (b) **Mixed AFNs:** These are networks in which copied and traditional patterns are more or less equally balanced. Mixed AFNs often rely on local, rooted products but their distribution is based on imported models. Examples of such networks are local brands where new certification schemes support local farmers.
- (c) **Embedded AFNs:** These initiatives are based on everyday customs, traditions and consumption/production patterns. Tradition and locality do not refer only to food but also the way the network is organised. Examples of such networks typical for Poland or CEE countries include allotment gardens, informal exchange networks, or markets where daily food purchases are made.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this article, we refer to seven case studies (see Table 1) conducted by each of the authors on different types of alternative networks in Poland. Research carried out from 2011 to 2016 has been supplemented by studies conducted in 2019.

In order to make the best use of the materials we have and to fulfil the main aim of the article, which has been capturing the process of adapting ideas and patterns of alternative food networks created in the West to the semi-peripheral context of CEE countries, we have used the methodology of secondary analysis [51]. It involves the use of existing data, collected for the purposes of a prior study, in order to pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work; this may be a new research question or an alternative perspective on the original question [52]. In this respect, secondary analysis differs from systematic reviews and meta-analyses of qualitative studies which aim instead to compile and assess the evidence relating to a common concern or area of practice. The specific type of secondary analysis conducted here, is amplified sampling [53] and is meant to achieve other objectives than those set for primary research.

By combining knowledge from various sources, we were able to obtain greater saturation of data to make them more representative and have deep insight into the complex system of AFNs in Poland. Like every method, it is not free from defects and challenges, requiring, among others, an accurate interpretation framework or/and the distinct operationalisation of key issues. We are aware there are also other limitations of the method; for example, a problem with comparability, as the goals of the previous studies were slightly different, hence the interview scenarios also vary.

In our article, we refer to the following seven different case studies from various parts of the country (see Table 1). They are connected by the fact that all of them are different types of AFNs in the way we frame this notion (see Introduction). Each network has been researched using in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation and visual analysis. In total, one hundred interviews with consumers, producers and suppliers, as well as representatives of institutions collaborating with AFNs (e.g., local government bodies), have been held. Despite the fact that the specific goals of each study were different, the overall intention was to designate various forms of AFNs in Poland and show their developmental path as well as social and organisational structure. In each of the cases, we have used non-probability sampling, as the key goal was more discerning of the phenomenon, not a statistical inference.



**Table 1.** Brief description of cases studies included in the scope of paper.

Case	Dates of Research	Network Features	Research Features
Slow Food Convivium in Gruczno	2012–2014	A network bringing together consumers and producers interested in local, traditional high-quality food. An elitist, tradition-focused initiative.	Researches were conducted mostly at homes or outlets (restaurants/stores) of the Convivium members.
The Free Toruń Marketplace	2012–2014	A regular event organised by Toruń activists, combining the traditional marketplace formula with new content. An egalitarian and progressive initiative (leaders).	Field researches at the marketplace and interviews at homes of consumers and farms of food suppliers.
Eco-Museum of the Noteć Valley	2012–2014	A local brand bringing together high-quality food producers. An egalitarian, tradition-focused initiative.	Interviews and observations of producers (of honey, fudge, local products) on site plus researches of consumers met during sales.
The Toruń Fruit and Vegetable Market	2012–2014	A typical marketplace supplying food to Toruń inhabitants.	Interviews with consumers (at their homes) plus interviews with sellers and farmers. Additional observation rounds at the marketplace itself.
Community-Supported Agriculture ‘Dobrzyń nad Wisłą’	2012–2014	Community-supported agriculture, a system of relationships and food contracts between farmers and consumers.	Interviews with consumers (at their homes) plus observations during CSA activities.
Consumer Cooperatives	2011–2016 and 2019	Non-formal organisations based on radical ideas, located mostly in large cities, whose objective is to establish direct relations between local farmers/small producers and consumers. Healthy Bytów is a newly established cooperative in a non-typical small-town setting.	Interviews with producers and consumers. Observations during multiple meetings and events.
Malopolski Przełom Doliny Wisły Wine Growers Association	2019	An organisation with about 20 members in a specific geographical location (south-eastern Poland), established to promote and enhance the competences of members and, indirectly, their products.	Interviews with producers, consumers and local society. Observation during promotional events.

Source: authors’ own elaboration.

When organising the empirical material, we decided to look at AFNs through the prism of social practice theory. We were inspired by the definition of social practices proposed by Reckwitz [54] who underlined the meaning of social, material and spatial arrangements through which the social world is organised. In other words, we are treating social practices as a bundle of activities, things, places and people which together perform social reality. Social practices are defined here as actions carried out concerning things, symbols and interpretations [55]. Therefore, the empirical part is arranged according to the operationalisation drafted by Mylan [55]. Mylan underlines three aspects that comprise social practices: Values, know-how and materiality. To align our operationalisation with this concept, we decided to use the tripartite structure to present the results:

- (a) **Network ideas:** Values, motivations and knowledge that influenced the shape and structure of the examined networks.
- (b) **Materiality:** Physical objects, places and infrastructure that enabled or resulted from the network. In this point, we analysed food, packaging, production/sales/consumption spaces.
- (c) **Activities:** Specific actions of individuals involved in the investigated AFNs—methods of production, sales, consumption or the organisation of the network itself.

As Fonte notes, AFNs viewed through the prism of social practice theory are no longer a pure manifestation of individual activity or defence against the industrial system [44]. Rather, AFNs can be perceived as a complex social practice shaped by the cultural context, materiality, attitudes and knowledge of the individuals involved. Using the tripartite model, we analysed the imitated, embedded and mixed AFNs. The essential feature of this approach was its openness and performative nature. In the analysis, we let the actors speak while investigating the configurations emerging from the CEE AFNs' establishment and consolidation practices.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Network Ideas: Imitated, Mixed and Embedded

Starting the analysis from the imitated model, it is based on an attempt to transfer patterns observed in another (usually different) social and geographical context. The network organisers translate the initiative, products and relating practices into the Polish setting. In our studies, this model was more or less apparent in two initiatives, CSA Dobrzyń and the Malopolski Przełom Doliny Wisły Wine Growers Association. A feature common to these two networks, whose objectives, values, structures and scale vary, is an idea transferred from elsewhere. We quote a statement, typical for this initiative, from one of the producers in the wine growers on his inspiration to engage in the wine industry:

It all started quite long ago ... some 30 years. I am an architect by profession and designed wineries in France and Germany, that's where I met this setting, and then it was a hobby of a kind that kept on growing. I started to focus, not just on Western, but rather on Central Europe—Czech Republic, Hungary and so on, and finally decided that, basically, we can attempt something like this in Poland.

Although vines were cultivated in the area where the wine growers association operates as recently as 100 years ago, now those who engage in this activity have imported the idea, the necessary skills, and even some vine stock from beyond Poland's southern border. They do not mention local sources of knowledge found in this area, which may be because they are inaccessible or because the growers do not have ties to the region—all those we interviewed were born elsewhere. Transferring the network idea, in this case, took place because of contacts and communications with producers hailing from Western Europe. The Polish initiators, thanks to their experience, travels, and professional work, have produced a relatively accurate East European clone of the initiative. This even goes beyond wine—the producers are now attempting to establish a denomination, trying to reconstruct and graft the features assigned to transferred products onto the space of a specific region. In some sense, therefore, wine growing in Poland has a performative nature, as it consists of replaying and building imagined worlds. This remark is obviously equally applicable to each network we examined, but in the imitated model this replaying seems to be more pronounced, if only because of the non-embedded nature of the products or the related social practices.

The imitated model need not, however, involve so unambiguous a transfer from one cultural and social space to another. Of particular interest here is the example of CSA, which originally was a politically radical U.S. initiative involving producers and consumers in working on an agricultural farm. In Poland, this initiative was quickly transformed by the dominant free market rationality. CSA turned into an effective and efficient system of individual sales of produce by farmers directly to consumers. The social, political and cultural aspects of this kind of network have been relegated to the background. The following is a quote from a consumer regarding community-supported agriculture:

Honestly, you can't build stronger relations when you collect your parcel because it all goes so fast. You go there to pick it up. I usually go with my children, so one kid goes one way, the other goes the other way ... Some people keep coming whom I recognise but do not know

by name, most faces are familiar, we exchange friendly greetings and brief platitudes. On the other hand, there are hardly any deeper relationships here.

In this case, the relations are based on new media and virtual sales platforms, and often have a market nature without any ideological background. Thus, they require specific (for example, digital) competences, but are also adapted to a new group of consumers. Picking up boxes occurs at specific times when consumers arrive from work, in a location where they can park their cars, and the products themselves combine modern and traditional symbols—they can be ordered using a professional online store.

The other network type we identified is the mixed type, which we consider as combining external inspirations with conscious references to local traditions. Some networks in which this model predominates are top-down initiatives coming from public institutions, local government, or NGOs. This type merges rooting and references to regional traditions with the imitated network idea. In the analysed studies, this model was featured in the Eco-Museum of the Noteć Valley and the Gruczno Slow Food Convivium, as well as—with some reservations—food cooperatives, which are mostly informal initiatives referencing both Polish food cooperative traditions and inspirations by alternative Western cooperative movements, whose roots go back to the 1870s, and which experienced a resurgence following the 2008 crisis as the so-called new cooperativism [56].

The mixed model structure assumes overlapping of practices in specific networks. New, currently popular organisational forms are filled with products and activities typical for specific regions, groups, or traditions. The key role in this process is played by external animators that provide organisational forms to sustainable food initiatives. In a formalised mixed model, the shape and activities of the network are frequently dictated by public or non-governmental experts whose activities attempt to combine universal AFN frameworks with locally embedded products.

In the case of consumer cooperatives, which are informal and non-commercial projects meant to bring small rural farmers and processors closer to the urban intelligentsia and middle class consumers [57], the reference to tradition is combined with a loose, informal, and non-hierarchical structure typical of new social movements [38]. One of the interviewees, a member of the Łódź cooperative, characterised these ties as follows:

A form of consumer organisation similar to ours was common in pre-war Poland and is still popular in Western Europe and Northern America. We attempt to derive inspiration and make reference to the great traditions of the pre-war cooperative movement. We are a part of a resurging Polish movement, with similar cooperatives mushrooming in every city.

The initiators of cooperatives, initially with ties to niche anarchist and socialist organisations, referenced the largely forgotten pre-war traditions of Polish food cooperatives, which in the early 20th century, and especially in the war period, formed a significant social movement based on self-organisation of urban and rural consumers. The members of consumer cooperatives were particularly influenced by the principal Polish cooperative theorist, Edward Abramowski. As related by another Łódź Food Cooperative member:

I was inspired by the very idea of cooperativism... and the first book I came across was Abramowski's treatise on cooperatives where he described the activities of English food cooperatives... the state was greatly outpaced by the cooperatives, as they were a thing ahead of their times, forming something entirely new, and this idea of creating something new and independent, both from private institutions and charities and from state mechanisms, is what appeals to me as an anarchist, so a cooperative could be a means to put these utopias, these theories, into practice.

For them, drawing upon cooperative traditions meant restoring cooperatives as democratic non-profit organisations managed by their members, based on the ideas of solidarity and self-help, and avoiding intermediaries in food sales [38]. These rediscovered cooperative values have, however,



become blended with others, derived from an entirely different, Western and modern context, such as ecology, environmental protection, food quality, or the radically understood egalitarianism (the lack of hierarchy, not part of the tradition, and decision-making by consensus that now prevails in many new cooperatives [38]). Yet, in the consciousness of members, these values often form one inseparable whole—the historical and the local fused with the newer and more remote inspirations.

Describing the dynamics of mixing, we want to point out that food obtained from short food chains is commonly used in Poland as a local development tool able to increase the added value of small, family-based agricultural farms and boost the attractiveness attractions of a particular area for tourists. The practices involved in food production, processing, and sale are linked to ideas of developing rural or, more rarely, urban areas. For this reason, Poland has seen the development of a number of similar initiatives that refer to local tourist products, tourist fairs and open air marketplaces, restaurants, and farm tourism. In both top-down initiated networks (like the large number of regional local food brands) and cooperatives, an important thread is the multi-sensory consumption of local character, focused on a customer originating from outside the production area. The governing idea of such networks seems to be an attempt to exploit possibilities relating to tourism or new food trends. Exogenous organisational patterns (e.g., local brands), requirements (e.g., hygienic regulations), and consumer attitudes encounter the embedded knowledge, practices, and products offered by the networks. Hence, growing tourism or regional food being in vogue are global trends that can be realised in local conditions using local food. Mixing means that an externally imposed (imitated, global) objective is actualised using local means in a local context.

Embeddedness is the third rationality of AFNs in Poland and CEE countries that underwent a period of transition to democratic and free market systems, and are characterised by a syndrome that could be called ‘incomplete transition’. Despite new patterns of consumption and production becoming embedded in these societies, they still show pre-industrial or transformational practices relating to obtaining and processing foods, and living traditions: Self-provisioning in rural areas, individual food processing, allotments, own gardens, and fruit and vegetable markets. These networks rely mostly on family members and close friends. In our analysis, an example of an embedded initiative is the Free Toruń Marketplace.

The statements of women—who are the family members usually responsible for providing food—are typical. They mention how interest in food cements their family ties, and how through looking for recipes, cooking and preserving food, and ultimately eating together, family members become a close-knit whole. The following is a quote from a consumer in the open air market:

Well, last Christmas I made dumplings, decorated the Christmas tree, and sang Christmas carols with my brother’s children and all the rest; so it is surely very important. We also read passages from the Bible before the Christmas Eve supper; we shared the wafer. It’s all about tradition. Family, tradition is people’s ethical framework.

Informal or semi-formal traditions of food provisioning also overlap with memory constructs. The interviewees use their reminiscences as a barrier of sorts, dividing food that is healthy and tasty from food that might be dangerous. Both producers and consumers often refer to memory, family traditions, and their own experiences relating to food. The following is a quote from a consumer in the Free Toruń Marketplace:

My parents in general, they farmed a plot of land, or perhaps it was an entire field. A field where we grew vegetables. We went there to help with the growing . . . it was somewhat tiring. I believe it was a positive thing, because we had some healthy food . . . I was living with my grandparents who occupied the house’s upper floor, and my grandpa had this mystical connection to nature. This rubbed off on me too.

These references to the past play an important role in Polish AFNs, especially embedded networks, yet are nevertheless present across all types. This is because memory, especially reference to things

considered traditional, may be the common denominator connecting food producers and consumers. By using a similar set of cultural imaginations and nostalgic reminiscences, they use analogous resources to define what good quality food means. Both producers and consumers anchor their decisions in similar imaginations about the positive impact of tradition on the quality, taste, and character of the product. A specific feature of Poland, or more widely CEE, is also rooting these tales in experiences of a shortage economy, and then transformation, which for some interviewees produced tensions between reality, traditions, and modernity. A consumer from the EcoMuseum of the Noteć Valley recalled:

It was that admiration which your generation does not remember. Back then I had to raise a small child in a countryside, which had to eat something, and we had to as well. One day they put some sweets for some, like those formerly only seen in American films, and now they are in our local store. So we wanted to taste them . . . but then our admiration waned and we started to reflect—hey, our dumplings are the best. Grandpa’s sausage was supreme and so we started to look for those tastes and aromas.

The traditional, informal, pre-modern food practices have become for these people a bridge, connecting regional traditions and resources with the modern world. Buying on the market or individually processing fruits is not dictated by necessity and shortages of socialist economy but is a conscious political decision of an individual protecting their body and family against dangers resulting from modernity.

To summarise this section, it should be noted that borrowing and embeddedness become blended in some networks. Each of the examined networks is a compromise between an attempt to refer to a certain region, space, and tradition and an attempt to introduce new threads, products, and processes. The dominant dynamics informs the nature and shape of the network.

### 3.2. *Materiality in the Network*

Alternative food networks are a combination of the structure of products, tools, and space. Next to ideas and specific practices, a key feature defining the character and potential of short food chains is the materiality of the network.

The most typical networks are those of a mixed nature, often used for commodification—the multi-sensory consumption of rurality. Producers and consumers utilise objects with connections to tradition: Costumes, packaging, graphics, sale spaces, typical brown hues and product presentation. Rurality, in this case, is defined as a value in itself, a context ensuring high quality, good taste, and the genuine character of the product.

People, food, and objects embedded in the network reproduce the belief about its uniqueness. The paradox, however, is that the networks aspire to a universal, ubiquitous character. The objects and products offered in each network are often similar, with brown hues and names harking back to past times, ‘Old Polish Ham’ or the countryside, ‘thatched roofs’ predominating. In the case of cooperatives, the reference to rurality takes another form. Here, countryside food means simple and genuine food, not wrapped in any fictional meanings, especially references to an imaginary past.

Products sold in a cooperative have to be as natural as possible, referencing an idyllic vision of the countryside, where simple but tasty and wholesome food is produced. The vegetables and fruits are often covered with soil, unlike the washed products sold at stores. A cooperative member from Poznań said:

When we compare ecological products which are dirty, with offshoots, these apples, these malformed carrots, we realise that quality is more than skin deep.

As a cooperative is not merely a commercial enterprise but involves ecological ideas, the common good, and fair profits for the farmer, products are displayed or sold so as to reduce costs and, more importantly, conserve the environment as much as possible, with multiple use or recycled packaging. In these networks, the local character is complemented by threads typical for the lifestyle of the new

middle class. The food, its packaging, and manner of display is not so much a nod to tradition as an attempt to promote its genuine and healthy nature.

The 'mixing' in the AFNs we examined do not apply only to the method of organisation or network structure, but also to the food sold in them. Let us consider the products themselves and their taste. In addition to foods typical for this part of Europe, until recently available only at open air marketplaces (for example, groats or such forgotten vegetables as kale or Jerusalem artichoke) or made at home (dumplings or pickles), cooperatives offer products and preserves wholly foreign to the local culinary culture (kombucha, tofu, tempeh, tortillas). The food is obtained using various sources, from owners of small (though not always local, sometimes hundreds of kilometres away) farms, some of which obtained ecological certificates, from vegetable markets, ecological wholesalers or food processors using craft-like methods (such as bakers, makers of preserves or dumplings etc.), and finally, cooperative members themselves who produce processed food at their homes. The choice of these foods is related to the lifestyle of the urban middle class that dips into various culinary traditions. Although initially the cooperatives had the objective to source local food—and some of them actually work together with farms located near the city where they operate—none are connected to a specific regional tradition.

Some cases show a very interesting instance of mixing and creating new orders. For example, a local producer, using materiality (costumers, products, packaging, sale location) comes up with a non-existent regional folklore, which is not recognised by consumers, to stand out at an ecology fair organised in a large city by an ethnographic museum.

The simplified vision of a countryside idyll is a factor limiting the uniqueness of networks constructed in this manner. The scene played out is the same, regardless of the region, place, and community traditions. The paradox of the process is that, under the guise of uniqueness, a unified product, referencing a general vision of what the countryside once was, is offered. The offered products and the manner in which they are displayed are very similar regardless of the region. The unification process is boosted by consumers who use cookbooks, blogs, and media referencing the apparently diverse but actually uniform food offered in the network. During the research, the team was faced with minimal diversity of networks using food as a vehicle for local growth. Our database was filled with similar initiatives built using almost identical objects, products and symbols.

The situation becomes more complex in the case of more niche and elitist networks of an imitated nature. In this instance, local character is still the main factor behind quality, but it no longer takes the form of a simple reference to the national rurality construct. The material background of networks of this type is more diverse. Space is still an important factor linked to the object quality construct. It provides the object and is affected by it in turn. At the same time, materiality in these networks is increasingly referencing modernity and individualism. The producers and consumers provide a patchwork of activities and objects that combine local character with innovation. The products themselves are more exclusive, and the emphasis is on their unique, individual character.

A good example of the process is the Malopolski Przełom Doliny Wisły Wine Growers Association. The initiators of this initiative reference specific locations and spaces, reconstructing rural traditions. The network is therefore a mixture of different orders. One of the photos shows an expensive wine bottle label against a meadow background (Figure 1). What stands to attention is the illustration that features a pair of rubber boots typical for Polish farmers. The popular imaginarium is thus creatively used to increase the attractiveness of a 'posh' product. There is a mixture of two orders, elitist and local, whose common denominator is a reference to high quality and sustainable character of food. Theoretically inconsistent, the objects seem to mesh well into the background, boosting the network's attractiveness and offer.



**Figure 1.** An embedded imitation, the Mickiewicz vineyard. (Source: [www.winnicasolaris.pl](http://www.winnicasolaris.pl)).

The most difficult issue to examine is the materiality of embedded, informal, everyday food practices relating to AFNs. By definition, they are scattered and dependent on individual, family or class context in which their practitioners operate. In this model, although dominated by the embeddedness logic, some borrowings peek through, induced by three kinds of actors: Media, kitchen utensils, and the products themselves. For the interviewed consumers, cookbooks and recipe websites of any kind are very important. Next to traditional fruit preserves, one can find here the newest fashionable diets and international kitchen recipes.

In traditional markets, Polish staple food appears side by side with products, such as citrus fruits or bananas, originating from geographically and culturally remote spaces. The presence of these products in embedded networks is no accident—greatly desired in the communist era, they have now become everyday fare. Their availability in this model shows a peculiar normalisation, as well as the success of the harrowing process of transformation.

The majority of studied initiatives are based on a reference to local character, in particular, rurality. Objects and space are one of the key tools of recreating neo-ruralist ideologies, relating to a countryside idyll, in Polish AFNs. Unlike in Western European countries, these threads are not derived only from the elitist imaginarium of the urban middle class, but also reference the folk turn, the search for identity by the people's class [6]. The cohesive element linking these two scenes, middle class and people's class, is the rooting of objects and networks in the local character, but how the character is defined, what is its meaning and to whom it is addressed differs.

### 3.3. Activity in the Network

The three models of key importance for this study also translate to specific activities relating to individual initiatives. Embedded, imitated, and mixed AFNs are organised in various ways. This is most distinctly observable in the case of the first model. In our study, they were used by citizens for everyday food provisioning. Activity in these networks focuses on daily shopping at the fruit and vegetable market and individual production and processing of food. These practices involve mostly family members and, much less frequently, close friends. A market consumer said:

As for the Nowicki street market—I always call it that, because we never called it anything other at home—for many years I had been coming there from Czernikowo with my parents, later when I moved to Toruń I was there less frequently, but . . . for some six months I have been visiting it once per week, buying fruits, vegetables, and the like . . . and they have not just fresh supplies but much cheaper too.

Practices of this kind are structured by memory, reminiscences, habits, and family traditions. They focus on obtaining food, without going beyond the shopping process. The function of the researched networks was limited to provision, without any extension of their activities to the environment, sustainable development, or social justice. At the same time, these activities are of a relatively universal nature. The data shows that, except for the youngest respondents, the majority of Polish consumers do, from time to time, avail themselves of the offer of fruit and vegetable markets [57]. Another important feature of these initiatives is their inclusive nature. Well embedded in the Polish food environment, they are based on habits, allow access to relatively cheap food, and do not promote the class distinctions which are so typical for other AFNs. At the same time, some of these practices appear to be relegated to the sidelines; consumption models typical of developed societies may lead to slowly constricting the scope and importance of embedded food-related social practices. Producers and sellers with ties to the local market note the decreasing number and status of purchasers, as one marketplace producer said:

I believe they find it more advantageous to purchase at stores. Right now, we don't serve rich customers anymore, it's usually the poorer classes that shop here—or we just don't know if they are rich, the quantities they purchase do not reflect that. Customers used to drive here in the afternoon, but because they have to pay for parking, they are not that interested now. They go and visit stores with free parking spaces. When parking fees were introduced a few years ago, we saw a considerable drop in the number of customers.

The individual or family nature and limited scope of related social practices are also typical of initiatives that lean towards the mixed model. The considerable role of local government or the public sector and the formalised nature of such networks does not facilitate engaging consumers and producers in activities other than sales of food. A consumer in the Free Toruń Marketplace said:

I don't like to associate. For me, associating sounds kind of artificial. When associated, we would be acting too formally, and not naturally. Being an active citizen is very important for me—I mean if I didn't vote in elections, and it did happen on occasion, I'd have a bad conscience, even though I know there is no party I would like to cast my vote for. So in the electoral booth I have to consider whom should I support. Therefore, my choice of local—not Polish, but specifically local—products is important for me. This is how I am an active citizen.

Consuming food obtained from alternative networks is often treated as sufficient citizen activity in itself. Interestingly, this suits all actors involved in the initiatives. Producers clearly state in interviews that they do not expect more activity and involvement from consumers. Farmers and processors look for AFNs for economically efficient means to sell their goods. We note the lack of common practices among people involved in such food chains. Production, consumption, and purchases are often separated from each other, not connecting consumers and producers. For some reason, this is the result of a low social capital of Poles, or the entire CEE region. According to a producer in the Eco-Museum of the Noteć Valley:

No, we don't usually make friends with customers, they would like us to, but we only engage in routine seller–customer relations that, while friendly and so on, are somewhat limited.

Collaboration between producers, if any, is limited to obtaining raw materials, or perhaps an exchange of basic information on food. Consumer activity is likewise atomised; purchasing groups or cooperatives are rare.



The situation is slightly altered by initiatives in which borrowing dynamics and bottom-up consumer organisation are stronger. The most important features driving the activities of both consumers and producers are individualism, family, and the human body. In this case, however, the set of observed activities is slightly wider. This is well illustrated by activities in food cooperatives, aimed by default at making connections between producers and consumers, as well as between members of cooperatives. While facing organisational difficulties [36], their growth and existence is contingent on collaboration and trust between all actors involved in specific initiatives. A member of the Mokotów Food Cooperative, Warsaw, said:

A cooperative is an amazing crash course in democracy and an important thing. Each discussion we had there and all those disputes and difficulties are truly a great experience teaching how to organise a group activity, act together, make decisions, and participate.

Owing to low levels of social activity and negative experiences relating to cooperatives during the communist era, which are typical for CEE countries, the fact that non-formal institutions based on collaboration can succeed is treated as something exceptional. For many of those involved in cooperatives, the value and satisfaction they derive from being part of a community and obtaining high quality food are equally important, as a member of a Warsaw cooperative said:

So ... mostly I thought that was great ... that people do something for themselves, but together, that this is a huge challenge, to collect a group of people ... of course, they profit from that, but the profits are unevenly split and so is work, but there you have a group where mutual trust is necessary, and so open too, even though there are many risks of various kinds, people have the courage to make something like this, of course, food is important, is a safe pretext, but there is something more. Of course, it's not always about food, because I can go to the marketplace and buy myself some, and that would be quicker too, don't know if cheaper, however, the important thing is that a group is formed. And that it is some form of a community.

Collaboration with cooperatives is often pursued by socially active farmers who view producing healthy and good quality as a mission of sorts. A farmer supplying Warsaw cooperatives said:

I want to change the world. I'm not doing that because I want to get rich. If it was just for money, I would be doing something else, because this work is quite a drudgery.

For the imitated model, rooting in local character and traditional food purchase methods overlaps new trends and notions not yet fully internalised by those involved in the networks. Nevertheless, in this model, the different nature of customers and the very product and its function extend the list of practices related to alternative food networks. Wine growers associate around the idea of wine tourism, wine sampling in vineyards, or producing wine together. In community-supported agriculture, sales are complemented by meetings at the farm and one of the cooperatives holds so-called luncheons on the grass that allow consumers to get together. Networks of this kind are also more willing to take up the opportunities offered by the Internet and social media, moving some of their activities to the virtual world. It appears that AFNs, in which the borrowing dynamics predominate, show the biggest tendency to introduce innovations, new solutions, activities, and schemes. At the same time, these activities are slightly more hermetic and exclusive, suited to the needs, expectations, and capitals of a specific group of consumers, such as the middle or creative class.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this article was to present the specific nature of AFNs in Poland as a CEE country. The theory of social practices divides the analysis into three essential areas: The ideas of the network, its materiality and the activities implemented into it. It allowed us to split Polish, and by extension CEE AFNs, into three types: Imitated, mixed and embedded. First, these networks differ from each

other in the original idea and values, which are a base for network construction and organisation. Materiality also plays its role in the differentiation of the surveyed AFNs. Food is produced, presented and sold using various symbols in a particular context. Depending on the type, we can find more progressive, elitist or traditional, and egalitarian products and symbols. Last, but not least, networks are also distinguished by a catalogue of actions. The embedded type is based on daily activities, ritualised purchasing, processing and consumption practices. Those of imitative character more often require non-typical acts, such as wine tourism or contracts signed with a farmer. Table 2 is a synthetic summary of the most important features of each of the three network types.

**Table 2.** Constituent elements of each alternative food network model in Poland.

	<b>Models of Alternative Food Networks in Poland</b>		
	<b>Imitated</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Embedded</b>
<b>Network idea</b>	Exogenous	Neo-endogenous	Endogenous
<b>Nature of the product</b>	Elitist	Elitist, rarely egalitarian	Egalitarian
<b>Food type</b>	Unique	Simulating uniqueness	Traditional
<b>Network organisation</b>	Somewhat formalised	Strongly formalised	Weakly formalised
<b>Organisational model</b>	Bottom-up	Top-down	bottom-up
<b>Network activity level</b>	High, but not focused on a specific group	Low	Average, family-focused
<b>Support from the public sector</b>	Weak	Strong	Weak
<b>Values</b>	Looking for new experiences, taste, health	Local character, family, health	Family, health
<b>Scope</b>	Niche	Common, but not used for everyday provisioning	Common, used daily
<b>Our cases:</b>	Malopolski Przełom Doliny Wisły Wine Growers Association Community supported agriculture 'Dobrzyń nad Wisłą'	Consumer Cooperatives (in some aspects) Eco-Museum of the Noteć Valley Slow Food Convivium in Gruczno The Free Toruń Marketplace	The Toruń open-air market

(Source: authors' own study).

In this article, we refer only to studies conducted in one CEE country, Poland. While being aware there are multiple differences in the historical and economic trajectories of different CEE countries, we believe there are many common experiences regarding the food system that make Poland quite typical in this respect. That is why we treat Polish AFNs as representative of the region. In this article, we also rely on the literature on AFNs in other CEE countries to obtain a broader, comparative perspective. Studies conducted in CEE countries, cited in Section 2, and our own in Section 4, demonstrate that AFNs in the region are not an unthinking imitation of activities arising in other social and cultural contexts. We also know that in the case of embedded networks that this is not simple copying of traditions and patterns, but rather their transformation when transferred into another region (e.g., CSA as quick purchases). The difference between AFNs evolving in the CEE countries and those in the Western Europe/USA countries stems from multiple factors, such as communist era experiences, low level of social capital in society, position of family and health high in the hierarchy of values, and an economic and cultural pressure of market-orientated transformation processes. Numerous studies demonstrate that the CEE countries are characterised by unique practices related to the production, distribution and consumption of food from non-industrial sources. The traditions of the dachas typical of post-Soviet countries [6], Polish and Czech workers' allotment gardens [27,28], foraging and

fishing [49], traditions of local markets [36], and food supply directly from farmers are still alive in the region. Initiatives treated in Western and Northern Europe as novelty and innovation are elements of the everyday food landscape in CEE. However, development and modernisation leave the mark on food chains. New organisational patterns are visible [58] and ICT technologies and social media are more present and shape food networks. Blogs and Instagram profiles of consumers are full of pictures and videos of recipes and processing practices of home dishes. This is how past meets modernity, but the core itself remains rooted in the pre/post-industrial traditions of the region. Food practices remain focused on the family, the reference to rural experience and childhood tastes, together with a positive evaluation of traditions. This catalogue is supplemented by post-modern fears related to the lack of transparency of industrial systems, concern for health and the individual's body and the willingness to stand out. This clash of tradition and modernity creates an interesting background for CEE AFNs.

## 5. Conclusions

The division of AFNs into embedded, mixed and imitated models is not sufficient; however, it is a way to grasp the diversity of the AFNs in the CEE countries. This split also affects what happens within the networks. They are never a simple, social reconstruction of tradition or modernity; instead, they form an inconsistent performance whose individual constituents are more or less visible. A feature common for all networks is focusing on the family and bodies of individual respondents. The family nature of AFN practices is therefore stressed. This does not mean, however, that the networks do not have a sustainable character. According to the quiet sustainability concept [27], the sustainable AFN potential in the EEC is based on everyday, informal and family orientated practice without direct reference to progressive policy. Particular attention should be paid to embedded-type networks, which underline the capacity of the local and original AFNs. Describing this phenomenon and supporting the term quiet sustainability, we propose the concept of **invisible alternativeness**. By this, we mean several essential practices related to non-industrial food production and consumption that have been present in the CEE for a long period due to specific social and historical circumstances. Many everyday, embedded, traditional ways of production, processing or acquisition are not recognised as alternative or unique by political or cognitive frames. The practices are based on ordinary actions, established in semi-peripheral regions that have the potential to (re)shape food regimes. Hundreds of thousands of Polish allotment holders might have a greater influence on the food system than individual cases of urban gardens in the biggest western cities. Performance of other types of networks (imitated and rooted) also proves that when they are faced and engaged with local factors they should be taken seriously when talking about changes in CEE food regimes. Our proposition of the three network models, with all their limitations, can be an opening point for further, comparative analysis, based on data from other countries. It also allows to go beyond the region, to look for specific types of AFNs in particular countries or regions, evading the constraints of centrally defined forms of alternativeness or sustainability.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, W.G. and R.Ś.; methodology, W.G. and R.Ś.; validation, A.B. and M.W.; formal analysis, W.G. and R.Ś.; investigation, W.G. and R.Ś.; writing—original draft preparation, W.G. and R.Ś.; writing—review and editing, R.Ś., A.B. and M.W.; visualization, R.Ś.; supervision, W.G.

**Funding:** This research was funded by Polish National Science Centre, grant number UMO-2017/26/D/HS6/0083.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## References

1. Van der Ploeg, J.D. From de-to repeasantisation. The modernization of agriculture revisited. *J. Rural Stud.* **2018**, *61*, 236–243. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Smith, J.; Jehlička, P. Stories around food, politics and change in Poland and the Czech Republic. *Trans. Inst. Br. Geog.* **2007**, *32*, 395–410. [[CrossRef](#)]

3. Jehlička, P.; Smith, J. An unsustainable state: Contrasting food practices and state policies in the Czech Republic. *Geoforum* **2011**, *42*, 362–372. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Smith, J.; Kostelecký, T.; Jehlička, P. Quietly does it: Questioning assumptions about class, sustainability and consumption. *Geoforum* **2015**, *67*, 223–232. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Jung, Y.J.A.K.; Melissa, L.C. (Eds.) *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 2014.
6. Mamonova, N. Patriotism and Food Sovereignty: Changes in the Social Imaginary of Small-Scale Farming in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine. *Sociol. Rural.* **2018**, *58*, 190–212. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Blumberg, R.; Mincyte, D. Infrastructures of taste: Rethinking local food histories in Lithuania. *Apetite* **2019**. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Bilewicz, A.; Śpiewak, R. Beyond the “Northern” and “Southern” Divide: Food and Space in Polish Consumer Cooperatives. *East Eur. Politics Soc.* **2018**, *33*, 579–602. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Fendrychová, L.; Jehlička, P. Revealing the hidden geography of alternative food networks: The travelling concept of farmers’ markets. *Geoforum* **2018**, *95*, 1–10. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Hinrichs, C. Embeddedness and local food systems: Notes on two types of direct agricultural market. *J. Rural Stud.* **2000**, *16*, 295–303. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Goodman, D.; Goodman, M.K.; DuPuis, E.M. *Alternative Food Networks. Knowledge, Practice and Politics*; Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2014; ISBN 9780415671460.
12. Renting, H.; Marsden, T.K.; Banks, J. Understanding Alternative Food Networks: Exploring the Role of Short Food Supply Chains in Rural Development. *Environ. Plan. A* **2003**, *35*, 393–411. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Tregear, A. Progressing knowledge in alternative and local food networks: Critical reflections and a research agenda. *J. Rural Stud.* **2011**, *27*, 419–430. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Goodman, D. The quality ‘turn’ and alternative food practices: Reflections and agenda. *J. Rural Stud.* **2003**, *19*, 1–7. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Darnhofer, I.; Gibbon, D.; Dedieu, B. *Farming Systems Research into the 21st Century: The New Dynamic*; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012.
16. Schermer, M. From “Food from Nowhere” to “Food from Here:” changing producer—Consumer relations in Austria. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2015**, *32*, 121–132. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Guthman, J.; Brown, S. I will never eat another strawberry again: The biopolitics of consumer-citizenship in the fight against methyl iodide in California. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2016**, *33*, 575–585. [[CrossRef](#)]
18. Chen, W.-T. From “Junk Food” to “Treats”. *Food Cult. Soc.* **2016**, *19*, 151–170. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Tregear, A.; Török, Á.; Gorton, M. Geographical indications and upgrading of small-scale producers in global agro-food chains: A case study of the Makó Onion Protected Designation of Origin. *Environ. Plan. A* **2016**, *48*, 433–451. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Bowen, S. The Importance of Place: Re-territorialising Embeddedness. *Sociol. Rural.* **2011**, *51*, 325–348. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Bhabra, G. Sociology after Postcolonialism: Provincialized Cosmopolitanisms and Connected Sociologies. In *Decolonizing European Sociology: Transdisciplinary Approaches*; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E., Boatcă, M., Costa, S., Eds.; Ashgate: Farnham, UK; Burlington, VT, USA, 2010; ISBN 9780754678724.
22. Bhabra, G. Cosmopolitanism and Postcolonial Critique. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*; Rovisco, M., Nowicka, M., Eds.; Ashgate: Farnham, UK, 2011; ISBN 9780754695561.
23. Bukraba-Rylska, I. *Socjologia wsi Polskiej*; PWN: Warszawa, Poland, 2012.
24. Kornai, J. *Economics of Shortage*; North Holland Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1980.
25. Christian, G.; Dobrinka, K. The Social Production of Mistrust. In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*; Chris, M.H., Ed.; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2002; pp. 74–91.
26. Mroczkowska, J. Pork politics: The scales of home-made food in Eastern Poland. *Apetite* **2019**, *140*, 223–230. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Smith, J.; Jehlička, P. Quiet sustainability: Fertile lessons from Europe’s productive gardeners. *J. Rural Stud.* **2013**, *32*, 148–157. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Sovova, L. Self-provisioning, Sustainability and Environmental Consciousness in Brno Allotment Gardens. *Socialni Studia* **2015**, *12*, 11–26. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Velčovská, S.; Del Ciappa, G. The food quality labels: Awareness and willingness to pay in the context of the Czech Republic. *Acta Univ. Agric. Silv. Mendel. Brun.* **2015**, *63*, 647–658. [[CrossRef](#)]

30. Aistara, G.A. Good, Clean, Fair . . . and Illegal: Paradoxes of Food Ethics in Post-Socialist Latvia. *J. Balt. Stud.* **2015**, *46*, 283–298. [CrossRef]
31. Mincyte, D. How milk does the world good: Vernacular sustainability and alternative food systems in post-socialist Europe. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2012**, *29*, 41–52. [CrossRef]
32. Malak-Rawlikowska, A.; Majewski, E.; Was, A.; Borgen, S.O.; Csillag, P.; Donati, M.; Freeman, R.; Hoàng, V.; Lecoeur, J.-L.; Mancini, M.C.; et al. Measuring the Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 4004. [CrossRef]
33. Śpiewak, R. The Social Process of Defining Quality Food, Based on the Opinions of Polish Consumer Cooperative Members. *Village Agric.* **2016**, *4*, 123–139.
34. European Commission. *European Commission, European's Attitudes towards Food, Security, Food Quality and the Countryside*; Special Eurobarometer, 389; European Commission: Brussels, Belgium, 2012.
35. European Commission. *Designin Europe Future: Trust in Institutions, Globalisation Wave EB87.2*; Special Eurobarometer 461; European Commission: Brussels, Belgium, 2017.
36. Kopczyńska, E. Economies of Acquaintances: Social Relations during Shopping at Food Markets and in Consumers' Food Cooperatives. *East Eur. Politics Soc.* **2017**, *31*, 637–658. [CrossRef]
37. Halamska, M. Quasi-chłopi w przestrzeni społecznej wsi. *Wiś Rol.* **2013**, *159*, 28–42.
38. Bilewicz, A.; Śpiewak, R. Enclaves of activism and taste: Consumer cooperatives in Poland as alternative food networks. *Socio. Hu* **2015**, *3*, 145–166. [CrossRef]
39. Petrescu, D.C.; Petrescu-Mag, R.M.; Burny, P.; Azadi, H. A new wave in Romania: Organic food. Consumers' motivations, perceptions, and habits. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2017**, *41*, 46–75. [CrossRef]
40. Moragues-Faus, A.M.; Sonnino, R. Embedding Quality in the Agro-food System: The Dynamics and Implications of Place-Making Strategies in the Olive Oil Sector of Alto Palancia, Spain. *Sociol. Rural.* **2012**, *52*, 215–234. [CrossRef]
41. The Diversity of European Food Cultures. In *A companion to the Anthropology of Europe*; Kockel, U.; Nic Craith, M.; Frykman, J. (Eds.) Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, UK; Malden, MA, USA, 2012; pp. 355–372. ISBN 9781118257203.
42. Bardone, E.; Spalvėna, A. European Union food quality schemes and the transformation of traditional foods into European products in Latvia and Estonia. *Appetite* **2019**, *135*, 43–53. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
43. Fonte, M. Knowledge, Food and Place. A Way of Producing, a Way of Knowing. *Sociol. Rural.* **2008**, *48*, 200–222. [CrossRef]
44. Fonte, M. Food consumption as social practice: Solidarity Purchasing Groups in Rome, Italy. *J. Rural Stud.* **2013**, *32*, 230–239. [CrossRef]
45. Maestripieri, L. Are Solidarity Purchasing Groups a Social Innovation? A Study Inspired by Social Forces. *Partecip. Confl.* **2017**. Available online: <http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/article/view/18557> (accessed on 7 December 2019). [CrossRef]
46. Michel-Villarreal, R.; Hingley, M.; Canavari, M.; Bregoli, I. Sustainability in Alternative Food Networks: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 859. [CrossRef]
47. Hormel, L.M. Food or Flowers? Dacha Gardening and Gendered Class Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine. *Rural Sociol.* **2017**, *82*, 75–100. [CrossRef]
48. Hoop, E.; Jehlička, P. Reluctant pioneers in the European periphery? Environmental activism, food consumption and “growing your own”. *Local Environ.* **2017**, *22*, 809–824. [CrossRef]
49. Grivins, M. A comparative study of the legal and grey wild product supply chains. *J. Rural Stud.* **2016**, *45*, 66–75. [CrossRef]
50. Zarycki, T. *Peryferie. O Nowym Ujęciu Zależności Centro-Peryferyjnych*; Scholar: Warszawa, Poland, 2009.
51. Borowska-Beszta, B.; Bartnikowska, U.; Ćwirynkało, K. Analiza wtórna jakościowych danych zastanych: Przegląd założeń teoretycznych, i aplikacji metodologicznych. *Jakościowe Bad. Pedagog.* **2017**, *2*, 5–24.
52. Szabo, V.; Strang, V.R. Secondary analysis of qualitative data. *Adv. Nurs. Sci.* **1997**, *20*, 66–74. [CrossRef]
53. Turner, P.D. Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data. In Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, USA, 24–28 March 1997.
54. Reckwitz, A. Toward a Theory of Social Practices. *Eur. J. Soc. Theory* **2002**, *5*, 243–263. [CrossRef]
55. Mylan, J. Understanding the diffusion of Sustainable Product-Service Systems: Insights from the sociology of consumption and practice theory. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2015**, *97*, 13–20. [CrossRef]



56. Bilewicz, A. Między enklawą stylu życia a zmianą społeczną. Kooperatywy spożywcze w polskich miastach. In *Aktywizmy Miejskie*; Gójska, A., Lewenstein, B., Zielińska, E., Eds.; Scholar: Warszawa, Poland, 2019.
57. Zakharov, K.; Maciejczak, M. Consumer Food Cooperatives as Complex Adaptive Networks—The Case of Five Cooperatives from Poland. *Rocz. Nauk. Stowarzyszenia Ekon. Rol. Agrobiz.* **2018**, *20*, 184–189.
58. Goszczyński, W.; Knieć, W. Strengthening Alternative Agro-food Networks in the Eastern European Countryside. *East. Eur. Countrys.* **2011**, *17*, 5–20. [[CrossRef](#)]



© 2019 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).