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# “FOR CLEAN FOOD” MOVEMENT OR HOW GLOBAL IDEAS GROW AND DEVELOP ON BULGARIAN GROUND

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## Abstract

The current global environmental situation drives different international organizations, governments, scientists and grassroots movements to seek solutions for more sustainable development. Everyday eating is a basic need that requires an enormous amount of resources and has a huge impact on the environment. Thus different types of actors attempt to establish sustainable models of food consumption. Bulgaria is also a part of these processes and global ideas about creating “alternatives” to the current dominant models of food provision. The subject of the current study is the *Hrankoop* movement as an example of these “alternatives” with its ideas, actions and formations (food cooperative, farmers’ markets and store). The main focus of the article is to demonstrate how and to what extent global ideas for alternative food supply networks are construed and implemented locally. I will explore the emergence, development and transformation of *Hrankoop* movement and will summarize its main specifics at a local level.

**Keywords:** *alternative food networks, food sovereignty, food localization, Hrankoop movement, clean food*

## Introduction

Global environmental concerns about resource depletion and sustainable development are gradually emerging and becoming increasingly significant. On that account international organizations, governments, scientists and grassroots movements seek solutions addressing these issues. Everyday eating is a basic need that requires an enormous amount of resources and has a huge impact on the environment. Thus different types of actors attempt to establish more sustainable models of food consumption. Bulgaria is also a part of these processes and global ideas about creating “alternatives” to the current dominant models of food provision (Kneaf-

sey et al. 2008) increasingly more so in recent years. In this article I present the *Hrankoop* movement as an example of these “alternatives” with reviewing its ideas, actions and formations (food cooperative, farmers’ markets and store). I explore specifically *Hrankoop* as an environmental movement<sup>1</sup> that tries to solve some current environmental problems by reducing the ecological footprint and implementing new methods of growing, production, distribution and consumption of food.

It is the main aim of this article to demonstrate how and to what extent global ideas for alternative food supply networks are construed and implemented locally. I will explore the emergence, development and transformation of *Hrankoop* movement and summarize its main specifics at a local level. The study poses the following main questions: to what extent global ideas are implemented by the main actors, involved in the processes; to what extent do the actions of the actors meet the initial ideas; do this movement generate changes and how visible are they in society; and how sustainable are the methods of production, transportation and consumption of food developed by the actors.

This research is based on ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with main actors who promote and organize food cooperative and farmers’ markets in Sofia and also with producers, members of *Hrankoop* Sofia and one interview with the coordinator of Plovdiv’s farmers’ market during the period 2013–2016. Besides, I am also a member of the *Hrankoop* food cooperative which gives me the opportunity to better understanding the attitudes of coordinators and producers.

### *Connecting environmental protection and food consumption*

Nowadays we cannot deny that there is a strong relationship between ecology and consumption. Ricard Wilk argues that issues of consumption are essential for understanding environmental change at all scales of analysis, because everything we buy, wear, eat, and drive connects us in some way to the natural environment through long chains of connections (Wilk 2006: 418, 421). He identifies two types of consumption: direct and indirect consumption. The second one includes production, disposal, transportation of goods, linked together in complex “commodity chains” in which it is difficult to define the full environmental impact (Wilk 2002: 5). According to Daniel Philippon “food and drink have been significant drivers of environmental change both locally and globally. This is not only because agriculture has had an enormous impact on the physical environment but also because environmental changes have been closely associated with cultural changes. Culture, environment and consumption are in a dynamic relationship, shifting and evolving

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<sup>1</sup> This research is part of my doctoral thesis on “Environmental Movements in Post-socialist Bulgaria. Cultural Practices and Civil Activity”, which was defended successfully in January 2017 at IEFsEM-BAS.

at different points in time and place. Food is a matter of choice, an expression of cultural narratives and desires” (Philippon 2018: 5–6).

### *Global environmental discourse and its local perspectives*

In this sense, taking action related to the socially responsible growing, production and distribution of food and at the same time connected to reducing your ecological footprint fits well in Kay Milton’s understanding of environmentalism. She describes it as “a concern to protect the environment through human effort and responsibility” and as “a type of cultural perspective” – a particular way of understanding the world and as such it “has implications for, and is expressed in, the things people do” (Milton 1996: 33). Milton also defines global environmental discourse as transcultural which is not tied to any particular group or location, but which flows across cultural boundaries within a global network of communication (Milton 1996: 170). Bulgaria is also part of this global environmental discourse, and I am interested in the issues of the “cultural friction which arises out of encounters and interactions” (Tsing 2005: xi) between global and local cultural perspectives. As Duijzings notes, globalization is not simply an imposition from above; it also includes processes of negotiation, hybridization and co-constitution that involve both global and local actors (Duijzings 2013: 18). As Philippon notices, food and power have arisen in global movement (or set of movements) which is diverse and widely distributed and has a potential for long-term transformation of what and how we eat (Philippon 2018: 5–6). Therefore it is important to examine several key concepts and notions with a global spread and how local environmental NGOs and different actors attempted to implement them in Bulgaria.

### *“Alternative” and Alternative Food Networks*

Many authors draw attention to issues concerning current food system that is “in need of critical scrutiny” (Kneafsey et al. 2008: 1) and “does not meet the fundamental criteria of social justice such as freedom from want, freedom from oppression, and access to equal opportunity” (Allen 2008: 158). According to David Goodman et al., alternative food networks have emerged in response to the glaring and multifaceted contradictions of the unsustainable industrial food system and the exploitative trading relations embedded in the global supply chains that support its growth and (expanded) reproduction. The authors conceptualize alternative networks as “new economic and cultural spaces for the trading, production, and consumption of food – organic, fair trade, local, quality, ‘slow’ – whose ethical and aesthetic alternative ‘qualifications’ distinguish them from the products conventionally supplied by international trade, mainstream food manufacturers, and supermarket chains” (Goodman et al. 2012: 4). Damian Maye and James Kirwan also

examine these new food networks as opposed to conventional supermarket chains because they seek to establish a direct relationship between producers and consumers (Maye and Kirwan 2010: 1). Kneafsey et al. think that defining “alternative” is problematic. They argue that “it is no longer sufficient or accurate enough to simply merge different enterprises and schemes which proactively differentiate themselves by purposely or necessarily all under the heading of ‘alternative’”. Despite this, the authors recognize the term “alternative” as useful as it provides a short and quick way to identify these initiatives.

The main argument of Kneafsey et al. is that the one feature shared by “alternative” food practices is the attempt to create “closer” relationships between producers and consumers. They suggest the term “reconnection” as an expression of these relationships and distinctive contemporary manifestation of the “alternative”. This term implies a revival or re-establishment of a “lost” or damaged connection, a return to previously existing and presumably now broken sets of relationships and practices. Kneafsey et al. define three major sets of relationships which various actors are seeking to “reconnect”: producers with their market; consumers with product-process-place and finally people with nature (Kneafsey et al. 2008: 28–33).

### *Localization of food and the concept of “food sovereignty”*

In recent years food localization is increasingly identified as another main characteristic of food “alternatives” and as an important step in the pursuit of sustainability. Rachel Shindelar and Michel Pimbert argue that newly emerging vision of modernity emphasizes the need for more local food systems in the face of peak oil, climate change, loss of biological and cultural diversity, and recurring food and water crises. They believe that food systems built on short and transparent supply chain use less fossil fuel and generates fewer carbon emissions and is considered to be more socially and ecologically sustainable, more transparent and therefore safer than industrial farms, as well as foster local economies and communities (Shindelar, Pimbert 2015: 5). According to Rachel Shindelar many political, social, and economic arguments support (re)localizing food systems, but the one who received the most attention from the general public and mass media is reducing ecological footprint by consuming locally produced products (Shindelar 2015: 19–21).

At this point it is important to introduce another essential concept in order to understand food localization and sustainable agriculture: food sovereignty. The most popular and most quoted definition of food sovereignty is the one given in Nyéléni Declaration of the First Global Forum for food sovereignty, held in Mali in 2007: “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and

policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”<sup>2</sup> According to Amy Trauger, emphasis on “peoples” in the concept is significant because everyone in the food chain is a potentially powerful actor (Trauger 2015: 5). The concept is established by the International Peasant Movement *La Via Campesina*<sup>3</sup>. Its founding purpose is to “develop solidarity and unity among small farmer organizations in order to promote gender parity and social justice in fair economic relations” through the implementation of agricultural practices that preserve “land, water, seeds and other natural resources,” and foster sustainable agricultural practices based on small and medium-sized producers (Schanbacher 2010: 53).

Many authors agree that food sovereignty is “alternative and powerful counter voice to current visions of agricultural reform, farming, and globalization” (Schanbacher 2010: 53), “new alternative paradigm and driver of change challenging the current food regime” (Wittman 2011: 90) and “alternative paradigm of food and agriculture” (Pimbert 2009).

Food sovereignty is based on several key ideas and practices examined in detail by William Schanbacher. He draws attention to both sustainable and local (and in particular local production and consumption) use of resources focusing on community development in which the interests of families, friends and neighbors is extremely different than a neoliberal vision of a globally integrated world. Priority is given to concepts of cooperation, efficient production for local communities, mutual well-being and sustainable development, in contrasts with purely economic concepts such as competition, efficiency, profit-making and unfettered consumption<sup>4</sup> (Schanbacher 2010: 55). As we see, the social aspects represented by the local community and the cooperations are as important as the ecological ones. David Pepper defines these understandings as green values (Pepper 1996) which include not only a new attitude towards nature and the sustainable use of natural resources but also a new attitude towards people, production, economy and policies. Basque union of small farmers ENHE Bizkaia, which is one of the founders of *La Via Campesina*, succeeded to implement a seemingly utopian idea of food sovereignty in practice and proves that new forms being built through collective processes based not only on production but also the relationships between people. They established “community supported agriculture” by creating a network of producers and consumers who are not just sellers and customers, but mutual aid groups in which everyone has equal responsibility for the food system. The model seemed utopian in 2007, however, in 2008, 800 families received baskets produced by 80 farmers who planned their production based on mutual agreements with the consumers<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>.

<sup>3</sup> The organization is composed of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless [peoples], rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers from around the world, including 56 countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas (Schanbacher 2010: 53).

<sup>4</sup> More about ideas and practices of food sovereignty see Schanbacher 2010; Pimbert 2015.

<sup>5</sup> For more details see EHNE Bizkaia, Food First Backgrounder, vol. 19 (3), 2013.

## *Implementing food sovereignty in Bulgaria*

In Bulgaria ideas and practices of food sovereignty are promoted by the ecological association *Za Zemiata*<sup>6</sup>. It plays an important role in the emergence of the *Hrankoop* movement in the Bulgarian capital. The activities that *Hrankoop* developed through its two formations – the food cooperative and the farmers’ markets – express the ideas of food sovereignty. *Za Zemiata* promotes buying local food (which brings environmental benefits and helps create jobs) by choosing small organic farmers<sup>7</sup>. In my interview with Ivan – a representative of the association, he claims that their Food and Agriculture work is employed within the framework of food sovereignty. According to him, direct sales and short supply chains are good examples of how its ideas are implemented in practice. The association has worked towards the promotion of food sovereignty and the establishment of the first food cooperatives in Bulgaria, in particular mainly in Sofia<sup>8</sup>.

The food cooperatives, again according to Ivan, are developing relatively successfully, new groups are created and, following the policy of the association, they are left to deploy independently. He considers the campaign for food sovereignty, which they started with, as unsuccessful because it had a predominantly promotional purpose and presented concepts that were incomprehensible to people. This has led them to rethink their policies, and in 2014 they decided to focus on more practical things and develop the farmers’ markets in Sofia as an example of implementing the idea into practice. They are establishing a project “Making Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) working for Society and the Environment” funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, which aims to promote specific activities within a year, including the development of farmers’ markets in Sofia. “*We make farmers’ markets, develop them and claim: this is food sovereignty*,” says Ivan.<sup>9</sup>

The experience of creating food cooperative is a foreign model introduced in Bulgaria by an activist from *Za Zemiata* who studied abroad and had personal experience with such formations in Barcelona and with another activist, experienced in permaculture farming. Thus it was adopted by “*two enthusiastic youngsters who witnessed and experienced something in Europe and then came back to Bulgaria*”,

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<sup>6</sup> *Za Zemiata* [For the Earth] is part of *Friends of the Earth Europe*. According to Alanna Higgins, the latter is one of the several organizations in the Global North which recognizes and discusses food sovereignty but the concept has not been realized to its full potential (Higgins 2015: 55).

<sup>7</sup> See report by *Friends of the Earth* “From Farm to Folk: public support for local and sustainably produced food”, January 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Food cooperative *Hrankoop* was created around 2010 as an informal formation. In 2013 *Za Zemiata* organized a film festival where food sovereignty and food cooperatives were discussed in order to promote them, for more details see [http://zazemiata.org/v1/NoviniCHetene.368.0.html?&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=131&cHash=db69a836e73ff638585de07457e60792](http://zazemiata.org/v1/NoviniCHetene.368.0.html?&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=131&cHash=db69a836e73ff638585de07457e60792).

<sup>9</sup> All names of respondents have been changed and all translations of the interviews are my own. Quotations will be given in italic.

explains another activist from the movement. According to another respondent, a member of *Hrankoop* in Plovdiv and the organizer of the first farmers' market there, at some stage there were “*pushes*” from different places and “*the moment was ripe*”. Besides those in Sofia, food cooperatives are evolving in other big cities like Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas and Veliko Tarnovo. In following back the emergence of the movement, some activists' stories reveal that it arose “from the bottom up”, from a small informal group of people looking for “clean food”.

I explore the politics of alternative food system-making in Bulgaria as a process and also the consumers and the producers as “imperfect” social actors (Goodman et al. 2012: 5–6). In this account, it is important to show the ideas of *Hrankoop*, its development and history and the transformation of the movement.

### *Main ideas and aims of the Hrankoop movement that are promoted in society*

Members in the *Hrankoop* movement usually do not use the word “food sovereignty” when explaining main ideas and aims of the movement but as we will see, its principles are leading people towards that very same concept. The primary intent of the food cooperative is direct contact and dialogue with producers of bio, eco and organic food<sup>10</sup>. The aim is to evade a speculative network of resellers and to encourage native producers through direct sales. The idea is not just collective food buying and demand for unbearable discounts but fair prices that are fixed by producers. The cooperative is trying to help the members of the group in choosing clean products and to educate everyone about the true value of the good, sensibly grown food and the social system of mutual aid<sup>11</sup>. The general concept is for “clean food” that the cooperative and later the farmers' markets offer to consumers. The motto of *Hrankoop* is also “For clean food!” but it is not explained at the official website of the organization<sup>12</sup>. This made me attentive what “clean food” means for the activists of *Hrankoop*. Christina, one of the coordinators of food cooperative and farmers' markets explains how she understands it:

*“it is clean, clean for us... I mean clean is that [food] which is not treated [with anything] or treated only with natural preparations and the one that spares the land, it is clean. Clean is subjective [notion], but we [coordinators of Hrankoop] insist that it should be clean, not [by all means] organically certified.”*

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<sup>10</sup> Later I will explain in details the use and meaning of these three notions.

<sup>11</sup> Information is taken from the official website of the organization, see it in Bulgarian <http://www.hrankoop.com/hrankoop/sofia/>

<sup>12</sup> Unlike Slow Food movement, which concept is based on three interconnected principles: “good, clean and fair”, and is explained in details. For Slow Food “clean” means “production that does not harm the environment”, see <https://www.slowfood.com/about-us/our-philosophy/>.

During my research, it was made clear that for coordinators of *Hrankoop* the certificates are not as important as building a trustworthy community of producers and consumers with shared aims and ideas. The notion of trust was always present in my conversations with them. It is quite essential, along with the establishment of a personal relationship between producer and consumer and according to social actors, it is what distinguishes *Hrankoop* from similar formations. Another coordinator shares that his personal aim is to establish community of producers. Coordinators say that the communities of coordinators, producers and consumers, and also among producers themselves, are already formed; my observations reveal a different picture, though. Later in the text, I will examine this issue.

The other main characteristic which is promoted at farmers' markets and its motto is "Directly from producers"<sup>13</sup> which very clearly demonstrates the ideas and principles of *Hrankoop*'s work. In most cases, the products sold there are presented by the producers themselves, which gives you a perspective of how your food was produced shown directly by the person who produces it. In this way, consumers can "reconnect" with product-process-place. For organizers it is essential to support both, native producers and production. On their official website they state: "Mission of *Hrankoop* farmers' markets is to provide access to clean food. Most producers are organically certified, and all have chosen to love their work, understand the importance of purely grown food and respect nature and people"<sup>14</sup>.

### *Some problems and mixture of main notions*

The other characteristic of *Hrankoop* is the policy every producer to set their own prices, but this leads to distrust between certified and non-certified producers. Many certified producers are displeased because non-certified producers can sell their products at similar prices to organic products even though they didn't invest a solid amount of money for a certificate.

The other main issue which I observed was the mixture of three central notions: bio, eco and organic (food). As explained above, clean food means environmentally friendly produced which is not necessarily the same as organically certified. However, the usage of these three notions which meanings are almost the same, but differ concerning official control of products, brings confusion among consumers. In Bulgaria we use the term "bio" food for those products which are organically certified<sup>15</sup> by licensed certification firm corresponding to the European regulations.

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<sup>13</sup> See official website of farmers' markets in Bulgarian <http://pazari.hrankoop.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> In Bulgarian we use "bio" (from biological, in Bulgarian "biologichna"), transcribed in Cyrillic for certificate and products and it has the same meaning as organic. Below in the text I will use the Bulgarian label "bio" for organic food, products and certificate.

Eco<sup>16</sup> is just another way to label environmentally friendly produced food, but such products do not have an official certificate. Organic<sup>17</sup> has the same meaning as bio and is a transcription from the English word, but it is rarely used. Interviews with coordinators show that they understand very well the meaning of these three notions but still the terms are not duly explained on their official website. One of the coordinators also shares that farmers' markets are known as "*bio markets for clean food*" but this is not quite true because organizers say that not all products have certification; yet, they insist that producers *grow clean* [food]. This model of labeling food is also taken from another farmers' market in Sofia which offers "bio, eco and natural foods". Therefore, I can only conclude that *Hrankoop* does not succeed in educating the consumers but rather confused them. My observations show that there is a huge distrust in the Bulgarian society concerning bio-certified products. Very indicative about distrust and confusion are articles under titles like "*Bio idiots*" and "*Bio and eco hemorrhoidal*" which deepen the confusion about the topic and satirize the respect to healthy, bio and natural food. On the other hand, there are accusations against the organizers of farmers' markets that they are speculating on the subject of clean food and that not all of the producers, presented at the markets are producing clean food. Also, some producers share the vision that there are no rules at farmers' markets and organizers allow resellers at them. Due to these and other internal organizational and conceptual issues, some producers are prompted to leave the organization.

### *Development of Hrankoop*

As was mentioned above, *Hrankoop* was founded around 2010 by a small group of people looking for clean food as a grassroots movement. The initiative started from consumers from the capital trying to find producers of clean and naturally produced food. *Za Zemiata* received a small project grant which helped the development of the formation. At the beginning, every consumer volunteered to conduct the delivery of their ordered products directly from the particular producer. The group gradually and spontaneously expanded and included new producers and consumers. As a consequence, it was necessary to improve the delivery scheme. This was the second stage of development for the *Hrankoop* movement. Members of the cooperative decided to employ people for deliveries. But the group continued to be informal and illegal, part of the informal economic sector. Later on, in September 2013 some of the active members and coordinators of food cooperative decided to start the first farmers' market in Sofia. The aim was to make ideas of *Hrankoop* reach the widest audience and to come closer to the legalization of *Hrankoop*'s activities<sup>18</sup>. At the

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<sup>16</sup> 'Eco' from ecological, in Bulgarian: 'ekologichna'.

<sup>17</sup> In Bulgarian: 'organichna'.

<sup>18</sup> Earlier, food cooperative was a closed group and building a trust among individual members was

beginning farmers' market started with voluntary efforts of food cooperative's coordinators and producers. Later on, they were supported financially by the NGO *Za Zemiata* which run the already mentioned project "Making the Common Agricultural Policy [CAP] work for Society and the Environment". It aimed to show that the „CAP could and should support not only the highly intensive food industry but also the small-scale clean food production and sustainable short food supply chains". There was another project which also supported farmers' markets in Sofia and in another big city in Bulgaria as events for sustainable development. It was managed by another NGO.

Due to the internal organizational and conceptual problems, food cooperative split and organizers from *Hrankoop* had to find a new place for deliveries. Currently, there are three *Hrankoop* farmers' markets in the capital, and they also organize markets in other Bulgarian cities. Organizers of *Hrankoop* succeeded in legalization of their organization and in opening a store in one of the capital's shopping centres.

*To what extent do the actions of the actors meet the initial ideas?  
The issue of community establishment*

Despite the efforts of coordinators and the non-governmental organization, *Hrankoop* did not succeed in developing the model of community supported agriculture which best represent food sovereignty in practice and in its totality. According to one of *Hrankoop*'s coordinators, they try to implement principles of community supported agriculture in food cooperative, but it is difficult to deploy its full potential. She believes that food cooperative is not just a business cooperative, but a strong bond of solidarity<sup>19</sup>. Christina shares that she supports the social aspect of the cooperative very much, she admits that the word "cooperative" is not part of everyday speech of the group but still:

*"I strongly wish [everyone] to know that this is cooperative, it is not [online] business, it is not a firm. As coordinators are already paid for their work but at the same time all members have equal rights. Producers and consumers are equal members of the group."*

These words demonstrate her ambivalent beliefs of what she expects the cooperative to be and what it actually is. According to Christina, the model of community supported agriculture failed because producers feared a possible crop failure and could not accept the idea of joint responsibility, and consumers preferred to buy their products on demand according to their needs and preferences instead of pre-crucial. Providing recommendation from an existing member was a requirement for the inclusion of new producers and consumers.

<sup>19</sup> For details on how *Hrankoop* is presented in media, see <http://museumofsolidarity.eu/2017/07/02/more-than-a-farmers-coop/>. The latter statement is taken from the article.

dered weekly box scheme deliveries which were supplied with whatever the farms have produced. Therefore, full-scale cooperation and the creation of a community cannot be achieved at this stage in Bulgaria. Despite the promotion of *Hrankoop*'s idea, both as a cooperative and an organization for solidarity, consumers have clearly expressed their preferences at this time. They typically wish to just buy products and so-called "solidarity actions" are not about helping at the farm, but mainly about purchasing the harvest of producers in a small period because some of them don't have a place for storage. Solidarity actions existed at the beginning of the cooperative when the formation was small, and people knew each other very well.

According to Ivan from *Za Zemiata*, there are two options for cooperatives. The first one is to work with coordinators who are paid for their work, and it is kind of online platform for purchase. This is the case of *Hrankoop* food cooperative. The second one possesses visible social element: consumers volunteer in it to organize deliveries and take a turn every week according to the approved schedule. He said that *Hrankoop* tried this option, but members of the cooperative were not very active. Ivan thinks that cooperative thinking is not popular in Bulgaria and this is the main reason why community supported agriculture hasn't been established here yet.

My presence at one of the *Hrankoop* meetings of producers and coordinators confirms the same observations. Organizers prefer producers to feel part of the established community with strong mission and ideas; but for producers it is important to sell their products and to be economically sustainable. This is why they are looking for additional markets. On the other hand, this brings to increase of production and changes the whole idea of presenting small-scale farms and artisan production with good quality. For producers, quantity is also important for sales and this in most cases reduces quality. Many producers admit that they are not economically sustainable<sup>20</sup>. Here again, we can see the mismatch between initial ideas and the reality.

## Conclusions

The coordinators wish to build relations alternative to the neo-liberal market system, to implement "green values" not only towards nature but also in relations between people. However, the cooperation that is close to this type of relationship cannot fully deploy. Christina, the coordinator of farmers' markets, shares that many producers still perceive her as a "boss". This attitude rather carries models from the system of internal hierarchy that leads to division, not to unification. From my conversations with producers I did not gain the impression of established community

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<sup>20</sup> More about attitudes and understandings of biologically certified producers and their economic sustainability see Stancheva 2017.

among them, and rather found that competition is not on a “*healthy scale*”<sup>21</sup>. Only one producer mentioned that there was a community of coordinators and producers when they were a small group of people at the start of the markets. But since then, things have gradually commercialized. Other producers also share such an opinion. They believe that the idea of farmers’ markets has been commercialized and coordinators do not think about producers and their sustainability but mostly think about sales and their increasing<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, we see two points of view, each of which based on the role played by the relevant respondent from *Hrankoop*. In my conversations with Christina, she has always put things around the cooperative and markets in a very positive direction. She has never discussed severe problems and things that have been revealed to me by some producers. I do not know how much she understands the nature of my work, but I think it was an effort on her side to present everything as ideally and positively as for the media. The development of *Hrankoop* and my observations show how the shift from an informal organization “alternative” to contemporary food supply system is turning into a legal organization and „alternative capitalist” businesses with an environmental or social ethic” (Goodman et al. 2012: 245) which is much closer to the mainstream.

As a result, *Hrankoop* did not succeed to „reconnect” consumers with the place where the food is produced. But they succeeded in reconnecting small-scale producers with the market and partly to reconnect producers and consumers. The important issue remains that these products are not available for low-income consumers because of their relatively high prices. Organizers cannot succeed in building an active community with shared ideas and aims among producers and between producers and consumers. This is specific not only for *Hrankoop*, but also for other organizations that start with similar ideals about creating a strong body of community, but afterwards become only consumer oriented businesses and online platform for clean food.

Yet, *Hrankoop* can be defined as an economically sustainable organization at the moment because they succeed in maintaining food cooperative and farmers’ markets without external project funding. *Hrankoop* is among the first ones to promote ideas around clean food, short supply chains, environmentally sustainable production and distribution of food. *Hrankoop*’s contribution to the introduction and development of alternative food policies is visible. The issues about clean grown and produced food are becoming more and more relevant mainly in the Bulgarian cities and lead to the creation of many formal and informal associations that offer such type of food. In a certain period of time, there were only in Sofia four farmers’ markets, three food cooperatives and huge number of online platforms, as most of the farms delivering directly to consumers. All this data lead me to the conclusion

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<sup>21</sup> Expression used by Christina concerning competition among producers.

<sup>22</sup> Coordinators take “solidarity fee” as they called it at the end of the markets day and it is 10 % of turnover of every producer. That is why some producers accuse them that they admit farmers which do not grow clean food.

that such kind of production, transportation and consumption are developing and can be defined as sustainable. Localization of food and presenting of mainly native producers is sustainable in ecological terms. Economic sustainability of producers needs further development, but it depends largely on people individually.

Speaking about global ideas as relocalization of food, sustainable agriculture, food sovereignty and protecting environment is primarily activity of NGO's. Environmentalism as cultural perspective is still at the starting point in Bulgaria. For producers and consumers, the essential discourse is about health and quality of life. So *Hrankoop* fits well in the model of environmental movement defined by Manuel Castells as "Defense of own space" because its adversary are polluters and its goal is quality of life/health (Castells 2010: 171).

Farmers' markets are recognized as a positive trend by the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Thus, in the second half of 2016, a new measure of the Rural Development Program was launched to support farmers' markets and short supply chains.

In conclusion, I think that the *Hrankoop* movement cannot be defined by a single characteristic because the implementation of global ideas on a local level has specificities of its own. These processes are very dynamic and complicated on a global level, and there are incessant new ideas and practices to be developed. The next steps, and further development and their future implementation, in particular, at the local level is yet to be seen and studied.

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