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# **The motivation of Gartencoop members' to participate in field activities: The Grounded Theory Approach**

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## SUMMARY

Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, is a different type of agricultural development that aims to produce organic, sustainable and locally-grown products, and at the same time tighten the relationship between consumers and producers. CSA projects can be found all over the world. In Germany, the first project was founded in 1988, and at the present moment there are about 30 projects of its kind. Gartencoop in Freiburg is a CSA organization that started in 2011, and it consists of around 250 members. Gartencoop aims to develop a sense of community through the concept of ‘solidarity economy’ by growing organic vegetables in a sustainable and climate friendly way, and distributing them locally among its members. Members of Gartencoop must contribute not only financially but also by participating in field and distribution activities. As a result of fluctuating levels of commitment and engagement noted by the Gartencoop organizers, the specific factors motivating the members to participate in the field activities will become the research focus of this master thesis.

Grounded Theory will be used as the methodology of choice due to the fact that it allows the flexibility for the researcher to go back and forth between data collection and the analysis of the information. Members of Gartencoop will be interviewed to provide the data necessary to develop the hypotheses that explain the behavior regarding members’ commitment and participation. In addition, members from the Anbau and Support team will also be interviewed in order to add relevant information that could help to explain the perspective regarding members’ motivation and to create a more holistic view of the subject of study.

During this study, it was found out that there are a number of motivating and discouraging factors that have an impact on members’ participation. Developing the sense of community seems to be the most important factor that needs to be addressed in order to increase the commitment and participation of members. Therefore, it is important that the organization not only becomes aware of these issues but actively develops strategies to increase the engagement of members and to ensure the continuity of Gartencoop.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In a world with increasing pressures on the natural resources, the agricultural sector also faces challenges due to an increasing food demand. One solution for more sustainable, organic and locally produced agriculture are CSAs. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture, and aims to create a more direct link between producers and consumers. The basic idea consists that the farm members pay a given amount of money at the beginning of the season, and in return farmers provide fresh vegetables, fruits and many other farm products directly to consumer members (Swanson, 2000). By committing to a price at the beginning of the season, the members share in the risks of production and decrease the need for marketing by the producer (Swanson, 2000). This impacts very positively the farmer, who can concentrate on the land and the production of the food. There are many types of CSA projects all around the world. In Germany, Gartencoop is a community supported agriculture (CSA) initiative based in the city of Freiburg.

As a CSA initiative, Gartencoop aims to promote sustainable farming through the following principles: environmental and climate-friendly farming techniques, seasonal diet (less animal foods), organic goods, short supply chain (local production), solidarity economy (no profit), and financial self-sustainability (Gartencoop, 2013). The initiative consists of about 250 members, who have to contribute in two main ways: monetary contribution (by paying a one-time deposit and monthly fee) and work contribution (members are encouraged to participate five times a year). The whole foundation of Gartencoop is based on this participatory idea, where the members contribute not only financially but also in the production/distribution activities. Without their help the successful development of this project will not be possible.

At the present moment Gartencoop is most interested in assessing the contribution of members in the field, since this activity is of crucial importance for ensuring the production and subsequent delivery of goods among all members. Therefore what motivates the members to go and help with the farming activities will become the major point of research of this master thesis.

In this project, it is intended to explore the motivational forces that fuel members' participation. In contrast, the discouraging factors will also be assessed to be able to understand better which are the obstacles that stop or reduce members' desire to help. How will this assessment be done? In order to get closer to members' way of

thinking, anonymous interviews will be conducted following Grounded Theory guidelines. Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories “grounded” in the data themselves (Charmaz, 2006). By following the grounded theory methodology, the idea is to create a personal space where members feel confident and in a hurry to really communicate what they think, and what they believe about Gartencoop. Only by creating this open atmosphere, it will be possible to penetrate members’ thoughts and belief systems, which are necessary for creating the most comprehensive theory. Not only members will be interviewed. But also members from the Anbau (gardeners and farmers) and Support team will be addressed in order to bring a more holistic view to the subject of study.

After conducting the necessary interviews, a list of hypothesis will be created from the data, which then will be validated by the members. These findings will become at the end, the constructing theory that explains the motivation behind members’ participation. This theory will try to encompass the different points of view and at the same time link similar behaviors of members. Although the theory might not be able to explain the actions of all 260 members, by staying close to Grounded Theory methods a more universal approach will be expected.

With this study, the researcher hopes to bring more clarification to the organization regarding the behavior and the participation of members. By discovering what are the sources of the motivation and discouragement of members, the project might be able to develop strategies and solutions for increasing the engagement and commitment of members towards the organization. This would not only impact positively the cooperative but also ensure the continuity of a very important socially and environmentally friendly project like Gartencoop.

## **2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This section is developed with the objective of introducing the reader to the idea of Community Supported Agriculture. The reader will be guided starting from the definition of a CSA project, its main characteristics, the evolution of CSA in Germany and ending by a short introduction to the project of study of this master thesis, “The Gartencoop”. It is important to add, that the section of background information was developed after the interviews with the members and all the analytical work was done. This was done with the intention, following Grounded Theory Guidelines, to avoid putting any pre-conceived ideas to the study in question.

### **2.1 What is a CSA?**

There are many definitions to CSA. According to the U.S.A department of Agriculture (USDA) (DeMuth, 1993), in basic terms, “CSA consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community’s farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Members or shareholders of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer’s salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm’s bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land. Members also share in risks, including poor harvest due to unfavorable weather or pests”. Another definition by Lamb (1994), says, “In its starkest terms, Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a concept describing a community-based organization of producers and consumers. The consumers agree to provide direct, up-front support for the local growers who will produce their food. The growers agree to do their best to provide a sufficient quantity and quality of food to meet the needs and expectations of the consumers. Within this general arrangement there is room for much variation, depending on the resources and desires of the participants”. And Adam (2006) adds that “The original idea of CSA was to re-establish a sense of connection to the land for urban dwellers and to foster a strong sense of community and cooperation with a decided social justice goal to provide food security for disadvantaged groups”.

So in basic terms, CSA projects aim to reconnect consumers and producers in a more direct way, as a kind of community where the risks and benefits are share

between the farmers and the members. Depending on how the relationship between the consumers and producers is established, there can be many variations to the CSA idea. But the core concept is that the CSA tries to adapt to the needs of the shareholders. By determining in advance what and how to produce, it creates a needs-based rather than production-based economy (Lamb, 1994).

By following this new economic approach, the relationship between consumers and producers is brought much more closer, not only impacting positively in the economic but also in the social, ecological and political aspects. Depending on the connection between the two parties, according to the USDA, there can be two main types of CSAs:

- Subscription CSA (farmer-driven): In this approach, the farmer organizes the CSA and makes most of the management decisions. Farm work is not required of subscribers. A permutation is the farmer cooperative, where two or more farmers organize to produce a variety of products for the CSA basket (Adam, 2006).
- Shareholder CSA (consumer-driven): This type of CSA typically features an existing “core group” that organizes subscribers and hires the farmer. The core group may be a not-for-profit organization and land may be purchased, leased, or rented. Most key decisions are made by core group personnel. Farm work might be required by the subscribers (Adam, 2006).

In this case, the project of study “Gartencoop” falls more in the second category of CSA, where members must and are encouraged to participate on the field activities. In addition a mixed core group composed not only by the shareholders but also by gardeners is in charge of taking the operational and management decisions.

## **2.2 Key characteristics of a CSA**

- Sharing Risk:

In a CSA project, the farmer or gardeners are not left alone with all the risks related to agricultural production. On the contrary these risks are shared among the members of the community and the farmers. According to Lamb (1994), in addition to committing themselves to supporting a farm over a given year, CSA consumers often



carry a large part of the risk associated with a season's harvest. In the current economic and market systems, where a farm usually has no connection to consumers, the risks connected with injury, crop failure, or fluctuations of market prices are carried by the farmer (Lamb, 1994). Based on the principle that a farmer's needs must be met even if there is a crop failure, consumers in a CSA project usually pledge to carry the operational risks (Lamb, 1994). This greatly releases all the economic pressures on the farmer, allowing him/her to actually focus on the important agricultural activities, thus impacting very positively all the food production system.

- Community:

“A crucial element in CSA projects is the degree to which the feeling of community exists among the consumers and farmers. In many of the successful CSAs there is a sense of connection among the consumers through the other activities they participate in” (Lamb, 1994). In cases where this feeling of community is lacking, the farmers or the core group should make a real effort to develop this sense of cooperative, which would not only impact positively the development of the farm but also the lives of the members of the CSA project. Lamb (1994), explains that for many people who live isolated lives, this sense of belonging to a piece of land and a group of people connected to a farm can be a gratifying and life-sustaining experience.

Also, in the subject of community, Abbot (2000) expresses, “if the CSA movement is to succeed in its agenda of transforming the production and distribution of food through communitarian means, the movement must inevitably deal with the “I and We” tension of communal life identified by Etzioni (1996). In his conception, communities must continuously adjust the relationship between the centrifugal inclinations of members in contrast to the centripetal tendencies of community. In the contemporary market place, where choice, convenience, and value are salient priorities, the “I and We” tension poses a particular challenge. At a minimum CSA members must change habits of purchasing, processing, and eating to adapt to the production and distribution constraints of CSA farms”. What Abbot tries to explain here is that the community aspect of a CSA project might not be suitable for all people. Members who decide to join a CSA initiative, might have to make compromises regarding commitment, food choice and nutrition habits in order to adapt to the organization. Members will have to find a balance between their individual values and those from the community. In other words, members who share the same values and feel identified

with the core ideals of the project will join and remain part of the cooperative. On the contrary for members who might discover disagreements between their values/ideals and those from the community, will probably leave the cooperative. For this reason, the development of the community feeling, which includes sharing values and ideals between consumers and producers, is of crucial importance for the long-term development of the CSA.

- Motivation:

Another very important characteristic, which is intrinsically related to the community feeling, is the motivation of members to join and participate on a CSA project. The motivation of members can become a reflection of their attitude towards the organization and thus greatly impact the development of the cooperative.

The motivation of members begins at the moment when they decide to join a CSA initiative. In a study done by Brehm (2008), “Concerns over the quality of the food and how the food is grown and produced are the most commonly agreed upon motivating factors for CSA membership. In contrast, concerns that relate to improving respondents’ community, building social networks via the CSA, and motivations based on specific health conditions are much less important motivating factors for joining CSAs. The low levels of motivation ascribed to a desire to develop a stronger sense of community and a desire to meet new people who care about where their food comes from are also noteworthy. Initially, they seem to indicate that concern for the community and the related development of social connections (social capital) through CSA activities are not a significant motivating factor for joining a CSA”. In addition, “when examining the relationships between motivations for joining CSAs and community attachment, strong community attachment clearly has a positive influence on motivations for joining a CSA. This relationship between community attachment and motivations may also be grounded within a concern for the overall well-being of that community and a desire to be supportive of local community members who grow food. This implies that community satisfaction appears to work to create a motivation to continue to improve their community as a place to live through their actions” (Brehm, 2008).

Other studies have also found similar results regarding the motivation for joining a CSA project. In a study done by Abbot (2000), “concern for a healthy environment and desire for fresh and organic food led the list, followed by support for local food

sources, knowing how and where their food was grown, and a desire to eat vegetables in season. Three items are especially noteworthy for their low rating—a sense of doing something with a community, an opportunity to attend festivals and events, and price”. In another study done by Goland (2002), “social, political, and environmental concerns are important in motivating people to join a CSA. Kane's interviews with Southeastern CSA shareholders show that ‘desire for organic produce’ is the top reason shareholders joined a CSA, followed by ‘freshness’. After that, the desire for ‘locally grown produce/’ to ‘support a local farmer’, ‘concern for the environment’, and to ‘support a small farmer’, are all listed as important reasons for joining a CSA”.

In short, the quality, seasonality and freshness of food; the desire to support local environmentally friendly food sources and concerns regarding how the food is grown and produced are the most important motivational factors mentioned by members for joining a CSA. In contrast, the community sense and the desire to build social networks are much less important reasons for joining a cooperative. From this it seems that members give a higher value to the goods (food) and the environmental benefits than the social and political aspect of a CSA project.

It is also important to add, that the researcher discovered that most of the literature regarding CSAs deals only with the motivation of members to join a project. In this sense, literature that specifically addresses the motivation of members to participate in field activities was not found. Therefore, this study will aim to explore the reasons behind the behavior of members to help and participate in the farm.

- Participation:

Although in most CSA projects around the world an active participation of members in the farm is not required, there are a number of initiatives (including Gartencoop) that encourage and promote the participation of members. In a study done by Abbot (2000) it was found out that “those members who participated more extensively in their farms experienced greater rewards. They were the ones who found that membership provided an avenue for civic responsibility and enhanced their feelings and connectedness to the land and the generative quality of nature. Their results also indicate that high participation correlated with a broader understanding of the implications of CSA and with a greater commitment to its ideals. But about half of the CSA shareholders did not participate beyond purchasing and consuming their share”.

From this it seems that participation of members in the farm can act as a powerful source of motivation and engagement.

In addition, Goland (2002) says that the “involvement of shareholders in the work of the farm, logistics of produce delivery, and even a willingness to tailor share size and composition to individual needs, are all aspects of CSA organization that together give each CSA a distinctive character. How these aspects of variability ultimately affect CSA success, such as shareholder satisfaction, reduction of farmer workload, or the goal of fostering a greater sense of connectedness to land is as yet understudied”. Therefore promoting participation of members in the farm, can act as a powerful tool for reestablishing this connection of man with the earth, which could impact very positively on the commitment of people. Not only the participation of members reestablishes this connection, but also it helps to reduce the amount of work that farmers would normally have to do by themselves in the farm. In this master thesis, the researcher aims to dive further into this topic and discover what are the motivational and discouraging factors that drive members’ participation.

### **2.3 CSAs in Germany**

“In Germany, the term “Solidarische Landwirtschaft”, which means agriculture in solidarity, has been selected for CSA-like projects. Other names that are being used for CSA-farms are “(Land-/)Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft” (economic community/agricultural management community), “gemeinschaftstragende Landwirtschaft” (community supported agriculture) and „(Selbst-/) Versorgergemeinschaft“ (community of self supporters)” (Volz, 2012). In addition, according to Volz (2012), although an official definition for CSA is not yet formulated, it is on the agenda of the “Netzwerk für Solidarische Landwirtschaft” which was founded in July 2011. But in general the idea is that the members of the community are the center of the project and they share the risks, investment costs and also participate actively in the farm.

One particular characteristic of CSAs in Germany is that, the price of the vegetables is not paid but the farming process is (Volz, 2012). “In the moment when there is no longer a price tag attached to the product but the work of the farmer is valued, it is a CSA” (Volz, 2012). In this sense, the CSA community gives a higher value to what it is produced, not only caring about the goods but also incorporating in

their value the social, political and environmental aspects of this type of solidarity food production.

“The focus of the concept is cost coverage and not profit maximization. Not production is the most important aspect, but farming and the social contact. The amount of the financial contribution and the frequency of the payment in installments is regulated in the agreement between the farmers and the other members” (Volz, 2012). In addition by separating the financial contribution from the prices of the products, a better social adjustment can be achieved (Volz, 2012).

In Germany, in CSA farms organic certifications is not compulsory, but nevertheless most of CSA-farms are already working respecting ecological principles or are even certified (Volz, 2012). Gartencoop is an example of a CSA project where no certification is needed, but they ensure to their members that the production of food is done following ecological and sustainable principles.

To this date, the concept of CSA is not very well known in Germany but interest is increasing (Volz, 2012). The first CSA farm in Germany, the Buschberghof, was founded in 1988, but it took several years before the next ones were created (Volz, 2012). Most of the CSAs are located in the North of East of Germany and only recently, CSAs were founded in southern Germany (Volz, 2012). At the present moment there are between 30-35 CSA-farms operating in Germany and another 30 initiatives are on their way (Interview 9). This clearly shows a very positive trend for the development of these types of agricultural projects. But in order to increase its scope and extension, “it is envisaged to promoted the concept more offensively and present it to a wider audience in order to increase its visibility. An exchange with other networks should also take place and advantages and disadvantages of CSA management strategies should be discussed” (Volz, 2012).

Among the factors that hinder the development and foundation of news CSAs in Germany are: difficult access to land, financial difficulties and finding the right farm close to the consumers (Volz, 2012). “Another main obstacle is that the distribution and sale of organic goods is very well organized in Germany and often already saturates the demand for local and organic products” (Volz, 2012). But in general it seems that there is a very positive trend regarding the development of CSAs. “The increase in the number of CSA farms and the rising demand for organic produce show that a lot of people are interested in a sustainable agriculture and that they prefer regional products. Many consumers are ready to enter a contractual middle-term relationship and to invest

in agriculture in order to receive healthy and fresh food. Also increasingly farmers understand that CSA can provide a strategy to make their farm operation feasible” (Volz, 2012). Therefore it seems that there is an increasing group of the society who is willing to support a more sustainable local production of food, where the connection between farmers and consumers is closer and where there is much emphasis on environmentally friendly practices. A very good example of this development is the foundation of the CSA project “Gartencoop” in Freiburg.

## **2.4 Gartencoop**

Gartencoop is an initiative of teachers, farmers, climate activists and activists from other social of movements that have in the beginning of 2011 founded a cooperative in Freiburg that supplies nearly 250 members with organic food (Gartencoop, 2013). The community is composed from members from different ages, social classes and economic status. The project aims to develop the sense of community and solidarity economy, by growing organic vegetables in a sustainable and a climate friendly way, which are then distributed locally among its members (Gartencoop, 2013). Below the researcher will present the most important characteristics of this CSA initiative (information from the Gartencoop website).

- Production system: The members, through their contributions cover the total costs of cultivation. The amount that each member has to pay is based on the financial resources of the individual. Gartencoop is financially self-supported. Animals, machinery and equipment are commonly held.
- Common ground: The land and the buildings are seen as common property, which are used in a responsible way. They should not be sold. At the present moment the land is leased, but in the medium term the cooperative aims to secure the land ownership.
- Environmental and climate friendly: Gartencoop is an opportunity to develop an ecological agriculture. Among its environmental values, the cooperative aims to promote soil fertility, the use of non-hybrid seeds, have a close nutrient cycle and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through the careful use of resources (energy and water), as well as having short transportation distances. This also includes the elimination of heated cultivation, and to promote a seasonal diet with more

vegetable and less animal foods. Regarding the use of fossil fuels, the initiative hopes to reduce and use renewable energy sources for the transportation (like bikes), and also for the production and storage of food.

- Sharing risks: Following the model of a cooperative, the farm becomes independent from the economic market and the pressure to generate profits. Production risks, such as crop failure due to bad weather, pests, or disease are borne by the community. The production of the farm is shared among all members.
- Work and knowledge sharing: In order to produce and safely supply food for several hundred persons, a lot of knowledge, experience, effort and a good planning are needed. For this reason, professional gardeners and farmers are required, which are employed by the cooperative. Apart from the financial contribution, members also actively work and participate in the farm. Each member must contribute at least five times annually in the project, either in the production or distribution processes. The gardeners and farmers also have the role to pass on to members their knowledge and skills in the horticultural sector.
- Distribution over short distances: After the harvest, members take the food to various distribution points (verteilpunkte) in the city, from where the rest of the members can pick their weekly share. Packaging, storage and emissions should be reduced to a minimum.
- Members: The members of Gartencoop are the core and the heart of the initiative. Their contribution is crucial for the development of the project. Members contribute not only monetarily but also by participating on the field and in the distribution of the food. Without their participation the project could not successfully run. Therefore trying to understand what are the forces that drive the motivation and commitment of members to participate is of crucial importance for the development of the cooperative. This will become the main focus of this study.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

This study aims to explore the motivation of Gartencoop members to participate in field activities. In order to achieve this, the researcher will try to assess the characteristics behind the motivation of people, which are of a qualitative nature.

As it was mentioned in the introduction, Grounded Theory Methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories “grounded” in the data themselves (Charmaz, 2006). The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory it is also said to operate in a reverse fashion from traditional scientific research (Allan, 2003). In the sense that rather than beginning with a hypothesis, the first step is data collection. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text (Allan, 2003). But what is coding? Coding means that the researcher attaches labels to segments of the data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distills data, sorts them, and gives a handle for making comparisons with other parts of our data (Charmaz, 2006). The codes are then grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable. From this concepts categories are formed which are the basis for the creation of the theory (Allan, 2003). In other words, Grounded Theory’s goal is to generate concepts that explain the way that people resolve their central concerns regardless of time and space (Allan, 2003). If the researcher goal is accurate description then another method should be chosen.

There are two main approaches for Grounded theory, constructivist and objectivist. This study will follow a constructivist approach, which places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from the shared experiences of researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2006).

The logic of the grounded theory methods call for the emerging analysis to direct data gathering, in a self-correcting, analytic, expanding process (Charmaz, 2006). This method recommends conducting multiple interviews and using early leads to shape later data collection. By allowing a constant gathering and analysis of data from the beginning of the study, This method will allow the researcher to move quickly in an area as unknown and as subjective as is the human motivation.

In addition, grounded theory interviews are used to tell a collective story, not and individual tale in a single interview (Charmaz, 2003). Therefore by interviewing



members is possible to collect data, which could be used for developing a theory that explains the general motivation behind them to work in the farm. For this reason, Grounded Theory seems to be the methodology that fits the best the study in question.

The book “Constructing Grounded Theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis” of Kathy Charmaz (2006), will be used as a guide for the development of this research project. A short introduction of each chapter will be explained bellowed as they were used as guidelines for the construction of this master thesis.

### **3.1 Grounded Theory guidelines**

#### **3.1.1 Gathering Rich Data**

Every scientific project starts with the very important step of collecting the right data in order to create a sound based theory. It is very important that scientists take their time in order to develop the methods and systems needed for the collection of data.

Gathering rich data is even more important, in the sense that it gives the researcher a solid material for building a significant analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Rich data are detailed, focused and full, thus they reveal participant’s view, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the context and structures of their lives (Charmaz, 2006). This rich data in social studies can be in the form of field notes, interviews, and information in the form of records and reports (Charmaz, 2006). In this case Grounded Theory methods have the strength that they allow researchers to move back and forth between data and analysis, which helps for dealing with the right amount of data at all times and avoid procrastinating during the study (Charmaz, 2006). This method really allows the flexibility required for qualitative social studies.

Although in most scientific studies researchers claim objectivity of their data, in reality, it is not possible to completely separate the self from the object of study (Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz (2006), in qualitative studies, there are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of their values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither the observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world. Therefore researchers, not participants, are obligated to be reflexive about what they bring to the study, what they see and how they see it (Charmaz, 2006).

One method recommended for collecting rich data is “Intensive Interviewing”. Intensive interviewing is a direct conversation (Lofland, 1984), which permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience with the person who has had the

relevant experiences, and it is a useful method for interpretive inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore it is said that intensive qualitative interviewing fits grounded theory methods particularly well, in the sense that both methodologies are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet restrictive (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore by combining the flexibility that both methods allow, this could create a good match for exploring the very subjective topic regarding the motivation of Gartencoop members to participate in field activities.

### 3.1.2 Coding:

After collecting data, the researcher, following the Grounded Theory methodology, should begin coding. Coding means categorizing segments or parts of the data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). The codes show how the researcher selects, separates, and sorts data to begin an analytic account of them (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding plays a crucial role in the development of qualitative study, because it helps to categorize the data and thus shape the road that the researcher should take (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is also the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory (Charmaz, 2006). Through coding the researcher define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means. Then the codes take form together as the elements of a nascent theory that explains these data and directs further data-gathering (Charmaz, 2006).

There are different types of coding that a researcher can use for its study such as word-by-word coding, line-by-line coding, incident-to-incident coding, theoretical coding, etc (Charmaz, 2006). In Grounded Theory according to Charmaz (2006), coding consists of at least two main phases: 1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line or segment of data followed by 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant and frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amount of data. For this reason, in this study a line-by-line or segment-by-segment coding will be applied for the first set of interviews. While on the second and third interviewing phases, focused coding will be the main approach for mining the new data for relevant information.

### 3.1.3 Memoing:

After collecting and coding interviews, following Kathy Charmaz (2006) guidelines to grounded theory, it is suggested that the researcher starts writing memos from the incoming data. Memo writing is the pivotal intermediate step between the collection of data and writing draft papers (Charmaz, 2006). It also constitutes a crucial method for grounded theory, because it pushes the researcher to start analyzing your data and codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Memos have also the ability to catch thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections that are discovered and crystallize questions and directions that should be followed in the study (Charmaz, 2006).

One tool that is recommended for writing memos is clustering. Clustering consists of writing first the central idea, category, or process; then circle it and draw spokes from it to smaller circles to show its defining properties, their relationships and relative significance (Charmaz, 2006). In other words, clustering acts as a mind-mapping instrument that helps in organizing the different codes around a main category, which then will lead the researcher to develop and write the main properties and concepts of the category. Therefore clustering and mind mapping will be used, in this research, as tools for constructing the different categories that come out of the data. They will act as visual tools for helping organizing the different codes, discover the relationships among them and define the different properties of each category. Once the mind-maps are finished, memos would be written in order to synthesize all the findings and concepts necessary for the development of the emerging theory.

### 3.1.4 Theoretical sampling:

In order to achieve saturated categories, the researcher will try to follow the principles of theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling means seeking pertinent data to develop the emerging category (Charmaz, 2006). In other words, the main purpose of theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories that will constitute the emergent theory, this means that the researcher will conduct theoretical sampling by sampling new sources of data to develop the properties of the category until no new properties emerge (Charmaz, 2006).

It is also very important to make the distinction between initial sampling and theoretical sampling. Initial sampling in grounded theory is where the researcher starts to collect data, whereas theoretical sampling is the tool that directs the researcher where

to go from this initial data gathering (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore in this study, initial sampling will be used for exploring the topic of members' motivation. And afterwards, once the emergent categories from the first set of interviews are developed, theoretical sampling will be used as a guideline for seeking new sources of data that would add relevant new information for the developing concepts.

But how does the researcher know when the categories are saturated? According to Charmaz (2006), categories are "saturated" when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveal new properties of these core theoretical categories. Therefore the researcher must pay close attention when gathering new data for identifying emergent new properties. Nonetheless it is important to add that due to limitations of time (a master thesis of not longer than 6 months) "fully saturated categories" might not be achieved. In any way, the researcher should thrive for making its best effort to develop rich categories that are able to create a holistic and concise theory.

#### 3.1.5 Theory construction:

After developing and saturating the categories, the researcher should move to the last step of the grounded theory method. Which consists of creating the theory based on the relevant concepts and categories that emerged during the study. But before the researcher starts developing the theory it is important to understand what a theory is. According to Charmaz (2006) there are two main definitions for theory, the positivist and the interpretive theories.

Positivists view their theoretical concepts as variables and construct operational definitions of their concepts for hypothesis testing through accurate and replicable empirical measurement (Charmaz, 2006). In other words positivist theory aims for parsimony, generality, and universality and simultaneously reduces empirical objects and events to which can be subsumed by the concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Positivists aim for an objective explanation of the study and try to leave all preconceptions and personal interpretations aside.

On the other hand interpretive theory emphasizes understanding rather than explanation, and this understanding is dependant on the theorist's interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Interpretive theory assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual (Charmaz, 2006). In this sense, interpretive theory acknowledges

subjectivity, which is based on the interpretations, values, knowledge and judgment that the researcher brings to the study in question.

Nonetheless, Charmaz (2006) considers that grounded theory as *theory* contains both positivist and interpretivist inclinations. According to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) theory means a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena. They also recognize that analysis means that researchers interpret data but implies that such interpretation is an unavoidable limitation. And for Alasuutari (1996) theories provide interpretive frames from which to view realities. Therefore, the present study would take a constructivist approach of grounded theory, where an interpretive stance of theory construction is needed, which then would reflect the researcher points of view as gardener and personal interests concerning solidarity agricultural projects.

But how does the researcher construct a theory? What is theorizing? According to Charmaz (2006), theorizing means stopping, pondering and rethinking anew. The researcher must stop the flow of studied experience and take it apart. To gain theoretical sensitivity, the study in question must be looked from multiple vantage points, make comparisons, follow leads, and build on ideas (Charmaz, 2006). But how can the researcher gain theoretical sensitivity? How is it possible to avoid remaining only at a descriptive level? Charmaz (2006) explains that coding for themes rather than actions contributes to remaining at a descriptive level. For this reason it is suggested to adopt gerunds during coding. Gerunds foster theoretical sensitivity because these words nudge the researcher out of static topics and into enacted processes (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, gerunds would be used during coding, in order to search for processes behind the behavior of Gartencoop members and be able to link motivational and discouraging factors. By adopting these practices, the researcher hopes to facilitate the last stage of theory construction.

### **3.2 Chronology of the research process**

First, this project started with interviewing close friends who are part of Gartencoop. These interviews were done following no guidelines, but trying to explore and allowing members to retell their story with Gartencoop. Beginning with the moment of joining Gartencoop, followed by working experiences in the farm and ending with

recommendations and any open topic that is/was of interest for the members. The interviewees were approached with an open attitude, allowing enough room for them to express their real opinions and beliefs. In addition, the interviews were conducted in familiar places (home, office) for the members, which help to create this atmosphere of trust and safety for members to truly express themselves. During the interviews taking notes was avoided, in order to not distract members and allow a natural conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees. All interviews were recorded to avoid loss of valuable data.

This first set of preliminary interviews (3 interviews) proved to be very successful due to the amount of information and the quality of data that was gathered. The interviews were transcribed using the “ExpressScribe” software and then coded using “MAXQDA\_2007”. After codification, a list of codes was obtained, which was analytically studied in order to try to develop concepts from this first set of interviews. Codes with similar meanings were grouped creating categories. In other words, categories try to express relationships between the codes. These categories then became the core and the focus of further interviews. In order to facilitate the creation of the categories, clustering and mind mapping were used as tools for grouping the different codes.

It is also important to add that the members that were interviewed in this preliminary set, they all resulted to be members of Gartencoop since the beginning, which means that they have participated in two consecutive harvesting years. Another characteristic of this first group is that it contained one individual member and two who have a shared membership. Therefore subsequent interviews, following the principles of theoretical sampling, were aimed at finding: 1. Members that have been only one harvesting season. 2. Members who have never participated in the field. 3. Sharing partners of interviewed members. 4. Members with different levels of income.

The second set of interviews proved to be very valuable, if not more than the first batch. A total of 4 interviews were recorded, transcribed and codified. New codes were analyzed and incorporated to the respective categories. Some of the categories were redefined in order to accommodate new incoming data. As the relevant information of each interview was added the categories became saturated, and even redundancy in members’ answers was founded. By exploring more in depth the categories and interviewing a different type of members the development of concepts seem to have reached a saturation point. Although there might still be minor gaps of

information, since all questions will never be able to be answered, the researcher have found that it has a very good foundation for creating the different hypothesis that could shape the constructing theory.

Afterwards, memos were written from the saturated categories, which try to encompass all the relevant findings that were discovered within the data. These memos would later become separate chapters in the results section of this study. From the memos a list of the most important findings and hypothesis was created. This list was sent to interviewed members asking for their opinions in order to validate these results. After the first validation phase, subsequently the list of hypothesis was also shared among the whole organization to bring validation among all members. Once the validation of results is finished, approved hypothesis will be used for the development of this study's theory.

In addition, following the theoretical sampling logic, a member of the Anbau team and a member of the Support team were also interviewed. The objective of these additional interviews is to corroborate the findings from the previous interviews and to find answers to some of the questions that were raised by the interviewed members.

## **4 RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher aims to present the most relevant findings which were discovered during the interviews. In addition to the results, comments, reflections and observations from the researcher will also be added, with the objective of introducing an analytical point of view that would help to clarify the role of the members within the organization and the motivational factors that might drive or discourage their participation.

A total of seven members were interviewed for this study. The members interviewed proved to be very valuable, because they represented a very mixed group within the organization. This group included: members from different ages and sex, members who share a membership and others who have an individual membership, members that has never been to the farm and others that go very often, and members with different levels of engagement. After interviewing the members, the researcher discovered that in order to get a better understanding of the behavior and commitment of members to participate in the field, the perspective of the core group is also needed. For this reason a member of the Anbau team and a member of the support team were interviewed. By adding these two perspectives to the study, the researcher hopes to achieve a more coherent and comprehensive theory regarding the motivation of members to participate in Tunsel. It is important to add that although the main topic of this study gravitates around the motivation of members, other topics that also have an influence in the commitment and participation of members were addressed during the interviews. A short introductory explanation of these perspectives is presented below.

### **4.1 Members' perspective**

The members' perspective is a reflection of different topics that were addressed in the interviews with the members. From the first set of interviews core categories were developed, which were explored even further in subsequent interviews, with the objective of reaching saturation. The main goal of these interviews with the members was to find out what are the motivational and discouraging factors that might drive their participation in Tunsel. In addition, processes within Gartencoop (like joining or participating in Tunsel) that might also affect or influence the engagement and commitment of members were also tackled during the interviews. In general, the



members' perspective aims to summarize and explain the behavior of members towards the organization, and the reasons why they might engage and commit in different ways.

#### **4.2 Anbau team's perspective**

The Anbau team's perspective tries to look at the processes that happen within or outside of the team that might affect members' participation. This perspective also aims to explore how the Anbau team feels about the different levels of commitment of members, what is the experience of working with and teaching members, what are the modifications or changes that should take place to improve the participation of members at Tunsel, and what is their opinion of the recommendations proposed by the members.

#### **4.3 Support team's perspective**

The Support team's perspective aims to understand what is the present state of Gartencoop and which are the structures and developments that shape the way the organization functions. The core ideals were also addressed due to their importance for creating the process of identification with the cooperative. In addition, during the interview, the member of the support team was also asked about his/her perception regarding the levels of participation of members, his/her opinion regarding the recommendations proposed by the members and the direction that Gartencoop is heading. By looking at the present state and future perspectives, the researcher aims to get a better understanding of how the organization and the commitment of members might evolve with time.

## **4.1 Members' perspective**

### **4.1.1 Joining Gartencoop**

In order to understand the motivation of the members to help in Gartencoop, it is important to look at how their process/experience was in joining the project. The first contact made with the organization can be of crucial importance for the way of involvement and engagement that future members will show towards Gartencoop. It is intended to try to find out what the feelings and impressions were at the moment before joining Gartencoop, and how the process of self-identification with the organization, might have established a common pool of ideals and values that fueled the engagement of the members. In addition, a summary of the most common reasons will be provided, with the objective of trying to look at the different drivers behind joining the project.

### **Before Joining**

Before joining Gartencoop, prospective members are involved in a series of emotions, feeling, preconceptions and ideas about what it will be to become a member. They might ask themselves: Why do "I" want to join? What are the pros and cons of being a member? How sure am "I" of joining? Thus, they might be caught between the intentions and the doubts of becoming a member, which will then lead to the very important process of taking the conscious decision to become a member. From the interviews, most of the responses from the members have been positive. They have expressed key words such as "hoping" (Interview 2, 3 & 4), "wishing" (Interview 5), "interested" (Interview 2, 3, 4, & 6), "fascinated" (Interview 1 & 7), "impressed" (Interview 7), "attracted" (Interview 1), which clearly denotes the desire to join and a very positive attitude regarding the organization. So far only one of the members has explicitly expressed "doubts" about joining (Interview 3), which then disappeared to give space to a phase of developing the intention to become a member.

The desire of joining is the first impulse for creating and developing the engagement and motivation towards the Gartencoop. Members, who really are looking to be part of the project, are probably more likely to show a real commitment towards the organization and participate more regularly in Tunsel. It is very important the joining process should be conscious act of becoming, in the sense, that members should know their rights and duties towards the organization and the importance of their contribution and involvement on the development of the community.

## Identification

Parallel to the act of becoming a member is the process of identification with the project (Interview 1, 2, 4 & 5). This process consists of developing an identity where values, ideals, visions and philosophies are shared (Interview 4). Members will start to ask themselves how they can feel related to such a project? And begin to find the common ideological dots that will link them and establish a closer bond with Gartencoop. During this process members might also question if the project represents a reflection of themselves and what they believe in, which will lead to finding the common elements/ground that will foster their engagement to the organization.

The process of identification is really important for creating a strong bond between Gartencoop philosophy and their own. After this process the level of identification with the project should be reflected by the commitment and the participation of the members. Therefore it is very important that the organization attracts people who might have many ideals and values in common.

## Reasons for joining

There are a number of different reasons for why a person will decide to join Gartencoop. Some of the members might join for health reasons (better food) (Interview 2, 4, 5 & 7), ecological reasons (conservation and sustainable farming) (Interview 7), for stepping out from the routine (doing something new) (Interview 2), for economic reasons (investing money in something valuable) (Interview 6), but at the end most of them have expressed as the most important reason the desire to support and help the organization to develop (Interview 1, 2, 5, 6 & 7). This shows that the members care about the future of the project, and hope that with their help it can grow and establish itself as an example of a solidarity and sustainable agriculture in Freiburg.

In addition the mere fact of joining Gartencoop means promoting the idea, which shows already a certain kind of engagement towards the organization. From this perspective, it is very important that members realize that their contribution to the organization is of crucial importance for the real development of Gartencoop. They should also try to keep in mind what were the reasons for joining and ask themselves if they changed overtime. Do they still want to support the organization? And if they do how can they increase or materialize this desire to help.

#### 4.1.2 Motivating Factors

The objective of this master thesis is to find out what motivates the members of Gartencoop to participate and help in the farming activities in Tunsel. After performing several interviews with the members, it was found out that the motivation to help in the farm cannot be disconnected from the general motivation of the member towards the organization. In this sense, the commitment of the members to support the project will probably be reflected in the way that they participate and how regular they will come to help in Tunsel. Different motivational drivers were found that fuel the desire to contribute and participate in the farming activities. Most of them are shared by the members and in some cases some particular drivers only apply to specific members. A closer look to these factors/drivers will be shown below.

#### Working outside

It is probably the most common and most mentioned motivational factor by members: members really enjoy working outside and they see it as a very important driver to go and help in Tunsel (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7). During the interviews, it was expressed by the members that working outside means getting in contact with the soil and the nature (Interview 2 & 6), using their hands (Interview 7), doing physical work (Interview 4 & 7), being healthier (Interview 6), doing something completely different from regular job (Interview 2), and freeing the mind (Interview 2), among others. Therefore working outside brings a great number of benefits to the members' lives and thus constitutes probably the biggest motivational driver to go to help in Tunsel.

Some members have also expressed that they already have experience in agriculture (Interview 6) or they even have a garden at home (Interview 3), which shows already that they enjoy very much working outside. Nonetheless, for probably most of the members, working in Tunsel means reestablishing a long-time lost connection with nature (Interview 6), in the sense that they will get to feel the earth and work together with it in order to produce their own food. The more symbolic this act becomes, the stronger the bond and commitment to help in the farm could be established within the member.

It is important that the benefits from working outside are not forgotten by the member and that they are kept very present at the moment of helping in Tunsel. In this way, members are assured to return to the Gartencoop in the future.

### Fundamental needs

Some members have also expressed the importance that implies working in the farm to help covering very fundamental needs, which means going back to doing something really fundamental and important for their own life (Interview 1, 2, 4 & 5). By helping to produce food in the farm, some members become aware of the act of creating life, and thus feeling at the same time proud and happy for supporting others and its own life (Interview 1). Because food is one the main reasons they are part of Gartencoop (Interview 2, 4 & 5). In this way this very fundamental work becomes a source of inspiration and motivation for the members.

This factor also acts as a source of reflection for the members, in the sense that they might start to question themselves how much have humanity distanced itself from the act of helping and covering our fundamental needs. If we all abandon the work in the fields, then who will produce the food that we need to feed ourselves? And also, the more we distance our selves from the earth the less we can assure a healthy and balanced nutrition.

### Cooperative ideals

Gartencoop is a solidarity agricultural project and therefore it entails a great number of cooperative ideals. In the interviews members have stated key words/phrases such as: “community” (Interview 1, 2, 6 & 7), “alternative” (Interview 1, 6 & 7), “social beings” (Interview 1), “sharing” (Interview 1), “rejecting the system” (Interview 1, 2 & 4), among others, which are related to this sense of cooperation. Members, who join Gartencoop, join not only an organization but also a community that aims to produce sustainable organic food to be shared among it members. Therefore, probably most of the members are familiar with this sense of solidarity and the desire to be part of an alternative project that rejects the current structure of capitalistic systems.

Nonetheless not all the members might be conscious about what it entails to be part of such an organization and might not be aware of the solidarity and cooperative philosophy that are supporting. For this reason, it is very important that the organization tries to bring awareness regarding this sense of community among it members.

### People

Related to the factor above, being part of Gartencoop means being part of a cooperative and thus getting in contact with people and establishing new relationships.

Many members have expressed that another very important motivational factor for going to Tunsel, is the opportunity to meet other members and work together (Interviews 1, 2 & 4). During their participation in the farm, members get in the opportunity to get in contact with new people and have great discussion, express their own ideas and opinions, and discover that many of the other members share the same vision of supporting and creating an agricultural community (Interview 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7).

Sharing with other members reinforce this feeling of being part of a family, of a community with a common goal. This can act as a very powerful source of motivation (Interview 6). Thus, it should not be forgotten, the importance of creating strong relationships among members for building up a sense of community and belonging. If people feel related to each other ideologically and in practical terms, they are probably inclined to be more engaged and committed towards the organization in general.

### Contribution

Another important factor for the personal motivation of members is how they see their own contribution. Do they feel valuable? Do they feel part of the success of Gartencoop? If they see their work as very valuable for the development of the project, they will probably create a stronger commitment to support and help Gartencoop (Interview 1, 6 & 7). For this reason, the way they see their contribution can have a great influence in the way that they will engage towards the organization (Interview 7).

However the way the members see their contribution, it is also linked to how welcome and useful they feel with respect to the anbau and the support teams. If the anbau team doesn't have a welcoming attitude (Interview 1 & 7), it is more likely that members will feel discouraged to keep participating in Tunsel. Therefore, managing teams should have a welcoming attitude in order to make feel members more valuable and useful regarding their own contribution.

### Learning

For many members going to Tunsel is a new experience. Many of them might not have any idea of how to plant, how to harvest, how vegetables grow. Etc. For this reason going to the farm can be a very exiting experience to get away from routine, to do something new (Interview 2, 4 & 6), to discover how to produce food and to learn useful skills for life (Interview 4), which can act as powerful sources of motivation for members. By going to Tunsel members will not only learn how the farm works

(Interview 6), but also discover how much work and energy it is required to actually produce organic, sustainable and quality food (Interview 2).

### Commitment

The self-commitment of the members is also a very important motivational factor for helping and participating in the organization (Interview 4, 5 & 7). Members who are committed will show a desire to help, to support the project and be engaged on creating an alternative agricultural system. The levels of commitment will vary greatly between members. Some of them might participate very seldom and others very regularly. And even for some of them, their desire to support the organization will be greater than the benefit they get from it (Interview 5). In the sense that even if they don't get vegetables they will still donate their time and money in order to help Gartencoop (Interview 4 & 7). Therefore it is very important that members develop a sense of understanding different levels of commitment and that they avoid blaming and judging for those who participate less.

The commitment of members might also change over time. For some members guilt might also works as a source of motivation. They have stated that the fact that they receive a weekly box without participating or in the cases where they don't participate what is required, this have created a sense of guilt which then becomes the flames that ignites their more active participation (Interview 6 & 7). For this reason, Gartencoop should find ways to foster the participation and increase the commitment of members.

#### 4.1.3 Discouraging Factors

Contrary to the motivational factors, discouraging factors are those ones that work against the motivation of people to go and help in Tunsel, but can't reduce or completely eliminate the participation or support from members within Gartencoop. They can be based on negative experiences in the farm; disappointing interactions with other members or the managing team; they can be external, like the weather and the distance; or come from personal issues. Nonetheless it is very important to identify them, because they can provide clear indications about where and how to improve things in the organization.

### Core Group Attitude

They way how members perceive the core group (Anbau and Support teams) can greatly affect their own participation within the project (Interview 1). From the interviews, some members have expressed moments where they have felt not welcome and even not taken into consideration at the moment of sharing their own ideas (Interview 1, 4 & 7). For a particular member, when participating in the legal group, he felt as if they had a suspicious attitude towards new people and under the pressure to prove to himself and others what he can do (Interview 1). Some others have stated the feeling of not being valuable and important, which clearly affects the view of their own work, and thus losing the importance and the meaning of their own contribution (Interview 4). Some have even felt like an obstacle for the gardeners when participating in Tunsel (Interview 1). Therefore the attitude of the core group can clearly affect members' participation. For this reason it is very important that the core group is aware and conscious about the way they treat the members and how their attitude can greatly influence how welcome and valuable members feel.

Another aspect of the core group attitude is that it reflects a power imbalance within the organization. Members might perceive themselves being in a hierarchy, and thus feel that their statements and opinions have less value (Interview 4). For this reason it is important that members understand their position within Gartencoop and they feel they have the right to give feedback to the core group regarding their attitude and how they treat members. By doing this, a more welcoming atmosphere could be created, which could act as a source of motivation for members' participation.

### Members Attitude

Not only the attitude of the core group can affect member's participation, but also the way that members perceive themselves can also impact their own role in the organization. Some members might feel not so identified and engaged (Interview 1 & 3), which would clearly be translated in a lack of commitment from their part, thus affecting negatively the project. Another member expressed that he feels more and more like a consumer and less like a producer (Interview 4), which clearly contradict the ideals and visions of the organization of developing a solidarity agricultural project where members take an active role in the process of creating their own food. Others might doubt their own role, as they don't feel part of the success of Gartencoop (Interview 4 & 7). And in some cases, the way they might perceive others members



attitude as negative (Interview 2). For example, members who only work for food or take only the benefits without helping are not considered to be participating in a productive way (Interview 6). In these cases the attitude of other members might also influence their own motivation.

### Distance

The traveling distance to Tunsel, as expressed by the members, also constitutes a discouraging factor to go and help in the farm (Interview 1, 2, 3, 6 & 7). For members who have a very tight schedule, the time required to go and come back from Tunsel might be greater than the few free hours that they have per week. These members dream about the farm being closer so that they could go there more often (just for a few hours every time) (Interview 1). In this case the traveling distance is a factor that can't be changed, thus members should become aware of it, and find the time to be able to contribute with the organization. Otherwise they should ask themselves how they could engage in other ways or that if they should still be part of Gartencoop.

### Weather

Another external discouraging factor like the distance is the weather. On rainy, cold, windy or snowy days members might decide to abort their plans to go to Tunsel and stay comfy at home (Interview 2). The weather is an external force that cannot be changed but it can also affect member's participation. It is probably a factor that affects in general the motivation of people to engage on doing active things outside. In order to work with it, members should always look for opportunities when the weather conditions might actually fuel their desire to help in the farm.

### Gartencoop development

During the interviews, a very concerned member expressed that there is an increasing distance between the idealism and the reality of the cooperative (Interview 4). In the sense that, to a certain degree, the member has noticed that the cooperative is becoming less social, more capitalistic and that the gap between producers and consumers is increasing. These changes represent shifts from the original idea/vision of the cooperative, in the sense that Gartencoop is adapting and changing to respond to economic pressures. Nonetheless these changes could affect the way members perceive the cooperative, thus affecting their participation. At this point the management team

should ask themselves how far is the development going from the original vision? And how should they explain these shifts regarding management to members? What will it happen if the cooperative becomes less social? Will members leave? These are all questions that need to be addressed and made clear to all members so that they can understand where and in which direction is the project going, so they can take the conscious decision to keep supporting Gartencoop or not.

### Structural problems

After participating in Tunsel, many members have discovered, or become aware that there are structural and organizational problems regarding work in the farm (Interview 2, 4, 6 & 7). Some of them have noticed that there is a lack of leadership among gardeners, which can be a result from being short of experience (Interview 2). Other members, who have been in Tunsel since the beginning, are disappointed by the lack of improvements regarding the organization of work in relation to the first year (Interview 2). And some of them have even stated how annoying it is to have to wait for work assignments in Tunsel (Interview 2). But one of the biggest obstacle that they have found is how inefficient is the assessment of workloads and work assignments (Interview 2). This means that the gardeners cannot really estimate how much time does it take to complete a work assignment and how many members do they actually need. This lack of organization not only impacts people motivation but it can greatly affect the efficiency of the farm. Therefore it is important to establish a constant process of optimization of work practices, where the opinion of the members can work as a source of feedback for identifying areas that need improvement.

Another problematic aspect mentioned by the members is that some of them don't understand how participation is counted (Interview 7). By not knowing how this process works, it will be hard for them to reach that level of satisfaction that comes when you have participated enough. For this reason it is very important that participation system becomes clearer for the members, and that they understand how it is counted if they help in the farm, in the distribution or in other groups.

### The Vegetable Box (die gemüsebox)

Although most members have expressed that they are content with what comes on the weekly vegetable box, a few members have expressed that they sometimes feel that their effort is not worth it (Interview 3). In the sense that they might feel an

imbalance between the time and money they invest in relation to what they receive in return (Interview 5 & 7). This issue probably arises when they compared what they spent weekly for Gartencoop in relation to what they could get in the supermarket. Nonetheless these members should not forget the real value of what they receive and the organization that they are trying to support.

Other members, who have a shared membership, have also stated that sometimes they feel that what they receive is not enough (Interview 2 & 3). This is due to the fact that they have to split a normal vegetable box between two persons, and this might result in not enough food for those who strictly eat vegetables.

### Personal Issues

The last discouraging factor is related to personal issues that might result from personality traits or from the way they perceive their own life and the things they do. During the interviews, some members expressed the fact that they are always busy and that they have not enough time as an excuse for not helping in the farm (Interview 1, 3, 4 & 7). For others, Gartencoop is simply not a priority in their life (Interview 3), and for that reason they don't engage and commit to achieve participation requirements. Other members also say that they feel lazy or that they don't even like to wake up early, thus making it difficult to participate on harvesting days (Interview 4 & 6). Some lack regularity, hence it is hard for them to create the habit to go regularly to Tunsel (Interview 7). One member even expressed the fact that he/she is becoming older and that his/her increasing physical limits pose a risk to her participation in field activities (Interview 6). All these excuses from members are to some extent valid, but they should ask themselves if they could do something to change them. They might also feel that these are traits from their personality, thus being part of whom they are. But in this case they should be aware if they (the traits) extend to other parts of their life, and should consider what they could do to get away from these patterns. They should also ask themselves where does Gartencoop fall within their priorities and what could they do to increase or solidify their engagement.

#### 4.1.4 Work Experience in Tunsel

A very important aspect that was addressed during the interviews was how the work experience in Tunsel has been for the members. Their answers were divided in

two main categories regarding their positive and negative experiences, and a third group of learning and discovering moments was also added. The summary of members' answers is presented below.

### Positive

Most of the members expressed that they have had good experiences when helping in Tunsel (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7). Some even stated that they feel very excited and happy every time they go to the farm (Interview 2). Others mentioned that they found that the work was very organized (Interview 1 & 3) and that they have developed a sense of admiration towards the great job done by the Anbau team (Interview 6). Most of them expressed that they really enjoy participating in Tunsel and all that this compromises (Interview 7), like working outside, feel the earth and plants, get in contact with other people, etc. But has it always been like this? Or are only good experiences remembered? Nonetheless, it is of crucial importance that members have a good first experience in Tunsel, in order to create a positive stamp that will fuel the desire of members to continue participating in the farm.

### Negative

Regarding the negative experiences in Tunsel, members have encountered organizational problems in the farm that hinders their work (Interview 2). In the same sense, they also have discovered that there are conflicting expectations between the gardeners and the members, in relation to workloads and what members are capable of doing in a certain amount of time (Interview 2). This creates pressure and a sense of dissatisfaction when members are not able to accomplish the working goals.

In regard to the Anbau team, some members have mentioned that they feel like an obstacle to the gardeners (Interview 6), and that the Anbau team lacks experience regarding the organization of jobs for members (Interview 2). In addition they have found out that they are always busy, thus unable to supervise, all the time, the work done by the members (Interview 6). This lack of supervision from the Anbau team relates to what other members expressed during field activities. Some of them have discovered that particular members are not very careful with the plants, which can greatly affect future harvests (Interview 6).

During participation members also have had negative experiences when associated with other members. Some of them have found out that some fellow

members are missing this community sense (Interview 6), which is of crucial importance for the development of Gartencoop. And others members also expressed their discontent when other members don't participate or when they don't engage enough for the good of the organization (Interview 2).

In general, negative experiences are very likely to affect further participation of members. Therefore, it is very important that members get to share their negative experiences so improvements can be made within Gartencoop.

### Learning/Discovering

During their work experiences in Tunsel, members have discovered that agricultural and food production is actually a very hard work that requires lots of input and effort from the people in charge (Interview 2). Going to Tunsel has also been an opportunity for members to learn to do something new, to learn to plant, to harvest and to produce food. All these lessons are very important for improving the awareness and understanding of members, regarding the work that is done in the farm, and the importance of their contribution.

Some other members also expressed that they discovered a sense of commitment to finish tasks, and that there is an increasing pressure for gardeners, because they need to produce more food as the organization grows and more members join Gartencoop (Interview 2).

#### 4.1.5 Gartencoop Contract

Another aspect that was addressed during the interviews is the way members perceive the contract that they need to sign at the moment of joining Gartencoop. The idea of the contract is to get across members what are their duties and rights as members and established a more formal commitment towards the organization. Nonetheless some of the duties are still not clear for the members or how they are defined. This section is intended for exploring what members think about the contract and where are the points that need further clarification.

### Commitment

As it was mentioned previously, one of the ideas of the contract is to help to create a concrete engagement of members towards Gartencoop. In order to create this

engagement, members need to become aware of the importance of their contribution as an essential part for the development of the cooperative. During the interviews, concerned members expressed the importance of understanding that in an organization with 260 members there will be different levels of commitment (Interview 2, 3 & 6). Therefore it is critical that they trust in the self-commitment of other members and accept that not all members will participate in the same way (Interview 1). Part of this self-commitment as mentioned by one member, should consist on taking the self-initiative to improve Gartencoop and in this way help the management team find solutions to the many issues that are still present (Interview 6). Nonetheless other members have also stated that they feel disappointed by the lack of commitment of certain members (Interview 6). For this reason, it is important that the project develops a way to ensure the right level of commitment for all members and develops an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance of different levels of commitment, because all members will never engage the same. In addition, another important tool for increasing the engagement of members consists on developing the sense of importance of members' contribution (Interview 2 & 6). It is of vital significance that members understand that without their involvement and participation the project could not exist.

### Payment

Although payment was not an issue that was addressed by many members, a concerned member expressed its beliefs that fees should be obligatory to all members and that a minimum fee should be established within the organization (Interview 2). In this way all members will contribute monetarily. However there will still exist big differences within their contributions. In this case, how can members avoid the feeling of being ashamed when not giving enough? For this, it is important that members understand and accept that not all members would be able to contribute in the same way. Or is it actually possible to find a way to balance the monetary contribution of members?

### Participation

Regarding participation there are different opinions among members. During the interviews they expressed key words such as: “more balanced” (Interview 6), “obligatory” (Interview 2 & 7), “no checking” (Interview 1 & 7), “controlling” (Interview 2), “transparency” (Interview 2 & 6), among others.

How are “actions” (farming and distribution activities) counted? Does participating in the distribution weigh the same as going to Tunsel? For members it should be made clearer how participation is taken into consideration. At the same time, they expressed a desire of having a more transparent system (Interview 2 & 6). In this way, members would get the chance to see who is participating and not in the project. They expressed this desire not as way to blame members who don’t engage, but rather, in order to get a better understanding of who is really contributing and try to approach those who don’t.

Another aspect that needs to be defined is, if participation should be controlled or not. Members have very divided points of view regarding this issue. Nonetheless in the case that participation is controlled or not, it is important to try to find mechanisms to create a better understanding between people who participate a lot and those who don’t. In addition, it will also help if ways to balance more members’ participation are developed. By building a sense of responsibility and commitment among member, participation might increase and in this way release the weight on those who work a lot.

### Contracts

For members, contract terms need more clarity, in the sense that they should get to understand better how their contribution is taken into consideration. Moreover when asked about having different contracts, some members rejected the idea (Interview 2) right away while others agreed (Interview 3). The idea of having different contracts is to help members who can’t participate in the field by giving them ways to contribute more in other areas (monetary). Nonetheless, having one or multiple contracts is irrelevant if the commitment of members towards the organization cannot be assured.

#### 4.1.6 Recommendations

This section is intended to work as a summary for the most important recommendations and suggestions that were mentioned by members during the interviews. In addition, the author ideas and recommendations will also be included. These recommendations reflect the way members perceive Gartencoop and are aimed at improving the organization, and may even help to solve issues or conflicts that are still part of the system. These suggestions were organized in different categories that try to encompass areas that, according to members, still need some improvement.

### Core Group Attitude

As it was mentioned in the discouraging factors, the attitude of the core group can greatly impact the way members perceive the managing team thus affecting their motivation to participate. But how is it possible to make the core group aware/conscious of their attitude? In the interviews members suggested that the core group should try to be more welcoming and friendly. In order to achieve this, they should reevaluate their attitude and rethink the way they treat and approach members (Interview 1 & 2).

Another member also expressed the importance of having no pressure for communicating with the core group (Interview 5). In the sense that he thinks he/she should be able to express openly his/her opinions and share his/her ideas with the core group and also with other members. For this reason it should be a priority to develop and maintain an open communication atmosphere, allowing every member to be able to express themselves and their concerns.

Other members also suggested that in Tunsel there should be one person from the Anbau team dealing specifically with members (Interview 1). This person could be in charge of organizing the work that members will do, answer their questions and constantly supervise their work. In addition, this person should properly welcome members that are coming for the first time, and possess a very charming and friendly attitude (Interview 2). This way members would feel more welcome and taken into consideration when participating in Tunsel.

Another suggestion for the core group is to organize activities where they can build and strengthen their relationships (Interview 6). In the sense that they get to know each other better and develop the very important sense of being part of a community and working together towards a common goal.

### Work Practices / Work load

Another aspect that needs improvement is the organization of work in Tunsel. It is very important that gardeners learn how to assess workloads correctly so that members know what they are supposed to do and have enough time to accomplish their goals (Interview 2). The standardization of work practices should come as they gain more experience over time. Nonetheless it is very important that they start organizing work depending on the skills of the gardeners and of the members (Interview 6). Experienced members might be able to do more complicated tasks and pass their



knowledge to inexperienced members (Interview 1). Members also suggested the need of more supervision during field activities. As a solution to this, experienced members could also act as supervisors in order to ensure that the activities are done correctly (Interview 6).

In order to dilute the knowledge among all members, introductory days could be organized in Tunsel (Interview 4). This would be an opportunity for new members to find out where the tools are located and which are the right techniques for the different farming activities.

With the objective of giving the opportunity for everybody to participate in Tunsel, some members have suggested having a rotating system for the harvesting days (Interview 4). At the moment, harvesting takes place every Wednesday at 8 am. Therefore some members, due to work or other liabilities, might never be able to join the harvesting days. By having them at different times and/or different days of the week, a greater number of members might get a chance to join this very important activity.

### Project Development

During the interviews, some members expressed that they are not so sure about in which direction is Gartencoop heading (Interview 2 & 4). For the benefit of the organization, it is very important that members are clear about the general line of development of the project. In this sense, a vision should be formulated and made explicitly public to all members (Interview 2 & 4). This way, members would be able to understand and feel identified with the goals of Gartencoop.

New developments within the organization should also come at the right time (Interview 4). In Gartencoop, before embarking in new projects, the necessary steps should be taken into consideration in order to ensure a good level of success. Members also express their concerns regarding doing too many projects at the same time (Interview 4). In this sense, the management group should avoid over ambitious ideas and the overlapping of projects that might require more resources (monetary and human) than what it is available. Especially for such a young organization, they should try to embark first in smaller projects that optimize and solidify its own structure and increase the level of satisfaction among members.

Some members also suggested that the number of gardeners should decrease (Interview 4). In order to become closer to the cooperative and solidarity ideals, the

knowledge from the gardeners should be transferred into the other members' over time. This way Gartencoop will become more resilient and independent, as more members become more capable of performing different farm activities.

### Motivating Members

How can members be motivated to participate more and feel more engaged towards the organization? For one of the members, the biggest tool for increasing the motivation of members is to develop a sense of community (Interview 6). By creating this sense of community, members might experience this feeling of belonging and being part of a 'family,' thus activating their commitment and engagement towards the organization. This might potentially then be translated into increasing participation. A tool for creating this sense of community, as suggested by members, consists of building up the relationships within each verteilpunkt (distribution point) (Interview 6 & 7). When members of the same verteilpunkt start communicating and even sharing time together, a feeling of belonging develops, which should affect positively each members' motivation. Verteilpunkt could also become the point of management for designating tasks and sharing responsibilities, which would then increase members' sense of commitment (Interview 7).

In order to understand the actual commitment of other members and their lack of participation, it was suggested that it would be a good idea to get in contact and ask them why they don't come to Tunsel. It is not to blame them but to get a better understanding of their position and the obstacles to their participation. On the same topic, prospective members should be addressed personally (Interview 3). The process of joining Gartencoop should become more personal. So in this way new members get to feel that they are joining a community and that their engagement to the organization is of vital importance. As a suggestion, each verteilpunkt could become responsible of interviewing prospective members of its own area.

### Food Box

As it has been mentioned earlier, most of the members seem to be very pleased with the contents of the food box (Interview 2, 4, 5 & 6). Nonetheless a member expressed his desires for more winter vegetables (Interview 5), while another member have expressed concerns regarding the balance between variety and volume of vegetables (Interview 4). As a solution, in order to stay close to the members' wishes, a

consumer's satisfaction survey could be distributed among members. In this survey, members could be asked what they like and what don't and also include suggestions of what kind of vegetables and in each quantity they would like to have. In this way, what Gartencoop produces could become closer to the desire of its members.

### Decision Making

Another concern of the members is the fact that it is not very clear for them where and how decisions are made within Gartencoop (Interview 4). Where do important decisions are taken? Or where small issues are solved? By not knowing how it works, it becomes more difficult for them to take part. The process of decision making should become clear to all members, so that they learn how and where they can participate.

This process should also aim to be inclusive, in the sense that a welcoming atmosphere and an open attitude invites all members to participate (Interview 5). In addition, it is important that during the assembly or the Coco meetings, the people in charge of monitoring possess the necessary discipline to avoid losing time and ensure the efficiency of the process of decision making (Interview 7).

### Participation

Regarding the participation status and requirements, members have very different opinions regarding the direction it should take. Among the key words mentioned during the interview are: "increase participation days" (Interview 6 & 7), "no blaming" (Interview 2), "sanctions" (Interview 7), "self-controlled" (Interview 7), "transparent" (Interview 2 & 6), "no controlling" (Interview 1), "communication" (Interview 2 & 6).

It is suggested that in order to increase participation, all members should always be informed about when and how they can participate (Interview 7). And in relation to controlling participation, there are very varied opinions regarding this topic. Some members think that participation should be controlled (Interview 2), others don't (Interview 1 & 7); that it should be transparent so they all can now who and how each member is participating (Interview 2 & 6); or that it should be self-controlled (Interview 7). Nonetheless the participation system and quotas should definitely become more explicit so that it encourages members to become active within Gartencoop.

## **4.2 Anbau Team's Perspective**

The Anbau team is responsible for everything that is related with the agricultural process within Gartencoop. It is a team of gardeners who are in charge of all the seeding, planting, harvesting, weeding, maintaining and educational activities at Tunsel. Members who come to participate in Tunsel are guided and supervised by members of the Anbau team. Therefore, the interactions between gardeners and members are of crucial importance for developing and strengthening the engagement of members to participate at the farm. For this reason, a member of the Anbau team was interviewed for this study, with the objective of discovering what is the perspective and position of the Anbau team, the processes, and the developments that are taking place at Tunsel. By doing this interview, the researcher hopes to get a better understanding behind the behavior of the Anbau team and how it might affect the participation of members.

### **Team process**

As in any project, having good relationships within the working teams is of vital importance for the development and good performance of any organization. According to the member of the Anbau team, relationships between gardeners are very important, and he/she thinks that they should strive for keeping a good atmosphere within the team. In order to achieve this, developing the 'team process' is needed. Supervision or moderation from a third party, as well as improving the communication among the team could improve the development of the team process (Interview 8). As a matter of fact, since last year, all gardeners are now at the same power level (Interview 8), which clearly brings more balance to the Anbau hierarchy, allowing for a better communication and shared responsibilities. Decisions in the Anbau team are also taken in consensus between gardeners (Interview 8). Although this form of decision making might not be time efficient, it creates a more open and positive atmosphere, which allows them to achieve more solid agreements concerning important issues.

It is important to notice that the Anbau team is making a real effort to develop the team process. By improving the relationships within the team, they hope to create a better atmosphere, which will not only positively impact they work, but also the perception that members have about them.

### Attitude

As it has been mentioned earlier, one of the discouraging factors for members' motivation is the attitude of the core group, and especially that of the Anbau team. From the interviews, the researcher discovered that the Anbau team is aware of the problem (Interview 8). Among the causes for their not welcoming attitude, the gardener expressed that being tired or impatient members might affect the way he/she treats them, and even that the attitude problem might be a reflection of their own personalities. As a consequence, this attitude is reflected on other people, and especially on members, occasionally making them feel like an obstacle for the gardeners (Interview 8). In order to improve this situation, it is important that members also understand the perspective of gardeners, the amount of work that they have and the little time they actually have to teach and to explain to all members (Interview 8). For this reason, more balance and understanding between the members and gardeners perspectives is needed.

In addition, the Anbau team expressed that at the present moment they avoid discussing and taking decisions in front of members, which eliminates the waiting times that they might have experienced in the past. Furthermore, expressing how they feel to members could help to clarify their position, and getting feedback from them could also impact positively the attitude problem (Interview 8). It is important that both, members and the Anbau team, understand that this is a problem that they need to work together to solve, which is of vital importance for increasing the participation and commitment of members.

### Work structure

As they gain experience and knowledge with time, the Anbau team is working hard in improving the working structure. Among the improvements and lessons learned, the Anbau team (Interview 8) expressed the following as relevant: the fact that the educational component is equally as important as the farming component; the importance of preparation and planning for creating good experiences for the members; that it is more efficient to do less farming "actions" (activities) but with more people; that they have achieved better calculations of the working quotas; and that they have improved the working structures and the estimation of work activities. All these changes and lessons have hopefully improved the working atmosphere at Tunsel, and further improvements will come with time.

Moreover, during the interview, the gardener was also asked for his/her opinion about the recommendations that were suggested by members for improving the work structures (Interview 8). Regarding changing the harvesting times/days, the gardener expressed that harvesting in the morning makes more sense from an ecological/biological point of view, but that the possibility of changing the harvesting days could be an option. Concerning supervision, the idea that experienced members can act as nominated supervisors is already put into practice sometimes, although he/she thinks that this act could be done more often and more consciously. Having only one person dealing with members would not be flexible enough. And on the subject of participation control, the gardener thinks that it should not be controlled. It should be based on the sense of self-responsibility of members. In addition, if it was controlled this would mean even more administration work for the gardeners.

Nonetheless despite the improvements that have taken place and the solutions that are suggested by members, there is a real need for creating a better link between the members and the working teams (Interview 8). By improving the communication and feedback to/from members, faster and more encompassing changes and solutions might be implemented, which might substantially alter the organizational structure over time.

### Cooperation

A close relationship with the support team is of crucial importance for the positive development of the organization (Interview 8). The member of the Anbau team also expressed that in 2012 there were communication problems between the two teams, but that they are working hard to continually improve the relationship and cooperation with the support team. One of the conflicting points between the teams is due to the fact that farming activities requires spontaneity, which makes it difficult for planning ahead and communicating with enough time what is needed (Interview 8). The Anbau team will also appreciate more help from the support team for writing the “actions” (farming and distribution activities with members) especially in summer when they are very busy at work. Nonetheless cooperation and communication between the teams has improved since the beginning, and on top of that both teams are aware of the importance to keep working on improving their relationship.

### Source of motivation

When asking the Anbau member what is the source of his/her motivation, he/she replied that his/her motivation comes from the motivation of the members (Interview 8). In the sense that when he/she sees members coming to the farm who are excited to participate and help, she/he will feel motivated and inspired by their energy. Another source of motivation comes from the positive changes and influences that he/she perceives on the lives of members due to the fact that they are part of Gartencoop: for example, eating healthier, learning how to harvest or simply enjoying new types of vegetables. These examples make a positive impact on his/her work, thus fueling his/her motivation.

Therefore it seems that the motivation of the members and the Anbau team are intrinsically interconnected in the sense that the motivation of members fuels the motivation of the Anbau team and vice versa, as in a cycle. For this reason is very important that both groups try maintain a good atmosphere and attitude, which would act as a catalyst for creating more positive experiences at Tunsel.

### Members

As it was mentioned in the subsection above, creating good and fun experiences in the field are of vital importance for keeping members motivated and inspired to come and help in Tunsel. In order to achieve this the Anbau team must work in improving the communication with members (Interview 8). One of the solutions that has been implemented recently for improving the communication is the “sprechstunde” (consultation hour), which gives the opportunity to members to meet the Anbau team and shared their questions, opinions and ideas. Although this has proven to be a good opportunity to share ideas, the Anbau team would like to encourage members to give more feedback, especially at the moment of doing farming activities at Tunsel (Interview 8). Feedback from members could help to find solutions or even immediately affect the atmosphere and attitude of the Anbau team in a positive way.

The Anbau team also aims to supervise and help members at the field. But at the same time they also encourage members to develop their own learning process. By making mistakes, members can learn through experience how things should be done (Interview 8). Unfortunately for members that don't come to Tunsel, they miss the chance of learning and seeing how things are properly done.

At the same time, the Anbau team tries to keep an open attitude, and the biggest and maybe only expectation that they have from members is that they actually come on time (Interview 8). This would greatly help in the organization of work at the farm and reduce or even eliminate the waiting times for members.

### Community

According to the Anbau team it is of crucial importance to develop the sense of community and aim to have a more balanced cooperative (in terms of participation) (Interview 8). By developing this sense of community members would feel more part of a family and hopefully feel more engaged and take more in consideration their responsibilities towards the cooperative. Members who feel not engage or have a guilty feeling for not participating, should rethink their position and are at all times free to leave Gartencoop (Interview 8).

It is also important to remember that Gartencoop is a very young organization and things will likely to continue to improve and develop with time. The trust that is needed for creating a strong cooperative is burgeoning, and it is increasingly important that members continually provide feedback regarding things that need changing and/or could be improved (Interview 8). Another aspect that members have experienced in the community is the development of a hierarchy within Gartencoop. For the Anbau team this hierarchy is inevitable, since there is a need for trained gardeners for organizing and putting into practice the activities required for the production of food. Nonetheless, the Anbau team, following the sense of community, remains open for criticism and suggestions from the members on how to do things better.



### **4.3 Support Team's Perspective**

Equally important for the functioning of Gartencoop is the support team. The support team is mostly in charge of dealing with all the administrative work, communication and planning that doesn't concern the farming activities. They play a key role for the development and growth of the community, and for this reason, a member of the support team was also interviewed for this study. The idea is to find out how the role and position of the support team affects and interacts with the participation of members at Gartencoop. Below, a summary and discussion of the most important findings during the interview will be presented.

#### **Present Development**

Gartencoop is at the present moment at its third year production, which means that Gartencoop is still a very young project that is adapting and learning with time (Interview 9). According to the support team they feel confident and content with the levels of participation of members. Members who come regularly are improving their skills at the farm, thus making the system more efficient (Interview 9).

In these first three years, Gartencoop has grown and adapted to the circumstances, and experienced a number of "reality checks" that has shaped and given importance lessons to the people behind the organization. They have discovered that there would always be different levels of commitment, and that even members who cannot keep their commitment might decide to leave the organization (Interview 9). This happened at the beginning of the present year, when about 50 members left the organization.

On another topic, they have realized the importance that the gardeners have within the organization and they also feel that they have achieved a good balance between the number of gardeners and members (Interview 9). Their knowledge and experience have proved to be very valuable for developing the project. But at the same time, their importance within the organization has created an imbalance of knowledge and power (Interview 9). This is another reality check for the organization, in the sense that the development of a hierarchy was inevitable and the same time needed for the growth and evolution of the project. Although there is still much to learn and develop, the support team aims to remain open and flexible for new changes and improvements that could help shaping Gartencoop.

### Improving engagement / participation

When asked about how they might be able to improve the engagement and participation of members, the support team replied that the biggest tool that they can work with and in which they working with at the moment, is the communication and education of members. The more members learn about how things work in the farm, and the effort that is actually needed and put into delivering their weekly vegetable box to their houses, the greater they might commit to the organization.

It is also important to remain open and transparent (Interview 9), so members understand how things function and how they can engage. The support team also encourages members to invest some effort into getting to know the organization and discover how they can get involved.

Another aspect for improving participation could begin with the joining process. For instance, more welcoming and open attitude could positively impact member's perception of the organization, thus fueling their engagement. According to the member of the support team (Interview 9), it is very important that prospective members are clear about what is to be a member of Gartencoop. By having a more close and personal joining process, members could understand better what would be their position on the project and how they should engage and participate. In addition, being more aware of their attitudes could also positively affect the participation of members (Interview 9).

### Decision making

Since the foundation of Gartencoop, the core group has not had enough time for defining the decision making process, regarding to where, how and when decisions are taken (Interview 9). But with the experience gained in the last three years they feel it is time for developing and structuring the decision making process. Nonetheless, at the present moment, the decision making process follows a grass root dynamic (Interview 9). A grassroots movement is one that is driven by the politics of a community, which means that the movement is created in a spontaneous and natural way and it's not based on traditional power structures (Ekins, 1992). In this sense, the decision making process in Gartencoop, following a grassroots dynamic, aims to be flexible, based on trust and operates predominantly through consensus, where nothing is fixed but, rather, decisions are taken depending on the importance of the situation. The decision making process also aims to be as transparent as possible (Interview 9), so that all members are aware of

how and why decisions are taken, and that they are also, at all times, encouraged to participate and give feedback when they don't agree with certain issues.

At the present moment there are also three levels of decision making. The MV or "Mitgliederversammlung" (Members assembly) is the big general assembly where important decisions concerning everybody are taken (Interview 9). Then come the Coco, which meets twice a month, where decisions at an operational level are taken and members are encouraged to come and participate (Interview 9). And at the last level are all the decisions that are taken individually or collectively by the members of the core group (Interview 9). Although these three levels of decision making have proven to be successful for Gartencoop, it is very important that they keep aiming to develop even further the decision making process. All members should be aware and informed about where, how and why decisions are taken, and also to make explicit how they can participate in the process.

### Controlling

In CSA projects, about a third of the members don't engage in field activities (Interview 9). For this reason many of these projects develop mechanisms for controlling and compensating the participation of members. According to the member of the support team, there are three major ways for controlling the participation of members (Interview 9): first, 'No Control,' which means that the organization trusts the self-commitment of the people and hopes that they will participate to the extent that is required; second, 'Control and Communication,' which aims to more thoroughly comprehend members' attitudes and engage in a constructive way in order to understand why members might not come to help in the farm; finally, 'Control and Compensation,' which has the objective of finding a way to compensate the lack of engagement by sanctioning (in a monetary way) members who don't participate enough or don't comply with contract terms. At the present moment Gartencoop has no participation control or compensation mechanisms. There is no control because there is no other consensus among the community (Interview 9). According to the member of the Anbau team, he/she would appreciate if there were some sort of controlling mechanism. Nonetheless, until a new consensus is reached, things in Gartencoop will remain the same.

### Contract terms

When asking the member of the support team for more clarification to some of the questions that were raised by the members regarding the contract terms, he/she expressed:

- 1- The participation count system was defined in the last MV (“Mitgliederversammlung” – Members assembly). This mean that only the following activities: working half a day in Tunsel, participating in the distribution or helping in the cooking counts as an “action” (one participation quota).
- 2- The payment structure of Gartencoop is based on the system done by the CSA project Buschberghof and by several free schools like Waldorfschule or Freieschule in Freiburg. The idea consist that there is no minimum fee for the members and that each of them gives a monetary contribution according to their possibilities.
- 3- There is only one contract for members and it will remain like this. In this sense, they expect members to coordinate themselves and help each other so they can accomplish their participation requirements.

For this reason, it is important that the core group makes an effort to keep bringing clarification and understanding to the members about their role and the importance of their monetary contribution and participation for the development of the cooperative.

### Core ideals

What are the core ideals of Gartencoop? The core ideal is what the member of the support team call a “Copernican revolution”. This means that in the system of CSA, the farm is at the center, and that the humans and communities gravitate around the farm. In this sense, the community is taking responsibility for the agricultural activities, sharing the harvest and sharing the risk (Interview 9). Agriculture is unlike many other capitalistic activities where a good is produced: when doing agriculture, people work with their own food, which depends on the weather, pests and many other factors and it is for this reason that humans should deal with it differently (Interview 9).

Regarding the ecological ideals, the objective is to have a sustainable organic agricultural system, which uses as little fossil fuel as possible, transport distances are kept short, biodiversity is supported, soil fertility is increased and where 100% non-

hybrid seeds are used (Interview 9). And regarding the social aspect, the idea is to work towards a solidarity post-growth economy. In the sense that everybody can participate no matter what his or her skills are or financial situation is (Interview 9). The idea is also to educate people and to prepare them for a self-sustainable future where more people might be needed in the food sector.

It is of crucial importance that these core ideals are shared and known by the members because these ideals are key for creating the process of identification and establishing the commitment and engagement required for the success of Gartencoop.

### Future Development

In relation to the future development of the cooperative, one of the main objectives at the moment is to buy the land at Tunsel (Interview 9). According to the member of the support team, buying the land is a very important step for ensuring a long-term perspective of the project. Although the German law makes it difficult to buy the land collectively, they hope to start buying the process and find solutions to ensure the permanence of Gartencoop (Interview 9).

Regarding land planning, from the almost 9 hectares of terrain, the idea is to have one third of vegetables, one third of agricultural products (like wheat) and one third of green manure, which will be used for feeding the cows that later will provide the organic fertilizer (Interview 9). With this distribution of the land use, they aim to provide a wider range of products and have a more efficient system based on the recycling of nutrients.

On the subject of memberships, the cooperative aims to stabilize at a maximum of 300 memberships (Interview 9). Growing beyond this number the cooperative will be forced to change its system and infrastructure. An additional objective is to increase, at least 10%, the number of members coming from the area around Tunsel (Interview 9). This will definitely release some of the pressure that actually exists in the distribution chain.

Another idea consists of integrating the vegetable production in Tunsel with other initiatives in Freiburg, like the “mittagstisch” (sharing lunch) of Susie. The idea will be that Gartencoop could become the provider of the vegetables that are used for preparing the meals of this kind of projects.

Nonetheless it is very important for the development of Gartencoop that future projects come at the right time and that they are supported by majority of the community.

#### **4.4 Merging of the Perspectives**

When stepping aside and looking at the three perspectives, it is inevitable not to see the importance of their interconnectedness. Although the Members, the Anbau team and the Support team have different roles within the organization, they are all of vital significance for the functioning of the Gartencoop. If any of these groups is missing or does not meet their responsibilities the future of the cooperative will be seriously threatened. Below is a summary of the most important key points where these perspectives merge.

- Many of the issues and concerns that were expressed by members on the interviews, are already known and/or being addressed by the core group. The core group also aims to resolve these issues in order to affect positively the whole organization.
- One of the motivational drivers of core group is the motivation of the members. When the core group sees and interacts with committed members, they often feel even more motivated and engaged towards their work. This creates what the researcher calls a “cycle of motivation”, which means that the motivation of members fuels the motivation of the core group, and then the positive and welcoming attitude of the core group will fuel the motivation of members. For this reason, the atmosphere and the interactions between them can greatly affect the commitment and engagement of both (members and core group) towards the organization.
- The core group should try to make structures and mechanisms (eg. in the decision making process, participation count system) clearer for the members, in order to avoid misunderstanding and fuel their engagement.
- Talking specifically about the attitude problem, from the interviews the researcher has also learned how the motivation of the members is not only driven by personal ideas or beliefs, but also by the joy of working together as a

community. In this case, the attitude of the core group can greatly affect the participation of members within the organization. During the interviews, it was expressed by the Anbau and Support team that they are aware of the problem and they aim to improve the situation.

- Feedback from members would be greatly appreciated by the core group. This would help to identify faster flaws and key issues within the organization. In addition, members are also encouraged to take the initiative and propose solutions to the different problems they might discover in Gartencoop.
- The cooperative needs to put more emphasis on the importance of members' contribution and demonstrate that their participation in the field is of crucial importance for the success of the cooperative.
- Gartencoop is also a very young organization that is developing with time and adapting to new situations. In this sense, the core group asks members for understanding, in the sense that developments and structures will continue to evolve until a more efficient and stable system develops.
- According to some of the members and the core group, the development of the community idea could be one of the key aspects for increasing the engagement and participation of members.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In the final section of this master thesis, the researcher aims to present the most important hypotheses that were validated by the members. These core hypotheses constitute the heart of the theory that explains the behavior, the drivers and the discouraging factors behind the motivation of Gartencoop members to participate in the field activities. In addition, relevant information that was obtained from the interviews with the core group will also be included, in order to bring clarification to some of these hypotheses.

In order to guide the reader, these hypotheses will be presented below following the core categories that were developed earlier in this study.

### **5.1 Validated Hypotheses**

#### Joining Gartencoop:

- The desire of joining is the first impulse for creating and developing the engagement and motivation towards Gartencoop.
- Members, who are truly looking to be a part of the project, are probably more likely to show real commitment towards the organization and participate more regularly in Tonsel. However, very motivated members might also simply not have enough time to participate.
- The process of identification (finding a common vision, values and ideas) is crucial for creating a strong bond between Gartencoop philosophy's and their own. The core group aims to effectively communicate the core ideals and values of the organization in order to strengthen this process.
- The most important reason for joining Gartencoop is the desire to support the idea of a community-based solidarity agricultural project and help the organization to develop.

#### Motivating factors:

- The motivation to help in the farm cannot be disconnected from the general motivation of the member towards the organization.



- The commitment of the members to support the project will probably be reflected in the way that they participate and how regularly they will come to help in Tunsel.
- Enjoying the work outside is probably the most common and most mentioned motivational factor by members to work in Tunsel.
- Being part of Gartencoop means being part of a cooperative and thus getting in contact with people and establishing new and refreshing existing relationships. This is another of the most significant motivational factors for going to Tunsel.
- Another important factor for the personal motivation of members is how they see their own contribution. If they see their work as very valuable for the development of the project, they will probably create a stronger commitment to support and help Gartencoop. The core group should actively work on acknowledging the importance of members' contribution.
- Going to the farm can be a very exciting experience for members to get away from daily routine, to do something new, and to discover how to produce food and to learn useful skills for life, all of which can act as powerful sources of motivation for members.
- Being part of Gartencoop is also a social/political decision to support and expand the philosophy of this solidarity agricultural project.

Discouraging factors:

- How members perceive the core group (Anbau and Management team) can greatly affect their own participation within the project. Fortunately the core group is aware of this problem and it is trying to improve the situation.
- Some other members have stated the feeling of not being valuable and important, which clearly affects the view of their own work, and thus losing the importance and the meaning of their own contribution.
- It is important that members understand their position within Gartencoop and they feel they have the right to give feedback to the core group regarding their attitude and how they treat members. By doing this, a more welcoming atmosphere could be created, which could act as a source of motivation for members' participation. As it was expressed in the interviews, the core group encourages members to give more feedback.

- The traveling distance to Tunsel also constitutes a discouraging factor to go and help in the farm. Also traveling to Tunsel is quite expensive for members without a “Regiokarte”.
- One big obstacle found out by some members in Tunsel is that the assessment of workloads and work assignments is inefficient. This means that the gardeners cannot really estimate how much time does it take to complete a work assignment and how many members do they actually need. This lack of organization not only impacts people motivation but it can affect the efficiency of the farm. Nonetheless, with gained experienced, the Anbau team is constantly working on improving the work structures.
- Another problematic aspect mentioned by the members is that some of them don’t understand how participation is counted. By not knowing how this process works, it will be hard for them to reach that level of satisfaction that comes when you have participated enough. The participation system was defined in the last members’ assembly, although not all members might yet know this.
- For some members Gartencoop is simply not a priority in their life, and for that reason they don’t engage and commit to achieve participation requirements.

#### Work experience in Tunsel:

- Most of the members expressed that they have had good experiences when helping in Tunsel. Some even stated that they feel very excited and happy each time they go to the farm.
- It is of crucial importance that members have a good first-experience in Tunsel, in order to create a positive stamp that will fuel the desire of members to keep participating in the farm.
- In general, negative experiences are very likely to affect further participation of members. Therefore, it is very important that members get to share their negative experiences so improvements can be made within Gartencoop.

#### Gartencoop Contract:

- Concerned members expressed the importance of understanding that in an organization with 260 members there will be different levels of commitment. Therefore it is critical that they trust in the self-commitment of other members

and accept that not all members will participate in the same way. The core group is aware of this, and already accepts that there will always be different levels of engagement.

These hypotheses represent the theory behind the behavior and participation of members. They aim to achieve understanding regarding the motivational factors which fuel member's engagement. In addition, they also aim to become the starting points from which the organization and the people behind Gartencoop can start acting and improving the participation of members.

As a last thought, the researcher also believes that the biggest tool for increasing the commitment of members consists of working constantly in improving the communication and interconnectedness between the members and the core group. By bringing these two groups closer- and fully developing the sense of community- Gartencoop will continue to flourish for years to come.

## **5.2 Reflections on the research process**

When looking back at the research process, the Grounded Theory methodology and specifically the Grounded Theory guidelines from Charmaz (2006) proved to be a very valuable tool for trying to assess member's motivation. By following very strictly the research recommendations and using tools like intensive interviewing, line-by-line coding, focused-coding, use of gerunds during coding, and memoing, the researcher feels very successful with the level of depth that was achieved with the subject of study. In such a short amount of time and by interviewing the right persons, the researcher was able to develop a list of hypothesis that not only explains the motivational drivers and discouraging factors for members' participation in Tunsel, but this study also addresses other processes and categories which are closely linked to members commitment and engagement towards the organization. The only major constraint that was found for developing an even more profound study was the lack of time. The researcher would have liked to have a longer time frame for developing an even more concise theory, use additional data gathering methods and explore other categories and concepts that also have an impact on members' participation.

The researcher also particularly liked the flexibility that Grounded Theory allows. By moving from data collection to analysis, and then being able to go back

again and collect more data to fill the analytical gaps, the researcher really had an advantage over other methodologies. The researcher also believes that Grounded Theory methodology fits very well the study of subjective topics regarding the human behavior, like “the motivation” in this master thesis. And he also believes that Grounded Theory due to its strength and scope could become an even more important and influential methodology in the sphere of social sciences.

In addition, as it was discovered during the literature review, there is a large academic gap regarding studies that specifically address the motivation of members’ to participate in CSA activities. Therefore the researcher suggests that future studies should not only address the reasons for joining CSA projects but also the motivating and discouraging factors that fuel members’ participation and commitment. Specifically in the case of Gartencoop, this study should be taken as a base from which further research should be done, in order to develop a better understanding behind the processes that occur between the interactions of members and the core group, and how this relationship can be brought closer and develop a true sense of community.

## 6 OUTLOOK

On completion of this thesis, it is also important to reflect what could be done with the findings of this study. This section therefore aims to summarize the speculations, from the researcher point of view of what could happen in the future regarding Gartencoop and CSA projects in general.

From the study, it seems that there are a number of different motivating and discouraging factors affecting members' participation and commitment. These factors seem to be intrinsically linked to the relationships that exist not only between the people but also in relation to the core values of the organization. Gartencoop must continue developing the sense of community in order to increase members' engagement. By doing this a stronger sense of belonging will develop, which will impact very positively the whole organization. In the case that Gartencoop decides not to work actively on developing this sense of community, the project will probably experience even higher fluctuations of members. As typical to many other CSA projects, members who don't feel attached to the organization will probably leave, and new members will join every year. Therefore, ensuring the right amount of members will probably become a challenge every year for the core group (Anbau and Support teams). By developing this strong sense of community, it is likely that most members will remain for a longer period of time within organization. This will very positively impact the cooperative, allowing it to develop more solid structures and concentrate on increasing the efficiency and satisfaction of its members.

In a more general note, there seems to be an increasing trend regarding the development of CSA projects (Volz, 2012) & (Interview 9). This is due to the fact that there is an increasing demand for organic and locally-grown food products. As new CSA initiatives start to emerge, it is necessary and important that the management teams define the levels of participation that are required for the successful operation of the farm. The management team should also have a closer look and monitor the participation of members. They should also ask the members what motivates them and develop ways to improve their engagement and participation. In conclusion, the ongoing success and long-term viability of CSAs is dependent on the development of a close relationship between the producers and the consumers, an important step in developing a more sustainable world.

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## Testimony

I hereby attest that I have completed this thesis without external aid, using only the resources indicated and that I have not previously submitted this document as a Master thesis elsewhere.

\_\_\_\_\_ Place / Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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