

Development of Community Supported Agriculture in Austria and France: a comparative analysis in the context of social innovation

Entwicklung der Solidarischen Landwirtschaft in Österreich und Frankreich: eine vergleichende Analyse im Kontext Sozialer Innovation

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Summary

In Austria, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm numbers have levelled off at around 30-40 farms, while its counterpart in France, the AMAP, not only currently has 2,000 farms but also shows a formalisation of territorial organisations, which support the farmers. In this paper, we aim to show what can be learned from the French experiences in terms of the actors and their constellation and the institutionalisation of AMAP. Based on literature review and semi-structured interviews with representatives of CSA in both countries, we will compare the development of CSA in Austria and France using the concept of social innovation as well as the conceptual framework of phases of innovation by Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017). In the analysis, we focus on the criteria of agents of change (phase 1), new constellation of actors (phase 2) and the degree of structural stabilization (phase 3). From the experiences in France we learned that a formalised CSA network supporting CSA farmer's needs at an operational level and forming alliances in the agricultural sector could promote CSA in Austria.

Keywords: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Associations pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP), social innovation, new consumer-producer initiatives

Zusammenfassung

In Österreich hat sich die Zahl der Solidarischen Landwirtschaftsbetriebe (Community Supported Agriculture, CSA) bei 30-40 eingependelt, während in Frankreich die Anzahl der AMAP-Betriebe, einem von CSA inspiriertem Modell, bei rund 2.000 liegt und diese Betriebe durch formale Organisationen auf unterschiedlichen territorialen Ebenen unterstützt werden. Ziel des Beitrags ist es aufzuzeigen, was aus den Erfahrungen der AMAP in Frankreich in Hinblick auf die Akteure und ihre Konstellationen sowie die Institutionalisierung gelernt werden kann. Dazu vergleichen wir die Entwicklung von CSA in Österreich und Frankreich anhand des Konzepts Sozialer Innovationen und der Innovationsphasen aus dem konzeptionellen Rahmen von Rückert-John et al. (2013) und Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017). In der Analyse konzentrieren wir uns auf die folgenden Kriterien: AkteurInnen des Wandels (Phase 1), neue Konstellation der AkteurInnen (Phase 2) und den Grad der strukturellen Stabilisierung (Phase 3). Neben Literaturrecherche haben wir semi-strukturierte Interviews mit CSA-VertreterInnen in beiden Ländern durchgeführt. Auf Basis unserer Ergebnisse schließen wir, dass ein formalisiertes CSA-Netzwerk, das die Bedürfnisse der CSA-Landwirte auf operationeller Ebene unterstützt und Allianzen im Agrarsektor bildet, die Verbreitung von CSA in Österreich fördern könnte.

Schlagworte: Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Associations pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP), Soziale Innovation, neue KonsumentInnen-ProduzentInnen-Initiativen

1 Introduction

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enables the formation of direct relationships between consumers and producers based on values like solidarity, risk-sharing, community building, respect for the environment and strong regional anchoring. In this local food system, the consumer agrees to pay the producer in advance for a harvest-share and in return, the producer is committed to supply fresh, local and good-quality products (see literature review in Hinrichs, 2000; Wellner and Theuvsen, 2016; URGENCI, 2016).

In Austria, the number of farms working according to the CSA principles remains small so far and has levelled off at around 30-40 farms (European CSA Research Group, 2016; Plank et al., 2020; Umweltberatung, s.a.). Looking for the reasons why the numbers are stagnating in Austria, literature gives several hints on the difficulties for CSA farms in Austria. Schermer (2015) points at the early availability of organic and regional/local food in the mainstream retail distribution channels as one explanation. Plank (2018) mentions several challenges to implementing CSA principles under the prevailing socio-economic and policy framework conditions. For instance, there are the difficulties of integrating consumers into production and management processes. This is not only due to the limited time resources of consumers in the context of normal working hours, but also due to legal protection issues, if consumers are working on the farm. Additionally, the Austrian social security and pension system as well as adequate legal forms are not well aligned with collectively managed farms and represent institutional barriers for CSA initiatives. Similarly, the current agricultural funding system provides little support for the primarily small-scale CSA farms (Plank et al. 2020). Another important aspect, which might hinder the development of CSA in Austria, is the absence of a formal supporting organisation. Attempts to install more formalized organisational structures, such as a network point for CSA, have not been successful so far and are under ongoing discussion (Pabst and Krall, 2015; Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.).

When reviewing CSA in Europe, the French system of the Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP), inspired by CSA, stands out in terms of its development and number of farms involved. An AMAP is a collective formed by consumers and producers engaged in a local partnership, bonded by a contract, without commercial intermediaries and with an idea of durability. This is defined in "La charte des AMAP" (MIRAMAP, s.a.). In 2015, there were more than 2,000 AMAP existing in France (European CSA Research Group, 2016). Supporting organisations emerged on local, regional and national levels with a double mission of experience sharing and representation. At national and in some cases at regional level, MIRAMAP and AMAP assume the legal form of an association, while some regional and local AMAP have no legal status.

Against this background, we raise the question of why CSA and AMAP in Austria and France today have different levels of implementation and spread. Besides the chronical

development of CSA and AMAP, we are particularly interested in the organisational structure. To our best knowledge, there are no scientific studies comparing CSA in Austria and France. In this paper, we will try to fill this gap by addressing the following questions:

- I. How have CSA and AMAP and their organisational structure developed in Austria and France since their creation?
- II. Where do the developments resemble each other and where do they differ?

We will employ the concept of CSA as a social innovation, since a large part of the underlying Austrian data stems from the EU-H2020 project SIMRA (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas). SIMRA aims at understanding, evaluating and boosting social innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural development in marginalized rural areas. Within SIMRA, social innovation is defined as "the reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors" (Polman et al., 2017).

Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017) also give a perspective on social innovation as "innovation of social practice" and define it as "alternative practices or new variations of practices which differ substantially from established mainstream routines". In their conceptual framework for analysing specific cases of social innovation, the team of authors specifically addresses food consumption and CSA as a social innovation. Based on this framework, we will compare the development and current organisational state of CSA in Austria and France by applying the three phases of innovation formulated by the authors mentioned regarding the criteria: agents of change (phase 1), new constellation of actors (phase 2) and degree of structural stabilization (phase 3). In our conclusion, we will reflect on what Austria may learn from the French experiences regarding the development and successful implementation of CSA with regard to the criteria examined.

2 Methods

The research team started with a literature research centred on CSA in Austria and AMAP in France. The topic of CSA is relatively new in Austria and the body of literature consists of several bachelor's and master's theses, e.g. investigating the diffusion of CSA in Austria (Pabst and Krall, 2015) or its potentials and limits as a counter hegemonic movement (Braukman, 2015). Scientific papers, among others, assess factors hindering CSA's expansion in Austria (Schermer, 2015), compare the current distribution of CSA in Germany and Austria (Wellner and Theuvsen, 2016) or investigate the role of CSA in the Austrian Third Food Regime (Plank, 2018; Plank et al., 2020).

The literature corpus on AMAP addresses different topics like the formalization of the network (Le Rudulier, 2010) or

the new form of contract between producers and consumers assumed by the model of AMAP, some going further, saying that it redefines the values of the ‘local’ (Poulot, 2014) and commitment (Raynal and Razafimahefa, 2014). This literature gives some insights on the characteristics of the network, some of which are close to the characteristics given by Rückert-John et al. (2013). There is also another stream of literature that interests us on the creation of the movement and its dynamic (Lanciano and Saleilles, 2011), in particular concerning our field research area, Île-de-France¹ (e.g. Blanc, 2012).

To complement findings in literature we conducted interviews with stakeholders in both countries. The data collected for Austria mostly stems from the EU-H2020 project SIMRA examining Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas. The definition of marginalization in SIMRA was based on physical, environmental, social and economic aspects whereas the classification of areas was extended to rural and intermediate rural areas within the project (Price et al., 2017). We proposed several CSA farms in Austria, which went through a case study selection process developed within SIMRA. The CSA farm finally selected is located in the North-Eastern rural plains of Austria, a favourable but dry agricultural production zone. The municipal population density is relatively low (60 inhabitants per km²), with regional domestic production below the Austrian average (Valero et al., 2017). For this paper, we used the data of a focus group and of seven semi-structured interviews collected in SIMRA between March 2018 and July 2018 (SIMRA, s.a.). One additional interview with a special focus on the historical development of CSA in Austria was conducted in July 2019, using an adapted interview guideline from SIMRA. The Austrian interview partners included a farmer, eaters² (ErnteteilerIn in German), representatives of civil society, science, Chamber of Agriculture as well as the Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism³.

To obtain data for the French part of the article, we conducted seven semi-structured interviews with an adapted interview guideline from SIMRA in the Parisian area in May and June 2019. The interview partners included a farmer in one of the first Parisian AMAP, a founder and member of a new Parisian AMAP, the Organic Farmers Trade Union Groupement des Agriculteurs Biologiques (GAB), the regional Chamber of Agriculture, network managers at a regional level (Le réseau des AMAP Ile-de-France) and at national level (MIRAMAP: Mouvement Interrégional des AMAP) and the Interdepartmental and Regional Directorate of Food, Agriculture and Forests in Ile-de-France (DRIAAF). The French data was used for this paper as well

as for drafting the master’s thesis “The AMAP: structuration of an alternative agri-food chain” (Ayrault, 2019).

All semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed with MAXQDA12 according to predetermined categories. For the Austrian data collection within the SIMRA-project, the analysis used categories elaborated within the project (SIMRA, s.a.). For all French interviews and the additional Austrian one, the categories were adapted and focused on the overall development of CSA/AMAP. The evaluation categories included inter alia the characteristics of the movement of CSA/AMAP and the structure and organisation involved.

The SIMRA social innovation evaluation framework is designed along two phases and suggests a comprehensive mixed-method approach. We could not apply the whole framework to the French AMAP due to a lack of resources. Also, the data we collected within the SIMRA framework was targeted at a single case-study, whereas now we are looking at the whole CSA organisational structure. Therefore, we did not have enough data to employ the whole SIMRA evaluation framework. To study the various stages of the development of CSA in Austria and AMAP in France we use the approach of phases of innovation formulated by the team of authors Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017) in their theoretical framework for analysing social innovation for consumption practices. They defined the following three phases of innovation, each of them described by a number of criteria:

1. Variation or the challenge of established social practices,
2. Selection of alternative practices or practice elements and experimental implementation, and
3. Stabilization of social practices.

In our analysis we focus on the criteria of agents of change (phase 1), new constellation of actors (phase 2) and the degree of structural stabilization (phase 3). These criteria may explain crucial differences in the development of CSA in the two countries examined. The chosen criteria are comparable with those used in the SIMRA-project and are well covered by the data collected.

3 Development of CSA in Austria and AMAP in France

In this section, we first present the development of CSA in Austria and AMAP in France as described by our interview partners and in literature. Second, we reconnect these findings with the phases of social innovation defined by Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017).

3.1 Development of CSA in Austria

The year 2011 can be seen as the starting point for CSA in Austria. After intense preparation, the first Austrian CSA “Gela Ochsenherz” was founded near Vienna (Braukmann, 2015). Also, in 2011, the first European Nyéléni Forum

1 In this paper, we define “movement” as the activities and gatherings among single CSA/AMAP farms and supporting stakeholders and associations, which result from the engagement of these stakeholders to advance CSA as a practice.

2 We are using the term “eaters” to refer to consumers who have a vested share in the CSA’s harvest.

3 Now: Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism.

for Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni Europe) took place in Austria, which was hosted by the ÖBV Via Campesina (Austrian Association of Mountain and Small Farmers) and the Austrian branches of Attac⁴ and FIAN⁵. Nyéléni Europe stimulated networking and knowledge sharing around CSA (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.). As a result, the Austrian Attac was invited to participate in the EU Grundtvig project “CSA for Europe” (running from 2011-2013). Led by the International CSA network URGENCI based in France, the project aimed at shared learning between farmers and consumers in all partner countries, through knowledge exchange workshops and farm visits (URGENCI, s.a.). Interested farmers and students were actively involved in this project. Overall, “CSA for Europe” has boosted the further development of CSA in Austria (SIMRA interviews, 2018/19).

In the years 2012-2016, intense networking took place between already existing and newly founded CSA in Austria, consumers in CSA, engaged students and people from the civil society, who partly refer to themselves as food activists (Pabst and Krall, 2015; Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.). The Austrian Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni Austria) initiated by the ÖBV, Attac, and FIAN and supported by people from the civil society and volunteers from other organisations had its first meeting in 2014. Since the beginning, CSA has been one topic Nyéléni Austria is dedicated to and people actively involved in the latter are also engaged in CSA networking activities. Moreover, Nyéléni Austria provides an online platform and a wiki⁶ on food sovereignty topics including CSA (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.). During this time, the number of CSA in Austria rose to around 26 (European CSA Research Group, 2016). With the support of the ÖBV Via Campesina and other associations, the above mentioned stakeholders discussed different ideas and models regarding a formalization of the informal CSA networking activities. Regarding its tasks and functions, the CSA network was first conceived simply to enable knowledge exchange and cooperation among CSA and periodic CSA network meetings, but it should have no centralised structures. Later, a wider set of tasks and activities, such as establishing an advisory and coordination office, internal and external public relations and networking with other organisations and authorities was aspired to. There were ideas of integrating CSA related agendas into existing organisations such as the German CSA network or the ÖBV Via Campesina as well as founding an Austrian CSA association of its own (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.). In 2016-2017, concrete attempts to install a formal Austrian CSA network were undertaken. Eleven CSA attended the last network meeting in 2017. The basic idea was to establish a council of CSA, where each individual CSA should have a

voice in the network. In this meeting, the roles, competences, legal and financial aspects of the network were discussed and agreed on. One suggestion was that the network could use the structures of the ÖBV Via Campesina and would therefore not need its own legal form (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.; SIMRA interviews, 2018/19). However, the network was not implemented. The reasons are manifold, as we learned from the SIMRA interviews and from networking meeting proceedings (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.). Some CSA argued that the proposed new network structures were disproportionate in relation to the few CSA currently present in Austria. There were also different opinions among individual CSA on its roles, legal form, affiliations as well as on the network’s scope and whether it should also engage in political activities concerning food systems. One frequent topic was the question of the fair remuneration of voluntary networking activities (Ernährungssouveränität Wiki, s.a.; SIMRA interviews, 2018/19). Ultimately, the lack of (time) resources required to advance the network into an operational phase may have been a factor on top of the conceptual differences (SIMRA interviews, 2018/19).

In 2017 and 2018, we observed a shift from intense Austrian wide exchange and networking activities back to focusing on the single CSA. Some of the CSA underwent internal restructuring; some farms stopped their CSA activities while new ones started. The exchange seemed to happen on a more regional level since then, partly supported by established organisations, e.g. the project “Appetit auf Zukunft” in Upper Austria by Bio Austria and the Green Party, or the support by Bio Ernte Styria in the province of Styria. This institutional support was mostly initiated by people, who have already been involved in CSA activities in Austria and then started to work in these institutions. Meanwhile, in the Vienna region intense cooperation occurred among several CSA, starting from the Austrian pioneer CSA “Gela Ochsenherz”. Amongst other activities, they launched a new homepage for CSA in Austria (SoLaWi leben, s.a.; SIMRA interviews, 2018/19)

3.2 Development of AMAP in France

In 2001, the Vuillon couple, market gardeners in the south of France, came back from the USA where they discovered CSA. Back in France, they decided to work under CSA principles and, less than a year later, the first regional network Alliance Provence was created when the number of AMAP in the region grew fast (Poulot, 2014). In the beginning, AMAP were supported by the Alliance Paysans – Ecologistes – Consommateurs (PEC) created in 1991 under the influence of the Confédération Paysanne, which was a farmers’ trade union for sustainable development. The Alliance PEC disappeared after one last meeting in 2004, leading to the birth of URGENCI, which is the International Network for Community Supported Agriculture. However, before its disappearance, the Alliance PEC helped the first AMAP and regional networks, and gave momentum to the movement, with active volunteers getting involved in the AMAP movement (Ayrault, 2019).

4 Attac: Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières et pour l’Action Citoyenne. It is an international movement working towards social, environmental and democratic alternatives in the globalisation process.

5 FIAN: Food First Information and Action Network. It is an international human rights organisation for the right to food.

6 Wiki: a web-based collection of articles which can be read and edited by its own audience.

We will now focus on the region Île-de-France, our case study, to describe the emergence of local supporting organizations. In Île-de-France, the first AMAP were created in 2003. From the very beginning, they were supported by existing associations working in the agricultural field, and the trade union of organic farmers (Blanc, 2012). Their number increased strongly from 2006 to 2010 (up to about 350 in 2019). This was also due to the formalization of a regional network, which worked with other stakeholders to support new farmers, and the strong interest of Parisian consumers for this new model that filled a gap in the market. For instance, there were only relatively few farmers markets in the capital city and organic stores made their debut quite late compared to Austria. Moreover, with the urbanization of Paris' surroundings, Parisians had lost their awareness of the agricultural field as well as their connections to farmers (Ayrault, 2019).

AMAP soon started to gather at a very local level, creating inter-AMAP, an informal network working on territorial issues like technical aspects and the agronomic context, through sharing experiences, machinery and tools, or representation activities like the communication with the city or regional council. Inter-AMAP vary a lot depending on the context. They can be composed of less than ten AMAP up to tens of AMAP. In fact, the development of the supporting network structure has always been a reaction to perceived issues from committed people in the AMAP system. At a regional level, the first operational issues were: how to attract new farmers and set up new farms, as market-gardening ("maraîchage" in French) in Ile-de-France was still very fragile, and how to create adapted supporting tools, as the Chamber of Agriculture did not support these new alternative agri-food models. The answer found by the network was to reinforce experience sharing and create partnerships with skilled associations like the GAB, causing the regional network to develop, define its mission and gain new skills (Ayrault, 2019).

Once the operational ground was secured, it appeared that AMAP lacked coherence and external visibility. Each AMAP was first doing its own communication, soon strongly supported by the regional network, but still regional networks quickly found that they needed to speak a common language and get a voice if they wanted to be heard at a national level. This situation, along with the expansion of AMAP all over France up to 2,000 AMAP, mainly around urban areas (Raynal and Razafimahefa, 2014), led to the creation of the Mouvement Interrégional des AMAP (MIRAMAP) in 2010 and its important missions of representation and experience sharing (Ayrault, 2019). In 2014, the MIRAMAP published the common definition for the AMAP (MIRAMAP, s.a.; see also chapter 1 in this paper) including their core values: locality, durability and direct relationship.

3.3 The phases of innovation of CSA in Austria and AMAP in France

We now apply selected criteria used by Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017) to describe the three phases of innovation in the development of CSA and AMAP. The employed criteria comprise the agents of change (phase 1), new constellations of actors (phase 2) and the degree of structural stabilization (phase 3).

In *innovation phase one* we focus on the *agents of change*. These are the actors who challenge the established practices (Seyfang and Smith, 2007 in Jaeger-Erben et al., 2015). They can be individuals, initiatives, groups, representatives from institutions, or economic actors (Rückert-John et al., 2013). In Austria, it started with a group of engaged consumers, interested farmers and food activists (Pabst and Krall, 2015), who were supported by NGOs⁷ like ÖBV and Attac. The food activists and the NGOs played a steering role. A characteristic feature in the Austrian development is that food activists were very engaged in CSA development even though most of them never became farmers or eaters in a CSA. In France, the driving force were the farmers looking for new opportunities to market their products and who managed to gather engaged consumers willing to help and activists from Alliance PEC, who already had experience in such initiatives.

For *phase two of the innovation process* the criterion of *new constellation of actors* is interesting for our analysis. This criterion is about comparing the constellation of actors in view of newly established actor constellations or the modification of existing actor relationships (Rückert-John et al., 2013). For the overall CSA development in Austria, we see that the groups of actors – farmers, consumers, food activists, NGOs – gathered together in CSA networking meetings to pursue knowledge exchange between CSA farms within Austria and with CSA farms in Europe as well as to advance the CSA development in Austria. As we described in section 3.1, these meetings and networking activities had a national scope until 2017, since then actor relationships seemed to happen on a regional level. In the course of time, some of the actors, mainly food activists, started working in related fields like the organic farming association and research institutions and continued supporting CSA from within these institutions or facilitated co-operations with the Chamber of Agriculture.

For France, we see that a network developed from the core composed of farmers, consumers and activists from Alliance PEC that was created in phase one. When Alliance PEC disappeared the activists were integrated to the AMAP movement. The activists used their experience to find partnerships and allow the movement to spread and strengthen. One important partnership was the GAB, which was able to bring some technical expertise to the movement. As the AMAP movement grew, it quickly became part of various networks contesting traditional agriculture. All the move-

7 NGO: Non Governmental Organisation.

ment developed around the need to secure farmers, changing the food system was not the main incentive at first.

Regarding the entry into the *third phase of innovation*, Jaeger-Erben et al. (2017) consider the *degree of formalization* (i.e. how stable are the structures) as being crucial. In Austria, attempts to install a formalised network have failed so far. We would therefore see CSA in Austria as not having entered the third phase of innovation yet. In France, once the stakeholders succeeded in the operational part, there was a need for formalization to insure the stability and resilience of the movement, to be heard at a national level as well as to make new diversified partnerships. Thus, AMAP have an established organisational structure with informal inter-AMAP on the local level, formal networks (for the major part) on the regional level, and a national organisation called MIRAMAP. These structures were created from ground level up to the national one initiated by the will of engaged producers.

4 Conclusion

Today, Austria and France show a different state of CSA with France holding much higher CSA farm numbers in comparison to Austria as well as networks at different territorial levels, which support the farmers. In this paper, we aimed at elaborating on factors leading to the current state of AMAP in France and what can be learned for CSA in Austria. We therefore have addressed the following questions: i) How have CSA and AMAP and their organisational structures developed in Austria and France since their creation and ii) Where do the developments resemble each other and where do they differ? To answer both questions, we employed the concept of CSA as a social innovation. We found the methodological approaches of Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger-Erben et al. (2015; 2017) a valuable framework to analyze the phases of innovation of CSA. For the analysis we focused on the criteria agents of change (phase 1), new constellation of actors (phase 2) and the degree of structural stabilization (phase 3).

Regarding the *agents of change (phase 1)* we found that, both in Austria and in France, the agents of change consisted of groups of interested farmers and engaged consumers supported by NGOs. However, they differ when it comes to their role in the beginning of the CSA movement. In France, the farmers and their needs at an operational level played a central role in the development of the AMAP, the farmers were the driving force. Conversely, the CSA development in Austria was strongly supported and steered by active consumers, food activists and NGOs. In the course of time the farmers' needs concerning operational issues in running a CSA farm might have been somewhat lost sight of and at least some of the farmers did not feel represented anymore. Refocusing attention on the challenges CSA farmers are dealing with such as work overload, financial instabilities or legal aspects may help to support further CSA development.

We also saw differences between Austria and France regarding the *new constellation of actors (phase 2)*. We learned from phase 1 that the groups of agents were similar in both countries. In both cases, activists played a significant role in forming co-operations between the agents of CSA and other organisations such as organic farming organisations / associations, but the impact of the co-operation differed. In Austria, individual food-activists became associates in organisations working in related fields, such as educational institutions or the organic farming association. They continued promoting and supporting CSA farmers and consumers, but as a national formalized network was not implemented, the activities focus on a regional level. In comparison, in France activists were already organised within a bigger structure (PEC) leading to new and stronger partnerships. What can be learned from the development of the AMAP in France is the importance of forming and strengthening alliances with established players in the agricultural sector who can help with technical support at the operational level.

Finally, when analyzing the degree of structural stabilization (phase 3) we found that Austria has not yet entered this phase. While several processes were initiated where different ideas and concepts for a more formalized CSA network were discussed, they never met with broad acceptance among individual CSA. In France organisational structures were very quickly created at different territorial levels in order to support the needs of the farmers involved. Today there are established organisational structures on local, regional and national levels.

To conclude, the early formalization of the AMAP in France as well as strong alliances of AMAP with established organisations gave a strong impetus for the spreading of the movement. Reviving efforts to install more formalized CSA structures grounded on tight partnerships could be a way to advance the development in Austria, too.

As we only applied parts of the framework of Rückert-John et al. (2013) and Jaeger Erben et al. (2015 and 2017), we certainly see the limits of our paper: The authors cited defined a number of criteria for each of the three innovation phases. We selected those, which we believe best describe the development and organisational structures of CSA in both countries and for which we had the most reliable data. We are aware of the blind spots created by this selection, which may also limit the reliability of our findings. It would be interesting to do further research and investigate all criteria and dynamics among them, especially regarding the criteria: problem definition and problem solution in phase one. Furthermore, we are aware that when comparing different countries numerous other factors, such as e.g. the political culture, the culture of civil society engagement may play an important role regarding the development of social innovations within a country.

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