LUND UNIVERSITY

Slowing Down A Hungry City

A Cultural Study of

Short Food Supply Chains Initiatives in Amsterdam

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Abstract

Undeniably, 'Short Food Supply Chains' (SFSCs) or, in Dutch, '*korte ketens*' are on the minds of policymakers and visionaries in the Netherlands. In addition, the concept has given rise to multiple small-scale initiatives. This research explores the many stories and motives behind these initiatives, as well as any other practices that are committed to SFSCs in the city of Amsterdam. Firstly, an attempt is made to outline the context in which more direct and local-scale configurations of the food supply come into being. Secondly, the research inquires into the kinds of relationships that are idealised, established and sustained through korte ketens. As it turned out, the emergence of SFSCs in Amsterdam can be associated with a variety of different developments, including moods of nostalgia, a resurgence of interest in heritage and locality, an urge to add more value to food, and experiments with new forms of cooperation. In all cases, SFSCs are meant to bridge a certain distance – between past and present, place and food, as well as between different actors within the food chain – which in turn ultimately reinstates a notion of wholesomeness within the urban food chain.

short food supply chains ; korte ketens ; city ; food ; local ; sustainability ; nostalgia; heritage ; locality ; cooperation

// A b s t r a c t – NL

De korte keten houdt beslist de gemoederen van Nederlandse beleidsmakers en andere visionairen bezig. Daarbij is het concept aanleiding geweest tot de oprichting van vele kleinschalige initiatieven. Dit onderzoek verkent de vele verhalen en motieven die schuilgaan achter de initiatieven en praktijken die zich direct of indirect met de korte keten verbinden binnen de stad Amsterdam. Allereerst doet het een poging de context waarbinnen directere en lokalere organisatie van de voedselvoorziening vorm krijgt in kaart te brengen. Ten tweede richt het onderzoek zich op de relaties die binnen de korte keten worden geïdealiseerd, gerealiseerd en onderhouden. Zoals is gebleken, kan de opkomst van korte ketens in Amsterdam worden geassocieerd met een aantal bredere ontwikkelingen, waaronder stemmingen van nostalgie, een groeiende interesse in cultureel en natuurlijk erfgoed en lokaliteit, een drang om meer waarde aan voedsel toe te voegen, en experimenten met nieuwe vormen van samenwerking. In al deze gevallen is het de bedoeling dat korte ketens een afstand overbruggen – tussen verleden en heden, plaats en voedsel, maar ook tussen verschillende actoren binnen de voedselketen – hetgeen op z'n beurt een zeker idee van heilzaamheid binnen de voedselketen dient te herstellen.

korte ketens ; stad ; voedsel ; lokaal ; duurzaamheid ; nostalgie; erfgoed ; lokaliteit ; samenwerking

For my oma

Mia ter Maat (*1934-2022*)

who prepared my earliest food memories

Foreword

It was in autumn, 2021, that one of my oldest friends and I went to visit Zeeland, a rural province in the southwest of the Netherlands. Food fanatics that we are, we ended up spending the weekend chasing after the most local and authentic Zeelandic foods. And so we found “the” best cinnamon pastry of the region, sipped away a variety of white wines from a neighbouring vineyard, and picked up fresh oysters from the shores.

On our last day we were getting groceries for a feast when we walked into a cheese shop and asked the retailer excitedly for a nice, “regional” cheese. The man stated bluntly that there were really no cheese makers in the region any longer. “It’s a real craft,” he explained. As we walked out of the store, I suddenly became aware of the fact that local food is more than a product that can be consumed at will.

Before I express my gratitude to all the wonderful friendships that made me relate to food the way I do, I want to thank all the great people who have participated in my research for the thesis. My visits to farms, gardens, dairies, stores, and collectives, as well as coffees, teas and chats with passionate food producers and initiators have been truly enlightening. Through this, I have met exceptionally hard-working people and I cannot stress enough how much I appreciate each person’s readiness to contribute to the research.

In the early stages, when I was still a research intern at Wageningen Research, I have learned a lot from my conversations with colleagues in the field of (food) sustainability. I particularly want to thank Bram van Helvoirt, Sigrid Wertheim-Heck, and Patrick Huntjens for their insightful input. In addition, I want to thank my supervisor at Wageningen, Jan Hassink, for having facilitated my internship and showing confidence in my research work.

Several (critical) pairs of eyes have supported me in writing this thesis. Therefore, I want to say thanks to the classmates and readers who have commented on my work along the way. I especially want to acknowledge how delightful it has been to have had Jón Þór Pétursson as my supervisor for this thesis. All the best for your new research position and homecoming, Jón Þór!

As said before, this thesis exists by the grace of the wonderful friendships that have shaped me. First of all, I want to mention my dear peaches, Elsa, Kara and Lee. I am endlessly grateful to still have my oldest friends Hanneke and Wouter in my life. The same goes for Nina and Yannick –

my intellectual counterparts. Barbara, Iris, Joey, Kylian, Laura and Mirjam continue to teach me about the good life, thank you all for that. Let me also spend the moment to say thanks to Anna, who has sent me love and light across the ocean. To William I want to say: you truly are my bosom friend, as you inspire me to stay curious on principle.

Lastly, I want to thank my dear family. My most courageous sister, her life partner Ries, and of course my parents. Mam and pap, everything I do, is an ode to you.

Nemo Koning
8 June 2022, Malmö

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Introduction
: A wicked problem and a magic concept

On the 25th of January 2022, four candidate council members sat around a table under dim light. Not for food, as far as the viewer can tell from the online broadcast, but to discuss food. The everyday meal of the citizens of Amsterdam, to be precise. As the city faced elections for a new electoral period, the host of the evening invited the guests to shed light as to what the city's consumption habits should look like in the near future. Despite some minor disagreements about responsibilities and procedures, all of the candidates, representing the left, centre and the right of the political spectrum, largely agreed. Namely, a bigger portion of people's diets should be plant-based; the profusion of fast food, soda's and sweets on offer should be mitigated by promoting healthier options; and the more local and unmediated the food is bought, the better.

This last point of consensus is especially striking, not least because local food is a rather novel phenomenon in the Netherlands. One concept in particular went briskly round the table, namely that of '*korte ketens'* – the more compact, Dutch equivalent of 'short food supply chains' (SFSCs). In other words, more direct and/or local-scale links between food producers and food consumers were widely acclaimed on this occasion, not just by the candidates, but also by a panel of relevant experts joining in the discussion. Throughout the evening, korte ketens were considered to be a panacea for a diverse array of issues – including, but not limited to, social exclusion, unhealthy eating, excess waste, biodiversity loss, food illiteracy, and childhood obesity.

A closer look at the food landscape of Amsterdam reveals a long list of different initiatives operating around the city that give life to this concept of 'korte ketens'. These include urban farms, food co-ops, food retailers, eateries, festivals, school programs, activist associations, and community services. After several decades of importing and representing cuisines from all corners of the world, the metropole now seems to partially direct its focus closer to home and to the landscape of food production surrounding the city. This demonstrates that the 'short food supply chain' is more than an abstraction invented around a food policy department's drawing board. Instead, the concept seems to cater to a deeper desire for food proximity and authenticity, while pointing to a broader movement of shifting values and relations.

Undeniably, “shorter” food supply chains are on the minds of urban planners and visionaries, but what exactly explains this enchantment? And what is it that makes people experience the current food chain of Amsterdam as extensive or “long”? Since food is so central to daily life and entails many interdependencies, the conditions which gave rise to korte ketens might tell us more about broader currents within the city today. Perhaps even, the popularity of korte ketens points to certain cracks in the social relations and material practices that the food chain is composed of.

Thesis aims

Present research started with my involvement in a Dutch research project named ‘Transition to a sustainable food system’ (TSF), which attempts to map the current state and transformation of food production, distribution and consumption within the Netherlands. The overall project looked at the food chain from the perspective of sustainability in a broad sense and examined sustainable practices in different parts of the country. My involvement consisted of investigating regional food initiatives in Amsterdam. More specifically, I tried to get a clearer sense of the ambitions of people engaging in practices related to so-called local food and korte ketens. One of the main questions concerned the degree to which these initiatives are on the same page, how they relate to one another, and whether their practices mutually reinforce each other.

The research took place from September 2021 until April 2022. During this time, I spoke to many actors in the field of sustainable food and food policy, including co-ops, Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA), NGOs, entrepreneurs and municipal policymakers. I observed that the region of Amsterdam is characterised by a number of gaps between various actors in the (short) food supply chain, which possibly obstruct essential collaboration between these actors. Once I started to catch sight of the constellation of local food initiatives in Amsterdam, I realised how these gaps have partially to do with divergent narratives and interests coming together in the city’s urge for korte ketens. However, since the initial research was more exploratory and solution-oriented in nature, I did not address any of these complexities in depth, nor did I get the chance to delve deeper into concepts such as locality, emotion, heritage, cooperation and other culturally relevant themes with respect to the korte keten.

The present research is an opportunity to explore questions I did not address in my contribution to the TSF project. These are more ethnological and sociological in nature and sparked by a yearning to disclose the everyday realities and stories at the heart of korte ketens. Here, I problematise the concept of ‘korte keten’ in order to explore the practices and discourses that make the concept meaningful to its practitioners. My research thus follows a “magic concept” at work and demonstrates how the idea of the short food supply chain mobilises and unifies as it offers a productive imagery of the food chain of Amsterdam. A cultural analysis of the concept will also bring to light frictions and tensions that are an inevitable part of practices working towards short food supply chains.

With the help of the following two research questions, I will pursue as well as narrow down foregoing aims:

α. What is the social context in which korte ketens come into being in Amsterdam?

β. Which kind of relationships are idealised, established and sustained through korte ketens?

The notion of ‘korte ketens’ may be fairly new, but the sustainable food movement certainly is not. Seeing korte ketens as part of this broader movement propagating sustainable practices in food production, distribution, and planning, I aim to contribute to research on food sustainability in an urban context. Indirectly, I aim to reveal the polyphonic nature of sustainability. Cultural analysis and ethnology seem especially fit to capture this. That is, the issue inherently brings in diverse and potentially divergent everyday stories, practices, and struggles, especially where food is concerned. Because ecological sustainability and debates on carbon footprint, planetary boundaries, and so on, are outside the scope of this thesis, I will mostly focus on topics related to cultural, social and partially also economic sustainability and explore what these things could mean to the city of Amsterdam.

Food landscape of Amsterdam

At first sight, the city of Amsterdam offers a cornucopia of food options. With a population just over 900.000, grocery stores (big and small), deli shops, lunchrooms, street markets, restaurants and takeaways are bound to work hard to satisfy the many and various hungers of the city dweller.

Consequently, a diverse range of cuisines, diets, roots, origins and ideals is represented in the food supply. Within the densely populated city centre, old-fashioned herring stands and ethnic grocers operate side by side with trendy cafes and vegan eateries. Amsterdam hosts over 20 traditional street markets which usually open during the weekends and provide people with daily foods, as well as classic snacks and bargains. However, these markets are not the main source of people's provisions any longer, to many they have become a "special treat", rather than a place for everyday shopping (Steel, 2009, p. 107). Also, farmers' markets or other places where food is bought directly from the farmer are an oddity. Wholesalers, supermarkets and intermediaries thus have a tremendous share in the food supply chain, which is also shown by the strong presence of food retailers like Albert Heijn and Jumbo in the Amsterdam streetscape.

During my research, I got to know the municipality of Amsterdam as rather ambitious when it comes to their food policy. Recently, officials announced plans to have half of people's everyday diet plant-based by 2030, 25% of which will have to be locally produced. In regard to the locality of the average Amsterdam meal, a local bank estimated in 2012 that its ingredients have traveled approximately 33.000 kilometers altogether (Rabobank, 2012). A remarkable fact, since agriculture abounds in the immediate surroundings of the city, as well as in the country at large. Some of the most fertile farmland, including the Beemster and the Flevopolder, are only 30 kilometers away from the city centre. However, most of the produce is shipped abroad without entering the city. As the municipality puts it: "Tomatoes from greenhouses in North-Holland end up in German supermarkets, not on the plate of people from Amsterdam" (Gemeente Amsterdam n.d., 'Voedselstrategie').

The observation above hints at the Netherlands' notorious status as a major agricultural exporter. In fact, the country is historically built on highly productive farming. Thanks to a head start in terms of technological development and the convenient location amidst plenty of waters and close to big cities like London, Dutch "agriculture has been intertwined with trade since the Middle Ages" (Koning, 2020). Since the Netherlands has always been a small but densely populated country, short distances between farmlands and cities meant lower transportation costs and enabled quicker distribution of highly perishable goods like dairy and meat, which further intensified (livestock) production. Another reason why the Netherlands has relied on food trade, is the country's limited access to nutritious resources. Grains, for example, had to be imported from Eastern Europe for a long time in history.

Several challenges related to industrialisation and price falls of agricultural products throughout the 19th and 20th century lead the increasingly dominant government to stimulate the intensification, rationalisation, and specialisation of food production (Bieleman, 2010). From a practice kept up by small farmers organising themselves in cooperative enterprises, agriculture thus "evolved into an economic sector – some prefer to speak about agri-business – that employs only a limited group of people in a direct sense" (Idem., p. 313). This combination of circumstances made the Netherlands the agricultural stronghold that it is at present. To this day, the contribution of agriculture to the Dutch economy still holds firm, even though the number of companies in this sector is still declining (Afrian, Van der Wal & Hoeksma, 2020). These statistics further suggest that a fewer number of agri-food businesses are claiming a bigger share of the domestic product.

Despite the country's vast agricultural industry, the shelves of Amsterdam supermarkets are not filled with regional produce. Fruits and vegetables from faraway places predominate, something that is not only the case for products out of season, but for products that are perfectly *in* season as well. For a large part, the food is provided by distribution networks "in which a single bite may move thousands of 'food miles', with many opportunities for 'adding value' (profit) by countless middlemen before it finally reaches the mouth" (Belasco, 2008, p. 20). Sociologist Gary Gereffi calls this type of design of the food chain a "global value chain" (1994). Keeping commodity prices low is fundamental to these chains; the locality of the food, however, remains only trivial information. Corporate food retailers such as supermarkets and fast food joints thrive on cheap deals and high profit margins and are complicit in bewilderingly complicated food logistics. Therefore, these actors are commonly seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution when it comes to food chain (re)localisation (Zwart & Wertheim-Heck, 2021).

Meanwhile, Amsterdam has seen an emergence of niche farmers' markets, urban farms, plant-based restaurants and events committed to alternative eating. These spaces mostly diverge from previously described "agri-food business" and oppose its principles and exposed scandals. The city is also home to three universities and many knowledge institutions and NGOs focusing on food and ecology. As one can tell from previously mentioned food policies, a rather progressive and green local government has been at the city's wheel for the past few years, backed by a majority of progressive-voting city dwellers. Despite the present knowledge, activity and broad-based support for green(er) lifestyles, some have remarked that within Amsterdam, most food practices still take place within "traditional structures", with a central position for corporate food retailers, which

partially accommodate to increasing demands of local food (Van der Valk, Pineda Revilla & Essbai, 2021). Additionally, just like any other metropolitan area, the city is dealing with a scarcity of space and fierce territorial competition. This means that big capital and real estate developers have a big say in the city's spatial planning, at the expense of smaller initiatives and cultural communities which mostly have to make do with temporary spaces.

The striking absence of a regional food system in the Netherlands is increasingly interpreted as a "wicked problem": an intricate issue with many different and disparate causes (economic, cultural, and so on) and manifold direct and indirect consequences (Sibbing, Candel & Termeer, 2021). The coronavirus pandemic especially seems to have put the country's lack of connection to local agriculture back on the political agenda, since it demonstrated the importance of resilient distribution networks that do not rely solely on global food trade (e.g. Schouten, 2021). Since the roots of the problem are so dispersed, solutions have been sought from many different corners.

As a consequence, a multiplicity of initiatives has popped up in Amsterdam, with diverse backgrounds and operating on many levels. This includes: small-scale producers reaching out to consumers, for example in the form of farm shops; ("alternative") food networks and spaces which are citizen-based and put innovative forms of consumption into practice; broader organisations with an aim to connect food initiatives, of which some are NGOs, but also governmental policy programs focusing on local and sustainable food. Together, these initiatives aspire to a (re)localisation of the Amsterdam food chain, i.e. korte ketens.

A closer look at 'korte ketens'

So far, I have been using the terms 'korte keten' and 'short food supply chains' interchangeably, mainly for the sake of clarity and variety. A first glance at online sources shows that the idiom 'Short Food Supply Chains' (SFSCs) has settled itself within the anglophone vocabulary associated with sustainable development. A European Union regulation (1305/2013) has defined such a chain as: "involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to co-operation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers". This definition, with a focus on the number of operators, deviates from the original, more sociological usage of the term, in which it is used as an umbrella term, indicating any type of communication linking consumers with food's origins, more than the quantity of "times a product is

handled or the distance over which it is ultimately transported" (Marsden, Banks & Bristow, 2000, p. 425). Central to the latter definition are the relationships foods invoke and the value and meaning that are inaugurated as part of these.

It is important to note how the coinage of 'SFSCs' around the turn of the millennium is inextricably bound up with studies on rural development and SFSCs' presumed contribution to the resilience of local food production. With author and architect Carolyn Steel's conception of the "Hungry City", food has become an issue of policymakers in the bigger cities too. In tandem with the inception of urban food policies, in due course, short food supply chains thus became "a media to introduce the issue of food into urban imagery" (Galli & Brunori, 2013, p. 28).

Logically, it is with these developments that talk about the food chain and making it "shorter" start to make an appearance in policymakers' language in Amsterdam around 2014, although other expressions like 'sustainable' (*duurzame*) and 'regional' (*regionale*) chains are then still preferred over 'short'. In the meantime, the term 'korte keten' seems to have become much more prevalent in food policy discourses, to which the panel discussion from the introduction bears testament. Since the surfacing of the concept, several national organisations devoted to SFSCs have seen the light. With solemn names like *Taskforce Korte Ketens* and *Nationale Samenwerking* ('National Alliance') *Korte Ketens*, these organisations appear to take their duty seriously.

As with many other terms related to sustainability, it is likely that the ancestry of the concept of 'korte ketens' can be traced back to (rural) sustainability discourses overseas. However, in the Dutch translation the concept has acquired a meaning of its own. Whereas the expression 'short food supply chains' – also in its abbreviated guise 'SFSCs' – is a mouthful and sounds somewhat technical, 'korte ketens' is more compact and comes out surprisingly catchy. As its English counterpart 'chain', '*keten*' implies a certain bond, as well as a limitation, or better, an interdependency in Dutch. This feature becomes more highlighted without the addition of 'food supply' – as in '*food supply* chains'. Korte keten thus effectively conjures up the idea of unswerving and thus simple and straightforward transactions – two notions that happen to be highly regarded within Dutch social mores. The absence of any snobbery in the concept of 'korte ketens', a term that is easy to understand, further explains its appeal.

Interestingly, the promotion of 'local food' as such – a concept that is related to korte ketens, but not entirely similar – has so far not been integrated into Dutch policymaking. For example, there is no such thing as an official hallmark for products made domestically, like there is in Sweden and

Italy. However, local food is increasingly incorporated into food policy, only now as part of the programme of korte ketens. This is merely an example of all the different notions and ideals that are encapsulated in the concept.

Galli and Brunori listed 32 contemporary food virtues, concerning both food and distribution, that can be connected to SFSCs. These range from “fresh”, “slow”, “seasonal”, “fair” and “cultural identity” to “social responsibility”, “embedded”, “rural-urban linkage” and “sustainability” (Idem., p. 3). This much is also true for the concise, Dutch korte keten. With its all-encompassing essence, the concept is meant to solve many different issues at once. For instance, issues arising within the city of Amsterdam, as we have seen earlier. Korte ketens’ could thus be regarded as a “magic concept”, coined by political scientists Christopher Pollitt and Peter Hupe to describe key terms that bring a combination of broadness, instant positivity, implied consensus and fashionability (2011, p. 643).

Magic concepts may cast a spell over practitioners and scientists, but Pollitt and Hupe also point to their obfuscating workings. Potentially “conflicting interests and logics” are obscured by the seductive holism of such a concept (Ibid.). In the case of SFSCs, the contested ecological sustainability of local food may for example be overlooked (Stein & Santini, 2021; cf. Mason & Lang, 2017, pp. 142-5). Urban planners Branden Born and Mark Purcell have written persuasively how there cannot be anything “inherently good” about the local scale – or about the short, for that matter (2006). In the case of Amsterdam, for instance, policymakers leave out the fact that most regional food production includes meat and dairy, which contradicts their plant-based goals. Nonetheless, the almost self-evident virtue of korte ketens makes it appear as if food production in close proximity is, in fact, automatically more desirable. These contradictions suggest the inherent affective nature of the concept and give an idea of the immediacy of the many issues it claims to tackle. Moreover, the “magic” nature of korte ketens also begs the question which conflicts of interest are obscured. As the food chain – no matter how short – inevitably consists of several independent links, there are naturally different perspectives and interests at work.

Disposition

First of all, I owe the reader an account of previous literature and how this relates to the topic of korte ketens. From there, I move on to an expansion of used methods, as well as a reflection on my

research procedure. In the succeeding chapter on theoretical concepts I introduce and clarify the concepts that have proven to be relevant in the analysis of my research material while engaging in ongoing theoretical discussion. Chapter one, two, and three make up the analysis. Here, I discuss the themes of nostalgia (chapter one); heritage, locality, and value (both chapter two); and trust, transparency and cooperation (chapter three). The thesis will end with a discussion, in which I sum up my main findings, as well as contemplate applicability and options for further research.

Previous Literature
: *Food for Change*

As for now, qualitative studies on korte ketens are scarce, perhaps because the phenomenon is so novel in a Dutch context. Most published studies have been more explorative in nature, mapping different food initiatives throughout the country or urban gardens in the city of Amsterdam specifically (Van Kampen, 2020; Duitman, Van Hoorn & Ruijs, 2021). Others have connected korte ketens to broader tendencies of contemporary consumption culture (Veen, Jansma, Dagevos & Van der Schans, 2019). However, there is a large body of international literature on citizen-based food initiatives, such as CSAs and other "alternative food networks" in the city (Patel & MacRae, 2012; Haney et al., 2015; Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012, p. 3). Slightly less obviously connected to korte ketens, but just as relevant, is literature on "food democracy" and "ethical consumption", as these currents constitute the backdrop against which korte ketens take shape. Finally, there are also ethnological studies on organic, local, and heritage food which are particularly helpful in understanding the relationships that SFSCs aim to sustain (Pétursson, 2020).

Food democracy

Several authors have situated SFSCs and korte ketens at the crossroads of innovative food entrepreneurship and "alternative food networks" (Galli & Brunori, 2013; Edwards, 2019; Van Kampen, 2020). The latter contains spaces that display "imaginaries and material practices infused with different values and rationalities", running counter to the conventional foodscape (Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012, p. 3). Alternative food networks may, in varying degrees, work towards more direct connections between producers and consumers – or SFSCs. Important examples are urban gardens, food cooperatives and CSAs. These initiatives are driven by ideals promoting, among other things, transparency within the food chain and environmental stewardship. With that, some of these networks attempt to compensate for a government that has let the free market prevail when it comes to its food policy and, as food policy scholar Tim Lang put it, "left it to Tesco" (in: Steel, 2013, p. 13) or, alternatively, to the Albert Heijn – in other words, the big retailers. In her study of alternative food networks in the Netherlands, including korte keten initiatives, Sandra van

Kampen notes how people behind these networks are driven by the ambition to take responsibility for food-related matters that the government, in their eyes, has come to neglect (Van Kampen, 2020, p. 24).

The people in the study of Van Kampen pointed out how they do not want to rely on the "whims of the market" (2020, p. 12, my translation). when it comes to food security and the protection of biodiversity. Citizens who are involved in alternative food networks thus feel compelled to take matters into their own hands and organise themselves in various ways. Although most of these initiatives still operate within the conditions of the market, they attempt to change the system from within by deploying different practices, based on different values. The latter aspect explains why alternative food networks are commonly associated with a broader current of activism and organisation labelled as "food democracy". This term points to a countermovement opposing the highly rationalised and specialised food industry, governed by "profit oriented multinational corporations as well as international networks of scientific and administrative experts" who wield considerable power over people's everyday food in all anonymity.

Food democracy resists the anonymity of the food chain, as well as the centralisation of what in the literature has become known as "food control". Coined by Lang, this term points to big agri-food businesses and food retailers which increasingly control the food chain by centralising and monopolising food supply and keeping important information away from consumers, for example by choice editing products. This dominant food regime, for long backed by political decision makers and financial institutions, is the result of the weighty ambition "to feed the world cheaply and profitably" (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019, p. 2). In response to environmental damage, decreased food quality, perverse incentives, and scandalous practices of the food industry, a movement of outspoken citizens has risen that opposes established politics and business practices, striving to change the food chain "from below".

Although nowadays applauded by policymakers and the financial sector, the concept of 'korte ketens' has to be understood in light of ongoing, decades-old resistance to the same actors. With time, this resistance has developed into a moral imperative more than an organisation that can be easily pinpointed, calling for multiple approaches related to food production – including animal welfare, ecological sustainability, and fair trade practices. Although these issues are usually addressed separately, by different organisations and actors, they bring up the same "resentment of the role that large corporation play in food" and persuade people to take back control of the food

supply (Norwood, 2015, p. 1). Korte ketens, specifically, can be explained as a response to demands for (re)localisation of food and farming in the Netherlands and for bigger transparency. As it happens, the current food establishment has also started to see the benefits of korte ketens, for instance for economical sustainability, and therefore increasingly support and participate in SFSCs platforms. The latter development has resulted in an intricate web of citizen-based initiatives, corporate business practices and government policies, working both together and against each other in shifting the food chain (Van der Valk, Pineda Revilla & Essbai, 2021).

Some authors – but also policymakers – consider food democracy the quintessence of "productive democracy", since participating in food initiatives stimulate democratic practices and commitments, and therefore celebrate its arrival (Littler, 2011; cf. Norwood, 2015; Vermeulen, 2012). Besides spreading awareness and opposing common practices of the current food chain, food democracy namely also endorses general democratic virtues, such as sovereignty, self-organisation, civic engagement and (international) solidarity. The ideal is that, besides profit-oriented companies and bureaucratic governing bodies, consumers, too, have a say in the food supply. This comes down to what is also known as "food sovereignty", i.e. "the ability of a region to make decisions regarding its own food and agricultural practices and policies" (Sandler, 2015, p. 20). Predominant stakeholder capitalism, agricultural monoculture, the monopolisation of food distribution and the free traffic of goods, as established by law, are commonly perceived to be at odds with sovereignty as such.

Despite their potentially subversive character and potential, in a city like Amsterdam, alternative food networks, and food democracy more generally, coexist with food spaces that target growth and efficiency. To most urban consumers, korte ketens and local food initiatives offer a perhaps more ethical variation to the usual food retailer, such as the supermarket. In other words, korte ketens have also become part of a conformist mainstream, which includes "ethical consumption" habits. As cultural scholar Jo Littler has pointed out, this type of consumption brings in a multitude of conflicting ethics. Therefore, she writes how "ethical consumption is increasingly a zone of 'contradictory consumption'" (2011, p. 28). For example, there are grocery stores who sell a significant amount of local foods and try their best to establish communication between customer and producer by means of visual content and additional information. However, all of this still takes place within an environment where there are also other options, which are perhaps cheaper, more convenient and by no means locally sourced – let alone through SFSCs. This type of ethical

consumption cannot be called subversive and offers “progressive possibilities” within a space that still adheres to the logic of consumerism (Idem., p. 1). For this reason, to engage in ethical consumption can also be understood as “resistance without activism” (Pétursson, 2020, p. 57).

The diffusion of responsibility that inheres in ethical consumption have lead authors, including Littler, to regard it as an unwanted burden to individuals and “an overwhelming, rather than partial responsibility for change” (Littler, 2011, p. 5; cf. Bornemann & Weiland, 2019; Jhagroe, 2019). In policy documents related to the (re)localisation of the food chain, the municipality of Amsterdam, for instance, calls for “a new interpretation of the concept of entrepreneurship” (Gemeente Amserdam, n.d.), as well as “active participation” of citizens (Circle Economy & Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). By doing so, the municipality introduces a duty related to the food chain, expecting Amsterdam citizens to “develop capacities and responsibilities beyond the simple consumption [and sales] of goods” (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019, p. 2). Some would explain this appeal to the “active” consumer and entrepreneur, also known as “food citizenship”, as a government-imposed “individualisation of responsibility”, in which change of the food chain comes down to individuals (Jhagroe, 2019, p. 192). Littler calls this tendency “green governmentality”, following Timothy Luke, in which people’s food unease and resistance “are being channelled into one set of neoliberal solutions” (Littler, 2011, p. 31).

In this thesis, I am not going to get involved in this discussion between celebratory and critical accounts of food democracy. Rather, I want to show how local reconfigurations of the food chain take shape against a backdrop of “productive” food democracy, ethical consumption and food citizenship. In this context emerges a subject whose everyday food activities – grocery shopping, cooking, eating – are charged with political meaning. The truism of “we are all consumers” has permeated many people’s lives and inspired an array of “alternative” consumption and production practices, of which korte ketens are only one. This has all added up to a situation in which, as political theorist Shivant Jhagroe writes, individuals realise they are both object and subject of the food chain (2019, p. 193). From this realisation, heterogeneous and sudden “identities and solidarities” flow (Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser (2012, p. 13). Besides shifting boundaries between activism and consumerism, people are also increasingly reminded of their impact on other people, whether they live faraway or not, by the (transnational) flow of information through the internet (Idem., ix-xi; Johnston & Cairns, 2012; cf. *Rotten* on Netflix (2018-2019).

The theme of "boundary crossing" also comes back in accounts of korte ketens as belonging to a time of "prosumption", in other words a time in which consumers are increasingly getting involved in the production-side of the chain. Researchers at the university of Wageningen have connected local food initiatives popping up in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam to "current times in which borders are blurring in various regards and in which people become increasingly outspoken" (Veen, Jansma, Dagevos & Van der Schans, 2019, p. 17, my translation). Observing that the distance between producer and consumer has expanded throughout the decades, they explain the emergence of the outspoken consumer as a sign of a growing urge to bridge the established distance. Producers further fuel this trend with an abundance of information on production techniques and guarantees of good practices behind the scenes. Nowadays, the technological means to forge direct bonds between producer and consumer are also at hand – think of social media.

The above trends inevitably play a part in contemporary initiatives working towards alternative conceptions of the food chain in Amsterdam, such as korte ketens. However, they do not explain the added value of korte ketens on an everyday basis, nor what korte ketens contribute to consumer-producer relations and communities at large. In the next section, I will address precisely these matters.

Intimate food

In their research on CSAs in the city of Toronto, Sima Patel and Rod MacRae conclude:

> "The beauty of CSAs is not so much the amount of food they can produce, but the platform they provide to accomplish other things. The possibility to contribute significantly in many meaningful ways to the health of communities suggests the effort is worthwhile." (Patel & MacRae, 2012, p. 98)

This idea of CSAs and other alternative food networks being not so much a realistic substitute for the current food supply as a wholesome platform is rather ubiquitous in the literature in this field. In such accounts, it is claimed that the "social proximity" of alternative food platforms eminently engages people in (sustainable) food issues and educates them about methods of production, while facilitating community building and promoting horizontal and cooperative food systems (Galli & Brunori, 2013, p. 10; Patel & MacRae, 2012; Haney et al., 2015; Van Kampen, 2020; Edwards, 2019). Besides these socio-environmental benefits, the usually more varied array of products that

these platforms offer is believed to further ensure more nutritionally varied and resourceful diets, as well as a more general revaluation of (local) agriculture.

Studies questioning the environmental impact of SFSCs reaffirm the impression that their benefits are mostly connected to social impact. For instance, they can "favour the interaction and connection between farmers and consumers and thereby promote the development of trust and social capital that in turn can generate a sense of local identity and community and contribute to social inclusion" (Stein & Santini, 2021, p. 83). The underlying idea here is that interaction within the food chain opens up the possibility of community building – so in short, interaction is means community (Haney et al., 2015). At the same time, this model is also subject to inherent friction, not the least because the right circumstances need to be in place to provide the necessary interaction.

Jennifer Haney et al. have stated that community-building food initiatives thrive on a smaller scale. Whenever these initiatives expand significantly, they run a risk of becoming a "more disconnected wholesale supplier" (2015, p. 40). In addition, participants, whether consumers or producers, also need to be equally committed and susceptible to the initiatives' community work. Haney et al. furthermore address the increasing turnover of members of CSAs and raise the question whether busy urban lifestyles go along well with food activism.

A more interesting merit of SFSCs – from a cultural analytical standpoint – is brought up by researchers Alexander Stein and Fabien Santini. They emphasise the "aspects of care and links to the territory" (2021, p. 83) that make "short" chains stand out in comparison to global value chains. SFSCs, they write, sustain valuable connections between cityscapes and their rural surroundings and connect more to local heritage. Regarding this last point, geographer Ferne Edwards has pointed out the fact that most alternative food networks in Europe have traditionally been about revitalising culinary heritage and protecting it against the facelessness and placelessness of mass-produced and globally distributed food (2019). According to Edwards, a deeper urge to restore "authentic" food landscapes thus leads European SFSCs initiatives to reconnect food production to specific places and their "terroir" – the unique characteristics of a place. Besides the food, a sense of care is also distributed within a short food supply chain, as more direct links between producers and consumers bring trust and transparency, which ultimately "ensure more ethical procurement pathways" (Idem., p. 157).

Although these accounts, which draw attention to elements of care and territoriality in SFSCs, are certainly most helpful, they do not go into detail about how connections to place, people

and heritage are established. Here, the work of ethnologist Jón Þór Pétursson on the organic food movement and "intimacy" within the food chain intervenes (2020). Organic values, according to Pétursson, are more than a quality mark on food labels, they signify how "people define and experience time, tell stories, navigate between competing moralities, establish relationships within the anonymous food chain, and deal with pleasant and unpleasant emotions" (Pétursson, 2021, p. 2)

Pétursson's studies on producer-consumer interactions online, an organic grocery store, a local consumer association and the marketing of Icelandic skyr, offer different examples of ways in which food consumption practices become intimate and meaningful. Meaning is exchanged through giving a face to producers, taking more time for interactions with consumers, making connections across time by telling stories from the past and/or making people feel part of a "larger collective that is actively trying to change how people produce and consume" (Idem., p. 16).

In similar ways, korte ketens appear to be part of a more comprehensive search for more profound, "slow" and transparent food relations; in other words, a search for intimacy within the food chain. These connections, which also carry emotional meaning, may head in all kinds of directions – between past and present, producer and consumer, foodstuff and place, among other things (cf. May, 2013; Paxson, 2010; Trubek, 2008). Central to Pétursson's argument, is the idea of food as a vehicle for emotions (Pétursson, 2020, p. 27). Through food, feelings of guilt, anxieties of anonymity, health risks, climate grief, nostalgia, but also daily delights, guilty pleasures, aesthetic thrills, and care for loved ones are constantly negotiated. Food spaces – whether that be supermarkets, organic grocery stores or alternative food networks – accommodate, affect, enact and orient these emotions in different ways, through different architectures, aesthetic applications and rituals.

I mostly want to contribute to the above (ethnological) area of research on organic food and SFSCs with my study of korte ketens in Amsterdam, as I will look into the different types of intimate relationships that are formed as part of these chains, while also situating these in a context of food democracy and growing resistance to the current state of the food chain.

Methodology
: A Local Food Bricolage

A wise man, going by the name of Mark Vacher, once taught me in one of his lectures that a methodology chapter should contain more than just a statement of used methods. The suffix '-logy', he explained, reminds the researcher of the learning process that methodology is meant to capture. Taking Vacher's words to heart, I will thus candidly reflect on what I have learned about the research field, the validity of my chosen methods, and myself along the way. For a variety of reasons, I was repeatedly pulled in and out of the research field, reviewing my own research position. According to Davies, such a "turning back on oneself" (Davies, 2008, p. 4) inheres in practising reflexive ethnography. More concretely, this meant that sometimes I had to recognise perspectives, personal engagements, and expectations that I brought to the research. Before I elaborate on the various positions that shaped the research, I will first give a more practical overview of the ways in which I have approached the research field.

The material

The city of Amsterdam is a relatively small, but densely populated metropole and is home to a large number of sustainable food initiatives in all shapes and forms. In order to understand how korte ketens come to be and why they are valued, I decided to include a variety of actors who put korte ketens into practice in the research. In my selection of contact persons, sites, and materials I focused on those farms, producers, organisations, stores, and networks that explicitly engage with discourses related to local food, alternative consumption, and short food supply chains, interpreting 'korte ketens' rather loosely.

Also, I found contact persons through a snowball effect, meeting producers, for example, through the food networks they are providing for. This eventually turned out to be rather valuable as I also learned more about how the different actors relate to one another. Eventually, my contact persons turned out to be largely dependent on people's willingness and availability to participate. Shortly after I started to send emails to people, I found out many candidates are tired of (yet

another) research on sustainable food. Nonetheless, I ended up with a proper group of contact persons, each representing a different link within the (short) chain.

Semi-structured interviews, in which I addressed topics such as motives, ambitions, and obstacles, initially seemed the prime way to explore motives and themes behind korte ketens initiatives. A strength of this method is the insight it grants into people's ways of connecting different concepts and giving meaning to their everyday practices. Indeed, my main findings have been informed by these interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the participants (4 in total) preferred to meet through videotelephony or on the phone. This resulted in slightly more compact interviews, but did not influence the depth of material too much from my point of view.

However, I also soon realised that I needed more material to complement the accounts of the participants. Many of them referred to websites, (broadcast) conferences, television shows, policy documents, and more. Since this research investigates the (broader) context in which korte ketens emerge, I decided to also include these types of material as they turned out to be equally relevant to my understanding of the field. They helped me understand the backdrop against which the practices and utterances of the participants take shape.

In addition, I offered a helping hand to the people that participated here and there – for the sake of reciprocity, but also for more first-hand experiences of the initiatives' everyday practices. One of them responded to this proposal, meaning that I cooperated at a handover of one food network, while observing and making notes. Five of the interviews took place during opening hours of the (farm) store or handover of a collective, which turned the interviews into more of a go-along conversation, watching participants interact with customers or fellow-members – or turn a cheese wheel here and there, in the case of one dairy farmer. Lastly, I also conducted several short observations, taking pictures too, in a variety of grocery stores and food markets to get a better sense of how short food supply chains manifest in retail environments. Overall, these observations were instrumental to comprehending practical interpretations of SFSCs and prevented the thesis from being fixated on the korte keten as a concept.

Altogether, all these different sources and encounters added up to a total of 17 (go-along) interviews (including 3 follow-ups) lasting approximately 45 minutes, which were transcribed and translated from Dutch to English upon use; 1 participant observation lasting roughly 2 hours at a food network; and 6 short, 15-minute observations at 3 markets, 2 grocery stores, and 1 food network. To this can be added tens of documents, websites, registered conferences, blogposts,

PowerPoint presentations, and television shows (for an overview of all the material, see References chapter). Finally, I did not only focus on language and interactions between people, but I also included scenery, surroundings, mundane objects, and how people interact with the "materialities of every life" (Ehn, Löfgren & Wilk, 2016, p. 22) into my analysis.

I stopped gathering material at the point that my findings reached a certain theoretical saturation – in other words, when I stopped observing fundamentally new things. In the eventual selection of contact persons and material, I have tried to include as many different perspectives as possible. However, because of the lack of time and my dependency on people's availability, there are obvious blind spots in my contacts and material. Firstly, I have not been able to reach as many different corners of the city as I wanted. Some initiatives that were located in more marginalised areas, for example, were unfortunately not available. Also, I did not include that many consumer perspectives, because I mostly wanted to find out why and how korte ketens initiatives are founded. In my (participant) observations and a single go-along interview at a food network, I did get to speak to a handful of consumers, though.

The analysis

Initially, I did not approach the material with a clear-cut, premeditated theoretical framework. During the process of analysing the material, I started to see how the context in which korte ketens take shape is made up of different practices, beliefs, aesthetics, discourses, ideologies, politics, trends, and many other aspects. In order to narrate this context in all its complexity, I deployed a "bricolage approach", allowing myself the use of various, disparate but related materials and theories to engage with the field (Ehn, Löfgren & Wilk, 2016). Not only does this type of approach do justice to the complexity of the field, it is also instrumental to "unwrap hidden phenomena and see what is not immediately visible" (Jönsson, 2000, p. 226) as each type of material adds as well as reveals yet another layer. An approach as such is also served by a certain theoretical flexibility and interdisciplinary approach.

I realised how a bricolage approach in some way acknowledges the "messiness" of the research process and, essentially, considers not one material "pure" or self-contained. That is to say that materials, in a way, seep into each other. This became clear to me once I found out that a large part of what one research participant told me in an interview, was more or less literally quoted from

their website bio and could also be found in a video on the same website. Moreover, I repeatedly heard people utter similar catchphrases and discourses on korte ketens in the interviews.

In an effort to reveal more than catchphrases and bios concerning korte ketens, I thus chose to integrate diverging materials in my analysis, juxtaposing and aligning them in various ways. With that, analysis becomes more of a compositional practice, in which much of the materials come together as part of a presented narrative. This means that my voice is present in the analysis, as I "highlight aspects of the ethnography in the hopes of making it stick" (O'Dell & Willim, 2011, p. 35). By allowing myself to switch between different perspectives with a view to deliver a balanced representation of the field, I propose to modulate this. As Tom O'Dell and Robert Willim have stated, the field is not so much "out there" as it is "part of the ethnographer" (2011, p. 34). They further stress how the ethnographer's own experiences also pervade the analysis to a large extent. I grew up in urban, Dutch surroundings, where food mostly is consumed and informed about through marketing and storytelling, not through lived experience. Therefore, I had to sometimes immerse myself in new environments of food production located in the outskirts of the city.

One could argue that a certain remoteness dictated my research. But in fact, the urban-consumer gaze that I took to the research field introduced a certain proximity to the analysis: I myself represented the urban consumer reconnecting with food producers through the korte keten. At the same time, I also gradually started to feel more at home in these new surroundings. This experience reminded that research is an embodied practice, so aptly described by Sarah Pink, as I attuned myself to the research participants in fluctuating ways (2008).

In good faith

All the participants that I spoke to or worked with knew about my research and its content and gave permission in either written or oral form to be included in it. Before I conducted the observations in the grocery store, I also asked executives for permission. In the case of the street markets, this proved more difficult, which made me decide to make notes on the overall scenery without including personal interactions. Since I do not consider the topic of korte ketens or any of the materials that I have used sensitive or potentially harmful, I have decided not to anonymise any participants or initiatives. This is also because most participants have also publicly connected their names to the initiatives and were eager to participate by name in this research for the greater good.

Theoretical Concepts
: As Short As Possible

This chapter is devoted to a variety of theoretical concepts that proved helpful in my understanding of the research field and material. Helpful yet complex, I must say, and for that reason I will clarify how I have come to make sense of these. Specifically, I aim to unwrap the meaning of the word 'short' or '*korte*' as part of the idiom 'SFSCs' and 'korte ketens'. I soon discovered that this word raises interesting cultural analytical questions.

At first glance, the adjective 'short' seems rather straightforward and measurable, referring to, for instance, the number of links in a food supply chain. On closer inspection, however, all kinds of cultural notions underpin the experience of 'short'. According to early sociological studies of SFSCs, the essence of 'short' is the immersion of a product in information and association, "for example printed on packaging or communicated personally at the point of retail" (Marsden, Banks & Bristow, 2000, p. 425). The question arises exactly what information matters in making such a transaction meaningful to people. Basically, this points to the cultural embeddedness of the food supply chain and the cultural values that prevail (Wu & Pullman, 2015).

Although the term 'food culture' usually brings to mind a group of people's staple foods, kitchen techniques, taste preferences, etiquette and so on, food scholar Warren Belasco points out how the infrastructure "by which a group's food moves from farm to fork" (2008, p. 20) is imbued with culture too. In other words, the way in which the food chain takes shape carry just as much cultural meaning. In my view, the cultural characteristics of the food chain are also demonstrated by the existence of SFSCs, which are essentially part of a counterculture opposing the presumed "longness" that pertains to the current chain. The discourse concerning SFSCs give rise to discussions on cultural values – on fairness, authenticity, and so on.

On the current food chain, Belasco notes how, strictly speaking, it can hardly be called a chain, "which is shorter and more linear" (2008., p. 60). With distribution cycles going in all kinds of directions, the current food chain bears more resemblance to a web. SFSCs could thus be understood as an attempt to restore the linearity or shortness of a chain. Nonetheless, the appeal and value of these two traits – 'linear' and 'short' – are not self-evident from a cultural point of view. To reiterate what Stein, Santini, and Edwards have indicated: SFSCs and local food initiatives have

emerged in a context of a growing interest in locality, care, heritage, and reconnection to food production (2021; 2019). My own research has reaffirmed this context, but also brought to light other aspects that motivate korte ketens initiatives in Amsterdam.

In the following paragraphs, I will introduce the different theoretical concepts that help explain the context in which short food supply chains come to be. Specifically, I will go into the concepts that stick to the adjective ‘short’. I have structured this elaboration by means of a series of adjectives that, as I found, are closely associated, namely: ‘local’, ‘warm’, ‘slow’, and ‘together’.

Local

An often-heard association with SFSCs and korte ketens is ‘local’. Indeed, personal, unmediated food relations will often take place closer to home. Local then describes a specific geographical range in which a food is distributed, which can be demarcated as the smallest range possible. However, foods grown in close proximity could just as well end up on the plate via many separate links (e.g. farm-factory-wholesaler-grocery store-home delivery). On top of that, some of the SFSCs initiatives that participated in my research also cooperate with foreign suppliers with whom they sustained direct relations without interference of intermediaries. In spite of all that, I still want to take the association ‘local’ seriously, since it discloses a deeper urge which is at the heart of korte ketens, namely to (re)establish a connection between food and place.

In a similar way as SFSCs have to be understood in light of the anonymity of the current food supply chain, Moya Kneafsy et al. have pointed how “the local is always experienced and understood in relation to larger geographical scales, such as the regional national or *global*” (in: Stein & Santini, 2021, p. 78, my emphasis). ‘Local’ is thus inherently relative and current local food activism and faddism relates itself to the preponderance of global value chains. In this context, any food that is “knowable” – in other words: traceable – and overcomes the facelessness of the food chain, is inherently local (Trubek, 2008, pp. 208-9).

Cultural studies on local food have looked into various aspects belonging to it, such as terroir, regional branding and heritage. These different accounts promote the idea that the “locality” of food is essentially (re)produced. An interest in this “production of locality” lead food scholar Amy Trubek to look into the concept of “*terroir*” and how it is used by producers to brand their products (2008). Practically, this originally French idiom refers to how “distinct ecologies of

production generate distinctive sensory qualities in handcrafted agricultural products" (Paxson, 2010, p. 444).

From an ethnological point of view, terroir draws attention to how people and place, as well as culture and landscape, interact in producing a sense of locality, as people "go about the quotidian tasks of agrarian livelihoods that physically shape landscapes" (Paxson, 2010, p. 453). In other words, the idea of terroir situates agricultural practices in their location, accommodating feelings of belonging while making cultivator's work more meaningful. Terroir shares some of these effects with heritage. Various authors have shown how food has increasingly become a focal point of heritage labelling (Pétursson & Hafstein, 2022; May, 2013). Food's strong association with the senses, emotions, memory and communality makes for an integrated, affective experience of places and cultures (Pétursson & Hafstein, 2022, p. 64; May, 2013, p. 70). Therefore, food practices play a pivotal role in shaping regional identity imagination, of which heritage is a mere part.

Trajectories of turning something into heritage, whether instigated by producers, public servants or marketers, may promote emotional as well as economic value, which is why heritage also has a more institutionalised and capitalised side – think of UNESCO's World Heritage List. As Sarah May stresses in her writing on the heritagisation of German cheeses, "a manufacturer's attention to his product's outstanding characteristics often requires the intervention of […] distanced actors" (May, 2013, p. 65), especially governing actors such as regional offices. For the moment, I am not interested in the power relations surrounding heritage, as much as I am in the type of intervention underpinning processes of "heritagisation" (cf. Hemme, Tauschek & Bendix, 2007).

Instead of fixating on the question what heritage exactly *is* or could be, I want to give thought to what heritage *does* (cf. Miller, 2006). By no means is heritage already "out there", waiting to be discovered; rather, it is distinguished, created, and, more importantly, enacted by people. In the case of May's German cheeses, this is done in a more official form, namely a PDO protection, supported by regional counsels; whereas ethnologists Jón Þór Pétursson and Valdimar Hafstein have shown how processes of heritagisation may also take shape in a context of marketing in their studies of Icelandic skyr.

In his discussion of cultural heritage, Hafstein draws attention to the "distant proximity" that underlies heritage relations; an at times self-aware reflection on culture by which familiar environments, habitual practices and profane stuffs are turned into "privileged parts" (Hafstein 2014; May, 2013, p. 67). According to Hafstein, heritage relations, by definition, emerge in a

conceptual "landscape of smoldering ruins"; in other words, in a situation when valued infrastructure, institutions and gifts of nature are perceived to be on the verge of decay (Hafstein, 2014, p. 108). Despite its dramatical implications, this scenario was repeatedly summoned up by participants in the research, as they endow their own practices with the responsibility to preserve food traditions and relations that are under threat from globalisation and modernisation.

To conclude, heritage relations invoke a distant outlook on culture – sometimes described as a "metacultural perspective" – which implies that people already set one foot outside a culture. The "cosmopolitan self", a self that is characterised by a multiplicity of cultural attachments, is on the rise, wrote cultural theorist Stuart Hall (2002, p. 27). To a certain degree, this relation also has a bearing on connections to the local. Heritage and terroir establish a sense of place and so establish locality, but imply that rootlessness has become the point of reference – a native self would not be bothered by heritage, locality, nor terroir. At the same time, a cosmopolitan consumer will feel more connected to a food once it becomes knowable and embedded with locality.

Warm

In his study of the "warm city", sociologist Thaddeus Müller writes how intimacy within the urban space is essentially "pliable" and elusive (2002). A city constantly oscillates between warmness and coldness, depending on time and space. This is not to say that intimacy is an intrinsic component of some periods or spaces; it is people in interaction who may fill a moment with positive feelings. The work of Müller draws attention to how emotion acts within the city. Eating in particular, one of the most intimate and convivial everyday activities, gives occasion for vibrancy in a city, with streets full of eateries and cafés usually being the hotspots. Besides, although a tiresome and mundane activity to many, grocery shopping can also initiate moments of emotional interaction.

The topic of intimacy within the food chain is central to the work of Pétursson. He extrapolates the scenery of the household dinner table to explain the ways in which "different actors within the food value chain nurture each other both physically and *emotionally*" (2020, p. 24). Consumers and producers may exchange meaning by, for instance, providing a product with imagery and stories. These symbolic economies generate value, but are nonetheless often interrupted, as most production currently takes place behind closed doors. In post-industrial times, the gulf between food production and consumption seems bigger than ever. Hence the many

initiatives, in many shapes and forms, that aim to "mend the broken chain by establishing or re-establishing bonds between producers and consumers" (Pétursson, 2018, p. 282).

In his work on food and emotion, Pétursson builds on cultural anthropologist Monique Scheer, who conceptualises emotion as a practice and, with that, emotional relations (to food) as enacted, staged, enticed and manipulated (2020, p. 54-8). A conceptualisation of emotion as such directs attention to the scenery in which intimacy comes to be, from the appearances of a space to the mise en scène. Certainly, I soon noticed how korte ketens often manifest in spaces that are in many ways at variance with "conventional" food spaces – to put it briefly, they often contain more green, wood, and handwritten text. These spaces are also often multifunctional, offering a drink and a place to sit in their store, which is meant to breach the coldness that Müller associates with monofunctional spaces (2002; cf. Pétursson, 2018, p. 590).

Whereas Scheer directs attention to how assemblages enact emotion, cultural theorist Sara Ahmed directs attention to how people come to relate feelings to products, people, and moments. In an essay on happiness, she states that objects cannot be inherently happy, but become "happiness means" through the distribution of positive feeling (2010, p. 26). Feelings circulate, she writes, and tend to move from person to person (2014, p. 5). Happiness can result from such an "affective economy". Visiting korte ketens initiatives and analysing video material on local food, I came across many different instances in which people actively distribute feelings of joy and warmness to the short food supply chain – and so connected 'short' to 'happy'.

More interestingly, Ahmed conceptualises happiness as an orientation, which she defines as follows: "[o]rientations register the proximity of objects, as well as shape what is proximate to the body" (2010, p. 24). Indeed, korte ketens are all about opening up a new horizon for consumers to approach grocery shopping, showing them the way to all kinds of food producers, which may be located in close proximity. Mapped out bike tours along farm stores and footage of people travelling directly to a nearby farm, are just a few examples of my material from the field that demonstrate how positive feelings are not just enacted, but specifically also oriented when it comes to korte ketens.

However, the understanding of emotion as an orientation may suggest that people in principle are able to move around freely in their emotional experience. It may also obscure the fact that people may be guided by "moods", which cultural theorist Jonathan Flatley understands as "a kind of affective atmosphere […] in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular

affects can attach to particular objects" (2008, p. 19). The idea of spending time visiting many different stores to acquire local food may not necessarily enthral the hurried city dweller. The emergence of the korte keten, can thus be seen as the awakening of a "counter-mood", opposing the mood of the day by shifting values and slowing down the hurried temper of Amsterdam.

Slow

A compelling example of a mood that I came across in the field, has everything to do with nostalgia. I encountered narratives around food in Amsterdam that spoke of a "sentiment of loss and displacement" and in a way mourned the rapid passing of time. Based on the literature and my own findings, I have recognised three experiences that underpin nostalgia as such. Firstly, there is an obvious spatial element to nostalgia, as it entails a particular experience of a place. More specifically, one of rootlessness, of no longer belonging to a place, of "identity dislocation", which prompts people to seek nativeness in current times of globalisation (Boym, 2001, p. 12; Davis, 1977, p. 421).

Secondly, nostalgia scholar Svetlana Boym interprets the emotional experience of nostalgia as "a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life" (2001, p. 10). An increasingly hasty everyday spurs many people towards greater functionality and efficiency, making them look back in sorrow at a perpetual past that feels more attuned to, as Boym put it, "the slower rhythms of our dreams" (Idem., p. 8). This contributes to discontinuity, an experience that sociologist Fred Davis deems essential to nostalgia (1977). Such discontinuity implies a break in time, a dissociation from the contemporary and, concomitant, minor or major identity crises. This explains people's desire for continuity, for maintaining or restoring valued practices.

Integral to aforesaid elements of nostalgia is a third experience, namely deprivation. For example, a feeling of home is missing or a sense of being in sync with present times is lost. According to Pétursson, these "feelings of loss" have consistently appeared with modernisation since the 18th century. Simultaneously, a nostalgic preoccupation with authenticity appeared (Pétursson, 2020, p. 20; Zukin, 2008, p. 728). As people's identity formation is unsettled and their "sense of self" is at stake, authenticity promises embeddedness (Davis, 1977, pp. 419-420). One might respond with indifference to the passing of time or, alternatively, so cling all the more onto past homes, stories, selves, mentalities and rhythms which are meant to represent authenticity.

Another response that can be connected to nostalgia, is to become predisposed to slowness. “Social acceleration”, is a term sociologist Hartmut Rosa uses to describe the context of technological advancement, rapid social change, but also an increasing pace of life, which means that increasingly less time is spend on everyday activities – including rest and sleep (2003, pp. 15-6). This societal tendency has historically given rise to many movements advocating for a “slow-down”. These include activist movements, but also lifestyle trends promising “a rest from the race” (Idem., p. 16) – like mindfulness and, more recently, forest bathing. In a similar vein, slow coffee, artisanal longer-rise bread, Slow Food products, urban gardens, as well as “alternative” forms of consumption are committed to slowness and accommodate the nostalgic subject. Calls for “slow” food relations also stick to korte ketens, which often also facilitate relatively time-intensive food interactions.

Together

Urban sociologist Richard Sennett has stated that people are “losing the skills of cooperation needed to make a complex society work” (2012, p. 9). An important example of such skills are “dialogics”, i.e. the ability to hear other people. In the field I encountered many accounts stressing the “connecting force” of food, believing in the ability of food to bring people together. Korte ketens specifically are often understood as a means to facilitate exchange between people, for instance farmers and consumers, something which potentially evokes “attention and responsiveness to other people” (Idem., p. 14).

Essentially, korte ketens point to a development in which (formerly) passive consumers become increasingly active and aware of their position within a food chain and have become more willing to (virtually) interact face-to-face with food producers (Marsden, Banks & Bristow, 2000, pp. 425-6). This means that korte ketens are also associated with a resurgence of cooperative skills and sentiments of togetherness. The purpose of the korte keten here is to rid the food chain of its individuality, facelessness and opaqueness and, instead, instil in people a cooperative and receptive mentality through direct food relations.

In summary

Several different experiences underpin the "shortness" of a short food supply chain. These experiences connect to a food: a sense of place or experienced locality; emotional meaning and intimacy; an appeal to nostalgia and notions of slowness; and a cooperative mentality and associations with togetherness. Indeed, all these connections carry positive resonance, which reminds of the fact that the korte ketens is essentially an idealised image of the food chain. But how do people practically idealise the korte keten? And how do they sustain the kinds of relationships that I just discussed? These questions, among others, I will address in the following chapters.

Chapter 1
: *Visions of the Past*

One day during the pandemic, Ellen, an enterprising, middle-aged woman started going from door to door, sliding leaflets into mailboxes around the Nieuwmarktbuurt, a neighbourhood in the city centre of Amsterdam (Interview with Ellen). This is the where Ellen grew up and where her family had owned businesses for eight generations. Her grandparents met only 500 meters away, one of the anecdotes Ellen cherishes as it connects her to the city district and its history. According to Ellen, her ancestry also explains her deeply felt grief over the area's current food selection. Indeed, this small, but buzzing district has seen quite some changes for the past decades.

For instance, entrepreneurs in the area are now mainly focused on visitors and tourists, instead of the local population. While the streets were empty due to a series of nationwide pandemic lockdowns, Ellen realised how specialised food stores, sole traders and farmer's markets throughout the years had made way for "Albert Heijns, restaurants and coffeeshops". According to her, this shift has resulted in a limited access to "real groceries", as well as a street scene that is a lot different from the one she remembers from her past.

In the bio of her initiative, which is named '*De Stadsboerderie*', she summons up the image of the "*lieve stad*" ('the sweet city'), coined by a former mayor of Amsterdam to describe the city's historical conviviality and tolerance (De Stadsboerderie, n.d., 'Over Ons'). Speaking on behalf of her neighbourhood, Ellen looks with sorrow at what remains of the city as such. Motivated by this passionate account of the city, Ellen started building a network of customers interested in buying vegetables, fruits and wares that she directly picks up from local producers.

As she got in touch with suppliers, a world of resourcefulness and craft opened up to her. She was soon introduced to Amsterdammers growing mushrooms on used coffee grounds or providing readymade grilled cheese sandwiches made from stale sourdough bread. An advertising video on her website also shows Ellen taking her car to the countryside, in the vicinity of Amsterdam, and purchasing seasonal vegetables from farmers with whom she seems to be closely acquainted. In the same video, Ellen shares how she was pleasantly surprised by the amount of neighbours who consider access to organic and local products a "necessity", and joined her initiative by becoming one of her customers.

Further away, on the outskirts of Amsterdam, vegetable grower Wim owns a robust greenhouse for many years – he refused to tell me for how long exactly. When I asked him about his practices, he initially referred to times when Amsterdam teemed with agriculture, providing the city with fresh produce. Wim told me that "[b]ack in the days, there were two hundred vegetable growers around Amsterdam. I am here still. With one or two left" (Interview with Wim). He continued to explain how over time regional wholesalers had to close their doors or started to import from faraway countries, forcing him to change his business and target group.

Today, Wim is one of the most renown cultivators of the city, supplying specialty varieties of herbs and vegetables to high-end restaurants throughout the city. In addition, he has become somewhat of a protector of rare and native crops, selected on the principle of flavour. With an Instagram account and occasional appearances on Dutch television and public programs, Wim has become inseparable from the agrarian heritage he aims to preserve. Even so, in his narration of his practices, he could not help but express his scepticism towards contemporary sustainable practices and their associated parlance. In his holding on to an "agrarian mentality", his uncompromising belief in nature's perfection and his no-nonsense approach to quality food, Wim has come to represent food practices that seem to belong to another time.

In what follows, I will explore the sentiments that these two people exemplify. One aim here is to understand their particular relation to time and place and how this informs their food practices. Another aim is to find out whether the disclosed narratives, that I have come to understand as nostalgia, are prevalent in the city of Amsterdam. One part will focus how storytelling is employed to create shared values. Between the lines, I will examine the usefulness of a longing for the past in approaching present and future.

Nostalgic engagement

The stories of Ellen and Wim have a certain outlook on the city in common, one that turns the attention to a time that has past. Feelings of nostalgia mark their relation to these days long gone, which they both represent as more transparent and untouched by globalisation and mass consumption and, implicitly, as simply more wholesome, at least when it comes to the food chain. To them, this "personally experienced past" has become a matter of affect and imagination (Davis, 1977, pp. 415-416). In the case of Ellen and Wim, the purely transactional, high-speed character of

the supermarket-centred food chain is at odds with the food relations they were brought up with and which are vital to their sense of belonging. Their insistence on non-supermarket, organic and native – in other words, authentic and untouched by modernisation– foods, indicates a somewhat nostalgic longing for times past.

Even though the societal circumstances obviously have changed, Wim thus refuses to give up on his agrarian legacy and continues to fulfil his role as a provider of local produce for the city of Amsterdam – albeit in a changed form. Ellen works hard to keep up her family's tradition of retailing in order to maintain what is left of her "lieve stad". Within nostalgia, histories may be used only selectively, or as Davis puts it "in specially reconstructed ways" (1977, pp. 417). Problematic aspects are so not included in Ellen and Wim's accounts of the past food chain – for instance former issues with food security. In other words, they are working the past, in such a way that they dramatise and prettify it in contrast with "events, moods and dispositions of our present circumstances" (Ibid.)

This juxtaposition pertains not only to different timeframes, but to different places as well (Boym, 2001, p. 12). Both Wim and Ellen reconstruct the local vis-à-vis the global; for example, potatoes from the region are compared to those coming from producers elsewhere, usually in favour of the former. In that respect, nostalgia describes a productive longing that constructs an account of reality in whose light times and places acquire different meanings. That is to say that nostalgic longing, in this context, is not only explained by the current predominance of Albert Heijns or the disappearance of agriculture within Amsterdam, but also by a creative imagination that Wim and Ellen put to work. Nostalgia enables them to critically evaluate "the present through contrast with […] selective visions of the past" (Cashman, 2006, pp. 137-138), such as the local in contrast with the global, and serves as a stimulus to engage in practices countering dominant foodways.

Boym notes how nostalgia is by no means simply "antimodern" or, for that matter, antiglobal (2001, p. 8); in fact, as mentioned before, nostalgia inheres in modernisation. Ellen's nostalgic longings got her in touch with younger generations of producers and their contemporary, 'smart' foods – coffee-grown mushrooms and grilled cheese sandwiches from recycled bread. The concept of the food co-op, which she has applied to her own initiative, is itself a recent phenomenon in the Netherlands, having its origin abroad. Her food practices thus relate to the present just as much as they do to the past.

The same goes for Wim, whose old-fashioned style of growing vegetables corresponds well to current international food styles and fads and the philosophies of the hippest restaurants popping up around Amsterdam. The food practices of Ellen and Wim thus demonstrate a reflective type of nostalgia. They contemplate the past and the progress of time, without wanting to restore foodways from the past and do not “shy away from the contradictions of modernity” (Boym, 2001, p. 13). Instead, they are flexibly mediating between history and present as they reinvent old means in a contemporary context.

Nostalgia can also be just as much oriented to the future as it is to past and present. For example, it might inform attitudes towards the future and make one want to take responsibility for practices by perpetuating them in coming times. Perhaps it is the anticipation of an Amsterdam without the presence of agriculture or without warm relations around food that renders Wim and Ellen nostalgic and motivates them to carry out their specific food values (Davis, 1977, p. 417). Nostalgia, in other words, can become a tool of engagement, enabling anyone to critically asses the present through their visions of the past (Cashman, 2006, p. 138). In some cases, these visions not only concern nostalgic individuals, but also evolve into commonly shared sentiments.

Wim’s and Ellen’s lamentations might point to a broader story of Amsterdam. At the same time, an individual biography like that of Ellen puts the situation of Amsterdam into perspective and makes the transformation of the city palpable. Its present-day streetscape, predominated and engulfed by tourism, comes across even harsher after hearing Ellen’s family history. So does the decay of agriculture within the city after learning about Wim and his urban-agrarian lifestyle. Although the accuracy of their accounts of the past can be questioned, the affect is undeniable, as both accounts inspire different approaches to food production and consumption – and so, perhaps, “the fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future” (Boym, 2001, p. 8).

Stories from the past

Now that I have rephrased nostalgia as a tool of critical engagement, its widespread usage within food and sustainability initiatives comes to light. Before I offer some other examples, only this time coming from policymakers and entrepreneurs working towards a transition of the food chain, let me briefly discuss nostalgia’s affinities to practices of storytelling. Nostalgia requires storytelling work

to come to life and spark moments of common sensemaking, especially in the context of collective organisation and public speaking. At the same time, nostalgia serves as a powerful rhetorical device within storytelling, granting “a sense of community and coherence across time and space” (Humle, 2014, p. 11), while offering a sense of shared meaning and communal narrative.

In transitional periods, when new identities and meanings are in the making – which surely is the case with sustainable food development in the Netherlands – building on a (reconstructed) past may thus provide solid ground. In her study of a consultancy firm, Didde Maria Humle writes compellingly about the way organisations employ “antenarrative storytelling”; in other words, speculation about the future by selectively drawing on the past, based on a guiding narrative that is always emergent and never completed, but mostly accommodates the everyday (2014, p. 13). Antenarrative stories as such add up to “webs” of storytelling practices, in which both collective and individual stories are entwined. Small-scale food initiatives like those of Wim and Ellen are implicated in these webs just as much as food policymakers and larger-scale entrepreneurs are.

Without question Mark is a storyteller. After founding and developing multiple platforms encouraging short food supply chains with his company ‘Amped’, he has now expanded his ambitions and invests a large amount of time, energy and money in bringing about structural change within Dutch the food supply and “roll out” and scale up korte ketens (Interview with Mark). With a “task force” and several regional “roll out strategies” he aims to bring together people representing politics, banking, business, and nonprofit organisation and collectively reconfigure the current food chain while “co-creating” discourses, strategies and applications around the korte keten.

Besides hosting smoothly-designed websites offering inspiration to anyone interested in “regionalising” the food chain, he mostly tackles the issue by speaking at relevant events, assisting funded research projects, organising “co-creation sessions”, developing schematic models that help to interpret trajectories of food transition. Mark’s background is in video game development, which explains his playful and unorthodox approach to the food chain, which he interprets as a system that needs to be “fooled” instead of “fought” by choosing the right strategies – like an endboss in a raid (Amped Concepts, 2021, p. 16). This approach earned him recognition from policymakers at both regional and national level, who think his practices show the way within a sustainable food transition.

It is especially in a context of public speaking that Mark’s charisma and stern belief in korte ketens become apparent. As he explains food transitions straightforwardly and appealingly, he also

makes use of historical references. At the start of his address on an event aiming to activate "robust" korte ketens among people working in business and regional politics, Mark told a story about Fort Pampus (Video 'Activatie van de Robuuste Korte Keten', 2021). Historical accounts of this 19th-century fort slightly differ, but it was originally built to keep away hostile foreign forces coming from sea. The fort is part of a more comprehensive defence line enclosing Amsterdam called the 'Stelling van Amsterdam', comprising 42 forts that were built in a short amount of time but became ineffective with the invention of aircraft.

In an attempt to revitalise this piece of UNESCO World Heritage, Mark has founded a project named '*Voedsel rond de Stelling*' ('Food around the Stelling'), which aims to connect cities in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam to their rural surroundings. Whereas the Stelling initially had a military purpose, Mark now hopes to redefine it as infrastructure "sheltering" and "embracing" the inhabitants of the metropolitan area while ensuring food security and social inclusion (Amped Concepts, 2021, p. 13). Not only does Mark make use of the Stelling as a means to create awareness of regional heritage and food production by specifically connecting with producers within the perimeters of the historical defence line, he also wants to put the forts to use by installing them as pick-up points for local-food meal kits (Ibid.). Mark's ambitions with the Stelling project fit into his notion of a "regenerative food system", as it makes use of existing infrastructure and heritage while also endowing these with new meaning. For some reason, Fort Pampus and the Stelling are often brought up in contexts of sustainable food systems (e.g. Baarsma, 2019; SlowFood.nl, n.d. 'Forteiland Pampus'). One reason could be that the area within the defence line was originally entirely self-sufficient regarding its food supply, so it would be prepared for times of war.

Similar efforts to regenerate local history are to be found in a food policy report published by the municipality of Amsterdam in 2010. The report marks the start of municipal involvement in local food and korte ketens and sketches a history of the city as historically being embedded in rural food production. According to the policymakers, "the immediate surroundings of Amsterdam were and are known for their fresh agrarian products" (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010, p. 19, my translation. Dairy production in Waterland and Amstelland, fish from the North Sea and Lake IJssel and the presence of many food industries in the vicinity assured the city of a steady supply of food. However, the advent of refrigerating technologies made the city less dependent on local food production and stricter environmental regulations further stimulated the emergence of "longer" food chains, according to the policymakers (Idem., p. 20). The policy text continues to draw on this

historical presence of food production around Amsterdam to make a case for more locally oriented food chains now.

Stories about the Stelling by Mark and about Amsterdam's agricultural history by policymakers add up to webs of stories, meant to direct processes of identity formation and placemaking as they give a sense of direction in times of (food) transition (Humle, p. 2014). Mark, for example, expressed his hope that collaborations on a local scale will help to "discover what our real identity is" (Video 'Activatie van de Robuuste Korte Keten', 2021, my translation). In one of his texts, he calls this process the "unearthing of regional identity" (Amped Concepts, 2021, p. 44, my translation), which is supposed to be set in motion by local food projects connecting to cultural heritage such as the Stelling. By situating Amsterdam in an agricultural past, policymakers make the transformation to korte ketens seem natural and possible – and not at all far-fetched.

Nostalgic storytelling thus proves to be a pivotal practice within periods of sustainable transformation, especially when big groups of people need to organise themselves and seek shared notions of time, place and identity. Nostalgia serves a purpose here, as it appeals to something that is lost and needs to be conserved or, better, regenerated – in a same way as the environment has to be saved. Subject to this loss could be a sense of identity, locality or (culinary) heritage. Even though the nostalgic narratives underlying the accounts of Mark and municipal policymakers may at times be interpreted as "ironic, inconclusive, and fragmentary" (Boym, 2001, p. 15), their usage of history remains effective in constructing a notion of who the inhabitants of Amsterdam are, as well as what future foodways could look like.

Nostalgia revisited

In this chapter I described several instances of nostalgia, put into practice by different initiatives working towards korte ketens. In the case of Ellen and Wim, this involves a past that is lived; in the others, nostalgia is more of a rhetorical device to engage people in the transition of the food chain. In both cases, stories from the past are used to inform attitudes towards present and future. More than a lethargic, static and reactionary state of feeling, nostalgia can thus be interpreted as an apparatus for critical engagement and activism. Nostalgia could for example invoke a sense of responsibility towards specific practices or traditions that are to be safeguarded within Amsterdam.

Moreover, practices based on nostalgia invite people to join in a yearning for the past and co-create a future (Boym, 2001, p. 18). This might lead to practices that strive to restore a past, but the result is more often that practices relate to the past and present reflectively and reinterpret “old” principles, means and cultural heritage in a contemporary context. Nostalgic practices as such might draw on lived experience, but could just as well be charged with times and places that were never really there and instead are actively (re)constructed on the basis of antenarratives. Whatever the past may be that these practices dwell on, they mostly relate to it selectively and in ways that fit present purposes.

Some of the names given to Amsterdam’s many innovative and alternative food retailers and cooperatives aptly represent the outlined complexities of nostalgia: ‘*Stadsboerderie*’, ‘*Buurderij*’, ‘*Landmarkt*’, ‘*Vokomokum*’. Either they use existing nostalgic terms or reinvent them by creating novel concepts, but all appeal to a sense of simplicity and nativeness in a time when international names and trendy neologisms prevail within the food sector. At the same time, emphasising for example the neighbouring-aspect of a farm – ‘Buurderij’ is a compound word made up of ‘*buur*’ (‘neighbour’) and ‘*boerderij*’ (‘farm’) – or the rurality of a marketplace with the addition of ‘*land*’ (‘countryside’) to ‘*markt*’ (‘market’), indicates the far from self-evident nature of supermarkets having a connection to the countryside or customers having farms close by.

The above names thus say more about the present than they do about anything else. Together, they point to a certain mood pervading Amsterdam**,** one that is ambivalent towards present times and lingers on feelings of lack and loss when it comes to the food chain. Food places and collectives call on this city mood when they facilitate a platform from which people can distance themselves from the current food chain and dwell in a different, “alternative” space. During my observations and conversations, I came across several ways for food places to call on moods of nostalgia.

Firstly, as said before, a certain longing for slowness and stillness underlies nostalgia. Practices that are more attuned to the “slower rhythms of our dreams” thus in a way accommodate as well as rouse the nostalgic subject. In the local food stores that I visited, for example, I noticed how a different rhythm pertained to these spaces, one that could be called slower compared to the faster rhythms that are in effect at regular grocery stores. Visitors were strolling around the shop almost recreationally – Pétursson’s writing on an organic food store sensitised me to the flow of carts – while employees seemed to take more time for their tasks (2018, p. 590).

I encountered one striking example of how stores implicitly relate to notions of slowness at a bakery department in a relatively big local food retailer in the city centre of Amsterdam. Imagery of artisanal breads was accompanied by a text claiming: “We do not rush our bread. Our sourdough is allowed to ‘mature’ for 24 hours” (Image 1). Interestingly, the content creators suggest that most retailed bread is for some reason rushed and not “allowed” to mature. In similar ways, I noticed how many people, like Ellen, highly value taking their time to interact with customers, visitors, and members, allowing these relationships to mature.

Secondly, there were instances in which grocery stores more explicitly aim to establish a connection between past and present. For instance, by including heritagised, “classic Dutch treats” and “forgotten vegetables” in their range of products and also advertising them as such (Image 2). In these two ways, namely through establishing slowness within their spaces and orienting relationships between past and present, grocery stores deploy nostalgic sentiments. By doing so, they accommodate alternative forms of consumption, including the purchasing of local food, and turn it into an affair that is comforting and sentimental as much as it is new, exciting, and innovative.

A final thought

Urban nostalgic sentiment might not just relate to another time, but to another place on the map as well. To the people in Amsterdam, an Italian trattoria or a Chinese restaurant could promise more authenticity and locality than so-called Dutch pancake houses aimed at tourists. At times, local culinary heritage might appear more remote than foreign specialties, which possibly correspond more to people’s sense of identity and location. This brings in Anouk’s case, who, besides a korte keten-initiative on the north side of Amsterdam, also runs an Algerian-inspired ‘*souq*’ in the city centre. This food store, whose interior closely resembles North African marketplaces, offers a wide variety of seasonal vegetables from the region of Amsterdam. When I arrived at the location, I was especially struck by the appealing presentation of the vegetables.

When I spoke to Anouk about the store’s approach and customers, Anouk soon turned nostalgic: “How many people can now still really make bouillon or soup?” (Follow-up interview with Anouk) While glorifying the nomadic Algerian cuisine of her business partner and good old “mom’s cooking”, she deplored the culture of convenience and ignorance in the Netherlands and the

dying out of extensive cooking. Her case demonstrates how foreign food concepts may also facilitate a sense of place and local nostalgia – which is thus by no means anti-global. Anouk's souq surely shines a new light on the idea of nostalgia as a "once familiar but now foreign country" (Cashman. 2006, p. 137).

Chapter 2
: The Old Country

In the wake of global lockdown policies in the period of 2020-2021, Dutch public television – generally more focused on foreign cultures and affairs – was practically unable to produce programs abroad. Travel shows, for instance, now had limited access to parts of the world in which they usually take interest and shoot their material. This turn of events went hand in hand with an upsurge of domestic television, i.e. shows on Dutch history, travel destinations and foods. With the help of top-notch video equipment, such as drones, it became possible to watch well-known Dutch presenters discovering regional hotspots and delicacies, tell stories about places and events everyone in the Netherlands has heard of, and reestablish bonds with rural areas that, so far, have remained largely unseen.

Most striking is the particular gaze that characterises these shows, one that appears to relate to rather distant natural and cultural heritage, perceiving it as some sort of curiosity while expressing excitement and surprise. In one travel show, a presenter elaborates on this attitude: “that you look at your city with different eyes, and it was again a *revelation*. And actually that is the attitude you have, away on a trip. And that’s something I have seen again, that you can [have] that in the Netherlands too” (‘Amsterdam (NL) - Zwolle & Salland (NL)’, *3 op reis,* 2020, my translation, my emphasis). This revelation mostly comes from within, as the presenter refers to a process in which a habitual space turns into a place of discovery.

In the same episode, another presenter stays the night in a cabin in Amsterdam, just kilometres away from her own residence, which is set up as an observatory for butterflies she would probably also find in her own garden. The setting compels her to look at the urban ecosystem “with different eyes”, an ecosystem she has been part of herself, but which only becomes apparent to her once she steps out of it and enters the observatory, it seems.

This scenery makes me think of the way Hafstein described heritage relations as typified “by imagining a vista outside one’s own self from where one may observe one’s own customs and expressions with, as it were, an alien gaze” (2014, p. 120). The implied detachment, or “foreignness”, permits a self-conscious irony, which “opens up the prospect that we might imagine ourselves differently” (Ibid.; cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). While making her closing remarks,

the presenter raises a glass of white wine produced in the same garden, adding to the imagination of Amsterdam as a (future) wine region. She is conspicuously ironic as she describes the wine as "having notes of Noordermarkt, a bit of Jordaan, and a hint of Stopera" ('Amsterdam (NL) - Zwolle & Salland (NL)', *3 op reis*, 2020, my translation)

A global health crisis and its logistic consequences might have piqued an interest in local heritage in the Netherlands, at least on public television. Interestingly enough, it was already in 2019 that the aforementioned travel show started to focus on destinations just 5 hours away from centrally located Utrecht – that is, without taking an airplane ('Graz - Drenthe - Soweto', *3 op reis,* 2019). The host explains this commitment by the program's wish to encourage ecologically sustainable ways of travelling. The travel show thus demonstrates a coming together of sustainable lifestyles and local awareness. In the case of the travel show, this awareness is rather general, whereas other shows focus specifically on food and cooking. One of them is concerned with Dutch "terroir"; the other is hosted by a famous chef who attempts to put regional specialties (back) on the map.

In this chapter I will expand on the theme of (culinary) heritage and more specifically what kind of relations underlies it. In addition, I want to show how the locality of regional food is constructed in the Netherlands. Finally, I will look into the ways emotional and economic value are added to people's groceries. The distant, foreign gaze as exemplified by the presenter in the observatory-cabin runs like a thread through this expansion.

Heritage relations

Heritage relations necessitate an outside perspective from which engrained practices are recognised and valued – mostly because they offer a different outlook on everyday life. Explicit discourse on (culinary) heritage is rather meagre in the Netherlands. However, there are traces of the particular "distant proximity" to be found in Dutch food television. My personal favourite is a show hosted by Yvette van Boven, a Dutch tv chef, cookbook author and former restaurateur known for her appealing eccentricity. Her show, *Koken met Van Boven* ('Cooking with Van Boven'), has had 5 seasons, in the period from 2015 to 2018. In between her demonstrations of recipes in a well-styled though cozy kitchen, she also takes time to inform viewers about Dutch food history and traditional dishes many people in the country probably never heard of.

One episode is devoted to the pickling and fermenting of food. She starts off by exclaiming how: "Meanwhile, we find it's only natural that you can get all kinds of vegetables and fruit all year round. But if you let nature run its course, then there are periods of abundance and periods of scarcity. Because nature does not let herself produce" ('Inmaken en wecken', *Koken met Van Boven* (2015), my translation). It is interesting how Van Boven acknowledges how foodways have changed in such a way that there is more food security, while also expressing some sort of value judgement of this development.

Van Boven continues by explaining how preserving practices were therefore once meant to keep foods and their nutrients accessible year-round. Most striking is a scene in which she speaks to a "preserving expert", who even put on traditional Dutch dress for the occasion ('Captain's Dinner', *Koken met Van Boven* (2018), my translation). In the expert's explanation of age-old conserving techniques, past circumstances – such as long trips on board of a 18th-century ship – were a main incentive, suggesting that these practices are somewhat obsolete. The preserving expert's lectures are part of her "culinary historic heritage centre". With this organisation, supported by Slow Food Northern Netherlands, she is one of the few people actively safeguarding traditional Dutch food practices.

In spite of all their possible outdatedness, Van Boven makes a case for pickling and fermenting food at home, as it is meant to encourage eating more seasonally and mindfully. Pickling and fermenting are thus "heritagised", in a way that even though these practices have "lost their value, their former function or economic viability", they yet "undergo a transvaluation that grants them a second life" (Pétursson & Hafstein, 2022, p. 65). Not only do the revived practices restore a "continuity between the past and the present" (Idem. p. 67), they also help in "slowly guiding the present toward the future" (Idem., p. 54).

By no means does the episode on preservation methods become mere historic storytelling; As Van Boven demonstrates several straightforward pickling methods, she makes an attempt at turning the preservation of leftover vegetables into a prosaic activity. Moreover, in the episode she picks up her vegetables at two young entrepreneurs; one of them a young "vegetable saver" who for instance prepares and retails soups from improperly shaped foods, the other a short-food-supply-chain initiator offering meal boxes. By connecting old to new and specifically tradition to short food supply chains, Van Boven simultaneously associates heritage with alternative and sustainable means of food consumption.

Heritage in practice

In the case of the different food initiatives that I spoke to, this association between korte ketens and heritage is not so evident. Nor does the Dutch word for 'heritage' – '*erfgoed*', literally translated 'inherited good' – pop up in any documents concerning Amsterdam's municipal food policy. Only Mark makes this connection explicit with his Voedsel rond de Stelling-project by explaining how "the link between the heritage and the landscape" has to be part of short-food-supply-chain activities, hoping that these linkages will help to "forge social-cultural bonds" around food (Amped Concepts, 2021, p. 40/44, my translation)

Mark's project is built on the assumed communal benefits of cultural heritage. While people on an everyday basis mostly approach food as individual consumers, (culinary) heritage might offer a "communal, commensal experience" to people, invoking regional awareness and their belonging to a local community (Pétursson & Hafstein, 2022, p. 63). Heritage practices and policies so create a sense of community among people in the region of Amsterdam – which may not even be there in the first place. Heritage relations are inextricably bound up with an urge to safeguard particular things in preparation of their disappearance with the progress of time. Once a cultural attribute is heritagised or called "traditional practice", it becomes imperative to preserve it or, in case it has already ceased to be, to mourn it. I am intrigued by the similarity between heritage relations and discourses around sustainability here, which also often call on the immediacy of the "eleventh hour".

The notion of safeguarding any particular cultural inheritance did seem to concern some of the people involved in korte ketens. I am reminded of Wim, who wants to carry on the agricultural tradition within the city limits of Amsterdam and who was also rather outspoken about his wish to conserve rare and in some cases native food crops. Furthermore, I got to meet Wendela, who is running an artisanal cheese dairy and dairy farm under the smoke of Amsterdam. She told me how part of her occupation involves augmenting "attention for the artisanal" and inspire people to get their food directly from her farm or any farm in general (Interview with Wendela).

What Wendela is trying to preserve is therefore not just the craft of making cheese on a small scale, but also the institution of the farm per se – as, for example, a place that people frequent for groceries. Such an impetus was also expressed by Mariët and Cindy, mother and daughter, when

I visited their farm shop just outside of Amsterdam right next to their family's cow farm. They think it important to bring about "more involvement with the farm" by, among other things, letting visitors cuddle with their cattle and being as transparent as possible (Interview with Mariët & Cindy). One way or the other, all these farmers are safeguarding the institution of the local, small-scale farm within the urban landscape.

Besides such cultural heritage as the farm and related crafts, there is also natural heritage, in the form of nature reserves, fields with particular soil qualities, and vulnerable ecosystems. Mariët and Cindy, for example, lease an area of land that is part of a bigger peat meadow area called the 'Ilperveld', owned by the province of North-Holland. They both take their responsibility of keeping the ecosystem there intact seriously. They let their cattle graze in such a way that the field remains open and attractive to several reed types and meadow birds, all in order to, as Mariët put it: "keep the Ilperveld the Ilperveld" (Interview with Mariët & Cindy).

The maintenance of natural heritage is also what drives *Boeren van Amstel* ('Farmers of Amstel'), a cooperation of dairy farmers who are all located to the south of Amsterdam. Practising agriculture without disturbing the habitats of meadow birds happens to be one of their aims too. Michel, the cooperation's general director, told me enthusiastically about a podcast series they devoted to these birds in collaboration with a nature conservation NGO (Interview with Michel). In these cases, it remains the question whether the farmers are actually aware of their role in maintaining natural heritage without the interference of a province, director or NGO.

As Hafstein remarks, heritage "transforms people's relationship with their own practices, the ways in which they perceive themselves and the things around them" (2014, p. 118). Their involvement in natural heritage surely makes the everyday practices of Boeren van Amstel and Mariët and Cindy more meaningful, as their activities become part of the maintenance of an ecosystem. In similar ways, Wim's and Wendela's practices are charged with meaning, as they are all about preserving practices and institutions they deem threatened. Without their heritage-awareness, they maybe would not consider their agricultural practices anything more than habitual.

Short food supply chains and local food initiatives are essential to such an awareness, as they bring in the perspective of an outsider – a consumer, for example – who intervenes in their enterprises and is disposed to value them differently. Perhaps they both experience some kind of revelation; a stronger sense of place or a revaluation of antique food routines such as organic farming and pickling.

With closer relationships between farmer and consumer, consumers could undergo changes in the way they perceive themselves too. In a way, heritage might be even more revealing to an (urban) consumer than to farmers or food producers. Concluding one of her episode on preservation, Van Boven curiously asks Wim, who makes regular appearances in her television show, whether he pickles his vegetables while sharing a meal. “Well”, he says, “we deep-freeze certain things” (‘Inmaken en wecken’, *Koken met Van Boven*, 2015, my translation). In her passionate, heritagised account of pickling, Van Boven almost overlooks the fact that the organic farmer has modern technology at his disposal too.

A sense of place

In the titles of her episodes, Van Boven conspicuously refers to specific regions. For instance, an episode on potatoes is named ‘Spuds from Sint Annaland’; one on mackerel ‘Mackerel from Egmond aan Zee’. The host visits these places and derives her ingredients directly from producers, while also situating the food in local peculiarities and histories. This connection that Van Boven makes between food and region might strike the average Dutch person as odd, as the supermarket-dictated food chain tends to separate most Dutch products from their specific location and stocks them all under the same heading: ‘The Netherlands’.

In her 2021 show, *De Streken van Van Boven* (‘The Regions of Van Boven’), Van Boven takes this interest in local food one step further by devoting whole episodes to specific regions. Embarking “on a journey at home”, she is in search of “regional” foods and flavours (‘Waterland’, *Streken van Van Boven,* 2021, my translation). At times, her quest to find local speciality dishes seems somewhat forced, as she repeatedly and determinedly asks locals about “the” dish of the region. In one episode, her artificial yet contagious enthusiasm for the local reaches a milestone. As she is having a picnic with her crew, she unpacks one local specialty after the other while also mentioning the origin of every single beer that she is opening.

One episode reaches a deeper understanding of the regionality of food. In this one, the World Heritage Site Beemster is the focus of attention. Van Boven meets up with a young farmer who took over a pear orchard and started to also grow vegetables there. As the farmer pulls out beetroots from the soil, he elaborates on the marine clay that the Beemster region is known for and

allegedly gives the vegetables and fruits their distinctive taste profile. "If you have rich soil, then you also get a rich flavour", he says ('Beemster', *Streken van Van Boven,* 2021, my translation).

The viewer is told how the soil qualities of the area are the result of a massive lake drain in the 17th century, initiated by rich inhabitants of Amsterdam to make space for agriculture and feed the city. Here, a coming together of economic history, cultivation, and natural development established a specific regional character with the resultant marine clay. The soil needs to be "taken good care of", according to the young Beemster farmer. A most tangible instance of natural heritage, the Beemster area demonstrates how regionality is something that needs to be nourished and maintained.

Whereas in France contemplating the "*goût du terroir*" is firmly embedded in the country's tradition of gastronomy, in other countries, such as the United States or the Netherlands, the focus on regional qualities has become part of a more novel food movement revolving around natural infrastructure and working with instead of against it. As Trubek notes in her book concerning terroir, to the French the concept refers to a material reality (2008, p. 18). However, the author herself likes to see it as "a folk category through which people understand their relationship to the land" (in: Paxson, 2010, p. 444).

The novelty – or absence – of terroir-awareness in the Netherlands becomes clear right away when exploring international versions of the world-famous Beemster cheese website. The US American one tells visitors: "BEEMSTER IS MORE THAN A CHEESE. IT'S A PLACE. IT'S A FLAVOR" (Image 3, capitals in original). The Belgian version even has a specific section on "Terroir", offered in both Dutch and French. The Dutch website, on the other hand, does not say anything about the regional aspects of the cheese, let alone about its terroir.

Culinary journalist and television host Joël Broekaert seems to have spotted this lack of knowledge about soil quality and local character in the Netherlands when conceiving his show *Joël Lokaal* ('Joël Local'). In this show, the host travels across the Low Countries – again, on a journey at home – to experience the different soil types underlying the land; in fact, each type has its own episode. All this in order to, as Broekaert phrases it in the intro of the show, answer the question "what the Netherlands taste like" ('Zeeklei', *Joël Lokaal,* 2021, my translation). Most riveting about this intro is his usage of the term 'terroir', which he uses to educate viewers on soil quality, climate and environment in connection to the flavour of food. The manner in which he elaborates on this topic reveals how this information might be new to the common television viewer.

Instead of terroir-awareness, there is thus a presence of terroir education in the Netherlands, for example in the form of Broekaert's show. With this type of education, an attempt is made to connect general knowledge of native soil to getting in touch with the Dutch identity. In an episode on marine clay, Broekaert and a seaweed farmer totter through a sticky coastal clay landscape, claiming how this is where "the Netherlands come into existence" (Idem.). In combination with the host expressing his want to map the "terroir of the country", scenes such as these suggest that Broekaert's mission is not just to educate people amusingly on terroir, but on the origins of the Netherlands as well.

In an episode on peat, he has a sip of various kinds of cow milk – as if it were a wine tasting – and contemplates their different aroma's based on the lands the cows were grazing on. In between, Broekaert loathes large-scale dairy industries for collecting milk from different places before homogenising and selling it all under the same label. It is almost as if he implies that some local, Dutch identity is lost in these industrial procedures that are based on centralisation and tend to be indifferent towards origin. Similar criticisms of the "regionlessness" and centralisation of present-day food provisioning are also to be found in Van Boven's show (Nestle, 2013, p. 363). The beetroots from the Beemster farm, for example, are compared to "those in the supermarket". In another episode, Van Boven discusses the value of "real Dutch fish" and expresses a strong aversion to supermarket fish, which, according to the host, gets flown in from Asia and "is really not fresh at all, is just farmed [fish] and really nasty" ('Makreel uit Egmond aan Zee', *Koken met Van Boven,* 2015, my translation).

Van Boven's and Broekaert's espousing local, short-chain food and a focus on terroir appears to be mostly a response to the contemporary food chain, in which "eating has never been less connected to where people live and how people farm" (Trubek, 2008, p. 246). They oppose this by showing alternatives, their "bulwark against the incredible (and increasingly menacing) unknowns" (Idem., p. 12) of the distribution of food operating on a global scale – which has proven to be especially "menacing" in times of a pandemic. Besides the slightly elitist tendencies of both Van Boven and Broekaert and their scepticism towards supermarkets and mass production, they are also making a case for going back to the (rural) roots of the Netherlands and (re)discovering a regional, perhaps Dutch, identity – an "unearthing" that gets quite literal in the case of Broekaert's dissections of soil.

Not surprisingly, the word 'terroir' was not used by any of the farmers or producers that I spoke to, nor were any of them elaborating on specific regional qualities. However, some of the above sentiments were definitely shared by the interviewees. Mostly the kind of sentiment that turns against supermarkets and the locality-indifferent food chain. The Albert Heijn – a giant supermarket chain mentioned earlier – was brought up quite often, particularly as a metonym for all the market leaders within food retail. Anouk, for example, started her local food pickup point to "enrich" or, better, complement people's food offer as dictated by Albert Heijn.

Some of the members of FoodCoopNoord told me that they initially joined so they could bypass this very chain (Go-along interview with members of FoodCoopNoord). Wim told me displeasedly how "supermarkets, everything, everybody buys from Morocco, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Turkey" (Interview with Wim). With this, Wim also makes a connection between supermarkets on the one side and placelessness and globalisation on the other. Michel explained how Boeren van Amstel started as a cooperative wanting to market their milk under regional, "Amstelland" dairy instead of watching it being submerged in milk from other parts of the country by their buyers. Ironically, Albert Heijn is now one of their most appreciated sellers.

To all of the participants, local food and korte ketens represent the opposite of all the (bad) traits associated with supermarkets and global, centralised food distribution. Furthermore, they partly brand, define, interpret and explain their practices vis-à-vis the principles of the (super)market. This is similar to how the two television hosts continuously compare all the fresh produce that they encounter to products from the supermarket. Yet taste quality was not specifically mentioned by the interviewed farmers and producers as something with which they distinguish themselves from conventional, large-scale food retailers. Instead, participants expressed the more abstract belief that their practices might lead to general appreciation of food, as well as more regional and seasonal diets.

According to Ellen, supermarkets make consumers "want to eat strawberries for Christmas" (Interview with Ellen), a thing she attempts to swear off with her food enterprise. In other words, the focus of local food initiatives on locality is currently mostly in response to predominant lack of regionalism and seasonal food within Amsterdam's foodscape. Regional taste, or terroir, appears to be less of a concern here. This demonstrates how locality is by no means a static concept; rather, its definition is relative to the dominant scale of the food market – which is now mostly global.

Food value

Let us take a closer look at the observation that interviewed farmers and producers mostly want to contribute to the "appreciation" of food. 'Appreciation' has two different meanings in Dutch, as '*waardering*' could mean aesthetic 'valorisation' as well as monetary 'valuation' (cf. May, 2013, p. 69). Indeed, some of the interviewees spoke of the upsettingly low prices at supermarkets. Ann, one of the people who run an urban farm and CSA in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, told me how "people are totally used to cheap food, we really can't compete with Albert Heijn and the Jumbo" (Interview with Ann). The intricate and nerve-racking distribution industry behind stocked supermarket shelves, which is well described by Steel, is responsible for prices which seem disengaged from any true value (2009).

The Netherlands is especially renown for food retailer's fierce competition for the best deals, with a literal 'supermarket war' ('*supermarktoorlog*') taking place between 2001 and 2007. Although the numbers are slowly increasing, it is estimated that Dutch consumers tend to spend less than 13% of their income on groceries, which is on the lower end compared to other EU countries (Berkhout, Van der Meulen & Ramaekers, 2022).The farmers, producers and initiators that I spoke to appear to be on the same mission, namely to change Dutch consumer's appreciation of food – albeit through different means.

Frank, urban planner for the Municipality of Amsterdam, said in an interview that he considers the "creation of added value" one of the prime virtues of local food and short food supply chains (Interview with Frank). In his view, this added value will "translate into a price that consumers are willing to pay" for their groceries. The implication is that enhanced awareness, visibility and transparency of food production will alter urban dwellers' valuation of (local) food. One example that Frank brought up as promising in this respect, is Mark's Stelling project, as it is meant to illuminate the "production landscape" surrounding the city.

As for now, the Stelling project is still work in progress, but in a way farmers like Wendela, Cindy and Mariët are already putting these ideas to practice, only then on a smaller scale. With their aura of artisanality and tradition and entirely open production, they are hoping to account for the relatively high prices of their milk, cheese and beef. To some extent, this aura is a byproduct of their

particular approach and philosophy, but it is also the result of conscious branding, to which their websites and social media presence bear testament.

The assumed reciprocity between – both affective and geographical – closeness to food production and valuation of groceries is widely shared in Amsterdam. Paxson, who studied the use of terroir in the branding of US American cheeses, writes how regional branding is “the productive outcome of market capitalism […] while simultaneously speaking to the intimate” (Paxson, 2010, p. 445). Hence, local food and specifically korte ketens are able to bridge the gap between economic and emotional value, two “forms of value that are otherwise difficult to reconcile” (Miller, 2008, p. 1131). According to Miller, who writes about different “uses of value”, communication is a key factor here. “[C]ommunication itself adds value” (Ibid.), and it is mostly affective communication that gets lost in so-called “long” food supply chains. Throughout my research I encountered several instances of the communicative potential of direct producer-consumer relations, including open picking gardens, “Meet the Farmer” events, and social media posts of newborn calves.

Besides “value-adding”, people also expect local food to be “values-based”, that is, displaying good practices and stewardship (Paxson, 2010, p. 450). This shows how food’s valuation is also connected to current food values, such as animal welfare and nature-inclusion; topics which were also addressed by the farmers and producers that I spoke to. For now, though, I am mostly interested in the perceived need for adding value to food and why korte ketens are assumed to fulfil this need.

An interesting idea that I took from May is that korte ketens in a way “arrange a stage where […] products can be enacted” (2013, p. 71). Looking at such initiatives through the optic of theatre certainly helps to understand how greater visibility and more information charge food with emotional value – which, in turn, might lead to economic value. To a certain degree, the value of food is performed and as korte ketens bring the producer and production process from the backstage to the front, products get a chance to be valued more. This also goes for regional quality, which according to Paxson “is not an a priori quality to be discovered […]; rather, it is something to *do*” (Paxson, 2010, p. 445, my emphasis).

One of the dramatical techniques often employed by korte keten initiatives is storytelling – as also stated in chapter 1. A most effective form of communication, storytelling enables farmers to engage laypeople in their everyday practices. When I asked Mariët and Cindy what has mostly changed on their farm since they started to produce on a smaller scale, open their farm shop and

getting involved in korte ketens, they told me how they have taken up the role of a storyteller and informer much more (Follow-up interview with Mariët & Cindy). They are also doing events and host excursions, in part also because of their location in a nature reserve.

Wendela's practices on the dairy farm reaffirmed this observation, as she often takes her time in her farm shop to explain their methods of cheese making and hosts workshops and teaching aimed at children – I once observed her explaining to customers in detail how holes in cheese are formed, for example. Wim has done similar things with his appearances in the television show of Van Boven where he, too, took up the role of an informer, something which personally gave him "great pleasure" (Interview with Wim). Besides their ambition to preserve artisanal practices, the maxim here is also that storytelling and sharing knowledge are value-adding activities that enthuse people to take the detour and get their groceries directly from the farmer and paying a little extra. Part of the added value of food once people buy it directly from a farmer or through another form of korte keten is also derived from the fact that food becomes more knowable and transparent. Whereas information on the packaging of supermarket-bought remains abstract, knowledge that is transmitted by the original producer becomes more "experiential" (Trubek, 2008, p. 208-209).

Apart from storytelling, another, simpler way of enacting value comes down to specifically stating the origin of a product. In contrast with big food retailers, which offer a largely uniform food supply with no specific attention to place of origin, local food producers and retailers inaugurate a connection between food and place – and in many cases specific regions as well. Anouk, for instance, was proud to mention how she sells thyme from the Provence and ginger from Peru next to her selection of regionally produced vegetables. In one of Amsterdam's many grocery stores committed to local food, I additionally found a map of the Netherlands displaying the locations of each individual supplier of its fresh-looking fruits and vegetables across the country – including a convivial portrait of the farmer in question (Image 4)

By situating foods in the context in which they have been produced, producers and retailers add an experience to the food, turning the mundane acts of grocery shopping and eating into little voyages of discovery. With highly advanced amusement within hand's reach – especially for the contemporary urbanite – farms and urban gardens cannot afford to fall behind and need to offer an experience that goes beyond the mere informational. May describes how an ordinary, German countryside dairy is turned into an attraction: "Next to the dairy lies a wooden building. It houses a

small shop, a restaurant, and a museum whose rustic furnishings and antique tools for dairy production fulfill visitors' nostalgic expectations" (May, 2013, p. 63).

Except for a large, rather commercial goat farm in the south-west, there are not examples of such developed "amusement farms" in Amsterdam. However, it is not difficult to see how Wendela as well as Mariët and Cindy appeal to the expectations of urbanites with the rustic interior of their farm shops, which are either located in a barn or the "barn" is specially built for this purpose. The urban farm that Ann co-runs also gains extra attention because of a café that is located right in the garden, attracting the city dweller who wants to have a drink or read a book in a peaceful place.

When I visited the farm stores, urban gardens and farmers' markets, I was surprised to see how these places have become part of people's (episodic) outings. Most of my fieldwork took place in late September, in gentle weather, and I witnessed several day trippers stepping off their bikes to get a drink at a farm shop and perhaps buy some cheese or meat on their way, resembling the domestic tourism demonstrated in aforesaid television shows. This suggests that korte ketens open up the possibility for turning grocery shopping from a quotidian task, approached with indifference, into leisure activity.

Wendela, as well as Mariët and Cindy play in on these tendencies with their farm stores by offering drinks and snacks – to their annoyance, the latter even felt compelled to offer Coca Cola cans. In collaboration with two nearby farms, Mariët and Cindy also organised a "Open Farm Store Day", inviting people to take a trip along their farms, join a guided tour and come "pet the cows" (Image 5). Cindy told me how they initially wanted to call it a "Waterland" tour, but realised their own farm is not officially part of this designated region north of Amsterdam. Nonetheless, it demonstrates how farmers attempt to relate their practices to a context of regionalism, leisure activity and (domestic) tourism.

Through, as cultural scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett put it, "a collaboration between highly self-conscious producers and consumers" (in: Pétursson & Hafstein, 2022, p. 61), positive feelings are ascribed to local food in similar ways as to French wines or Tuscan delicacies on a holiday abroad. In a way, value is also added to people's immediate surroundings, to "home", and therewith also to home products – in fact, artisanal and local cheeses, vegetables and meats can become "accessories" to a sense of home (May, 2013, p. 71). More specifically, value is added to rural surroundings as leisure space is expanded beyond the limits of city centres. Places of local

food may so become a "creative hub of a symbolic economy" connecting rurality to purity and authenticity (Zukin, 2008, p. 725).

So far, I have talked about farmers' and producers' enactment of (emotional) value and the ways in which they employ techniques of storytelling and setting. I was startled to realise how people like Broekaert and Van Boven also perform their role as consumers with their television shows. As they display appreciation of local food and regional quality, they communicate affect to viewers, who might want to experience these delights themselves. Objects are not inherently happy, but become "happiness means" through the distribution of positive feeling, writes Ahmed (2010). I could not help but think of this as I watch an excited Broekaert and Van Boven meet up with farmers, pick bouquets of fresh vegetables, explore novel types of food, sniff and taste soil types, and eat carefully prepared produce al fresco. At one point, Van Boven even kisses farmer Wim on the mouth after he offers her a bunch of specialties from his garden ('Makreel uit Egmond aan Zee', *Koken met Van Boven,* 2015). In my view, this is the epitome of the enactment of the "happy" lifestyle that local food and korte ketens promise.

The local scenery

In the intro of this chapter, I brought up the revelation that presenters of a travel show encountered as they explored their surroundings in Amsterdam. A similar encounter can be seen in an episode of Van Boven's cooking show in which she goes on her bike for a day out not far from her own home in Amsterdam-Noord and finds out about a neighbouring dairy farmer ('Waterland', *Streken van Van Boven,* 2021). Revelations such as these go to show that the city is perhaps not so aware of its immediate vicinity, let alone the agriculture and food production that takes place there. Both of these shows exhibit a specific urban, consumerist perspective, with a focus on extraordinary experiences and quality products. Van Boven calls the Beemster and Waterland areas the "back garden" of Amsterdam – after all, she remains a "townie on a voyage of discovery" (Steel, 2009, p. 57).

In some way, these fragments, in combination with earlier observations, add to the suspicion that home and its rural surroundings have started to become a "scenery" as well, a space "which serves the purposes of politics, bureaucracy, cultural production, and tourism" (May, 2013, p. 71). This would mean that places of local food production, like small-scale farms and urban gardens, are

integrated into the experience market and its “landscapes of experience”: sought-after spaces of joy and amusement, offering encounters which are as fabricated as they are elusive (O’Dell, 2005, p. 6).

Partly, this is the context in which korte ketens come into being. Mark, for instance, mentioned the boosting of tourism as one of the advantages of korte ketens. At the same time, though, people’s interest in korte ketens also shows a readiness to go beyond the “tourist gaze”, become more than passive observers, and engage in activity, for instance by joining a workshop, a CSA, or a food cooperative (O’Dell, 2005, p. 17). Korte ketens thus respond to a contemporary demand for experiences, for instance by infusing food with stories and seizing it as a moment of education. Such a demand for experiences connected to food could have evolved out of the lack of embeddedness of food – but of also heritage and locality – in Dutch culture (Steel, 2009, p. 111).

Experience, understood as an emotional encounter that leaves an impression, basically serves to bridge a certain distance – between past and present, between city and its (rural) surroundings, between consumer and producer, grocery and origin. By facilitating experiences and exchange, korte ketens and local food thus cater to a need for reconnection with food traditions, Dutch soil, locality, gastronomic wisdom, identity – in other words, the old country.

Chapter 3
: A Face to the Chain

One phone call from a neighbour was all that Beemster farmer Astrid Francis needed to promptly take her tractor to a supermarket chain's head office and unload tons of potatoes on their doorstep (Gerbrandy, 2021; 'Beemster', *Streken van Van Boven,* 2021). The neighbour had informed her that the local supermarket had claimed that her potatoes were "sold out" and thus replaced them with potatoes from Israel. Francis, who had an exclusive contract with the chain, became furious, as she had plenty of her potato cultivar called 'Beemster Valery' in stock. The playful protest action, put on record with a mobile phone, soon attracted media attention. Shortly after, the supermarket chain in question released a statement saying they and "their customers" were willing to support farmer Francis by any means. This instance, taking place in early May 2020, was a part of a broader current of Dutch farmers protesting in the past years, some of whom also found creative means to get rid of their oversupplies (e.g. Pennings, 2020). For some reason, Dutch potatoes have not been ending up on Dutch supermarket shelves.

Three of the people that I spoke to, namely Mariët, Cindy, and Ellen, explicitly said to be inspired by Francis' action, as she made them realise that there is something structurally wrong with the current food supply chain. Others mentioned a different event, equally influential, that has to do with the Lutkemeerpolder. This greenfield land in the outskirts of West Amsterdam, which is exceptionally fertile due to its clay soil, has acquired a cult status ever since it became subject to plans of real estate developers. Since 2018, strong resistance to these plans has risen in the form of '*Platform Behoud Lutkemeer*' ('Platform Preserve Lutkemeer'). On their website, the platform frames the area as another green space "with historical meaning" that has fallen victim to the "real estate machine" (Website *Platform Behoud Lutkemeer* (n.d.), my translation). The Lutkemeerpolder has come to symbolise the perceived relentlessness and unapproachability of spatial planning in Amsterdam, as well as the waning biodiversity in the city. A compelling extra detail to the story is that Ahold Delhaize, a food retail multinational, for long seemed to be involved in the real estate plans.

More than once, the people that I spoke to shared their astonishment about large-scale logistics, which often favour foreign products at the expense of homegrown. Besides these issues

being a matter of local versus global food, the cases of farmer Francis and the Lutkemeerpolder also draw attention to the puzzling and obscure workings of the major food supply chains and corporate expansionism. Each, in a different way, bring up the issue of transparency within the food chain. Frequently, some of the informants' depictions of the current food chain were imbued with distrust, caused mostly by the opaqueness of agri-food business. Many local farmers, urban gardens and food networks therefore aspire to alleviate this distrust within the food chain by investing in openness and close relations with their customers and members. Transparency and trust are certainly not synonymous, but they are closely related as my interviews and observations indicated.

Interestingly, trust and transparency have also inspired a variety of other initiatives, including (digital) platforms mapping and connecting different local food enterprises in Amsterdam and organisations initiating collaboration regarding the regionalisation of the food supply of Amsterdam. In different ways, these initiatives attempt to put an end to the facelessness of the food chain and establish trust between different actors. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the different ways in which issues connected to trust and transparency inspire initiatives promoting korte ketens in the city of Amsterdam. Before doing so, I first need to gain an understanding of the circumstances contributing to the impenetrability that has come to be associated with the Amsterdam food chain. In order to do that, I will start by exploring how some (important) actors within food governance – i.e. policymakers, bankers, and other institutions having power in relation to the food supply – have written about korte ketens.

Amsterdam ambivalent

In his essay on "connecting small and big food systems", Pim Vermeulen, urban planner for the municipality of Amsterdam, opens with the following quote by Steel:

> "Food is a form of dialogue. […] [W]e need open lines of communication between consumers and producers – networks and channels that flow both ways.The global food superhighway is exactly what we don't need: a one-way system that delivers food as though the people at either end had no relationship with one another. It is a system based on profit, nothing else; one that only profits those who run it." (2009, p. 310)

Vermeulen's essay was published in 2012, shortly after a Dutch translation of Steel's *Hungry City* came out. The effect of this book on urban food policy is clearly visible in food policy documents

from this time period. For example, Rabobank, a leading bank in Amsterdam, also chose to use two of Steel's quotes to open their chapters in which they call for the localisation of the Amsterdam food chain (Rabobank, 2012). Certainly, Steel's book offers a rich and insightful account of the urban food supply and the way it has developed over time. Also, her metaphor of the "superhighway" is truly compelling. However, in the same book she is highly critical of the agri-food businesses that, in her view, have been backed and given free rein by banks and policymakers. Hence, the question arises whether both Vermeulen and Rabobank realise they are implicated in the situation they appear to bemoan.

In another document, in which the municipality of Amsterdam, in collaboration with other municipalities, investigates its legal tools to change people's diets, policymakers state it is due to the "food environment" that people in the city are developing increasingly unhealthy eating habits (City Deal Voedsel op de Stedelijke Agenda, 2021). They bring up the scenario of a train station, where people are lured into the consumption of all sorts of allegedly unhealthy foods. Again, it is the question to what extent the municipality realises they have been involved in development plans that were the foundation for the now deplored food environments. For example, the creation of "hubs" around important intersections in the city, such as train and metro stations, has for long been common practice of urban planners and real estate developers. These hubs are supposed to offer all sorts of conveniences, including food retail, and are meant to combine vitality with mobility.

Municipal policymakers have repeatedly announced their plans to control and diminish the amount of fast food in Amsterdam (Hielkema & Obdeijn, 2021). They especially aim at the many fast-food (chain) outlets which take up significant space in the urban streetscape. These plans are part of a policy programme fighting the "obesogenic food environment" and promoting plant-based diets among inhabitants. Within this programme's discourse, burgers, waffles, and other snacks are the great evil. At the same time, urban researchers Iris Hagemans and Julie Ferguson have pointed out how a local loophole opened the door to the opening of a large amount of take-away food stores in the city centre of Amsterdam (2022). Most of these stores cater to the demands of visitors and tourists, offering convenient comfort foods such as waffles and noodle boxes. To a certain degree, the fast-food environment is thus as much the unintended consequence of a legal glitch as it is a natural consequence of a metropolitan economy.

The health effects may not be the only reason why policymakers have targeted fast food. Pétursson draws attention to the way in which fast food (chains) and snacks have come to symbolise

"speed and rootlessness" (Pétursson, 2020, p. 28). A wariness of convenient, faceless, and globalised foods may additionally underpin the municipality's fight against fast food. Korte ketens, which stand for quality over quantity, are naturally a welcome replacement. Frank, urban planner at the municipality, entertains the idea that korte ketens will break with a "production system that has made the Netherlands great" but has left people preoccupied with cheap deals instead of sustainable food relations (Interview with Frank). In an essay published in the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool*, Barbara Baarsma, CEO of Rabobank, laments the "mental distance" between farmers and consumers, which is caused, in her opinion, by the predominance of global value chains and export-mindedness of Dutch agriculture (2019).

At no point does Baarsma mention the fact that these business practices in the past have been financed and encouraged by the same bank that she currently chairs. The mental distance that she describes may be a result of the Taylorism that was introduced to Dutch agriculture from the 1950's onwards under population pressure (Veerman, 2020). Technological innovation aimed at intensifying food production was established by close collaboration between the state, technology industry, and banking business (Bieleman, 2010, p. 303). Ever since, agriculture has become a true industry in the Netherlands, with mass production of relatively low-cost meats, vegetables, and fruits taking place behind closed doors. Baarsma leaves this economic history of Dutch agriculture unmentioned in her essay. Instead, she sets out the benefits of korte ketens for the entire food chain in a way that she makes it seems as if this has always been the better option for all actors within the Dutch food chain.

If anything, it may be the many faces of food governance that render the food chain opaque to outsiders. More than once, the farmers, producers and initiators that I spoke to shared their confusion about the mixed messages coming from the local municipality, for example. On the one hand they claim to help out local food initiatives where they can; on the other, the municipality, in the eyes of these people, has not done enough to prevent supermarket chains from wiping out small entrepreneurs in the city streetscape, nor do they secure a favourable environment for local food initiatives. In her article on this very issue, journalist Floor Milikowski writes how the municipality of Amsterdam seems to act as Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses at the same time. In his book on urban planning, Sennett depicts the former as an activist defending urban communities, while painting the latter as a ruthless urban developer undermining the fabric of the city – or what Sennett calls the "*cité*" (Sennett, 2018, p. 78-89).

A practical example of the janus-faced nature of the municipality is provided by Wendela, who has a wish to construct an environmentally sustainable building out of straw bales as part of her dairy farm. Since there is no legal framework for such "pioneering" undertakings (yet), this idea proved "too" innovative for the municipality to grant a licence. Moreover, since our interview took place, Wieke is forced to look for a new location with her food network, FoodCoopNoord, because the cultural centre where they are based needs to close down late 2022 at the request of the municipality. These instances add up to the experience of small-scale entrepreneurs and initiators that they are not backed by the local government. At the same time, the municipality of Amsterdam published a rather forward-looking Food Strategy (*'Voedselstrategie'*), in which they claim to support "sustainable entrepreneurship" and "regional production and distribution (*Gemeente Amsterdam,* n.d., 'Voedselstrategie', my translation).

In the meantime, the concept of 'korte ketens' has become a buzzword among policymakers and bankers. Strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), among other things, have also lead big food retailers like Albert Heijn to introduce local food to their range of products, in the shape of a designated local food isle or specific product line (Zwart & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). Essentially, these retailers try to marry large-scale distribution with locality and transparency, printing pictures of farmers on their products or offer local specialties. The result is a situation in which municipality and CSA, supermarket and food network, banker and urban farmer stand side by side in Amsterdam in their call for korte ketens. In a situation as such, food governance appears to take no responsibility for the current state of the food supply chain and, instead, distances themselves from it. This ambivalence that pertains in Dutch sustainable food discourses only adds to the perceived impenetrability of the major food supply chain.

Intermezzo: Amsterdam in flux

To a certain extent, the aforedescribed ambivalence is built into the city of Amsterdam and signifies how priorities in urban development have changed over time. An example of such a shift has to do with vibrancy and mobility. Sennett describes evocatively how an "emphasis on free flow" once put "mobility at the heart of defining a 'good city'" (Sennett, 2018, pp. 36-7). This focus in traditional urban development on smooth and fluent infrastructure had all to do with a concern about congestions and traffic jams that have historically pervaded cities. In present times, mobility is

mostly achieved through public transportation, motorway connectivity and smart city centre layouts. Sennet states that the materialisation of free-flowing cities has given rise to an urban dweller who cares more about passing speedily and easily through a city than "knowing it viscerally" (Idem., p. 37) In other words, efficiency and speed are now an important part of the urban mentality as mobility has become synonymous with freedom and vibrancy.

As Steel writes, 'vibrant' is "every urban developer's favourite adjective" (Steel, 2009, p. 146). But what was vibrant then is not necessarily vibrant now. That is, the way urban developers have construed 'vibrancy' has shifted. Big shopping malls, with all amenities under one roof, were once meant to incarnate vibrancy, to give an example. Based on the Food Strategy, urban gardens, community kitchens, food education programs and local food initiatives now promise liveliness and wholesomeness according to the municipality of Amsterdam, as these spaces underline the "social function of food". Moreover, Frank told me that one of the municipality's ambitions is to establish a "connection between the city and the surrounding production landscape", thereby "making that production more visible" (Interview with Frank). It seems that visibility and connectivity between city and countryside have gained importance in urban development – at least on the drawing board.

The recent focus of urban planners in Amsterdam on visibility of food production suggest that a situation has arisen in which city dwellers have somehow turned blind to (local) food production. Whether this is true or not, it is not a surprise that the city is less connected to its rural "production landscape", considering that most development plans have for long been aimed at ensuring smooth transportation within the city but not necessarily outwards. Mariët and Cindy, for example, indicated that their main challenge is to persuade people from the city to make the extra effort to come visit their farm just outside of Amsterdam, which is hardly accessible by public transport – admittedly, I myself broke some sweat cycling their way. It is questionable if people are willing to spend that much time shopping for groceries. Ellen expressed some dissatisfaction with some of her customers who collect their local products in a hurry after taking their kids from the nursery. As I was helping out at a handover of local foods at Anouk's food network called '*Buurderij*', I also noticed how some customers did not have time to chat to the farmers who were also present that day. It was in the afternoon on a weekday, and people were probably on their way home from work.

With the experienced time crunch of everyday life, as well as a free-flowing infrastructure that is built on efficiency, it is no wonder that the social function of food is not always on the mind

of the average city dweller. At the same time, Ellen explicitly stated the value of bringing local food into the city centre of Amsterdam and accommodate (too) busy customers. The concept of her food network is, to some degree, also built on a clientele who has no time to travel to the outskirts of the city to pick up their groceries. In a way, she demonstrates a certain pragmatism that policymakers who expect urbanites to deliberately seek the rural landscape and believe in the inherent "connecting force" of food lack. Although her ambition is to bring back slower and closer food relations to the city centre of Amsterdam, she accepts the many different rhythms represented in the city. However, Ellen's food network also shows how it is due to busy lifestyles that intermediaries like her appear within the food chain – inevitably at the cost of a degree of transparency.

To a certain extent, korte ketens, which are all about establishing interaction between consumers and producers, go against the tide in a dynamic city built on free flow and convenience. Indeed, korte ketens require a certain amount of time and receptivity that urbanites are not always able to work up. At the same time, the way korte ketens challenge this receptivity also partially explains their appeal. In a chapter called 'The Competent Urbanite', Sennett poses the question how the experientially "impoverished" city dweller can "better engage with the *cité"* (Sennett, 2018, p. 171, original italics). Among his suggestions is the cultivation of "street-smarts"; in other words, embodied ways of knowing the city, for example through smell, touch and sound. Another suggestion is to stroll more through a city and to explore unfamiliar places, instead of only navigating through it from point A to B. Korte ketens, in the form of an urban farm or a farm store just outside of the city centre, stimulate urbanites to explore corners of the city that are perhaps located outside of their routines but re-engage them in multisensory ways.

Food close by

The context of relentless urban development, bureaucratic hurdle, and confusing statements of support by key actors in food governance, as illustrated earlier, cultivates distrust among local food producers and initiators. It leads many of them to do things differently altogether, glorifying independence and civic cooperation. In these cases, korte ketens are the outcome of food initiatives' urge to bypass conventional food retail, agri-food business, and authorities by taking matters into their own hands. These initiatives are exceptionally invested in close relationships with purchasers, suppliers or between participants, as they try to reinstate trust within the food chain. Essential to

these relationships, it turned out, is the relatively small scale on which they operate. For example, all four food networks that are included in this research, have a maximum capacity. Wieke mentioned how 50 members is the amount of people with which her food network is still able to maintain their core principles; if it becomes more, they will have to make undesirable concessions.

Ann was most vocal about preserving the small scale of the CSA. She explained to me how each urban farm that she co-runs can handle a maximum of 100 members, otherwise “you lose something” (Interview with Ann). When I asked her what this “something” exactly entails, Ann pointed out the interaction between farmers and members that is key to their association. ‘Growth’ is something that the CSA defines in terms of appreciation and well-being among their people; to them, the volume of production or revenue is irrelevant. There are also other reasons why initiatives cannot or do not want to expand. Ellen, for instance, stated that her network can expand to up to 50 customers, but if it is going to be more, she said, “someone else can take over”, because she will not be able to handle all the work. In general, to these initiatives, growth is not synonymous with expansion. Instead, they want to inspire other people to initiate their own food networks and rather see their initiatives multiply, something which Van Kampen also found in her research into alternative food networks across the Netherlands (2020).

Besides operating on a small-scale, I also found examples of food networks that employ different organisation structures – different compared to conventional enterprises, that is. Ann explained to me how all members of the CSA are encouraged to participate in collective decision-making, which takes place monthly and is subdivided in different committees – 5 in total, in analogy with the amount of fingers on each hand. The food network in which Wieke participates also has a democratic approach, although they rely more on each person’s participation. This means that each member has to help out during a handover or transport every once in a while. Their food supply is also based on a combination of farmers’ yields and members’ demands. Most of these “alternative” conceptualisations of food consumption are also shown by specific words that are used to address involved people. The words “consumer” or “customer” were not heard that often. Wieke’s food network only involves “*leden”* (‘members’), whereas the CSA consists of “*boeren*” (‘farmers’) and “*oogsters*” (harvesters).

In a slightly different way, the described closeness of relations is also noticeable within the farm stores that I visited. First of all, the farmer’s goods are usually produced only meters away and the animals with which they work graze on the same premises. Mariët and Cindy, as well as

Wendela, said they find it especially important to allow their customers to look around on their farms and so be transparent. The second time that I visited Mariët's and Cindy's farms, they were not present in the farm store during open hours, which meant that I had to walk into the cowshed and find them myself. Not only did this situation establish trust towards their products, but they also demonstrated trust towards me as a customer. Next to their own goods, these farm stores usually sell products by other producers as well. When I asked Wendela about the products she sells, she said "it has to be a match" (Interview wit Wendela). Mariët and Cindy also pointed out they prefer a "personal relation" to the producers they collaborate with (Follow-up interview with Mariët and Cindy).

Close relations are key to above initiatives, which means that there is a degree of mutual involvement, with as few intermediaries as possible. In that way, consumers engage more with food production, sometimes even participate in it, but farmers and food producers are also more attuned to consumers. Through these transparent, "shorter" food relations, both food consumption and production become more meaningful. This opens the way for solidarity within the food chain. Wieke, not a farmer herself, said that what she values about korte ketens are a fair price for farmers and giving back their financial independence. As the case of farmer Francis illustrated, many farmers have an exclusive contract with retailers, which puts them in a highly dependent position. Most retailers have lots of providers to choose from, which further pushes down the price and creates a distorted situation. Closer, unmediated relations between consumers and producers, which sometimes simply means being more visible to each other, could overcome these mechanisms.

Food connects

A lack of visibility or opaqueness of food production is commonly believed to be a source of all sorts of deficiencies within the food chain, including a general disengagement of consumers from the context in which their foodstuffs came to be. In a document stating the municipality of Amsterdam's future spatial plans, policymakers write: "The origin of food is barely visible within the city, which causes us to feel no responsibility towards environmental and health costs" (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021, p. 200, my translation). Naturally, 'visibility' is then believed to be the magic formula. It is brought up in Frank's appeal for making food production surrounding Amsterdam more "visible", with which he hopes that people will become more willing to pay extra.

Certainly, the examples of the CSA and food network show how close relations can bring change to the food chain, but visibility of food production is only a part of what these initiatives are about. However, there are also initiatives for whom visibility has been the main purpose for existing.

Van Amsterdamse Bodem (‘Made in Amsterdam’) is an example of an organisation that steps in when it comes to the (in)visibility of local food in Amsterdam. Jitske, communications specialist at the mostly digital platform, told me it is their ambition to connect different food initiatives operating in the city and its surroundings, as well as “generate visibility” of local producers (Interview with Jitske). One of the outcomes is an online overview of all kinds of food initiatives throughout Amsterdam, with which they intend to make it easier for people to search for options if they want to eat more locally. The overview shows nearby urban farms, food collectives, and local grocery stores, among other things, in just one click. In addition, their agenda keeps people up-to-date with all sorts of street markets, food workshops, and open days across Amsterdam. According to Jitske, information about local food used to be rather fragmented and dispersed among different websites of small-scale initiatives. By facilitating a central point of communication they aim to make local food more accessible and approachable for people in Amsterdam.

Van Amsterdamse Bodem's function as a central point of communication is also demonstrated by instances in which they helped citizen-based initiatives acquire the right (financial) resources to get off the ground. Furthermore, Jitske told me how, besides events and activities engaging consumers and would-be initiators, the platform also hosts events linking current producers and initiators in Amsterdam with each other while facilitating “a look in each other’s kitchen” (Interview with Jitske). She has noticed that these actors rarely ever communicate between them and are “caught up” in their own practices. Here, another aspect of (in)visibility within the food chain comes to the fore. It is not just that consumers have become disconnected from producers, but also that producers and other actors within the food chain have become disconnected from each other – or, at least, have become invisible to each other.

Precisely this last point, namely to establish communication between important actors connected to the food supply, provided the impetus for the network *Voedsel Verbindt* (‘Food Connects’). By organising events on sustainable and local food, this organisation instigates the exchange of knowledge within their network, which includes bigger actors such as Rabobank, the municipality and province of North-Holland, as well as smaller enterprises and initiatives. Gerry, lecturer in sustainable economics and chairwoman of the organisation, hopes that bringing different

actors within the food chain in touch with one another will establish mutual trust and stimulate a sense of individual accountability (Interview with Gerry). According to her, the localisation of the food supply has become such an intricate issue that all involved actors need to get around the table and, together, work on “large-scale” solutions. In the long run, the commitment to the network could mean that representatives can hold each other accountable.

In a way, Voedsel Verbindt and Van Amsterdamse Bodem make an attempt to put and end to the anonymity of the food chain of Amsterdam and its environs. With the events they are organising and the platform they are setting up, they bring different actors into contact with each other within a food chain that otherwise risks being faceless and cluttered. In the meantime, they additionally introduce rituals of cooperation to the Amsterdam food supply. By facilitating exchange – which, according to Sennett is essential to such cooperation – they enable different types of solidarity and reciprocity (2012, p. 93-95). Exchanges may enlarge differences between different actors and fuel competition and animosity, but eventually repetition and dialogue could open the way for overcoming these differences as well. Time will tell whether the intended cooperation will get off the ground – the pandemic has made big gatherings impossible most of the time since these organisations were founded.

Arnold, emeritus professor of landscape planning and renowned for his involvement in several organisations in the field of sustainable food in Amsterdam, said something interesting about Voedsel Verbindt. During his involvement in the organisation, he noticed how the network mostly provided an opportunity for policymakers “to be among their counterparts” and gather with people who “speak the same language” – which I interpret as other actors in the field of food governance (Interview with Arnold). This observation has prompted Arnold to make an effort to involve people from all walks of life in his recently founded ‘Food Council MRA’. Inspired by other food councils around the world, he hopes to develop this council into an official democratic body with political authority, giving a voice to citizen-based initiatives, small producers, and citizens too.

In a document that essentially laid the foundation for the food council, Arnold and others named this concept a “table democracy”, i.e. a type of consultation in which all relevant parties get around the table to discuss a particular issue (Kennisprogramma Duurzaam Door, 2018). Next to a different way of organising the food supply, organisations like Voedsel Verbindt, Van Amsterdamse Bodem and the Food Council MRA demonstrate how korte ketens give rise to exchange and

cooperation on a larger scale, as well as innovative ways of decision-making. A commitment to accountability and visibility within food relations, which lays the foundation for many small-scale korte ketens initiatives, also drives these organisations. In a way, trust and transparency seem to have become the mantra of the korte keten, pertaining to many different levels and domains.

In his account of cooperation and the "de-skilling" of society, Sennet is not devoid of nostalgia – although he himself denies this – as he writes how society is "losing the skills of cooperation needed to make a complex society work" (2012, p. 9). According to him, people's capacities to cooperate are essentially already there, but "risk being wasted by modern society" (Ibid.). Indeed, with mass production and important decision-making regarding food taking place behind closed doors and the existence of "long" global value chains, capacities to interact and cooperate are being wasted. Despite all its challenges, korte ketens re-engage different people within the food chain and compel them to equip themselves with important skills to exchange and cooperate with others. Urbanites in particular, who dwell in a free-flowing but also more inward-looking environment, are so forced to look around and open up their eyes to their (rural) surroundings, interacting with people who may be intractably different.

Discussion
: *Food is a Dialogue*

When I grew up, I was told to buy (fair trade) cane sugar from producers located in the Global South and bypass white sugar from Dutch farmers who were subsidised by the European Union. Also, I remember being told not to buy any fresh foods from my home country's many greenhouses and go for Mediterranean fruits and vegetables instead – because these had “at least seen some natural sunlight”. Nowadays, local food is on the rise within the Netherlands, not the least because a global pandemic has reminded many people of the importance of a solid regional food system. This development over time shows how both food ethics and aesthetics are continually subject to change.

In essence, the emergence of korte ketens also signifies a shift of ideas in the Netherlands regarding the country’s economy, identity, leisure, and value. As I wrap up the thesis, I will summarise which circumstances in the city of Amsterdam I found to have contributed to this shift of ideas. From there, I move on to some concluding remarks on the korte keten in Amsterdam, connecting all the concepts and materials that, so far, have sent the analysis in different directions. Also, I will reflect on the applicability of the research. Lastly, I will leave the reader with some suggestions for future research or, better, questions that arose out of my own research but I could not pursue myself due to lack of time.

To recapitulate

My analysis started off “in media res”, describing the mood of nostalgia captivating some of the participants in the research, as well as policy documents and larger-scale organisations. I used the framework of nostalgia to focus attention to subtle experiences of rootlessness, discontinuity, identity loss that have pervaded the city of Amsterdam and inspired different initiatives to establish slower, more time-intensive food relations, while also invoking a sense of place through techniques of storytelling. With that, I have tried to demonstrate how nostalgia is by no means a reactionary and lethargic state of feeling, but instead something that may galvanise people into taking responsibility for practices and traditions that are to be safeguarded within the urban space.

A similar urge to preserve relations to the past, as well as to the local, lies at the heart of the explorations of Dutch heritage and terroir that I discussed in the succeeding section of the analysis. Here, I have tried to demonstrate the self-conscious approach to self, everyday practices and culture that animates farmers and producers who situate their practices in notions of terroir or local heritage as well as consumers who are on a voyage of discovery within their own habitual space. In my view, this is the backdrop against which local food and locality is construed within Amsterdam, as it is still not self-evident to many urbanites to consume locally, meaning that purchasing from a nearby farmer mostly remains a sporadic, though value-adding experience. Value that, once it turns into monetary value, is also called for by policymakers.

In the meantime, initiatives in Amsterdam promoting slower, local, and warmer food relations coexist with an urban space in which speed and efficiency predominate. Urban development has long been focused on ensuring mobility – also demonstrated by smoothly designed self-service cash desks built into supermarkets – which appears to be at odds with calls for korte ketens, which imply fundamentally different forms of consumption. However, korte ketens initiatives also bring a face to the chain in the sense that transparency is established between different actors within the food chain. Perhaps, such encounters of transparency facilitate a type of dialogic exchange that instils in urbanites a receptive and cooperative mentality.

Lastly, I have shown how korte ketens urge on different forms of political organisation and decision-making in Amsterdam. In that sense, korte ketens are more than locally or ethically embedded ways of food procurement. Korte ketens also provide a possibility for cooperation and food democracy. Next to visibility and transparency, these organisations are mostly devoted to reinstating trust within the food chain. Because of this association of trust many different actors, including both bankers and food activists, now stand side by side in their call for korte ketens.

A wholesome chain

In different ways, korte ketens arise from an urgency to bridge a certain distance – between past and present, place and food, producer and consumer – that pertains to the current food supply of Amsterdam. They are meant to "mend the broken chain", to reiterate the words of Pétursson. It struck me how korte ketens were on many occasions presented as a panacea for all sorts of deficiencies within Amsterdam, including its waning biodiversity, public health issues, economic

instability, and social exclusion. Again and again, korte ketens are framed as more responsible, aware, complete, fair, and valuable, among other things. In other words, korte ketens appeal to a notion of wholesomeness.

This abstract sense of wholesomeness connected to korte ketens captivates policymakers, who want to see citizens consume consciously – meaning more healthily and less wastefully – and know that just providing information is not sufficient to change their behaviour (WRR, 2017). It also comes back in the accounts of nostalgic city dwellers, in whose eyes korte ketens correspond more to past food relations. In the meantime, this wholesomeness gives meaning to the everyday practices of CSAs and local producers, who can see the appreciation in their customers' and members' eyes.

Does this mean that korte ketens are indeed the magic solution that the policymakers from the introduction made it seem? Do all kinds of different interests and aims indeed come together in this concept? Now, food appears to be preeminently a topic that gathers people around the table – to mention a truism that is repeated ad nauseam, "we all eat". However, the food supply chain also brings many different levels of power and governing. As Jhagroe has suggested, emotional connections to food may compete with market-embedded understandings of food within sustainable food discourses (2019, p. 195). Therefore, the korte keten might be a nostalgic engagement or a form of resistance to some, but an interesting investment and stimulant to the local economy to others.

And so, Mark, Gerry, Jitske, and others facilitate ritualistic brainstorms about "scaling up" korte ketens, whereas Ann or Wieke do whatever they can to keep their initiative small-scale and independent. It is quite the challenge to bring all understandings of food together within the collective endeavour to establish korte ketens. This brings to light the inherent polyphonic nature of food, and sustainable food more specifically. Certainly, many different storylines and intentions come together in the korte keten, but it also does justice to the many initiatives that have committed to it to recognise the particularity of each individual perspective. In the end, it is because of all kinds of intimate connections and interdependencies it sustains that food gives rise to multiple biographies.

A look into the future

In the course of doing this research, I have repeatedly felt compelled to reflect on the applicability of the research findings. On one occasion, I presented preliminary results to a group of policymakers working for the city of Amsterdam. Based on these experiences, I realised how revealing the multifaceted nature of korte ketens as well as food democracy, and learning about the divergent context in which these emerge was valuable to these people, who otherwise may approach it as a monolith. This research is specifically aimed at policymakers, organisers, and initiators who want to understand the context in which korte ketens emerge within a city like Amsterdam.

Furthermore, the research gives insight into the application of concepts such as heritage, locality, and cooperation. There has not been much research on recent resurgences of interest in Dutch culinary heritage, which has also motivated me to inquire into this trend. Sticking to the city of Amsterdam has helped me to define and delineate the research field, but most matters that I have discussed are applicable to the Netherlands as a whole.

Also, with this research I wanted to add a specifically cultural analytical case study of SFSCs and alternative food networks in the Netherlands. So far, much of the research in the Netherlands has been dictated by transitions theory. Such research surely has been very helpful in understanding the degree to which korte ketens contribute to broader sustainable transitions, but has not addressed the cultural context in which they take shape. However, transitions theory is more equipped to detect the frictions that stand in the way of sustainable development. Integrating a cultural understanding of korte ketens into transitions theory may prove fruitful here.

In general, I have come across several structural tensions underlying korte ketens – for instance between small-scale and large-scale, between more "alternative" and activist variants of SFSCs and market-embedded ones. This is a topic that could be pursued in the future. Finally, I am curious about the extent to which korte ketens become part of people's everyday shopping. Will visits to a local farm store remain episodic leisure activities or will they become ingrained into people's routines? In that respect, the role of supermarkets cannot be overlooked in establishing korte ketens. Future studies will have to focus on these dynamics.

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Images

Image 1:

“*We do not rush our bread. Our sourdough is allowed to ‘mature’ for 24 hours. The bread you buy now, has been hand-knead yesterday, risen after that and been baked today.”*

[by author]

Image 2:

“*Delicious! Organic* ‘Weespermoppen*’ : classic Dutch treat made from almonds.”*

[by author]

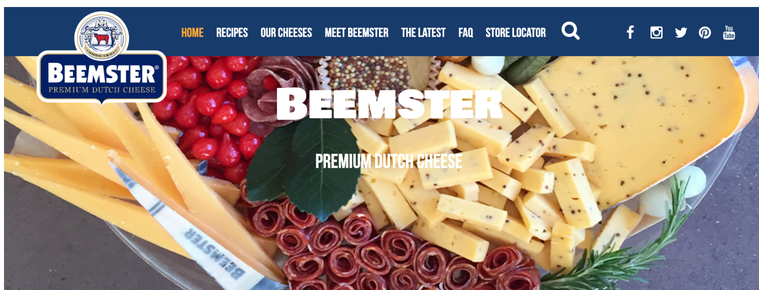

Image 3:

[see: www.beemstercheese.us]

BEEMSTER IS MORE THAN A CHEESE. IT'S A PLACE. IT'S A FLAVOR. TUCKED INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE OF NORTH HOLLAND, THE BEEMSTER IS RENOWNED FOR PRODUCING THE RICHEST AND CREAMIEST MILK, WHICH OUR MASTER CHEESEMAKERS USE TO HANDCRAFT BEEMSTER'S AWARD-WINNING CHEESES.

Image 4:

[by author]

Image 5:

"*Open Farm Store Day!*
On October 23 Arken AE, 't Zuivelhuisje *and* Natuurboerderij Hardebol *organise a open farm store day. On this day, from 10:00-16:00, several activities will take place on 3 farms including special offers in the stores. Think of a guided tour, playing on the farm for the small ones, petting cows and many more! A nice outing for young and old!"*