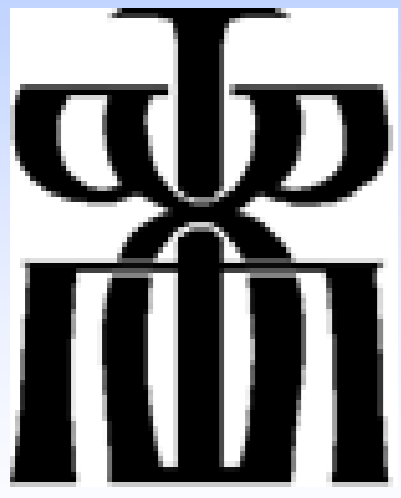


# From Alternative to Mainstream?: Solidarity Economy and Short Supply Chains in Croatia



Olga Orlić, PhD  
Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb  
olga.orlic@inantro.hr



## Community-supported agriculture (CSA)

- Direct marketing (Roque, Thévenod-Mottet, Bourdin, Barjolle, 2008)
- Alternative provisioning networks (Grasseni, 2013)
- Short supply chains
- Purchasing directly and on a regular base from the local farmer(s) producing food in ecological and organic way
- Weekly distribution of vegetable “baskets” for members of particular CSA group
- Bypassing middlemen – lower prices of such products – people and environment before the profit
- Creating solidarity between producers and consumers in the consumption circle
- Encouraging farmers turn to organic production



## Development of CSA in the World

- Teikei (Japan), 1971
- Les Jardins de Cocagne (Geneve; Switzerland) 1978
- AMAP: Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne (France)
- CAS: Community-supported agriculture (USA)
- ASC: Agriculture Soutenue par la Communauté (Canada)
- GAS: Gruppi d'acquisto solidale (Italy)

### Croatia

- GSR: Grupe solidarne razmjene (Zagreb and surroundings 2009)
- SEG: Solidary ecological groups (Istria, 2014) (Medić et al, 2013)

## Theoretical background

- Role of CSA within the solidarity economy (Kawano, Masterson, Teller-Elsberg, 2009)
- Food sovereignty vs. Food security concept (Schanbacher, 2010)
- Alternatives to capitalism (Hahnel and Wright, 2016)
  - Symbiotic and interstitial strategies

## Methodology

- Qualitative
- Observation and partial participant observation
- Semi-structured interviews
  - CSA members (including farmers)
  - OPG farmers
  - Hotel managers
  - State officials (Ministry of Agriculture)

## Technical platform for CSA in Croatia

- „Green market” mailing list – included almost everyone interested, cancelled – opposed opinions about that administrative decision)
- Mailing list for each particular CSA group
- Ordering tickets (again initial information via e-mail)

## Principles of CSA

- Transparency
- Trust
- Solidarity

## Problems that follow implementation of CSA principles

- External (Administrative)
  - Public Procurement Law – CHANGED! (1st July 2017)
- Internal (Group dynamics)
  - Time consuming, cash needed, saturation with seasonal products (CSA)
  - „Free-riding” within the group – organizational burden falls on the same few individuals, or on the producers themselves,
  - Buyers now have more options (eco-products market niche)

## Examples of good practices: Solidarity Ecological Groups (SEG) in Istria

- Producers are members of the SEG group, and members of the NGO Istrian Ecological Producers (IEP)
- Internal control system (fraud is punished by exclusion and public exposing),
- Solidarity with farmers in the period of transition (monitoring)
- Solidarity with buyers in period when they do not have cash for buying products



## Implementation into Croatian policy

- At the beginning the activities of CSA were considered semi-illegal and marginal
- Actors were afraid to be thrown out of the market by „big players”
- The market niche for ecological products in Croatia is growing (Petljak, 2010)
- Buyers and farmers (!) in Croatia sometimes equal locally and ecologically produced food
- Change in policy
- July 2017 – Public Procurement Law: the cheapest offer does not have to be taken automatically, the short supply chains have to be taken into account
- Ministry of Agriculture – Department for Rural Development
- Developing local food systems and short supply chains became part of the rural development policy
- February 2019: The call for subsidizing Short Supply Chains – the call was cancelled (for technical reasons) and will be published later this year
- Incentives to finance farmers’ cooperatives (*zadruga*)
- Name *zadruga* has a negative connotation from the period of socialism – after 1990s *zadruga* were neglected
- Today: farmers are subsidized to cooperate as „Producer Groups and Producer Organisations”

## References

1. Grasseni, Cristina. 2013. Beyond Alternative Food Networks. Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney
2. Kawano, Emily, Masterson Thomas Neal, Teller-Elsberg, Jonathan. 2009. Introduction. In: Solidarity Economy I: Building Alternatives for People and Planets. Kawano, Emily, Masterson Thomas Neal, Teller-Elsberg, Jonathan (eds.), The Center for Popular Economics, Amherst, MA USA, 1-7
3. Medić, A., Pešak, S., Marić, Dedić, I., Traub H., Golija A., Koprivnjak K., Kolar Fodor S., et al 2013: Brošura GSR-a, Zelena mreža aktivističkih grupa, Zagreb <http://www.grupasolidamerazmjene.net/gsr-brosura/povijest-pokreta-ili-gsr-u-svijetu>
4. Orlić, Olga. 2015. Grupe solidarne razmjene kao pokret za postizanje prehranbenog suvereniteta. In: Vrtovi našega grada: Studije i zapisi o praksama urbanog vrtlarenja / Rubić, Tihana; Gulin Zmić, Valentina (eds.). Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Hrvatsko etnološko društvo, Participacija, 231-240.
5. Petljak, Kristina. 2010. Istraživanje kategorije ekoloških prehrambenih proizvoda među vodećim trgovcima hranom u Republici Hrvatskoj / Organic food category research among leading food retailers in Croatia, Tržište Vol. XXII/1: 93 – 112
6. Roque, Olivier, Thévenod-Mottet, Erik; Bourdin, David, Barjolle, Dominique. 2008. Innovations in Direct Marketing in Agriculture in Switzerland 1. General review 2. CSA study: Community-Supported Agriculture.
7. Schanbacher William D. 2010. The Politics of Food. The Global Conflict between Food Security and Food Sovereignty. Praeger Security International. Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford.