Slow Food in Transition:  
A study of niche development in Stockholm

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Abstract

Food systems represent one of the most critical resources under threat as a result of an unsustainable dominant regime. It is essential that the agricultural sector and food systems be addressed in order to achieve systemic and lasting change for sustainable development. This study uses transition theory's strategic niche management approach to analyze a social innovation focused on creating systemic change within the currently unsustainable food system regime in order to influence a sustainability transition, using Slow Food Stockholm (a local level grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche) as a case study. Theoretically informed practical recommendations are given to help the Stockholm Slow Food movement grow and diffuse beyond its niche: to address social network weaknesses by broadening and strengthening relationships with underrepresented groups as well as resourceful and mainstream regime actors; to strengthen learning processes by fostering second-order learning through the creation of a platform for active and critical contemplation and knowledge sharing regarding niche growth and niche related topics; to manage expectations more realistically by identify and clarify niche goals for both the long term and the short term using tangible projects to stimulate involvement and concrete action opportunities for activists. Finally, reflections are given regarding remaining research gaps and the need for further studies relating to innovations for sustainable food system transitions.
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Introduction

Food systems represent one of the most critical resources under threat as a result of an unsustainable dominant regime. The patterns of food production and consumption have been described as “arguably both the key driver of global environmental change and a fundamental factor of global economic and social development” (Foley et al, 2011; Lang, 2009). For example, today's unsustainable agricultural regime has negative implications for increasing land-use change, freshwater depletion, and greenhouse gas emissions (Foley et al, 2011). It is therefore essential that the agricultural sector and food systems be addressed in order to achieve systemic and lasting change for sustainable development (Garnett, 2013). Accordingly, this study will focus on the application of transition theory in analyzing an innovation niche that was formed with the purpose of creating systemic change within the dominant food system regime in order to influence a sustainability transition. This will be done through the case study of a local level manifestation of the Slow Food (SF) movement, which will be defined within this study as a social-technical innovation qualifying as both a grassroots and a social-ecological innovation source.

In the last century, humanity has achieved great material wealth while simultaneously degrading ecosystem services and creating increasing scarcity of critical resources in a way that now threatens to limit future social development (Steffen et al, 2011). Accordingly, innovative new approaches are needed in order to address these growing threats to social, economic, and ecological sustainability (Westley et al, 2011). However, there are a number of competing ideas on how best to achieve the vision of a more sustainable future. One growing body of research claims that truly long-term sustainable development can only be achieved through systemic change of existing dominant (and unsustainable) regimes. In particular, the promotion and management of such regime transitions toward sustainability has received increasing attention from the research community in recent years (Grin et al, 2010; Markard et al, 2012; Smith et al, 2005). As Grin et al (2010) states, “it is crucial to understand transition dynamics and how transitions can be influenced into a desired direction, such as sustainable development and new value systems.”

Previously, the related research fields of transition theory and social-technical innovation have focused mainly on technological innovations and their role in regime transitions. However, transition theory has recently proved useful in exploring socially focused social-technological transitions by studying grassroots innovations (see Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Technological innovation and social innovation (i.e. community action) are two important strands of sustainable development, wherein the grassroots have previously been neglected (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). However, addressing only the social-technological dimensions of regime transitions cannot guide society toward sustainable outcomes. Social-ecological dimensions must also be considered (Chapin et al, 2010). As a result, recent research has highlighted a need for increased focus on social-ecological innovations in sustainability studies (Olsson & Galaz, 2012; Westley et al, 2011). This study therefore aims to address these knowledge gaps by focusing on a grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche at the local level through the study of the Stockholm Slow Food movement (SSFM) using transition theory’s strategic niche management (SNM) approach as a guiding framework.
Theory indicates that a meaningful sustainability transition within a social-technological regime requires that niche development reach a certain level of successful growth before it can have a lasting impact on a regime. Accordingly, this study will address the following research questions and sub questions using a SNM theoretical framework.

Research Questions:
- How successful has the SSFM been in developing their local innovation niche?
  - How developed is the SSFM’s social network?
  - How does the SSFM address and foster learning?
  - How successful has the SSFM been in promoting and managing expectations of what the movement can deliver?


[2.1] Theoretical Background

Transition theory is a relatively recent, yet increasingly expanding field of research, wherein strategic niche management has emerged as an approach to understanding transitions from a management perspective. Accordingly, SNM theory focuses on increasing the understanding of how a regime can be influenced toward a certain desirable transition in that “it may be used to induce or accelerate a change” to a regime (Kemp et al, 1998). Kemp et al’s definition of this approach is as follows: “strategic niche management is the creation, development and controlled phase-out of protected spaces for the development and use of promising technologies [or other innovations] by means of experimentation, with the aim of (1) learning about the desirability of the new technology [or innovation] and (2) enhancing the further development and the rate of application of the new technology [or innovation]” (Schot, Slob & Hoogma, 1994 as cited by Kemp et al, 1998). As mentioned, this approach has primarily been applied to the more technology focused socio-technical regimes. However, like other recent research using this approach to study more socially focused innovations (rather than primarily technology focused innovations), this study uses the SNM approach to better understand the development of a grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche.

For the purpose of this study of the Slow Food movement in Stockholm as a grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche, the niche and its role in a sustainability transition will be explored using the SNM explanation of socio-technical regimes set forth by Geels & Schot (2007) when describing the multi-level perspective (MLP) on transition management.

Within MLP, there are three main, interactive layers to a transition (see Figure 1). The “outermost” level is known as the landscape, which “forms an exogenous environment beyond the direct influence of niche and regime actors (macro-economics, deep cultural patterns, macro- political developments). Changes at the landscape level usually take place slowly (decades),” (Geels & Schot, 2007). The next level is referred to as the regime. Within the context of this study, a regime is understood as a set of “shared
Increasing structuration of activities in local practices

Figure 1: Multi-level perspective on transitions (Geels & Schot, 2007) - Within strategic niche management, the multi-level perspective, illustrated in this figure, will be used to inform the theoretical framework of this study, wherein the niche-innovation level is in focus.

cognitive routines” or dominating norms within a community or system that explain “patterned development along ‘technological trajectories,”’ (Geels & Schot, 2007). The regime level is made up of many actors and directly influential factors, including markets & consumer preferences, industry, science, culture, policy, and technology. The dominant regime is considered to be the mainstream and generally accepted way of acting and thinking, etc. A regime transition, therefore, can be understood as a change from one dominant regime to another (Geels & Schot, 2007). Such a regime transition from an unsustainable or less sustainable regime to a more eco-conscious, sustainable regime (i.e. “a fundamental transformation towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption”) can be understood as a sustainability transition (Markard et al, 2012). Regime transitions can take different forms and follow different pathways, meaning that regimes can experience transitions for a variety of reasons, and the transition from one dominant regime to another can take place in a variety of ways (Geels & Schot, 2007). Yet these various transition pathways each suggest that a well-
developed niche is key to successfully influencing the regime transition, which is important when attempting to manage a transition toward a more sustainable regime. This is of particular interest in relation to this study, which focuses on the third level within the multi-level perspective, the niche.

“... Historical evidence suggests that entrepreneurs/system builders and niches play an important role in the transition process” (Kemp et al, 1998). It is by studying the development of the niche itself that the SNM approach can help explain how a systemic change or regime transition can be achieved. In this way, “strategic niche management [acts] as a transition tool,” (Kemp et al, 1998), by looking closer at the processes influencing niche growth and success, in order to better manage a sustainability transition. For the purposes of this study, a niche is understood to be a protected space or “incubation room” for the development and use of promising new ideas, innovations or “novelties” to be tested without being subjected to the pressures of the currently dominant regime (Geels & Raven, 2006; Geels & Schot, 2007; Kemp et al., 1998; Schot, 1998; Schot & Geels, 2008; Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Accordingly, “niche-innovations are carried and developed by small networks of dedicated actors, often outsiders or fringe actors” (Geels & Schot, 2007). It is one such innovation niche, originating from a grassroots base, with a focus on both social and ecological innovation, on which this study will focus.

Alternative theoretical frameworks should also be recognized as offering potentially complementing approaches and insights to exploring such a grassroots and social-ecological niche. For example, social movement theory has previously been used to study grassroots and social ecological movements in Stockholm (Ernston et al, 2008) and other areas (Seyfang et al, 2010). However, the focus of this paper is on the study of the SSFM niche using an innovation lens in the hopes that theories regarding the successful management of innovation niches can reveal ways in which this movement “can grow and diffuse ideas into wider society” (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

[2.2] Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws on three bodies of theory. Of these, two will provide context for the study framework, allowing the research to be presented through the lens of 1) grassroots innovation theory, and 2) social-ecological innovation theory. These two innovation lenses primarily act as guiding frameworks for the cite selection for this study. The third source of theory for this study (3) transition theory’s strategic niche management approach) will act as the focus for the research process, providing the primary framework for the methods, results and discussion portions of the study.

1) Grassroots innovation theory will be used in defining the SSFM as a grassroots innovation niche. For the purposes of this study, grassroots innovations are considered to be niches “existing within the social economy of community activities and social enterprise” where they develop via a protective set of “different social, ethical and cultural rules” than those acknowledged in the mainstream regime (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). “The benefits of grassroots innovations for sustainable development derive
principally from their creating a space for: developing new ideas and practices; experimenting with new systems of provision; enabling people to express ‘alternative’ green and progressive values; and the tangible achievement of sustainability improvements, albeit on a small scale,” (Seyfang & Smith, 2007 as cited by Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

2) **Social-Ecological innovation** theory will be used in defining the SSFM as a social-ecological innovation. Olsson and Galaz (2012) have recently developed the social-ecological innovation concept that can “help move [regime transitions] to new trajectories of sustainability.” “Social-ecological innovation is defined as technological and social innovation - including new strategies, concepts, ideas, institutions, and organizations - that enhance the capacity of social-ecological systems to generate bundles of essential ecosystem services,” (Olsson & Galaz, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the relevant ecosystem service, or way in which humans directly benefit from nature (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005), would be food provision. Such innovation can help reconfigure social-ecological systems and fundamentally change human-environmental interactions and feedbacks.

3) Transition theory’s **Strategic Niche Management (SNM)** approach will be used to analyze the innovation niche. From within the SNM approach, this study draws specifically on theory surrounding **niche development processes** that have been identified as necessary for the success of niche growth. Accordingly, the framework of the study will include a focus on those areas outlined as niche development indicators by Kemp et al (1998) in reference to the processes at work within the successfully developed niche. Recently, these niche development indicators have been successfully employed in a similar grassroots innovation study in the UK, proving their usefulness as a research tool within the theoretical framework of this study (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). These indicators include A) **social network building**, B) **learning**, and C) **expectation management**. According to the SNM approach, the successful development of these indicators within the innovation niche is essential to the success of the niche’s overall development, and ultimately its ability to influence a regime transition.

A) **Social Network Building** - Social network building refers to the building of both internal and external social networks that the niche can draw on for support and niche growth. Ideally, networks should include a variety of stakeholders who can call on various resources to support the niche in its development (Kemp et al, 1998; Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

B) **Learning** - According to the SNM approach, “learning processes are held to be most effective when they contribute not only to everyday knowledge and expertise but also to ‘second-order learning’ wherein people question the assumptions and constraints of regime systems” (Kemp et al, 1998 as cited by Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

C) **Expectation Management** - Managing expectations refers to how the niche presents itself to the public, and how promises made and goals set are addressed by the niche (Kemp et al, 1998; Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). SNM states, “to best support niche emergence, expectations should be widely shared, specific,
realistic and achievable” (Kemp et al., 1998 as cited by Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

These three theoretical areas are used to analyze the development of the SSFM. In so doing, this study will effectively create a portrayal of how “successfully developed” this grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche is at this point, as well as provide a theoretical explanation of why it is at its current state of developmental success, and how it might become more successful in the future.

[3] Case Study Description

[3.1] Transitions and the Slow Food movement

In 1986, a hand-full of individuals founded the Slow Food movement in Italy, with the goal of redirecting the trajectory of social and ecological development away from “fast-food” and toward a more quality focused, ecologically and socially conscious food system (Petrini, 2007). In effect, Slow Food began as an attempt to influence the dominant socio-technical food regime away from its trajectory of increasingly “fast-food” oriented production and consumption. Slow Food instead emphasizes a need for the opposite: a “slow life,” where one can “rediscover the rich varieties and aromas of
local cuisine” (cited from The Slow Food Manifesto, signed in Paris, 1989). The movement presents itself as the alternative to the “fast-food” regime, which is described as both socially and ecologically unsustainable. Created for the purpose of influencing, even instigating a sustainability transition within the food production and consumption system, this innovation niche is an ideal subject for a the study of a grassroots and social-ecological innovation niche development study. It is the study of just such an innovation niche and its ability to develop successfully that can help society better manage the desired sustainability transitions needed for a more sustainable future.

[3.2] Think Global, Eat Local

From the start, Slow Food has focused on reaching a global population in the hopes of creating large-scale, systemic change. In the early years of the movement, the Slow Food Manifesto was created and ratified by representatives from 15 countries. Today, the Slow Food movement has ca. 100,000 members in over 150 countries (see Figure 2, above), with their manifesto published in 8 languages (Slowfood.com, 2014). From this global network, Sweden and Stockholm stands out as a natural choice for a study of local level niche development within the movement, as it represents the first non-Italian location to be active in the Slow Food network as early as 1986 (Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014; Slowfoodstockholm.se, 2014). Today, Stockholm (see Figure 3, right) represents one of over 1,300 local level manifestations of the Slow Food movement, spread across the globe (Slowfood.com, 2014). Though this study focuses on one of these locations, it is the hope that such research may be replicated in other locations within the Slow Food International (SFI) network in order to better understand the local niche processes at work in this movement and how they differ between locations and cultures.


[4.1] Data gathering

[4.1.1] Site selection - Slow Food Stockholm convivium

In order to conduct a study of the niche development of the Slow Food movement in Stockholm, all Slow Food groups (known as convivia (plural) or convivium (singular)) listed on Slow Food Internationals homepage as being located in the Stockholm region...
were contacted. At the time of the study's start (Autumn 2013), this included Slow Food Stockholm, Slow Food Haga, and Slow Food Sormland. A short email was sent to each of the chairpersons listed for these convivia in November 2013, introducing the study and asking for their possible participation. Only Slow Food Stockholm responded, expressing a clear interest in participating in the study.

Upon conducting a short phone interview with the chairman of Slow Food Stockholm, it was evident that both Slow Food Haga and Slow Food Sormland were no longer active at the time of the study, and that the Slow Food International website had not yet been updated with this information. This explained the lack of response from the Haga and Sormland convivia regarding the original email sent, asking for their participation in the study.

[4.1.2] Qualitative Interviews

After briefly explaining the focus of the study to the chairman of the Slow Food Stockholm convivium, it was established that the Slow Food Stockholm (SFS) convivium would participate in the study. This would include distribution of a survey to the convivium members as well as in-depth interview(s) with the chairman. This preliminary phone interview with the SFS chairman also provided a referral to another prominent member of the convivium that would be able to provide details on the foundation and early days of the Slow Food movement in Stockholm. This referral was followed-up by an email and preliminary phone interview introducing the study and its focus. It was agreed that an in-depth interview would be held with the second participant, who had also been a chairman for the Slow Food Stockholm convivium.

In-depth, qualitative interviews (Britten, 2006; Kvale, 1996) were conducted with these representatives of the Slow Food Stockholm leadership (current and former chairmen) in order to gather qualitative data on the development of the niche. Accordingly, a list of interview questions and sub-questions was developed using the theoretical framework as a guide. Questions were asked concerning the start of the Slow Food movement in Stockholm in order to establish its origins as a grassroots niche. Interviews included discussion questions regarding the movement as a social-ecological innovation niche as well. Questions were also asked about the building of Slow Food Stockholm's social network, how learning takes place through the convivium, and how Slow Food Stockholm deals with expectation management. Data gathered via interview is presented, when possible, as quotes within the results of the study in order to ensure transparency.

The same interview questions were asked in both interviews, as both interview participants were either current or former chairmen of the Slow Food Stockholm convivium and therefore had firsthand knowledge of these topics. However, the interview with the former chairman focused heavily on the history of the start of Slow Food Stockholm and its establishment as a local grassroots-niche, as this was his area of expertise. Both participants were sent an abbreviated list of the interview questions (excluding many of the sub-questions for brevity's sake) shortly prior to the interviews. This was done in order to give the participants a chance to think on the general topics
that would be discussed, and prepare for the interview regarding materials they would like to share with the researcher.

All interviews were conducted as semi-structured (Britten, 2006), wherein the list of interview questions were used as a guide. This allowed the researcher the flexibility to ask the participant follow-up questions as seen fit, while also using the list of interview questions to ensure that the necessary topics were covered in each interview.

[4.1.3] Questionnaire

A short questionnaire (Bourque & Fielder, 1995) was developed for distribution to the members of the Slow Food Stockholm convivium, using the theoretical framework as an organizational guide. Before distribution, the questionnaire was sent to the convivium chairman for review. Following some minor adjustments to the questionnaire in response to feedback from the convivium chairman, the questionnaire was distributed by the chairman to those members of Slow Food Stockholm who were listed as current members at the time of distribution. This included 84 individual and/or family memberships in the convivium. Accordingly, 84 individual email addresses received an invitation to participate in the study by clicking on a link and completing the survey online.

Distribution of the questionnaire took place via email on February 11, 2014 and responses were collected until March 1, 2014. During this time, one reminder email was sent to the convivium members regarding the questionnaire and informing them that the questionnaire would no longer be available after March 1st. As an acceptable response rate of over 30% had already been reached within the first week of distributing the questionnaire, it was decided that only one reminder email would be needed, mainly as a courtesy to inform participants of the March 1st deadline for responses. In total, questionnaire responses were received from 39 participants, roughly a 45% response rate.

The format of the questionnaire was digital, with all questions requiring an answer in order to submit a finished questionnaire, except in the case of the question regarding income which was made optional. All questions were made mandatory in order to ensure that no questions were left unanswered by mistake. The question regarding income was made the only exception in order to allow participants the opportunity to keep that particular piece of information private if so desired. The digital format was chosen for its ease and speed of survey distribution and response delivery.

The aim of this questionnaire was to gather further information concerning the social network directly connected to Slow Food Stockholm, as well as to learn about the individual experiences of the members of that network regarding their participation in Slow Food Stockholm. In order to do this, both closed- and open-ended questions were asked, including questions regarding gender, age, occupation, and income, as well as their motivations for joining Slow Food Stockholm, what and how they have learned from their membership in the convivium, and their view of SFS’s ability to manage expectations within the membership base.
**[4.1.4] Literature Review**

A literature review (or document analysis) was also conducted using Slow Food Stockholm’s annual reports from the 5 years leading up to the study, spanning 2008-2013. Two of these reports were collected from the Slow Food Stockholm website, and an additional three reports were provided by the current convivium chairman. Reports gathered from the website are considered official, whereas those provided by the chairman are considered unofficial, as they could not be verified as having been signed off on by all members of the steering committees from the corresponding years. These 5 reports were used as additional data concerning the activities and growth of Slow Food Stockholm, and provided a source for data triangulation.

Slow Food International’s website and Slow Food Stockholm convivium’s website and Facebook page were likewise used as literary sources for data gathering and document analysis. The websites and Facebook pages of related convivia and businesses and/or groups with whom Slow Food Stockholm had or has a direct partnership or cooperation were also reviewed for the study. This was done primarily in order to better understand Slow Food Stockholm’s social network, and to learn how the niche presents itself to its members as well as those outside the convivia using these media outlets.

Slow Food Stockholm’s printed promotional material was also reviewed as a literary source in order to gather supplementary data regarding the movement and how it presents itself to the public.

Population statistics were also gathered for comparative data to be used in the analysis of social network data gathered from questionnaire results. These statistics were sourced from the City of Stockholm website (stockholm.se and statistikomstockholm.se).

**[4.2] Data Analysis**

Interviews were recorded with the permission of the interview participants, and then transcribed manually by the researcher. A transcription of the interview was then made available to the participant, allowing for corrections and/or comments to be returned to the researcher within a reasonable time period. Both permission to record the interviews and participant opportunities to review and revise the transcribed interviews were carried out in accordance with available ethics guidelines (see http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/Ethics%20Guidelines.pdf). Interview transcripts were then manually coded and qualitatively analyzed (McKlellan et al, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to the categories of 1) grassroots innovation, 2) social-ecological innovation, 3) social network building, 4) learning, and 5) expectation management. Qualitative data gathered from the questionnaire participants as well as the literature sources were also analyzed according to these categories. Each category corresponds to a section of the theoretical framework guiding the study.

Within these categories, further analysis was made based on the following guidelines.
- Social network building: Both internal and external networks are reviewed. The movement’s internal network is defined as including those who are individual members of the Stockholm Slow Food movement, while external network members are understood as any organization or group external to the SSFM with whom the movement has contact or a relationship.

- Learning: Within this study, learning processes are considered both internally and externally. Internal learning is defined as any learning opportunity that is directed to those within the local movement itself, usually members of the internal social network. External learning is also addressed within the study, wherein external learning is understood as learning opportunities directed at those outside of the internal social network.

- Expectation management: In order to assess the ability of the niche to management expectations effectively, this study looks at the goals and promises put forth by the niche in order to establish to what extent they are 1) widely shared, 2) specific, and 3) realistic & achievable.

[4.3] Critical reflection of methods and data sources

Due to time and budget limitations, all translations to and from Swedish were made by the researcher, a native English speaker with near native fluency and an advanced degree in Swedish. The interviews being conducted in Swedish occasionally resulted in a slight difficulty for the researcher, who is not a native Swedish speaker. Because of this, interview questions needed to occasionally be restated in different ways in order to be understood. In one interview, a third party was asked to intervene in order to translate a word/concept for it to be understood by the participant. This created an occasionally halted flow within the interviews, and potential misunderstandings within the interview. However, most issues seemed to eventually be resolved by the end of each interview.

In interviewing only two members of the Slow Food Stockholm convivium leadership, there is a risk that the data gathered from these interviews does not adequately represent the thoughts and experiences of the wider leadership network (for example, the broader steering committee, etc.). However, as Slow Food Stockholm has only ever had two chairpersons, and both were interviewed for this study, it can be understood that the leadership for the convivium was adequately included in the study, providing data from both present and past leaders.

Likewise, the distribution of the questionnaire to only the 84 current members of the convivium can be considered too narrow a pool of participants. A better method may have been to include both present and past members of the convivium, allowing for a slightly broader participant pool. However, access to Slow Food Stockholm’s email lists was only possible through the assistance of the convivium chairman, in order to respect the privacy of the convivium members. As a result, the possibility of sending the questionnaire to a broader email list, including present and past convivium members, was not known to the researcher until after distribution had already occurred and the majority of responses already received.
The literature review data of the yearly reports being limited to only the five from the immediately past years can also be considered a weakness within the study. However, as these were the only such documents available, they were still used in the study despite the fact that only five from the most recent years of convivium activity could be analyzed for data gathering.

[5] Results

[5.1] Grassroots Innovation

Self described as a grassroots organization at its base (Slowfood.com, 2014), the Slow Food movement was originally created as a niche for activists to organize for the purpose of promoting a food system that is the opposite of “fast food” and “fast life” (as evident in The Slow Food Manifesto, for example) (Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014; Slowfood.com, 2014). Likewise, Slow Food Stockholm was founded by only a few individual activists (see Figure 4), Calro Barsotti and his wife, Anna Barsotti (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014; Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014;

Figure 4: Slow Food Stockholm Founders with Slow Food International Founder, Carlo Petrini (Picture courtesy of Carlo Barsotti) - Since the early days of the Slow Food movement, Stockholm and Sweden have been represented in the activities and international network building of the organization, attending major events (in cities like Italy and Paris, pictured here) within the founding history of the movement. (From Left: Anna Barsotti, Carlo Petrini, and Carlo Barsotti)
Slowfoodstockholm.se, 2014). With its start as a small group of activist individuals, growing slowly over time while striving for change, the SSFM can clearly be considered as “grassroots” at its base.

Since its start, Slow Food has been a niche for innovation regarding food production, culture and policy (as evident by Slow Food in Brussels, global initiatives, etc.). The Stockholm movement represents a local niche for the spread of innovative ideas about local food systems and ways to promote sustainable changes locally according to Slow Food ideals. With its grassroots base working together through community activity to achieve a change in “social, ethical and cultural rules” (Seyfang & Smith, 2007) regarding food, the SSFM can effectively be considered as a local level manifestation of a grassroots innovation niche for the purposes of this study.

[5.2] Social-Ecological Innovation

Evidence of Slow Food’s links to social-ecological innovation can be found as early as 1989, when the movement’s manifesto stated that, “in the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes.” Beyond highlighting the importance of considering the negative impacts of fast food on both social and ecological systems, Slow Food also makes it clear that its goals include, “linking the pleasure of good food with a commitment to their community and the environment,” (Slowfood.com, 2014). This idea is also evident in the movement’s watchwords or guiding principles, “Good, Clean & Fair” (see Figure 9, found on page 28), where both social and ecological issues regarding food provision and consumption are addressed (Slowfood.com, 2014).

The same is true for the local translation and manifestation of these three principles (Good, Clean, & Fair) in the Stockholm movement, where promotional material such as Slow Food Stockholm’s brochure (printed multiple times, most recently in 2014) highlight both these watchwords, as well as a commitment to working for a more “ecologically and socially sustainable food production” system, locally and globally. Through the promotion of these concepts, highlighting the need for a dominant food regime that is both socially and ecologically sustainable, Slow Food and the SSFM can be understood as a social-ecological innovation, as it is an organization with new “concepts, ideas, [and] institutions” aimed at enhancing the ability of the dominant regime to generate “essential ecosystem services” related to food (Olsson & Galaz, 2012).

[5.3] Strategic Niche Management for Successful Niche Development

Having established the SSFM as a niche for both grassroots and social-ecological innovation at the local level, the development of this innovation niche will now be explored using the SNM approach to consider how successfully the niche has developed, focusing on social network building, learning and expectation management indicators. For a summary of these results, see Table 1 (found on pages 32-33).
[5.3.1] Social Network Building

“In order for a social innovation to have a broad, durable impact, the social innovation must ‘cross multiple social boundaries to reach more people and different people, more organizations and different organizations, organizations nested across scales (from local to regional to national to global) and linked in social networks’” (Westley & Antadze, 2010 as cited by Olsson & Galaz, 2012).

[5.3.1.1] Membership Network (Internal Social Network Building)

Slow Food Stockholm, as a convivium membership network, was first build around the personal connections of the key activists, Carlo Barsotti and his wife Anna, according to interview data. As a result, and due to the grassroots nature of the organization, representatives from the local entertainment industry dominated the early convivium, as Carlo Barsotti worked mainly in that realm and relied on personal and professional contacts to recruit supporters locally for the movement. However, over time, the membership network expanded and transformed into a more diverse group, steadily growing in number over the years, according to interview data. Questionnaire data supports that the membership network has indeed become broader since its founding days, as evident in the richness of today’s membership network diversity.

[5.3.1.1.1] Membership Network Diversity

According to questionnaire response data, today’s membership network is made up of a clearly diverse set of members representing a variety of employment sectors. When asked to list their occupation in their own words, 12 respondents (30%) listed more than one activity (often in different categories – see Figure 5). After reviewing the many occupations listed by respondents, the answers were grouped into general categories according to the similarities observed. These categories broadly included food production and sales, writing/journalism, student/education, management, public health, tourism, design, politics, engineering, and IT (see Figure 5 for a full list of response categories and a chart of response data for this question). Interview data supports that today’s membership network is made up of representatives from a diversity of employment branches.

Just as the membership network shows a diversity of occupational sectors being represented, gender diversity is also fairly well represented within the network. Questionnaire data shows the membership network to be made up of ca. 58% women, which indicates that women are only slightly over represented within the group, as the City of Stockholm’s statistical data shows the local population to be 51% female as of December 31, 2012 (Statistikomstockholm.se, 2014).

Unlike gender and occupation, the SSFM seems less diverse in terms of income levels and age groups represented in the membership network. Questionnaire data shows that 36% of respondents report earning 500,000 SEK per annum or more, where as Stockholm’s population statistics show an average of only 13.1% at this income level.
When asked to list their occupation, questionnaire responses show a diversity of activities and professional backgrounds represented within the Slow Food Stockholm membership network. This graph displays general categories of occupations listed in the survey responses, as well as the approximate number of members in each category. Many members listed multiple occupational activities; accordingly many responses are counted here more than once, as they fall into several of the listed categories.

locally. This indicates a heavily overrepresented higher income class within the membership network. Likewise, lower income classes seem to have less representation in the local movement. Questionnaire data shows only 15% of respondents reporting an income level of 159,900 SEK or less per annum, where as Stockholm statistical data shows the local population to be made up of 34.9% of individuals earning in these two lowest income levels (0 SEK per year (8.1%) and 1,000-159,900 SEK per year (24.8%))(see Figure 6 for a full comparison of these results). This points to the heavy underrepresentation of lower income groups, and over representation of upper income groups within the membership network.

Responses regarding income level per annum show a overrepresentation of higher income groups and under representation of lower income groups in relation to the general population statistics from the Stockholm area. (Stockholm population statistics sourced from Statistikomstockholm.se (2014) and are accurate as of December 31, 2012.)
Likewise, lower age groups are also underrepresented in the membership network. Questionnaire response data shows that 75% of respondents identified themselves as between the ages of 51-79, but only 10% of respondents were under the age of 35. Comparative analysis could not be made with the local general population, as available statistics were not specific enough on age distribution data. However, it can be understood that within the SSFM, older generations are more heavily represented than younger ones. Interview data support this analysis of a membership network made up of an aging population. As one questionnaire respondent stated, “[Slow Food Stockholm] needs to find a way to reach the youth demographic. Many young people are actually interested in food and environmental issues.”

“I have to say that the age level is fairly advanced. On average, thinking about it, it's around 40 or 45. 45 is the middle age. What I've had a hard time with, myself is getting the youth involved. Here in Sweden, not in Italy. But in Sweden, it's hard to get the younger demographics,” (Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014).

Though SFS has been less successful in incorporating lower income populations and younger age groups into the membership network, more success has been achieved in the recruitment of individuals with no previous experience in social activism. With 23% of questionnaire respondents indicating that SFS is the first non-profit organization or movement they have been involved with, it is evident that the SSFM has been successful in attracting and engaging with those within and new to community action efforts.

Participants were also asked to list what first attracted them to Slow Food Stockholm, and responses again showed a diversity of interests at work. Just as when asked to name their occupation, many participants also listed several factors as having attracted them to the movement. Among the various answers given to this question, ca. 18% of respondents mentioned a specific connection or interest in Italy (the birthplace of Slow Food) and 33.3% cited an interest or connection to food and/or food production. Ca. 15% named a specific contact that introduced them to the movement and an equal amount (ca. 15%) mentioned having been active in or otherwise connected to another Slow Food convivium or network before joining Slow Food Stockholm (either because of relocation to Stockholm, or due to another convivium closing). Ca. 44% of respondents referred directly to Slow Food grounding concepts (often in combination) regarding food, the environment, society/culture, politics, etc. and their importance. Of these responses mentioning specific Slow Food concepts, almost half (20% of total responses) specifically mentioned the importance of both sustainability/environmental/ecological concerns and social/cultural concerns in combination. The diversity of reasons listed in response to this question shows a number of things. First, SFS’s membership and convivium networks (see following section for details on the convivium network) can account for ca. 1/3 of the members’ introduction to Slow Food Stockholm. (Interview data supports that the SFS internal membership network has been the most reliable way to recruit new members in recent years.) Second, general interest in food and/or Italy has lead to another approx. 1/3 of members becoming interested in the SSFM. And finally, Slow Food concepts and activities themselves have brought at least another 1/3 of the members into the SFS network. These findings, especially the latter two, in combination with the results of the earlier question regarding previous activism, show that Slow Food Stockholm has succeeded in bridging the gap between food enthusiasts and those interested in...
environmental and/or social activism, creating a niche for grassroots and social-ecological innovation to spread.

“So, the best way to get new members is actually through these restaurant visits we have. And then it’s usually in the ways that, since everyone, all the members have their own networks and they bring someone with them that’s interested. And then, with time, they become new members. That’s the most common way to become a member in Slow Food. By knowing someone who’s a member, then joining as a members yourself,” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014).

With the internal membership network so heavily relied upon for membership recruitment, the number of connections that members have with community and/or non-profit organizations outside of SFS is also of interest. When asked to list other non-profit organizations they were actively involved with outside of Slow Food Stockholm, 63% of respondents indicated involvement with at least one other organization. Furthermore, 43% of respondents listed active involvement in 2 or more organizations outside of Slow Food Stockholm. When grouped into categories, these organizations ranged from political parties and interest groups (6 references), historical/heritage/cultural/art interest groups (9), sport and recreation (5), environment and sustainability groups (7), food and farming related groups (17), and finally health and community development groups (24). Clearly, the Slow Food Stockholm membership network contains well-connected individuals with personal networks spanning over several diverse interest groups and activities. This again indicates the plurality of individual interests that have found a connection through the SFS membership network.

[5.3.1.1.2] Membership Network Size

With its growth in diversity over the years, the Slow Food Stockholm membership network has also grown in size. Since its original start with two key activists acting as ambassadors and local leaders for the Slow Food movement in Stockholm, membership levels have slowly but steadily increased since SFS was founded in 1991. In recent years, both the yearly reports and interview data state that the membership network has fluctuated in size between ca. 130 “at its highest, and 75 at its lowest” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014), and is currently holding steady at ca. 100 members. Interview data also indicates that specifically building the membership network has not been prioritized within the local movement in previous years, choosing “quality over quantity” regarding the members and their commitment to the movement.

“We tried to make it so that every member, not just the chairman, would be active. Everyone should have some small activity. And that’s why we are few. We haven’t tried to create a massive organization. Quality, so every member can be interviewed and they can have a concrete sense of being personally active,” (Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014).

However, further interview data and review of SFS’s recent yearly reports indicate that membership recruitment is certainly a concern, especially regarding the number of active members which effects the ability to hold successful events throughout the year.
For example, event cancellation due to a lack of attendance is a regular concern within the organization and its leadership. This concern and the attention given to membership growth are evident, and monitoring of membership development is noted in each yearly report, showing a recent leveling off of growth locally.

“We’ve had large events, and used a large amount of resources, and we’ve handed out brochures, and we’ve talked to people. But it hasn’t produced many results. It spreads knowledge, and that’s good. But when it comes to membership recruitment, the homepage has attracted some, and Facebook has attracted some, but mostly it’s through personal contacts,” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014).

Accordingly, it is understood that current leadership has found the most successful form of membership recruitment to be through the current membership network via personal networks and word of mouth. Questionnaire data supports that 15% of current members who responded to the survey became interested in the SSFM through a personal connection to a convivium member or activist within the local movement. This is a relatively low percentage of current members representing those joining the local movement via what SFS leadership considers the most reliable source of membership recruitment. However, it is possible that more respondents would also indicate a personal networking element at play when first learning about SFS if the question had been asked directly. Instead, inference must be made from the responses gathered from the more general and open-ended question regarding what first attracted members to SFS.

Beyond membership growth, it can also be assumed that the size of the informal SFS social network has also grown since the convivium was formed. Both interview data and review of SFS’s internet outlets (homepage, Facebook page, etc.) reveal that currently, the number of individuals in direct contact with Slow Food Stockholm via email list-serves and Facebook is much larger than the immediate membership network sampled for this study. For example, Slow Food Stockholm’s Facebook page has 168 “likes” as of March 21, 2014 (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Slow-Food-Stockholm/351659564890440).

“Yes, I can say that many of the people that “like” Slow Food are not currently members. But, to take the step over to becoming active at events, that’s a big step. And I can tell you that I get almost every day, maybe five times a week there are new people coming in that “like” Slow Food Stockholm. About five per week, I think. So, it’s not quite every day, but it’s still quite a lot. That adds up to 250 people per year,” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014).

Though Facebook “likes” are unquestionably less commitment than physically joining the movement through convivium membership and attending activities, this data still indicates an extended and growing breadth to the network reached by the SSFM beyond current convivium members.

[5.3.1.2] Convivium Network (External Social Network Building)

SNM theory suggests successful niches are well networked with a range of stakeholders, who draw on resources to support the niche (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).
[5.3.1.2.1] Convivium Network Diversity and Strength

Slow Food Stockholm is formally connected to both Slow Food International and Slow Food Norden, and was active in Slow Food Sweden until its recent closure. However, though formal, the practical influence of Slow Food International on the local Stockholm convivium is described as minimal by Chairman Andersson. Though a newly constructed organization within the Slow Food global network, Slow Food Norden does act as a source of knowledge sharing between Slow Food Stockholm and other convivia that are members of the regional network.

“You could say that, [that partnerships have almost always been informal and/or temporary]. We have collaborated with, for example we were in contact for a while with an association in Sörmland [Sörmlands Matkluster] that organizes small-scale producers. So artisans, craft workers so to say. Food artisans. But it was a fairly temporary collaboration. And that’s because Sörmlands Matkluster didn’t work so well in that collaboration. It was more of a network. Then, there are other networks like Slow Food Norden which is a network that works,” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014).

Accordingly, most collaborative contacts between Slow Food Stockholm and outside organizations have had a tendency to be temporary and informal. This includes cooperation with other convivia in Sweden. Partnerships are mainly made on an ad hoc basis. Nonetheless, review of Slow Food Stockholm’s latest 5 yearly reports indicates that certain partnerships have become recurring over the years, most often when successful events are repeated from year to year. For example, Terra Madre Day in Stockholm has provided a recurring platform around which to build cooperative relationships with other local organizations (like Eldrimner), leading to potentially more permanent partnerships. Though this indicates that a transition toward more permanent partnerships may be taking place, as cooperation with outside organizations has been repeated at such (usually annually) recurring events, no such partnership with other local organizations has been documented to last more than 2 years at this point.

“And then we have a collaboration with Eldrimner. Do you know what Eldrimner is? It’s all of Sweden’s food producers. I shouldn’t say food producers, they’re small food artisans. And it’s small organic farms and small bakeries, and so on. And they’re up north; I would say it’s in Jämtland. And they have two employees I think. They get support from the Department of Agriculture and EU money and so. They have a totally different economic base [than we do]. And they organize all the food artisans in the country. And there we have a collaboration that, it goes up little up and down depending on what we do. For example, in the autumn we have Terra Madre in Turin [Italy]. And then, always with Terra Madre there is collaboration between Slow Food and Eldrimner. And sometimes we also do other things together in other contexts, too,” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014).

However, certain local businesses have consistently worked with Slow Food Stockholm to host various smaller events, such as food tastings, repeatedly from year to year, indicating potential for more formal partnerships to evolve within these relationships. For example, Sva Marga Food & Design in Vaxholm has hosted a handful of Slow Food Stockholm events, as noted in the yearly reports since 2008. Slow Food Stockholm
currently advertises for Sva Marga’s on the convivium’s homepage, where only three non-SF related links are advertised. Likewise, Sva Marga’s website displays a link to Slow Food Stockholm’s homepage at the top of its short list of web-published food related links. However, Sva Marga is the only such advertised partner organization that also advertises for SFS in return. This indicates that there is room for development within these existing network links.

[5.3.1.2.2] Convivium Network Relations within the Public Sector

“A guiding principle for transitioning communities is to ‘build a bridge to local government’” (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

When asked about connections with local or regional government, both current and former chairmen indicated that there were no direct ties to government bodies or organizations in Stockholm or Sweden. Though Slow Food Stockholm self-identifies as a political movement, data reveals only an indirect approach to political action. Slow Food and the Stockholm convivium are not aligned or associated with any political party as a matter of principal. However, it would be possible to contact or attempt to influence party leaders and political bodies without aligning with any specific party (see for example the case of Transition Towns in Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). Yet data shows that this has not been attempted by Slow Food Stockholm.

Furthermore, the interview with Chairman Andersson revealed that, “in other countries they apply for grants, government grants.” This is true for other convivia in Scandinavia, such as Norway, where “a Norwegian fund provided for a 3 year salary to employ someone to work with Slow Food. And then, of course, when you can work full time with the movement, you can have a whole other activity level” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014). In this way, others in the region have benefitted from seeking and gaining government support in order to offset operational costs and support the organization financially. However, Slow Food Stockholm has not sought financial support from either government or private sources. When explaining this, Chairman Andersson added that, “we are independent in that way. On the other hand, if we had applied for grants, then maybe we would be able to have someone working with things part time.” Instead, the SFS relies on the volunteer efforts of the steering committee members, including the chairman, who describes his leadership style as “the Swedish way of organizing things.” He explains that in Sweden, “we want a more collective group that is responsible,” and Chairman Andersson, who also has a full time job outside of SFS, promotes this way of sharing responsibility within the convivium leadership. This way of working makes them independent from grant funding, and instead dependent on one another as a source of volunteer labor. It has also left them without potential network partners within grant providing agencies (government or private) that could benefit the growth of the local movement.

The lack of convivium network partners may be due in part to the movement’s deliberate choice to pursue “quality over quantity” (Honorary Chairman Barsotti interview, 2014). Though large and strongly grounded organizations have approached Slow Food Stockholm with offers of partnership since the local movement’s start in 1991, they have repeatedly declined to align themselves, feeling that compromises
should not be made to the movement in favor of higher membership numbers. This approach and commitment to growing the movement organically, with a focus on grassroots network expansion (both for membership and partnerships with outside organizations) has perhaps helped protect the identity of the movement while delaying its growth.

[5.3.2] Learning

“Learning processes are held to be most effective when they contribute not only to everyday knowledge and expertise but also to ‘second-order learning’ wherein people question the assumptions and constraints of regime systems” (Kemp et al, 1998 as cited by Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012).

Learning is a key process within SFS, and data shows that this is pursued both through internally facilitating learning for those already within the SFS network, but also through awareness building among the general population external to the current network.

[5.3.2.1] Internal Learning

When asked what they have learned about through Slow Food Stockholm, questionnaire participants listed a variety of topics (see Figure 7). Over half (59%) of respondents mentioned food and/or food products in some form, and 23% of responses indicated increased learning about Slow Food as an organization and/or movement. 18% of responses indicated learning about sustainability and/or eco-related topics, and 10% noted learning about questions of fairness and challenges for producers. Another 13% of responses cited issues regarding communication between consumers and producers, and cooperation/solidarity, while 15% of responses claimed to have not learned anything through participation in Slow Food Stockholm. These results indicate that the majority of SFS’s membership network has experienced learning in some form as a result of the movement, though a disproportionately high amount of the learning is regarding food and food products rather than other topics relating to food issues (i.e. ecological food production issues, equitable food distribution and pricing issues, etc.).
Figure 7: What Members Learn Through SFS - When asked to list what they have learned through participation in Slow Food Stockholm, questionnaire respondents named a diversity of topics. This graph displays the general categories into which responses were grouped based on similarities of listed topics, as well as the approximate number of members in each category. Many respondents listed multiple topics under what they have learned; accordingly many responses are counted here more than once, as they fall into several of the listed categories.

When asked how they learned through Slow Food Stockholm, participants again listed several sources within the movement (see Figure 8). The most common answer, with 1/3 of respondents mentioning it, was through attending SFS’s local events and activities. Another 15% responded that they learned through reading the SFS and SFI newsletters, and/or via the SFS website. An equal amount (15%) specifically mentioned learning through SFI related activities, such as Terra Madre, and another 15% mentioned that contact with other members of the SFS membership network was a source of learning. 10% of responses indicated courses given by SFS, and 8% mentioned SFS organized trips and conferences as a way they learned. 28% of respondents answered that they have not learned anything through the movement or did not specify how they learned. This data indicated that the most effective form of learning provided by SFS is through the convivium’s local events and meetings, though many other forms of learning are also engaging the convivium members. And with 72% of respondents indicating learning in some way through SFS, the majority of SFS members are benefitting from the convivium’s efforts to provide learning opportunities.
All Slow Food Stockholm events have a learning element, as supported by interview data & review of the available yearly reports where descriptions of events are given. Among the events and meetings planned by SFS, courses are regularly given throughout the year to promote learning within different age groups and ability levels. Adult courses are the most prevalent within the documented activities, usually taste testing and other lectures suitable for the general public regarding food related topics. Review of the yearly reports showed that adult courses designed for food professionals have also been organized by SFS and well attended by members of the local community of food professionals (chefs, restaurateurs, etc.). Though the majority of SFS's learning opportunities focus on adults, youth courses are also organized on a regular basis. For example, a children's food preparation course has become an annual event, engaging children and adults through the course and its accompanying event wherein the students share the food they learned about with family and friends at a convivium meeting.

Beyond directly arranging courses to promote learning, Slow Food Stockholm also works to facilitate learning in other ways was well. For example, the local convivium arranges educational trips abroad and sends representatives to conferences within Slow Food International and regionally (within Sweden & Scandinavia) on a regular basis. A great deal of the learning taking place within the movement is, as in the case with these Slow Food excursions, experiential learning. That is, learning by doing and testing new techniques within the Slow Food sphere of thinking/living/working is also facilitated regularly within the SFS activities.
Apart from experiential learning, convivium members receive information regarding activities as well as news relating to the movement via email correspondence and other online SFS sources. Newsletters/correspondence come both from Slow Food International and the Slow Food Stockholm convivium. Slow Food Stockholm also maintains a website (recently redesigned in 2010-11) and Facebook account (created in 2012) to provide more public access to news on local events and Slow Food related topics, including a history of Slow Food, though locally specific history is lacking on both sites. According to yearly reports and review of the sites themselves, both sites are constantly updated with posts on events and Slow Food related news and events, showing that SFS commits both time and attention to this form of learning within the movement.

[5.3.2.2] External Learning

Though SFS’s learning opportunities are available to the general public, most are focused on the promotion of learning within the internal social network rather than externally. SFS has, however, recently taken steps to more actively build awareness about food issues and the local movement. For example, information brochures (“informationsfolder”) are mentioned in one yearly report within the context of distributing information to current members as well as outside organizations and individuals for both awareness building and possible membership recruitment. The brochure includes general and Stockholm specific history of Slow Food, explaining in brief about the movement’s activities and how to become a member. Interview data confirms that 1500-2000 of these informational brochures have been distributed over the last 2.5 years, with plans to continuing distribution of the brochure going forward. Chairman Andersson noted that the distribution of these brochures have shone to be more effective in building awareness about the movement than for membership recruitment. The yearly reports also show that “information, publicity and promotion” is a consistent topic of discussion and review among the SFS leadership. This indicates a continued interest and the importance of awareness building and the spreading of Slow Food ideas externally to the current membership network.

Yearly reports also note regular interaction with various media and members of the general public (both organizations and individuals) who have contacted the convivium with enquiries via info@slowfood.se, SFS’s general information email address. Members of the convivium’s steering committee handle these inquiries. SFS leaders, such as Chairman Andersson, have also given interviews and speeches to media and outside organizations on Slow Food and the local movement. Interview data and yearly reports suggest that this occurred most prominently ca. 2008-09 when national attention was drawn to youth and elderly food issues in Sweden. Media attention has fallen somewhat since then, though inquiries and statements continue to be exchanged regularly via info@slowfood.se. Even with a decline in media interaction in recent years, SFS’s continued interest in and efforts for building awareness of the movement and local food issues shows a commitment to furthering external as well as internal learning.

Review of membership data available in the yearly reports also indicates a possible correlation between media attention and membership growth. However, interview data shows that media attention has been less helpful in recruiting new members than in
raising awareness, as mentioned earlier. Questionnaire data supports this, as no participants mentioned media attention or media sources (articles, etc.) when listing how they first became interested in SFS. Therefore, it is difficult to understand whether the increase in awareness building has had any concrete impact on movement growth, at least as far as membership recruitment is concerned.

[5.3.3] Expectation Management

*SNM theory claims that niche development is best supported if expectations about what the niche can deliver are “widely shared, specific, realistic and achievable” (Seyfang & Halextine, 2012).*

[5.3.3.1] Widely Shared Expectations

Data indicates that expectations regarding what the local movement’s goals are and how they should be addressed are not “widely shared” by members of the local movement. Review of the literature (website & promotional brochure, etc.) indicates the communication of long term goals of a food culture that embraces the watchwords “Good, Clean, & Fair”. According to Slow Food International’s website, these watchwords should be understood as meaning the following (see Figure 9 below):

![Figure 9: Slow Food’s Watchwords (Slowfood.com, 2014)](image)

*Figure 9: Slow Food’s Watchwords (Slowfood.com, 2014)* - The Slow Food movement has an approach that is “based on a concept of food quality that is defined by three interconnected principles: good, clean and fair,” (Slowfood.com, 2014). These principles are evident in both Slow Food International’s promotional materials, as well as Slow Food Stockholm’s publications, both on- and off-line.

Slow Food Stockholm’s translation of these principles is mostly in line with Slow Food International’s English language version (see Figure 9), but does not mention seasonal diet, local culture, or animal welfare. However, in other text describing the local movement, the SFS website and brochure also list goals of working for "ecological production, conservations of local and regional food cultures, and the development of agriculture that does not deplete the earth or impoverish those who work it.” Accordingly, it can be understood that SFS has printed material listing goals that are mostly in line with those of the larger international Slow Food movement.

When the current and former chairmen of SFS were asked to list the goals of the movement, answers were somewhat varied. Former chairman and current Honorary Chairman Barsotti (one of SFS’s founding activists, one of the first activists present at the founding of Slow Food International, and still active in both SFS and SFI) responded that the main goal of the movement is “to improve awareness about the food that we eat.” Current SFS Chairman Andersson gave a less general answer to this question, listing 3 main goals: 1) to increase the number of people who think about food in a “Slow Food” way (Good, Clean, Fair) – i.e.: raise awareness, 2) to influence those who
sell and distribute food in Stockholm to choose good food products (raw materials), and 3) that restaurants serve more dishes based on traditional and seasonal food culture and use mainly ecological products. Though Honorary Chairman Barsotti’s answer and Chairman Andersson’s answer are not necessarily contradictory, there is a seeming lack of clarity within the leadership regarding what the actual goals and expectations of the local movement are.

“We need a Slow Food Sweden that clearly stands for something. Why is it here? How does it complement other strong organizations?” - Questionnaire Response

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the local movement seems to lack unity regarding what goals are represented in the planning of the yearly schedule. A review of SFS’s events and activities over the last 5 years shows that the “good” and “clean” goals seem to get more focus (enjoying food, appreciating and learning about food cultures and traditions, and to a lesser extent choosing ecological products), and only occasionally addressing the “fair” goal (for example, activities benefitting SFI’s “10,000 Gardens in Africa” program). Likewise, questionnaire data supports that convivium members feel events focus mostly on appreciating “good” food and less on “clean” and “fair” food issues. In combination, this points to a set of goals and expectations that are not widely shared between Slow Food International, SFS leadership and among its convivium members.

[5.3.3.2] Specific Expectations

From the data gathered within this study, expressed goals are mainly long-term visions and non-specific. Were the previously stated goals and expectations outlined above more widely shared throughout the SSFM network, specificity would still be a concern, as none of these goals are very clear or concrete. When asked about this, Chairman Andersson explained that concrete goals had been set previously within SFS but were found ineffective. “It’s very difficult. We have had goals for membership numbers. Sometimes we succeeded, sometimes we failed. We have had goals for how many people we would get to attend public activities. Same thing there. Sometimes we’ve reached the goals, other times we’ve had to cancel the event because there were too few people” (Chairman Andersson interview, 2014). Chairman Andersson also mentioned that, “it is very difficult, too. Because, if one fails with that type of goal, then it is so obvious that it failed.”

Despite this history of failing to reach some of the previously set goals within the SSFM, questionnaire data shows that some members would like more focus on defining SFS goals, understanding how to reach them, and why they are important. Identifying and defining more immediate goals for the movement that can bridge the way between today’s world and the long-term goals of a “Good, Clean & Fair” food system is clearly something the SSFM can improve upon for future niche growth.

[5.3.3.3] Realistic & Achievable Expectations

Currently, the long-term nature of the listed goals for SFS is at odds with the lack of specific, short-term goals to help achieve the long-term vision. In recent years, the focus
of local events and activities has only been on a portion of the goals of achieving a “Good, Clean & Fair” food culture. In light of this, expectations of fulfilling the Slow Food vision in Stockholm may not be seen as realistic or achievable.

When members of SFS were asked about their expectations regarding the local movement, responses varied from member to member, with many indicating disappointment and unmet expectations. When asked if SFS had fulfilled their expectations, questionnaire data showed that ca. 13% either had no expectations or did not feel active/experienced enough in SFS to answer the question, ca. 21% were completely satisfied with their SFS experience so far, and could not even think of something they would like to see improved within the local movement when asked in the following question, and ca. 15% felt that their expectations were met (said “yes” to the question) but also listed that SFS would benefit from more activities or more members. However, a large portion of respondents, ca. 51% indicated that their expectations have not yet been met, and many gave specific answers as to why they felt that way (see selected quotes below).

“I would like to have more meetings that don’t only involve having a nice time and eating together but have more focus on what we can do, how we can do it, and why we should do it. Today there is a lot of information that doesn’t reach the broader masses…”
- Questionnaire Response

“I think that Slow Food Stockholm functions entirely too much like a pleasure-movement, focusing on taste-testing, food excursions and other expensive events, and too little work is done creating change in how people purchase and eat food. Working to show the value of food is great, but I’m missing work with more ideology.”
- Questionnaire Response

“I had wished that there were more opportunities for meeting and activities.”
- Questionnaire Response

“I’m looking for a link that focuses more on bio-diversity and farmers rights.”
- Questionnaire Response

“I was surprised by the low number of members. With so few people and limited budget it’s hard to reach out properly.”
- Questionnaire Response

“It’s hard to get members to come to the activities.”
- Questionnaire Response

“We have a ways to go. We have to learn to combine consumption and production and work with solidarity.”
- Questionnaire Response

In order to understand why members felt expectations were not met, those answers indicating that SFS has not met their expectations were analyzed separately, taking a closer look at the reasons given. Of those who indicated unmet expectations, 15% were still mostly positive about SFS (though did not say “yes” to having their expectation met), but wished the movement were bigger, with more members and more activities. 10% felt that the local movement did not have enough funding to effectively perform or make a large-scale impact. 30% indicated that there is a lack of budget-friendly activities, making it difficult for lower income groups to be more involved. And 45%
specifically called for more public outreach and cooperation with outside organizations engaged in or affected by food issues. Some responses even specified which groups they would like to see increased involvement with, such as food producers and distributors and farmers, schools and retirement homes and hospitals, the youth population, families with young children, low-income groups, and government councils at the city and county levels. Some respondents even suggest working on the local movement’s public image and marketing in order to help with outreach and promotion of SFS. Also, 30% of respondents indicating unmet expectations expressed that SFS is currently too focused on “good” food and not focused enough on “clean & fair” food issues. Several stated that there were too many events based on sharing food experiences and socializing internally, but not enough focus on changing the way people (external to the current membership network) view and make choices about the food they buy/eat/grow/serve/distribute. Some issues that were specifically mentioned as needing more attention included consumer and producer interests and solidarity, biodiversity, and food producer rights. One respondent even asked for “more focus on what we can do, how we can do it, and why we should do it,” showing again how some SFS members are calling for a more specific definition of how to help the movement grow through personal involvement.

With more than half of questionnaire participants responding that their expectations of Slow Food Stockholm and the local movement have not been met, it is clear that expectation management is a weak point within the niche's development. However, many respondents also suggested specific and concrete ways to improve the movement that would help SFS better address the goals of a “Good, Clean & Fair” food system. If SFS is able to draw on this rich pool of ideas and concerned members to address the current shortfalls of the local movement’s current situation regarding goals, the vision of a “Good, Clean & Fair” food system in Stockholm may become more realistic and achievable.
Table 1: Summary of Results for Strategic Niche Management Indicators - Study results regarding strategic niche management indicators for successful niche growth as applied to Slow Food Stockholm and the SSFM innovation niche are summarized and presented here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Niche Management Indicator for successful Niche Development</th>
<th>Slow Food Stockholm Niche Strengths</th>
<th>Slow Food Stockholm Niche Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internal Social Network Building</td>
<td>Diversity of occupations and backgrounds represented</td>
<td>Upper level income levels overrepresented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Network Diversity</td>
<td>Diverse gender representation</td>
<td>Lower income levels underrepresented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Network Size</td>
<td>Successful recruitment of new (first time) activists</td>
<td>Upper age groups overrepresented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Network Diversity and Strength</td>
<td>Successfully attracting both food and environmentally interested individuals</td>
<td>Lower age groups underrepresented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Network Relations within the Public Sector</td>
<td>Niche members are well connected, active community members with broad personal networks that can help as resources for niche growth</td>
<td>Lacking in diversity of sources for recruiting new niche members (heavy reliance on current members to bring in prospective members)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stable and continuous growth</td>
<td>Collaborations and partnerships are mainly temporary and ad-hoc</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Membership recruitment prioritized within niche organization and leadership</td>
<td>No connections to public/government/political organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active and effective use of social media for niche promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connections with local, regional, national and international levels of Slow Food organization(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborations with other local and regional organizations and local businesses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Political organization with no ties to any particular party</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential for grant funding opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Expectation Management</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Learning</strong></td>
<td>Learning opportunities are given in multiple ways (classes,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lectures, newsletters, educational trips, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning opportunities are given for a variety of ages and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ability levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Members learn about a variety of topics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The majority of niche members report learning through</td>
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<td></td>
<td>membership in SFS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>External Learning</strong></td>
<td>Printed material actively used to promote Slow Food/Slow</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Food Stockholm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Open line of communication with public and media via email,</td>
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<td>webpage and Facebook page</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The majority of learning opportunities are related to food</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and food products (taste testing, etc.) rather than other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Slow Food related issues (farmers rights, agricultural</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sustainability issues, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotional material and efforts are not connected to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>effective increases in membership recruitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Expectation Management</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Widely Shared Expectations</strong></td>
<td>“Good, Clean, Fair” goals are evident in SFI and SFS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promotional materials</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Expectations</strong></td>
<td>Concrete goals have been set in the past, and used to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>help build membership and grow niche impact</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Realistic &amp; Achievable Expectations</strong></td>
<td>Many niche members are positive or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>optimistic about addressing weaknesses within the</td>
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<td>organization, which can bring expectations closer to being</td>
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<td></td>
<td>realistic and achievable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expectations and goals are not widely shared between SFS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>leadership and members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Good” goal is overrepresented in niche activities, with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>little focus on “Clean” and “Fair” goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goals and expectations lack specificity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goals and visions are mainly long-term and non-concrete</td>
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<td>Lack of wide spread and specific goals and expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>suggests expectations are not currently realistic or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>achievable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately half of questionnaire respondents indicated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>unmet expectations since joining SFS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
[6] Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the SSFM innovation niche is not yet fully developed. Though it has been more successful in developing certain areas of the niche, other areas are underdeveloped and could benefit from extra attention within the niche. As the Slow Food vision includes a broad societal transition away from a fast food dominated regime, it is in the interest of the movement to pursue a more fully developed niche in order to contribute to the transitions to more sustainable and just food systems.

Accordingly, these findings will now be discussed in the context of strategic niche management and related theories. Issues addressed within the discussion will include broadening the internal social network, broadening and strengthening the external social network, encouraging independent learning, and identifying and clarifying niche goals for the short and long-term. By addressing these issues, it is the hope that this innovation niche focused on food system regime change will benefit from existing theory and will develop further in its ability to influence sustainable development and contribute to transforming food systems.

Finally, suggestions will be given that may help the movement further develop at the local niche level in order to enhance the innovation niche and its ability to influence a sustainability transition. These suggestions are not meant as an exhaustive or complete list of how to practically apply the theory in this case. Instead, they should be seen as ideas of how SFS can potentially improve the effectiveness of their niche development using concrete examples of ways in which the theory can be applied in practice.

[6.1] Social Network Building

[6.1.1] Broadening the internal social network to include underrepresented groups

The SSFM has been fairly successful in building its social network since the local movement began. Growing slowly over time, the internal social network of convivium members has broadened to include a variety of people with different backgrounds and different reasons for joining the movement. This is particularly important for niche success, as social innovation research indicates that the social network must “cross multiple social boundaries to reach more people and different people” (Westley & Antadze, 2010) in order to include a variety of stakeholders and ultimately support a more successful impact on the dominant regime (Olsson & Galaz, 2012). Strategic niche management literature also indicates the importance of a well-developed social network including a range of stakeholders who have access to resources that can be used to support the niche as it grows (Schot & Geels, 2008; Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012; Smith & Raven, 2012).

Though SSFM has made great strides in developing its social network to include a variety of stakeholders, it is clear that two groups are as yet particularly underrepresented in the network: lower income levels and younger age groups. According to a review of Slow Food research, underrepresentation of lower income
groups is not unique to the local Stockholm movement. Though the greater Slow Food movement is also considered to have grown since its start to include gastronomes as well as social and environmental activists (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011), it is still criticized by some as having a lack of focus on including lower income groups and too much focus on “high-price luxury food products” (Simonetti, 2012). Including lower income groups in the local SFS network is essential for the ability of the local movement to address Slow Food’s third watchword (fair), where good food is defined as a “right, even for those who have less in their wallets” (Slowfoodstockholm.se, 2014). When highlighting the importance of access to a good, fairly priced food system, the movement (locally and on a broader scale) can only gain from better including lower income groups in the social network, as they represent a stakeholder group that is directly affected by these food-focused issues.

The inclusion of younger age groups is also a concern within the local movement’s niche development. Like lower income groups, young people also represent a stakeholder group affected by Slow Food issues. However, young people also represent an untapped resource for the local movement. Gaining a higher representation of young people in the SFS social network has the potential to give the movement a natural resource for new ideas, energy, and a legacy of future leaders to continue the movement through future generations. In this way, young people can be seen as a stakeholder group with access to resources that can be used to support the niche and its development, both today and in the future.

[6.1.2] Broadening and strengthening the external social network

The results of this study have shown that the external social network of the Slow Food Stockholm convivium is formed mainly on a temporary and add-hoc basis, mostly with other Slow Food bodies and local restaurants. In Seyfang & Haxeltine’s (2012) similar grassroots innovation niche study, results concerning the niche’s broader external social network development were much like those found here, and it was suggests that “wider networking efforts outside the niche could be formalized and invested in, in order to build bridges with actors in mainstream systems” (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012; see also Schot & Geels, 2008; Smith, 2007). In order to strengthen the niche’s external social network, SFS must pursue partnerships with a broader base of organizations, especially public institutions, as well as strengthen the ties between SFS and its current add-hoc partners. In so doing, the innovation niche could gain support and increase its ability to influence the dominant regime.

In order to broaden the SFS network, efforts should be concentrated on the niche’s least developed portions of their social network. This includes the public sector, specifically government bodies and state funded institutions, such as universities. By focusing efforts on building ties with university groups and student organizations for example, SFS can more effectively reach younger audiences while also creating stronger ties to outside groups with complementary goals. The latter is also true for the creation of links to government bodies. By seeking out partnerships with local, regional, national, even international government organizations that deal with food related issues, the SSFM can gain both legitimacy and influence in government arenas such as legislation, implementation, even funding for projects of interest to the Slow Food movement. In support of this, previous studies focusing on social-ecological innovations have shown that “links to the political arena are of crucial importance in order to move from an idea,
shared by a small informal network of engaged actors, to the institutionalization of a new environmental governance and management approach” (Olsson & Galaz, 2012). A cross-scale approach to network building is also recommended by earlier research within social innovation theory, showing that in order to have a “broad, durable impact,” an innovation niche such as this must engage “organizations nested across scales (from local to regional to national to global)” (Westley & Antadze, 2010). This shows that the niche can benefit not only from engaging with the public sector, but with institutions that span across different scales of influence, in order to build a stronger social network.

In addition to creating ties to new groups such as universities and government bodies, SFS must strengthen its relationship with existing external contacts. This can be done by formalizing the currently ad hoc relationships proven productive in earlier coordinated efforts. As an organization with both local and regional contacts within its external social network, Slow Food Stockholm has the potential to facilitate sustainable change by diffusing better practices and practical informational tools for a more sustainable food system through a strong relationship and collaboration with outside organizations. Voluntary behavioral choices to change food related practices (such as buying local/organic/small scale) could potentially have significantly larger aggregate effects depending on how broadly and at what rate the information and practices are shared through the collaboration network (Rogers, 2003). These types of small incremental changes at the level of the individual can lead to larger regime changes in for example food systems, and are considered to be an essential key to achieving transitional regime change (Wansink, 2004). Slow Food Stockholm therefore can benefit from an investment in strengthening and formalizing their external social network and ties to outside organizations in order to facilitate the diffusion of voluntary behavior change through local and regional collaboration ties.

[6.2] Learning

[6.2.1] Encouraging independent learning

Though SFS has clearly prioritized learning within its activities and events, independent learning and knowledge sharing within the membership base is one way that the niche can strengthen its learning processes. Within SNM research, it is stated that the most effective learning processes “contribute not only to everyday knowledge and expertise but also to ‘second-order learning’ wherein people question the assumptions and constraints of regime systems” (Kemp et al, 1998 as cited by Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012; see also Schot & Geels, 2008; Smith & Raven, 2012). However, the majority of learning opportunities mentioned in these results take the form of SFS as a distributor of knowledge (arranging lectures, courses, etc.) rather than a promoter of individual knowledge gathering and sharing by its convivium members. In other words, it is not evident that ‘second order learning’ is being actively promoted within the niche, though this may be taking place in the background. As SNM research indicates that niche introspection and critical thinking about the niche itself and how it fits into the broader context of society and the environment is a key element in the learning process of a successfully developed niche (Kemp et al, 1998), addressing this weakness within the movement can aid in niche development.
[6.3] Expectation Management

[6.3.1] Identifying and clarifying long-term and short-term goals

Within this study, results have shown that the SSFM has struggled to effectively manage expectations of what the niche aims to achieve and its ability to effectively achieve those aims. In order to address this weakness, both long-term and short-term goals should be considered, as both are necessary for successful niche development (see for example Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). When addressing the movement’s long-term goals, SFS should review its approach to the vision of a “good, clean and fair” food system, working to ensure that the vision is shared and understood by convivium members and its leadership, and that the three principles of this vision are each given their due in terms of promotion within niche activities, etc. An example of how this might be done could include an organized discussion on what these principles mean, why they are important, and how they can be addressed locally. Doing this can then lead into the development of short-term goals for the achievement of the long-term vision.

By focusing on outlining a pathway towards the long-term vision, SFS can effectively set a path of smaller, more concrete steps that can be followed in the short-term in order to help the niche achieve its larger-scale, systemic goals. It is particularly important that these goals include tangible ways in which all members can participate, considering that not all convivium members can be organizers or committee leaders. Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) suggest that this might take the form of “tangible projects offering immediate benefits” that can show both convivium members and the general public that the niche can accomplish “clear, recognizable progress and actions, appealing to potentially interested members of the public and delivering a sense of purpose and achievement.” This is suggested in earlier SNM research as well, where in it is stated that, “activities will be developed to substantiate the expectations” set forth by the innovation niche (Kemp et al, 1998). Within a technical innovation niche, this might take the form of research projects or the employment of experts relating to the innovation itself (Kemp et al, 1998). However, a more socially focused innovation niche would perhaps be better served by a more grassroots activity relating to the social-ecological issues at the center of a movement such as Slow Food. By focusing efforts on a few, specific, tangible, attainable goals in the short-term, connected to concrete and accessible activities based locally, it is easier to focus the efforts of the niche on these goals, which in turn help ensure an overall successful endeavor both short term and long term. If SFS can do this, the long-term goal of a systemic change away from the “fast-food” regime may become both realistic and achievable.

[6.4] Suggestions for practical application of theory

- Include underrepresented groups -

One way SFS can try to better incorporate younger age groups and lower income groups is by including more low-cost options when planning events and activities, allowing more involvement without high price tags. Events with members spending time instead of money allows for both the inclusion of those “with less in their wallets” to be more involved, as well as providing additional outlets for niche development by, for example, investing time and energy in a new project or activity that all members feel they can actively contribute to. Such a project could include adopting a community garden plot.
dedicated to growing “slow food” produce, where convivium members (young and old, rich and poor) can meet, work on the garden, learn about growing their own food using Slow Food concepts, and share the fruits of their labor.

- *Strengthen the external social network* -
One way to show a more formal relationship between currently informal collaboration partners is by asking contacts currently promoted on the SFS homepage to reciprocate by likewise listing SFS under the partner’s website, under “links” for example. This is already the case with Sva Marga’s online partnership with SFS, and could be replicated with the other organizations promoted on Slowfoodstockholm.se. Granted, this is a small gesture; yet it may serve as a first step towards a more formal relationship upon which cooperation can further develop. Facebook may be another resource through which SFS can grow their online partnerships with organizations both new and previously linked to the local niche.

- *Invest in building the social network* -
Seeking out and developing new and existing partnerships is a time and energy consuming task, especially for an organization made up of volunteers, many of whom are already active in multiple community groups in their free time. As a way to bring in new energy and assistance to address social network building, SFS might consider exploring the possibility of creating a student internship or trainee position for social network development and management. This would create ties with learning institutions as a recruitment base (both for the internship and for potential new convivium members), as well as incorporate more focus on involving younger age groups in the development of the niche. As internships and trainee positions are often unpaid, this would minimize the financial strain on SFS regarding a financial investment in social network building. Previous studies of grassroots innovations reveal that funding issues and financial instability within the niche is a common struggle for niche development. “The main challenges faced by grassroots innovations are related to the struggle to maintain a viable sustainable sociotechnical space within a wider unsustainable regime. This translates into issues around securing funding, which in turn affects possibilities for institutionalization and consolidating learning, managing organizational change, making effective links and networks with other societal actors, and diffusing oppositional ideas into wider society (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; see also Seyfang, 2009; Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012; Smith, 2006; 2007). In light of this, a student internship with no additional financial burden on the niche itself (other than the man-hours required to coordinate with the chosen student) can be seen as a relatively cost-free resource to support niche development.

- *Foster ‘second order learning’* -
One way to achieve ‘second order learning’ is through encouraging discussion and individual learning and knowledge sharing about the issues relating to the Slow Food movement and its local niche development in Stockholm. By providing a forum and encouraging members to participate in such discussions, SFS can facilitate independent learning and knowledge sharing within the innovation niche. This can be done, for example, by introducing a topic for informal conversation at convivium events, or on the SFS homepage or Facebook page as an online forum, where network members can share their knowledge and fuel each other’s learning on Slow Food as a movement and the issues related to its goals. In so doing, members become personally active in the learning process and can alert the niche leaders (such as steering committee members)
to knowledge gaps or interests within the social network, allowing for a stronger innovation niche and enhanced niche development regarding learning processes.

- Identify and clarify niche goals -
Theory suggests that tangible project be used to explore and develop goals and expectations within the niche. The suggestion of a local community garden project mentioned earlier would be an example of such an activity, where all members can participate and share in immediately tangible rewards through engaging and supporting the local Slow Food convivium within such a project.

[7] Conclusion

This study has conducted a critical analysis of the Slow Food movement in Stockholm as an innovation niche representing both the grassroots and social-ecological innovation as important resources for successful sustainability transitions to take place within dominant food systems. The analysis of this local level niche has included an assessment of its niche development processes, using transition theory’s strategic niche management approach as an organizational and theoretical framework. Accordingly, the study has summarized the local movement’s strengths and weaknesses in the areas of social network building, learning, and expectation management. As SNM theory names these three areas as indicators for successful niche development, suggestions have also been made regarding how the niche can improve in these areas in order to aid and enhance future niche development. Both theoretical and practical examples of how to improve the niche development processes are given as a starting point for critical assessment of how this niche, and others like it, can address potential weaknesses effecting niche growth. By helping to better understand the niche development processes at work in local level movements with goals of large-scale, systemic change, like Slow Food Stockholm and the larger Slow Food movement, this study contributes to a greater understanding of how to more effectively manage sustainability transitions, with a focus on grassroots and social-ecological niches as a valuable resource for innovation for needed change within currently unsustainable food system regimes.

However, applying SNM theory within such a context has not previously been favored in transition research. Therefore, it is necessary that additional studies such as this be explored in the future in order to more fully understand the context of this study’s results. Further research of local level Slow Food movements in different global locations could, for example, help explain how SFS’s results compare across different cultural, economic, political, and ecological circumstances. Furthermore, cross-scale studies looking beyond the local level niche would also be beneficial in increasing the understanding of movements like Slow Food and their broader niche processes and development.

In closing, it should be pointed out that this study not only uncovered weaknesses within the SSFM, but also its strengths. And, by addressing the weaknesses, they may also be transformed into strengths for the local movement, helping it grow as a movement and strengthen in its pursuit of a systemic regime transition away from the unsustainable “fast food” way of life dominating the current food and agricultural system. This study should be considered as a potential tool to help manage this
transition towards the Slow Food vision of systemic regime change towards sustainable development of local and global food regimes. For, as one survey respondent points out, “Slow Food has a lot left to accomplish. The movement in Stockholm is still working itself out. But I look positively on this development. It is important that Slow Food has a presence in Stockholm and in Sweden. I think the best is yet to come.”
References


