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# Shifting the Food System Paradigm

*A case study of food purchasing in Los Angeles*

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## **Abstract**

Malnourishment, food insecurity, food swamps and obesity. These are only a few of the detrimental effects of the current food system, a product of industrialization and path dependence within unsustainable practices. As sustainability issues in general, the inherent complexity that the Los Angeles food system is characterized by requires collective action by stakeholders from across the public, private and community sectors. A paradigm shift where sustainably produced, high quality food is both supplied and demanded is essential for the development of a sustainable food system; one where healthy and affordable food is accessible to all societies' communities. A sustainable food system is not unobtainable. It does however require dedication and participation, and perhaps first and foremost: coordination. The Los Angeles Food Policy Council is a non-governmental organization that works effectively with initiatives to address food system issues in the Southern California region. An example of such an initiative is the Good Food Procurement Policy, which can be regarded as one of the most comprehensive and successful food procurement policies in the United States, in which the Los Angeles Food Policy Council coordinates actors in a collaboration toward developing a sustainable food system. The Los Angeles Food Policy Council and the Good Food Procurement Policy thus provide for an eminent case to study in order to address the purpose of this thesis, namely to increase the understanding of the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward the development of sustainable food systems. In order to address that purpose, a qualitative case study was conducted where a framework was constructed through pattern matching of theoretical and empirical data. The theoretical data were, due to a gap in the research, gathered through a synthesis of the four areas: cross-sector collaboration theory, NGO theory, sustainable food supply chain theory, and coordination theory. The empirical data was collected through interviews conducted with individuals that provided valuable insights. The mechanisms found to be most relevant are; organizational characteristics of the NGO, knowledge-sharing about sustainable food, organizational characteristics of the collaboration, path dependence, communication and information-sharing, and financial resource dependence.

**Key words:** sustainability, cross-sector collaborations, NGOs, sustainable food systems, coordination mechanisms

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## **1. Introduction**

*In this chapter an introduction is given in order to provide context of the study. The initial section entails background information that depicts the causes and the current status of the food system. This is done in order to create an understanding for the study topic's relevance in relation to both an empirical and theoretical background. Derived from this is the purpose of the study, which is stated in the subsequent section.*

### **1.1. Background and Problematization**

The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 marked the end of World War II and the beginning of a new era in economic history. Technological advancement brought unprecedented growth and improved living conditions in countries that had suffered economically and socially during the war such as the United States, United Kingdom, France and Japan (Crafts & Toniolo, 1996). Improved living conditions in combination with advancements in healthcare resulted in a considerable population increase due to longer life expectancy and lower child mortality rates (Cutter, Federman, Garner, Kiely, Levine, McGough, McNillen & Short, 1996). The population growth brought on a greater demand for commodities and services, which stimulated the economy further in the countries that possessed the knowledge, technology and infrastructure to support the increased demand. Many countries were not able to support that increase in demand however, and during the 1960s hunger and malnutrition was widespread across the greater parts of Asia and South America (Pinstrup-Andersen & Hazell, 1985). Fortunately, the post war industrialization also implied that significant advancements were made in the agriculture industry (United States Department of Agriculture and Economic Research, 2014). The introduction of synthetic chemicals, pesticides and genetically modified crops in food production facilitated greater and more stable yields, which raised farmers' incomes, fed more people and stimulated employment in the rural non-farm economy. This phenomenon came to be known as "the Green Revolution" which is considered a major determinant in bringing many underdeveloped countries out of poverty and malnourishment, for example, the average income almost doubled in Asia between 1970 and 1995, and as a result, poverty rates dropped from an average of almost 60 per cent in 1975 to less than 30 per cent by 1995 (Pinstrup-Andersen & Hazell, 1985).

The irony however is that even though the result of the "Green Revolution" and the industrialization of the agricultural industry, were mainly the same in developed countries as in the developing countries, i.e. more food could be produced at a lesser cost, the impact of the transition was not. Due to the fact that the conditions for economic expansion in developed countries such as the United States far exceeded the ones of the developing countries discussed previously, the environmental, social, and economic effects were far apart.

In terms of environmental impact, the industrialization of the agricultural industry has been associated with contributing to climate change (Gornall, Betts, Burke, Clark, Camp, Willette & Wiltshire, 2010), losses in biodiversity (Devine & Furlong, 2007; Horrigan, Walker & Lawrence, 2002) and irreversible damage to ecosystems (Horrigan et al., 2002). The heavy modification of crops, increased use of non-renewable energy sources and the extensive use of antibiotics, chemicals and pesticides in food production are all consequences that have been linked to the industrialization of the agricultural industry (John Hopkins University, 2010). In addition, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (2009) estimates that more than 30 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are caused by the agriculture industry and food systems globally.

The modification of produce has also severely impacted the people consuming it. By adding for example refined sugars, fats and flavour enhancing chemicals in production, producers are able to supply food that have low production costs and that they can sell at a low, competitive price (Grotto & Zied, 2010; Wells & Buzby, 2008). Unfortunately, most of these products lack micronutrients essential for sustaining health and entail a major portion of many people's diets. This has caused diet-related diseases such as heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and obesity to rise to epidemic proportions, being among the most common causes of death in the United States (Mokdad, Marks, Stroup & Gerberding, 2000; Flegal, 2005). Today, more than one third, or 78.6 million, of all American adults are obese (Ogden, Carroll, Kit & Flegal, 2014), resulting in a annual medical cost of \$1 249 higher than the cost of a person of normal weight (Finkelstein, Trogdon, Cohen & Diez, 2009).

Furthermore, it is also believed that the development has contributed to increasing social inequalities as the more nutritious, less modified food has increased in price due to the industry's focus on lowering production costs and thus altering, resulting in a lower quality end product but at a cheap price (Montgomery, 2007; United States Department of Agriculture and Economic Research, 2014). The effects are that food essentially has become a question of wealth and the possibility to buy nutrient rich, unrefined foods, and thus the possibility to attain a healthy life, a privilege (Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O'Brien & Glanz, 2008).

In addition, the technical advancements meant that human labour was replaced by more effective machinery and small-scale producers were replaced by larger production facilities in order to capitalize on economies of scale in production (Ollinger, Nguyen, Blayney, Chambers & Nelson, 2005). As a result, many farmers were forced out of the agricultural industry into "blue-collar" production and manufacturing industries (Lewis, 1979). This in turn led to increased urbanization since a large part of the population had to relocate and move from their farms into cities and their suburbs where the factories were located (Winfield, 1973).



What can be concluded is that throughout the evolution of the current food system, focus has primarily been directed towards economic growth and prosperity and thus neglecting societal and environmental aspects, resulting in unsustainable production practices, negatively affecting every level of society. In order to inhibit the negative development further, societies must take social equity, environmental protection and economic development into equal consideration. This is what is referred to as the triple bottom line<sup>1</sup> and by catering equally to the three pillars, a society could attain sustainable development<sup>2</sup> (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1984: 43).

In the case of sustainability initiatives, the key sectors involved are the public sector, the private sector and the community sector (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee, Francken & Leroy, 2007). Furthermore, partnerships between organizations from the public, private and community sectors were established as a vital means in achieving “global sustainable development” at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - the Rio Earth Summit, where it was stated that “only with comprehensive and widespread cross-sector collaboration can we ensure that sustainable development initiatives are imaginative, coherent, and integrated enough to tackle the most intractable problems” (Business and the Environment, 2004). This is further underlined by the United Nations (2010) in the report ‘Sustainable Development, From Brundtland to Rio 2012’, where it is concluded that in order for a society to achieve sustainable development, businesses, government and non-governmental organizations<sup>3</sup> must collaborate.

The first step toward the formation of collaborations, according to Gray (1985), is the participating actors’ realization that they are codependent on each other in the addressing of the issue. One aspect that constitutes the base for this codependency is the inherent difficulty for a single organization, alternatively organizations within a single sector, to successfully implement an action plan that incorporates all three properties of sustainable development in combination with the multifaceted nature of the problem (Hens & Nath, 2003).

The literature that takes a standpoint in social issues often argues that for the purpose of efficiently addressing the issue at hand, it is essential for organizations across sectors to collaborate (den Hond, Bakker & Doh, 2012; Gray, 1985; Trist, 1983). When synthesizing the literature on social issues stakeholders and sustainability theory, it becomes evident that in order to address sustainable development, stakeholders from the public, private and/or community sectors must collaborate by combining their respective capabilities and resources (Roome, 2001; Selsky & Parker,

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth referred to as TBL

<sup>2</sup> Defined as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1984: 43).

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth referred to as NGOs

2005; Trist, 1983). As a matter of fact, several researchers have arrived at this same deduction, such as Fiedler and Deegan (2007), Gray (1985) and Van Huijstee et al. (2007). An increasingly common manner in which such collaborations occur is through NGO initiatives (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Moreover, the concept of organizations collaborating across sectors implies certain difficulties due to their inherent differences (Roome, 2001; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Trist, 1983). Therefore in order to ensure effective and efficient utilization of resources and cooperation between partnering members, it is vital for the success of collaborations to employ mechanisms for arranging the organizational structure, decision-making processes, responsibility distribution, activities undertaken within the collaboration etc., namely coordination mechanisms (Gulati, Wohlgezogen & Zhelyaskov, 2012).

Coordination mechanisms can improve the collaborative performance (Lehoux, D'Amours & Langevin, 2014) and are considered essential for the success of collaborations due to the complex nature of collaborations (Roberts & Bradley, 1991). Schneider, Wallenburg and Fabel (2014) add another dimension to this aspect by concurring that the success of collaborations towards sustainable development are dependent on coordination mechanism due to the complexity of addressing social, environmental and economical aspects. Therefore, the complexity of both cross-sector collaborations and particularly those aimed at sustainable development are highly complex.

Current research on the coordination of sustainable food systems is sparse and even more so the research on how NGOs can carry out such coordination (Lehoux et al., 2014; Malone & Crowston, 1994; Michaux, Defelix & Raulet-Croset, 2012; Schneider et al., 2014; Tongsatawe & Tips, 1988). Therefore, in order to address this issue, it is necessary to firstly dismantle the concept into smaller portions in order to subsequently synthesize the disciplines that focus on the respective theoretical field. As the issue is not solely concerned with the development of sustainable supply chains, but rather the entire food system, which entails the collaboration of stakeholders both within and of an entire industry, the theoretical standpoint is taken in cross-sector collaboration literature. Another justification for this is that the focal company in this study is the NGO, an organization that is rarely included in supply chain literature. The theoretical fields that are further identified as relevant consist of cross-sector collaboration, sustainability, NGOs, food supply chains and coordination literature. Sustainability, serving as a perspective theory, will, to an as great extent as possible, provide the lens through which we view the other theoretical fields, namely cross-sector collaboration theory, NGO theory and supply chain theory.

## 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations towards the development of sustainable food systems.

## 2. Literature Review

*This chapter provides a thorough review of cross-sector collaboration, NGO, sustainable supply chain, and coordination literature. These four areas are synthesized in order to create a theoretical framework on which the study is based. The chapter commences with a discussion regarding different appellations and definitions of collaborations. This section culminates in a definition of cross-sector collaborations found to be most applicable for the purpose of this study. The subsequent sections provide further insights and perspective to the theory on the type of collaborations studied. Lastly, the final section provides a review of the mechanisms and factors that, according to the theory, can affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.*

### 2.1. Appellations and definitions of collaborations

Collaborations of actors from different sectors are commonly referred to as cross-sector collaborations (Austin, 2000; Bryson, Crosby & Middleton Stone, 2006; Milliman & Grosskopf, 2013; Roome, 2001; Thabrew, Wiek & Ries, 2009). While such relationships are frequently formed in order to address a certain social issue, this is not exclusively the case. Bryson et al. (2006: 44), for example, define cross-sector collaborations as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately”. This view thus implies that actors engage in collaborations in order to reach greater value than they would have on its own alternatively with an actor from its own sector. This take on collaborations is primarily rooted in strategy literature and often takes a resource dependency perspective on the existence of collaborations. Selsky and Parker (2005) refer to this view as the resource dependency platform.

Other common appellations include, cross-sectoral interactions (den Hond et al., 2015), and cross-sector alliances (Milne, Iyer & Gooding-Williams, 1996; Wymer & Samu, 2003). Gulati et al. (2012: 533) refer to the concept as interorganizational cooperation, which they define as organizations' common pursuing of mutually accepted goals in, and place focus on the relevance of establishing a mutual perception of the inputs and outputs of the collaboration. Depending on the context, there does not necessarily need to be a difference between interorganizational and cross-sector partnerships, other than that inter-organizational partnerships can refer to collaborations within a sector, rather than between organizations from different sectors. As there exists a larger body of literature on interorganizational collaboration

with social issues focus however, there are most probably findings that could be relevant for the purpose of this study nonetheless.

Similarly to Gulati et al. (2012), Gray (1983) refers to the concept as interorganizational collaborations within domains. Gray and Wood (1991: 146) use the same term and source the formation of such collaborations to “when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain”. This branch of collaboration literature is rooted in theory on social issues management, including social problem solving and stakeholder management theory and has many contributors including Clarke (2012), Clarke and Fuller (2011); Eweje and Palakshappa (2011); Seitanidi, Koufopoulos and Palmer (2011) and Selsky and Parker (2005).

Selsky and Parker (2005: 850) provide a substantial review of the current literature to create a platform for studying the concept they call cross-sector social-oriented partnerships, in which organizations from different sectors “jointly address challenges such as economic development, education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, community capacity building and environmental sustainability.”

The final branch of collaboration theory is that which concerns what is most interesting for the purpose of this study. Namely, authors who have already created a synthesis between the theoretical fields of collaboration literature and sustainability, and who have thus taken collaboration toward social issues one step further. These include Roome (2001) and Sharma and Kearins (2011) who refer to interorganizational collaboration for sustainability; Fiedler and Diegan who refer to environmental collaborations and lastly Van Huijstee et al. (2007: 75) who refer to intersectoral partnerships as “collaborative arrangements in which actors from two or more spheres of society (state, market and civil society) are involved in a non-hierarchical process, and through which these actors strive for a sustainability goal”.

As a result of this review and the empirical context of this thesis, it is argued that although comprehensive in variation, none of the appellations provide a definition that correlates with the purpose of this thesis, as they do not mention either sustainable or NGOs. Therefore, the definition of the collaborative arrangements studied that best describes the phenomenon, and that will thus henceforth be referred to, is:

*Cross-sector sustainability-oriented collaborations with NGOs<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> The terms partnership and collaboration are used interchangeably in the literature on the matter (Gray, 1985; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007) and will correspondingly be applied in the same manner in this paper. The concept will furthermore henceforth be referred to as “collaborations”

## **2.2. Different Perspectives on Collaborations**

In their review article Van Huijstee et al. (2007) outline two different perspectives that authors take in collaboration literature, namely the institutional perspective and the actor perspective. The former represents the view that the emergence of an increasing number of collaborations are a result of the new institutional landscape that organizations are subject to. Put concisely, this is due to globalization and its cause of meta-problems that can only be addressed through collaborations between sectors. Within the actor perspective researchers are less concerned with the contextual institutional premises of collaborations and rather place their efforts on studying the threads of which the fabric that is a collaboration is woven. Included in such research is for instance actors' incentives to partner, positive and negative aspects of collaborations and the identification of critical success factors (Van Huijstee et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this study a combination of the approaches outlined by Van Huijstee et al. (2007) is most valuable. Through such an approach it is namely possible to provide context with an institutional perspective, as has been done heretofore. Furthermore in addressing the research question an actor perspective is more instrumental when investigating which mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in cross-sector collaborations toward sustainability. Therefore an actor perspective will henceforth be applied.

## **2.3. The Phases of Collaborations**

When researching collaborations from an actor perspective, a relevant method is to break down collaborations according to their chronological development (Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Gray, 1985; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Trist, 1983; Van Huijstee et al., 2007; Westley & Vredenburg, 1997). Authors of collaboration literature often divide the process into three distinct phases (Gray, 1985; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Trist, 1983; Westley & Vredenburg, 1997). Consensus has however not been reached on what the terms that the phases should be referred to as, thus the choice has been made to employ the names given by Selsky and Parker (2005), namely formation, implementation and outcomes.

Naturally the characteristics and activities in the different phases will vary in accordance with which types and specific traits of the collaborating organizations (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Therefore the following synopsis of the phases shall merely be regarded as a brief description of the general implications of the phases of collaborations.

According to Westley and Vredenburg (1997), the formation phase involves stakeholders establishing a common formulation of the problem domain, including gathering relevant information, making the collective decision to partner, identification and legitimization of the significant stakeholders, etc. As the first step in the engagement of a collaborations, the preconditions, such as the actors' incentives for partnering (Gray, 1985; Greening & Gray, 1994; Selsky & Parker, 2005), the laws and regulations that apply (Beske, Land & Seuring, 2014; Lambell et al., 2008; Snow & Soule, 2010; Wognum, Bremmers, Trienekens, van der Vorst & Bloemhof, 2011), and differences and similarities in partnering organizations (Clarke

& Fuller, 2011; Lombardi, Pascucci, Cembalo & Dentoni, 2013; Maier & Finger, 2011; Roome, 2001; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012; Van Huijstee et al., 2007) are stressed in theory as relevant factors during the formation phase.

The implementation phase implies that partners take aspects such as culture, knowledge sharing and participatory decision-making into consideration by for example establishing joint values and premises under which they intend to operate, which leadership or governance structures to employ (Gulati et al., 2012; Selsky & Parker, 2005), as well as articulating the strategic aims of the collaborations more formally (Gray, 1985). The final stage in the process of collaborating, the outcomes phase, involves the fixation of the emanated organizational configurations, which Trist (1983) refers to as referent structures. Gray (1985) describes this as the development and subsequent establishing of common norms and values into a prevailing framework for the collaboration. Selsky and Parker (2005) add that the outcomes phase includes the results of the collaboration, both measurable and immeasurable, such as the domain's ability to learn and adapt.

#### **2.4. Factors that affect the potential success of collaborations**

Several factors are identified within the theoretical areas cross-sector collaborations toward sustainability, cross-sector collaborations with NGOs and sustainable food supply chain theory as significant in determining a collaboration's potential success. Examples include, as previously mentioned, incentives for collaboration such as resource dependence between partners (Beske et al., 2014; den Hond et al., 2012; Lombardi et al., 2013; Roome, 2001; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Van Huijstee et al., 2007) or partners' realized interdependence in addressing the problem at hand (Gray, 1985; Lombardi et al., 2013; Trist, 1983).

A second example that is identified constitutes juridical factors that regulate aspects of the collaboration such as laws or principles, as previously mentioned, that cause the individual organization to be more or less inclined to collaborate, alternatively that determine the nature of the collaboration with regards to for example contracts (Lombardi et al., 2013, Beske et al., 2014; Migliore, Schifani, Guccione & Cembalo, 2013; Lehoux et al., 2014) or monitoring processes (Wognum et al., 2011; Beske et al., 2014) in the implementation phase. It is however commonly stated in the literature that NGOs are more inclined to use less formal coordination mechanisms, such as trust and communication, and less formal monitoring than private businesses or governmental organizations (Michaux et al., 2012; Ring & van de Ven, 1991; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991), although other authors argue that this rarely is effective in practice (Lehoux et al., 2014).

A third aspect that can affect the fate of a collaboration are the markets and interest groups in its proximity. Actors addressing sustainability (Selsky & Parker, 2005), and sustainable food systems in particular, are often subject to external stakeholder pressure from for example consumers (Beske et al., 2014; Maier & Finger, 2001; Migliore et al., 2013; Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012; Wognum et al., 2011), media (Van Huijstee et al., 2007), the government (Wognum et al., 2011), and environmental associations such as for example sustainability-oriented NGOs (Beske et al., 2014; De Geer, 2009; Migliore et al., 2013; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Organizations adhere to this pressure for several reasons, the main purpose, as expressed in the literature,

being in order to maintain or increase their level of legitimacy toward stakeholders and pressure groups (Bryson et al., 2006; De Geer, 2009; den Hond et al., 2015; Fiedler & Deegan, 2007; Gray, 1985, 1989; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007).

While these three examples of aspects can have impacts on collaborations and their success, there are a vast number of other external and internal factors, contingent to each specific collaborative network, that further affect the success of the collaboration. In their research Schneider et al. (2014) conclude that since achieving sustainability implies the simultaneous consideration of social, environmental and economical aspects, successful collaborations are dependent on the coordination of the internal collaborative structure in relation to the “case-specific” external contingencies. In addition, their study proved internal coordination, i.e. coordination of the parties within the collaboration, to be “the most salient factor of successful implementation of sustainability in [their] study” (Schneider et al., 2014: 487).

In order to identify the specific factors that make collaborations successful, and that are within the control of the partnering organizations, focus is placed on those aspects and mechanisms that have direct effects on the partnership. Roberts and Bradley (1991) contend that a vital element to ensure a successful collaboration is the coordination of actors and activities in this process due to the complex nature of collaborations. This assertion is consistent with Gray’s (1989) statement that when working together to address a certain issue, a fundamental requirement is that collaborations are coordinated. Lehoux et al. (2014) provide further support for this argument by stating that to ensure the success of a collaboration, it must be carefully arranged and planned through the use of coordinating mechanisms in order to enable this manner of conducting business.

The concept of coordination<sup>5</sup> is discussed as an important mechanism category throughout the theoretical disciplines enclosed in this literature review (Bruns, 2013; Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon, 2005; Gulati et al., 2012; Lehoux et al., 2014; Malone & Crowston, 1994; Michaux et al., 2012; Saab, Tapia, Maitland, Maldonado & Tchouakeu, 2013; Schneider et al., 2014; Smit, Driessen & Glasbergen, 2008; Tongsatawe & Tips, 1988).

Actions taken by NGOs to coordinate actors in cross-sector collaborations mainly take place during the formation and implementation phases (Selsky & Parker, 2005). As a result of a review of the theory on the matter, it is thus found that the mechanisms that affect this coordination can be studied from a chronological perspective, although most mechanisms have a tendency to affect coordination throughout the entire collaboration in terms of for example individual characteristics of the partnering actors. These characteristics, which can affect the incentives for collaborating as well as the implementation of the collaboration and thus the continued coordination of the collaboration. Mechanisms can prevail as facilitators or barriers for an NGO to coordinate the actors in sustainable food systems, depending on the degree to which they are present (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

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<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this thesis coordination is defined as *the efforts conducted toward “integrating and aligning the actions, knowledge, and objectives of interdependent members, with a view to attaining common goals”* (Rico et al., 2008: 163).

### **2.4.1. Coordination mechanisms**

The following sections provide coordination mechanisms and factors that, according to theory, affect the ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems.

#### ***2.4.1.1. Experience, trust and routines***

According to Roome (2001), prior experiences of collaborating entail a mechanism that can affect partners' facility to collaborate. This is also the case for actors who have previously collaborated with NGOs (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Experiences, regardless of being positive or negative, can cause actors to have biases for or against certain activities or processes in collaborations, which can either facilitate or impede the coordination of actors (Roome, 2001). Bryson et al. (2006) as well as Ring and van de Ven (1994) agree by stating that the more positive experiences that actors have shared, the greater the potential for coordinating a collaboration between them. Concurrently, a lack of experience can have the effect that members make simple mistakes that could have been avoidable with more experience on the matter (Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Van Huijstee et al., 2007). Poncelet (2001) states that a balance between actors with more and actors with less amounts of experience within a collaboration is preferential.

The concept of trust, namely "the ability to form expectations about aims and partners' future behaviors in relation to those aims" (Vangen & Huxham, 2003: 10), can be regarded as a factor of prior experience or prejudices of partners (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). Distrust between partners can become a psychological barrier to collaborating, hence its opposite, trust, can be regarded as a facilitating factor to coordinating collaborations (Howes, Tangney, Reis, Grant-Smith, Heazle, Bosomworth & Burton, 2015; Michaux et al., 2012; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Van Huijstee et al., 2007) and in particular with NGOs (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Ring & van de Ven, 1994; Saab et al., 2013). Trust is furthermore addressed within the literature on sustainable food supply chains as well (Beske et al., 2014), where it for instance is regarded as a factor that can facilitate coordination between farmers and consumers, as organic food supply chains often are shorter than conventional food supply chains (Migliore et al., 2013).

Another factor of prior experience that can affect collaborations is that of routines or processes that have evolved through organizational learning, such as methods for problem-solving (Sharma & Kearins, 2011) or the concept of 'business-as-usual' (Van Huijstee et al., 2007). When path dependence is a result of business practices that are disconnected from the aims of the collaborative efforts, they can signify barriers to coordination, as routines, habits and cognitive patterns that require breaking in order to develop new ones within a collaboration (David, 2007; Gulati et al., 2012). Path dependence is regarded as a relevant factor within sustainable food supply chain literature (Tavella & Hjortso, 2012) where e.g. Maier and Finger (2011: 96) identify "the threat that organic products pose for the collaborators' routines and their acquired positions in the organization" as a significant barrier to coordinating actors in a collaboration toward a more sustainable food supply chain.

In summary, the factors experience and routines can potentially prove as either barriers to coordinating collaborations, when prejudice and/or biases that inhibit organizational learning exist as preconditions in the formation phase, or as facilitators



when actors have a history of successful collaborating and they can provide insight and knowledge throughout the collaboration practices (David, 2007). Trust signifies a factor that is always beneficial; the more the better, whereas distrust can pose as a large barrier to coordination (Gereffi et al., 2005; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Van Huijstee et al., 2007).

#### **2.4.1.2. Organizational Culture**

An organizational culture is defined by Selsky and Parker (2005) as the social context within an organization that is built up of values, and principles that affect individuals' behaviors and actions. The authors continue by highlighting a few critical factors to creating a common organizational culture between collaborating partners consisting of clear communication, aligned objectives and expectations (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991).

The concept of organizational culture is frequently coupled with organizational values, principles and norms in the literature on cross-sector collaboration toward sustainability (Michaux et al., 2012; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sharma & Kearins, 2011), and cross-sector collaboration with NGOs (Dutting & Sogge, 2010; Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Milne et al., 1996; Murphy & Dixon, 2012; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; The Charity Commission, 2009) whereas social norms is the only factor out of the four that is referred to in sustainable food supply chain literature (Migliore et al., 2013). Gray (1989) and Trist (1983) are two of many authors who outline the significant role that culture, including values, principles and norms, plays in collaborations, and state that organizations with divergent cultures are more likely to cause increased turmoil in already tumultuous problem domains.

On the contrary, authors within all the disciplines studied, as well as coordination literature concede that partners with similar cultures, alternatively implementing a shared culture within the collaboration can facilitate coordination (Gray, 1989; Gulati et al., 2012; Howes et al., 2015; Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009; Lehoux et al., 2014; Selsky & Parker, 2005). This is done by for instance aligning goals (Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Dwyer et al., 1987; Hamann & Acutt, 2003; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007), objectives (Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Gray, 1989; Migliore et al., 2013; Selsky & Parker, 2005) and actors' perceptions of the problem at hand (Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012; Van Huijstee et al., 2007).

#### **2.4.1.3. Communication between partners**

The communication mechanism is somewhat interrelated with the culture mechanism, as both can be viewed as a component of the other. Communication can affect the interorganizational culture, as it is crucial for aligning values, principles, goals etc. (Selsky & Parker, 2005), whereas culture can be regarded as a precondition to whether and in which manner members within an organization have an inclination to communicate (Bennington, Shetler & Shaw, 2003).

Communication as a means to provide for partners to be able to make decisions and plan in a manner that benefits the collaboration (Lehoux et al., 2014) is especially vital during the implementation phase in order to ensure a successful collaboration (Beske et al., 2014; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012; Van Huijstee et al., 2007; Wognum, et al., 2011), in particular in its coordination (den Hond et al., 2015; Howes et al., 2015; Lehoux et al., 2014; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), including when developing sustainable food systems (Beske et al.,

2014; Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012), and is bound to be more advantageous the clearer (Selsky & Parker, 2005), the more frequent (den Hond et al., 2012; Migliore et al., 2013) and the higher the quality (Beske et al., 2014) of the communicated information is. Poor communication can be a consequence of partners' failure to articulate clearly their goals (Rondinelli & London, 2002; Selsky & Parker, 2005), grasp co-partners' fundamental incentives or primary concerns (Selsky & Parker, 2005) and can cause the system profit to decrease (Lehoux et al., 2014). With regards to the development of sustainable and local food systems, communication is further outlined as imperative in order to effectively communicate the differences between conventional food and the higher quality food (Tavella & Hjortsø, 2014).

#### ***2.4.1.4. Resource dependence***

This mechanism includes both the aspect of human resources, such as knowledge and skills possessed by the individuals in an organization, and physical resources such as the tangible assets owned by an organization, including financial means (den Hond et al., 2012). Resource dependence between collaborating partners is, as previously mentioned, a factor frequently discussed as an incentive for collaborating (den Hond et al., 2012; Milne et al., 1996; Ostrom, 2009; Rondinelli & London, 2002; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007) but is also often regarded by authors as an essential mechanism for the success of collaborations (Beske et al., 2014; Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Gold, Hahn & Seuring, 2013; Migliore et al., 2013; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Yaziji & Doh, 2009) and specifically for the successful coordination thereof (den Hond et al., 2012; Lehoux et al., 2014; Michaux et al., 2012; Tongsawate & Tips, 1988).

The pooling of the two types of resources between organizations have positive effects such as increased productivity through specialization by individuals, cost reduction on infrastructure and physical space as well as learning by increased communication with others (Scobie, Hatton & Vargo, 2013). The combination of resources is not only concerned with these potential gains, but also with the interdependencies that exist between partners and their respective resources in order to reach their common goals (Rondinelli & London, 2002). The coordination of resource interdependencies entails balancing, organizing and planning each partner's resource contribution to ensure minimal levels of process losses and maximum output (Gulati et al., 2012). Gulati et al. (2012) state that the rigidity of resources<sup>6</sup> signifies a barrier to coordination.

Tongsawate and Tips (1988) are in agreement and argue that knowledge, defined as a resource, and the coordination thereof is a rarely utilized mechanism although it represents one with the most potential to addressing coordination issues. There exists a general consensus within the literature regarding knowledge<sup>7</sup> sharing as a vital coordination mechanism (den Hond et al., 2012; Lehoux et al., 2014; Michaux et al., 2012; Scobie et al., 2013; Stafford et al., 2000; Tongsawate & Tips, 1988). Yaziji and Doh (2009) as well as Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) state that partners' perceived value of the others' resources can also signify a facilitator/barrier to coordination. The higher the value, the greater the facilitation and vice versa. Resource dependencies mentioned in the literature that can signify more specific barriers in the case of the coordination of sustainable food supply chains are the lack of knowledge of organic

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<sup>6</sup> i.e. how difficult it is for partners to acquire or transfer resources between organizations (Gulati et al., 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Including know-how, expertise, advice, learning etc. (den Hond et al., 2012)

farming methods (Beske et al., 2014) and physical resource dependencies such as the size of farms (Migliore et al., 2013), technical rigidity (Wognum et al., 2011) and farmers' lack of financial means (Beske et al., 2014).

#### ***2.4.1.5. Organizational structure, governance and decision-making in the collaboration***

Regarding the matter of organizational structure, governance and decision-making, several different perspectives exist within the literature. While there is general consensus on the three concepts' great significance on the coordination of collaborations (Gereffi et al., 2005; Howes et al., 2015; Lehoux et al., 2014; Malone & Crowston, 1994; Ring & van de Ven, 1994), there is an ongoing discussion regarding for example whether coordination is most facilitated with a formalized and hierarchical organizational structure, in order to provide clear guidelines of individuals' daily activities and responsibility distribution, although structural rigidity is thought to have negative consequences, by the same authors (Gulati et al., 2012).

There is an overwhelming portion of the literature across disciplines, however, that contests that formalized and hierarchical organizational structures in fact imply more bureaucracy and structural rigidity, allegedly causing unnecessary risks such as power imbalances leading to partners free-riding or opportunistic behavior, and thus argue that coordination is best facilitated through participatory decision-making, equal power and responsibility distribution and democracy ( Gray, 1989; Hillman et al., 2009; Michaux et al., 2012; Roome, 2001; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Trist, 1983). This notion is additionally included in sustainable food supply chain theory, where bureaucratic organizational structures are regarded as impediments to building trusting and cooperative relationships between supply chain partners (Lombardi et al., 2013). Furthermore, research shows that NGOs often experience a fear of losing control of decision-making, causing them to opt more for participatory decision-making than other types of organizations (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

This primarily implies that structure, governance and decision-making are factors that are highly relevant for coordination in the implementation phase of the collaboration although they prove significant in the formation phase as well. This is due to the fact that the partners' individual organizations inevitably possess certain preconditions that can either enable or hinder the coordination of these factors. Authors such as den Hond et al. (2012) and Maier and Finger (2011) state that the compatibility of organizational structures in partnering organizations will have direct implications for the coordination of the collaboration between them, implying that the more similar they are, the more facilitated the coordination.

## 2.5. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework		
Coordination Mechanisms	Factors	
Experience, trust and routines	Prior experience	Bryson et al. (2006), Poncelet (2001), Ring & van de Ven (2007), Roome (2001), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Van Huijstee et al. (2007), Yaziji & Doh (2009),
	Trust between partners	Beske et al. (2014), Howes et al. (2015), Mayer et al. (1995), Migliore et al. (2013), Saab et al. (2013), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Selsky & Parker (2005), Van Huijstee et al. (2007)
	Routines, habits and cognitive patterns in the individual organizations	David (2007), Gulati et al. (2012), Maier & Finger (2011), Tavella & Hjortso (2012), Van Huijstee et al. (2007)
	Differing problem-solving approaches	Sharma & Kearins (2011)
Organizational Culture	Culture, values, norms and principles	Dutting & Sogge (2010), Gray (1989), Michaux et al. (2012), Migliore et al. (2013), Murphy & Dixon (2012), Roberts & Bradley (1991), Roome (2001), Snively & Tracy (2000), UK Commission (2009)
	Shared culture between partners	Dwyer et al. (1987), Gulati et al. (2012), Howes et al. (2015), Kooiman & Jentoft (2009), Lehoux et al. (2014), Migliore et al. (2013), Milne et al. (1996), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Selsky & Parker (2005), Trist (1983)
	Aligned goals and objectives between partners	Clarke & Fuller (2011), Dwyer et al. (1987), Gray (1989), Hamann & Acott (2003), Migliore et al. (2013), Seitanidi & Crane (2009), Selsky & Parker (2005), Van Huijstee et al. (2007)
	Aligned problem perception between partners	Sharma & Kearins (2011), Tavella & Hjortso (2012), Van Huijstee et al. (2007)
Communication between partners	Communication	Beske et al. (2014), den Hond et al. (2012), Howes et al. (2015), Lehoux et al. (2014), Pfeffer & Salancik (1978), Rondinelli & London (2003), Selsky & Parker (2005), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Tavella & Hjortso (2012), Van Huijstee et al. (2007), Wognum et al. (2011)
	Clarity of information	Selsky & Parker (2005)
	Frequency of communication	den Hond et al. (2014), Migliore et al. (2013)
	Quality of information	Beske et al. (2014)
Resource Dependence	Resource dependence	Beske et al. (2014), Clarke & Fuller (2011), den Hond et al. (2012), Gold et al. (2013), Green (2003), Lehoux et al. (2014), Migliore et al. (2013), Pfeffer (1981), Pfeffer & Salancik (1978), Rondinelli & London (2002), Scobie, Hatton & Vargo (2013), Selsky & Parker (2005), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman (2000), Wognum et al. (2011), Yaziji & Doh (2009)
	Knowledge (incl. advice, council and know how) sharing	Beske et al. (2014), den Hond et al. (2015), Lehoux et al. (2014), Michaux et al. (2012), Pfeffer & Salancik (1987), Rondinelli & London (2003), Scobie et al. (2013), Tonsawae & Tips (1988)
	Farm size	Migliore et al. (2013)
	Technical rigidities	Wognum et al. (2011)
	Farmers' lack of financial means	Beske et al. (2014)
Organizational structure, governance and decision-making in the collaboration	Organizational structure of the collaboration	Clarke & Fuller (2011), den Hond et al. (2012), Gereffi et al. (2005), Gulati et al. (2012), Herranz (2010), Howes et al. (2015), Lehoux et al. (2014), Lombardi et al. (2013), Maier & Finger (2011), Malone & Crowston (1994), McNamara (2012), Ring & van de Ven (1994), Roome (2001), Selsky & Parker (2005), Stephenson (2005), Tavella & Hjortso (2012), Werkheiser & Noll (2013)
	Governance of the collaboration	Maier & Finger (2011), Selsky & Parker (2005)
	Power distribution between partners	Clarke & Fuller (2011), Covey & Browns (2001), Gereffi et al. (2005), Gold et al. (2013), Hillman et al. (2009), Maier & Finger (2011), Michaux et al. (2012), Pfeffer & Salancik (1978), Selsky & Parker (2005), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Van Huijstee et al. (2007)
	Participatory decision-making between partners	Howes et al. (2015), Lehoux et al. (2014), Roberts & Bradley (1991), Selsky & Parker (2005), Sharma & Kearins (2011), Tavella & Hjortso (2012)

**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Mechanisms and Factors that Affect an NGO's Ability to Coordinate the Actors in Collaborations Toward Developing a Sustainable Food System**

### 3. Methodology

*The following chapter provides a review of the methodological mechanisms applied within the study. The first section entails a description of the research approach, followed by the design of the research. The third section provides a brief description and justification of the case selected, which is followed by a description of the data collection. Further the method for how the empirical data are presented and analyzed is outlined. Finally, the reliability and validity of the study is discussed.*

#### 3.1. Research Approach

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations towards the development of sustainable food systems. Furthermore, the research also aspires to fill the gap in current research in the relevant theoretical fields, consisting of cross-sector collaboration, sustainability, NGOs, food supply chains and coordination literature.

Initially, in order to provide a theoretical answer to the purpose, a large amount of literature within the respective theoretical areas was reviewed. A framework aiming to theoretically explain which mechanisms affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations towards the development of sustainable food systems was created based on derivations of what was expressed as vital factors affecting such relationships in the literature.

Subsequently, in order to more comprehensively and empirically address the purpose, empirical data was collected and analyzed with regard to its position against the theoretical framework. As a result of the analysis and in order to expand on current research on the matter, a revised theoretical framework based on an integration of previous theory and the empirical data was developed.

#### 3.2. Research Design

##### 3.2.1. Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative research method was utilized afore a quantitative approach due to the fact that in order to address the purpose, a theoretical framework containing what can be regarded as a large number of aspects to research empirically. This is in turn due to the limited amount of theory that exists within the specific area of research, which thus implied that four theoretical disciplines were synthesized in order to provide for a more comprehensive study. This is hence a multiaspect study in which case Larsson (1993) states that a qualitative case study is most appropriate.

For the purpose of this thesis, focus is placed on contextual factors of the case studied namely how individuals involved perceive and portray reality of how processes are carried out by individuals within and with a particular organization in a specific geographic region (Backman, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009). In addition, as the purpose of this thesis entails examining a specific contextual phenomenon, specifically mechanisms largely performed by the people involved, it challenges the use of a quantitative research method due to the difficulties related to the quantification of multidimensional variables and the formulation and testing of theoretically derived hypotheses. Thus the utilization of a qualitative approach is motivated further (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A case study was conducted as is motivated by the selection of a qualitative research method, as the two are closely connected and often associated with one another (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A case study is often utilized when the purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth examination of a specific representation of a phenomenon and its, often ambiguous and complex, relation to its particular context (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009). Conversely, the contextual factors of the case study make it difficult to draw general conclusions based on the results, which is why the approach is sometimes critiqued.

### **3.2.2. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning**

The utilization of a qualitative research method commonly entails an inductive approach afore a deductive, as the latter comprises empirical testing of theoretically derived hypotheses, something that is closely associated with quantitative research. The inductive research approach on the other hand, implies drawing conclusions regarding theory based on empirical observations (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) however, these two can be considered as guidelines rather than rules, which is why this study contains elements of both inductive and the deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning was used as the theoretical framework was created and subsequently tested empirically to examine how well it corresponded to reality. Inductive reasoning was thereafter used as the data collection, which had generated new empirical findings, were integrated in the existing theoretical framework, which was thus revised and updated. This would thus, according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2008) imply an abductive study as it consists of both inductive and deductive reasoning.

### **3.3. Case Selection**

When conducting a case study, the selection of the appropriate number of cases, and what cases to select, is highlighted by Yin (2011) as a difficulty. Given the purpose and the resource restraints of the study, a single case study of a specific NGO in Los Angeles was utilized afore multiple case studies as it, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), enables a greater in-depth understanding of a the specific case and its context. Conducting a single case study of an NGO in Los Angeles is further motivated by Yin (2009) as the selected case meets several of the outlined rationales for selecting a single case afore multiple cases.

- The case presents a critical test on existing theory regarding an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations towards the development of sustainable food systems.
- The case is unique due to the Los Angeles's geographical, political, demographic and cultural conditions, however not so specific that it does not capture attributes that could potentially be identified in other cases.
- The study is revelatory as it depicts a unique presentation of the current state of an NGO in Los Angeles.

The study does however not meet the longitudinal rationale (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which entails that the case should be studied at two different times in order to depict any changes that may occur over time and identify patterns of transition, due to resource restraints and thus replication of this study rather than conducting a second study is instead suggested for future research.

The Los Angeles Food Policy Council<sup>8</sup> represents a compelling case study as Los Angeles is ranked one of the most sustainable cities in the United States and there are currently multiple initiatives towards the sustainable development of the city, and due to the important role of NGOs in civil society by virtue of its disassociation of state and government involvement (ARCADIS, 2015). Moreover, Los Angeles has undergone the aforementioned agricultural industrialization, which has resulted in an unsustainable food system where in the 1950s, Los Angeles was the top agricultural producing county in the United States, when in 2010 however, it was one of the lowest producing counties, sourcing minimal quantities of food locally (LAFPC, 2012). Concurrently, the city is exposed to great challenges relating to the city's demographics, economic development, political landscape, geographical location and infrastructure etc. such as the impending threat of natural disasters, droughts, a harsh climate, and an infrastructure built upon the use of cars as the primary means of transportation (ARCADIS, 2015; LAFPC, 2015). Los Angeles represents a unique environment to conduct research in and in order to address the purpose of this thesis it is thus relevant to study an NGO located in Los Angeles.

The LAFPC works toward developing a sustainable food system in the Southern California region by both coordinating initiatives that were commenced prior to its own founding, as well as creating several initiatives on its own. One of its most successful programs is the Good Food Procurement Policy<sup>9</sup>, a program that leverages the purchasing power of large institutions in order to stimulate the supply and demand of food that is sustainably produced and of higher quality than conventionally produced food, and thus facilitate a paradigm shift of the current food system (LAFPC, 2015). The GFPP is one of the most comprehensive food procurement policies in the United States and has since its initial adoptions in 2012 for example contributed to a redistribution of more than \$12 million in produce sales towards the local economy in Los Angeles through the collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District<sup>10</sup> (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012). As an NGO with such a short history of such great success, the LAFPC and its GFPP provides for a case study from which increased understanding can be created about the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

### **3.3.1. Selection of interviewees**

#### **3.3.1.1. Respondents**

According to Yin (2011), when studying a complex issue it is important that respondents represent a heterogeneous group with regard to perceptions of the object of study, in our case the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system. Our heterogeneous sample entails interviewees who work for organizations or alone toward the development of sustainable food systems, where most work at or in collaboration with the focal organization. These individuals come from different sectors and thus have different perspectives on the collaboration.

The sectors represented within our list of interviewees are the community sector, for example the Los Angeles Food Policy Council representatives; the public sector,

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<sup>8</sup> Henceforth referred to as LAFPC

<sup>9</sup> Henceforth referred to as GFPP

<sup>10</sup> Henceforth referred to as LAUSD

including Antonio Villaraigosa former Mayor of Los Angeles and a number of deputies in the City of Los Angeles; the private sector, including Coosemans Shipping and Gold Star Foods; the agricultural sector, including farmer and farm director Michael Roberts at McGrath Family Farm and the academic sector, including Steve Zimmer at LAUSD and Robert Gottlieb at Occidental College. When interviewing such a diverse group the study becomes multifaceted and can thus provide more accurate empirical findings and analysis (Yin, 2011).

Further, Yin (2011) states that when ensuring that the sample is diverse, it is also viable for the sample to be limited in scope. Therefore a sample of 21 respondents involved in the development of sustainable food systems from multiple sectors in the Los Angeles society is regarded as reasonable for this study, where quality over quantity is an applicable mantra.

### **3.3.1.2. Sampling**

Sampling was conducted through the use of theoretical sampling in order to ensure as well as certain elements of snowball sampling. Although implying certain limitations such as uncertainty of whether sampling is exhaustive or distorted, snowball sampling is an effective sampling method when having limited access to time and other resources (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The sampling process consisted of a two step process in which firstly, respondents with clear associations to the focal organization, the LAFPC, were identified and contacted and secondly they are asked to provide referral to additional respondents that could provide insights for our purpose. Snowball sampling should, according to Yin (2011), not be utilized for convenience purposes, but rather when respondents are difficult to contact or can provide valuable insight and information on the subject matter. Although the method is admittedly convenient, the latter was also the case, considering that respondents' geographical position is so far away in combination with the implied time difference, which implies communication barriers. Additionally respondents provided both relevant insights and information for the addressing of the purpose of this thesis.

At the first stage of the sampling process, a number of people who had been mentioned as key players within the GFPP, alternatively who worked in organizations that were mentioned as key players involved in the GFPP, were initially contacted by email in the process of our secondary data collection. Many of these individuals connected us to others who would be more helpful at the initial stages of our research, i.e. who could provide us with more secondary data, but simultaneously let us know that they were open for further contact if needed. Subsequently, in the next stage of the sampling process we reconnected with those individuals who had offered their future help, as well as the individuals whom we had come in contact with through the initial contact people for interview booking.

## **3.4. Data Collection**

### **3.4.1. Secondary Data Collection**

The secondary data collection was performed through internet searches on the work being done in Los Angeles toward developing a sustainable food system, a thorough review of the LAFPC website and the information received from our initial contacts at the LAFPC. This information included progress reports on the GFPP, case studies of the GFPP performed by for example other university students and a case study of the LAUSD's good food procurement practices. The secondary data was used to gain a



deeper understanding of how the LAFPC works and helped us in the preparation for our interviews by for example facilitating the formulation of interview questions that were contextually accurate. Thorough preparation enabled us to get to the core subjects of the interviews faster and thus gave us more time to discuss the topics in depth.

### **3.4.2. Primary Data Collection**

#### **3.4.2.1. Qualitative Interviews**

In order to increase the understanding on the mechanisms that affect an NGOs ability to coordinate initiatives toward developing a sustainable food system, primary data was collected through semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the respondents listed above. Semi-structured interviews imply that the interviewer asks the respondent questions based on a questionnaire template. Questions are usually open-ended meaning that the respondent is required to answer the question without selecting a preconstructed answer, as in for example a multiple-choice questionnaire. As opposed to in a structured interview, the interviewer is in a semi-structured or unstructured interview able to deviate from a potential template by leaving out questions that may for example already have been answered by the respondent in a previous question or by asking additional questions in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the perception of the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 406) most qualitative researchers favor research practices with as little structure as possible, due to the perception that such structure contaminates the results by “imposing an inappropriate frame of reference on people” when aiming to understand their thoughts on a matter. Thus, in order to eliminate such contamination to an as great extent as possible, we employed semi-structured interviews to those interviews that were planned and when we knew we had more time to ask more questions that we needed help remembering, and unstructured interviews when we knew that we had less time or when interviews were conducted spontaneously.

When using semi-structured interviews, templates were constructed for each individual interview, as our sample was so diverse that the questions would not have been applicable unless reformulated. As our intention was not to compare the interviewees’ responses with each other, which according to Bryman & Bell (2011) can be a reason for using semi-structured interviews, the fact that we posed different questions to respondents was not an issue. The questions were based on our theoretical framework with the aim of being able to increase the understanding of the respondents’ statements’ positions in comparison with the framework and thus update it accordingly to make it more accurate.

Interviews were conducted in various places, for example at Los Angeles City Hall, The California Endowment, at the former mayor’s private residence, McGrath Family Farms and at the restaurant Good Girl Dinette. The interviews lasted varying amounts of time, from ten minutes to four hours, depending on how much time respondents were able to devote to us. All interviews except one were recorded. Recording the interviews enabled us to transcribe them, which further facilitated the process of data analysis. The reason for one of the interviews not being recorded was that it was conducted over a lunch meeting in a rather loud restaurant, which meant that the recording would have had too much background noise for being able to interpret what was being said. Instead we took notes of the most important points and wrote down

everything we could remember from the interview as soon as it was over. Unfortunately, however this may have meant that valuable data was lost as we may not have remembered everything important that was said. On the other hand, we met with the same respondents again, at which point the relevant topics were discussed again and we were able to record the entire meeting.

A potential issue associated with recording is that interviewees may become uncomfortable and hesitant. This is however less likely the case when the topic of interest is not of a personal or sensitive nature and the interviewee is able to respond freely (Bryman & Bell, 2011), and is thus not regarded as an issue.

### **3.5. Method for presenting empirical data**

As previously mentioned, the majority of the interviews conducted for this thesis were recorded and subsequently transcribed in full in order to minimize the risk of misinterpretation and ensure that all of the information presented by the interviewees would be included in the data analyzed, in accordance with what Bryman and Bell (2011) contend. As further verification recordings were listened to by both authors in order to confirm and correct any mistakes made in the transcripts. Additionally, the “word for word” transcription also facilitated the use of direct quotation from the interviews instead of paraphrasing, as well as an understanding of not solely *what* interviewees said, but also *how* they said it, which can provide important contextual meaning (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As a precaution, notes were also taken during the interviews in order to ensure that, in the unfortunate event of a technical problem with the recordings, notes on the most important points would exist.

The empirical data are presented in accordance with the structure of the theoretical framework. Focus is placed on those mechanisms and sub-factors that are expressed as predominantly important in their effect on coordinating the actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system. Mechanisms and factors that are less emphasized are however also included in the empirical data as they nonetheless could provide value for the subsequent analysis. Direct quotes are provided as a means to provide evidence, clarity and objectivity, as they demonstrate to the reader precisely what the respondent said, rather than the author paraphrasing and thus staining the response with his or her own interpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **3.6. Method for analysis**

Yin (2009) proposes pattern matching as an appropriate method for finding and comparing patterns that occur in a theoretical framework with patterns found through empirical data collection. As the purpose of this study is to fill a gap in existing theory, namely that of the mechanisms that enable NGOs to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems, it is regarded as valid to compare and contrast the phenomena that are according to a synthesis of existing theory on similar or partially applicable theory thought to occur, with those that are depicted in the case studied in this thesis. As the specific theoretical area that the purpose addresses does not contain any previous research however, both similarities and dissimilarities are equally important to take into consideration; dissimilarities between the theoretical framework and the empirical findings can imply that the theory is obsolete and in need of an update, alternatively that previous research is not

applicable to this specific theoretical area. Similarities can on the other hand affirm and strengthen that existing theory is applicable on cases such as the one studied in this thesis.

When revising the framework with regard to the new findings, the new mechanisms that are found in the empirical data are highlighted in order to extend the theoretical framework and emphasize their contribution to the existing research. Mechanisms that occur in both the previous research and the new empirical data are kept in the theoretical framework. Factors that are included in the theoretical framework but that are not supported by the empirical data are also included in the revised framework, as although the study cannot confirm the importance or relevance of the factors, it can conversely not discard them either. Therefore those factors are included in the revised framework, categorized in a logical manner.

### **3.7. Reliability and validity**

#### **3.7.1. Reliability**

An important aspect regarding the reliability of a qualitative study is, according to Van de Ven and Poole (1990) that of how the empirical data are converted from incidents into event constructs. This is done through classifying incidents, or interview responses, into theoretically meaningful events, or in the case of this study, into coordination mechanisms identified in previous theory. A common challenge in this process is grasping a meaningful context of the qualitative incident when translating it into what is oftentimes a single term (Van de Ven & Poole, 1990). To account for this issue, we consistently returned to our raw data when presenting our empirical findings, in order to recollect the details of the context in which respondents were speaking, including for example what was said prior and subsequently as well as the tone of voice. Additionally, we were meticulous when presenting the data in their appropriate context, particularly when using direct quotes.

The reliability of the study was further increased by ensuring that the sample contains respondents who are knowledgeable on the subject in question as well as collecting different types of data in different ways. This is a method known as triangulation (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009) and the way in which it was employed was by comparing secondary data, interviews and observations in order to ensure that all data was congruent, as well as by conducting interviews where multiple and diverse respondents gave their opinions from different perspectives but on the same points of interest (Van de Ven and Poole, 1990). To ensure that the data collected from the interviews was valid, we also used respondent validation to further enhance the reliability (Van de Ven and Poole, 1990).

Another way to increase the reliability is to strive to allow for interviewees to respond as freely to questions as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2011). By conducting semi- or unstructured interviews and posing open-ended questions that are not leading, i.e. do not restrict respondents in terms of influencing them to answer in a certain way.

#### **3.7.2. Validity**

One way in which validity was accounted for was through the use of pattern matching as a means to ensure construct validity, in accordance with what Yin (2009) states is a most relevant method of data analysis in case studies.

Furthermore, Glaser (1978) outlines three aspects of validity that are to be regarded when conducting case studies. Firstly a high level of integration implies a high level of validity. The revised framework that is presented is derived from the preliminary framework, which consists of a synthesis of theory from four different disciplines that overlap and create a platform for our study, and was further revised with regards to the empirical data collected, and can thus be regarded as integrative.

Secondly, the level of validity depends on how well the final framework relates to the purpose of the study relative to other frameworks (Glaser, 1978). As the purpose of this study is rather specific and there exists virtually no previous theoretical or research platform, our study scores highly within this category, as other theoretical frameworks that address the same or a similar purpose have not been found.

The third and final aspect of validity relates to the relevance of the final framework (Glaser, 1978). Due to the specific nature of the purpose, the relevance can be regarded as limited. However, it is argued that due to the lack of previous research on the matter, it can provide a starting point for future research. Furthermore, due to the final framework's derivation from the preliminary framework, which was based on four different theoretical areas, the final framework could provide some relevance within any of the four, although rather specific.

## **4. Empirical Findings**

*In this chapter the empirical findings derived from interviews with individuals that work at or with the LAFPC, alternatively that could provide valuable insights on the mechanisms that affect on the LAFPC's ability coordinate actors in collaborations toward the development of a sustainable food system, although independent from the LAFPC. A list of the interviewees that partook in the study is provided in Appendix 1. In the first sections of the chapter an account for the context of the empirical findings in terms of geographical location, namely Los Angeles, and the LAFPC to enable for a deeper understanding of the findings. Subsequently the findings that relate to mechanisms and factors that correspond to the purpose are presented in accordance with the structure of the theoretical framework. This is done in order to provide clarity, although what is noteworthy is that structuring the findings in this manner implies that a certain amount of analysis has already been carried out.*

### **4.1. Los Angeles**

The County of Los Angeles is located in the State of California on the United States' West coast and is the largest county in the country with a population of over 10 million. The county is comprised of 88 cities, among which the City of Los Angeles is the largest with its 4 million inhabitants (United States Census Bureau, 2014).

In the 1950s, Los Angeles was the top agricultural producing county in the United States. In 2010, however, it was one of the lowest producing counties, sourcing minimal quantities of food locally (LAFPC, 2012). Besides the implied political and economical effects of the industrialization of food systems, one can also observe a negative correlation in terms of the health development of citizens across the globe (Skouteris, Cox, Huang, Rutherford, Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2013). Due to this development, societies are currently faced with the local impact of a global and industrialized food system that is negatively affecting the environment and its inhabitants. An example of this is the widespread occurrence of "food swamps", i.e. urban areas where lower-income communities have limited or no access to healthy food (LAFPC, 2012).

Recognizing this fact, Angelinos have determined their food system to be unsustainable, and have thus taken action. Farmers, restaurateurs, gardeners, chefs, food wholesalers and processors, grocers, public health practitioners, consumers etc. have taken initiative towards change through coordinating a food system that promotes environmental sustainability while increasing access to healthy food and stimulating the local economic climate. As a reaction, the administration of Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles' former mayor, created the Good Food For All Agenda in July, 2010 (University of Wisconsin Madison, Delwiche & McKinney, 2014). By 2011 the organization had evolved into an independent collective impact initiative, and the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC) was formed (LAFPC, 2012).

### **4.2. LA Food Policy Council and the Good Food Purchasing Policy**

The goal was formulated with the involvement of key stakeholders who were identified through a deliberate process by Alexa Delwiche, Managing Director of the LAFPC. Consulting all key stakeholders facilitated an all-encompassing discussion

within a diverse group of participants, which enables for the LAFPC and its partners to work toward developing a sustainable food system with a holistic approach.

The LAFPC has created several initiatives on different levels in the Los Angeles community towards improving the food system in Southern California, one of which is of particular importance for the purpose of this thesis, namely the Good Food Purchasing Policy. The GFPP is as the name entails a purchasing policy directed towards large institutions in Los Angeles and the purpose of the GFPP is to “encourage the production and consumption of food that is healthy, affordable, fair and sustainable [...] recognize that food choices and actions have the power to reform the food system, sustain local family farmers, food workers, support sustainable farming practices, reward good environmental stewardship and increase access to fresh and healthy foods [and to] buy and request Good Food as much as possible” (LAFPC, 2015). This is done through leveraging the purchasing power of large institutions to affect the demand for food that is produced in line with five values: local economy, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutritional health (LAFPC, 2015).

Once the institutions have agreed to sign the GFPP, they are tracked and scored on the food they purchase and the proportion of food that is sourced in accordance with the values included in the policy. The extent to which they comply with and take action toward developing their good food purchasing infrastructure further, can enable them to score higher, although the general requirement of the commitment is that institutions source their food according to the bottom line specification within each value category (University of Wisconsin Madison, Delwiche & McKinney, 2014).

A large institution to sign the pledge in 2012 as the LAFPC had just been formed in 2011, was the LAUSD. The LAUSD’s initiative to improve its good food purchasing commenced prior to its collaboration with the LAFPC, but was through the collaboration able to raise its score further and thus perform better with regard to the guidelines and goals of the GFPP. Between the years 2009 and 2012 the LAUSD increased its portion of locally sourced food from 9 per cent to 73 per cent (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012), and its partnership with the LAFPC and commitment to the GFPP as previously mentioned, redirected circa \$12 million toward locally sourced produce in the first year of collaborating, alone (University of Wisconsin Madison, Delwiche & McKinney, 2014).

Other institutions involved in the program include Guckenheimer; the food providers at Google Los Angeles and Roll Global, the City of Los Angeles and several of its departments, such as City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks, City of Los Angeles Convention Center, City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the City of Los Angeles Department of Aging (LAFPC, 2014).

### **4.3. Coordination Mechanisms**

*The empirical findings with regards to coordination mechanisms that affect an NGO’s ability to coordinate actors within a collaboration are presented in accordance with the classification used to group factors with mechanisms in the theoretical framework. In addition, a few subheadings have been added based on the empirical findings in order to make the presentation of factors more lucid. A section of mechanisms not discussed in the literature review titled ‘Other mechanisms’ is added*

also provided. The factors that were not addressed in the empirical findings are excluded from this section.

### **4.3.1. Experience, trust and routines**

#### **4.3.1.1. Prior experience**

In an interview with one of the distributors working with the LAFPC, Gold Star Foods, it was stated that Gold Star Foods' positive experience of working with the LAFPC was a major determinant in the company's decision to develop the collaboration further. In addition, another contributing factor to Gold Star Food's further commitment to the GFPP that is highlighted in the empirical data is the LAFPC's prior successful collaboration with the LAUSD. This is seconded by the Managing Director of the LAFPC, Alexa Delwiche, who in an interview stated that the LAFPC often leverages its prior successes in order to attract new partners as well as to strengthening current partners' respective commitments to the GFPP.

The empirical findings from the interviews thus indicate that partnering organizations' prior experience and past successes affect the LAFPC's ability to attract new partners to the GFPP as well as its ability to coordinate existing partners. The empirical data further indicate that the fact that the LAFPC has a record of previous successful collaborations also facilitates the coordination as it strengthens the NGO's credibility and facilitates trust building with new partners. Furthermore there are indications that organizations that possess limited prior experience with the LAFPC or other organizations working toward developing sustainable food systems, sometimes show unwillingness to comply with the GFPP, such as within City Council Departments:

*"[...] a lot of times it was 'buy in' but a lot of times there was resistance, right [to Paula Daniels]?"* –Former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

*"...Within departments because they had to understand how to work it."* –Paula Daniels

As a lack of prior experience can be the cause of a lack of understanding for or knowledge of matters, this could also be a cause for the departments' resistance to participate in the GFPP. The lack of prior experience, alternatively lack of knowledge or understanding could thus signify a barrier for the LAFPC's ability to attract new partners. What is also evident in the empirical data however, is that in order to circumvent the barrier of a lack of prior experience, facilitators such as leveraging the power of for example the mayor or educating the counterpart about the mutual benefits implied in collaborating.

#### **4.3.1.2. Trust**

Trust is a factor of coordination that was not explicitly mentioned frequently in the interviews. The empirical findings however indicate that the aspect of trust affects the LAFPC's ability to coordinate actors committed to the GFPP. In an interview with Alexa Delwiche, the importance of trust is highlighted as a factor that affects the LAFPC's ability to coordinate, as a trusting relationship facilitates information sharing and transparency, such as information regarding purchasing data between partners, which Alexa Delwiche states would be unattainable without the existence of trust between organizations.

There are several indications to the fact that trust is built in various ways within the

GFPP, for example, the empirical data indicate that trust can be created as a result of experience as previously exemplified. Moreover, the data also indicate that, for example, a close connection to government and a close connection to individuals who are considered to be trustworthy, such as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa supporting the GFPP, further facilitates the building of trust between actors in the collaboration, how trust is built is however not discussed. This could be due to the abstract nature of the concept.

#### ***4.3.1.3. Routines, habits and cognitive patterns in the individual organizations***

The empirical data are conclusive on the fact that the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors within the GFPP is affected by the routines, habits and cognitive patterns of the individual organizations. In several cases, the interviewees express this 'path dependence' of previous practices as an impediment to coordination. For example, when asked what some of the challenges for the LAFPC, in terms of expanding the policy to other regions might entail, Jill Overdorf expresses the difficulty of coordinating actors who are not early adopters to the sustainable practices outlined in the GFPP:

*"One of the challenges [...] is that you're dealing with a bunch of people who are not early adopters necessarily, they're farmers, they're ranchers and they're used to doing things in one way."* –Jill Overdorf

This thus implies impediments to the LAFPC's ability to coordinate, especially in terms of getting new actors to adopting the GFPP. This derivation is supported further by Michael Roberts, Farm Manager at the organic McGrath Family Farm, who states that the path dependence referred to by Jill Overdorf, is a relevant factor for the producers in the collaboration:

*"Phil [the owner of McGrath Family Farm and member of the Leadership and Advisory Board at LAFPC] got into organics very early on, in the early nineties when the certified organic movement first got started, so for us it's been a lot of growing pain figuring out how to do it you had the crutch of chemicals for so long, his family grew with chemicals from post-World War Two until the late eighties, early nineties, so you take that crutch away and now you have to figure out how to do things without it."* –Michael Roberts

On the other hand, one might argue that path dependence relating to farming techniques rather signifies technical resource dependence. This is another relevant aspect of the challenge, as it further inhibits farmers to circumvent the path dependence, i.e. if farmers had knowledge of organic farming techniques, and thus lacked resource dependence, then the path dependence would not be relevant either. The empirical data indicate however that there is a distinction between the two and that individuals, and thus organizations' path dependency to certain routines, habits and cognitive patterns, affect the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors committed to the GFPP.

### **4.3.2. Organizational culture**

#### ***4.3.2.1. Culture, values, norms and principles***

The five values on which the Good Food Purchasing Policy is built: local economy; environmental sustainability; valued workforce; animal welfare and nutritional health; are an aspect frequently mentioned by respondents to be of great importance in the



LAFPC's and their partners' work toward developing a sustainable food system. The concept of the work being centered around a core of values permeates throughout, not only the LAFPC, but also to the partnering organizations. The values, priorities among the values and complying with the values are all points that are frequently mentioned by respondents as a principal aspect of their collaborative work.

Although priorities exist within the various value categories, the fact that the set of values included in the GFPP is so inclusive, and that organizations are required to comply with a baseline standard within all value categories causes partnering institutions to consider all values regardless of their respective priorities, thus automatically aligning the values as well as sharing knowledge about the entire set of values and how to comply with them, which is something that could facilitate for organizations to raise their score further within value categories that they perhaps had not considered prior to their involvement in the GFPP. The empirical data indicate that shared values between the partnering organizations are an important aspect to creating a shared culture within the collaboration, which in turn is a facilitator for the coordination of the actors.

One reason for the importance of values within the GFPP is that they were established through a thorough process where a large and diverse group of key stakeholders and organizations from various sectors came together and voiced their opinions on what the policy should include. This is what Alexa Delwiche refers to as collective impact, namely:

*"[...] reaching across sectors and issue areas [...] breaking down silos and [...] creating a shared vision and roadmap for solving large social problems."* –Alexa Delwiche

This indicates that the diverse group of key stakeholders were important for three main reasons: Firstly that a shared vision was created among stakeholders from different backgrounds, which entails that the foundation of the collaborations, namely what is included in the GFPP, incorporates the perspectives of key stakeholders that are thought to represent the general opinion of similar types of organizations. Those organizations signify potential future partners for the LAFPC and having taken the perspective of their sector or organization type into consideration within the policy, greatly increases the chances for that organization to both form a partnership as well as facilitating the implementation of the partnership with the LAFPC. This is due to the fact that an understanding has been created within the LAFPC of what such a partnership could entail, and is thus connected to the factor prior experience.

Secondly, including a diverse group of key stakeholders implies facilitation of coordination between partners, as the roadmap mentioned by Alexa Delwiche in the quote above, entails that those key stakeholders could lead the way on that road and serve as forerunners within their respective sectors. Attracting and attaining new partners that can follow a forerunner rather than lead is regarded as simpler, as it implies that new organizations can learn from the experiences of the leading organization, as well as the LAFPC having learned from the experience of collaborating with such an organization previously. Sharing such experiences further facilitates for the LAFPC to coordinate those new collaborations, due to the learning curve implied.

Thirdly, Alexa Delwiche's quote indicates that the fact that stakeholders act separately in isolated "silos" signify a barrier to creating a shared vision, and hence culture, as they require "breaking down" to do so. Therefore this entails a rather intuitive barrier for the LAFPC's ability to coordinate actors and concurrently, with reaching across the sector areas being the aim, creating a shared vision and roadmap signify the facilitating coordinating mechanisms to circumvent the barriers to achieve that.

Furthermore, while many organizations had been taking initiatives toward a similar cause, prior to the establishing of the LAFPC, the GFPP included not only values that had already been considered by other organizations, but also incorporated fair labor standards, i.e. the value called valued workforce. This resulted in one of the most comprehensive food procurement policies in the United States (Clare Fox, LAFPC Networking Meeting April 22nd 2015), with a vision of creating a food system based on values. In such a food system, respondents highlight the significance of transparency within the food supply chain so that people can be confident that suppliers acting within the five values of the GFPP and thus making high quality food available to all communities in Los Angeles.

*"[...] be confident that [...] suppliers are supporting local economies, and communities, protecting our environment and our natural resources, treating workers with dignity and fairness, raising animals humanely and ensuring that the highest quality, most nutritious food is available in all communities."* –Alexa Delwiche

Including more values in the GFPP is one way in which the LAFPC can attract more partners, specifically those that prioritize fair labor standards, which is an issue that is of great importance, especially in a society such as Los Angeles and the South Californian region, where the social inequities are so extreme and evident. Incorporating valued workforce in the GFPP further sends the signal to stakeholders that the LAFPC recognizes some of the most inherent issues in the food system, one which is has been disregarded by every organization in the past.

#### ***4.3.2.2. Aligned goals and objectives between partners***

The fact that the policy is so inclusive is regarded as a main success factor to the GFPP, as it entails a policy that benefits all stakeholders in the long-run:

*"[...] bring[ing] something to the table that's going to benefit everybody. [...] [T]hat's why this is so successful; because everybody benefits in the long-run..."* –Jill Overdorf

This implies goal alignment between partners, which entails a facilitator to coordination. Although there are several benefits implied, such an inclusive policy can admittedly imply challenges when engaging in new partnerships, as although the policy may benefit all stakeholders involved, new partners often prioritize the values differently and getting them to see the importance of considering all values is not a simple task (Personal interview with members of LAFPC, 15th April 2015), and is hence regarded as a barrier to establishing shared values, a shared culture and thus coordinating the actors involved. It is a significant barrier, specifically in the formation phase, as taking all the values into account is a fundamental requirement for an organization to be able to participate in the GFPP at all, and thus represents a vital aspect for the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors.

For instance, the LAFPC has encountered greater difficulties when attempting to influence private businesses to employ the GFPP compared to for example governmental institutions, as private businesses often place focus on a single bottom line, rather than the triple bottom line. This implies that the fundamental purpose of private businesses, namely that of creating profit for their shareholders proves to be the most significant barrier to getting them to consider the other two pillars of the TBL and thus goal alignment and participation in programs such as the GFPP. Gold Star Foods is a food distributor that works closely with the LAUSD that is looking to expand the type of good food program they take part in within that collaboration to other school districts. They recognize their role in the supply chain as a distributor to make products that are demanded available and are trying to do so while also staying economically viable as well as simultaneously acting within the five values of the GFPP in order to stay in partnership with the LAUSD.

This could imply that the threat of losing business, and thus profit, could be a facilitator that is strong enough to get private businesses to consider the remaining pillars of the TBL although rather involuntarily. On the other hand, Gold Star Foods may rather, or simultaneously, be driven by the opportunity of gaining first mover advantages in an emerging market, where the company has reduced its risks of having limited know-how, as they have gained experiences from working with the LAUSD at a point when Gold Star Foods had no choice but to comply with the LAUSD's requests. Therefore this could insinuate that private companies' focus on a single bottom line, profit, could be leveraged in order to get them to consider the TBL if there exists either a threat that they may lose a significant amount of existing or potential profit if not complying.

The LAFPC recognizes that there are inherent barriers involved when attempting to balance the pressures of stakeholders with different goals and objectives, especially for large private businesses, but also the weight of their involvement in the process. The LAFPC also acknowledge however, the significance of ensuring that private companies that are trying to change their practices toward becoming more sustainable are welcome to join the conversation whenever they are ready to. Thus the LAFPC attempt to facilitate the formation and coordination of partnerships through leveraging an open and inclusive culture towards potential members.

Establishing consensus regarding the benefits of engaging in a partnership and aligning goals can be difficult in governmental organizations as well, especially when there are certain organizational structures in place:

*"[...] you've got to push the bureaucracy, and that's what my deputy mayors were really good at. Well, actually they were better than me. By the time it got to me, then it was not going to be a happy meeting, [...] but for the most part with them, what they tried to do was do a win-win, get [the departments] to embrace it, get them to understand why [...]"* –Antonio Villaraigosa, Former Mayor of Los Angeles

This quote indicates clearly that both bureaucracy and a lack of comprehension of the benefits of collaborating entail barriers to coordinating actors, specifically in the formation phase of the partnership. However getting one's counterpart to understand the advantages of collaborating and that both organizations involved will gain equally from it is regarded as a facilitator when such barriers exist.

### 4.3.3. Communication between partners

#### 4.3.3.1 Communication

The importance of communication is highlighted by many of the interviewees in terms of information sharing and transparency in collaborations as a fundamental means to coordination, as it is one of the fundamental requirements to committing to the GFPP. Transparency and information sharing are important as they create a baseline understanding about the policy and which aspects of institutions' procurement practices that need changing in order to better comply with the values of the GFPP. This understanding signifies a requirement that enables institutions to begin making changes and thus represents a facilitating factor to coordinating actors in the GFPP. The corresponding barrier to achieving this however, is the fact that the information required in order to create that baseline understanding is very difficult to gather due to the lack of transparency in the current food system. Transparency is not only required in the formation phase of the collaboration however. In order to monitor partners' continued compliance as well as their progression within food procurement practices, the LAFPC require their partners to provide them with an annual report on their compliance with the GFPP.

Moreover, Emily McKay identifies that the necessity of such a high level of transparency presents a challenge to an institution like Gold Star Foods, where the concern is not with transparency and information sharing itself but with how to best go about sharing that data that is comprehensible and useful with other actors, such as their customers and suppliers. The importance of transparency and information sharing is thus not limited to the actors involved in the GFPP. Alexa Delwiche accentuates the importance of transparency throughout the entire supply chain, specifically in order to enable for potential discrepancies between practices and the GFPP values to be illuminated:

*“This is the vision behind the good food purchasing policy. It is a system where we [as consumers] know where our food is coming from and I think that’s the most important thing, it’s that transparency. Where is our food coming from? And how can we be confident that our suppliers are supporting local economies, and communities, protecting our environment and our natural resources, treating workers with dignity and fairness, raising animals humanely and ensuring that the highest quality, most nutritious food is available in all communities?”* –Alexa Delwiche

### 4.3.4. Resource Dependence

Resource dependence is a coordination mechanism that is most emphasized within the scope of knowledge dependence. This factor is imperative throughout the entire process of the LAFPC's work toward coordinating the actors in the GFPP and is indicated as an aspect that can itself have huge impact on shifting the paradigm in the current food system.

#### 4.3.4.1. Resource dependence

Resource dependence is a factor that is commonly mentioned in the empirical data with regard to financial means and has not only direct implications on the coordination of actors, but also indirect consequences such as a lack of financial means for the LAFPC to expand and thus facilitate further coordination of actors. The LAFPC has heretofore been financed mainly through grants but, due to its current

capacity restraint, its members are exploring other options such as arranging their own fundraiser in June, as they are expanding and thus are in need of more capital.

Another way in which financial means can be restricting in the work toward coordinating the actors involved in the GFPP is specified by Alexa Delwiche as when institutions have limited resources to invest in higher quality food. The LAUSD is dependent upon the increased popularity of the school lunch program to cause an inflow of financial means that they can invest in higher quality food in order to strengthen their GFPP commitment. This resource dependence thus serves as a barrier to coordinating the actors in the GFPP.

This is an especially vital aspect within the GFPP, as the policy is based on the concept that in order to develop a sustainable food system, the paradigm of the entire industry must shift in the sense that a greater demand for sustainably produced food has to be established in order for the producers to start supplying it.

*“[...] show people that there is more value to product that taste good and that helps the local economy than there is in product that just looks good and taste like crap. You can shift that paradigm because people are going to ask for more of the good product and they are going to ask for more good food. So the more good food you can sell the more you are going to sell and that’s where I think we can shift that paradigm into food that looks good but tastes bad into food that tastes good.” –Jill Overdorf*

In the case of the GFPP this demand is leveraged through large institutions in order to stimulate the production of higher quality food, as it is a more efficient way of creating demand than persuading the public to, in turn pressure producers to start supplying such food. Another barrier to creating demand through the public is the fact that sustainably produced food rarely can compete with the price of conventionally grown food, which is something that the public has gotten used to and thus expect. In order to create an increase in demand for higher quality food it is vital to educate the public about the negative effects of buying conventional food and the positive aspects of buying sustainably produced food. This is one way in which the barrier of the higher prices of sustainably produced food can be overcome, namely to teach people that it is a better investment.

Finally, financial resource dependence of the public can serve as a barrier in the sense that regardless of the public’s awareness of the positive aspects of consuming sustainable and high quality food and respective negative aspects of consuming conventionally produced food, if they cannot afford to buy the sustainably produced food, there is an evident barrier to doing so.

#### **4.3.4.2. Knowledge sharing**

Many aspects are evident in the data that point toward the inherent difficulties of shifting the food system paradigm, aspects that are woven into the coordination work that is conducted by the LAFPC. However, the education factor, or knowledge sharing, prevails as the sole most significant aspect that permeates throughout the empirical findings as well as virtually every aspect of the food system that needs changing and thus coordination to initiate and achieve it. The significance of knowledge sharing is best explained when viewing the LAFPC’s work through a process in which knowledge sharing, or education is vital at, not only virtually every stage, but on every different level within that stage.

The first step of the process can, for illustration purposes, but not necessarily in practice, be regarded as the realization of an organization's dependence upon others in addressing the issues in the food system and more specifically those issues that they can address, as they possess a lack of knowledge and/or another barrier to coordination that is implied, lack of prior experience. This is the point where an institution contacts the LAFPC to initiate a partnership in order to address the issues in their own procurement practices. At this stage common goals and values, and thus culture are established through knowledge sharing by the LAFPC when educating the institution in question about the potential issues in their supply chain and the values that need to be taken into consideration in order to address them.

This is one of the main missions carried out actively by the LAFPC and is enabled through the next step, namely for the institutions to share their purchasing information with the LAFPC. In order for this to occur, the LAFPC needs to have established a trusting relationship with the institutions, which thus facilitates the coordination. What are described in the empirical data as significant barriers to creating this relationship however are structural rigidities in organizations, such as bureaucracy, as well as a lack of understanding of the benefits or interdependencies of collaborating with the LAFPC. Creating an understanding by sharing knowledge and thus educating the departments however caused them to cooperate and is hence regarded as a facilitator for the LAFPC to coordinate actors in the GFPP.

After having gained access to institutions' purchasing information, the LAFPC is able to analyze it through the use of a vast database of suppliers that are rated in accordance with their compliance with the five values of the GFPP. A barrier that respondents identified as a challenge that occurs at this stage is the difficulty of attaining the required information for that analysis to occur, as there is such limited transparency in the food system currently. A lack of transparency can thus be identified as a barrier to the LAFPC's ability to share information and thus coordinate. This lack of transparency can further be associated with a lack of education, or experience, on the supply chain members' behalf, regarding how to create transparency through for instance monitoring practices within their respective organizations. Therefore, monitoring is a factor that can be regarded as a facilitator to the LAFPC's ability to share information and thus coordinate actors in the GFPP.

The subsequent step in the process is for the institutions to source information on how to monitor their purchasing practices, which is a matter that the LAFPC assists with through organizing events that they call networking meetings, at which various actors can network and convene on matters such as how to create transparency in the supply chain. Hence, knowledge and experience sharing is, again vital in order for actors to be coordinated. Furthermore, the fact that all the different links in the supply chain play a role is an example of the different levels on which education is required in the entire food system, in order for sustainability issues in the food system to be addressed.

At this stage, there are several additional factors that play a role. For example the fact that the meeting attendees are of a diverse nature with respect to the types of organizations they represent, which sectors these organizations act in, etc., which implies more diverse knowledge pool and set of experiences that is available to those seeking information. Another example of a factor that affects the knowledge sharing

that occurs at the networking meetings are cultural aspects such as values, which are communicated inter alia through the language use of those who speak at the meetings. This language for example urges attendees to network and share knowledge and experiences with each other.

Furthermore, other ways in which LAFPC enable partners to obtain information that can assist them in their efforts to improve their purchasing practices are through quarterly newsletters, social media and their website where they for example provide for resource sharing.

When having established how institutions are to go about monitoring their supply chain practices, the subsequent step entails creating contracts that provide clear guidelines and regulations regarding actors' compliance with the GFPP. Colleen McKinney and Alexa Delwiche explained during an interview that many of the active contracts between institutions and their suppliers that the LAFPC examine contain directives that are in line with those encompassed in the GFPP, but are often violated by suppliers, alternatively they are incomprehensive. Oftentimes such directives are however completely excluded from the contracts. Unless contracts can be terminated, for example if the violations are to a severe enough degree, their duration period serves as a time barrier to signing new contracts with different suppliers.

*"[...] [I]t's a long process for them to go through and once we have the contracts we can't change it so whenever the contracts are up for renewal, that's when we answer it ourselves and try to see how we can make it better for them and how we can comply with all the food policy requirements [...]"* –Star Parsamyan

Contracts thus play a central role in enabling the process of coordinating actors, and active contracts that are not complacent with the GFPP often signify barriers to creating new contracts that are complacent, and thus negatively impact the LAFPC's ability to coordinate actors by delaying the coordination activities. Furthermore, another aspect that facilitates efficient contract writing is developing clear and standardized language that is included in the contracts as well as the RFPs that lead up to the contracts.

Institutions participate in the GFPP on different levels of compliance within the various value categories, and as they strive to strengthen their GFPP scores, the language in the contracts thus becomes increasingly significant. Furthermore, through signing contracts with appropriate language to purchase sustainably grown food the creation of a supply of such food is stimulated throughout the supply chain and the industry, which entails the next step in the process of coordinating actors toward shifting the paradigm of the current food system and thus developing a sustainable one. This is especially vital, as no matter how much demand is created; the fact that a supply does not yet exist is evidently a significant barrier to creating that paradigm shift.

A challenge that is apparent in this stage is farmers', but also general, lack of knowledge and experience within sustainable farming when responding to the market pressures of institutions demanding higher quality food. The industrialization that has shaped the current food system has caused major difficulties for producers who attempt to discontinue their unsustainable farming practices, due to factors such as path dependence that imply opportunity costs in terms of experience and knowledge

of more sustainable farming practices such as organic farming. Although producers may possess knowledge and experience of for example organic farming, there are nonetheless significant barriers that serve as challenges to competing with conventional farming, which is a requirement for creating a supply of sustainably produced food. These challenges include for instance a lack of knowledge and experience regarding methods that enable organic farming on a large scale, as current methods prove inefficient, as issues of e.g. weeding and pests are more difficult to control without using synthetic chemicals other than on small farms, especially when there are financial restraints in terms of affording higher labor costs.

Due to the elimination of the use of synthetic chemicals, which enables more efficient farming, organic farming requires more manual labor, which in turn implies higher costs that for conventional farmers. Higher costs imply higher prices for the end consumer, if the farm is to stay economically viable, which entails that the products are not as competitive on a price basis, which is a barrier to increasing the demand of sustainably grown food. This is especially the case when consumers are used to purchasing cheap food. Hence, higher prices of sustainably grown food and the public perception of food being cheap are two factors that serve as barriers to increasing the demand of sustainably grown food. Educating the public on the benefits of purchasing and consuming sustainably produced food is however as previously mentioned, identified as a factor that to a certain extent can circumvent these barriers.

The next step in the process is thus educating the public in order to further stimulate the demand for sustainably produced food. This step is vital for the GFPP for example in the sense that the more individuals that are educated about the issues involved in purchasing conventionally produced food and the benefits of purchasing sustainably produced, the greater the likelihood that more organizations will realize the food system issues as well as the interdependencies of addressing them, which will further improve the prospects of shifting the paradigm of the current food system and developing a sustainable one.

There are however substantial difficulties implied in educating the public, which furthermore is regarded as an extremely vital aspect of the ability for the LAFPC to coordinate efforts toward shifting the paradigm of the current food system. An aspect that represents a significant barrier to educating people on the issues of the current food system and what needs to be done in order to address them, is that the changes that must occur have such long term effects as opposed to showing immediate results, which is especially an issue since:

*“As a society we tend to be rather myopic and so we want an instant gratification, that’s much more what we’re driven by and so if you can show a seven generation benefit, or even three generation benefit, [...] you can see the wheels start turning.” – Jill Overdorf*

Presenting people with concrete evidence of either short or long-term effects hence facilitates that understanding, which implies that knowledge sharing can serve as a facilitator to educating the public, which in turn is regarded as a vital aspect for coordinating actors toward developing a sustainable food system.



#### **4.3.4.3. Farm Size, technical rigidities and farmers' lack of financial means**

Dealing with weeds and pests without using synthetic chemicals in relation to the size of the farm in question and the challenge to stay economically viable are two of the inherent difficulties implied in organic farming. Additionally a lack of knowledge and experience within sustainable farming methods that are more efficient than existing ones, is outlined as an aspect that causes higher costs and prices of the final product. As previously mentioned, one of the main factors on which organically farmed food competes with conventionally farmed food is on price, indicating that organic farms are struggling with popular expectations of cheap food, a barrier that potentially could, as previously mentioned, be circumvented through educating the public on the disadvantages of purchasing conventionally produced food and the benefits of purchasing sustainably produced food.

*"[...] in this country everybody is so used to buying cheap food, that's the way it's been, so we need to talk to them a little bit more in being able to invest in healthy food. So I think those two things: education – to explain why is it important to buy from a local farm that doesn't use chemicals – and the other thing would be price – if we can compete a little bit better on the price, but with the education you may not have to compete so hard because people might understand "OK it's a better investment"."* –Michael Roberts

Another aspect that can be regarded as both a technical rigidity as well as a farm-size issue that signifies a constraint to the LAUSD in their strive to improve their good food purchasing score, and hence serves as a barrier to coordinating the actors within the GFPP is the challenges involved in a large institution sourcing food from small- or mid-sized farms. Again this is a barrier that can be associated with a lack of knowledge and experience, but as they LAUSD are at the forefront of the initiative, there is not necessarily any knowledge or expertise to gain in order to circumvent this barrier, other than experimenting and being creative.

#### **4.3.5. Organizational structure, governance and decision-making in the collaboration**

##### **4.3.5.1. Organizational structure of the collaboration**

In order to study the organizational structure within collaborations focus was placed on the organizational structures within each individual organization in the partnerships. As a comprehensive description of the LAFPC's organizational structure is provided in the section below, titled 'Organizational structure of the NGO', this section will primarily comprise a description of the organizational structures of the partnering organizations.

The institutions committed to the GFPP are generally characterized as large bureaucratic organizations with rigid hierarchical structures. With the majority of the partners consisting of governmental institutions, this is rather typical. Bureaucracy, structural rigidity and hierarchy are described as aspects that impede the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors within the collaboration, as bureaucracy tends to hinder development and change by causing inertia within organizations. These barriers to collaboration are however circumvented by the LAFPC through the use of tools such as clear goals and metrics, accountability and the ability to leverage power of the government or influential individuals.

The empirical data describe how the LAFPC implements the use of goals, timetables and metrics in order to ensure compliance as well as to penetrate structural rigidity in partnering organizations with structural rigidity:

*“[Y]ou’ve got to push the bureaucracy to [...] break through the inertia.”* –Former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

The actors’ purpose of committing to the policy is oftentimes described as an abstract goal relating to their perception of sustainability and how they can be more sustainable. In large, hierarchical organizations, effective communication is often difficult, which can result in visions, such as this one, not permeating through the organization as it could have in for example a smaller, more agile organization, such as for instance that of LAFPC. In organizations where bureaucracy poses a barrier for the LAFPC to recruit or coordinate actors transforming abstract goals and visions into quantifiable and comprehensible targets is an effective way to penetrate that barrier. Providing individuals with concrete targets, timelines on how to reach them and metrics on how to gauge the development can effectively cause relatability and understanding that partners can commit to.

In addition to using goals, metrics and timelines as means to push bureaucracy, another important aspect described by several interviewees as a means for the LAFPC to break through the barrier of bureaucracy in the partnering organizations is accountability. Mary Lee described how the LAFPC has to make sure that local agencies and entities are held responsible for their commitments to the GFPP. By breaking down the responsibility of the commitment into local levels, such as holding a specific department responsible for complying with the policy commitment, change does not tend to get stuck in the bureaucracy to the same extent as it otherwise may have. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa suggests that this method can be implemented even more elaborately by holding individuals accountable for the institutional commitment to the GFPP. For the best effect of this facilitator, the person held accountable should be a person of power such as a CEO or a manager.

A third method described in the interviews as a means for the LAFPC to break through the bureaucracy in partners’ organizational structures is by leveraging its connection to the government and the power of the Mayor. The founder of the LAFPC, Paula Daniels’, close connection to the Former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is a factor that is presented by several interviewees as crucial in the sense that the LAFPC and the GFPP had the support of the Mayor, which was highly influential in terms of building the LAFPC’s legitimacy, especially at the initial stages of forming the LAFPC. In addition, a strong working relationship with the City Council is also highlighted as an aspect that facilitates the LAFPC’s ability circumvent many of the bureaucratic barriers of the governmental institutions committed to the LAFPC.

*“[...] [U]sing the power of the City to get others to do good food policy stuff [...]”* – Former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

#### ***4.3.5.2. Power distribution between partners***

The LAFPC is described as the coordinating body and it does have several control mechanisms, such as measurements, metrics and the utilization of accountability, in place in order to ensure compliance by the partners committed to the GFPP. These are mechanisms that need to be in place due to the LAFPC’s lack of formal power outside

its own organization. However, the previously described facilitating factors used by the LAFPC to penetrate the structural barriers of bureaucracy can to a certain extent be applied to circumventing its lack of formal power as well. One method described earlier is the leveraging of the LAFPC's close working relationship with the government and, during his time in office, the former Mayor Villaraigosa. These relationships do not give the LAFPC any formal power and thus do not change the power distribution within the collaboration, it nonetheless does instill legitimacy for of LAFPC, which facilitates its coordination of new actors as well as existing ones.

Evidence of this lack of power could further be represented by the difficulty for the LAFPC to recruit private businesses to the GFPP, namely that the LAFPC does not have power that they can inflict on them, and leveraging the power of the City may not be as effective in institutions that are not governmental. What can be concluded is thus that the close connection to government signals power and mandate even though no formal power is directed to the LAFPC due to the governmental relationship.

The fact that there is a knowledge imbalance on sustainable food systems between the LAFPC and the actors could further add to the perception of power of the LAFPC. Sustainability is an abstract concept and its content and significance is presented as difficult to grasp by the actors. Evidence of this is provided in the empirical data in terms of for example the fact that several institutions that were contacted in the hope of scheduling an interview about their collaboration with the LAFPC, the representatives referred back to LAFPC members, stating that the LAFPC would best be able to respond to queries on the matter. This insinuates that these partners view the majority of the responsibilities within the collaboration as the LAFPC's, which could indicate a responsibility or power imbalance within the partnership. On the contrary, however, the LAFPC is largely dependent on their counterparts for example share their procurement data in order to be able to coordinate the collaboration, as well as staying in business at all. This further indicates a distribution of power that is inclined toward the LAFPC's partners.

#### ***4.3.5.3. Participatory decision-making between partners***

Participatory decision-making is principally employed in the collaborations between the LAFPC and its partners during the process of establishing the implementation plan of the GFPP on the partners' procurement practices. Together with the support of the LAFPC, partners establish which levels of compliance they commit to within each of the five value categories included in the GFPP. Subsequently, the LAFPC create an action plan to guide the partners in the process toward reaching those levels. Through the use of such a participatory process, the LAFPC is able to take their partners' priorities into consideration, while simultaneously incorporating the baseline requirements of the GFPP. This further contributes to the practical aspects of fulfilling the goal alignment between partners.

Furthermore, what is evident in the empirical data is that there exists general consensus among respondents that participation of organizations and members across sectors and throughout the food supply chain, or collective impact, is imperative in order to address the entire scope of the issues in the current food system, due to its inherent complexities:

*“Collective impact is a collaborative approach that reaches across different sectors and fields of interest to solve complex issues, so for instance solving the food system*

*problems – kind of complex, you can't do it by yourself so people have got to reach out to others and so collective impact is also a really important way to make large changes and lasting solutions to these problems and what we're trying to do is help bring people together with common visions and common goals.” –Haan-Fawn Chau*

#### **4.4. Other mechanisms**

*Additional mechanisms that were found to be of vital significance in the empirical data include the role of champions, contracts and the characteristics of the the backbone organization, the NGO, in advancing and facilitating the LAFPC's coordination of actors in the GFPP.*

##### **4.4.1. Champions**

An aspect that was frequently mentioned as relevant to the LAFPC's work was the role of specific individuals who act as leaders for the cause and for the LAFPC but who are not in the LAFPC themselves. These individuals include people with extensive knowledge and influence, and a will to use these characteristics toward supporting and advancing the initiative. These champions work in different sectors, for example Robert Gottlieb from Occidental College and LAUSD School Board Member Steve Zimmer from the education sector. Steve Zimmer's engagement was instrumental in the LAUSD's adoption of the GFPP and the concurrent formation of the partnership with the LAFPC.

*“[...] [T]wo of our good food heroes that we are honoring at that event are here today, Bob Gottlieb from Occidental College and also LAUSD school board member, Steve Zimmer. So you'll get to hear all about their incredible work [...]” –Clare Fox*

The fact that he had initiated change within the LAUSD's food procurement practices a few years prior to the adoption of the GFPP implies that he may have prepared the organization in terms of for example instilling certain values and principles in the LAUSD that led to its organizational culture to correspond more with that of the LAFPC. This could be one way in which the role of champions could facilitate the coordination between the institutions and the LAFPC.

Furthermore, the LAFPC has strong champions at the City Council level as well, the most important ones consisting of Councilman O'Farrell who has been highly involved in the GFPP's implementation at the city level, Mayor Garcetti who is providing strong support of the LAFPC's efforts toward opening a partnership between the LAUSD and a program with the Department of Recreation and Parks as well as Councilman Koretz, whose office was the initial sponsor of the City Council Motion and with which the LAFPC continued to work to monitor that the city departments that are asked to comply with the GFPP, actually do.

An aspect that is highlighted as important in the LAFPC's work toward coordinating the actors in the GFPP is that of pushing the bureaucracy. Governmental institutions such as the City Council are bound by rigid organizational structures and bureaucracy, barriers to coordination that are best circumvented through leveraging the power of individuals that possess it. This may signify a reason for champions' significant role in the process of coordinating the GFPP.

#### **4.4.2. Contracts**

An aspect that prevailed as compelling at a rather early stage in the data collection was that of contracts. As previously outlined, the LAFPC's work builds around the premise of enlightening institutions on the issues of their current purchasing practices and what about them that needs altering in order to comply with the GFPP. What is evident in the data is that that the role that the aspect of contracts plays is of vital significance to the LAFPC's work. Contracts do not however affect the collaborations between the LAFPC and institutions in the sense that it the partnerships are contractual, rather it is the LAFPC's role in analyzing existing contracts between institutions and their suppliers and ensuring that new contracts that contain appropriate language, guidelines and regulations are signed with appropriate suppliers. This is an imperative and most palpable aspect of the work that the LAFPC carries out in order to coordinate the actors in the GFPP.

The barriers that are evident in the context of contracts are the time barrier of existing contracts' duration when those contracts do not fulfill the criteria of the GFPP, the lack of standardized language regarding the requirements of the GFPP that can be used in RFPs and contracts. Another barrier is that of suppliers. If new contracts are to be written with current suppliers who are unfamiliar with the LAFPC's work or sustainability issues in the food system, they could be unwilling to cooperate due to for example a lack of experience, knowledge or due to path dependence. Furthermore, regardless of which stage the contracts are signed at, whenever they include suppliers that are not yet entered in the database that the LAFPC has created, a barrier exists in terms of the LAFPC having to gather and analyze information about them in order to evaluate whether those suppliers are desirable suppliers within the scope of the GFPP. This barrier is further elevated due to the difficulty of acquiring the relevant information, as current supply chain transparency is extremely low.

The greater aim of contracts rather than solely regulating and guiding suppliers in their partnership with the institutions is to stimulate supply creation of sustainably produced, high quality food throughout the supply chain, which will contribute to the shifting paradigm in the current food system toward a more sustainable one. Therefore contracts entail a coordination mechanism that is imperative in the LAFPC's work toward coordinating actors in the GFPP.

#### **4.4.3. Characteristics of the NGO**

What is emphasized in the empirical data is the importance of the organizational characteristics of the NGO as the backbone organization of the GFPP. The factors are essentially the same as those within the mechanism 'organizational structure, governance and decision-making in the collaboration' however with the alteration of the focus being placed on the NGO rather than its relationship with partners.

##### ***4.4.3.1. Organizational culture of the NGO***

On the matter of the primary success factors of the LAFPC's work with the GFPP thus far, several aspects are highlighted. Firstly, the foundation of the LAFPC, namely how good food is defined and the values that are included in that definition, serves as the cultural principles on which the LAFPC's organization is based. Having a strong cultural orientation within an organization can be regarded as a facilitator for any work that is carried out by the organization and thus can also be regarded as a facilitator to coordinating the actors involved in the GFPP.

A second aspect that contributes to the organizational culture of the LAFPC is that its members created a structure and a space that is open and welcoming for anyone who is interested in getting involved in issues that concern the food system. This aspect contributes to creating an organizational culture where resourceful and competent people are not only more bound to get involved, but also where they are more likely to thrive and thus contribute more to the successes of the organization by for instance facilitating its ability to coordinate actors in the GFPP.

Thirdly, the culture that was built within the working group within the LAFPC that created the procurement document that entails the foundation of the GFPP is stressed as a success factor of the GFPP. This is due to the fact that the working group consisted of a diverse group of individuals from different sectors with different interests, opinions and experience that worked together and those who remained involved throughout the process showed trust, genuine commitment to the cause as well as support for one another's areas of interest. These are aspects that further contribute to a working space that is characterized by openness, inclusiveness, acceptance and support, which all represent values that strengthen the organizational culture:

*"[...] [A] lot of relationships were established and trust was established through that process so the people who ended up sticking it out with us, I mean there were definite issues that arose as we tried to really understand each others' issues and I think initially when we where talking about the concept of good food people thought about it as a "either, or" and I think through our process we got to an "and" so it became much more inclusive."* –Alexa Delwiche

#### **4.4.3.2. Organizational structure of the NGO**

In the previous section, the factor of organizational structure is briefly mentioned as an aspect that affects the organizational culture, as well as the significance of the LAFPC having an organizational structure that consists of a diverse set of stakeholders. This is frequently discussed, as not only something that affects the organizational culture, but also as a facilitator to the process of developing the GFPP. As previously mentioned, the GFPP itself is highlighted as an aspect that serves as a foundation within the organization, guiding the members in their work toward coordinating actors in their efforts toward developing a sustainable food system.

Therefore the diverse set of stakeholders coupled with the aspect of the GFPP serving as a backbone within the backbone organization can be viewed as a significant factor to the successes of the LAFPC thus far, and hence also its successes within the GFPP and coordinating the actors engaged in the policy.

Another aspect of the organizational structure that is mentioned is the construct of the LAFPC Leadership and Advisory Board. The board consists of a diverse group of around 40 stakeholders who are all *"movers and shakers"* (Haan-Fawn Chau, LAFPC Orientation Meeting 22 April 2015), i.e. great food system leaders and people that are willing to dedicate themselves to changing the food system.

In summary, the organizational culture and structure of the backbone organization of the collaboration, the LAFPC, is frequently emphasized as of vital importance to its members work toward developing a sustainable food system. The aspects about its structure and culture that are most highlighted are the diversity of the members on all

different levels, whether on the Leadership and Advisory Board, in the initial working group that created the Good Food Procurement Document or whether attending the networking meetings.

*“[...] [W]e had such a diverse group around the table and what was critical is beyond the agenda on the table was this procurement document and the outcome from that [...]”* –Jill Overdorf

This is due to the implications that diversity has on many different aspects, for example that it brings many different principles, values, and experiences to the table, which creates comprehensiveness in the policy formulation; that those people with different interest must collaborate and build trusting and supportive relationships along the way, which builds a strong cultural foundation within the organization; and that the food system issues that are addressed within the scope of the NGO are so complex that incorporating a wide array of perspectives, skills and experiences is of vital importance in order to attend to the problems at all.

Therefore, the organizational characteristics of the LAFPC have imperative effects on the mechanisms that in turn affect its members' ability to coordinate the actors in the GFPP toward developing a sustainable food system.

#### **4.5. Summary of Empirical Findings**

*This chapter has reflected the empirical findings collected through respondents' recollection of the mechanisms that affect the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors within the LAFPC, as well as respondents' views on factors that affect the development of a sustainable food system in general. This section will further provide a summary of the main findings within the most prominent mechanisms.*

That which was most evident and relevant in the empirical findings is the inherent need for knowledge sharing, or education, about sustainable food within all categories of stakeholders of the food system including all supply chain members as well as the public. This is due to the general lack thereof, which represents a barrier to coordination that can be connected to virtually all of the other mechanisms.

What was found to be a second imperative mechanism is one, which is not mentioned in previous research and was thus not included in the preliminary framework, namely the characteristics of the NGO in terms of organizational culture and structure within the NGO. This is another mechanism that affects virtually all aspects of the collaboration, as it entails factors such as the NGO being based on a set of values that is amplified through the structure and permeates through both the backbone organization and contributes to creating a common culture between partners that guide the respective collaborations.

An aspect that is found to be of vital importance is that of trust between partners, as it enables for a second significant factor; information sharing, or communication. Information sharing is furthermore regarded as a fundamental prerequisite for the collaboration to work at all.

Furthermore, barriers that are evidently relevant within the context of coordinating actors include path dependence on different levels in the food system; from farming to structural rigidities in governmental institutions, as well as financial resource

dependence of four stakeholder groups within the food system: the NGO, potential or current partnering organizations, farmers and the public.

## **5. Analysis and Discussion**

*In this chapter the empirical findings from the previous chapter are compared and contrasted to the existing theory presented in the theoretical review. As existing theory is very limited in scope however, a discussion is provided in order to increase the understanding of the mechanisms' and factors' effects on the particular collaborations with which this thesis is concerned. The chapter is structured in accordance with coordination mechanisms as headings and with factors that are identified as most relevant within each coordination mechanism. Subsequently a revised framework is presented through a synthesis of the preliminary theoretical framework and those mechanisms that are identified in the empirical data.*

### **5.1. Coordination mechanisms**

#### **5.1.1. Organizational characteristics of the NGO**

##### **5.1.1.1. Organizational culture of the NGO**

Organizational culture represents a mechanism that is rather difficult to study as it entails the social context within an organization that is built up of values and principles that affect individuals' behaviors and actions (Selsky & Parker, 2005), thus making values and principles viable indicators of the organizational culture. While previous literature on cross-sector collaborations, NGOs, sustainable food supply chains and coordination mentions the importance of creating a shared culture between partnering organizations and that divergent organizational cultures are more difficult to coordinate (Gray, 1989; Gulati et al., 2012; Howes et al., 2015; Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009; Lehoux et al., 2014; Selsky & Parker, 2005) little is discussed regarding the role of the organizational culture within the NGO. The empirical findings indicate, however that the organizational culture of the backbone organization is of vital importance, not only for attracting and attaining new partners, but first and foremost in establishing a solid foundation on which the organization is built.

##### *Values*

The empirical findings further indicate that such a foundation includes values and principles that guide the behaviors and actions of individuals, which is in line with Selsky and Parker's (2005) definition of an organizational culture. Empirical evidence points toward that a foundation built on values provides for those values to permeate through the organization and further affect all aspects of the work carried out by the NGO, including other mechanisms that in turn affect the NGO's ability to coordinate actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems.

##### **5.1.1.2. Organizational structure of the NGO**

What is evidently important in the empirical data gathered is that the organizational structure of the NGO as a backbone organization has vital implications for many aspects of the NGO's work, but most significantly for the organizational culture, which in turn has vital implications for coordination.

##### *Participatory decision-making*

Just as the organizational culture of the NGO, the organizational structure of the NGO is only briefly discussed within the cross-sector collaboration, NGO, sustainable food



supply chain and coordination literature. Nonetheless, it states that the organizational structure of NGOs often entails characteristics such as participatory decision-making due to a fear of losing control of the decision-making process (Selsky & Parker, 2005). While a fear of losing control is not an aspect that is evident in the empirical data it can neither be rejected nor confirmed, although participatory decision-making is mentioned as an important aspect within the scope of having an inclusive organizational culture and that is relevant in for example the process of developing policies that are to serve as the foundations of partnerships.

### *Diversity*

What is a second empirical finding that is regarded as a vital aspect to facilitating the coordinating actors in collaborations is the fact that the NGO is composed of a diverse set of key stakeholders. Engaging people and organizations from different sectors with varying knowledge and experience is a factor that is heavily emphasized as a vital requirement for being able to address food system issues due to their complex nature. This notion corresponds with that of social, or sustainability, issues in general and can thus be regarded as a meta-problem where collective impact is necessary, as outlined in cross-sector collaboration theory by Gray (1985) and Van Huijstee et al. (2007).

#### **5.1.2. Knowledge sharing about sustainable food**

Knowledge sharing is an aspect that is discussed within the scope of resource dependence in current literature. The theory presented in the literature review primarily applies knowledge sharing between partners as a factor that affects an NGO's ability to coordinate actors (den Hond et al., 2012; Lehoux et al., 2014; Michaux et al., 2012), whereas the empirical findings indicate that this factor is so significant throughout the entire process of coordination work by NGOs that it is regarded as a coordination mechanism rather than a factor of the coordination mechanism resource dependence. This is in line with what Tongsawate and Tips (1988) stress, namely that knowledge sharing is the mechanism with the most potential to positively affect the coordination of collaborations.

The literature further mentions the lack of farmers' knowledge about organic farming methods (Beske et al., 2014), as well as a lack of communication to consumers about the differences between conventionally produced food and sustainably produced food as two barriers that are confirmed by the empirical findings as having the ability to affect the coordination of actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems.

##### ***5.1.2.1. Educating stakeholders about sustainable food***

The levels on which the knowledge sharing mechanism needs to be employed in order to facilitate the NGO's coordination of the actors involved in the system change are:

- Educating potential and current partnering organizations about the issues of their current procurement practices, the issues in their respective supply chains, what needs to change in order to become more sustainable and how.
- Educating potential partners about the significance of sourcing sustainable high quality food and the mutual benefits that are implied
- Educating partners and actors in the supply chain about how to create transparency and monitor the practices throughout the supply chain as well as

how to create contracts that advance the development of sustainable food systems and prevent unsustainable practices

- Educating the farmers about sustainable farming techniques, which is in line with existing theory (Beske et al., 2014) and can circumvent path dependency issues
- Educating the public about the benefits of consuming sustainably produced food versus the disadvantages of consuming conventionally produced food due to the issues in the current food system, which is in line with what Tavella and Hjortsø (2014) outline in the previous literature. Furthermore, the concept of stakeholder pressure by the public is outlined in previous literature by Beske et al. (2014), Maier and Finger (2001), Migliore et al. (2013), Tavella and Hjortsø (2012) and Wognum et al. (2011) as a highly effective mechanism to stimulate the creation of supply of sustainably produced food through demand. Businesses are thought to adhere to such pressure due to the strive to gain or maintain legitimacy (Bryson et al., 2006; De Geer, 2009; den Hond et al., 2015; Fiedler & Deegan, 2007; Gray, 1985, 1989; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007), which could signify be a reason for their compliance, although the empirical data also indicate that a fear of losing business and thus profit entails a significant incentive to adhere to the pressure.

#### **5.1.2.2. Champions**

Champions as a factor that can advance and facilitate the coordination work of the NGO is not mentioned in previous theory, but is however, due to its frequent occurrence in the empirical data regarded as a relevant aspect. There are two aspects that are derived as vital for the role of the champion to be effective, influence and knowledge.

##### *Influence*

In order for champions to be successful in their advocacy they need to possess characteristics that make them influential. Examples of such characteristics include having a title or role that implies formal power, having informal power in terms of the ability to influence others into doing something they would not otherwise have done, and having legitimacy or invoking trustworthiness on others. The role of champions is particularly effective when people with such characteristics are advocates who act outside of the backbone organization, as people will not view them as acting out of self-interest.

##### *Knowledge*

The second aspect that is important in a champion is that he or she possesses knowledge about that which he or she is advocating. Such knowledge implies increased power and legitimacy and thus influence, and a lack of knowledge can imply the direct opposite, hence making knowledge a fundamental requirement.

### **5.1.3. Organizational characteristics of the collaboration**

#### **5.1.3.1. Organizational culture of the collaboration**

Previous literature on cross-sector collaborations, NGOs, sustainable food supply chains and coordination couples organizational culture with the concepts of values, norms and principles (Selsky & Parker, 2005). As previously discussed, these concepts are more identifiable than the culture itself, in the social context of an

organization and are thus employed as indicators in order to distinguish cultural traits between partnering organizations.

Previous theory states that partners with similar organizational cultures are more likely to achieve successful collaborations that are simpler to coordinate than partners with divergent cultures (Gray, 1985; Trist, 1983). While the empirical data does not provide sufficient indications of the cultures in the partnering organizations, what is evident is that common cultures within the collaborations are frequently established in accordance with what Gray (1989), Gulati et al. (2012), Howes et al. (2015), Kooiman and Jentoft (2009), Lehoux et al. (2014) and Selsky and Parker (2005) state. This is done through the use of goal alignment as stated by Clarke and Fuller (2011), Dwyer et al. (1987), Hamann and Acutt (2003), Seitanidi and Crane (2009), Selsky and Parker (2005) and Van Huijstee et al. (2007). Aligning actors' problem perception as stated by Sharma & Kearins (2011), Tavella and Hjortsø (2012), Van Huijstee et al. (2007), is another factor found to be employed by the NGO. Therefore, common organizational cultures are built within each collaboration that the NGO engages in, which is in accordance with what previous theory on the matter states can facilitate coordination. A factor that is categorized differently in the preliminary theoretical framework than here is trust; an explanation for this is found below.

#### *Aligned goals and values*

Values are mentioned in the previous literature as an aspect of culture, however in the empirical findings there is evidence that values can play a much more important role in collaborations and the coordination thereof. As the empirical data indicates, the entire collaboration is based on a set of values that in turn serve as the foundation of the common culture that is established between partners. Within the values that outline the guiding principles for the collaborations the NGO included all the different values and goals that organizations may prioritize, thus to a certain extent aligning goals to even prior to the formation of the partnership. This was enabled through the inclusion of a diverse group of key stakeholders during the policy development. This initial step facilitates further coordination, as organizations' goals will already be included in those of the NGO. The challenge however is for the NGO to persuade their partners to consider all of the values included in the principles of the policy, which is regarded a difficult task due to the inherently diverse goals and priorities of partnering organizations, and thus entails a barrier to aligning the goals of and coordinating the actors involved. Other barriers to goal alignment that are found in the empirical data are structural rigidities such as bureaucracy and private businesses being driven by a single bottom line, i.e. profit generation, rather than a triple bottom line. Evidently these organizations are not concerned with sustainable development, in which case they would take all three pillars into consideration (WCED, 1984).

According to existing theory, aligning the problem perceptions between actors is a facilitator to coordination between actors collaborating toward creating local and sustainable food systems (Tavella & Hjortsø, 2012). As the empirical data shows, this factor is so closely coupled with the values and goal alignment process within the coordination of the collaboration, that while vital, the aspect is already taken into account.

#### *Trust*

While trust can intuitively be coupled with experience and routines, as in the literature review, the empirical data shows that trust is more relevant in the context of building

a common culture between partners in order to enable for example information sharing, which signifies a fundamental requirement for the collaborations within the GFPP to proceed, an aspect that moreover will be discussed further on in the thesis. The fact that trust represents a prerequisite for information sharing to occur within collaborations between the NGO and its partners, which in turn is a fundamental requirement for the collaboration to occur signifies that the empirical findings are in line with what theory states on the matter, namely that a lack of trust, or distrust would significantly impede the coordination of the collaboration (Mayer et al., 1995; Migliore et al., 2013; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Van Huijstee et al., 2007).

Another context in which trust is referred to in the theory is within the development of sustainable food systems, where bureaucratic organizational structures are regarded as impediments to building trusting and cooperative relationships between sustainable supply chain partners (Lombardi et al., 2013). This notion is however neither confirmed, nor rejected by the empirical findings, as the LAFPC has successfully created trusting relationships with governmental institutions laden with bureaucratic organizational structures. What is evident however is that the LAFPC, as previously mentioned, employs a number of facilitating coordination mechanisms and factors that could signify explanations for that success, despite potential structural rigidities implied.

#### ***5.1.3.2. Organizational structure of the collaboration***

When comparing the structures in the organizations involved in collaborations with the LAFPC however, it is evident that their organizational structures are significantly divergent to that of the LAFPC. The majority of the LAFPC's partners are governmental organizations laden with bureaucracy, hierarchy and structural rigidity, while the LAFPC is a small organization characterized by participatory decision-making, democracy and inclusiveness. According to theory on the matter, similar organizational structures in partnering organizations the more facilitated the coordination (den Hond et al., 2012; Maier & Finger, 2011). Therefore the opposite, that divergent organizational structures are more difficult to coordinate, should also hold true. Hence, it should theoretically be difficult for the LAFPC to coordinate the actors in their collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

With regard to the empirical findings, there are indications that this, in fact, is the case. What is doubtful however, is that this difficulty is due to the differences in organizational structures, as the mechanisms that are employed in order to circumvent those challenges the same as those employed to circumvent the uneven power distribution in the relationship. Therefore, it rather proves more likely, with support of the empirical findings, that the difficulties are more closely related to power imbalances, caused by barriers implied by bureaucracy, between the partners, as well as possibly the lack of understanding of what the collaboration entails in those individuals who are resistant to complying, which is generally an issue throughout the work conducted by the NGO.

#### ***Power distribution***

As presented in the literature review, there are split opinions regarding whether a formal or informal organizational structure of the collaboration is more beneficial in terms of facilitating coordination; Gulati et al. (2012) argue that a more formal hierarchical organizational structure can facilitate coordination, as it provides clear guidelines of individuals' daily activities and responsibility distribution, whereas an

overwhelming number of authors argue the contrary, as a more formal organizational structure implies more bureaucracy and structural rigidity, causing power imbalances, which in turn causes risks such as opportunistic behavior and partners free-riding. The latter authors thus argue that coordination is best facilitated through organizational structures characterized by participatory decision-making, equal power and responsibility distribution and democracy (Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Covey & Browns, 2001; Gold et al., 2013; Gray, 1989; Hillman et al., 2009; Lombardi et al., 2013).

The empirical findings indicate that the respective collaborations within the GFPP contain certain traits of formal governance mechanisms in terms of for example employing monitoring and reporting systems and leveraging the power of influential organizations or individuals. As previously mentioned, such mechanisms can be employed as a means to circumvent the NGO's lack of formal power toward their partners. Therefore the empirical findings further support the theoretical findings that bureaucratic organizations with structural rigidity and hierarchy can cause an unbalanced power distribution between partners, which causes barriers for the NGO to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

#### *Participatory decision-making*

The empirical evidence of participatory decision-making between partners primarily consists of the NGO's partners partaking in the process of developing a plan for how the partner is going to reach baseline or higher requirements within the value categories outlined in the GFPP. This implies that the empirical findings are in line with what Gulati et al. (2012) and Selsky and Parker (2005) state, namely that participatory decision-making is a method used in the implementation phase of cross-sector collaborations in order to for example establish the premises on which the partners are to act within the collaboration. This further suggests that although a partnering organization has a bureaucratic structure, participatory decision-making can still be enabled. Furthermore the empirical data does not indicate that there are difficulties to such participatory decision-making, which could signify an indication that it is in fact the employment of participatory decision-making that facilitates the coordination between the NGO and its bureaucratic partnering organizations, as stated by Thabrew et al. (2009), Selsky and Parker (2005) and Tavella and Hjortso (2012).

Furthermore, what can be established, is that there is general consensus among respondents that there is an inherent will to involve actors on all levels of the food system in the future, and that this is a vital aspect to further coordinating actors in the development of a sustainable food system. This could potentially be in line with what Selsky and Parker (2005) state, namely that NGOs tend to opt for more participatory decision-making due to their fear of losing control of that process. With regards to the context of these empirical findings however, it is more likely that the strive to include actors from all relevant sectors in the decision-making process is due to the nature of the issue at hand, namely the development of a sustainable food system. Therefore the NGO's as well as their partners' opting for participatory decision-making is rather in line with what theory suggests about meta-problems such as those regarding sustainability issues. These problems are according to theory so complex that participation is required from stakeholders across sectors in order to address them (Fiedler & Deegan, 2007; Gray, 1985; Roome, 2001; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Trist, 1983 & Van Huijstee et al., 2007), which in fact is the notion upon which the majority of the literature review is based on.

### **5.1.3.3. Formal coordination mechanisms**

The literature on the coordination of collaborations does not explicitly refer to contracts or monitoring as a means to coordinate collaborations. Contracts are rather mentioned within the scope of determining the nature of the collaboration (Michaux et al., 2012; Ring & van de Ven, 1991; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991), whereas monitoring is mentioned as a means to control it (Wognum et al., 2011; Beske et al., 2014). Furthermore, due to the fact that previous NGO literature contends that NGOs are more inclined to use less formal coordination mechanisms than for example private businesses or governmental institutions (Michaux et al., 2012; Ring & van de Ven, 1991; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991), these factors were excluded from the theoretical framework. As our empirical findings indicated otherwise, possibly due to Lehoux et al.,'s (2014) contention that less formal coordination mechanisms rarely prove effective, contracts and monitoring were included in the revised framework. Furthermore, another factor that proves significant in the empirical data is accountability, which is explained below.

#### *Contracts*

What is conclusive in both the empirical and the theoretical data is the significant role contracts play in the coordination of the collaboration, that role however differs between the empirical and the theoretical data. In the literature, contracts are presented as means to control the nature of the collaborations, such as principles on which the collaboration is founded (Lombardi et al., 2013, Beske et al., 2014; Migliore et al., 2013; Lehoux, et al., 2014), which in this case would imply the relationship between the LAFPC and the actors committed to the GFPP. This is the role of the GFPP, but in addition, the empirical data suggest that the LAFPC uses the actors' external contracts a means of coordinating actors in the GFPP. The empirical data suggest that significant aspects in the coordination of actor contracts towards sustainable development include the time barrier of existing contracts, the importance of creating and implementing a standardized language in relation to sustainable food supply chains, and achieving greater supply chain transparency, a factor that is highlighted frequently in the empirical data.

#### *Monitoring*

As previously mentioned, Lehoux et al. (2014) contend that informal coordination mechanisms are ineffective in practice. The combination of the structural rigidity in several of the partnering organizations as well as the power imbalance between the LAFPC and its partners, this could imply that a use of informal coordination mechanisms in fact would be ineffective in practice. This could potentially be the reason for the fact that one of the success factors of the LAFPC's ability to coordinate the actors being through the use of metrics, goals and timetables. Such factors can furthermore be regarded as effective means to ensure accountability, another significant aspect in the LAFPC's coordination work.

#### *Accountability*

Accountability is highlighted in the empirical data as a mechanism to ensure that actors involved in the collaboration live up to their GFPP commitments, and is indicated as particularly useful when coordinating actors with bureaucratic organizational structures. The concept of accountability is described in the empirical findings as a control mechanism utilized by the LAFPC for holding individuals on

different hierarchical levels within the partnering organizations accountable for their commitments. Therefore accountability is included in the revised framework as a vital aspect to ensuring compliance within the collaboration and thus a factor that contributes to the NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in a collaboration toward the development of a sustainable food system.

#### **5.1.4. Path dependence**

##### ***5.1.4.1. Organizational path dependence***

###### *Prior experience*

Yaziji and Doh (2009) as well as Roome (2001) argue that prior experience, and specifically partners' positive prior experience of collaborating with NGOs, can affect the NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in the collaboration. The empirical findings provide support for this theory, as partners in the GFPP that had previously engaged with the LAFPC expressed that this provided further inclination to extend that collaboration. Additionally, the LAFPC stated that their prior successes often facilitated the coordination both in terms of attracting new partners, and in terms of building on their learning curve, and thus improving the coordination skills within the organization. Another aspect that facilitates the coordination of actors within the LAFPC is the fact that the procurement document that serves as a foundation of the GFPP is inclusive of all types of stakeholder groups implying that when new members adopt the GFPP, their priorities are already taken into account due to the LAFPC having prior experience with similar types of actors.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that the coordination of collaborations is facilitated in partnerships where one actor's rich experience is complemented by its counterpart's lack thereof (Poncelet, 2001). As indicated by the empirical findings, the LAFPC often possesses more experience than its partners, indicating that Poncelet's (2001) theory is supported.

###### *Routines, habits and cognitive patterns*

Path dependency as a consequence of an organization's routines, habits and cognitive patterns that have been established over time can according to both theory and the empirical findings signify a barrier to the coordination of collaborations (David, 2007; Gulati et al., 2012).

In addition, the literature states that organizational learning that is not connected to the collaboration, such as methods for problem-solving and deviations from the usual routines, habits and cognitive patterns can cause path dependence, which signifies a barrier to coordinate actors in collaborations (Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Van Huijstee et al., 2007). This theory is supported in several ways in the empirical data, for instance farmers' dependence on synthetic chemicals posing a threat to successfully engage in organic food production. Another example that is evident in the empirical findings distributors' lack of experience with sharing procurement information with other actors, as they are bound by routines that have not required such practices.

##### ***5.1.4.2. Structural path dependence***

The empirical data confirms the two types of structural path dependencies highlighted in the literature as factors that can affect the LAFPC's ability to coordinate actors towards the development of sustainable food systems, namely farm size (Migliore et al., 2013) and technical rigidities (Wognum et al., 2011). As these aspects are primarily concerned with farming, they can be regarded as slightly less imperative

than many other factors that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate actors in the food system. These factors do however represent a rather important aspect if the path dependence that is implied entails a barrier too high for farmers to overcome. I.e. if farmers do not produce sustainable food, then the supply of sustainable food will not grow large enough to enable for a paradigm shift in the food system, which is the ultimate goal of the NGO's work. Therefore the structural path dependencies affecting farmers have imperative implications for the NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems.

### **5.1.5. Communication and information sharing**

Communication is defined as any interaction or information sharing that occurs between collaborating partners and is in the literature advocated as a facilitator for collaborative partners to be able to make decisions and plan in a manner that benefits the collaboration (Lehoux et al., 2014). In addition, communication is regarded as especially vital during the implementation phase in order to ensure a successful collaboration (den Hond et al., 2015; Howes et al., 2015; Lehoux et al., 2014; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The empirical findings support this theory, although it does not indicate that communication is of greater importance in the implementation than in the formation phase.

#### **5.1.5.1. Transparency**

As presented in the empirical data, transparency is one of the fundamental requisites on which the GFPP is based. Transparency allows for the LAFPC to regularly attain information regarding their partners' procurement processes and allows the LAFPC to provide comprehensible information back to their partners, which they in turn can utilize in order to make changes. This allows for better understanding of the goals of the collaboration, actors' incentives and primary areas of concern that are addressed through the collaboration. Transparency by this empirically derived definition is thus considered to be an imperative factor for the coordination of the actors within the GFPP as there would not be any collaboration without it. The role of transparency in the current literature is not as pronounced although the aforementioned aspects described in the literature, namely quality (Beske et al., 2014), frequency (den Hond et al., 2012; Migliore et al., 2013) and clarity (Selsky & Parker, 2005) of the information communicated, are presented as facilitators in the coordination of collaborations.

### **5.1.6. Financial resource dependence**

Financial resource dependence is mentioned in the previous research as a factor of resource dependence that can affect an NGO's ability to coordinate actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system (den Hond et al., 2012). The empirical findings indicate that financial resource dependence in fact plays a role for the coordination of such collaborations, and a rather large one at that, as it is relevant to several different types of stakeholders in the food system.

#### **5.1.6.1. Financial resource dependence of the NGO**

Financial resource dependence of the NGO is evident in terms of capacity restraints. If the NGO has a lack of financial means, there is a significant barrier to expanding by hiring more people to handle the increased workload that is implied when forming new partnerships, alternatively developing existing ones.



**5.1.6.2. Financial resource dependence of partners**

When partnering organizations lack financial resources it can entail a barrier to invest in higher quality food, which implies a barrier for the NGO to attract new partners. Alternatively it implies a barrier for the NGO to coordinate existing partners in terms of strengthening their commitment and contribute more to the development of sustainable food systems.

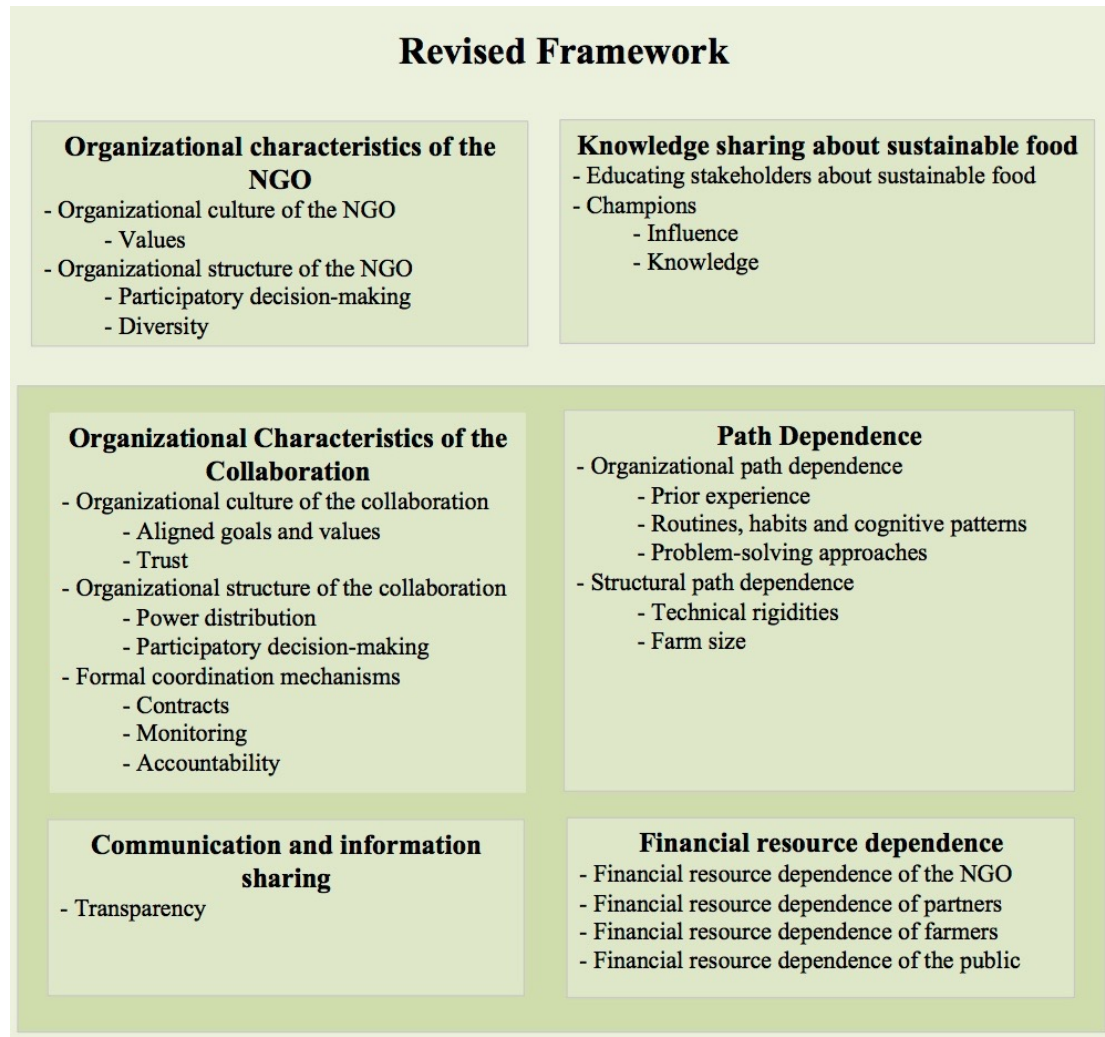
**5.1.6.3. Financial resource dependence of farmers**

Farmers represents the stakeholder group that is in fact mentioned in previous theory regarding their lack of financial means as a barrier for the NGO to coordinate a sustainable food system (Beske et al., 2014). The empirical findings provide support to this theory, as they indicate that farmers' lack of financial means can imply a barrier to farming organically. This is due to organic farming methods being more labor intensive and thus more capital intensive than conventional farming, which is more reliant on synthetic chemicals that for example generate larger produce yields. Therefore financial resource dependence of farmers can represent a barrier to employing sustainable farming methods and thus limiting the supply of sustainably grown food, which in turn can negatively affect an NGO's ability to coordinate actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

**5.1.6.4. Financial resource dependence of the public**

The final category of stakeholders whose financial resource dependence can affect an NGO to coordinate actors is that of the public. As long as the supply of sustainably produced food is limited, the prices will be higher than those of conventionally produced food, which proves a reason for decreased demand that higher quality food. Increasing the demand for sustainably produced food is an aspect that is vital for the paradigm of the current food system to shift and the public's demand for sustainably produced food is an aspect with great influence on the accumulated demand. Without this demand there will be limited supply, which again will signify a barrier for NGOs to coordinate actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

## 5.2. Revised theoretical framework



**Figure 2: Revised Framework of Mechanisms and Factors that Affect an NGO's Ability to Coordinate the Actors in Collaborations Toward Developing a Sustainable Food System**

## **6. Conclusion**

*In this chapter a brief presentation of the results of the study in relation to the purpose, followed by a short discussion regarding the limitations and validity of the results. Finally, suggestions for future research on the topic are considered.*

### **6.1. Results in Relation to Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate the actors in collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

In order to provide a platform for the research a thorough review of the literature from four research areas that were regarded as relevant for addressing the purpose was conducted. These consisted of literature on cross-sector collaborations, NGOs, sustainable food supply chains and coordination. In the process of reviewing existing literature, the mechanisms that were highlighted as most significant with regards to the purpose were compiled in a preliminary theoretical framework, which provided an initial theoretical answer to the purpose. Subsequently empirical data was gathered through interviews held with individuals who were currently or had previously been working at or in collaboration with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, alternatively who could provide other valuable insights about the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate actors in the food system in Los Angeles.

The empirical findings were then analyzed and discussed through a comparison to the theoretical framework. This was done by categorizing the empirical findings in accordance with the mechanisms included in the theoretical framework to reveal discrepancies and similarities more clearly. What prevailed was that the initial framework did not adequately present the mechanisms that were identified as most important in the empirical data. A revised framework where theoretical and empirical findings were merged was thus created, which provided a response to the purpose that is both theoretically and empirically grounded. The revised framework is furthermore structured according to what the empirical findings indicated as the mechanisms that are most important, with factors that are categorized according to the context in which they are most relevant, and according to how the mechanisms are interrelated in the NGO's coordination of collaborations toward developing a sustainable food system.

The mechanisms highlighted in the revised framework are: organizational characteristics of the NGO; knowledge sharing about sustainable food; organizational characteristics of the collaboration; path dependence; communication and information sharing; and financial resource dependence. Understanding these mechanisms, and the factors that in turn affect the mechanisms, will assist NGOs in other cities or regions in their work toward coordinating actors in collaborations toward developing sustainable food systems.

### **6.2. Limitations and Validity of the Result**

The revised framework addresses the interrelation between the role of the NGO in the coordination of stakeholders in addressing the complex issue that is the sustainable development of food systems. This has not previously been done, although it can be

regarded as a highly relevant issue within sustainability due to the concept being widespread within industrialized societies across the world. As the revised framework incorporates both the four theoretical areas derived from a breakdown of the purpose, and empirical findings of the purpose as a whole, the revised framework effectively addresses the purpose of the study.

The relevance of the revised framework is further supported due to its inclusiveness, as all mechanisms and factors that were stressed in both the theoretical and empirical findings were included. This was done in order to avoid excluding mechanisms or factors that are in fact relevant for the purpose, but that perhaps were not exemplified in the case of the LAFPC. Furthermore, the revised framework takes aspects of the entire food system and its stakeholders into account, rather than concentrating the focus on the NGO. This increases the revised framework's applicability to other cities or regions with unsustainable food systems, especially in the US where stakeholders in the food systems often consist of national actors.

Moreover, in the revised framework certain factors could be considered to overlap. This is due to their high relevance in different contexts of the coordination of collaborations, as the concept can be viewed as a process where factors such as for example trust are pertinent at more than one stage, although not as important in all stages.

There are inevitably a number of limitations to the revised framework however. First, the literature review on which the initial theoretical framework was based could have incorporated more literature and from a greater number of theoretical areas, such as for example food supply chain theory. As a vast body of literature exists within this area, and the decision to base the framework primarily on cross-sector collaborations had been made. This was done due to the fact that supply chain literature often regards a private company at the end of the supply chain as the focal company and this was regarded as less relevant from an NGO perspective. Second, the study was conducted from a sustainability perspective, which could limit the framework's relevance to NGO coordination of cross-sector collaborations with other types of objectives than developing a sustainable food supply chain, including a conventional food supply chain. A third limitation to the revised framework is its primary applicability to Los Angeles, due to certain preconditions that are connected to for instance the local culture, geographic location and awareness of sustainability.

Fourth, the empirical findings included in the revised framework could have incorporated the opinions of more interviewees and thus have increased empirical support. Booking interviews with more individuals proved difficult however, due to so many of them referring to individuals with whom interviews had already been booked or carried out. A final limitation to the framework is that it was constructed at a static point in time, although attempting to explain the factors of a process that are likely to change over time. Due to the complexity of the issue however, the process is not regarded to be fast paced although there is an implied learning curve of each aspect of the coordination work that is carried out by the NGO. This limitation could be evident in terms of for example gaining more explicit insights regarding the mechanisms that affect the coordination of private businesses in collaborations toward the development of sustainable food supply chains, a stakeholder group that was slightly underrepresented in the collaboration.

### **6.3. Future Research**

The general lack of previous research related to the purpose of this study implies that there are a vast number of potential studies that can be conducted in both scope and scale. For instance, the study could be replicated at a future point in time in order to strengthen the reliability of the revised framework. Another suggestion is to study the same phenomenon in a different geographical setting, which is in fact possible due to the current initiatives being taken across the US where different cities are replicating the GFPP. Such research would not only increase the empirical evidence and reliability of the framework, but also its generalizability. Furthermore, with regards to scope future research could entail studying the mechanisms that affect the coordination of conventional food systems, alternatively the mechanisms that affect an NGO's ability to coordinate other types of sustainable supply chains.

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## Appendix 1

### List of Interviewees

Interviewee	Position and Organization
Alexa Delwiche	Managing Director at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Colleen McKinney	Policy Analyst at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Joann Lo	Vice Chair of the Leadership Board of Los Angeles Food Policy Council and the Co-Director at Food Chain Workers Alliance
Jill Overdorf	Leadership and Advisory Board of Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Corporate Executive Chef and Director of Business and Culinary Development for Coosemans Shipping of Los Angeles
Antonio Villaraigosa	Former Mayor of Los Angeles
Paula Daniels	Founder and Member of the Leadership and Advisory Board of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Star Parsamyan	Education/Legislative Deputy for Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, 13th District Los Angeles
Tony Arranaga	Communications Director for Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, 13th District Los Angeles
Harout Semerdjian	Legislative Deputy for Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, 13th District Los Angeles
Michael Roberts	Farmer and Farm Manager at McGrath Family Farm
Karen Rosales	Purchasing Supervisor at Gold Star Foods
Emily McKay	Buyer at Gold Star Foods
Angela Miramontes	Gold Star Foods
Haan-Fawn Chau	Special Projects Manager at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Clare Fox	Director of Policy and Innovation at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Anisha Hingorani	Network & Communications Coordinator at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Jackie Saucedo-Rivera	Chair of Farmers Markets for All Working Group at Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Robert Gottlieb	Leadership and Advisory Board at Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Executive Director at and Founder of Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College
Mary Lee	Leadership and Advisory Board at Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Deputy Director at PolicyLink
Rachel Surls	Leadership and Advisory Board at Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Sustainable Food Systems Advisor at UC Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles County
Anthony Holland	Political Consultant in Los Angeles

# Education – The key to good food?

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Malnourishment, food insecurity, food swamps and obesity. These are only a few of the detrimental effects of the current food system, a product of industrialization and path dependence within unsustainable practices. As sustainability issues in general, the inherent complexity that the Los Angeles food system is characterized by requires collective action by stakeholders from across the public, private and community sectors. A paradigm shift where sustainably produced, high quality food is both supplied and demanded is essential for the development of a sustainable food system; one where healthy and affordable food is accessible to all societies' communities. A sustainable food system is not unobtainable. It does however require dedication and participation of all stakeholders.

*By Louise Klintner & Johan Fred*

**The Los Angeles Food Policy Council** or “the LAFPC” is a non-governmental organization that works effectively with initiatives to address food system issues in the Southern California region. An example of such an initiative is the Good Food Procurement Policy (GFPP), which can be regarded as one of the most comprehensive and successful food procurement policies in the United States and the policy is already being adopted by other cities such as New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia. The GFPP signifies an important milestone in the development of a sustainable food system, and more importantly, educating stakeholders.

**In order to create a better understanding of how the LAFPC** work with policy adaption, what barriers they encounter and how they break through them, we will examine the LAFPC's work on coordinating actors committing to the policy through a step-by-step process in which knowledge sharing is vital at virtually every stage, and on every different level, and bring insights in to the NGO's work towards the development of a sustainable food system.

**The first step** of the process can, for illustration purposes, but not necessarily in practice, be regarded as the realization of an organization's dependence upon others in

addressing the issues in the food system and more specifically those issues that they can address, as they possess a lack of knowledge and/or another barrier to coordination that is implied, lack of prior experience. This is the point where an institution contacts the LAFPC to initiate a partnership in order to address the issues in their own procurement practices. At this stage common goals and values, and thus culture are established through knowledge sharing by the LAFPC when educating the institution in question about the potential issues in their supply chain and the values that need to be taken into consideration in order to address them.

**This is one of the main missions** carried out actively by the LAFPC and is enabled through the next step, namely for the institutions to share their purchasing information with the LAFPC. In order for this to occur, the LAFPC needs to have established a trusting relationship with the institutions, which thus facilitates the coordination of the institution. What are described as significant barriers to creating this relationship however are structural rigidities in organizations, such as bureaucracy, as well as a lack of understanding of the benefits or interdependencies of collaborating with the LAFPC. Creating an understanding by sharing knowledge and thus educating the

departments however caused them to cooperate and is hence regarded as a facilitator for the LAFPC to coordinate actors committed to the policy.

**After having gained access to institutions' purchasing information**, the LAFPC is able to analyze it through the use of a vast database of suppliers that are rated in accordance with their compliance with the five values of the GFPP. A barrier that is identified as a challenge at this stage is the difficulty of attaining the required information for that analysis to occur, as there is limited transparency in the current food system. A lack of transparency can thus be identified as a barrier to the LAFPC's ability to share information and thus coordinate. This lack of transparency can further be associated with a lack of education, or experience, on the supply chain members' behalf, regarding how to create transparency through for instance monitoring practices within their respective organizations. Therefore, monitoring is a factor that can be regarded as a facilitator to the LAFPC's ability to share information and thus coordinate actors in the GFPP.

**The next step** in the process is for the institutions to source information on how to monitor their purchasing practices, which is a matter that the LAFPC assists with through organizing events that they call networking meetings, at which various actors can network and convene on matters such as how to create transparency in the supply chain. Hence, knowledge and experience sharing is, again vital in order for actors to be coordinated. Furthermore, the fact that all the different links in the supply chain play a role is an example of the different levels on which education is required in the entire food system, in order for sustainability issues in the food system to be addressed.

When having established how institutions are to go about monitoring their supply chain practices, the subsequent step entails creating contracts that provide clear guidelines and

regulations regarding actors' compliance with the GFPP. Contracts thus play a central role in enabling the process of coordinating actors, and active contracts that are not complacent with the GFPP often signify

## The five values of the LAFPC

- Local economy
- Environmental sustainability
- Valued workforce
- Animal welfare
- Nutritional health

barriers to creating new contracts that are complacent, and thus negatively impact the LAFPC's ability to coordinate actors by delaying the coordination activities. Furthermore, another aspect that facilitates efficient contract writing is developing clear and standardized language that is included in the contracts as well as the RFPs that lead up to the contracts.

**Through signing contracts with appropriate language** to purchase sustainably grown food the creation of a supply of such food is stimulated throughout the supply chain and the industry, which entails the next step in the process of coordinating actors toward shifting the paradigm of the current food system and thus developing a sustainable one. This is especially vital, as no matter how much demand is created; the fact that a supply does not yet exist is evidently a significant barrier to creating that paradigm shift.

**A challenge that is apparent in this stage** is farmers', but also general, lack of knowledge and experience within sustainable farming when responding to the market pressures of institutions demanding higher quality food. The industrialization that has shaped the current food system has caused



major difficulties for producers who attempt to discontinue their unsustainable farming practices, due to factors such as path dependence that imply opportunity costs in terms of experience and knowledge of more sustainable farming practices such as organic farming. Although producers may possess knowledge and experience of for example organic farming, there are nonetheless significant barriers that serve as challenges to competing with conventional farming, which is a requirement for creating a supply of sustainably produced food. These challenges include for instance a lack of knowledge and experience regarding methods that enable organic farming on a large scale, as current methods prove inefficient, as issues of e.g. weeding and pests are more difficult to control without using synthetic chemicals other than on small farms, especially when there are financial restraints in terms of affording higher labor costs.

**Due to the elimination of the use of synthetic chemicals**, which enables more efficient farming, organic farming requires more manual labor, which in turn implies higher costs that for conventional farmers. Higher costs imply higher prices for the end consumer, if the farm is to stay economically viable, which entails that the products are not as competitive on a price basis, which is a barrier to increasing the demand of sustainably grown food. This is especially the case when consumers are used to purchasing cheap food. Hence, higher prices of sustainably grown food and the public perception of food being cheap are two factors that serve as barriers to increasing the demand of sustainably grown food. Educating the public on the benefits of purchasing and consuming sustainably produced food is however as previously mentioned, identified as a factor that to a certain extent can circumvent these barriers.

**The final step in the process**, although this step permeates the entire process, is thus educating the public in order to further stimulate the demand for sustainably produced food. This step is vital for the

GFPP for example in the sense that the more individuals that are educated about the issues involved in purchasing conventionally produced food and the benefits of purchasing sustainably produced, the greater the likelihood that more organizations will realize the food system issues as well as the interdependencies of addressing them, which will further improve the prospects of shifting the paradigm of the current food system and developing a sustainable one.

**In conclusion**, the lessons that can be learned from the LAFPC are lessons of knowledge sharing. The food system is a complex phenomenon and in order to make an impact on its development, people, organizations, governments, communities, all stakeholders in the food system must grasp the vastness of the problem and the urgency of the situation. One of the solutions to changing the system relies on educating stakeholders and knowledge sharing about the complexity of the problem, the barriers related to it and how to circumvent them. The LAFPC does just that, and they are good at it too!

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