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FINAL REPORT WP6

AN EXPLORATION OF MULTI-FUNCTIONALITY IN  
URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES

*Marlinde Koopmans, Evy Mettepeningen, Dan Keech, Matt Reed, Ilona Kunda, Talis Tisenkopfs  
Alison Belshaw, Maarten Michels, Una Meiberga  
Nigel Curry, Mikelis Grivins, Guido Van Huylenbroeck*

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**Marlinde Koopmans, Evy Mettepenningen, Guido Van Huylenbroeck**

*Department of Agricultural Economics, Ghent University*



**Matt Reed, Dan Keech, Nigel Curry**

*Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI)*



**Ilona Kunda, Talis Tisenkopfs, Mikelis Grivins**

*Baltic Studies Centre*



**Maarten Michels**

*RoomER, Ghent*



**Una Meiberga**

*Kalniciema Quarter, Riga*

**Alison Belshaw**

*Community Farm, Bristol*

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## List of abbreviations

BPD	Bristol Drugs and Alcohol project
BSC	Baltic Studies Centre
CCRI	Countryside and Community Research Institute
CF	Community Farm
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DLA	Dynamic Learning Agenda
DOW	Description of Work
KQ	Kalnciema Quarter
MUFI	Multifunctional Urban Food Initiative
UGent	Ghent University
WP	Work Package

## Chapter 1: Multi-functionality in a (peri-) urban context

Access to food and other resources has for centuries limited the economic growth of cities. The required energy for the growth of cities came from human labour that was dependent on food produced on the land. In other words, the growth of human populations and therefore of cities was directly related to land use: the more people the more land was required to extract resources<sup>1</sup>. The introduction of fossil fuels reduced the need for agricultural labour and the cost of transport dramatically and as a result cities could expand. In the last century the total urban population expanded from 15 % to 50% of the total population (Deelstra & Girardet 2000) The low transport costs have made the distance of a city to its required resources almost irrelevant, yet cities still use land to acquire resources. Basically cities are “*plugged into increasingly global hinterlands*”(Deelstra & Girardet 2000, p.43). Every day products from all over the world are imported into the city. The distance between production and consumption means that the origin and (final) destination of consumed products is often unknown to the end consumer. As a result, the dependency of citizens on nature, more specifically on natural resources, is more and more invisible for them. Low *et al.* (2005) described this as citizens that live in a “*virtual world*”.

In consequence, for decades food has hardly been part of the urban public domain. Agriculture and food production belonged to the rural areas<sup>2</sup>. Also in literature, food was most commonly analysed from a rural development perspective (Morgan 2009). In her book “*Hungry city: how food shapes our lives*” Steel (2008), however, argued it is the city where the demand for food, the challenges for distribution and waste streams are the greatest. In other words, food has an impact on a city region, is no longer self-evident and cannot be viewed as external to the urban public domain. Although the question of food in the urban area is also very relevant for developing countries, in this work package we focus on developed countries, more specifically on the developments in the United Kingdom, Latvia and Belgium.

Over the last two decades the attention to urban food has grown tremendously worldwide. Cities have established food councils, rooftop and community gardens were established, as well as school gardens and local food markets. In the city, urban food initiatives are typically multifunctional and therefore well integrated in the urban fabric. Multifunctional Urban Food Initiatives (MUFIs) can be defined as initiatives that incorporate a wide range of social, economic, environmental and cultural functions simultaneously with food related activities such as food-producing, -retailing or -sharing activities in the city (adapted from Curry *et al.* 2014). They exist in a large variety, addressing different social, economic, and environmental urban challenges each to a different extent.

The first purpose of this Work Package (WP) is to make an inventory of functions that urban food initiatives in the city and peri-urban areas can perform. Furthermore, we briefly reflect on the challenges for MUFIs, both internal and external to the initiatives. This brings us to the second objective of this WP that was identified in correspondence with the SMEs, which is to investigate how to develop MUFIs so that they can become more sustainable and economically viable, and at the same time increase their relevance for society as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Or the land had to be used more intensively.

<sup>2</sup> Although activities such as allotment gardens always have existed.



The research in this WP is based on a combination of data obtained from the city region reports from WP 2 and data obtained through a close collaboration with three SMEs as cases of MUFIs in the city regions of Bristol, Riga and Ghent. More information on this data collection process can be found in section 2 of the report, which focuses on methodology. Section 3 describes the different functions MUFIs can perform in urban and peri-urban areas and highlight the interlinkages between those functions. The specific multifunctional character of the MUFIs provides opportunities, but also goes along with many challenges, which will be discussed as well in section 3.

Section 4 then focuses on how MUFIs can further develop in a sustainable and economically viable way. In this section we introduce a theoretical model that is applied to and empirically verified based on the three cases. In section 5 we reflect on the experiments. Each research team focused on a particular element (or innovative strategy) within the organizational model of our cooperating MUFIs. We think that these strategies are highly relevant for many other MUFIs as well. The three elements we will focus on are: working with volunteers, a multifunctional use of urban land and the development of an online platform to stimulate networking. Finally in section 6 we conclude with a reflection on the learning outcomes and a list of recommendations to foster the development of multifunctional urban food initiatives.

## Chapter 2: Research process

The work in this WP involved a cyclical, iterative and participatory process where both researchers and SMEs together developed shared interpretations and recommendations about the urban food developments.

In the first phase, the exploration phase, we started with a workshop exercise to identify the main needs and interests of the three SMEs and the three research groups. This exercise was supported with the identification of challenges and opportunities each SME experienced in their organization. The outcome of these exercises was used as an input to prioritize the main research questions within the WP. These research questions were not fixed but part of a **Dynamic Learning Agenda (DLA)** (see Box 1). This means that throughout the research project the research questions changed and were further specified (see Annex I for the final DLA).

### Box 1 Description of the Dynamic Learning Agenda (Moschitz, 2013: 6)

“The Dynamic Learning Agenda is a method to record the essence of the learning trajectories of innovative projects. The tool especially attempts to reveal the tough issues in the learning process that are often “swept under the rug” (Kleiner & Roth 1996; Regeer 2009). The dynamic learning agenda is described thoroughly in the Reflexive Monitoring in Action guide (Van Mierlo et al. 2010:63) and the following paragraphs cite that publication.

*“It is a tool that aims at making sure that during project implementation the project staff focuses on developing actions for the core problems and issues facing the project team. “The dynamic learning agenda is a tool that helps system innovation projects link long-term aims to concrete perspectives for actions by formulating the challenges that arise, recording them, and keeping track of them.” It involves a range of project participants in keeping a dynamic list of challenges and actions to respond to, ranked in importance. These are readdressed throughout the project, and ensure that the staff maintain focus on the true challenging issues.*

*The dynamic learning agenda can be constructed at the start of a project based on interviews with the various actors. Their perspectives (formulated as learning questions) are made clear and can also be tracked throughout the process. Transforming problematic situations from the perspective of system innovation into second order learning questions generates insights into the underlying causes. The dynamic learning agenda helps the project to make the contribution to system change explicit and to develop it with an eye on sustainable development (van Mierlo et al. 2010: 64-65).” (Moschitz, 2013: 6)“.*

The DLA included several overarching questions all partners were interested in. Furthermore each SME defined research questions that related to an experimental approach they wanted to further explore within this research project (the individual experiments). This means that during the experimental phase two parallel research processes took place.

First, during three workshops of two days the SMEs and researchers explored and discussed answers to the overarching questions. Additionally, to support these discussions, each research team developed a **thick description** (see Box 2) of the SME they cooperated with in the form of a number of reports, transcripts, maps, visualisations of relationships and pictures.

### Box 2 Explanation of a thick description

A thick description is an ethnographic term referring to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researchers make explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and put them in context (Hollaway 1997). This can be contrasted with thin description, which is a superficial account.

Secondly, for the individual experiments, the research teams were flexible to choose research methods. In the next section the research process of the three research team are described

## 2.1 Data collection & research process for each research team

### 2.1.1 BSC and Kalnciema Quarter

BSC cooperated with the most successful farmers' market in Riga, Kalnciema Quarter (KQ), which provided the benefit of very rich and interrelated activities, a dynamic development, and the potential to explore multi-functionality in considerable detail. KQ operates on its own private land, however this space was limited, and there was a potential need for expansion or other, even more imaginative ways of development. The fieldwork for WP6 proceeded from June 2013 till March 2015. **The goal was to capture the multitude of functions provided by KQ and the synergies between those functions, as well as to understand how this is achieved.** In the first stage certain assumptions were made about what these functions might be, after which BSC attempted to get validation from the users of these functions either directly (by interviews) or indirectly (by observation, "rapid assessment" media research, etc.). To sum up, BSC employed the following methods to make sense of how KQ operates:

- **Participant observation** of the operations of the market and other public activities. Observation allowed to draw important conclusions about the place-making function of KQ, the unique character of the place (which is non-transferable, although there are attempts to copy it), and of course the farmer-customer interaction.
- **Participant observation** of communication and problem-solving instances in the work in KQ, recruitment of interns, development of the social platform Markethopper together with the designer, programmer and managing staff. After a couple of years and constant presence no-one paid much attention to BSC researchers in the sense of adjusting their customary way of operation. This gave BSC the opportunity to observe the largely open, experimenting way of moving for the next step, combined with sound marketing and management knowledge and experience.
- **(Monthly) semi-structured interviews** with the key staff of KQ to find out about the latest developments, challenges and lessons learned, and to obtain different interpretations of these developments. Some interviews were more structured, e.g. those about the decision-making process. In the process of interviews BSC often asked for validation of their findings, and in effect much of the interpretations were co-created, especially those related to network-mapping, and identification of lessons learned. Thus the research was largely of a **participatory** nature.
- **Semi-structured interviews** with some cooperation partners of KQ, such as other NGOs, the city authorities and "creative quarters" on the other bank of the river.
- **Shadowing KQ** staff on their debates with other "creative neighbourhoods" about the best way to enter into a dialogue with the City Department of Culture and the Department of Development. BSC actively participated in drafting some definitions

and substantiating KQ's position to make it possible to negotiate a multi-year core grant for the more experienced "creative neighbourhoods". In that sense towards the end the project became **action research**, as researchers and KQ pooled their resources to lobby for a new support instrument from the city authorities.

- **Desk research:** analysis of KQ's project proposals to obtain public funding (and the procedures employed by the city and the Culture Capital Fund), which allowed to discover the flexible use of various legal entities and various cross-subsidising of activities. Desk research also included the **analysis of customer responses** to KQ news on Facebook and Twitter, analysing the dominant themes (fun, creativity, good place, etc.)

### 2.1.2 Ghent University and RoomeR

Ghent University (UGent) cooperated with RoomeR, an SME that successfully integrates multifunctional activities in its business model. Originally the SME wanted to experiment with a waste reducing project within SUPURBFOOD, but this proved to be impossible so plans needed to be adjusted to the objectives of WP6. The fieldwork proceeded from June 2013 until December 2014. In this period there were regular **semi-structured interviews** with the owner of the company, on average on a 2-monthly basis. From June 2013 until June 2014 interviews were done to create an understanding on how the SME developed over the years and to explore the role of its multifunctional character for the development of the SME. In order to support the thick description that resulted from this analysis, UGent interviewed two other staff members and analysed project proposals and competition proposals of the SME.

The second period of data collection, from July 2014 until December 2014, was focused on the individual experiment and aimed at exploring how to institutionalize the foraging of products in public areas used for commercial purposes. During this second period extra **semi-structured interviews** with the owner of the SME took place. Furthermore the SME and UGent participated in meetings to establish a contract between the city government and the SME. In this experimental phase, one of UGent's laboratories also completed a **toxic analysis of elderflowers**, some of which were harvested in areas that are known to be toxic and others in areas that are known to have good soil. Hence, the second part of the research process can be described as **action research**. Finally, because the negotiations were not successful and did not result in a contract, UGent carried out extra **semi-structured interviews** with three actors that were involved in organizations that did establish formalized agreements regarding public foraging.

### 2.1.3 CCRI and the Community Farm

CCRI collaborated with the Community Farm (CF) to explore the role and development of its volunteer strategy. Volunteering represents an important, integral aspect of the CF's objective to reconnect consumers with the production of their food. In order to gather data to review the effectiveness of the CF's volunteer development strategy, CCRI set out a three-stage data collection process.

Firstly, **CCRI explored the literature on volunteer evaluation**, especially in relation to ex-ante (aspirational) and ex-post post (observable) achievements. Because most of the CF's volunteer

strategy positions its aspirations in the future, much of the evaluation of volunteer practices must be ex-ante. However, some ex-post observations based on current experiences were regarded as highly relevant to informing strategic progress and volunteer satisfaction.

CCRI thus, secondly, **prepared interview and focus group questions** to gather views on current volunteers' experiences and interviews with CF staff and board members about their visions for volunteer development. Focus groups carried out during the lunch-time rest period were considered a practical way to engage with weekday volunteers (many of whom have worked together on the CF over several years), without interrupting their work patterns. This focus group was carried out in August 2014. In addition, **short one-to-one interviews** of about 15 minutes in length were carried out with weekend volunteers during a working day in September 2014. Questions were asked of individual volunteers while they were picking beans and pumpkins. Lastly, longer, **1-hour interviews were carried out with CF staff and board members**.

The third phase of volunteer evaluation involved an **on-line survey**, which was live on the CF web-site in November and December 2014. The survey was designed to probe, in confidence and anonymously, why people who expressed an initial interest in volunteering at weekends, did not show up. Returns were received from 42 respondents. In the questionnaire, participants were requested to consider completing a second, more detailed qualitative questionnaire. None of the 42 initial participants opted to complete the second survey.

## 2.2 Short description of the SMEs

Within this WP the national research teams (CCRI, UGent and BSC) closely cooperated with three SMEs. Furthermore the SMEs were present at all project meetings organized within the SUPURBFOOD project. In this section each SME is shortly introduced.

### 2.2.1 The Bristol Community Farm

The **Bristol Community Farm (CF)** in southwest England is "*an organic, not for profit growing community*" (The Community Farm, 2014) of 22 acres (9 ha). Members took over the farming, box scheme (seasonal produce for cooking) and wholesale business as a not-for-profit co-operatively owned organisation in April 2011. The initiative employs 18 people and delivers organic vegetables throughout the Bath and Bristol Area. The farm is owned by its 500 members who are able to vote at the annual general meeting. The aim of the Community farm is to:

- (i) Transform farming through organic production on member-owned land and 'healthy' food distribution direct to members' homes;
- (ii) Grow vegetables and fruit in the most sustainable way;
- (iii) Link a diverse membership to where their food is produced;
- (iv) Contribute to the resilience of food security, the local economy, and to the development of a self-sustaining, low-carbon food and farming system;
- (v) Increase knowledge of growing, giving hands-on experience and the chance to acquire new skills offered to people from all walks of life.

The Community Farm creates opportunities to learn about food production by involving volunteers. It has a social role, involving the disadvantaged in society but is also committed to improving the environment, aiming to minimize carbon emissions for example.

### 2.2.2 Kalnciema Quarter

The **Kalciema Quarter (KQ)** in Riga, Latvia, is private enterprise, an ensemble of buildings representing 18th / 19th century wooden architecture and a farmers' market. The renovated KQ is a public space, which, thanks to its proactive staff, has become a cultural and business centre that hosts festivals, concerts, cinema, exhibitions, design shops, a restaurant, an architect's studio, etc. Due to its popularity and established base of customers, KQ also has become an incubator for new innovative food-related enterprises. Originally developed as an enterprise promoting renovation of wooden buildings, it has adopted various promotional activities to achieve this goal.

However, social activities gained popularity fairly quickly and these became more publicly recognized than the initial goals. Currently, KQ has grown into the most successful farmers' market in Riga. It organizes markets weekly (in December even twice a week – on Saturday and Sunday) and in most cases the market has a specific theme. The market has developed its own contact list of farmers, has a stable circle of customers, has developed its own unofficial quality scheme for farmer selection and has nurtured several initiatives that have become popular in Riga.

Meanwhile, KQ is open to other activities. It has been active in attracting various cultural projects – concerts and various cultural, creative and educational events - and is open to new ideas. Because of its openness, KQ has reached its spatial and several other limits. Despite this, KQ staff has even more ambitious goals for future KQ development.

### 2.2.3 RoomeR

**RoomeR** is a small enterprise owned by two brothers. They produce an alcoholic beverage based on the flowers of the elderberry tree (*Sambucus nigra*). The production of this aperitif started at a very small scale in grandmothers' attic and the garage of the owners, but slowly developed into a well-established local business producing on average 50,000 liters per year in a little factory in the city centre of Ghent. The business consciously made the decision not to produce elderflowers on a farm plot but rather to gather the flowers from trees located in different green areas in and around the city of Ghent. Yearly, the company collects on average 1200 kg of elderflowers.

The initiative has a strong social commitment. They cooperate with a sheltered workplace for the bottling of RoomeR. Furthermore they often involve students in the development and production of new machines and they invite schools and other social groups on factory tours, explaining the story of RoomeR. Moreover, they continuously aim to improve their environmental performance by recycling water, reducing packaging, using bike transport etc. RoomeR is an official regional product. They first supplied local restaurants, cafés and festivals and are now expanding towards supplying supermarkets, also outside the city.

## Chapter 3: Beneficial ties between Multifunctional Urban Food Initiatives and cities

As first objective in our research we wanted to obtain a deeper understanding of the variation of functions that urban and peri-urban food initiatives have for the wider society and to explore the functional ties between multifunctional aspects of the selected SMEs and the city region (see DOW). In this chapter we first look into the literature to get an overview on what potential functions have been created by this type of initiatives. Secondly, we describe which activities of the participating SMEs contribute to which functions and third, we describe the challenges that result from them.

### 3.1 The role of multi-functionality in literature

*“Eating incorporates all manner of substance of the world as sustenance for the body”* (Potteiger 2013:261). In other words, food is, in the most fundamental way interconnected with our culture, infrastructure, soils, water, technology, labour, etc. (Potteiger 2013). Hence, the food system is not only part of the economic system but of a broad set of systems including social, cultural and ecological ones. This makes food a very powerful concept.

Several scholars have addressed social, economic and environmental relevance of the urban food system for society. Food can, for example, be discussed in relation to public health and food ownership, to (local) trade and employment, but also to biodiversity and waste management (Bohn & Viljoen 2011) In other words, urban food initiatives, as part of the food system, cannot merely be characterised by their geographical location, but also by their functional agri-food relations with the city. Van Veenhuizen (2006) therefore distinguishes – according to the three dimensions of sustainability – three potential functional relationships between the urban food system and the development of a city region:

- (i) The social dimension, which when well-developed results in an “inclusive” city region;
- (ii) The economic dimension, which when well-developed results in a “productive” city region;
- (iii) The environmental dimension, which when well-developed results in a “healthy ecological” city region.

Potential functional agri-food relations for each of these dimensions are illustrated figure 1 below. Although the list of functions is not exhaustive, it does illustrate the potential mutual beneficial ties between urban food initiatives and a city region.



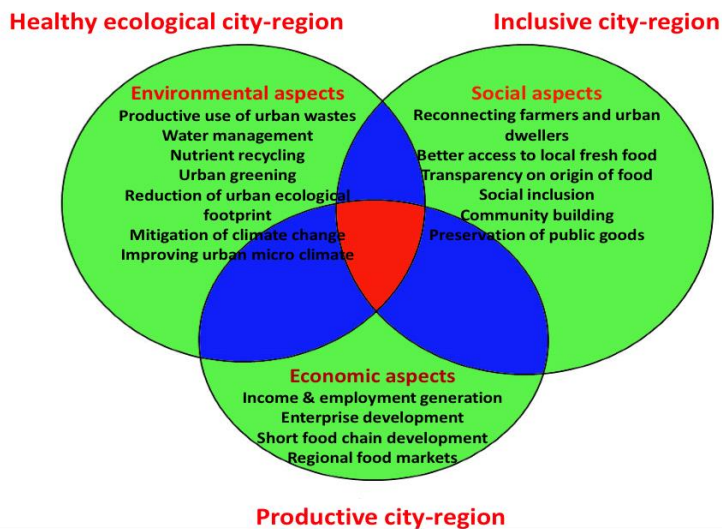


Figure 1 An agri-food typology of city regions (adapted from van Veenhuizen (2006) in SUPURBFOOD proposal)

Figure 1 reveals that urban food initiatives could potentially produce productive outcomes that address urban challenges and therefore benefit the nearby community (city) and society as a whole (Bohn & Viljoen 2011; Lovell & Johnston 2009 see also Van Veenhuizen 2006, and SUPURBFOOD proposal). Urban food initiatives will most often combine aspects of the three dimensions but will differ in their emphasis put on each one of them<sup>3</sup>. Ideally, urban food activities in cities move to the middle (red) area where it is assumed that optimal synergy between the three dimensions is reached. This typology can therefore serve as a framework to analyse the diversity of innovative activities in city regions with regard to agriculture and food.

Various authors have described potential outcomes of urban food initiatives. They have been enumerated in Curry et al., 2014). Firstly in **economic terms**, there is the obvious potential to produce **food** in the city (Kremer & DeLiberty 2011; Metcalf & Widener 2011). Other economic functions that also have been articulated are job creation and stimulating innovation (Curry et al. 2014) Secondly, in **social terms**, authors discuss urban food initiatives' contribution to **health** in respect of increasing good nutrition to improve both physical and mental health (Freeman et al. 2012), but also the health benefits of physical activity and recreation associated with local food production (McClintock 2014). Other social outcomes of urban food initiatives include the contribution to "food citizenship" (Hassanein 2003), to **knowledge** about food growing skills, sustainability, **security** (Kuo & Sullivan 2001)'s "eyes on the street", **community cohesion** through involving volunteers, offering care activities (Wakefield et al. 2007), to **a cultural identity** (Ackerman et al. 2014) and **social justice** (Milbourne 2012), including the delivery of food to the poor (McClintock, 2014).

Finally, authors have described **environmental functions** as productive outcomes of urban food initiatives' activities, like storm-water retention, greenhouse gas mitigation and urban ecological citizenship (Travaine & Hunold 2010). But functions are also discussed in respect of **amenity** or green space provision (Viljoen 2005); van Veenhuizen, 2006), **neighbourhood beautification** and the **gentrification of derelict urban land** (Hackworth 2007). Although this

<sup>3</sup> Although most of the aspects depicted in Figure 1 are confined to one dimension, they can also relate to the other two.



list of functions is not exhaustive, it does clearly show the multi-functional character of urban food initiatives.

In chapter four of this report we will describe that the productive outcomes of urban food initiatives are a result of **co-production**. In other words, food related activities are developed invariably in tandem with a range of other functions (Curry et al, 2014). Urban food initiatives should therefore be evaluated based on such a multifunctional framework (Lovell & Johnston 2009). Before addressing the dynamic mechanism behind how these functions are developed, we first describe the activities that can be observed within the SMEs introduced in chapter 2, resulting in different functions as productive outcomes.

### 3.2 What functions do SMEs perform?

In this section, we have identified the different activities of the SMEs introduced in chapter 2 and grouped them under the social, environmental and economic dimensions of van Veenhuizen (2006). We have illustrated this for each SME in Figures 2, 3 and 4 below. To a certain extent, however, activities have often a strong or weak relation to different dimensions simultaneously. An activity can contribute to, for example, the environmental and social sphere at the same time. Moreover, the activities can also trigger positive feedback mechanisms, where characteristics of one activity stimulate or influence the development and value of other activities. For each SME, these interrelations between activities are described in separate boxes.

#### 3.2.1 The Community Farm

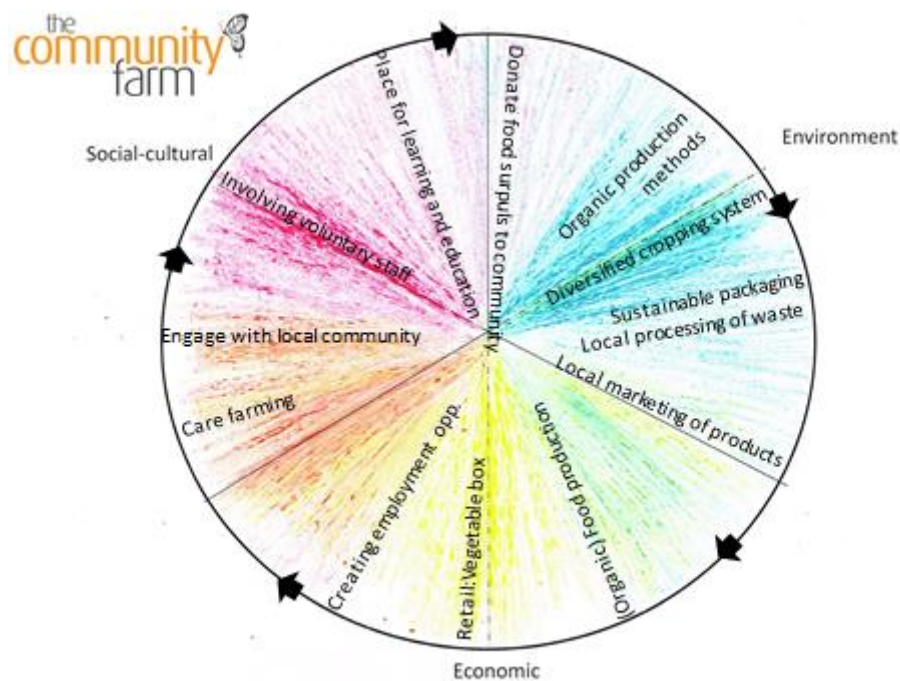


Figure 2 Contribution of the Community Farm to society

First, in **economic terms** the Community Farm grows over 70 varieties of fruit and vegetables organically and distributes them through a community box scheme, through wholesaling and at local markets. The farm created in total 21 paid jobs (equivalent to 11 full-time posts), and the expected net profit for the period April 2014 to March 2015 is £ 37 500.

Second, in **social terms**, the farm runs adult education classes on food growing and organizes 'plot to plate' cookery sessions. They are organized in a special built 'learning zone' on the site and in local schools. Furthermore, the farm organizes Farm Forest School activities that run through the school holidays and there are children's activity days. In the future they are planning to further develop the educational part of their organization and provide courses (subsidised and commercial) around food, farming and the environment; engage business involvement; provide care-farming training and attain CEVAS (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme).

The farm also contributes to community cohesion as it seeks to involve all of the local population through welcome events. They systematically involve volunteers on Community Farmer Days and on 'normal' field work days. Social cohesion/connectivity is created through the combination of the equity structure that is based in the community, a distribution system that is based on directly supplying the consumer and a programme of linked activities such as education and volunteering. And as final social activity, in terms of social justice, 'care farming' allows the active involvement of those with mental illness and drug and alcohol dependency, offering improvements in health through training and practical experience.

In **environmental terms**, the Community Farm reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by delivering very early in the morning, limiting cost for refrigerating, and refusing air-freighted import products for their vegetable boxes. The farm reduces waste because they use minimal package material and recycle packaging as much as possible. Furthermore they donate food that is not suitable for retail to community kitchens, compost the field waste and feed waste to pigs. Finally, through their organic practices they improve the soil quality and nurture wildlife.

### Box 3 Examples of positive interrelations between activities on the Community Farm

Organic farming requires intercropping, therefore a larger variety of species will have to be grown. The SME chooses to grow vegetables that are forgotten or not regularly sold in the supermarket. Apart from its environmental value, contributing to biodiversity, this approach also results in an economic advantage because they can offer a vegetable box with a great diversity of products, and with products that are less regularly available to the consumer. Furthermore it has a social value because consumers diversify their diet and increase their knowledge about (forgotten) food products.

Instead of having to visit the farm to purchase local products, the vegetable boxes are delivered at home. This has an environmental advantage- more efficient transport- but also an economic advantage as this is very convenient for the consumer.

The Community farm invites people regularly for voluntary activities and organizes voluntary events. This has social advantages, like improving social cohesion and increasing knowledge about food production, but from an economic perspective it is a cheap source of labour as well. Without this labour, many activities could not be organized. Furthermore it is a way of participatory marketing.

### 3.2.2 Kalnciema Quarter

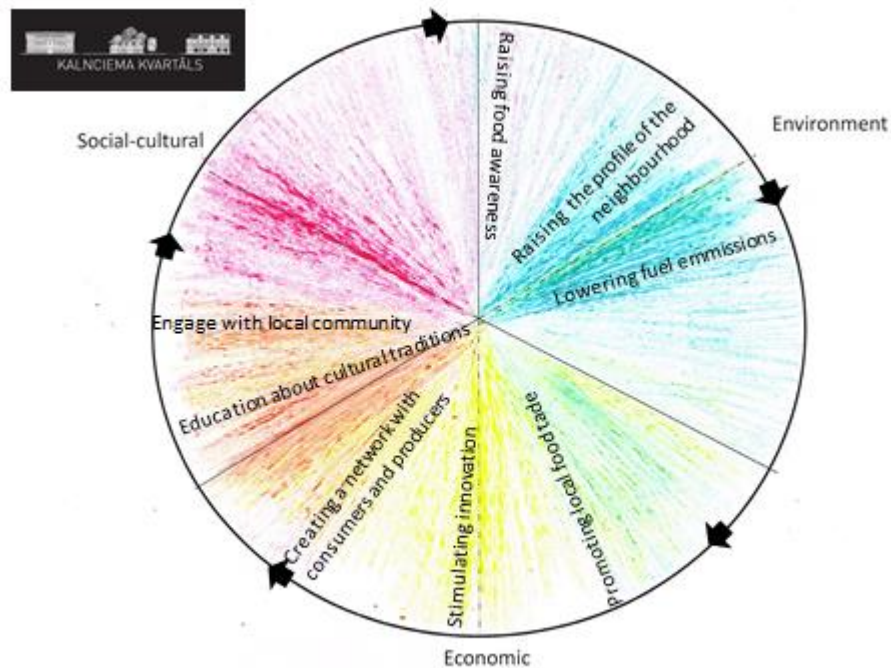


Figure 3 Contribution of Kalnciema Quarter to society

The Kalnciema Quarters' **economic contribution** can be allocated to the fact that they create a market by connecting consumers and traders. They organize weekly farmers' and artisans' markets. Furthermore they function as a hub for product placement of new innovative products and their activities raise the profile of the neighbourhood, even brand the area to one of the most creative districts in the city. Finally, they are also renting renovated wooden premises for seminars and meetings.

In **social terms**, Kalnciema Quarter contributes to social cohesion because their (market) space is a meeting place. Additionally, part of their activities are the organization of traditional annual festivals and cultural activities that (re)vitalize the cultural life in the city. There is also a strong educational dimension to their activities as they give excursions about the wood heritage, and courses about architectural wood crafting.

Finally in **environmental terms** they contribute to the amenity of the city.

#### Box 4 Examples of positive interrelations between activities in Kalnciema Quarter

The organization of cultural activities increases social cohesion and cultural knowledge, but at the same time it also attracts more customers to the farmers' markets, making them more profitable.

### 3.2.3 RoomeR

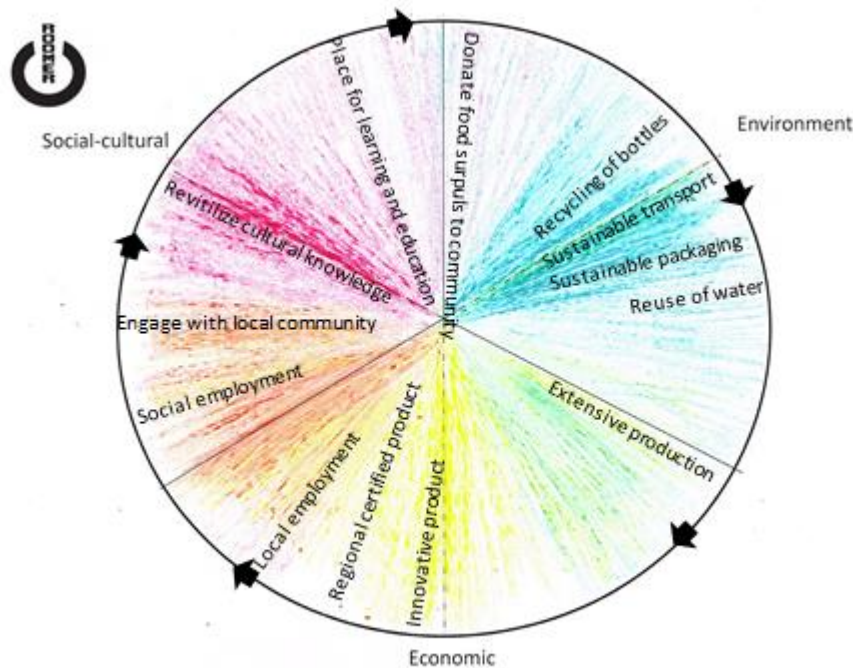


Figure 4 Contribution of RoomeR to society

In **economic terms** RoomeR produces a high quality, local and artisanal aperitif. Moreover, they consciously employ people from the region and cooperate with different local partners (for the supply of elderflowers, transport, technical development, etc.), as such stimulating the local economy.

In **social terms**, RoomeR considers itself as a learning organization. This means the staff gets maximum learning possibilities, they provide internships for marketing and chemistry students and for students from technical schools. Moreover, they also share their experiences about, for example, entrepreneurship and environmentally sustainable production during guided tours in the factory with different groups of people (e.g. schools, pensioners, etc.). Also people who cannot be employed in the regular labour circuit (due to a variety of problems ranging from former drug abuse to mental illness) get meaningful employment at RoomeR. Finally, in social-economic terms the SME advises and shares experiences about creative entrepreneurship with young entrepreneurs.

The activities of RoomeR are also **environmentally motivated**. The extensive production of elder flower adds value to the landscape. The production is integrated in other landscape activities (like parks) and as a result does not 'waste' extra land. Moreover, nowadays the elderberry is mostly considered to be a weed (waste or something unwanted) and RoomeR turns this wasted product into something valuable. Apart from their contribution to the biodiversity, they are also committed to reduce air, water, and sound pollution, use eco-friendly cleaning agents and continuously aim to reduce waste streams and energy use, etc.

#### Box 5 Examples of positive interrelations between activities in Roomer

Due to the current size of the SME, the bottling of Roomer is only happening once a month. Although machines are available for this kind of task, they choose to cooperate with a sheltered workplace for manual bottling. This approach not only creates employment for people that are disadvantaged in society, it is also economically more interesting because it allows for a fragmented bottling process (once a month instead of every day).

The recycling of crates and bottles reduces packaging, but is also a logistical challenge and a very labour intensive activity. Again, this activity is only possible because Roomer cooperates with the sheltered workplace for the cleaning of the recycled bottles. Furthermore they cooperate with a bike transporter to distribute the produce within the city, which reduces the environmental impact of the transport.

### 3.3 Opportunities and challenges for MUFIs

Being multifunctional comes with a lot of opportunities for MUFIs, but also challenges, that will all be discussed in this section.

#### 3.3.1 Opportunities

The multifunctional character of MUFIs creates development opportunities in general. First, food is often the product to be sold, but other less commercial activities (like cultural festivities or nature conservation activities) can be used to make the product more attractive and attract consumers. In Riga, Kalnciema Quarter attracts people with the organization of cultural music festivals, who become customers for the artists' and farmers' market.

Second, their sustainable character, and the fact that they are interlinked with so many sectors, makes the SMEs become more eligible for different economic support systems such as subsidies and loans available for innovative enterprises.

Third, in order to manage the diversity of activities, the SMEs manage an extensive network (chapter 4), resulting in goodwill and support in different areas by many actors. This can stimulate the development of the SME. For example, a large group of shareholders invested in the start-up budget of the Community Farm.

#### 3.3.2 Challenges

Managing this multi-functionality, however, does not come without challenges. First, the SMEs indicated that they are constantly challenged to manage the pressures that derive from the different activities. Each activity demands time and resources, and a success but also problems in one activity immediately influences other activities.

*“The most important thing for the Community Farm of all, though, is to be multifunctional. It is most keen to achieve all of the objectives set and one shouldn't necessarily take priority over another. BUT, there has to be a sustainable business that brings enough money in to make the whole thing work properly. At the moment there is a dependence on grant funding for a lot of*



*the social remit work, but there is an aspiration to be able to fund this (cross subsidy) out of other commercial activity.” “The Community Farm is critically aware that in the end it must ‘balance the books.’” (Community Farm)*

Second, the different functions combined can also make it difficult to prioritize new opportunities. As was told in the story of Kalnciema Quarter, the challenge with this breadth and intensity of activities is the prioritization of new opportunities, which, to quote the informant *“are never simple decisions”*, as complex benefits must be weighed against equally complex costs in terms of time, expenditure and other opportunities. There is a challenge of activities starting to compete among themselves for attention, funds and time.

Third, combining different functions leads to a more extensive and diverse network and the initiatives also need to cooperate with government departments that are not necessarily linked to food production. This means it is also time-consuming to maintain the extremely extensive and diverse network of contacts, needed to ensure the functioning of a constantly evolving set of activities.

Finally, fourth, combining different functions means also that the MUFIs have to comply with many different regulations in different fields (e.g. food safety, environmental regulations, regulations regarding the use of volunteers, spatial planning, etc.). As SMEs are often small, and their activities often do not fit a box, they are constantly involved in a learning process. With limited staff this can be very time consuming. As RoomeR puts it: *“We have, in many different areas, learned a lot in an empirical way. We are active in a sector that is very strictly regulated, and sometimes all of that (like issues related to food security, excise duties, registration and administration) seems to bury us under a mountain of paperwork.”(RoomeR).*

### 3.4 Reflection towards the city region

Based on this first exercise, visualizing activities carried out by the SMEs, we can conclude that relatively small initiatives can develop a diverse mix of activities. While discussing this phenomenon with the SMEs it became clear that the synergies between the activities are the outcome of a complex cross pollination that results from combining and integrating different activities in one place.

This intended complexity stimulates a process of linking activities that are culturally and also institutionally distinct from each other (Brunori & Rossi 2000). They push the boundaries of established governance mechanisms, for example in the case of the Community Farm in Bristol that is trying to integrate the involvement of voluntary work in their business model. For them, it is crucial to be able to offer social activities and environmental functions as an SME and clearly there is a social demand for this type of activities as well. RoomeR, on the other hand, challenges established institutions by insisting on the use of products grown in public areas. Furthermore, MUFIs can make innovative linkages between different sectors, institutions and actors. We see examples where brownfields are selected as a suitable area to develop a social cohesion project through food production (De Site, Ghent), or where the promotion of wooden architecture is linked to a farmers’ market (Kalnciema Quarter, Riga). To conclude, MUFIs stimulate innovation and reflective governance, which is an important added value for a city region.

### 3.5 Reflection towards the SMEs

A general comment made by the SMEs in the first exploration of research agendas was the lack of recognition they experience for their diverse social and ecological contributions to society. As was explained in the former section, including ecological and social values often involves difficult trade-offs. Calculating the economic value of social and ecological activities was not within the scope of this research. Another strategy is to develop measurable indicators that indirectly value certain types of social or ecological activities, which could be presented in a spin diagram, for example. In work package 5 of the SUPURBFOOD project the researchers did an attempt to develop sustainability indicators (see the final report of WP5 for the results). However, as was visualized in figures 2-4, the types of activities vary as well as the context in which they occur, hence, the value of one activity highly depends on the urban context. In a richer but urbanized area the value for producing food might be less important than the creation of green space, while this might be the opposite in an area with high poverty rates. Indicators have to be simplified in order to become a useful tool, but with that they unfortunately easily fail to take into account both the dynamic environment, which urban food initiatives develop, and the complexity of the initiatives themselves. Furthermore, the functions do not stand-alone, the developed activities are not an end goal but they are inherent in the initiative and adapted and adopted in a continuous cyclical process where one activity flows into the next one<sup>4</sup>.

In other words, before developing indicators or a measurable scheme, learning *how* to measure, it is important to first understand the development of the SMEs. This will help us to define policy recommendations and increase the knowledge on *what* to measure in order to make urban food initiatives more relevant and sustainable. Therefore in the next chapter we describe how the urban food initiatives develop.

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<sup>4</sup> This makes it also very difficult to fit them into a pre-defined business model.

## Chapter 4: How do urban food initiatives develop?

In developed countries many MUFIs are still new, in a start-up phase, or they often just operate on a project basis. In WP 6 we wanted to learn from the experiences of the SMEs and wanted find out how MUFIs develop and identify success factors so that they can become more sustainable and economically viable, and at the same time increase their 'relevance' for society as a whole.

Based on a review of the literature, insights from the city region reports and workshops with the SMEs, we translated the results into a **conceptual model** (see Figure 5). This **model** shows how MUFIs develop in interaction with the local context. The model is based on earlier models developed by Curry et al 2(014), Emery & Flora (2006), for the development of community capitals, and the model developed by Schermer et al. (2010) describing the dynamics of collective farmers' market initiatives. The conceptual model contains the main elements that allow us not only to gain insight the value of these initiatives, into how these initiatives develop, how synergies are created between different functions, but also where interventions could be done to facilitate their development.

In this chapter, we first introduce the model, describe its dynamics and illustrate how the different elements are in continuous interaction. After explaining the dynamics of the model we zoom in to the role of two building blocks; the visioning of the MUFIs and the organizational responses in the development process. We do this by using examples from the case studies. First we explain what forms the basis of MUFIs: what was their motivation to start an initiative, to engage in food production related activities in a (peri-) urban context. We then continue to describe the organizational responses of the initiatives. In this section we identify four areas of intervention where multi-functionality results in innovative strategies for urban food initiatives. The outcomes in both themes, the visioning and organisational responses, are directly influenced by the opportunities and challenges that result from the city regions' capital assets and contextual dynamics. In the description of the first two themes we will pay ample attention to this notion of 'locality'. We finish the chapter with a critical reflection on the potential impacts of MUFIs on the development of a city region and its contribution to a sustainable urban food system.



## 4.1 Introduction of the model

In chapter three we identified the multiple functions of urban food initiatives. In a second phase in the research we investigated how these functions developed and what potential interesting synergies are occurring. One of the first results was the observation that the development of the initiatives is not linear and output oriented. Instead, the initiatives are involved in a continuous learning process. The developed functions are often not the end goal of the initiative, they cannot be perceived as fixed outcomes. Consequently, it is difficult to capture the strategies and activities of initiatives in a conventional organizational business model. Instead the activities develop in response to opportunities and challenges that occurred in different points in time. They are in a continuous process of adaptation and improvement.

In the conceptual model (Figure 5) we want to capture these dynamics. The model contains two main elements and the continuous interaction between these elements influences the development of the initiatives. In other words, these elements are the building blocks of initiatives and can be understood as potential areas of intervention.

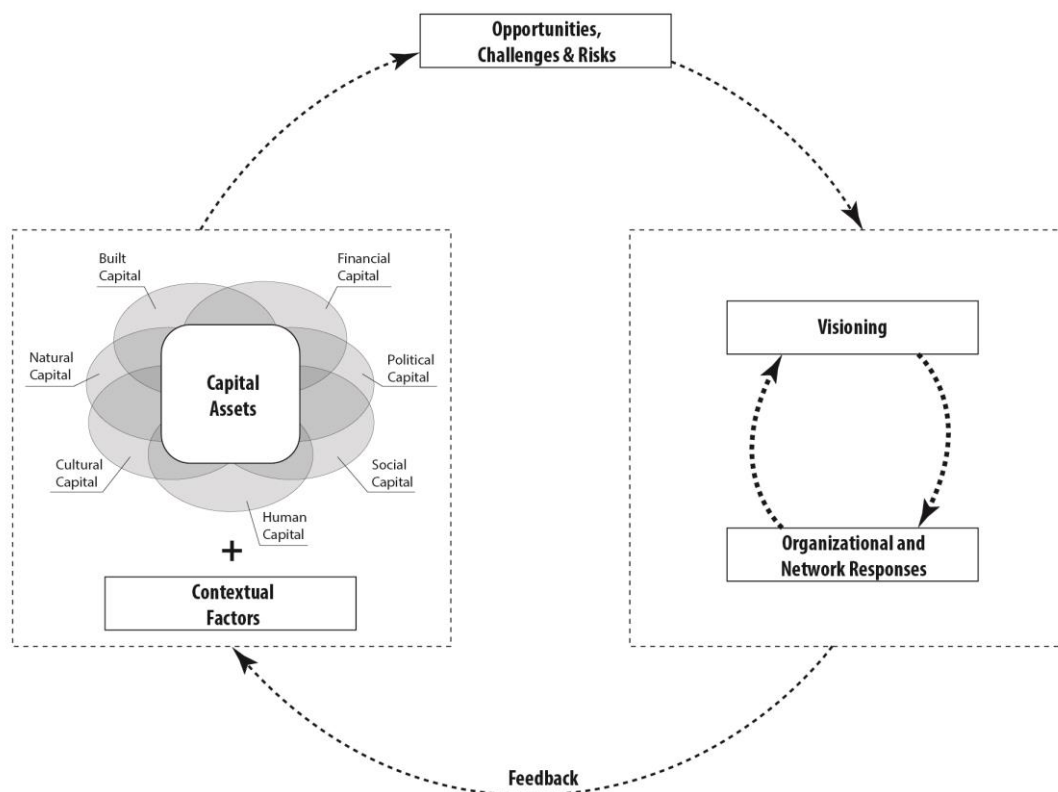


Figure 5: MUFIs' development model

## 4.2 The role of the local context

We first define the local context including the available capital assets and contextual factors. Emery and Flora (2006) originally identified capital assets as ‘local community capitals’. They defined these capital assets as resources that can be exchanged, invested or used to generate new resources.

In their Community Capital Framework, Emery & Flora (2006) identified and defined seven components of community capital. Natural capital refers to available natural resources, amenities and the weather conditions that are particular for a place. Cultural capital reflects traditions, language and values. It defines how people interact, and which voices are heard. Human capital refers to the skills and abilities of people to ameliorate their resources. Social capital relates to the connections among people, to the availability of trust and community cohesion. Political capital can be understood to include people’s ability to take agency and engage in actions that contribute to the community but also reflect access to organizations and power to change things. Financial capital refers to the available financial resources and finally built capital includes physical infrastructures.<sup>5</sup> The capitals interact and build on one another, but they can also be influenced by external investments. Emery & Flora (2006) describe the Community Capital Framework as a method to analyse local economic development.

The term ‘Community’ caused some confusion among the partners of WP6. Some partners had difficulties with the idea of describing a city region as “community”. Instead we agreed that the description ‘capital assets’ better clarifies its meaning and role within this model. For this reason, as from now we will refer to capital assets instead of local community capitals.

Apart from the capital assets, the local context is also influenced by its contextual factors. Where the capital assets refer to sources that can be exchanged, the contextual factors, according to Schermer et al. (2010), are passive. They are the market conditions, policy frameworks, institutional structures and general social and cultural trends in society.

In the model we distinguished two types of interactions with the local context. First, through their activities the initiatives build on what is present in the region. In other words, MUFIs take advantage of the available capital assets and contextual factors. For example by working with cultural traditions, using available buildings or brownfields, but also by building on available skills and creative talent that is present in a region. Second, the urban food initiatives consciously engage with the city region. That is to say, initiatives consciously cooperate with other local people and organisations.

In the next sections we discuss the internal dynamics (visioning and organizational responses) of the model more in depth, taking a multifunctional perspective, how objectives are shaped and result in multifunctional characteristics and how contextual and organisational challenges and opportunities are translated into innovative strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> For a more extensive explanation we refer to Emery et al. (2006: 2).

### 4.3 The dynamics in the model

In the initial phase initiatives start with a mix of (personal) objectives, challenges and opportunities that arise from the local context they are situated in. The defined objectives influence what types of activities are developed by the initiatives as organizational responses. As we will explain in further detail in section 4.4, the objectives are the result of the notion of agency and the desire to change something in society. It is often a commitment to contribute to sustainability, which automatically results in multiple objectives. Apart from personal objectives the choice for the type of activities is also influenced by the local context. The opportunities and challenges that stem from the local context explain the diversity in strategies and development paths of the SMEs. The activities are then operationalized in an effective organizational response (Schermer et al. 2010) for which the ‘multifunctional characteristic’ creates challenges but also offers opportunities.

Finally, we observe a feedback mechanism. Following the model of Schermer et al. (2010), the societal productive outcome that resulted from this process is argued to have an impact that in return will change both the local context and the internal organizational dynamics. This then creates new opportunities and challenges for the development of the initiative and that way the initiative enters a new cycle of development. In other words, the model illustrates a dynamic process where “resources are continuously combined and recombined” (Schermer et al. 2010:7). This also means that the initiative can contribute to ‘a spiralling up’ process of local capitals as was described by Emery & Flora (2006). We will further discuss this in the final section of this chapter.

To summarize, the activities and strategies developed by the MUFIs are not an outcome but are part of a dynamic process of adaptation and innovation in response to the changing contextual factors, and new opportunities that result from earlier strategies of the MUFIs.

### 4.4 Developing a vision and identifying objectives

People often develop an urban food initiative from the idea that what is happening in their community (or also wider than that), how food is grown, how people interact with their environment, how urban space is wasted, does not exactly correspond with their own values/beliefs and this triggers them to take action.

Roomer, for example, wanted to redefine the traditional role of an entrepreneur in society. With their business they want to extend the traditional profit oriented mind-set and demonstrate that a business can offer a place where people can learn and be part of the organization.

*“We want to develop a business where the economy supports society but not the other way around. To develop a place where you work to learn and live instead of where you live to work. I think that we do what we can to have a broader interpretation of the concepts growth and profit than only financial profits.” (Roomer)*

At the Community Farm they question certain practices in the conventional food system. In terms of production methods, the farmer argued: *“organic farming is the future if you want people to be able to ‘shake the hand that feeds you’.”* More on a general level, they also have

the desire to further develop a *sustainable* model of farming, a model “*that enhances the public’s understanding of the land and that enables people to reconnect to where their food is grown*”

The vision that results from values, ambitions and beliefs integrates sustainability goals in a systematic way. Hence, they inherently perform a variety of functions, or produce multiple outcomes that can be linked to the three sustainability dimensions (see chapter 3). RoomeR, for example, takes sustainability as a basic rule for running the business, but criticize, however, the use of ethical and sustainable practices in promotion campaigns. Instead they believe that: “*To try hard in silence, might be the best example of sustainable behaviour for future generations*”. For example, their objective to contribute to the environment influenced the decision to, instead of cultivating elder trees for the flowers, gather elderflowers from existing shrubs that grow on public (and private) land in the peri-urban areas of Ghent.

Nonetheless, the motivation to start the business is not only based on intrinsic values, their choices are also shaped by the local context. They are influenced by challenges and opportunities that exist in the city region. Consequently, the initiatives are *embedded* in the city region. This means that the notion of “locality” is important when describing the development of urban food initiatives. Earlier in the report we distinguished two types of interactions with the local. First, through their activities the initiatives build on what is present in the region. Second, they also consciously engage with the city region. Below we will give examples of the three cases to illustrate this.

#### 4.4.1 Building on what is present in the region

With building on what is present in the region we mean that the development of initiatives is an outcome of the available capital assets and contextual factors in a city region. For example, in the case of *the Community Farm*, the two initiative takers inherited a farm from their parents close to the city of Bristol. In 2005 they decided to cooperate and sell organic meat boxes and because of this started to cooperate in 2008 with Phil Haughton, owner of the Better Food Company, which is a company that sells local organic produce in Bristol. The three partners then decided to start a community farm with shareholders that sell vegetable boxes in the city. In other words, the SME was built on the city’s available human capital assets (the initiative takers), economic capital assets (an already existing market for local food) and natural capital assets (availability of land).

In Ghent, *RoomeR* took the opportunity to use the advice and knowledge that was made available by the local authority to increase the environmental performance of businesses active in Ghent. Furthermore they built on the ‘chauvinistic’ character of the people from Ghent. RoomeR argued: “*Ghent did not have many interesting authentic products and now they have ‘their’ RoomeR.*” Finally, RoomeR is also based on a traditional recipe that is still known among the elderly. In other words, they built on the city’s human capital assets (the initiative takers), political capital assets (support from the government for investments in environmental practices) and cultural capital assets (chauvinistic character of the Ghent citizens and the use of a traditional recipe.)

Finally in Riga, the formerly popular and well-attended markets became populated with produce of non-local origin and questionable standards and for part of the customers; there was a need for a trusted alternative. The new ideas of traceable food initially found expression

in the Berga Bazārs market (also a privately owned place, but enclosed, narrow, and elitist), and initiatives by some young catering entrepreneurs (e.g. Eco-catering; the internet eco-shop Dabas dobe), and NGOs (e.g. Homo ecos). **Kalnciema Quarter** responded to the trend very quickly. From all these initiatives, Kalnciema Quarter is now the most developed one. This illustrates how KQ was built, among others, on the city's human capital assets (the initiative takers), economic and social capital assets (demand for more traceable and higher quality food).

#### 4.4.2 Consciously engaging with the region

Apart from building on city regions' capital assets the initiatives also consciously engage with the region. This means that they also wish to interact on different levels within the local context. In Bristol, the **Community Farm** seeks to hold public 'welcome' events open to all inhabitants in the area and supports other community supported agriculture networks in the area through knowledge exchange and market development.

**Roomer** involves people from the city region in the harvesting of elderflowers. Then, they share and develop knowledge in cooperation with local schools and for the bottling of the beverage they cooperate with a social workshop. One of the owners argues: *"Because you follow your mission about participation, you develop a relationship with the consumer that goes beyond 'I am customer'. You create a natural community and are locally embedded"*.

Finally **Kalnciema Quarter** chose to not only target the well-of inhabitant as customer that generates the highest income, but also to involve other groups in society such as the elderly or immigrant groups in their activities. Furthermore, they created opportunities for local artists and artisans to experiment with new products.

### 4.5 MUFIs' internal dynamic: the organizational response structure

The visioning is a process of defining objectives, what you want to do. In the organizational and network responses the initiatives develop strategies on how to operationalize their objectives. This results in a great diversity of innovative strategies.

We will describe four areas with innovative organizational responses for multifunctional urban food initiatives: financing the organization, adjusting to the institutional environment, the operational management and communication and marketing. For each area we describe innovative strategies the SMEs have developed in response to the challenges that result from the multifunctional character of the SMEs. In discussing each of these areas, we will give also ample attention to how the organizational structure is influenced by local contextual factors. Finally we will discuss the role of networking as an overarching mechanism that supports the development of the SMEs.

#### 4.5.1 Financing the organization

Challenges	Successful Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not (only) profit oriented: lack of interest of banks to give a credit</li> <li>• Production of public goods that have no economic value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop multiple financial models               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support from the government</li> <li>✓ Access to innovation loans</li> <li>✓ Financial support from cooperants</li> <li>✓ Transfer costs (linking activities, rely on voluntary efforts)</li> <li>✓ Social exchange of services with other service-providers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

MUFIs often face financial challenges. First, because in their organizational models social and environmental objectives are as important as the economic objectives. Secondly, their organizational models have not yet proven to be economically viable, which means they often lack the trust of banks necessary to invest in the initiatives. Furthermore, initiatives evolve over time and activities are developed based on opportunities that arise in time, hence, their strategies are difficult to predefine in a fixed financial model. Some scholars already studied this phenomenon and concluded that the multifunctional characteristics of the MUFIs result in **multiple finance models** that can coexist in one organization (Jarosz 2000).

First, for the creation of social activities MUFIs often receive **support from the government**. Kalnciema Quarter, for example, successfully participated in tenders for public funds (e.g. from the City Council and from foreign embassies) with a number of project proposals that allow KQ to hold various free activities. The Community Farm obtained a grant to organize its voluntary program. Nonetheless, funding streams from any one source can be volatile. Public grant funding streams, for example, frequently change their priorities. Furthermore it requires skills and time to obtain public funding (Curry et al 2014).

Second, in WP6 we observed that the (sustainability) objectives and related activities of MUFIs could **give access to (local) innovation loans** and grants of organizations that want to promote certain (sustainable) practices. For example the social objectives of RoomeR were rewarded with an interest free loan from 'Network Flanders' (now active under the name FairFin vzw). In return, the people that supplied the credit had to become part of an advisory board of the funded organization.

Another example of alternative financing is the **financing through cooperants**. The Community Farm, for example, is a Community Benefit Society. Each of its 500 members invested in the farm through community shares, with members having an influence on how the farm is run. There was an initial share offer to provide the working capital to start the farm, with other offers for specific items that would assist the operation of the farm, for example machinery. Yet it is not required to be a member if you want to buy a vegetable box of Bristol's Community Farm.

Third, the initiatives **transfer costs**. They finance non-market activities with income generated from commercially viable activities (Kremer & DeLiberty 2011). For example, to provide a

space for community building and promotion of certain lifestyle values, Kalnciema Quarter holds free-of-charge cultural, educational and leisure activities, which are in a way “subsidised” by income-generating activities, most notably rent of offices and event space. And the Community Farm generates significant market incomes from premium prices for food. It seeks to blend these sources of income by internal ‘cross-subsidisation’ of non-market activities (for example relating to the environment) with market ones (Curry et al, 2014).

Fourth, the SMEs are commonly involved in **social exchange**. Kalnciema Quarter, for example, uses social exchange whereby they can get services for free (e.g. advertising their events in a magazine) in exchange for providing something of value to the service-provider (e.g. an opportunity to have a corporate event at KQ premises for free). Furthermore they often rely on voluntary efforts that can be seen as a stream of “income”. At the Community Farm, labour is supplied by those who are volunteering or training at the farm, which encompasses a diverse range of people, from those recovering from substance addiction through to those visiting on corporate away days. Although there are several advantages and this type of social exchange creates clear societal values, for profit making SMEs such as Roomer this is not legally permitted. Later in this report we will discuss the role of networking in this respect

#### 4.5.2 Adjusting to the institutional environment

Challenges	Successful strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing different political sectors (e.g. health, food,.. )</li> <li>• Complying with regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking a pro-active approach</li> <li>• Developing and maintaining informal relationships</li> <li>• Different enterprise forms</li> </ul>

In a multi-functionality context, urban food initiatives are confronted with a great diversity of **policy and legal frameworks**, as the different functions will be subject to different policy instruments (Curry et al, 2014). This means that the initiatives are often faced with restricting and complex legislations, for example in relation to food safety, land use and labour. The political environment is very different in different city regions. For example in Bristol the civic organizations are very active. They have a very knowledgeable food council that aims to: “*Influence and advocate for national, regional and local policies that support development of healthy, sustainable, resilient food systems*”<sup>6</sup>. Despite of that it is very difficult to induce change due to the difficult governmental structure. On the other hand, in Ghent the municipality itself took a very active role and launched a programme: “Gent en Garde”. They joined forces to make the food system in Ghent more sustainable. With that they aim to “*achieve victories*” throughout the local food chain: from production to processing and distribution to consumption and waste management<sup>7</sup>. However, their objectives do not always match the objectives of the MUFIs. This specific type of governmental organization to advance towards a more sustainable food system is however not present in all city regions, as can be

<sup>6</sup> From: <http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/about/> visited 11-12-2014

<sup>7</sup> From: <http://www.gentklimaatstad.be/stad-gent/gent-en-garde-voor-lokale-en-duurzame-voeding>



observed in Riga. This, however, does not necessarily limit the development of the initiatives; rather it changes their strategies.

Without denying the need to adapt to policies within the SMEs, we observed two coping strategies. First, Roomer developed a **proactive strategy**. According to Roomer “*The government should act as a coach, not as a punishing father*”. They approach the government institute that, to their understanding, is responsible for certain regulations or legal frameworks the SME has to respond to, and ask them how to deal with the situation. Because of that they avoid unforeseen conflicts with government institutes. Another example of a proactive strategy was observed with Kalnciema Quarter. They created their own food quality control system to be compliant with national food safety regulations.

Second, the SMEs **develop and maintain informal relationships**. Experiences in the three SMEs suggest that informal ties with the state can “soften” the legal and policy context of the SMEs and unlock potential for development. Later in this report we discuss the role of networks for the development of urban food initiatives more extensively.

Finally a third interesting strategy that was observed relate to the legal form of the enterprise. In order to deal with the lack of synergies between social, environmental and entrepreneurial policies, in earlier research McClintock (2014) identified the strategy of **taking up various legal forms** within one organization. This strategy was for example implemented by Kalnciema Quarter. On the one hand, it is an enterprise that owns a shop and offers services (e.g. rent of office space) and in this enterprise mode it operates commercially. But, Kalnciema Quarter is also a foundation and in this capacity, it applies, for example, for grants for public funding schemes to run cultural activities. Both legal forms are used simultaneously depending on the task at hand. Consequently, those involved in the running of Kalnciema Quarter are constantly reassessing the most appropriate enterprise form for new activities as they develop. This could also be a strategy to overcome the legal restrictions Roomer experiences as a commercial enterprise to cooperate with volunteers and pensioners or for certain types of land-use (foraging).

#### 4.5.3 Management of the organization

Challenges	Successful strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrating activities for different sustainability purposes</li> <li>Dealing with multiple sectors and types of activities: high pressure on staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being flexible and open for continuous learning and change</li> <li>Strategic HR management:</li> <li>Open communication, maintaining flexible and open for continuous learning and change</li> <li>Intensive cooperation with other organizations</li> </ul>

Multi-functionality also poses **challenges for the management** of the initiative. First, as was reported in chapter 3, for the SMEs it is a challenge to **balance the objectives**. They have to make choices and balance between creating economic, social and ecological outcomes.



The **diverse activities in different fields are demanding for the staff** of urban food initiatives. People have to be very flexible and knowledgeable in different fields. First, they are required to have knowledge about different sectors such as social care, the economies of managing a market place and organizing cultural activities. Secondly, they need to be able to manage different groups such as volunteers, elderly, social workers or schoolchildren. In other words, the staff has to be “a jack of many trades”. In order to support employees in such a challenging environment, the SMEs indicated it is important to **maintain flexible and open for continuous learning and change**. This means allowing staff to develop new ideas (provided they fit with the overall direction and make financial sense) and continuously be open to try out new ideas and react to new developments and opportunities that arise. This is however not easy, as was reported by Kalnciema Quarter: *“For the employees the dynamic environment of KQ activities is a bit of a struggle: „ one day it is opera, another day it is smoked bacon fat, yet another – pop-up sports activities.”*

Furthermore, in such a dynamic environment **open communication** with the employees and a firm grounding in a set of recognisable values (but without fanaticism) by the employees is very important.

A final strategy we identified to deal with the challenges is to take advantage of **good cooperation with other organizations**. Initiatives are often small and have only limited staff. However through their extensive network they can count on large group of people. This increases the potential activities the initiatives can realize. For example in Ghent, Roomer cooperates with a sheltered workplace. The sheltered workplace also brings staff to guide the workers to the factory of Roomer. As a result the organization needs less time, knowledge and energy to manage this activity and therefore it is realistic to continue to cooperate with the social workshop.

#### 4.5.4 Communication and marketing

Challenges	Successful strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing environmental and social outputs</li> <li>Staying authentic and transparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participatory story telling: Consciously involving customers in their business</li> </ul>

Finally, it is difficult to internalize or put a price on the added social and environmental value that results from different activities. Instead, the initiatives use them in their marketing strategy and apply a **participatory storytelling** approach to communicate with their customers. This means that instead of going for a one-way communication with commercials and pamphlets, the initiatives consciously involve customers in their business and business philosophy. Doing that, they also do not focus on one target group (e.g. young well-educated people), but try to diversify their audience. This strategy also contributes to the local embeddedness of the initiatives.

To illustrate, the Community Farm runs a “supermarket free challenge” to stimulate their members to not buy food from supermarkets. Roomer involves different groups of people in

the harvesting and bottling of the product with the advantage that they will tell their experiences to other people. It is important to remark that this transparent approach is only possible if you are consistent in following your mission. Consequently, maintaining authenticity and transparency are flagships of the SMEs. In the box below the role of participatory story telling is illustrated more in detail

#### Box 6 Detailed exploration of participatory story telling

While KQ does not rely on bottom-up civic involvement directly, as the roles of stakeholders are predominantly those of consumers and/or suppliers (of products and activities), one may see the importance of storytelling for KQ on several levels. First, the image of KQ is related to the story of preserving a beautiful part of the city by two dedicated brothers (a kind of a founders' myth); second, most of the activities by KQ provide stories in themselves – stories of creative artisans and farmers, unique products; in most cases the weekly markets have a theme (End-of-winter; Spring Cleaning, Bird Days, Young Fashion Designers; Italian (and other ethnic) cuisine; Fighting the Cold Beautifully, etc.).

Third, and perhaps most importantly, KQ provides a space where various individuals, groups and organisations may meet, exchange and promote their ideas. On the level of organisations, it is common for civic groups to take part in the events KQ have organized to reach the public they believe may be responsive, to educate KQ visitors about socially relevant topics (waste, climate change, caring for animals, etc.). On the level of individuals, the kind of space and activities that KQ provides is conducive to lingering, observing, sharing impressions (there is a coffee shop and multiple cosy corners to sit outside in the “garden”, there are always sellers of seasonal food for immediate consumption, and something to watch happening on the small wooden stage.

Therefore, we could suggest that through civic engagement KQ serves as a space for those willing to express themselves, respond to others and meet like-minded people.

#### 4.5.5 Importance of networking

Earlier, we already referred to the importance of maintaining and being involved in networks for the SMEs. Networking seems a basic task for urban food initiatives. The networking plays an important role in different levels of the initiative. Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that a network is important for the financing of the initiative outside the traditional loan structures, for crossing sectoral borders identifying key actors that can talk the different languages spoken in different sectors, for creating niches in the regulatory system through establishing trust relationships with governing actors, but also for developing and managing the activities by involving volunteers and developing and maintaining cooperation with other organizations. To conclude, the multiplicity of interlinked networks providing input into various activities makes SMEs viable and therefore is a key asset for the SMEs

The multifunctional nature of the initiatives makes these networks very extensive. They can be perceived and structured in various ways. Some are formally constituted (those surrounding governance, for example), others are informal (friendship networks, sustainability movements) and some lie in between. Their constitution, degree of formality and importance constantly changes over time as the SMEs' functions change. Different functions will have different network patterns, according to the priority of those functions. This is illustrated in two functional cases from the Community Farm below: that of drug rehabilitation (Figure 6) and that of food procurement by schools (Figure 7).

Because the development of functions is in itself an organic and dynamic process, the networks through which they develop are not necessarily an exact match to the functions, they change at different times and in response to different stimuli.

The figures above also illustrate that initiatives, although they are often small and only involving small groups of people, can have a large impact in a city region due to their extensive networks. In other words, the network dynamics are an important key driver for the development of new activities.

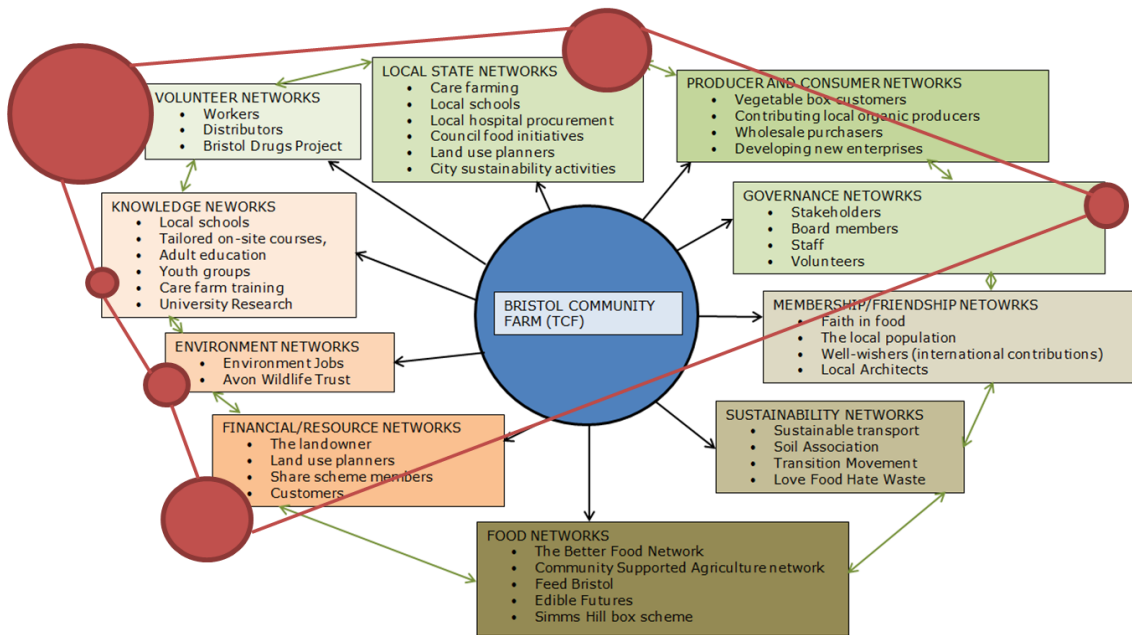


Figure 6: Drug rehabilitation network emphases

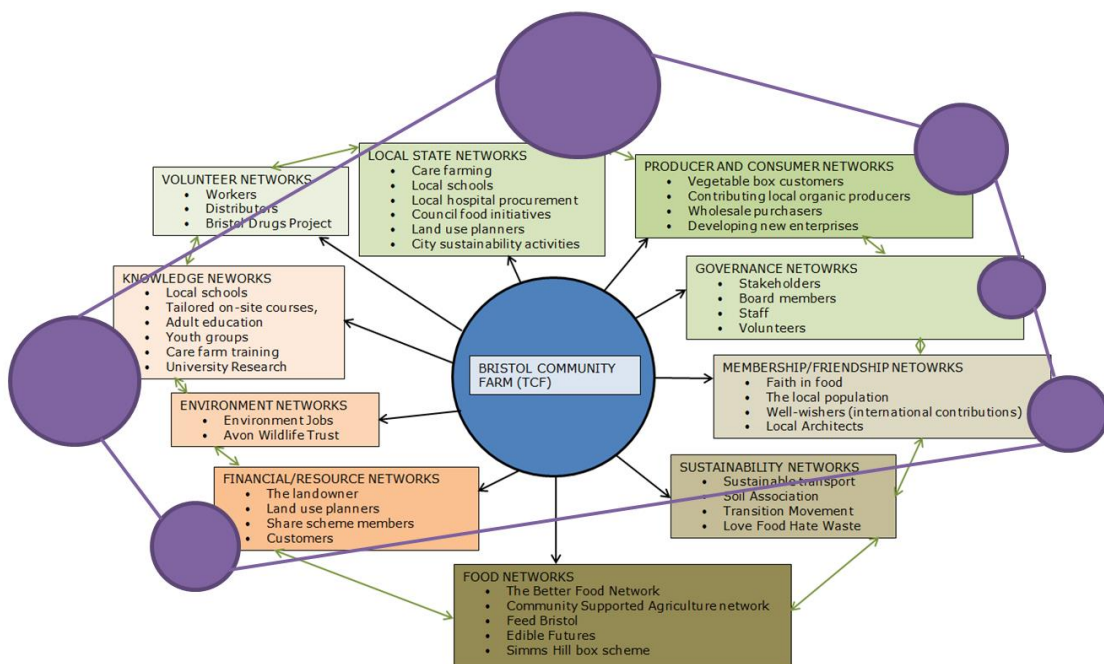


Figure 7 School procurement network emphases

#### 4.6 Reflection: what does this mean for the development of MUFIs?

Based on the discussions with SMEs and researchers, we identified important building blocks that, to our understanding, form and create the development of a food initiative in an urban context. First, the model emphasises the important interactions and relations between urban food initiatives and the city region, the MUFIs respond to opportunities and challenges that that exists in a city region. Because of this they potentially have an important signalling role. They tend to be able to very well respond to demands that exist in a certain place. These demands are not limited to commercial opportunities but also address social and environmental challenges. In the case of KQ, for example, there was clearly a need for a place to express culture and the culture of food. This can be very valuable for the city region development. It means that the strong and embedded relations of the SMEs with their city regions often also contribute to a 'a spiralling up' process of local capital assets in a city region (explained by Emery and Flora, 2006). In the boxes below we illustrate how each SME has evolved through this cycle of development.

Apart from the important role of the interrelations between the SME and the city region, the model illustrates that, rather than emphasising specific synergies, the development of MUFIs demands an integrated strategy. SMEs do develop interesting synergies but they are very much related to the opportunities and challenges in a city. Indeed there is a need to document and communicate the synergies of initiatives to become a source of inspiration for other SMEs. Yet such stories are most valuable when including the local context in which they are developed. Apart from their important interconnection with city region development, the model illustrates that SMEs are involved in a constant process of development and adaptation. The biggest challenges but also the biggest opportunity of MUFIs lies in the fact that they must be able to respond to the changing contexts in which they are situated. How this is done is very much dependent on the knowledge and networks of actors.

KQ is probably the best known weekly farmers' market in Riga. It started in 2009 and gradually established a loyal clientele from the local area, other areas of the city, and tourists. Alongside with running a market, KQ offers a range of cultural, educational, creative and consumption activities which make the place alive at almost any time. As a commercial enterprise (limited liability company), it strives to maximise the opportunities provided by owning a unique ensemble of wooden heritage, within a set of values of sustainable lifestyle, creativity and authenticity.

The key opportunities for developing KQ have been as follows: owning a unique space in the city; the visibility and networks of the owners (initially stemming from the renovation of wooden heritage buildings); the backing of a prominent Latvian chef and initiator of the Slow Food movement in Latvia; increased public interest in traceable food and spending high quality family time; development of the "hipster" culture in Riga; certain state and city support for cultural and community life in the "neighbourhoods". Two key bottlenecks in developing responses to these activities have been the physical limitations of the space owned, and the increasingly complex task of maintaining multiple relationships needed for running activities within the current scope, with limited staff.

The organisational responses to opportunities have been to provide an ever-broadening and diversifying range of activities, where the Farmers' Market and the open-air concerts attract the largest audiences (40% and 60% respectively), while the rest of the activities keep the place continuously busy on a smaller scale. To provide diverse free activities to the public, KQ also provides services for a fee (renting out premises), and applies for various types of project funding (both city and national, recently EU funds as well). To be flexible, it exists in several legal forms (a foundation, a limited liability company, an NGO).

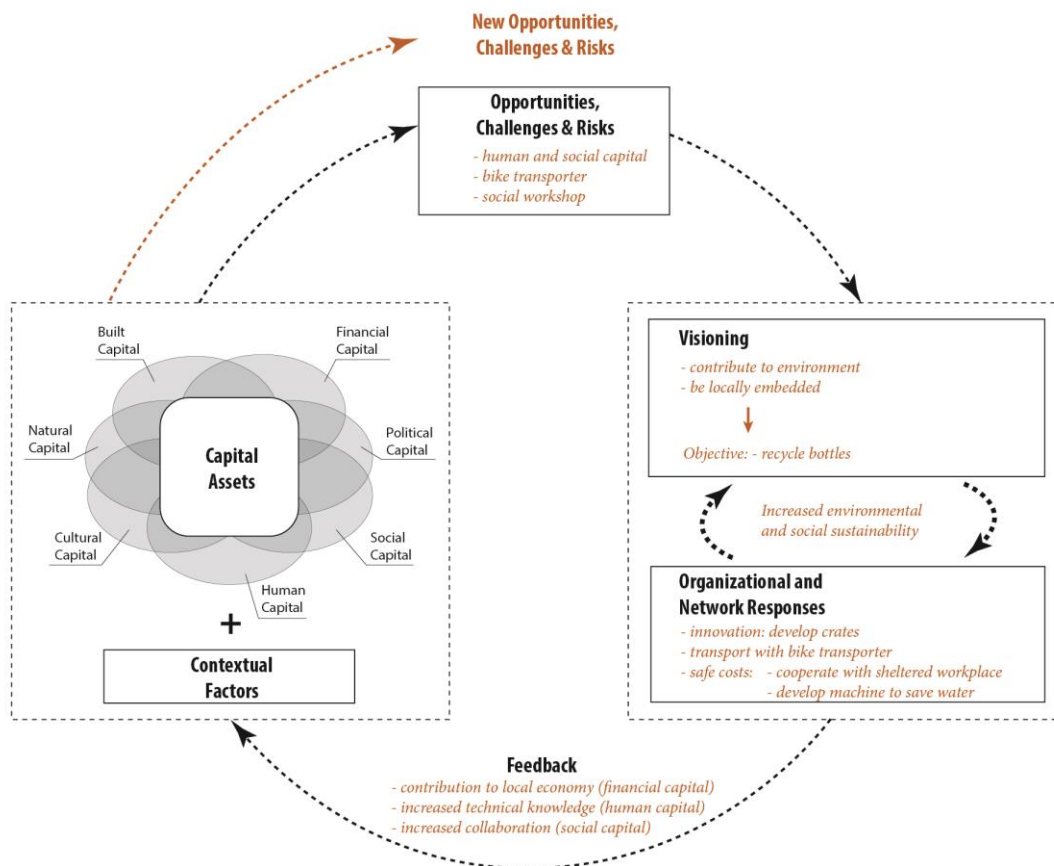
A core approach in KQ activities is openness to new challenges and ideas: within its set of values, it is open to experiment with many kinds of activities, linking with other existing initiatives (e.g. a recent farmers' market hosted the EU project "For Fair Chocolate" with fun activities provided from a special choco-mobile). To address the limitation of space, KQ is looking into replication and adaptation of its model elsewhere in Riga, as well as developing a "virtual" meeting place for farmers' market fans (Markethopper, to be described later).

**Box 7 Illustration of the development of Kalnciema Quarter**

**Box 8 Illustration of the development of RoomeR**

In order to contribute to the environmental sustainability of the business (vision), RoomeR wanted to recycle the bottles of their elderberry flower aperitif (the activity). They were faced with several challenges: first, how to return the bottles from restaurants to the factory; second, how to organize the rinsing of the bottles; and third, how to make this economically feasible. For tackling the first challenge they used their own creative capacity (human capital) to develop crates in which the bottles could be returned. Second, they had the opportunity to cooperate with a local logistics business that used bikes to transport products in the city of Ghent (contextual opportunity). This improved the environmental sustainability of the business, the image of the company and contributed to the local economy (feedback organizational response to vision). In order to tackle the second challenge they cooperated with a sheltered workplace from Ghent (contextual opportunity) to rinse the bottles once a month. This reduces labour cost but also improved the social value of the company (feedback organizational response to vision). Finally, they realized they lost a lot of water in the cleaning process of the bottles. Therefore in close cooperation with a technical school (contextual opportunity) RoomeR developed new machinery that reuses the water for rinsing the bottles. The combination of the different solutions makes the recycling of bottles economically equally expensive as buying new bottles and increases the social and economic value of the business.

For the people with a labour handicap RoomeR created labour opportunities and a “nice place to work (interview social worker)”, in other words they increased the social capital. By engaging with the bike transporter, they also contribute to the local economy, increasing the economic capital of the city. Finally, the activity contributes to the ambition of RoomeR to be environmentally sustainable.



The CF is a productive organic farm situated c. 12km south of Bristol and c. 23km east of Bath. While commercial horticulture forms the principal income stream for the CF, its objectives include the reconnection of local consumers to the food they eat, and the creation of a community around the farm. These objectives are integrated in CF operation via its governance and organisational structures: the CF is a community interest company, co-operatively owned by its members. While commercial aspects of the CF are designed to generate income for other, non-commercial activities, such as education and environmental land management, the CF has clear ideological objectives linked to its market presence – healthy and organic food, a transparent supply chain, a deep commitment to its workforce through the development of agricultural skills, and an inducement to consumers to avoid supermarkets.

Because the CF had previously been a privately-owned business, a great deal of work and new learning was required on the part of “lay” board members in establishing a community-owned organisational structure and operational management system. However, an advantage of this shareholder network became evident in 2012, following very poor weather and a subsequently poor harvest. While conventional banking mechanisms were not available, the shareholders were able to provide collective capital to see the CF through this difficult period and helped them to survive.

A number of bottlenecks are evident from our collaboration with the CF. These include under-capitalisation at the start of the enterprise and the difficulty of balancing commercial and social priorities. In addition, initial efforts to increase income by significantly expanding production have not succeeded and production has subsequently been reduced. Finally, planning guidance, which seeks to protect the fabric of the countryside and support conventional agricultural models of practice have not been flexible enough to accommodate developments which support MUFIs such as the CF. Finally, there is also a lack of strategic engagement at municipal level, with MUFIs regarded as a collection of social initiatives, rather than any contribution to restructuring urban food provisioning.

A positive opportunity for the CF is the continuation of its apprenticeship scheme with the Bristol Drugs and Alcohol project. The CF has benefitted from this arrangement in ways that contrast with the chaotic backgrounds of the apprentices: “... *been fantastic... really, really good, I'd have struggled without [the] help*”. As well as this valuable human capital flowing into the CF, the effect of the experience on apprentices may be dramatic: “...*some of them come here and they've never been out of the city, they're just overwhelmed, it's part of their journey...*”.

We do not claim that the CF has made local food more viable in the city-region. In fact the range of functions depends on institutional support (including grants and municipal policies) and the short and medium-term imperatives of its commercial operation. However, the CF clearly displays a dynamic approach to its changing external and internal contexts and it has reviewed the priorities it attaches to its range of functions in the light of these. Such revisions have been driven by the need to avert crises, successful so far, rather than a strategic approach to a dynamic model.

#### Box 9 Illustration of the development of the Community Farm



## Chapter 5 Three innovative strategies in depth

Within WP6 we spent considerable time exploring the value of the SMEs in the context of a sustainable urban food system and city region development in general. The SMEs also had the possibility to explore in depth and experiment with one of their innovative strategies, for which each SME identified a learning objective and this process was very individual. Therefore in this chapter, each research team has reported about their own “experiment”.

### 5.1 The Community Farm: Volunteers as part of an organizational Model

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

Volunteering is an integral aspect of the Community Farm’s (CF) operation. There are three principal ways in which volunteering is arranged.

Firstly, each Tuesday, a small group (5-12) of regular volunteers contributes to seasonal and regular tasks, including planting, weeding and harvesting in the fields; construction and maintenance of fixtures (such as pathways); packing vegetables ready for distribution. These types of volunteers are commonly long-term, committed, and older individuals who have spare time during the week (for example, following retirement or other changes in lifestyles). Some have invested in the CF as members/shareholders. Several were recruited during the early phases of CF development via promotional presence at public events (such as the Bristol Organic Food Festival, or student freshers’ fairs). Others have joined the group through word of mouth contact, suggesting that the Tuesday volunteers enjoy and recommend their experiences at the CF to others.

Secondly, monthly “community farmer” days are arranged on Saturdays which are designed to attract a larger number (40-60) of unskilled and potentially new volunteers to carry out specific seasonal jobs such as weeding and harvesting. These sessions can attract families and the work is intended to be convivial. Saturday volunteers are commonly recruited through the CF website and social media (including regular mailings and an on-line video which shows experiences of community farmer days), as well as through the Bristol Volunteer Bureau.

Thirdly, corporate volunteers pay to come to the CF for company team-building and for reasons linked to community profile/CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) contributions. These one-day volunteers are actively pursued and recruited by CF staff as an important income stream. Corporate volunteers may typically be offered discreet and time-limited jobs, such as the construction of interpretation boards. These three types of volunteers thus satisfy different but over-lapping working needs at the CF and, therefore, require the support of different CF staff: project manager, volunteer co-ordinator and farmer.

In addition to these three groups there is a distinct, fourth, group of volunteers. These are 3-5 individuals who come once a week from Bristol, and are collected by minibus from the city and driven to the CF by the volunteer co-ordinator. These people come to the farm as part of their association with the Bristol Drugs and Alcohol Project (BDP). Their distinction from the other volunteers is not based on the formal arrangement between the CF and the BDP, but on the



basis that these volunteers are completing apprenticeships on the CF, while the other volunteers are not provided with systematic and progressive instruction. The BDP volunteers, who meet and work with the other volunteers, are nevertheless included in the general description of volunteers because, like all the others, they come and work as a matter of choice and through a commitment to the CF's mission.

### 5.1.2 The objectives of the experimental stage

As an integral part within the CF operational model, volunteering is linked to three main aspects of the CF's values. Firstly, and fundamentally, the CF aims to directly re-connect consumers with the food they eat. While direct sales of produce is the mechanism through which this is commercially achieved – the CF distributes almost 500 vegetable boxes per week – volunteering achieves a more profound and, arguably, visceral connection between consumers and food through agricultural labour. The reconnection of consumers with food, through volunteering labour to produce it, is connected, secondly, to the objective of deepening knowledge and skills of agriculture through hands-on practice, and volunteer workers are instructed in the tasks they are expected to perform by CF staff who oversee food production. Thirdly, the different opportunities through which different types of volunteers are accommodated at the CF is designed to create supportive communities around, and connected to, the farm as a place.

In addition to these “mission” objectives, the CF also has a clear plan to expand volunteering. Support for the implementation of aspect of this plan was secured from a charitable trust funder in 2013. The plan includes six objectives:

1. To establish an economically viable schedule of educational activities, based on farming and food.
2. Environmental conservation by 2015, based at a new Learning Zone; and to develop the depth and breadth of their education project.
3. To increase the number of field volunteers to 30 per week within the next four years.
4. To gradually increase the number of Community Farming volunteer days per annum from 4 to 12 over 5 years.
5. By 2018 deliver Care Farming days in partnership with a maximum of three charities or support agencies for groups of vulnerable people.
6. To provide at least six Employee Volunteering Farm Activity Days each year from 2014.

As a consequence of discussions with the CF project manager, in 2014 CCRI was asked to analyse the volunteering arrangements at the CF and suggest ways in which three aspects of volunteering (and understanding of volunteer motivations) could be improved. These were:

- (i) The recruitment of more/new regular week-day volunteers;
- (ii) The attraction of more weekend volunteers;
- (iii) An analysis of the reasons behind some weekend volunteers not showing up, even though they register their interest and intention to attend via the CF web-site.

In pursuing this request, the CCRI followed a three-stage method, which has been outlined in section 2.1.3, above.

In summary, the CF sees volunteering as a key aspect of operation. While volunteers represent a valuable asset in terms of unpaid labour, and in some cases income, different types of volunteers are seen as a part of the CF's mission to reconnect consumers and their food, through practical agricultural engagement. CCRI carried out an evaluation of the volunteering arrangements at the request of the CF's managers, which pursued a three-phase method involving literature review, question-setting and data gathering. Results are discussed in the following section.

### 5.1.3 Contextualization of the experiment

A key aspect of the external context relates to the demand for local food in the Bristol city-region, which enables the CF to realise an income from supplying its produce commercially – wholesale to retailers and caterers, and through direct selling at farmers' markets and to box scheme customers. In the UK, the two biggest vegetable box schemes are "Able" and "Cole", and "Riverford Organics", who between them supply almost 100,000 boxes a week. While there is a substantial gap between the almost 500 boxes supplied by the CF, it is claimed by CF staff that local production and the innovative vision for the farm stimulates customer loyalty and makes the CF one of the larger, and most successful box schemes in the south-west.

However, despite this, another important external context relates to the serious commercial and personnel challenges the CF has faced in the past 6-9 months. For example, of the three key staff members involved in the volunteer evaluation, two have left. Furthermore, the financial position of the CF, despite the box scheme, has been inadequate to cover the operational requirements of the farm's multiple commercial and non-commercial objectives. As a consequence, the farm has consolidated its wholesaling business and significantly reduced (to under 10 acres/4 hectares) its growing area, while it improves its soils in order to facilitate improved fertility in the longer term.

These recent changes at the CF have affected the collaborative relationship within SUPURBFOOD. For example, it has been emphasised that the experimental phase involving the analysis of volunteer development was a specific request of the CF that emerged from the workshop. However, since the start of 2015, no further inquiry about the progress of an analysis has been requested. The analysis process concluded, in short, that:

- (i) Most people who volunteer at the farm are already connected and committed to it in other ways (particularly as shareholders or customers);
- (ii) While most were happy with their experiences, almost one in four were not; and
- (iii) Different types of people are taking part in each of the different formats/times of volunteering.

This picture suggests that if the CF wishes to expand its volunteer complement, its current strategy requires that this must be achieved by attracting more customers and/or shareholders. It is not clear whether the volunteer recruitment strategy has been amended following the reduction in the productive growing area.

One of the advantages of SUPURBFOOD, for both researchers and SMEs, has been the availability of financial support for SMEs, which has allowed CCRI to rely on a positive co-operation in the research process (e.g. time for interviews, provision of data etc.) and for the CF to benefit from connections with other SMEs in the partnership. However, throughout the

process, because of their commitments on the farm the team of the CF have not been able to engage with the process as they might have hoped.

#### 5.1.4 What are the lessons learned?

##### ***What are recommendations for other initiatives?***

As a consequence of our valuable and predominantly positive experiences of working with the CF, we can offer the following reflections to other SMEs seeking to provide multiple functions through their agriculture:

- A) Commercial
  - (i) The production of field vegetables in the UK is a highly competitive and price-sensitive business, typically with low margins. It is not easy to realise a profit from commercial horticulture at small scales and wholesaling, in particular, increases commercial risks due to its inherently lower margins. Contingencies need to be made so that the business can respond to poor harvests caused by adverse/extreme weather.
  - (ii) Several of our interviewees suggested early on in our collaboration that the CF sought to expand its production area too fast and too early. This seems to have been borne out both in terms of financial over-commitment and reduced soil fertility. A more modest approach to commercial production would have proved less risky and easier to financially manage.
  - (iii) While MUFIs clearly have multiple goals, there is a very considerable risk that funding social functions from commercial profits diverts funds from commercial reinvestment. It may be better to identify social functions and to plan to fund these from discreet budgets rather than from commercial income, until such a time when adequate profits are assured. In other words, it may be wise to separate income streams for commercial and social functions.
  
- B) Information and communication
  - (iv) One of the advantages that benefitted the CF at its inception was the adoption of an existing customer base, which has remained loyal. The CF has been very successful at retaining and engaging with this group of people and motivating them to feel involved in the CF, for example, through its interactive website, public campaigns and social events on the farm (which lies within a beautiful landscape).
  
- C) Volunteers
  - (v) Volunteering has proved to be successful in a number of ways including the development of a closely-knit labour-force and the development of agricultural skills, both formally through the apprenticeship, and tacitly, through repeated practice. Even so, the reliance on a regular volunteer workforce can cause problems, especially at seasonal peaks – while harvesting beans in September can be fun, harvesting leeks in January does not attract such high numbers.
  - (vi) While volunteers are very happy to work for free (or in return for vegetables), strong concerns were expressed about sub-standard toilet facilities.

### **What are recommendations for policy makers?**

Our key recommendations for policy makers include:

- (i) Currently the CF does not benefit from any agri-environment payments linked to its landholding and instead these are payable to its landlord. While the landlord has been a key supporter of the CF's development, it would have been beneficial for appropriate payments to be made to the CF business, both as a bolster to cash-flow, but also as part of a strategic environmental programme. To this end, we recommend that state agri-environment agencies become more informed about the particular dimensions of multi-functionality linked to peri-urban and urban agriculture and note such suggestions are not at all new, having a basis in the work of the London Ecology Unit and the Greater London Food Policy Council (GLC 1984<sup>8</sup>).
- (ii) Planning authorities are currently reactive and judge peri-urban development within predominantly rural structures. Planners should privilege the protection of high quality agricultural land in and near to cities as a food security and environmental climate mitigation resource.
- (iii) Partnerships between MUFIs and health authorities should be strengthened so that the example of the CF apprenticeship can be expanded and extended, for example to referrals for people who may benefit from the exercise and social contact associated with manual agriculture and experiences of nature.

## **5.2 Roomer: Multifunctional land-use in the city**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

According to traditional food production models, foraging as a method to gather your resources, is highly inefficient. Nonetheless Roomer proves that in some cases this form of resource procurement can be an interesting alternative and become part of an innovative business strategy. For urban food initiatives that aim to create environmental and social added values additional to their economic values, foraging (food) products in nature can be more interesting than producing this crop in a farm system. Roomer consciously made the decision not to cultivate elderflowers, an important ingredient of their alcoholic beverage, on a farm plot but rather to gather a majority of the flowers from trees located in different green areas in and around the city.

The Elder tree is known as a weed that grows in many different places, as it does not require much from the soil. *"Elderflowers appear plentiful in green areas and the harvest of these flowers can be incorporated in the sustainable management of these areas"* (CEO Roomer). Yearly, the company collects on average 1200 kg of elderflowers. The flowers are selected at least 5 km from a highway, 1 km from the railway and known polluted areas are strictly avoided. The flowers are collected selectively and with great care to guarantee the reproductive capacity of the trees. In addition to the collection of 'wild' flowers, to secure the harvest, on average 30% is bought from an organic producer of elderflowers located 30km

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<sup>8</sup> Greater London Council Economic Policy Group (1984) *Food for a Great City: GLC Strategy towards London's Food Sector*. Strategy Document No 35, 4<sup>th</sup> printing. London, GLC.

from Ghent. This is necessary because it is a lot of work, and therefore challenging to gather flowers in so many different areas in a short time frame of only 2 weeks per year (end of May-beginning of June). To integrate the gathering of elderflowers in their organizational model, RoomER faced several challenges.

- (i) The first challenge was to identify locations where it was allowed to harvest the flowers. For that they needed to look for cooperation with potential private and public landowners (e.g. nature organisations, estate owners). Although most landowners are willing to cooperate they face laws that officially do not allow removal of any substance in public parks, forests and nature areas. As a result they are only able to establish informal agreements that lack institutional support.
- (ii) Second, foraging means that food is collected in different areas. This requires a system of traceability, which refers to the location, but also to knowledge about the history of the soil and possible occurrence of contamination. Up till now there is only very limited data available on the risks of contamination.
- (iii) Third, the gathering of elderflowers is a very labour-intensive activity, therefore the SME had to come up with a creative solution to make the harvesting cost-efficient. They now cooperate with pensioners, artists, unemployed people and students; all of them collect flowers in different places. In return, the people receive a refund depending on the weight of the flowers they have collected (price/kg). They are an interesting target group: first, because they often can work full time in such a short timeframe; and second, because although the 'volunteers' receive a small extra income, they see it mostly as a pleasant social event. Involving such a diverse group of people has social advantages as it creates an interesting social dynamic and connects people to a product *and* to a place. Despite this, also for involving this group of people the institutional support is very limited.

The strategy of gathering or foraging products, instead of cultivating them is therefore a typical example where an SME identified opportunities in a city region and made innovative linkages but, as it is innovative, acts in a grey zone without much institutional support. For a commercial enterprise producing a product that is increasing in popularity, this weak legal position does not offer secure prospects for the future. Therefore, within this experiment, we will mostly focus on strategies to institutionalize public foraging.

### 5.2.2 The objectives of the experimental phase

Within this project we aimed to make a first step towards the institutionalization of foraging and gathering practices by commercial enterprises. More specifically we identified the following objectives:

- (i) To establish an agreement with the city administration that would allow harvesting of elderflower on city grounds.
- (ii) To carry out a chemical analysis to check for high levels of heavy metals in elderflowers that have grown on contaminated soils.
- (iii) To further explore the legal possibilities to include 'volunteers' and alternative payment schemes in the harvesting of elder flowers.

The last objective that relates to volunteers was intended to link with the objective described in 5.1. However, as Roomer is a commercial profit making enterprise, in the Belgium law volunteers cannot be active. As this changes the context, we did not further explore this research question in detail.

### 5.2.3 Contextualization of the experiment

According to the CEO of Roomer, the strategy to forage elderflowers is interesting for their organization because:

- (i) It is a waste of land to grow this plant in rows on a plot of fertile agricultural land while the tree could grow very well on marginal lands.
- (ii) Access to agricultural land is difficult and expensive.
- (iii) The organization saves costs to pay the rent of land and the maintenance of the plants.
- (iv) Integrating the elder trees in the landscape could result in a win-win for the SME, the landowner and for biodiversity. In green areas such as nature reserves, parks or in the margin of agricultural fields, elder trees can both contribute to biodiversity, and create an economic value. The SME thereby aims for “Eco-efficiency”, which means that an area produces a natural value, but also an economic value. The owner argued Roomer actually uses “*a product that is usually wasted*”.

#### ***Gaining institutional support***<sup>9</sup>

As was already mentioned in the introduction, the gathering of products on public land lacks institutional support. In Flanders, the use and management of different types of land is linked to different regulations. The first law to take into account is the Nature Decree. This Decree is valid for all nature reserves that were legitimized by the Flemish government. They can be both privately and publicly owned. In the Nature Decree, Art. 35§2 6° (Flemish government, 1997), it is indicated that in nature reserves “*it is forbidden to pick plants on purpose, collect, cut, de-root, damage or destroy plants or vegetation by all means*<sup>10</sup>”. Second, the Forest Decree, Art. 20 1° and 97 §1 3° and 10 ° indicate that, when it is not defined in an accepted management plan, and without permission from the Agency for Nature and Forests (ANB) and the landowner, it is forbidden to remove plants or parts of plants and trees in public and private forests (Flemish government, 1990). Nonetheless, fruit orchards, gardens, parks, agricultural fields with agroforestry, hedges along roads, rivers and canals are not defined as forests.

Third, the rules in city parks and green areas are formalized as “*Police regulations for the purity and health in the municipality*” (City of Ghent, 1998). In Title VII Art. 6 1°, it was indicated that in public parks and green areas it is not allowed to “*remove sand, dry wood, prunings, or*

<sup>9</sup> Part of this text will also be published in the RUAF Magazine.

<sup>10</sup> Original text: ‘planten opzettelijk te plukken, te verzamelen, af te snijden, te ontwortelen of te vernielen of planten of vegetatie op welke wijze ook te beschadigen of te vernietigen’.

*leaves*". Interestingly, the collection of fruits and nuts is not specifically mentioned here and thus could offer some room for maneuver. Furthermore, for some parks more specific regulations are described in officially approved management plans of these specific areas. Finally, apart from the legislation specific for different types of spatial destinations, in some areas the government has defined management practices in Special Protected Zones. These zones can be located at all types of land use (park, nature, green area,..). This could also restrict the possibilities to forage certain products.

Thus, based on the description of the legal restrictions, we can conclude that green areas other than agricultural land cannot (yet) have a productive function. Without having to change the law, the best opportunity would be to take up the collection of fruits, nuts and plants for commercial purposes in the management plans of the targeted green areas (but this would also be needed in the case of non-commercial use).

Regardless of the unsupportive Decrees, following the Property Law, which says: "*Natural fruits, cultivated fruits on the land belong to the owner of the land*" (Art.547 of the Civil Code, 1804), the SME decided to cooperate and had to establish agreements with the landowners. The experience of RoomerR shows that landowners owning different types of properties (gardens, nature reserves) often have no objections to allow the harvest of elderflowers. The SME therefore established verbal agreements of 'fair play'. Such agreements are based on shared norms and values about the management of an area. It assumes picking elderflowers does not harm nature, but rather allows profiting from the "*fruits from nature*". The SME made two different types of informal agreements:

- (i) Private owners of gardens and land are paid for a volume of picked flowers, or they get in exchange some volume of the end product (RoomerR) at the end of the year.
- (ii) In exchange for the permission to pick flowers on land that is owned by an NGO, the SME 'sponsors' the NGO with an amount that equals the value of the harvest.

These agreements are very flexible and not monitored by the actors. For an SME, partly due to the law described earlier, formalizing such agreements proved to be very difficult.

Within SUPURBFOOD, the SME tried to establish an agreement with the green management department of the city of Ghent. However, after half a year of internal discussions, the city decided not to establish an official agreement with the SME. They had several reasons for this. Although they acknowledged to experience a trend of receiving similar requests, the green management department was reluctant to allow foraging for commercial purposes. "*Most of all, we are afraid of the idea that if everyone will ask for permissions to forage in public areas, they will be looted*". A second argument used as a ground for objection referred to the type of plant, as the elder is not an '*important species*' and "*we do not aim to increase the amount of elder trees in public areas*". Finally the department argued that in the places where elder trees grow at this moment, the elderflowers are picked by private individuals, and the public institution does not want to take this opportunity away from them.

This analysis illustrates that the city was clearly confronted with conflicting interests. Integrating foraging in public space challenges the perceived function of this space. Despite the fact that they are aware of these changing relationships, in this case study area, the government is rather defensive against new innovations that challenge the traditional use of



public space. They argued: “As government, we work for the citizens and the community”, and are therefore resistant to getting involved in public-private land management relationships.

### ***Toxic analysis***

During the discussion with the city administration it became clear that a lot of soils owned by the city were badly contaminated. In Ghent this is a major drawback for stimulating foraging practices. Although general maps indicating contaminated areas are available, there is a lack of knowledge about the influence of this contaminated soil on plants. For that reason, RoomerR collected flowers in 5 different areas, some known to be contaminated and others not, and tested them on the availability of hard metals Cadmium, Arsenic and Lead.

Based on this analysis, we can conclude that the risk of contamination is very small because 1 litre of Roomer contains only 13g of elderflowers. However, when comparing the sample areas where flowers were growing to the amount of heavy metals found in the flowers, the results are somewhat surprising. It was expected that flowers growing close to the railway would show higher levels of contamination, but this was not the case. Also, flowers growing on a dumpsite for silt discharges had better than average results. This suggests that not all soils that have been contaminated are necessarily unsuitable for foraging activities of certain products<sup>11</sup>, yet further research is needed.

#### **5.2.4 What are the lessons learned?**

##### ***What are recommendations for other initiatives?***

Foraging or gathering products in public areas is an activity that is increasingly popular. We see examples in Ghent (RoomerR and Ginderella), but also in London. The practice is still in its infancy and a lot is still to be learned. From our experience we would recommend the following:

- (i) Foraging could be an interesting alternative, however without official agreements the harvest is never secured. One needs to be aware of this and take this risk into account.
- (ii) Negotiations to establish official agreements need a lot of creativity and require time and patience from the initiator. The cases demonstrate that informal agreements can be a good basis to start from.
- (iii) It is important to balance the demand with the availability of resources. For alcoholic beverages, relatively small amounts of ingredients are required, which makes the foraging activity more attractive. This suggests also that not all products are suitable for foraging.
- (iv) Sustainable harvesting practices are vital to allow and promote foraging. Although one does not need to cultivate the product itself, detailed knowledge about the plant and its growth are required.
- (v) Foraging is not an easy solution, but needs a lot of organizational skills during the harvesting season (managing the foragers), good networks to gain and maintain access to land and an advanced record system of the foraged plants.

<sup>11</sup> Also the proportion of the foraged plant that ends in the final product is important for this calculation.



- (vi) There is currently very little known about the influence of contaminated soils on the quality of the end product. This information is however necessary to promote this practice and will need further research.

### ***What are recommendations for policy makers?***

In order to take advantage of the potential for a productive city landscape and to allow commercialisation of foraged products, current land use regulations will need to be adapted and the necessary conditions and requirements will need to be identified for a sustainable gathering of food ingredients in public areas. For example, potential soil contamination in public areas needs to be investigated and taken into account.

The city government will have to explore possibilities to govern green areas that both accommodate the collective use of these areas (recreation, nature value) and a productive function (food production). Without having to change the law, the best opportunity would be to take up the collection of fruits, nuts and plants for commercial purposes in the management plans of the targeted green areas (but this would also be needed in the case of non-commercial use). The mechanisms explained in Box 10 and 11 could function as good examples of alternative mechanisms. Finally, the city government could also send an invitation for public tender to manage (a part of) a park or a plant in a park. In this tender, restrictions (e.g. type of plants, harvest methods) can be taken into account.

#### **Box 10 Managing public and private harvest of cranberries**

Officially in nature reserves in the Netherlands it is forbidden by law to remove plants or parts of plants. Yet the harvest of wild cranberries in public areas in Vlieland, an island in the north of the Netherlands, was tolerated and increasingly popular among inhabitants, tourists and business. This resulted in a lot of local disputes. In response, the responsible government agency *Staatsbosbeheer* that manages the property, developed new rules in 2011.

In pre-defined areas, people are allowed to manually gather cranberries up to 100kg. Only inhabitants of the island are allowed to use more intensive harvesting methods, and only with an official permission and volume restriction of 100kg. Enterprises or individuals that would like to commercialise the product have to be registered as inhabitant at the municipality of Vlieland. They also need to buy a special permission to harvest and they have to pay a percentage over the harvest to the responsible government agency. For both commercial and private use, the permission also indicates when, and in some cases where, people are allowed to harvest cranberries.

### Box 11 Two governance mechanisms that integrate a productive and an environmental function in a semi-public nature reserve

Gagel (*Myrica gale*) is a protected species and part of the heath vegetation. The plant can only be found in two nature reserves in Belgium. One nature reserve (Liereman) is partly owned by the municipality Oud-Turnhout and partly owned by Natuurpunt (nature organisation). In order to maintain the plant, the flower buds need to be removed on a yearly basis. Both owners have established agreements to harvest and process Gagel into a commercialised product.

First, members of Natuurpunt have developed a beer using the flower buds of Gagel. This beer is commercialised by Gageleer, a Cooperative Company with Limited Liability. The company is owned by members of Natuurpunt and the profit is partly used to buy new land to develop nature reserves.

Second, already for several decades the city of Oud-Turnhout sends an invitation for public tender to pick the flower buds of Gagel once a year in nature reserve Liereman, which is publically accessible (visitors have to use the walking trails). Based on that, the municipality established a formal agreement every five years with a Dutch flower company. This company is allowed to harvest the flower buds and use them to make flower arrangements that are sold by the company.

## 5.3 Kalnciema Quarter: the Markethopper – an experiment in developing a social media to link farmers markets, producers and visitors

### 5.3.1 Introduction

KQ got involved within SUPURBFOOD with the intention to further develop the web platform “Markethopper”. This is intended to become a social media platform for those who either run all kinds of markets (farmers’, craft, charity, etc.) or visit them and want to share with others their impressions and “market treasures”. It is intended to link fans of markets worldwide.

Markethopper has a friendly and simple interface and encourages its users to share impressions and products from various markets they visit. Profiles will be held both by consumers and market organisers, as well as producers of specific goods. There will be options of sharing “treasures” found in the markets in the form of pictures, and also links to market profiles and producer profiles. Users will be able to comment, rate various items and exchange e-mails. Users will be able to search for markets based on an extensive list of properties (farmers, crafts, heritage, charity, children’s activities, location, working hours, etc.). Currently the website is being developed by KQ staff (project manager, web designer, programmer, database operators), but it will be a registered trademark and a start-up company linked to, but separate from KQ.

It is expected that Markethopper will grow to include all kinds of social media content administrators, and a network of “focal contacts” in as many countries as practically possible. In time, it will also have to manage advertising. Overall, however, it is intended to be something filled with life and action by users themselves and their social activities.

### 5.3.2 The objectives of the experimental stage

“Markethopper” expresses the core of KQ’s mission: encouraging sustainable lifestyles, authenticity, community-building, short food chains, and economic opportunities for local producers. It will both give visibility to the idea of authentic local markets, encourage cooperation between actors and communication between people who visit such markets regularly. Within this project we aim to learn from the experience of developing such a platform.

### 5.3.3 Contextualization of the experiment

The Markethopper idea originated from the interlinkage of several opportunities and bottlenecks, in fact, it is the story of KQ in a nutshell. The key opportunities that stimulated this development are:

- (vi) The current public interest in sustainable lifestyles, authenticity, local produce, meaningful leisure activities that can be shared and simultaneously helping local producers;
- (vii) The extensive network that KQ has among the media, the creative individuals both in Latvia and in many other countries; among trendsetters and active middle-class individuals;
- (viii) The accumulated understanding of the needs of the public (through existing KQ activities in Facebook and Twitter);
- (ix) The travellers’ interest in local markets–related information, yet there is a lack of a specialised platform, which would also address the issue of not knowing local languages. It is envisaged that many local city markets in Latvia and even more producers will be interested to have their pages on Markethopper.

The key bottlenecks addressed by the experiment are the already mentioned limited city space that KQ can use, and the non-replicability of the exact model of its operation, which is too embedded in the location and its atmosphere. Another bottleneck is the impossibility to keep track of and facilitate exchanges between customers and producers by the limited staff that KQ can pay for.

An active, thriving online community will take much of that weight - producers and customers finding one another, perhaps producers initiating joint activities; markets borrowing ideas from one another and possibly cooperating, and in general creating a more powerful presence in the public perception.

### 5.3.4 What are the lessons learned?

The most successful strategies used by KQ so far have been the already mentioned: skilful use of multiple networks (farmers and artisans, corporate enterprises, artists and their groups, NGOs and charities, city administration, catering businesses, journalists, PR staff, trendsetters, etc.); multiple sources of funding (free activities balanced with grant funding and commercial activities); and diversification of legal entities, to enable flexibility. Creating a lively, social, open and distinctive space for a multiplicity of interactions and appealing to a sufficiently defined (yet inclusive) part of the population becomes a vehicle for perpetuating success.

### ***What are recommendations for other initiatives?***

From the experience of developing the social media platform Markethopper as part of the project experiment, we can recommend all kinds of initiatives to consider the many ways that social media can build the community around the Initiative, and the importance of the visual and functional choices: these have to reflect the nature, the spirit of the initiative very precisely. It is a series of very subtle differences between easy, friendly, tasteful, fun and – on the other hand – elitist, stand-offish, one-way or merely boring. Finding the right tonality may take a long time – it is recommended to be patient and ready to restart many times.

### ***What are recommendations for policy makers?***

Since actors such as KQ clearly provide services for the city, keeping alive a whole neighbourhood and being an important landmark for tourists as well, it is evident that the city authorities should provide support to providing these public functions.

Our research suggests that it is best to combine support in the form of grants for specific activities (e.g. traditional festivals, traditional crafts, contemporary art performances), which provide both continuity and focus, and unrestricted block grants, which enable responding to new opportunities, and perhaps pursuing a direction with an uncertain success, or keeping alive an important experimental activity with less commercial appeal.

Symbolic recognition is also important (*“just because you are there and do all these things”*) – perhaps establishing a specialised award for the activities that are most important and valued by city-dwellers.

In the light of the Markethopper social platform we may recommend policy makers considering (financial) support to multifunctional initiatives to be aware of the added value of virtual community-building and the human labour involved in a successful social media project. Policy makers need to have a more inclusive look and consider supporting not only activities that fit the traditional rubrics “gardening”, “culture”, “education”, but also the virtual communities and the expertise needed to build these. They are recommended to acknowledge that technologies are important, but also useless and dead if not maintained and facilitated by some staff, which cannot be done on a voluntary basis forever.

As a matter of further future, successful social media may be income generating, and then it will be important to develop fair and precise regulations on what parts of the multifunctional initiative get supported and to what extent. It will require transparency and adequate understanding of the different models of work of multifunctional initiatives.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

Within this WP, the main challenge was to discover the added value of multifunctional urban food initiatives (MUFIs) in order to make them more sustainable and economically viable, and at the same time increase their ‘relevance’ for society as a whole. For the SMEs it was important that their multiple activities would be recognized by society and the government and that their organizations could serve as an example to other people wanting to start such an initiative. In order to realize these objectives we developed thick descriptions of three SMEs and during several workshops discussed and developed our results. In this final chapter we will reflect on the learning process and its outcomes.

### 6.1 The functions urban food initiatives could perform in a city region

We started our work by exploring the diversity of functions performed by urban food initiatives in general, and the SMEs specifically. Several scholars have described potential contributions of urban food initiatives towards society. However, the added value that was created in the cases was usually very context dependent. For example, the potential of urban food initiatives to contribute to food security is only an added value for places where there is food insecurity. The valuation of contributions that result from the MUFIs’ activities should therefore be linked to the needs in an area. Also within the participating SMEs the important role of, and relation with the local context in the development of the initiatives was very prominent. They interact with the local by building on what is present in the region and by consciously engaging with the region. In summary, this means that the added value created by the SMEs’ activities in terms of functions to society have to be discussed within their specific local context.

**SMEs tend to signal urban needs** in a place and perceive them as opportunities to develop an organization/project. Importantly, such needs are not limited to economic opportunities but also include social and environmental needs. By doing that, they can potentially contribute to a ‘spiralling up’ effect of available capital assets in a city region. So, urban food initiatives can perform many different functions, yet in order to be valuable for sustainable urban food systems the activities ideally address local needs and demands and build on available capital assets in a place.

#### *“Warm words butter no parsnips”*

This also means **the city should profit from this signalling** function, and has to respond to the changes stimulated by the initiatives. SMEs take risks and enter unknown areas; as a result they are at this moment often active in “grey”, or far less institutionalised, governance zones. At this moment governments respond with “soft” measures to support the development of urban food initiatives, if they supply support. But it seems that now we are in a time that, in order to make a meaningful change, the “hard” infrastructure would need to change, the infrastructure that would get the initiatives out of their grey zones largely, unappreciated by the official policies. In part, this requires city authorities to decide that the multifunctional activities of food initiatives are their concern, as part of developing the social life of the city and fostering its sustainability.

Such transition does not happen without struggle. For example in Bristol, the initiatives were for a long time civically minded. Recently, however, the city council of Bristol developed plans to develop a (low carbon) bus service on land that is currently used for food production and now citizens are protesting against the government; it seems that “the game’s afoot” (Shakespeare's King Henry IV Part I, 1597). On the other hand in Ghent, they are now looking how the city government could adjust their land use policies in order to support sustainable local food production. They however struggle to integrate the conventional agricultural sector, active in the peri-urban area, in this new development. Finally, despite of the recent increase in interest from the municipality to support urban food developments, in Riga KQ is one of the pioneering companies in the realm of sustainable urban food provisioning and struggles to find support from the local state. In other words ,urban food production mostly remains in the grey zone of not being incorporated into the strategic thinking of city planning or in policy makers’ conceptions of the functions of the city. Incorporating this strategic thinking about food is therefore an important and urgent challenge for cities.

## 6.2 The meaning of synergies

A second objective within the DOW of SUPURBFOOD was to identify optimal synergies that successfully support initiatives. The definition of “synergies” indicates a certain additionality resulting from combining activities; the outcome is more than the sum of two activities. During the discussions with the SMEs it became clear that they do not necessarily aim for more, but rather aim for “better” they do not necessarily want to grow but to evolve. This suggests it is rather about a density of functions than about multiple functions or multi-functionality. A measure of synergies could then be the multiplicity of networks that produce the output and complex density of functions. This means the concept of synergies is redefined. It is not  $2+2=5$  but it is rather an outcome of complex cross-pollinations that result from combining and integrating different activities in one place. It are not the separate synergies between the different functions that create an added value, instead we suggest that the initiatives as a whole, with their complexity and density in activities, visions and strategies stimulate innovation and reflexive governance. As such they are valuable for the city region development.

One important **best practice** that we came across in all three SMEs, and which proved to be an important asset for them, is the involvement of networks and the diffusion of core and additional activities of SMEs with many other connected networks, thus facilitating the growth of MUFIs and transmittance of their functions to other SMEs, groups and networks in the city. This happens very much as a learning-by-doing process using the resources at hand and building on accumulated knowledge, collaborative experience and small successes. Furthermore, the SMEs are very successful in **activating and linking a great diversity of networks to support their organizational development**. This evolution is not calculated or instrumental, but rather an open creative organic development through social exchange. It is through networks and linking networks that SMEs create opportunities and make it work.

Despite that, it always remains a challenge for SMEs to keep a balance between the different activities; as such they continuously experience consequences of an “edge-effect”. With that we refer to the tendency for a greater variety and density of organisms to occur at the boundaries of two habitats. This however also results in a constant competition between the organisms in this “edge” to survive. In other words, with their density of activities linked to different sectors, urban food initiatives produce a dynamic adaptive environment, however

they also constantly face the struggle of maintaining the different activities and objectives. The Community Farm, for example, experienced a major drawback because one of their core economic activities, whole selling, was not sufficiently profitable. For several years other financial sources (training and social activities) filled this gap and paid for the debts. This proved, however, not to be a sustainable strategy.

The economic viability often remains a major challenge, but is also crucial for the SMEs. Also among the SMEs involved in this project there was a need to measure the added value created by their social and environmental related activities in order to support decision-making. From the model we learned that such measures first, would have to be able to take the interrelations with the local context into account. Second, throughout this report we also described several strategies of SMEs where social, environmental and economic objectives support each other (e.g. intercropping, which is required in an organic production method, diversifies the vegetable box making it more attractive for consumers). This means that the added value created by social or environmental activities is not only external to the initiatives, creating an added value for a place/district/city region, but also internal, contributing to the successful management of the SME.

In our discussions we also encountered another challenge we were not able to address in this research, but that will need further attention in the future. This is about the upscaling of initiatives that are in so many ways embedded in the local context. We already indicated that such initiatives do not necessarily aim to get bigger, but rather better, and with that do not upscale productivity but produce a better, more sustainable, product. Such development paths are rather new and should be further investigated. Yet the question remains: what does this mean for the future prospects of such initiatives? Does this imply a limit for scaling up? In this context, the role of locality in organizational development should be further explored.

### 6.3 How to support MUFIs?

In this section we critically analyse the role of government agencies in the development of urban food initiatives. With these recommendations we do not want to criticize the current efforts made by government agencies, but rather would like to stimulate reflexive thinking.

- A) Following the logic of the presented model in this report, in order to identify opportunities to most effectively stimulate sustainable urban (food system) development, cities should take a contextual perspective. City government should:
  - (i) Look at the needs and demands that exist in the target areas and spaces.
  - (ii) Start from the capital assets (social, economic and natural) that are available in an area or space.
  - (iii) Perceive MUFIs as arenas of social and political experimentation and innovation that deserve attention, and potentially also support from, the governing institutions.

Such a strategy could create opportunities for cities to outsource certain roles and responsibilities.



- B) Also, a dynamic environment is crucial for complex (multifunctional) initiatives to be successful. This means that city governments:
- (iv) Will need to be responsive to the signals indicated by urban food initiatives. The city government, but also the practitioners, need to be willing to question roles and responsibilities of different actors in society (business, citizens, governments, etc.).
- C) Although through their activities, many initiatives tend to take over roles from the government, the city government still has an important role to play. On the local level they can create possibilities to experiment but can also implement structural changes (e.g. in terms of land management). Furthermore, in order to influence legislations and governance structures at higher levels (national, EU) that limit urban food initiatives' development, cities will have to team up with other cities to strengthen their message and communicate and discuss the challenges with higher governmental levels.
- D) City Councils can recognise the role of small businesses and civic initiatives in identifying needs that are not yet met by the local state and enter into a dialogue as to the most appropriate way of supporting them. This may include the following:
- (v) Ways in which the spatial planning regulations of the city might foster the development of MUFIs, for example, allowing gardening on brown field sites and live/work spaces in the city (see Roomer).
  - (vi) Bolstering the capitals available to the MUFIs. This can be in terms of economics, creating conditions where businesses can tender for council contracts either in food provisioning or training, for example. Alternatively, it may include bolstering social capital, as in De Site (Ghent), using gardening as a form of community development. Or it may be through linking the MUFI to other projects in the city to build synergies, or supply chain efficiencies.
  - (vii) The City can champion the MUFI to regional, national or international authorities in order to facilitate these forms of experimentation and learn from their experiences. This may include providing arguments for the CAP to support MUFIs, or creative interpretations of regulations linked to urban form/space, to create growing space.
  - (viii) The City can organise its activities to help create niches within which MUFIs can develop, for example through public food procurement contracts, market spaces or street food options for small and start-up enterprises, providing council-controlled space for growing food, or working with developers to identify suitable brownfield sites for short-term growing. All of these options will provide MUFIs with opportunities to develop business models with local financial overheads.
- E) MUFIs have a responsibility to their communities and local councils to work reflexively in order to optimise their evolution, learning from other MUFIs and engaging constructively with the support they are offered. This could include:
- (ix) Developing viable enterprises. Food production, especially non-protected cropping is both seasonal and vulnerable to weather/pests/disruption, so MUFIs need to consider ways of adding value to their production. Examples such as Roomer

demonstrate that there is a space for high value, local products that are socially responsible. Equally, one has to keep in mind that SMEs receiving subsidies from other sources may affect the growth of other local food businesses.

- (x) Beyond the local. The KQ demonstrates how the growth of MUFIs need not be directed exclusively into local growth but it can be rapidly internationalised. Similarly, models from outside the locality can be emulated and adapted to local circumstances. This should decrease the costs – personal and social – of constant re-invention and focus on the gains of learning from others.
- (xi) A key element of social sustainability is that people need to be able to feel and demonstrate the meaningful impact from their activities, and that this should be measured and assessed. MUFIs need to be brave enough to stop, or alter course, if their activities are not successful.
- (xii) Clarity about ends and means. In a constantly evolving and dynamic initiative the purpose of a project can become obscured, and will very likely change. This is further complicated in a MUFI as the ends are often the means, but this needs to be clearly articulated in order for the wider social purpose of the MUFI to be clear to all stakeholders.

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## Annex I Dynamic Learning Agenda WP6

	DLA WP6
<b>Overarching research questions (within WP6)</b>	
<b>Multi-functionality</b>	
1	How can we grasp the diversity of the concept of multi-functionality in the different arena's (different functions in land-use, in finance, in policy, in businesses)?
2	Identify the variation of functions that (peri-)urban food initiatives perform while engaging in urban food provisioning activities
3	Identify successful synergies of functions that result from multi-functional food initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What potential social functions offer income opportunities for multi-functional food businesses?</li> </ul>
4	Identify the challenges and opportunities linked to fresh produce that enable the inclusion of minority groups
<b>Role of place</b>	
5	How can a business turn the various aspects of the place it is based in into business opportunities?
6	How are such opportunities perceived as meaningful and by whom?
<b>Organizational model</b>	How to valorise and communicate the added value of multi-functionality in (peri-)urban food initiatives?
7	Identify success factors for the development of MUFIs
8	Explore capacities (financial, human and environmental) that characterize MUFIs
9	Identify key stakeholder groups and networks, their role, responsibilities and constraints for the successful development of MUFIs
10	Identify key characteristics of the organizational structure (internally) of the SMEs
11	How can what we have learned about MUFIs be developed in order to produce replicable models?
<b>Case specific questions</b>	
12	Public foraging as an SME - why, how to organize the integration of public and private land-use? What are problems and opportunities? (Ghent)
13	Working with public procurement and education-why, how, problems and opportunities (Bristol)

14	Working with volunteers - why, how, what inspires volunteers to participate, what are problems? What makes it successful? (Bristol)
15	Working with socially disadvantaged groups - why, how, problems and opportunities (Bristol, Ghent)
16	How can KQ encourage and develop self-organization of farmers? Can this happen through intensifying the communication of product users and the promotion of the potential of direct food chains? (Riga)
17	What is the interplay of public and private benefits, intended and unintended functions, as reflected in stakeholder views of KQ activities? (Riga)
18	What are trust and distrust imbalances in governance of KQ and which governance procedures would introduce greater trust? (Riga)
<b>Deleted questions</b>	
	The governance mechanisms of <i>multifunctional land use</i> in the (peri)urban area.
	What is the relationship between farmers markets and other cultural, economic and market fair activities from a consumer perspective? [Riga]
	How to create a local food market from a cultural heritage perspective? (Riga)