

# Habermas in the Garden

Broadening the Scope of Social Movements for Sustainability

*Sandra Villumsen*

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Sustainability Studies



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Sandra Villumsen

sandravillumsen@gmail.com

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Supervised by Turaj Faran

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of broadening the scope of social movements for sustainability. The implicit assumptions of the causal mechanisms for strategic social change propose limits to what transformative social action can be, and risk overlooking untapped resources for change. To address these limitations I use Habermas' critical social theories on public engagement, systemic rationality crisis and new social movements supplemented with Weber's principles of the unintended consequences of social action to look broader at transformative action towards sustainability. This is exemplified by alternative food movements using food as an entry point bringing along values of sustainability. The theory-guided research complemented with a qualitative study of three value-based food movements in Copenhagen suggests that unintended consequences of social action for food, activate social mechanisms and that these mechanisms, under conditions of communicative social structures, bring about emerging values for sustainability, and unintendedly reproduce alternative social structures. These value-based social movements can therefore be important actors in shaping how sustainability is conceived in contemporary social movements, how sustainability becomes conceptualized in normative terms, as well as bridging the gap between theory and practical action. By illustrating these social mechanisms I suggest how value-based social movements can contribute to the path towards sustainability, by recognizing them as important collaborators in the strategies of political social movements.

*Keywords: value-based, social movements, sustainability, communicative action, unintended consequences*

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# List of Abbreviations

AFM = Alternative Food Movement

CA = Communicative Action

CR = Communicative Rationality

CFM = Copenhagen Food Movement

KbhFF = Copenhagen Food Collective

IR = Instrumental Rationality

NSM = New Social Movements

PS = Public Sphere

PSM = Political Social Movement

STPS = Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

TCA = Theory of Communicative Action

UC = Unintended Consequences

VSM = Value-based Social Movement

# Table of Content

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Research Problem, Aim and Questions	7
1.2. Limitations of the Study	9
1.3. Social Movements as Agents of Change for Sustainability	9
1.3.1. Extending the Scope of Social Movements	10
1.3.2. Food Movements as Instances of Neglected Social Movements for Sustainability	11
1.4. Sustainability Defined by Emerging Values	13
<b>2. Theoretical Frameworks</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Habermas and Modernity	14
2.2 The Public Sphere and Systemic Colonization of Lifeworld	15
2.2.1. The Public Sphere	15
2.2.2. The Systemic Colonization of Lifeworld	16
2.2.2.1. Communicative Rationality	16
2.2.2.2. Lifeworld and System	17
2.2.2.3. Societal Pathologies	17
2.2.3. Between the Public Sphere and New Social Movements	18
2.3 New Social Movements	18
2.4 The Unintended Consequences of Social Action for Structural Change	19
<b>3. The Model, Methods and Fieldwork</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 The Model of Argumentation	21
3.2 Research Design	22
3.3 Methodology	23
3.4 Methods for Data Collection	23
<b>4. Background to Case</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1. Copenhagen Food Movements	24
4.1.1 KbhFF - Copenhagen Food Collective	24
4.1.2 Copenhagen Community Gardens	25

4.1.2.1 DYRK	26
4.1.2.2 Byhaven Nørrebro	26
<b>5. Analysis and Discussion of Case</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1. The Public Sphere	27
5.1.1 Social Space and the Use of Public Reason	27
5.1.2 Emergence of Common Values	28
5.2. Resistance to the System	30
5.3. Structural Change by Social Movements	31
5.3.1 Value-based Social Movements	31
5.3.1.1 Strategies for Local Social Action	33
5.3.1.2 Re-moralization Initiated	34
5.3.1.3 Alternative Social Structures	35
5.3.2 Strategic Collaboration between Political and Value-based Movements	37
5.4. Structural Transformation and the Sustainability Ideal	38
<b>6. Final Remarks</b>	<b>39</b>
6.1. Sustainable Social Change and Strategic Considerations	39
6.2. Suggestions for Further Research	40
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix A - Data Collection</b>	<b>46</b>
A1: Interviews	46
A2: Interview Questions	46
A3: Focus Group	47
A4: Participant-Observation	48
A5: Observations at Meetings	48
<b>Appendix B - Habermas's Lifeworld</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix C - Weber's Five Mechanisms</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix D - KbhFF Principles</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Appendix E - 'Strategic' Opportunities, CFMs</b>	<b>51</b>

# 1. Introduction

“Sustainability will be achieved, if at all, not by engineers, agronomists, economists, and biotechnicians but by citizens” (Prugh et al., 2000).

‘Habermas in the Garden’ and sustainability? Where is the connection? If we are to move away from what we know is unsustainable, citizens and sustainability must go hand in hand in everyday life, in a long process over time to shape a new paradigm. The problems of sustainability are often easier to address than the solutions, and can be framed by overconsumption, overpopulation, fossil fuel use, species destruction etc. (Prugh et al. 2000), problems that are not primarily technical, but instead appear in systems of great complexity and with unpredictable interactions. This is why Prugh et al. emphasize politics and especially efforts of local communities, in exploring and testing solutions during a process of continuous adaptive learning, in deciding for what goal to be sought, a decision that will affect us all.

Taking a step backwards and asking about citizens engagement and the democratic constraints of widespread consumer identities bring Jürgen Habermas into the picture. I have chosen to use his critical social theories on public engagement, systemic rationality crises, and new social movements to look into existing social action that are creating potential transformative social structures to partly construct the lived alternative. The social movements of sustainability have long been associated with environmental movements (Agyeman, 2004), but when returning to the quote above, then the sustainability movement must be found in all of us. My attempt to broaden out the sustainability movement involves among other things, Gardens, and started with the familiarity of alternative food movements in Copenhagen. Even though these movements are acting politically neutral, they are acting in a field greatly politicized, while bringing up values that are important to sustainability, those of quality of life, human solidarity, and ecological sensitivity (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006). It becomes evident that when dealing with question of common values, an essential dimension of sustainability becomes that of politics, but politics built on a foundation of local communities with power to choose directly what sustainable communities will be like (Prugh et al. 2000). The Copenhagen food movements are experimenting with responsive social and communicative structures that enable actors to work within a common set of values with a vision of being part of a sustainable future. The food movements are not acting directly towards sustainability, but for food. The actors might be there for very different reasons, they might expose untapped resources for the sustainability movement and a hopeful journey of change can begin.

## 1.1 Research problem, aim and questions

When seeking for a broader potential for social movements for sustainability, I have chosen to distinguish between; ‘Political Social Movements’ (PSM), characterized by the conventional definitions of social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 2006) and by intentional aims and strategies setting the goal for political change towards sustainability, and; ‘Value-based Social Movements’<sup>1</sup> (VSM) conducting defensive, non-strategic social action that are normally not recognized as having transformative potential. They are through my cases illustrated by alternative food movements (AFM).

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<sup>1</sup> As emphasized by Gecas (2008) social movement theory “would benefit from greater attention to values”, since values are “important elements of members’ self-definition (value-identity), with implications for commitment to the social movement” (p. 349)



**The problem:** There is a tendency of bringing instrumental and strategic rationality into social movement theory in looking at successes and failures, strategies and goals, the capacity to mobilize and political influence (Starr, 2010). In other words, there is an implicit assumption of the mechanisms of social change. These mechanisms are important, but when trying to understand the mechanisms towards sustainability there are untapped resources for social change. The unintended consequences of social movement actions are rarely acknowledged as well as social movements that are not practicing direct political action. These movements are defensively contributing to new social structures that have potential to manifest themselves in the systemic structures. I therefore claim that part of the movement for sustainability can be found in the emerging VSMs, which have potential to contribute to sustainability, as an overarching value, enabling people to act for sustainability. The problem could be reframed by seeing sustainability not in the theory, but in the movements.

### **The Aims:**

**Aim 1:** By addressing the limitations of the implicit assumptions on mechanisms for social change I seek to provide a different perspective on how knowledge and social mechanisms in society can affect political processes in new ways. I aim to look at VSM actions and their potential to solve problems in everyday life related to the conventional systems, health and social lives, and their visions for a sustainable future. Through this approach I seek to explore their transformative potential through the theories of Habermas and the social mechanisms that are activated by the unintended consequences of social action, using Max Weber's concept. By identifying these social mechanisms I will look at how they can contribute to the path towards sustainability, by recognizing them as important collaborators in the strategies of political movements.

**Aim 2:** I seek to bring into sustainability science critical research (Jerneck et al., 2011) on the social movements for sustainability. I see my contribution, in studying social agents and alternative strategies, with the possibility to broaden the view on who is responsible, in who has solutions, and how these solutions contribute to sustainability. The potential for strategic collaboration between PSMs and VSMs can present new ways of combining strong sustainability approaches and e.g. post-growth strategies in order to define sustainability as an overarching value. The VSMs can thereby be important collaborating actors in shaping how sustainability is conceived in contemporary social movements, how sustainability becomes conceptualized in normative terms, as well as bridging the gap between theory and practical action. The concept of sustainability will emerge during this thesis and will be further discussed in the conclusion.

This thesis research is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Can alternative food movements act as an entry point for sustainability processes?

RQ1.1. What conscious aims and strategies for change are characterizing the Copenhagen Food Movements?

*And if not conscious for sustainability, then*

RQ1.2. Are there mechanisms for structural changes towards sustainability that are activated by the unintended consequences of food movement action?

*If so, then*

RQ2. What could social movements explicitly acting for sustainability gain from aligning themselves with value-based social movements?

*And,*

RQ3. How can the social mechanisms and the unintended consequences of value-based social action have influence on the path towards sustainability?

## **1.2 Limitations of the Study**

This study represents some limitations that can affect the validity of the research. The decision to limit the analysis to three small VSMs can be justified by the cases being selected only to illustrate the plausibility of the model arguing for broadening social movements for sustainability. The reduced explanatory value and their representativeness are therefore of less concern at this stage of research. I conducted 4 interviews, one focus group, attended several meetings, and participated in the most core activities. This has enabled me to get a broad view into the daily activities, as well as a broad understanding of motives behind the actions of the movement, and of the individual actors. It has all been conducted in Danish and empirical data have had to be translated into English by the author, although trying to be precise this part involves some level of interpretation, but follow-up conversations and observations at meetings have enabled me to get the statements confirmed. Despite a broad view into the daily life of these movements it is still a narrow entry point for generalizations on behalf of all three movements in Copenhagen. I have not found any secondary sources on the movements, therefore data and conceptualization of food movement from other movement studies is complementing my own data, when needed, this is clearly mentioned in the text.

The representativeness by the context-specific Copenhagen food movements (CFM) can be seen as a limitation. The social context favors the existence of alternative movements through a strong social security system, flexible work hours and open democratic structures, although it is not a precondition for activating social mechanisms and value-based social action.

## **1.3 Social Movements as Agents of Change for Sustainability**

When discussing sustainable social change we often talk about radical behavior change, about serious reformation of production and supply systems, about reducing consumption of resources and production of waste, and about reframing the perception of growth (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006; Anderson, M, 2008; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; Jackson, 2009). It is therefore important to direct attention to contemporary social movements actively creating autonomous structures based on rethinking, first of all, our

lifestyles and our value base in order to show that unlimited growth based on environmental exploitation is out of touch with reality (Korten, D, 1991).

“Social change sought by movements may happen less as a result of discrete confrontations and more because of slow, long-term shifts in beliefs and values. The newer social movement theory echoes newer social theory” (Starr, 2010).

By coupling critical social theory, social movements and sustainability a critical approach is unavoidable, but a critique rather used as a tool than as an end. Habermas’ ideas of differentiation of rationalities (Thomassen, 2010, 73) can describe contemporary social movements’ attempt to gain influence through autonomously creating the democratic space and structures that the system failed to provide.

Environmental movements are the most visible social movements acting on behalf of the ‘sustainability agenda’ especially emphasizing environmental justice (Agyeman, 2004), but these movements do not and cannot address all issues and injustices taking place in society, neither mobilize around the goal of sustainability. The ideals embedded in VSMs help communities to act on values important for their continuous well-being and to implement them in social structures, but they are not necessarily intentionally those of sustainability. Instead they can play an important role in shaping how sustainability is conceived in contemporary social movements, how sustainability becomes conceptualized in normative terms, as well as bridging the gap between theory and practical action. The idea of the unintended consequences (UC) becomes evident, since “achieving sustainability does not necessarily depend on pursuing sustainability. It is possible to have a sustainable society without anyone in society setting out to achieve this social goal” (Thompson, 2010).

### 1.3.1 Extending the Scope of Social Movements

According to Della Porta and Diani (2006, 20) social movements are defined as “a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action:

- Are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents
- Are linked by dense informal networks
- Share a distinct collective identity”

This definition corresponds to the PSMs of sustainability mentioned in 1.1, which are having declared goals and strategies towards sustainability.

According to Eyerman and Jamison (1991) social movements contribute with new ideas to societies: “Best conceived of as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation”. Social movements can create ‘ideals’, and are often brought about by transdisciplinary efforts, by using new technologies and organizational methods of communication created by the movement (ibid.). This notion allows me to broaden the scope of social movements for sustainability from being focused on PSMs with defined strategies, to be complemented by VSMs with creative potential of bringing about ideals that are not necessarily bound in strategies. Instead they are driven by values, the dynamics in the public sphere and the creative use of available resources.

Theories on new social movements (2.3) such as Habermas’ (1981) can explain why a movement is established, why it remains a movement and what media are used, but not

thoroughly the social mechanisms that bring about transformative potential. Therefore I have chosen to supplement Habermas' theories with Weber's concepts on the unintended consequences of social action in order to look at specific VSMs, by using differentiated rationalities of instrumental and communicative characters.

In relation to this Starr (2010) raises an important critique of social movement research, since it "busies itself with instrumental analysis, identifying resources, political opportunities, and strategic framing". Activists tend to find this information useless, and are instead interested in understanding how the movements can work better with what they have, and not being confirmed in what they know that they do not have (ibid.). These instrumental approaches to social movement action "does not tell us much about the relationship, pathways, and trajectories that must connect social and political activity. It does tell us about individual pathways into politics through political consciousness studies but not about the subtle ways that social events take or avoid politically influential forms" (ibid.). This exact notion of the missing link in social movement studies and the neglect of forms of action that do not have direct political influence is the core of this thesis, and will be addressed in much more details based on communicative action and the UC of social action.

### 1.3.2 Food Movements as Instances of Neglected Social Movements for Sustainability

The road to a well-defined movement is long and diverse. Starr (2010) questions whether food movements are "a set of policies, a consumer fad, a new market, or a social movement?" Food is used as a medium of change in all of the above mentioned, but with different incentives behind. In order to know whether a food movement is a movement of consumers or a movement of citizens it is necessary to ask what counts as social movement activity. Melucci (1989) questions the political reductionism of contemporary social movement research and instead see social movements in a broader perspective by them "shifting towards a non-political terrain: the need for self-realization in everyday life" (ibid. 23). The activities increasingly take place outside of the political and economic realm and enable the construction of collective identity and common values. This collective identity is the process of constructing a system of action formulated by actors "who are capable of defining themselves and the field of their action" (ibid, 34). This process requires that certain actors can initiate and frame the field of action, and by using inclusive and democratic methods create a 'we'. Without these social movements "asking questions about meaning" society would not be able to break out from "the apparently neutral logic of institutional procedures" (ibid. 26).

Sonnino and Marsden (2006) differ between two paths<sup>2</sup> in European food movements.

- The *oppositional* food movements are characterized by a vertical embeddedness directed towards political action, where edges of political and economic structures that constitute the agri-food landscape are aimed at being eroded.
- The *alternative* food movements are characterized by a horizontal embeddedness and action based on societal, spatial and cultural action, where

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<sup>2</sup> This exemplify the differentiation between political and value-based movements in food action

the aim is to create new and more autonomous structures, while resisting being incorporated into the mainstream food industry.

The cases of value-based food movements in this thesis falls under the category of 'alternative' and are distinguished from consumer movements by initiating action outside the dominant market structures, while aiming at creating alternatives locally, both structures of distribution, production and consumption. According to Allen et al (2003) the critical stance of conventional agriculture, combined with the search for alternatives is most commonly framed by the alternative, rather than the oppositional food movements.

“The food movement is about community, identity, pleasure and most notably, about carving out a new social and economic space removed from the influence of big corporations on the one side and government on the other” (Pollan, 2010)

There are of course movements that are both consumer, oppositional and alternative e.g. the global Slow Food movement (Slow, 2012), which is advocating for the international policy concept 'Food Sovereignty' claiming the 'right to feed oneself' and of a more integrated, democratized and localized food production (Wittman et al. 2010). The activities of alternative food movements present a different political food narrative and through developing viable alternative structures they challenge the industrial food system and its impacts (Levkoe, 2011). The activities are responses to increasing corporate control, alienation from production and consumption of food and commodification (Kloppenburger, 2000; Pretty 1998), but also the awareness of industrial agriculture's heavy fossil fuels use through chemicals and mechanization; large-scale monocultures threatening biodiversity and soil health; soil, water and air polluting livestock productions and their contribution to climate change (Pretty, 2008), as well as public health issues of nutrition and food safety (McMichael and Beaglehole, 2000).

Levkoe (2011) has conceptualized the broad scope of food movements as covering:

**Social justice initiatives:** physical and economic accessibility to healthy food, fair working conditions and fair trade.

**Ecological sustainability initiatives:** re-establishing connections between human and ecological systems, supporting biodiversity of ecological systems through organic and agro-ecological methods.

**Community health initiatives:** ensure local capacity to produce and distribute healthy foods through community gardens, farmers markets, food co-ops and community food and agriculture education.

**Democracy-enhancing initiatives:** provide opportunities for public participation in decision-making and control of the system through local food policies, councils and cooperatives.

The AFMs analyzed in this thesis address elements in all of the above initiative and their strength become the ability to collectively construct lived alternatives, despite diversity in values and uncertainty about outcomes (Hassanein, 2003). The movements' ideas and visions can be tested, they can be experienced and practiced and have potential of growing into new initiatives, institutions, exchange forms and modes of socialization (Allen et al., 2003). The activities of these movements start with existing knowledge and practices, not a grand theory or new technologies, and unintendedly

create potentials for 're-moralizing the lifeworld'<sup>3</sup> through practical action and structural transformation to be part of a sustainable future.

## 1.4 Sustainability Defined by Emerging Values

In this thesis I am trying to carefully distinguish sustainability from sustainable development, although they are often defined as correlating terms. The most known definition of sustainable development is from *Our Common Future*: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987), and distinguishing from the developmental perspective, then instead envisioning "a sustainable society [as] one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support." (Meadows et al., 1992).

Although definitions of sustainability are important, in social movement action sustainability can be seen as a process not merely a definition, a process believed to be driven by emerging values and collective action, as will be exemplified and conceptualized in my model (3.1). Values such as freedom, equality and sustainability can direct people in action and can generate standards from which behavior can be assessed (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006). A fundamental shift in prioritization of values is of great importance for sustainability, however these values, the interpretations and the actions they bring are varying widely between different societal contexts. Formulating sustainability in terms of a management concept for politicians, setting targets and measuring progress, does not facilitate concrete and meaningful action by citizens. Instead sustainability must be formulated in their own terminology, as citizens, as parents, and as human beings.

A terminology by Leisowitz and Kates (2006) presents transformative values of sustainability as corresponding to the mechanisms presented in my model and illustrated by the language I heard in the CFM. Social action in my case study is directed towards the food system, but since food represents a fundamental element in human survival, well-being and impacts on the environment, then value-based actions become oriented towards the sustainability ideal.

The values are congruent with; *quality of life*, of fulfillment not wealth; *human solidarity*, both local, global and future generations; and *ecological sensitivity*, nature valued as a source of all that supports humans and the entire web of life, as well as a source of endless wonder and enjoyment (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006). Even though these values are already widely held they need to be prioritized over other competing values such as economic and materialistic. The values of sustainability represent a sustainability transition to take place within the context of values and trends, therefore using food as a mediator grasps both social, political, environmental and economic aspects within an everyday context and language (Allen et al., 2003). Sustainability has engaged the mind, but also needs to engage the hearts (Leisowith and Kates, 2006) in visible and concrete ways, why strategies must be based on creating interwoven channels of change driven by a diversity of social actors.

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<sup>3</sup> A Habermasian term to be discussed later, but in short implies a critical, public assessment of values and normative foundations for action to enable re-thinking of societal problems morally e.g. through creating moral communities on different levels of society (Giri, 2002).

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter will go through the theoretical foundation for my analysis of the potential mechanisms of social structural change. By adopting Habermas' main works on the public sphere, the colonization of the lifeworld and new social movements, I will attempt to locate the case of CFMs in the public sphere and find evidence for them creating resistance to the colonization of the lifeworld. I will draw on the concept of UC of social action, especially as worked out by Max Weber, to later propose a model for broadening the social movements of sustainability.

### 2.1 Habermas and Modernity

“The theory of communicative action is intended to make possible a conceptualization of the social life-context that is tailored to the paradoxes of modernity”(Habermas 1987a, xl).

The Enlightenment<sup>4</sup> framed modernity as further advancement and progress aiming at emancipation, in which the use of reason became central (Callinicos, 2007, 15). Habermas, as a critical theorist, saw modernity as an incomplete project, and directed critique towards the accepted notion of modernity as a rationality with the purpose of domination over nature, others and of the self (Anderson, 2005). Weber described this dominating rationality as instrumental where actions were aimed at calculated ends by using humans and nature as the means to efficient success (Callinicos, 2007, 160). In modern societies Weber saw instrumental rationality as inevitably leading to imprisoning humanity in the ‘iron cage’ of bureaucratized capitalism (ibid. 178), as well as it was unable to explain the values guiding the ends of action (ibid. 255). The Frankfurt School’s critical theorists<sup>5</sup>, Adorno and Horkheimer, recognized the dominance of instrumental rationality (IR), but were absent of a positive solution (ibid. 255). Instead they came to the conclusion that the structures of late capitalism, of domination and exploitation, revealed the enclosure of human potential, and suggested no way out (ibid. 257). IR as the reason to both the problems and solutions of modernity lead Habermas to reconstruct the historical notion of reason in search for a way out of domination. He proposed reason as communicative, arising intersubjectively, aiming at reaching consensus (Thomassen, 2010, 52). In this way Habermas brought back hope for modernity. Communicative action created the potential for value-based norms to be formed through public opinion leading the way to a common project for modernity towards emancipation.

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<sup>4</sup> Here referred to the philosophical movement of intellectuals in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The use of reason was emphasized in studying and rethinking previously accepted normative foundations as religion and tradition (Callinicos, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Critical Theory seeks human emancipation, and must, according to Horkheimer, be explanatory, practical and normative in order to transform contemporary capitalism into a consensual form of social life (Stanford, 2012).

## 2.2. The Public Sphere and Systemic Colonization of Lifeworld

This section will be based upon Habermas' two main works: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (STPS), (1989)<sup>6</sup> and *The Theory of Communicative Action*, (1987)<sup>7</sup>. In relation to contemporary civil society, in the light of Critical Theory, these theories are fundamental for further analysis and understanding.

### 2.2.1. The Public Sphere

Habermas' early perception of, and believe in, social change lies within the public sphere (PS), where he finds a tiny hope for society; that through rational communication society can transform. Habermas describes the transformation<sup>8</sup> from an emergent, critical bourgeois PS creating public debate, into a disintegrated, uncritical PS in the social welfare state (Habermas, 1989, 206).

The institutional basis of the PS was in 'the public'; through the press, in political clubs, literary salons, pubs and coffeehouses (Kellner, 2000), where conversations were turned into criticism, creating public courage to use reason as transformative media.

Habermas saw in contemporary societies a *re-feudalization* of the PS as dividing producers and consumers of information, opinion and critique, and representing the passive consumer of opinion (Thomassen, 2010, 46). The re-feudalization also influenced politics; mass political parties were formed, led by political elites and strongly influenced by the interests of organizations and corporations (ibid.). Public opinion became managed; citizens became consumers, social integration declined and the bureaucratic welfare states' interference in everyday life eroded the difference between the state and PS.

"Where state and society had once been separate, they now interpenetrated, as the economy became increasingly regulated and organized pressure groups invaded the administration. Corporations blurred the distinction between private and public institutions. The family was losing its role in socialization. Culture was ceasing to be a domain of critical reasoning, and becoming one of mere ideological consumption..." (Anderson, 114, 2005)

In short, the transformation of the PS went from opinion to public opinion, and finally experienced a socio-structural transformation of the public opinion, from being public as in intersubjective and consensus-based, to being public as in one-way communication generated by mass media and presented by 'public relations', the system (Thomassen, 2010, 46).

Habermas' idealized picture of what was, proposed how the failed modernity project could be revitalized through communication and intersubjectivity in creating self-reflexivity and emancipation (Habermas, 1989, 36f). This proposal was crucial for initiation of democratization processes towards modernity, and was made explicit in the Theory on Communicative Action.

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<sup>6</sup> Published in Germany in 1962

<sup>7</sup> Published in Germany in 1981

<sup>8</sup> The transformation of the bourgeois public sphere took place throughout the seventeenth to the nineteenth century's capitalist societies



## 2.2.2. The Systemic Colonization of Lifeworld

After the STPS, Habermas published in 1981 (English 1987) the ‘Theory of Communicative Action’ (TCA), where he combines sociological theories on action and language, with philosophical theories on rationality, to develop a theory of modern society and its pathologies as a result of systemic colonization. He sought to find the diagnosis for society’s pathologies through a critique of contemporary society, and through proposing a forgotten cure.

Habermas develops the TCA in great volume and with high complexity. Following McCarthy (1987), I frame the TCA around three interrelated concerns: communicative rationality, lifeworld and system, and societal pathologies. These three concerns are relevant for explaining social movements’ resistance to bureaucratic and corporate dominations in social life.

### 2.2.2.1. Communicative Rationality

“...communicative reason: that is, not conquest of nature, but consensus among persons, arrived at by a rational-critical exchange of views within an emergent public sphere, independent of the power of absolutism.” (Anderson, 114, 2005)

One of Habermas’ intensions with the use of communicative rationality (CR) was to oppose the classical Marxist idea of revolution. Instead of taking over the state, the state could be surrounded and influenced by public opinion “to tame the capitalist system” (Anderson, 2005). CR is oriented towards reaching understanding in the lifeworld and enable its reproduction, “the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding” (Habermas, 1987a, 285-86). Intersubjective relationships<sup>9</sup> exist alongside instrumental relationships, but through communicative action (CA) norms can be shaped to critically exhaust manipulative communication during system domination, thereby initiating a process of rational will-formation, through the ideal speech<sup>10</sup> situation (Kellner, 2000).

The TCA offers solutions to the problems associated with the bourgeois PS, through a future-oriented perspective, where solutions are found in better conditions for participants to engage in a domination-free, rational dialogue aimed at mutual understanding (Thomassen, 2010, 52). However, Habermas does not believe that CA can penetrate society as a whole, therefore we need the distinction between the system and lifeworld (ibid. 73). Societal responsibility must also lie within the system, since not everything can be the subject of rational deliberation and consensus formation in the Lifeworld at all times.

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<sup>9</sup> In communicative action validity is transferred through intersubjective relationships where communicative rationality is formed by cognitive interpretations, moral expectations and valuation (Habermas, 1987b, 327).

<sup>10</sup> An ideal speech situation is a theoretical interaction based on pure intersubjectivity. It means an ideal situation with no restrictions on, or distortion of, the meaning actors wish to share. Communicative actors would be able to completely understand the meaning expressed because the influences of power would be neutralized (Kellner, 2000). Addressing an ideal speech situation further is out of the scope of this thesis, but it should be noted that, to Habermas, intersubjectivity is key to formulation of meaningful common values.

#### 2.2.2.2. Lifeworld and System

By seeing modernization, the rationalization of lifeworld, as a process of differentiation, Habermas distinguishes between instrumental and communicative rationality, and enables the dual concept of society as lifeworld and system (Thomassen, 2010, 73). This dual concept integrates and reproduces society, but through different medias. Social integration<sup>11</sup> takes place through communication aimed at consensus, and system integration takes place via money and power aimed at success (Habermas, 1987b, 120).

The lifeworld is the background, “the unquestioned ground of everything given in my experience, and the unquestionable frame in which all the problems I have to deal with are located” (Habermas, 1987b, 131), meaning the implicit, socio-cultural background consensus of the lifeworld where norms and values are taken for given (Thomassen, 2010, 72). Therefore CA has the potential to critically challenge ‘what is’, what Habermas calls the reproduction of lifeworld.

Through a continuous process of differentiation and rationalization throughout history, the system has advanced from the foundation of the lifeworld, and developed into political and economic institutions. The systemic integration of society, in contrast to the social integration of the lifeworld, is steered by the non-normative, de-linguistified media of money and power, regulating individual decisions beyond actors’ consciousness (Habermas, 1987b, 117). When the system is instrumentally interfering with the structural components of the lifeworld<sup>12</sup>, the communicative basis of solidarity in society is threatened, increasing the risk of systemic colonization of the lifeworld (Habermas, 154, 1987).

#### 2.2.2.3. Societal Pathologies

Habermas’ critical theory of modernity is directed towards the pathologies of modern societies, caused by the dominance of instrumental rationality (IR). Habermas suggests that the cure can be found in the emancipatory potential of CA, by re-establishing the communicative structures that money and power eroded.

The dominance of IR displaces communicative forms of solidarity, colonizes the lifeworld and prevents its reproduction (Thomassen, 76, 2010). The colonization can take different forms and have different effects depending on structural components of the lifeworld that it affects: loss of meaning is related to the lack of cultural reproduction; anomie and reification are related to the breakdown of social norms and social disintegration; and psychopathologies are related to social isolation and personalities (ibid.). The domination of IR in the lifeworld becomes a reinforcing loop of systemic integration of society, where the lifeworld is increasingly de-moralized, pacified and alienated. The solution to this systemic rationality crisis is CR, but it can only break through the instrumentality of society, by the critical responses from the lifeworld.

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<sup>11</sup> Social Integration: A normatively secured consensus orientates actions by social actors and ensures that actions are meaningful to society. Social integration enables meaningful reproduction of lifeworld.

<sup>12</sup> Structural components: Cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization (Habermas, 1987b, 154). See Appendix B for more detailed description.

### 2.2.3. Between the Public Sphere and New Social Movements

By going through the early theories of Habermas I have presented the importance of the PS and the lifeworld-system differentiation. Habermas believed in rationality as the normative foundation for moral and just societies, he made it clear that in order to criticize *what is* we need an alternative, why he developed the theory of CA. Today urgent ecological and systemic crises, driven by those same instrumental ideas and reasoning, force us to reconsider our path, and in Habermasian terms, to re-moralize society starting with the lifeworld, since in a democratic society this is where public opinion and action are created.

The reproduction of advanced consumer democracies driven by the system has created a locked-in situation, where the politics of unsustainability are reproduced with little opportunity to be resisted. Consumers are caught, producers are nodding, the politicians are obeying, the industries are lobbying – the capacity for sustaining the unsustainable is far from exhausted (Blühdorn, 2011). The political language of sustainability is still unsustainable, but to Habermas this kind of project is not necessarily lost, however, it might take time. New social movements cannot solve the problems, but they can construct value-based social and communicative structures creating space for a process of re-moralization.

## 2.3 New Social Movements

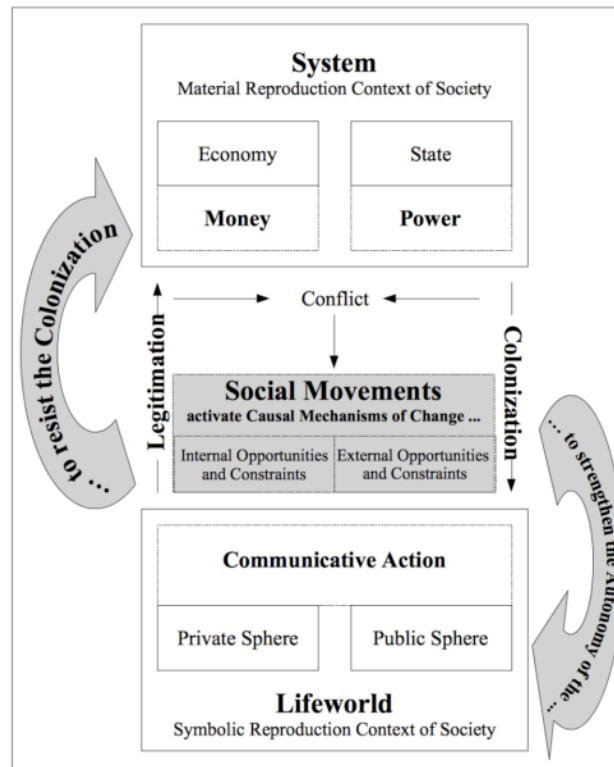
In 1981 Habermas published his theory on New Social Movements (NSM), where he combined his earlier theories. NSM action creates potentials that can transform lives and identities of actors, and in the everyday life restore moral and symbolic structures undermined by the colonization (1981, 33). In short, affect the public use of reason towards social change.

“The agents now crucial for generating a public sphere of debate are not those asking about *what we should get* but those asking about *who we are, how we live, and who is accountable*” (Edwards, 2008).

NSMs become important as channels for opposing the structural barriers of colonization that prevent social change. Through CA they can re-establish legitimacy in the systems on which lifeworld is dependent, and emphasize the insufficiency of money and power to cure the pathologies of society (Habermas, 1981). The NSM are bringing up ‘new politics’ related to “problems of quality of life, equality, individual self-realization, participation and human rights” (Habermas, 33, 1981). Their action resembles resistance towards the colonization of the internal structural components of the lifeworld; culture, society and personality, by the growing economic-administrative system.

For NSMs, excluded from complex technical, economic and political solutions, the solution must be more concrete, positive and creative, while issues to be addressed often is to be found locally and in everyday lives. People face pollution, destroyed urban environments, waste of resources, growing cities, poor food quality, declining health, social isolation etc. “developments that visibly attack the *organic foundations of the life-world* and make one drastically conscious of the criteria of livability” (Habermas, 1981, 35).

According to Habermas the conflict of the NSMs arise at the “seam between the system and lifeworld” (Habermas, 1987b, 395) as visualized in Figure 1. Conflicts are politically addressed by NSMs, in this thesis exemplified by PSMs, by activating intended causal mechanisms of change. My aim is to look into the possibilities of VSMs to gain influence in solving these conflicts embedded in the social structures of the lifeworld, why I bring up the UC of social action.



**Figure 1:** Social Conflict and the role of Social Movements as Agents of Change (source: Trocchia, 2009, Habermas, 1987ab)

## 2.4 The Unintended Consequences of Social Action for Structural Change

Why do the phenomena of the UC deserve special attention? Are they not simply unimportant residues of our fundamentally rational activity? One can be tempted to believe so. On the other hand, they can be seen as clear signs of the limits of our rationalizations and the foundations on which they are built.

Merton (1936) wrote *The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action*, which has inspired sociology until today, but the idea of UC goes back to the Enlightenment and Adam Smith, and known as ‘the invisible hand’.

“[L]ed by an invisible hand”...”and thus without intending it, without knowing it, [they] advance the interest of the society, and afford means for the multiplication of the species.” (A. Smith (1759), from Callinicos, 16-17).

This later became known as the principle that ‘social structures are the unintended consequences of individual actions’ especially directed at the rich in the modern

‘commercial’ societies and their self-seeking actions (Callinicos, 2007, 16-17). The UC are the surprises from the complexities of action systems, when we refuse or are incapable of thinking about more than a single cause and a single effect, or just the fact that multiple inputs produce multiple outputs under conditions of limitations (Meadow, 2009, 86-110).

The concept of UCs is most interestingly worked out by Weber, formulated in the time between Smith and Merton, as an attempt to explain the rise of the capitalistic ideal as a consequence of the Protestant ethic (Callinicos, 2007, 162-63). The dominance of IR created the ‘iron cage’ where effectiveness and bureaucratic consequences ensured continued growth, but instead produced humans without spirit. Therefore he found that modern man had lost fundamental common values, and now had to individually choose them (ibid. 172). Weber’s two main types of social action were instrumental rational and value-rational. Both types of action imply a conscious decision from the actor, a choice between different means (Etzrodt, 2005). In instrumental action the choice between alternative means is based on the most efficient way to reach an expected utility-based end, whereas the choice in a value-rational action is based on a system of norms and not on the end, the value being an end in itself (ibid.). Weber does not believe that common values can be restored, therefore the modernity project of emancipation has come to an end (Callinicos, 172). Habermas’ reconstruction and differentiation of rationality bring back hope to the modernity project by believing in CR as facilitating the emergence of common values formulated by communicative actors. In this way he actualize Weber’s value-rational actions, as will be pointed out in the analysis.

Weber formulated the mechanisms that activate the UC of purposive social action, and Cherkaoui (2007) identifies them as five mechanisms<sup>13</sup>:

- Limitation of instrumental rationality
- Interdependence of actions and between actors<sup>14</sup>
- Spill-over effect
- Conflict between the logic of spheres
- Emergence of new values

These five mechanisms have the potential of creating interrelated combinations producing complex webs of UC’s sources, difficult to analyze (ibid.). I will therefore, in the analysis, not specify which mechanisms are activated, but instead refer to their combined effect. The UC can help us to better understand the social mechanisms<sup>15</sup> and processes of change, which can contribute to social movement strategies and to the reproduction of transitory social structures.

“Any serious pursuit of sustainability must be based upon social processes that provide mechanisms for mediating diversity and conflict” (Ratner, 2004)

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix C for more detailed description

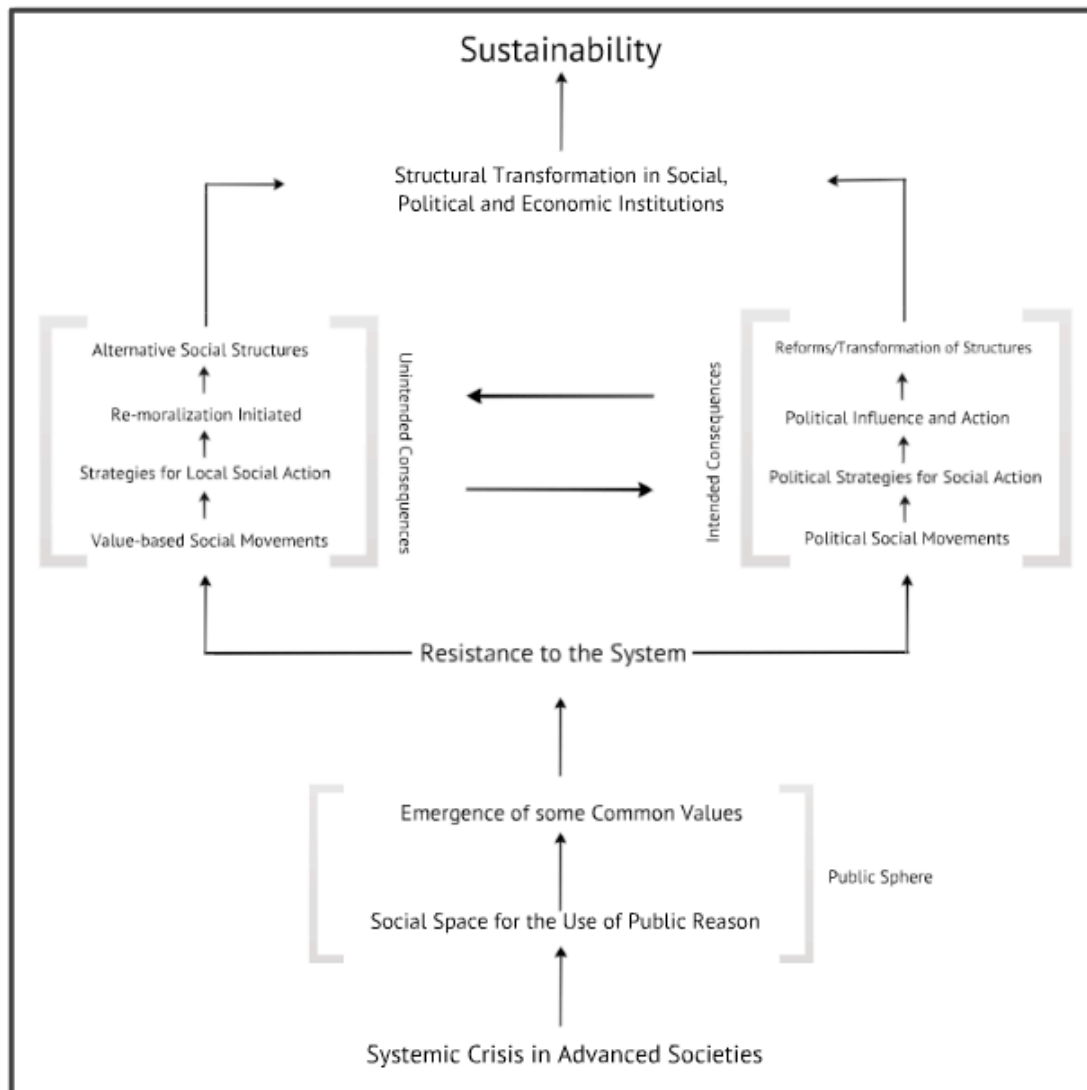
<sup>14</sup> A classic example is that of Hardin’s (1968) *The Tragedy of the Commons* that exceeds individual intentions and motivations and exemplify that individuals making choices solely in terms of their own interests, while ignoring cooperation, create more harm together than the advantages they individually obtain.

<sup>15</sup> A social mechanism explains the observed associations between events, as “a social process having designated consequences for designated parts of the social structure” (Hedstrom and Swedberg). In other words social mechanisms can explain the process from: what people do, why they do it, and what comes out of it

### 3. The Model, Methods and Fieldwork

This research initially started with an interest in social movements for sustainability. With theoretical backup I have conceptualized the model of argumentation for the potential of broadening the scope of social movements for sustainability. Through qualitative research methods I have collected empirical data to illustrate the plausibility of the outlined mechanisms.

#### 3.1 The Model of Argumentation



**Model 1: Developed by the author, 2012.**

The purpose of this model is to conceptualize how VSMs can push values of sustainability. The model is created to detect my movement of thoughts and to enable plausibility through analyzing data. It illustrates the logic of causality according to Habermas, although in reality mechanisms are dynamically activated on all levels at all

times, corresponding to the continuous flow of new actors. As explained in chapter 1, I distinguish between PSM; characterized by strategic actions towards sustainability and intended political action outcomes, and VSM; characterized by value-principles without conscious strategies towards sustainability, why outcomes can become unintended.

The model explains the mechanisms starting from observing social pathologies caused by systemic rationality crisis. The illustration of the PS shows that critical communities take shape and facilitate emergence of common values related to the social context. The critical PS enables resistance to take place in emerging social movements, exemplified in PSMs and VSMs. The mechanisms for social action taking place in the VSMs are analyzed to illustrate their transformative potential. The arrows between PSMs and VSMs illustrate the possibilities of strategic collaboration, and suggest the importance of collaboration in facilitating structural transformations in society towards a sustainability ideal.

### **3.2 Research Design**

My research design is theory-guided and qualitative, and explores contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2003, 1). I have sought to explore and analyze an assumed potential of VSMs influencing a sustainability transition, and have inductively collected qualitative data (Bryman, 2004, 9-10) to test the theoretical model. The model is an attempt to conceptualize the social mechanisms in social movement action, through which both intended and unintended consequences have potential to contribute to a sustainability transition. The contemporary phenomena are presented by three AFMs in Copenhagen, as potential agents of change towards a sustainability ideal.

The fieldwork has been conducted in Copenhagen and consists of both semi-structured interviews of two hours with four key activists, a focus group of four activists and both observation and participation in activities of the movements. The observation and participation have been crucial for experiencing how activists interact, discuss and make decisions as being important for observing the use of CA approaches. The focus group increased the understanding of how activists find common meaning in using food as the medium for social change. Participant-observations in activities and meetings enabled me to follow up on activities and dynamics within the movements and to further reflect on the collected data. I have chosen these three AFMs due to their potential of being value-based social movements with a sustainability ideal, while still representing diversity in activities and procedures. The movements represent both long-term and short-term social structures, attempts to resist corporatization, and strong value foundations, both explicitly formulated as well as more implicit ones. The only data on the CFMs have been empirical. No secondary literature is yet available. This, as well as the rather new concept of 'food movements' required that data were supplemented from other studies mainly based on European and North American movements.

Appendix A1 lists the interviewees, A2 lists the main interview questions for the semi-structured interviews as well as general questions during activities, and A3 lists the focus group questions and outcome. A4 and A5 list participant-observations and observations at meetings.

### 3.3 Methodology

My epistemological standpoint is derived from the idea of intersubjective truth, which is in line with the philosophical foundation of Habermas' theories<sup>16</sup>, and explains how knowledge and value-based norms are acquired through intersubjectivity, or interpersonal constitutions of meaning.

Ontologically I am guided by realism seen through the lens of Critical Theory, which has its roots in the Frankfurt School. Meaning that our cognitive discourses can change, in this case through the emergence of new intersubjectivity as a result of communicative rationality. Therefore, this realism is very different from naïve or surface realism of empiricism (Benton and Craib, 2010). Critical Theory believes that ideas shape the material world in important ways, that is why the way to transform societal structure is through changing the way individuals think and talk (Mearsheimer, 1995), enabling sustainability to become a process through intersubjectivity. This means that we can move beyond surface realism, when our cognitive paradigms change, to a world where society's reflexive and normative foundations cause e.g. political institutions to act according to more sustainable ideals.

### 3.4 Methods for Data Collection

I have collected my empirical data through triangulation (Bryman, 2004, 275) where especially participation and observation have supplemented interviews with important inputs, as well as contributing to the validity of the data. One interview I did after participating in a workshop in one of the community gardens in Copenhagen, where the interviewed (A, organizer KbhFF) participated too. We worked together in a group of 12 to build a raised bed over two hours, therefore the interview started with soil on our hands and mud on our shoes, when we left the garden. My intention with this 'pre-interview' was to see what food activists do together, what they talk about before and after practical work, and to listen to exchange of ideas, knowledge etc. It has been one way of dealing with the difficulties of gathering sufficient information through interviews, as intended and unintended consequences of actions as well as formulation of specific values are difficult to directly approach. The remaining interviews were done in more conventional ways, and all of them were semi-structured.

The focus group was conducted during a workshop in Copenhagen on urban agriculture. The method used was 'Open Space'<sup>17</sup>, and the discussion took place in a group of four food activists.

The background motives for being in a food movement I collected from both the daily activities and meetings in the food collective and the gardens, but also from a workshop I arranged by using the network BærByen<sup>18</sup>. The workshop gathered 70 food activists from Copenhagen<sup>19</sup>. The workshop was conducted as a space of citizen dialogue, where

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<sup>16</sup> See Intersubjective viewpoints in Habermas (1987) Vol. 1: p. 13 + 392, and Vol. 2: p. 10

<sup>17</sup> Open Space: Workshop participants can propose a question of their interest on the main topic. In this case 2x5 questions were proposed to approximately 30 participants. The five participants proposing a question in each of the two rounds also facilitate the discussion related to their question. The outcomes are shared afterwards.

<sup>18</sup> LUMES Making Change Happen project 2011 (Pluschke et al., 2011)

<sup>19</sup> A diverse mix of food activists and a handful of municipality representatives



ideas and experiences could be discussed and exchanged between ‘lifeworld’ and the ‘system’.

Data have also been collected through desk studies and literature searches of articles using LibHub and Google Scholar to generate results.

## 4. Background to Case

### 4.1 Copenhagen Food Movements

Only lately have the AFMs in Copenhagen, such as community gardens and food collectives entered the stage. I have chosen to focus on these, due to their practical value-based actions and strong roots in the local community.

Due to the strong welfare state and security net in Denmark, the resistance addresses what Habermas calls ‘new politics’<sup>20</sup>, although the movement actions are not explicitly political. The Danish welfare system is a growing economic-administrative system, where the state and the economy are ‘nursing’ citizens to an extent where the bureaucracy becomes a constraint for transformative change (Weise, 2012; Lykkeberg, 2012) both within the system and lifeworld.

#### 4.1.1 KbhFF – Copenhagen Food Collective

“We are driven by a dream and by generosity, and find that many people are eager to contribute.” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview)

**Københavns Fødevarerfællesskab (KbhFF)** is a member-based food collective in Copenhagen. Its member base has grown to more than 3500 households or more than 5000 members, since 2010, while it spread from one to nine locations in the city (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

On a weekly basis KbhFF provides organic and biodynamic produce from seasonally and locally harvested sources at low prices (KbhFF, 2012). KbhFF is organized around every member being a co-owner, co-worker and co-eater. This means that each member has responsibility for the organization to run, by putting in at least three hours of work per month (ibid.). The work differs from the members’ abilities and time. Some have more time to pack vegetables during the day, others to clean up at night, some to order vegetables from the farmer or arranging debates on food topics and yet others to prepare food for the weekly community kitchen (M, organizer KbhFF, interview). By creating a flexible and creative environment, open to everyone, KbhFF has managed to self-organize community structures that are both inclusive and participatory.

“In KbhFF nobody gets paid. Everyone is here on equal terms, why there is little talk about money, and no competition – just vegetables and people.” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview)

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<sup>20</sup> New Politics address issues as quality of life, equality, individual self-realization, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and active participation (Habermas, 1981).

These community structures have created a social space where quality not quantity; community not commodity; and the environment not the economy are what matters the most. The one-time, almost symbolic member fee and the limited surplus from the vegetables are pooled into a community fund, where they are re-invested into the local community (KbhFF, 2012). Thereby enabling the development of its own community structures, social network and spaces where commodification and the logic of accumulation are resisted and ideas of sustainability are supported. The fund also enables them to be independent on external funds and interests, this they see as important for being a part of a sustainable future (Principle 7, Appendix D).

“We have been approached by others who wanted to replicate the concept. There are examples of projects that want to earn enough money to e.g. have paid staff. This we don’t recommend as a feasible solution, since the achievements becomes hollow. The success becomes too easy. You replicate and you hire people to do the hard work, but essentially those are the things that people want to do; to built up, create and make it last - they want this alternative - they appreciate the shared work much more, they feel ownership, they are committed, they are not just consumers once again” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

In KbhFF consensus<sup>21</sup> has been the process of decision-making from the beginning, allowing a high level of autonomy, and keeping them from ever having had the reason to vote (M, organizer KbhFF, interview). It enables every member to have influence on the operation and development of the collective, and to create ownership and responsibility, which are essential for making KbhFF possible on an everyday basis.

The shared ownership enables each member to propose and initiate new projects, and to directly influence the activities and structures. The choice of consensus illustrates what the movements believe decision-making can and should be like (A, organizer KbhFF, interview). It also nurtures internal diversity bringing about cooperation from varied population groups, who would normally be with little common ground (Schlosberg, 1995).

The spirit of KbhFF has spread all over the city; a weekly community kitchen, member dinners at the different locations, critical debates and events in public spaces, an upcoming, experimenting community garden, a platform for facilitating communal ways of living, interacting and working<sup>22</sup>, ideas for and examples of new social businesses in other sectors and four new food collectives in other Danish cities (M, organizer KbhFF, interview; A, organizer KbhFF, interview).

#### 4.1.2 Copenhagen Community Gardens

“Urban community gardening teaches you about a real food system. Although I can still go to the supermarket next door, it now feels like cheating.” (K, gardener, DYRK, focus group).

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<sup>21</sup> “Consensus is a fairly formalized process of decision-making in which decisions emerge from a synthesis of ideas, arguments, and positions generated from group discussions. The consensus process places a high value on verbal participation, cooperation and the communication of feelings as well as practical ideas” (Schlosberg 1995, p. 305).

<sup>22</sup> See [www.sammenskud.dk](http://www.sammenskud.dk)

Community gardens are an essential activity in the AFMs. They bring about direct contact with plants, vegetables and soil. In Copenhagen there are several community gardens. I have been focusing on two of them; one is well established the other one is under planning, but generates many activities already.

#### 4.1.2.1 DYRK<sup>23</sup>

DYRK is a public rooftop garden in Copenhagen situated on the top of a school. During the last year the garden has had over 500 visitors, hosted 8 cafes each with about 50 visitors. DYRK wants to be of inspiration, and is providing a space to independently experiment with urban agriculture (C, gardener, DYRK, interview). It is a meeting point for the local community and a space for community dinners, art shows and music events. The municipality has given the rooftop for no costs, and helped financing the materials needed to start up.

“Community gardens expose some of the complexities in our food systems that we are distanced from, and they remind us of the respect for nature, for it bringing us food and nutrition. The purpose, in our garden, is not to grow vegetables for sale, but to grow inspiration – a reminder for society of the essentials in life. When engaged in a garden you start valuing food differently. You realize the high sensitivity to the weather, the dependency on seasons, the amount of labor put into it, and the absurdity of food prices.” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group).

DYRK is run by a core group of engaged people, but is open for anyone interested in hanging out or in growing food. The focus of DYRK is the environment and the people in it, leaving no space for money or hierarchy. “Here you share the food being produced, you share the knowledge you have, and the work you can do with your hands” (C, gardener DYRK, interview).

#### 4.1.2.2 Byhaven Nørrebro

The community garden ‘**Byhaven Nørrebro**’ is an initiative taken by a group in KbhFF. The organizational structure of KbhFF makes it possible to start up new ideas that become supported on member meetings. This initiative was well received and quickly brought together 80 people keen on growing food. The garden is not yet established, but will be so, in a busy local park, in the early June (Meeting 3, obs.). The organizational consensus structure is brought on from KbhFF.

The first start-up meeting collected 35 people and various reasons brought them there. Some just wanted to grow food, others were interested in new social community space, and yet others were curious, liked the idea, but knew nothing about growing food. The variety of people stretched from the strange old man on the street, to the landscape architect tired of making gardens for rich people, the engaged municipality worker wanting to be part of the change, the health conscious body therapist, the artist interested in making everything from natural and recycled materials, the anthropologist changing lane in life, the unemployed biologist, the students bored by deskwork etc. (ibid.). Very few had experience with gardening, everyone had lived in the city for years, and everybody was asking for a change in a more conscious and responsible direction.

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<sup>23</sup> DYRK means ‘GROW’.

They saw the potential in the community garden, for bringing about an alternative social space, practical activities and skills, creative surroundings for doing something together instead of by yourself, of growing, enjoying and appreciating (ibid.).

## 5. Analysis and Discussion of Case

To follow the line of argumentation of my model, I apply the cases of the CFMs to the VSM path, and argue for their influence on the path to sustainability guided by the works of Habermas and Weber. I will try to analyze the cases in relation to the activities and mechanisms taking place in the *public sphere*, and those taking place when *resistance to the system* is initiated.

### 5.1 The Public Sphere

The public sphere is “made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society” (Habermas, 1989, 176), creating public opinion by citizens not subjects, to legitimate authority in a democracy (Rutherford, 18-19, 2000).



#### 5.1.1 Social Space and the Use of Public Reason

The CFMs have experienced and acted upon the system crisis in different ways.

The initiative to KbhFF was taken after COP15<sup>24</sup> in December 2009, and was provoked by the lack of consensus and lack of common agreement containing serious goals during the COP15.

KbhFF “...was founded on a critique of the situation, and was a reaction against the ignorance and inadequacy of the system. The idea wasn’t new, but it didn’t exist in Copenhagen, and it was concrete – we needed that! It was a question of, where can we do something when politicians are not acting? COP15 exposed the limits and constraints of the political and economic systems. It was a very concrete example of how not to do it. So much support for change, and so little political agreement...” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The social space for rational-critical debate was formed, and the initial group of 30 activists worked towards building structures of a social movement aiming at being part of a sustainable future (A, organizer KbhFF, interview). The critique created the foundation for consensus, trust-based and inclusive structures.

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<sup>24</sup> COP15: The 15th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the 5th session of the COP as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol were hosted in Copenhagen, December 2009 (UNFCCC, 2009)

“In the beginning KbhFF was strongly supported by the left-wing activist environment. They are good at being against, but less good at routines, why their long-term engagement wasn’t there. As with demonstrations, it is easy to show up, but it rarely creates any permanent structures. This we wanted to be different on. We wanted to create something we could maintain, in order to build up the trust we saw was non-existing after COP15” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The community garden DYRK was reacting to the inadequacies of the industrial food system, to the disconnection between people and their food and sought to create social structures to bring people together around valuing an alternative food system.

“The food system prevent us from starving, but it doesn’t make us healthy. It is supposed to make it easy, but it makes us eat alone. Food is supposed to taste good, but it all tastes the same. It is supposed to be beautiful, but it all comes standardized and straight. We have lost the essentials in understanding what keeps us alive – mentally, physically and environmentally” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group).

The organization and value foundation of KbhFF is fostering social space for critical discussions to take place, although Habermas’ PS is idealized, many of the activities taking place are build upon strong incentives for interest-free, critical communication in an inclusive forum (Meeting 2, obs.). Actors can participate in activities and discussions without being experts in the field, through the collective knowledge and critical attitude, public reason is used to change practices and structures into more desirable patterns (ibid.). In these social spaces CA is not practiced in its ideal form, but the example of KbhFF’s consensus approach does provide mechanisms in the process of change with coordination of action orientations that facilitates the common interests (Habermas, 1987b, 150). These social spaces of CFMs create collective activities and discussions, which turn out to be important for the emergence of common values.

### 5.1.2 Emergence of Common Values

“People are not necessarily afraid of change, but afraid of being changed, why it should be a process controlled by the individual and driven by the community. It should be a change we are doing together, by visualizing and valuing both benefits, compromises and trade-offs” (A, organizer, KbhFF, interview)

This comment touches upon something very fundamental for the approaches of the CFMs. It is a process and a challenge to formulate new values and changing behaviors fundamental for creating a sustainable ideal to facilitate a social transformation. The notion of people being scared of being changed, say something about the feeling of loss of freedom and choice, but also something about whether personal value change is intended or unintended. Experiencing change takes place, according to Habermas, when awareness is created in intersubjective agreements between rational actors (Thomassen, 2010, 52) and in surroundings where change is meaningful.

Growing food in a community is seen as choosing a long-term quality life through a meaningful social life, trust in the community, working closely with nature, and understanding some of the complex interactions in ecosystems (C, gardener DYRK, interview). The community gardens are not created to provide food security, but are instead seen as revitalizing communities through food.

“The more disconnected we become from nature in the growing cities of today, the more we seek for community and meaning. We need food everyday, it is a familiar repetition in life, and it can act with an enormous power of persuasion” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group)

The dilemma today is that of social space, according to K, DYRK. “Food and the meal used to be the center of families, friends and communities, but today most people shop in supermarkets, many rarely cook and often eat alone” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group).

What has been noticeable when talking to KbhFF actors is the use of a collaborative ‘we’. It is incorporated into the language of the food collective. When something is referred to in relation to the KbhFF it is a common reference. The organizational structures, the collective responsibility, the consensus approach and direct influence create strong community ownership and engagement within KbhFF. The notion of a ‘we’ therefore becomes crucial for sustaining actions orientation (Melucci, 1989, 34), in this case aiming at creating permanent and responsive social structures.

“We value proximity. We have seen the farmer directly in the eyes, and that is more worth than control and stamps. When you have first seen farmers remove wheat from the fields, you know how much work is in producing food without chemicals. It creates respect for the food and trust between the farmer and us” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The social structures shaped by a communicative rational community enable actors to become active food citizens<sup>25</sup> instead of food consumers, and bring legitimacy to new food structures through the use of public reason backed by common values.

“Even though people are very different in KbhFF we still meet, because we have a common vision in mind and are eager to discuss and explore the values behind. Many people really want change.” (Mi, member KbhFF, interview)

All of the above show the need for transformative social action to take place in understandable, practical systems; through mediums people are familiar with, and which is based on values such as responsibility. The orientation towards creating permanent, value-based structures can facilitate space and time for people to critically discuss, create new values and legitimacy in their actions, while transforming actors from being consumers to citizens.

“Even though we don’t exactly know where this takes us, we still have to work in the direction that we believe we have to go towards. What we do in KbhFF is for me a step in the right direction, and it makes even more sense that the community is so supportive and full of hope.” (Mi, member KbhFF, interview)

“Mi” indicates the appearance of value-rational actions “the right direction” implies that actions are shaped by common values, but without a clear goal or without having to define it. This proves that the process of sustainability can exist within the movements, and through the responsive structures be shaped and formulated according to the social and environmental context.

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<sup>25</sup> Food citizenship presupposes rights followed by responsibility (Lang, 2009), which create potential for food citizens to take responsibility according to sustainability.

Although these activities involve a fairly small segment of the population, they create visible social spaces, initiate public debate and generate attention both in subcultures and in mainstream media (KbhFF, 2012). The space is characterized by being communicative; people are there to talk, interact and socially engage in practical actions. The diversity of actors encourages interaction and mutual understanding (Part-obs. 1, KbhFF), in Habermas' words intersubjectivity is valued, allowing equal participation and moral expectations (Habermas, 1987b, 327).

## 5.2 Resistance to the System

“They resist the reduction to merely ‘powerless dependent consumers of change’” (Arato and Cohen, 1995)

Habermas' thesis on the colonization of the lifeworld describes the locked-in situation of advanced capitalist societies (Thomassen, 2010). The dominance of IR and systemic integration generates the risk for social action to reproduce systemic structures instead of transforming them. For social movements, Habermas' distinction between lifeworld and system is important for generating resistance (see 2.3), since the systemic use of IR can be confronted by CR as the medium to surround the system. The intersubjective transfer of validity is morally justifying social action based on CR (Habermas, 1987b, 327), why these actions can be said to socially reproduce and de-colonize the lifeworld from the system. Resistance can grow into different approaches to social movement action. As the model illustrates PSMs can channel common values into strategic, political action, however, as the model implies and the cases show there are different ways of acting upon common values.

The actions of the CFMs are challenging 'what is', and therefore promote social integration. Societal pathologies, a broken food system and climate changes can be seen as reasons for people to critically involve in activities of resistance. The response to the loss of meaning can be seen in the gardens, where actors reconnect with nature and become responsive to the consequences of their acts with the soil. The response to the break down of social norms manifested in reification and alienation can be seen in KbhFF's attempt to de-commercialize food and to establish a practical and responsible community build on solidary values. The response to psychopathologies manifested in social isolation can be illustrated by creating social space for equal participation and voice. Resisting institutionalization is emphasized through KbhFF's principle 7 (Appendix D), enabling them to be economic and politically independent from external support. The justification of this principle is that it is a necessary standpoint if KbhFF is to be a part of a sustainable future (KbhFF, 2012), where they can decide what growth means to them, what responsiveness to change means and how it should be dealt with through alternative structures.

The cooperative and voluntary approach to VSM action expose different valuations of time, interaction and money, compared to that of the system, as well as creating permanent and responsive social structures, emerging values and educating settings, and can all be seen as forming preventative foundations, not only curing pathologies.

### 5.3 Structural Change by Social Movements

The activities of the CFMs are concerned with the process of generating different ways of interpreting societal problems and acting on them. They provide an interesting mix between understanding broader problems related to food, while finding simple and inclusive, but communicatively coordinated ways of acting upon them.



#### 5.3.1 Value-based Social Movements

“Food is practical politics. We work with concrete subjects in a process of change, which can be shaped into a rather simple system with wide side-effects” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

When KbhFF was officially established as a movement, they collectively formulated 10 principles<sup>26</sup>, aiming at being a part of a sustainable future, based on flexible and inclusive methods enabling continuous reshaping of the organization (A, organizer KbhFF, interview).

“There are really many entry points. This is why food is interesting. It can be for the vegetables, for the community, for the experimenting organization, or for initiating a different lifestyle” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The organization and value foundation of KbhFF is fostering social space for critical discussions to take place. The activities of food distribution does not allow KbhFF to be outside the economic realm, however, the distribution is structured in a way, where relationship and trust between the farmers and the collective are highly prioritized and where profits are not generated for the collective<sup>27</sup>. In this way the activities within the structures of KbhFF are not an interest of money, but the initial incentives for members buying the vegetables might be.

The motivation for new members to participate differs from that of the founding group, since the social space for rational-critical discussion is already shaped. For new members the process of personal and social change starts on various levels and at different times, and the critique and conflict between values are less associated with concrete events as COP15. In most cases the motivation is cheap organic vegetables and/or the social community, and complemented by awareness about the impacts of industrialized agriculture on the climate (Mi, member KbhFF, interview).

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix D, principle 7.



“It is cheap. It is healthy, and the purpose is good”...besides that “many people are interested in the climate and environment, and concerned. Here is something concrete we can do, instead of just voting every 4th year” (B, member KbhFF, part-obs. 1).

Taking responsibility in the community and actively contributing in the activities of KbhFF has brought about a web of social spaces. The capacity and influence of the movement have contributed to collaborations and solutions that facilitate societal change corresponding to the common values. Examples are collective work in the daily running, weekly community kitchens, critical debates on food and the environment, and numerous working groups on communication, organizational structures, farmer contact, events, carpentry, environment, recycling, facilitation etc. (KbhFF, 2012).

“It is very fascinating to experience what happens when 12 highly educated people are standing next to each other for three hours, while sorting vegetables. It is a very unique energy. People are thrilled, because they haven’t talked to other people in this way for a long time” (P, member KbhFF, part-obs. 1).

The reason for people to participate in the gardens are plenty, from creating alternative social space, practical activities and skills, creative surroundings for doing something together instead of by yourself, of growing, enjoying and appreciating nature in urban settings (Meeting 1, Byhaven, obs.). “Many of the people here are simply questioning the way society functions. They have chosen to gradually exit the rat race, and find hope in the fundamental values of these places and the strengthening of community structures that have otherwise become poor” (Mi, member KbhFF, interview<sup>28</sup>).

Participating in a community garden generates responsibility towards other actors, but especially includes concrete responsibility towards the soil and the plants. The activities are mostly based on garden work, workshops and community kitchens. If food is not eaten it is being given away, seeds are collected and used next year, and soil has being donated (C, gardener DYRK, interview). People involved in DYRK are both very knowledgeable on food and urban agriculture and very unknowledgeable, but there is great willingness to share knowledge while working (part-obs. 2, DYRK).

“What drives people to participate in the garden is increasing awareness, it is knowing the risks and the consequences, but also the care and love - and the fact that you get addicted to good food - and to caring and loving” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group).

The experiences from the CFMs make it clear that you can be a part of a garden, for digging in soil and seeing plants grow, or a food collective for getting cheap food or company. Motivations related to value-rational or self-interested behavior. But if these movements are implicitly representing a critique of the global food system and a vision of being part of a sustainable future, then the actors are unintentionally supporting the reproduction of these structures, no matter why the actors are there. “Food can be a strong marker, since it has a neutral, uncritical element, while being politically loaded” (A, organizer KbhFF, interview). It seems so basic to grow a garden or sort vegetables that it does not become associated with political radicalism and ‘system change not climate change’ demonstrations<sup>29</sup>, and exactly these positive and constructive approaches are characterizing the three food movements. It opens up doors for more

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<sup>28</sup> As mentioned in Appendix A1, Mi is also a part of the working group of Byhaven Nørrebro, therefore the interview also included questions related to the community garden.

<sup>29</sup> Referring to Climate Justice Actions during the COP15 (CJA, 2009).

people to engage in social change, and it creates new fertile soil for a reproduction of social structures towards stronger sustainability.

“...you *come* for the vegetables, but *stay* because of the community, and realize that there is much more in it than just food.” (A, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The engagement and the motivation, the desire to socialize and talk about food, or something else, unintended become a movement towards something more than food. It becomes an introduction to other forms of socializing and different lifestyles, and creates alternative spaces of action in opposing instrumental, goal setting and calculated actions.

### 5.3.1.1 Strategies for Local Social Action

The overall aim for the CFMs can be seen as showing people that the abstractness of sustainable change in societies can be met by comprehensible, coordinated and continued change in local communities. The CFMs facilitate collective actions that are normative based, reduces money as motivations for action, while the community around food becomes the motivator.

“KbhFF is not meant to be political, but it can’t be apolitical, food in itself is political. Instead it is up to each member to use the values, knowledge and identity in the way they find most useful – political or not” (A, organizer KbhFF, interview)

The CFMs do not have explicit strategies rather their practical actions are coordinated by consensus-based action orientations<sup>30</sup>, while the agreed principles<sup>31</sup> on food action formulated by KbhFF are used as normative guidelines in their consensus processes (Meeting 2, obs.). The road towards sustainability becomes unintended to the actor, because the ‘ends’ of the individual practical actions e.g. cheap organic food, a social community and/or individual value-rationality, create social space for CA to take place. When common values emerge through CA, a normative foundation is created for practical action, and actors can either start to intentional create new alternative structures based on the shared values or stay within the existing alternative structures and unintendedly contribute to the reproduction of these. The effect of the common values can be manifested in structures in both private and public sphere and with different degrees of societal influence. The CFMs enable actors to experiment within the new set of values therefore they facilitate value-based action in contrast to interest-based. This distinction is of importance to the strategic collaboration suggested between PSMs and VSMs, enabling policies to be influenced by values instead of interests.

When addressing the benefits of VSM action it is not to ignore that there can be negative consequences as e.g. the free rider problem, where actors benefit without contributing (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009), but instead to point out that the ideal action based on CR, which according to Habermas, is the normative foundation for moral and just societies, must be consequential in positive terms if build on common values. According to Habermas (1987b, 150-51); if action orientations are coordinated

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<sup>30</sup> It can, however, be argued that it is a purposive and justified strategy in itself to coordinate action orientation through consensus (Trocchia, LUMES, 2009 (See also 5.3.2.)), but one needs to distinguish between different ways of defining strategies (Humburg, LUMES, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix D

consensus-based by the movement, then action will be oriented towards mutual understanding and meaningfulness, ensuring social integration that have been undermined by systemic action integration, causing colonization. The UC of actions based on self-interest or value-rationality are often due to the mismatch between means and ends (Ratner, 2004), meaning that many actors will not intentionally have been seeking for common values and a community, but their motivator, the cheap organic vegetables are placing them in the action, where the communicative and reflexive structures enable the activities to become of common interest.

The constraints of the CFMs lie in the narrow scope of focusing on food therefore greater societal influence must involve movement alliances to have political effect. The CFM actions are dominated by communicative approaches, but also incorporate instrumental elements. However, it is less transparent when and how individual actions are instrumental and self-interested, why it is important for the movements to maintain a strong 'we' and constructively promote the benefits of interpersonal linkages through emphasizing practical and non-virtual activities in the community.

### 5.3.1.2 Re-moralization Initiated

The colonization thesis by Habermas and the conflicts addressed by NSMs are reflecting the potential of re-moralizing the lifeworld, while restoring the common values that according to Weber were lost.

“Contemporary challenges urge us to rethink our problems morally and “universalize our interests” from a normative point of view by the establishment of moral communities at different levels of the work of self, culture and society. But it is an epochal challenge to re-moralize our lives by discovering the bonds that connect the self and the other and the “ties that bind the fate of an individual to that of every other - making even the most alien person a member of one’s community” (Habermas, 1990, 20) (From Giri, K., 2002).

CA by social movements enables re-moralization processes when value-based actions diffuse into the broader community. Re-moralization can take place through interpersonal relations, where values and normative foundations can be critically assessed and where action can be taken collectively. According to Giri (2002), this can make us experience the interdependency among people and with nature, which are crucial for initiating sustainable change. To “universalize our interests” is not within the scope of the CFMs, although it can be argued that a communicative process of creating values of sustainability for the global<sup>32</sup> level must necessarily come from local community initiatives (Prugh et al., 2000).

The CFMs seek to partly construct lived alternatives and illustrate that public use of reason and consensus-based collective action can re-moralize the lifeworld through practical action and structural changes. The CFMs are, due to their popularity and inclusive approaches in the process of re-moralizing themselves and their local community. Their activities encourage post-materialistic values, different perceptions of time and money, change in consumption patterns and engaged food citizenship.

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<sup>32</sup> Global is consciously chosen to contrast the expansive 'universal'. Habermas' universalism in discourse ethics is a contested term (Scherer and Patzer, 2010), a discussion that is out of the scope of this thesis.

“If you have a critique or are dissatisfied with something, then don’t just say it and expect others to take care of it, but do it yourself or with others”...”in KbhFF you learn that directing a critique towards something means taking responsibility, finding solutions and acting. It is a learning process of being a co-worker and a citizen, not a consumer. It is about acting, taking responsibility, creating trust and building bridges. It is like a school of social change.” (A, organizer KbhFF, interview)

This point raised by A is important in relation to the UC of social action. One of Weber’s mechanisms of UC is the emergence of new values, e.g. taking place during processes of decision-making, discussions or action, when conflict arise from the values on which the action is based (Cherkaoui, 2007). Action initially based on self-interested behavior becomes embedded in coordinated communicative action structures, and bring about UC of benefit for the collective interest, in these cases with a sustainability ideal in mind.

The awareness created when being active in the gardens is different from that of KbhFF. At DYRK it is about the “...pleasure to see things grow, it is exciting to experience that you can actually create something with your hands, something that can sustain you, and change your perspective on time...when you start growing food, you start growing a respect that are in stark contrast to the dominating food system...the prices on food and the waste of food are put in perspective when you know how long time it takes to grow a cauliflower, and how much can go wrong in the process” (K, gardener DYRK, focus group).

The mechanisms facilitating the unintended re-moralization processes are characterized by Weber’s five mechanisms enabling emerging common values and activities to affect the broader community. Although many actors are conscious about the environment and to some extent sustainability, it is still in many ways self-interested behavior that enables the movement to grow by attracting new and diverse members. This illustrates that re-moralization and changing values can take place unintended to the actor, while working together to e.g. get organic food - practical actions that create social space for CA to take place. These mechanisms are important to focus on when looking at the transformative potential of VSMs, where actions are value-based, practical and interdependent, while at the same time actors unintentionally reproduce alternative social structures that are oriented towards a more sustainable future.

When action becomes based on a system of norms created by the re-moralized actors involved, it can be argued that Weber’s value-rationality becomes actualized, by actors individually choosing values in a collective attempt to construct the lived alternative.

### 5.3.1.3 Alternative Social Structures

“People are invited to give something of themselves and being present in a different way. The movement and the activities function as a direct extension of them, as opposed to the supermarkets only demanding that you give money, making you completely anonymous.” (Mi, member KbhFF, interview)

Actors can create new alternative structures when a normative foundation for action orientation is shaped. As mentioned in 5.4.1.1, at this stage new structures can be created and reproduced both intentionally and unintentionally by actors, in either case these structures become empowering and facilitate the transformative potential of the social movement action.

A recent initiative by KbhFF illustrates how a shared normative foundation can make both values and interests among actors and between collaborators meet. The initiative was taken after a heated debate at a KbhFF member meeting. The debate was about whether the collective should support farmers in the 3-year transition period from conventional to organic agriculture by accepting their produce. The debate became about much more, about what KbhFF is all about. KbhFF have a common vision of what the food system could be, how community structures, communication and societal trust can bring about change, and they created their little perfect bobble. It was time to take the step further, to support those who wanted to change too, but who were directly dependent on and constrained by the structures of the system. The split between members was between those mostly focused on their own interests and those who saw the long-term common benefits. The consensus process enabled views and knowledge to be shared in a constructive and inclusive way, and they finally agreed on a 6 months test period (Meeting 3, obs.).

“I might not completely agree with what someone says at a member meeting, but if I don’t have a better argument myself, then I avoid objecting. The argument often turns out to be the best for all under the given circumstances. Limited resources are sometimes the reason for compromises, but then it is good to have many heads and ideas on how to go about it in the best way. It is a dynamic process of going new ways.” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview)

The member meeting created the possibilities for different views to be exchanged, but were also influenced by self-interests. However, the common value foundation and set of principles functioned as a frame and guideline for action orientation beyond private interests.

“The use of consensus processes and the ‘education’ of members in listening, reaching understanding and sharing ideas give room for common goals instead of individual agenda” (M, organizer KbhFF, interview).

The discussion was a good example of the movement working for permanent, but responsive structures strengthened and coordinated by the 10 principles.

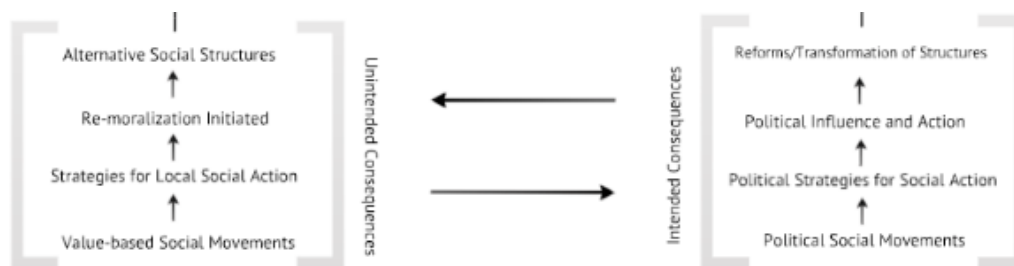
Interpersonal relations and consensus approaches characterize the social structures of the CFMs, but since the lifeworld is not de-colonized they are still influenced by the system in various and complex ways. However, it is important to point out that Habermas did not see the lifeworld and the system uncoupled, since they are interdependent in the negotiation of political power (Anderson, 2005, 123). Instead the conflicts arise against the colonizing encroachment of systemic imperatives (Kellner, 2000), as money and power, on areas of the lifeworld, which dominates in most of society. In this way, alternative social structures are created as responses to the way action is organized in the system. A CR could coordinate action orientations e.g. in terms of economies via interpersonal relations, and decision-making via consensus. Alternative socio-economic structures can be seen as local, moral economies: e.g. farmers markets, food collectives and coops, and community-supported agriculture<sup>33</sup> (Allen et al. 2003). Decisions by consensus can take place in social structures such as: community councils, educational projects, cooperatives etc.

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<sup>33</sup> Community-supported agriculture creates direct relationships between farmers and those who eat their food - farm members or shareholders (Cone and Myhre, 2000)

Examples of People' Food Policy Councils are now spreading in UK and Canada and integrate various food movements, think tanks and educational institutions in formulation of local food policies (PFPC, 2011).

### 5.3.2 Strategic Collaboration between Political and Value-based Social Movements



“Because the conflict is about values, sustainability must be socially and politically defined” (Prugh et al, 2000)

The CFMs have exemplified what their vision for sustainability means in a process of practice, and they have approached uncertainty and incomplete knowledge with communicative social structures that enable them to agree on the meaningfulness of their common practical actions<sup>34</sup>. As Prugh et al. argues “...something positive is needed, a vision of a way of life that is attractive, ecologically harmonious, and supportable in the long term - in short a way of life that is sustainable”, while acknowledging that visions cannot be prescribed, but must evolve over time (2000). This notion encourages emphasis on the diverse social actions that are already taking place, each working towards a value-based vision for sustainability. The CFMs have had success with mobilizing actors and engaging them in concrete and practical actions, where they unintentionally create critical social space and social structures with transformative potential. The practical and communicative foundation on which their actions are built should be of greater interest for political social movement strategies<sup>35</sup>.

It can be argued that it is a purposive and justified strategy in itself to coordinate action orientation through consensus (Trocchia, LUMES, 2009, 32), instead of a functional strategy oriented towards the UC of the systems actions (Habermas, 1987b, 150). However, both lines of strategies need to be present when negotiating political influence. The contribution from CA strategies is the coordination of action orientations by consensus that theoretically reduce the UC generated by the systems' functional actions (ibid.), if the systemic actions and communicative actions collaborate on strategies for change. CA combined with practical action is orientated to construct the meaningful lived alternative. The CFMs are acting politically neutral, but are working towards many of the core values of sustainability, therefore their activities and experiences could be coined with more strategic and political movements. The neutrality is important for mobilizing a diverse member base and to enable the

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix E for the author's suggestion of how to frame the opportunities in CFMs coordinated 'strategies' for collaboration with PSMs.

<sup>35</sup> Political social movement strategies for sustainability as e.g. exemplified by Humburg, (LUMES 2010)

construct of their alternatives, as in food collectives, community kitchens and vegetable gardens, while their communicative organization enables them to act, reflect and adjust based on the knowledge within the movements and the knowledge they continuously gain from their experiences.

By acknowledging the transformative capacities hidden in VSMs' actions, political strategies for change can be supplemented by practical experiences built on experimental social foundations and a set of emerging common values of sustainability that are acknowledged and can be interpreted in many different socio-economic contexts (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006). In order for the VSMs to gain political influence in the broader society they most collaborate with PSMs to confront the interest-based approaches characterizing politics (Chandler, 2007). This is exemplified in the model, where the suggested alliance can take place between VSMs and PSMs with intentional political and organizational strategies<sup>36</sup>. For collaboration to take place PSMs and VSMs must recognize the relevance of each other. PSMs can through integrating the concrete and practical examples of value-based transformative structures, broadening their horizon of social transformative change and challenge their strategic foundations. The VSMs can offer new forms of creative social structures, which are not necessarily strategically efficient or arising from theory, but instead value-based and successfully proven in reality. They can clearly illustrate, as exemplified by CFMs, that processes of change are important for the concept of sustainability, both processes of value change and re-moralization, and of creating responsive and communicative societal structures. The conflict over and prioritization of values will be a challenge for collaborative strategies to be formulated and implemented, but by recognizing transformative potentials taking place in everyday lives with few resources and much curiosity the outcomes can be diverse and experimenting. When broadening the understanding of social actors for sustainability, alternative micro- and meso-level structures can be recognized and facilitated on macro-level through PSMs.

#### 5.4 Structural Transformations and the Sustainability Ideal

The structural transformations needed in advanced capitalist societies today are complex. They not only have to transform our possibilities for democratic participation, but also have to re-moralize and appeal to human values of commonality. CA occurs in an ideal situation and can never take place in its purest form, but Habermas' differentiation is important for resistance and for creating a critical public opinion. In a Danish context, which is not ideal, there are democratic structures in place and freedom to act and speak. But for sustainable change to take place structures are needed, which can re-moralize and create change that is comprehensible, communicative and communal. The common values that Weber found lost in modern societies must be restored for transformative potentials to arise and for a paradigm shift to take place. The sustainability ideal needs to be based on fundamental values that are formulated through intersubjectivity in various settings in our daily lives. This ideal can be shaped by values such as the quality in life, of human solidarity, and of ecological sensitivity (Leisowitz and Kates, 2006), and facilitated by value-based social action. The sustainability ideal is supported by the way Ratner (2004) sees the concept of sustainability, to be "construed not as a fixed end, but as a *dialogue of values*...more

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<sup>36</sup> As the political social movement, Friends of the Earth, analyzed by Humburg (LUMES, 2010).

fitting to the diversity of ways in which the idea is applied and contested in practice”, therefore as “socially defined” sustainability “is meaningful not because it provides an encompassing solution to different notions of what is good, but for the way it brings such differences into a common field of dispute, dialogue, and potential agreement as the basis of collective action” (Ratner, 2004, 62).

“Of course it is about food and communities, but for me the community is more important than the food. The fact that we are together around the projects gives a very different dimension of the term sustainability. Our way of doing things has gathered really a lot of community activists.” (P, member KbhFF, part-obs.)

For social action on sustainability to be conducted by a broad range of actors we need an intersubjective understanding of sustainability, in order to improve the understanding of sustainability in general, which is why VSMs can contribute to how sustainability is conceived in society, and how it becomes conceptualized in normative terms.

The CFMs are illustrating how VSMs can contribute in broadening the scope of social movements for sustainability, by acting on values associated with sustainable approaches, translating them into concrete and livable social structures, while mobilizing diverse groups of everyday actors in social spaces where CA can take place. They are mobilized, not through demonstrations and direct action, but through UC and a value-rational. Their actions become based on a consensus on fundamental values, on practical skills and knowledge for structural change, and on the collective willingness to do change together, now and in the future.

## 6. Final Remarks

“If communicating the dominant approach to sustainability namely reform or environmental sustainability is difficult, communicating transformative or just sustainability will require new voices, new thinking and new strategies.” (Agyeman, 2007)

### 6.1. Sustainable Social Change and Strategic Considerations

My model illustrates the theoretical presumptions of broadening the scope of social movements for sustainability. A potential point of entry for sustainability processes has been detected through CFMs unintentionally shaping common values of sustainability, through creating and reproducing alternative social structures. This suggests especially social, but also environmental cures to pathologies in advanced societies. The mechanisms for initiating these unintended outcomes can be explained by Weber’s five mechanisms for UC, as well as using consensus in decision-making enabling a common framework to be formulated and acted upon, as corresponding to Ratner’s (2004) ‘dialogue of values’.

Sustainability becomes a process of value-based practice, dealing with uncertainty and incomplete knowledge through responsive structures and communicative approaches to construct parts of the lived alternative. Therefore for a process of sustainability to take place, values need to be restored intersubjectively, in order to re-establish communicative structures eroded by money and power. The process of sustainability



becomes conceptualized through intersubjectivity and practical actions, in ways that are possible to constructively act upon. If intersubjective truth can lead the way to the sustainability ideal through CA and value-based practice, rather than linguistic formulations of abstract ideas, then the ideal becomes a way of life.

The illustrative example of CFMs suggests that VSMs are underestimated as actors for sustainability in social movement studies. The practical and value-based actions can act as important strategic collaborators if PSMs and VSMs are recognizing the relevance of each other. What will be of interest for PSMs are the practical and communicative foundations of VSMs constructing lived alternatives guided by common values as complementing interest-based actions. By recognizing this potential the abstractness of sustainability for social movement action can be supplemented by comprehensible, coordinated and continued change in local communities.

The processes of change are of importance for the entire concept of sustainability, by allowing sustainability to be in the movements, not only in theory. This enables VSMs to have influence on transforming structures on all levels and to diversify logics of sustainability into practical and actable strategies of PSMs. PSMs should therefore recognize VSMs that unintentionally work with sustainability as a process of practice, and through intersubjectivity and practical action generate knowledge, reflexive action coordination and value-based norms as foundations for sustainable lives. VSMs can be agents in the process of re-moralization, in the process of creating alternative social structures, and in the process of generating different ways of interpreting societal problems of socio-ecological character and acting upon them. This will enable a continuous introduction of new value-based, responsive methods and structures to support a sustainable transition.

Habermas would have loved to be in those ‘gardens’ of growing change.

## **6.2. Suggestions for Further Research**

This thesis has provided a substantive, but limited illustration of the possibilities and transformative potentials of VSMs. Further research is needed to detect, describe and explain more VSMs and their potentials for acting for sustainability. The movements could be detected in various fields where social structures can be implemented as alternatives to the existing. Further research is also needed on the theoretical approach, since Habermas is not the only theoretical framework to draw attention to social movement action, therefore other frameworks should be explored. Identifying existing collaborations or initiating experiments with collaborations between PSMs and VSMs could be of great relevance for testing already existing capacities and for broadening the social movements of sustainability.

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# Appendix A - Data Collection

## A1. Interviews

Interviews conducted to illustrate the model of this thesis were through 4 semi-structured interviews of approximately 2 hours. The full names of the interviewed are kept anonymous, but are known to the author.

**A, organizer\* KbhFF, 2012:** A was a part of the founding group of KbhFF (2009), and is involved in the collective both through the 'Collective group' and the 'Consensus group'. He was interviewed on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, by the author.

**M, organizer KbhFF, 2012:** M was a part of the founding group of KbhFF (2009), and is involved in the collective both through the 'Collective group' and the 'Event group'. She was interviewed on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, by the author.

**Mi, member KbhFF, 2012:** Mi has been a member of KbhFF since Fall 2011, and is involved in the 'Coop Group', as well as initiator of the KbhFF community kitchens, and part of the working group on the KbhFF's community garden. She was interviewed on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012, by the author.

**C, gardener\* DYRK, 2012:** C has been in the founding group of the community garden DYRK, and is deeply involved in the daily running of the garden. He was interviewed on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012, by the author.

\*'Organizer' indicates their involvement in the KbhFF Collective group, which function as the coordinating organ and consists of representatives from all the working groups.

\*'Gardener' indicates that instead of 'activist' they are seen as gardeners.

## A2. Interview Questions

### Questions to the main interviewees

1. Why are you a part of a social food movement?
2. What were the ideas and visions behind the food movement?
  - 2a: Why was the initiative taken?
  - 2b: How did the movement take form?
  - 2c: How was the organization of the movement framed?
  - 2d: Why was food chosen as the mediator for change?
3. And, how does that correspond with how the movement works today?
  - 3a: How have the structures and approaches of the movement been shaped?
  - 3b: Is the movement following an action or organizational strategy?
  - 3c: How have you dealt with challenges and conflicts?
  - 3d: What have been the effects of shaping a movement on regular activities and common responsibility?
4. What role does the food movement play in the community?
  - 4a: Are the vision and messages accessible?
  - 4b: if, then how are the visions acted upon?
  - 4c: How are actors using the structures and opportunities in the movement?

- 4d: What kind of public space does the movement facilitates?
- 4e: What social dynamics have you experienced in the movement over time?
- 5. Is the food movement goal or process oriented?
  - 5a: If process, then what roles do you see food movements play in social processes of change?
- 6. What limitations and possibilities are related to food movement action?
  - 6a: Political influence
  - 6b: Short-term interests
  - 6c: Uncertainty and incomplete knowledge
  - 6d: Alternative structures
  - 6e: Social context
  - 6f: Collaborating partners
- 7. Do you have a vision for a more sustainable society?
  - 7a: If, then how does it look?
  - 7b: Do you see a relation between sustainability and food movement action?

### Questions to Community Garden and KbhFF activists

- 1. Why are you a part of a social food movement?
  - 1a: Has it had any effects on your life?
  - 1b: Has the practical and collective action approach been important for your engagement? If, then why?
  - 1c: Have you learned anything through this approach?
- 2. What is your attitude towards the conventional food system?
  - 2a: Could the system be improved? And if, then how?
- 3. How do you understand sustainability in your own terms?

### A3. Focus Group

#### March 27<sup>th</sup> 2012 - The Hub Copenhagen

**K, gardener DYRK:** K has been in the founding group of the community garden DYRK, and is deeply involved in the daily running of the garden.

**B, member, KbhFF:** B has been a member of KbhFF since 2011, and is involved in the community kitchens.

**P, member KbhFF:** P has been a member of KbhFF since 2011, and is co-founder of the consultancy Habitats, Copenhagen, focusing on 'wild urban nature'.

**AB, natlan.dk:** AB has been involved in organic agriculture, wild natural habitats and rethinking of urban greening through the working cooperative Natur og Landbrug.

**The Focus Group discussion was guided by the questions:**

- 1. What does food mean to you as social activists?
- 2. How can food act as a mediator in social change for sustainability?

**The outcome of the focus group** is summed up in the following statements:



1. The essential of food in human survival (mental, psychical and environmental)
2. The persuasive voice of food through story-telling (tradition and value-based)
3. The quality of life and what it really means (long-term quality)
4. The communicative space related to food (especially how a shared meal can create trust between people)
5. The changed time perspective (especially time from soil to plate, when growing food or handling food distribution together)
6. The wonders and joys related to food (growing, cooking and eating)

The outcomes of the focus group discussion provided insight into the ideas behind food-based action. In the thesis, however, the final statements used are mostly those of K, DYRK, but the discussion was guided by all four voices.

#### **A4. Participant-Observation**

**April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012:** Participation in the urban garden network meeting arranged by BærByen.

##### **Part-obs. 1: Participant-Observation at KbhFF Nørrebro:**

**April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012:** Conversations and discussions took place while participating and observing activities in the daily activities. Two members are quoted in the thesis:

**P, member KbhFF, 2012:** P has been a member of KbhFF since 2011.

**B, member KbhFF, 2012:** B has been a member of KbhFF since 2011.

##### **Part-obs. 2: Participation and Observation at DYRK:**

**November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011:** First observation took place during the LUMES Making Change Happen project, BærByen.

**January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012:** Participation in Seed Bomb Workshop.

#### **A5. Observations at Meetings:**

**Meeting 1 obs. 2012:** Byhaven, KbhFF Nørrebro. Start-up meeting attained January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

**Meeting 2 obs. 2012:** Member meeting, KbhFF. Meeting attained April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

**Meeting 3 obs. 2012:** Byhaven, KbhFF Nørrebro. Municipality meeting attained May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

## Appendix B - Habermas' Lifeworld

### Habermas' structural components of Lifeworld (1987b, 138)

**Culture:** The stock of *knowledge* from which participants in communication supply themselves to reach understanding. Can generate values to be institutionalized.

**Society:** The *legitimate orders* used to regulate participant membership in social groups and thereby secure solidarity.

**Personality:** The *competences* making a participant capable of speaking and acting oriented towards understanding and shaping identity. If individuals are socialized their motivations are oriented towards normed expectations.

**Reproduction:** These symbolic structures are reproduced through everyday communicative practices.

## Appendix C - Weber's Five Mechanisms

### Weber's five mechanisms of unintended consequences (Cherkaoui, 2007)

#### 1) *Limitation of instrumental rationality*

The notion that unintended consequences still take place despite well defined and observed conformity between means and ends e.g. ignorance and error.

#### 2) *Interdependence of actions and between actors*

Interdependence between actors and their strategies e.g. in the market, cooperation, conflicts and organizations, where social actors often direct their actions in relation to the past, present and future actions of others. In system language it means that the interdependence between elements of a dynamic system can be the source of complexity and the emergence of systemic properties that are not predictable from the perspective of its components alone (Meadows, 15, 2009).

#### 3) *Spill-over effect*

When an action spills over the boundaries of the sphere of activity where it is supposed to have effect. The spill-over effects often concern the elements between the spheres of activity and are characterized by autonomous rationality.

#### 4) *Conflict between the logic of spheres*

When the rationalization of an activity conflict with another activity because of its logic and relative autonomy. Conflict can also be caused by different point of views within similar spheres. E.g. when pairing politics and economy develops a rational bureaucracy as an unwanted consequence.

#### 5) *Emergence of new values*

Can take place during processes of decision-making, discussions or actions when conflict is created based on the values on which it is based. Alternative values can emerge due to rejection or impossibility of certain values.

## Appendix D - KbhFF Principles

### KbhFF's 10 principles

(Translated from [www.kbhff.dk](http://www.kbhff.dk))

Food should be:

1. **Grown and produced organic:** Defined as using organic or biodynamic principles and methods, which are not degrading the soil, not increasing the amount of chemicals, artificial fertilizers or pesticides in our soils and environments, and which instead builds on healthy and sustainable agriculture, water systems, biodiversity and animal welfare.

2. **Grown as local as practical possible:** The distance from farm to table has influence of the freshness, taste and nutritional value of food. The shorter the distance between where food is grown and eaten, the greater is the environmental benefits. By reducing the distance of travel for food, the more we reduce the environmental effects that are caused by transportation. By supporting local production of food we will support the efforts of those continuing using skills and food cultures, which are unique for growing food in our local climate.

3. **Season-based:** Food shall reflect the season. It is possible to extend the natural season of some foods by growing them in green houses, and we will support this if it makes vegetables more available throughout the year, but not if it involves external heating of the green houses, whereas the environmental benefits are lost.

Food should be distributed in a way that is:

4. **Supporting fair and direct exchange:** Many farmers are highly pressured on prices and therefore on their livelihoods, which leads to negative social and environmental consequences both locally and globally. We want to ensure as few links as possible between the farmers and us by creating direct, personal contacts where it is possible. We are conscious of our own "købekraft" and make sure that we 'prove' our influence by supporting fair and direct exchange.

5. **Environmentally friendly:** We reduce our CO<sub>2</sub>-footprints by using resources consciously. E.g. by reducing waste, reuse and recycle environmentally friendly materials wherever possible.

6. **Communicate and facilitate knowledge on food and organic agriculture:** We make people more conscious about how the food they eat gets to the table. We believe that if people become more knowledgeable and get more contact/feeling with the soil that feeds them, not alone will they be more willing to

support KbhFF, but they will also be better suited to make food choices in the future that are sustainable. An important part of this lies in sharing our knowledge on how to build up and run the food collective, and to inspire others to make similar initiatives in their communities.

**7. Economically sustainable and independent:** For KbhFF to have the best possibilities to organically grow and become a part of a sustainable future we must be capable of existing independently of external support, and thereby be less vulnerable of changes in the priorities of different public institutions and private businesses. This means that we always cover our costs through our own support and voluntary work.

**8. Transparent and promote trust in all production and distribution chains:** We are open and honest about all our financial transactions and about the weekly food choices we make. This is related to both those who deliver our food (and we expect the same from them) and in relation to how we choose to spend potential surplus.

**9. Nearby and accessible:** We work for organic food not to be an expensive gourmet-luxury, but instead a regular (fast) and natural part of our daily lives. This is why KbhFF must be nearby and accessible to all our members – also price-wise. We want to make organic vegetables accessible for a fair price and we will always prioritize quality and sustainability over price.

**10. Run by a local, working community:** The food collective shall embrace and encourage to more than just delivering cheap and good food. We work for the collective to be a platform, through which members together can create positive

## Appendix E - ‘Strategic’ Opportunities

The author’s proposed ‘strategies’ related to visions of CFMs are:  
(Categories are made by the author)

**KbhFF:** The foundation for KbhFF is ambitious, but has managed in many ways to succeed, due to their strong collective approaches.

**Inclusive community:** KbhFF want organic food to be for all. This they contribute to by establishing direct and fair trade between farmers and the collective, by providing cheap vegetables to members that instead volunteer on equal terms, by consensus decision-making and by being political neutral. **Outcome:** Diverse and acting community.

**Educating community:** KbhFF is a working community where skills are taught related to the running of a food collective and food distribution. Providing an educating and communicative community platform and opportunities for members to organize and create new structures. **Outcome:** Members become informed and acting citizens of their food system instead of consumers.

**Value-based community:** Activities in KbhFF are based on values of environmental sensitivity, quality of life and solidarity as main contributors to a sustainable future. These values are shared among the members, although other values might be conflicting and challenging the decision-making processes. **Outcome:** Common values created through food action and facilitating the sustainability ideal.

**Independent community:** KbhFF is independent of external political and economic support, but dependent on the community and their contributions physically and financially. **Outcome:** Resist corporatization, and become less vulnerable to changes in priorities of the system.

**Permanent community:** The structures of KbhFF are thought as permanent solutions, which can develop and be responsive to change over time. The membership is not binding, but the strong 'we' supports the sense of belonging. **Outcome:** Lasting social change.

(Based on interviews and the 10 principles)

### **Community gardens:**

“In the garden everyone contributes and bring along what they know, what they can and the curiosity to learn” (C, gardener DYRK, interview).

**Inclusive community:** The gardens are growing food for inspiration, for eating together and for sharing the produce. They are open for the local community, they do not require any garden skills, and remain apolitical. **Outcome:** Diverse and acting community.

**Educating community:** Activities in the gardens are learning by doing, and guided by those who know a little bit more. They share knowledge on experimental agriculture methods, composting, water collection systems, construction work (e.g. of raised beds, outdoors kitchens etc.) **Outcome:** Reconnecting people and nature.

**Value-based community:** Activities in the gardens are based on values of environmental sensitivity, quality of life and solidarity as main contributors to a sustainable future. **Outcome:** Common values facilitating the sustainability ideal.

**Dependent community:** The gardens have received some help from the municipality e.g. land use rights, and small financial supports to start up. However, the collaboration with the municipality enables change to take place in the system too. **Outcome:** Vulnerable to changes in priorities of the system, but have promoted changed attitude in the system through close communication.

(Based on interviews and web)