



FNA

Food Network Academy

Sustainable Regional Food Networks



1) GOOD GOVERNANCE



2) ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY



3) SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS



4) SOCIAL LEARNING & KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

FOOD NETWORK ACADEMY

CONCEPT PAPER

MAY 2017

EXTRACT

Sustainable Regional Food Networks (SRFN) is a model based in value-generating collaborations between actors aiming for a sustainable and equitable food system that goes beyond the existing industrialized food supply chains with purely economic aspirations to include cultural and social values and benefits, as well as ensuring food and nutrition security for all

VISION

The food system of the future calls for food supply chains that are made up by value-generating, collaborative and reciprocal partnerships between equal actors, where cultural, environmental and social values and benefits come before purely economic profits and with the overall objective of ensuring food and nutrition security to everyone. This can happen through the understanding of food as a “collaborative common” that encourages respectful and ethical practices of production and consumption of food.

MISSION

To develop, implement and disseminate an innovative food-system approach as an alternative to the industrialized and commodified food supply chains dominant nowadays. To achieve this, the FNA will follow a Living Laboratory approach (open-innovation) in order to create a working-model based on the combination of academic research, vocational training, entrepreneurial activities, public actors support and consumer’s engagement.

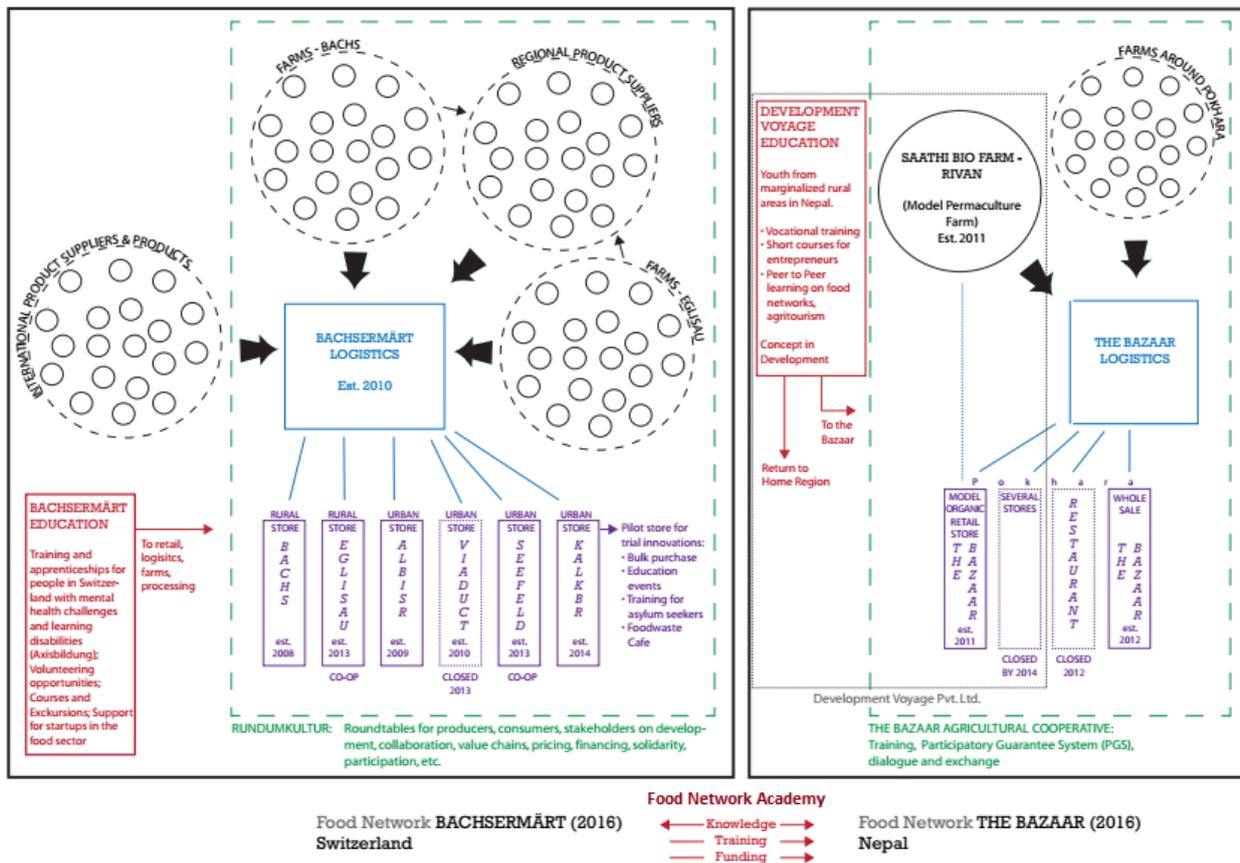
CONTEXT

The predominant food system of today is increasingly dysfunctional: One in six children is undernourished, while one in four is overweight (Gladek et al., 2016). While we have been able to improve food security in many regions, this has also led to other issues, such as declining soil fertility and threats to the biodiversity of our planet (Magnin, 2016). Risks are becoming increasingly systemic, with more widespread repercussions that are impossible to be dealt with by governments, industry or sector alone due to the global dimensions of this issue. Therefore, a paradigm shift is required in dealing with food. This shift needs to be better suited at addressing the challenges of the future food system: meeting the ever-increasing demand of food, reducing the environmental impact of agricultural production and consumption and ensuring dignified and fair livelihoods for all of the people involved in the food value chains.

THE “SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL FOOD NETWORK” MODEL

Sustainable Regional Food Networks (SRFN) provides a model for sustainable and equitable food systems as an alternative to the industrialized and commodified food supply chains dominant at present. This current paradigm of intensive agricultural production relies on a negativistic view of human nature, where self-interest and profit maximization are to be achieved and preferred over more collaborative ways of working that are mindful of other persons, ecosystems, and the future generations (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2012). A paradigm shift towards a system where food is understood as more than just a “commodity, and where its production and consumption are strongly related to natural, social, cultural, historical,

political, institutional, and personal issues” (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2012) is essential and demands larger collaborative efforts.



Source: World Food System Summer School Rheinau 2016- Case

Study.

The SRFN model looks at food supply chains as value-generating, reciprocal partnerships between equal actors that together act as custodians of a sustainable and equitable food system. SRFN goes beyond economic profit and includes cultural and social value and benefits, as well as food and nutrition security for all. The extent of equitable partnerships around production and consumption of food is supported by four principles of the SRFN-manifesto.

The SRFN takes the implementation of the right to food¹ a step further and focuses not only on producers’ entitlement to productive assets, but empowerment of all food system actors by supporting systemic education and skill development in the food sector, fostering food literacy and institutionalizing participation in food network governance through innovative political mechanisms. In this manner, the SRFN supports rural and urban food system actors in establishing diversified incomes, enabling livelihoods and ensuring food and nutrition security.

1 According to the FAO the right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement

The idea behind the SRFN model, as well as the principles, values and practices it should follow are a result of the practical experiences of two existing model networks: Bachsermärt in Switzerland and THE BAZAAR in Nepal. These two initiatives share common visions and objectives in search of a more sustainable and equitable food system that ensures food and nutrition security for everyone. Since early 2016 the entrepreneurs behind these initiatives have been working in collaboration with the World Food System Center at ETH University Zürich to extract the core ideas behind SRFN, based on their practical experiences. Being concerned about the future prospect of young Nepali in rural areas and the social and economic pressure associated with migration towards urban areas in search of a better livelihood, Tulsi Giri, a Nepalese social entrepreneur, decided in 2008 to found a NGO that would offer training for young people interested in organic agriculture, thereby providing them with alternatives to rural-urban migration. This developed into “THE BAZAAR”, an agricultural cooperative (more than 300 small organic farmers and 15 retailers organized under the cooperative) with a wholesale store, an organic model retail store and a model permaculture farm and training center with agro-tourism facilities.

When taking over a general store in the rural village of Bachs in 2008, Patrick Honauer, an experienced chef and entrepreneur concerned about negative developments in the rural areas of Switzerland - the total number of farms has decreased from 79,500 in 1996 to 53,000 in 2015 (FSO, 2015) - decided to use this chance to provide the villagers of Bachs with quality products sourced from local producers and which preferably used sustainable production methods, all of this with the goal of providing job opportunities in the rural area and increasing people’s livelihoods and well-being. This was achieved by setting up Bachsermärt, a store that has since grown into a regional food network, encompassing 5 retail stores (2 rural and 3 urban), a logistics network, training and educational activities and a platform to connect the stakeholders in the network from farmers and producers through to consumers.

After meeting for the first time in 2012, Tulsi and Patrick exchanged their vision and practical experiences and realized that they had a common objective: building Sustainable Regional Food Networks (SRFNs), a food network model which is considered to be a collaborative common – an idea that calls for understanding food as a basic human need and a rights available to all – that is produced & distributed in a sustainable way (ecologically, socially and economically). A model with these characteristics could ensure sustainable livelihoods, as well as providing development opportunities for young people through education and training. A collaboration between the two entrepreneurs was the next logical step to turn their vision of SRFNs into a reality.

Integral to the development of the SRFN model was the support provided by the Rundumkultur Association, a Switzerland-based initiative that promotes awareness on collaborative options for the creation and development of community-based projects. Based on a dialogical interaction between people, companies, networks and organizations who wish

to work in a sustainable and effective way, Rundumkultur has supported the conception and implementation of our innovative model by organizing round-table talks with the different stakeholders that make up a food system, providing financing for start-ups focused in the SRFN model, and by developing educational concepts for our two model food networks.

PRINCIPLES AND SUBPRINCIPLES OF THE SRFN MODEL

Since early 2016 in collaboration with the World Food System Center at ETH University Zurich, we are working to extract the core ideas behind SRFN. In this step-wise process, we recognized that both the existing food network models (Bachsermaert in Switzerland and THE BAZAAR in Nepal) presented some common characteristics and were implementing similar concepts and practices to address similar issues.

Table 1 presents the characteristics we believe any initiative with a SRFN model as its core should include, as well as which practices can reflect these attributes. Table 2 presents the possible outcomes that can be expected from fulfilling these characteristics, as well as some of the indicators available that could measure the impact on the environmental, social and economic spheres. Both these tables are based on the practical experiences provided by the two existing food network models.

Table 1. General characteristics		Table 2. Possible Outcomes and indicators	
Characteristics	Practices/Concepts	Possible outcomes	Indicators
Collaborative commons as a vision	-Shared values, common attitude -Collaboration, Solidarity, Participation -Economic participation to shift food from a market model to a commons model -Local & shared economy -Fairness & Equity (fair-trade)	Environmental Friendly	-Biodiversity maintained in production -Carbon footprint reduced
Local dialogical interactions	-Stakeholder dialogue -Space for individual initiatives -Empowerment -Regional production -Short distance between the commons	Resilience	-Share values & responsibilities
Ecological production/processing & preservation	-Agro-ecology -Permaculture -Organic -IPM	Sufficiency	-Food security -Nutritional diversity -Dietary diversity -Economic security for all stakeholders
Resource efficiency	-Food waste reduction -Waste reduction throughout the	Sovereignty	-Seed breeding -Food culture respected -Remote marginalized
		Community Development	-Rural-urban nexus -Small producers (farmers/groups/manufacturers)

		cycle (e.g. packaging) -Value addition (processing/preserving)	Quality	Quality of product is measured by its environmental friendliness more than appearance, weight, etc.
Generation exchange knowledge	and of	-Academy for peer to peer learning -Roundtables		

Source: Own elaboration

This allowed us to come up with a simple categorization that we believe is necessary for our initiatives, as well as potential peer partners, to be able to work for a more sustainable food system, under the SRFN model. The principles are as follows:

Principle 1 Good governance

Principle 2 Ecological Sustainability

Principle 3 Sustainable Livelihoods

Principle 4 Social Learning & Innovation Exchange

1 Good governance: New rules for an increased collaboration

The SRFN model calls for an open network of voluntary efforts and contributions from everyone involved in the food system. We believe that food has to be understood as “collaborative-commons”² and not a market in future. This is a paradigm shift that needs substantial changes on the current system, which means that a new set of rules is required to manage the production, distribution and access to food in the local, regional and global levels (“good governance”). To achieve this, we focus on the following attributes:

A) Permanent Stakeholder Dialogue and Participation

The SRFN model is based on constant dialogue between all the stakeholders at a local and regional stage, as well as between rural and urban settings in order to address the new challenges of a food network model jointly. We expect that all stakeholders provide us with inputs and ideas, but the decision-making has to be discussed and agreed upon by all. This attribute will balance different interests of the stakeholders, create space for participation and encourage individual initiatives.

B) Stakeholder Empowerment, Equality, and Shared Responsibility

All of the actors in the food system should consider themselves, as well as the others, as equals, with no hierarchical differentiation between them, which allows them to work

² According to Yochai Benkler a “new model of socio-economic production in which large numbers of people work cooperatively”, normally over the Internet

together in a collaborative manner. These actors are empowered to make their own decisions by awareness raising and by providing outlets, platforms and the means to act, which in turn means that they will establish partnerships to share both the responsibilities and the rewards of a SRFN model. The cooperative structure has been used in our guiding projects with an acceptable rate of success, but new legal and economic forms could also be found.

C) Fairness, Transparency and Accountability of Processes and Products

Since we call for shared responsibilities and collaborative efforts, there needs to be a structure - like a roundtable process for example - in which this kind of dialogue can be carried out in an inclusive, structured and fair manner between all of these actors. This would decrease conflicts, assist in making more informed decisions (concerning production, distribution and retail) and enable the public to be more knowledgeable and take interest in the SRFN model. The key for this point is the creation of relationships that go beyond economic gains.

D) Associative Economics

This attribute demands the collaboration between actors follow dialogical culture where different interests of actors are discussed to find appropriate common solutions. For e.g. in food sourcing, price is a crucial factor but the actors have to engage in discussion in order to satisfy their mutual interests and find best solution where price is not the only determinant of sourcing. All this collaboration will eventually translate into a food system that is mindful of the non-economic qualities of food, such as nutrition, and that provides producers with fair and diversified incomes that will translate into an increased well-being for themselves. Based on values such as empathy and cooperation, it aims to end with the “cut-throat competition” approach favored by the predominant food system in place nowadays.

2 Ecological Sustainability: Resilient and diversified food system

An important goal of a SRFN model is to ensure the ecological sustainability of the food system. This can be achieved by focusing in following 4 attributes in the food system and incorporating existing philosophies and principles aimed at this objective:

A) Production methods following agro-ecological principles

Production of food should follow agro-ecological principles including, but not limited to organic agriculture, permaculture, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) etc. These should be used in combination with other principles or methods in order to achieve a high degree of diversity and resilience for example seed production not controlled by GMOs and non-industrial production methods.

B) Processing to preserve food in resource efficient way

Reduce this instance as much as possible by showing preference for fresh foods; favor handcrafted traditional production; zero-waste, upcycling, resource efficiency, circular

economy, the use of food surplus for the supply of restaurants, local food processing and/or manufacturing, etc.

C) Efficient & ecological distribution enabling direct linkage between producers and consumers
Reduce – or even do away entirely – the amount of packaging; efficient and innovative use of transportation methods (car-sharing, local and regional courier, etc.). Eliminating intermediaries as much as possible.

D) Responsibility in Consumption:

Consumers need to think in terms of “sufficiency” (Do we really need to eat meat every day?), seasonality (Bananas all year around is not normal), responsibility and general appreciation of food. There is also a need to achieve zero food waste - or an important decrease -throughout the value chain: pre-post-harvest to consumption, packaging, and logistics.

3 Sustainable Livelihoods: A collaborative relationship

Both producers and consumers in a food system strive to ensure a livelihood that allows them to fulfill their needs and desires. The SRFN model calls for local and regional networks that work together to achieve the sustainability of all of those in the system, and not at an individual level. This can be accomplished by working on the following attributes:

A) Contributing to community building

Create a sense of belonging between the actors in the food system. Special attention should be placed on creating bonds and relationships between all the actors involved in the food system, both rural and urban, in collaborative schemes such as cooperatives.

B) Strengthening the local economy

People producing and buying in a local/regional context can use innovative tools such as a local alternative currency, community financing or mutual credits. Diversifying incomes can create resilience and adaptive local/regional economic systems. The objective here is to create value for the products and services offered in the region and, therefore, value addition for the community as a whole.

C) Respect existing and create new cultural dimensions in food

Issues such as food appreciation, preservation and promotion of indigenous/local food cultures, techniques and knowledge, gender equality, diversity and dialogue are the center of any sustainable food network. The SRFN model relies on these types of values and attitudes to recapture the cultural essence of food as a unifying experience shared across countries, languages and religions. The goal of this is to achieve peace and social security for all

stakeholders involved in the food system, as well as to foster a debate on our common understanding of food.

D) Fostering innovation and facilitating transformation

This idea allows for a great degree of innovativeness and entrepreneurship, for new ideas and models are needed to achieve the paradigm shift behind the SRFN model. These kinds of initiatives need to provide enough room for experimentation in the different stages of the food system and it has to be open for all participants of a network to create value regionally.

4 Social Learning & Innovation Exchange

A social process of informal learning will commence once the people who are working in collaborative initiatives start transmitting to each other their own food culture, shared values and specific knowledge. This learning process aims at further strengthening the networks, connecting and integrating people, offering training opportunities and driving innovations. We achieve this by:

A) Developing and maintaining instruments for social learning and innovation:

Dialogical interactions (like round-table process, for example), peer-to-peer networks, and dedicated institutions for this process. Recapture and actively combine shared stories and narratives from indigenous/local food cultures with new ways of understanding and living food promoted by the SRFN model.

B) Creating innovations in production, processing, and retailing:

New techniques for value addition like upcycling, processing of produce with renewable technologies, etc.

C) Vocational education/skill development and entrepreneurial training

We want to empower to develop professional and practical skills that can be used in the food network model. Entrepreneurship is a core capacity with which to accomplish our common goals and vision.

D) Research of new methods and techniques

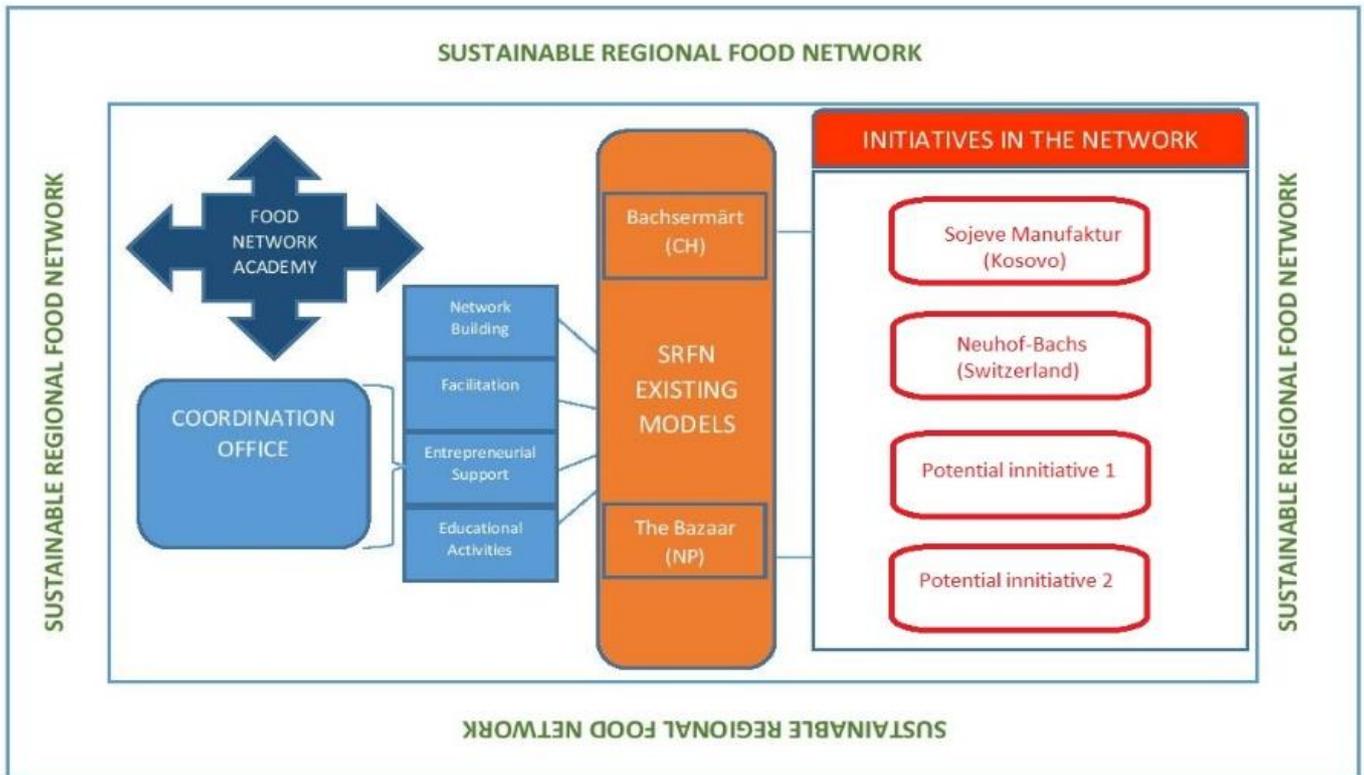
While we appreciate the lore and resourcefulness of indigenous/local foods, we want to be on the forefront of this new food model, therefore we will produce our own in-house research, collaboration with entrepreneurs, academia (like the World Food Systems Center from ETH Zurich and other institutions).

PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE: THE “FOOD NETWORK ACADEMY”.

The Food Network Academy (FNA) is an organization created to coordinate activities around the SRFN model. The FNA is born out of the practical experience and academic research developed by two entrepreneurial initiatives currently operating in Switzerland (Bachsermärt) and Nepal (THE BAZAAR) by following the Sustainable Regional Food Network model (SRFN) as an alternative framework to design and implement food-value chains under the “collaborative commons” philosophy. Both Bachsermärt (headed by Patrick Honauer) and The Bazaar (headed by Tulsi Giri) have been working since early 2016 in collaboration with the World Food System Center at ETH University Zürich to extract the core ideas behind SRFN, based on their practical experiences.

The FNA, through its Coordination Office, is tasked with fulfilling its vision (a new food system that is sustainable and equitable, based on associative economics) and mission (the development, implementation and dissemination of the SRFN model).

In this manner, the FNA acts as a forum for research and development, knowledge exchange, and the development of principles around the SRFN model. It also acts as a competence center focused on both young people and entrepreneurs who want to get empowered, have the initiative to start projects and the desire to gain the qualifications needed to establish initiatives based on the SRFN model. Peers from around the world are invited to join this network if they can demonstrate that they wish to follow the principles of the SRFN model as defined by this document. A Coordination Office has been established in Freiburg/Switzerland. This office will be responsible for the network building, communication throughout the networks as well as implementing the project plans regularly developed in conjunction with the FNA Advisory Board, made up by academics and practitioners with extensive experience in the topics, methods and values needed to establish SRFN models.



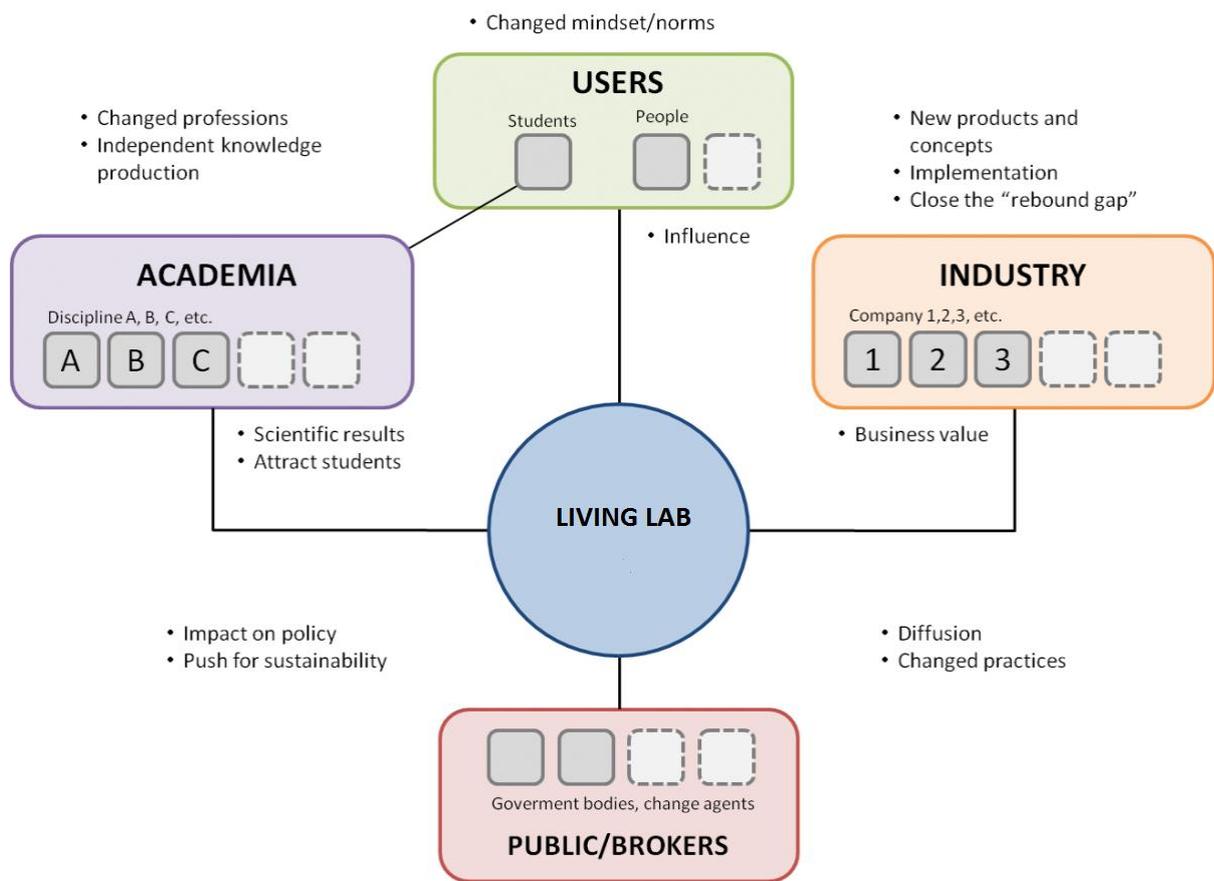
Source: Own elaboration

THE FNA APPROACH

The FNA initiative is carrying out action-oriented research on alternative ways to shape the food-value chain as a way to achieve a truly equitable and sustainable food-system, with healthy and nutritious food for everyone.

Having identified the need for spaces where trans-disciplinary and multicultural interactions can help in shaping the food system of tomorrow, The FNA will follow the "Living Laboratory" Approach (open-innovation) in order to create a working-model based on the combination of academic research, vocational training, entrepreneurial activities, public actors support and consumer's engagement.

Living Laboratories are "Physical regions or virtual realities where stakeholders form public-private-people partnerships (4Ps) of firms, public agencies, universities, institutes and users, all collaborating for creation, prototyping, validating and testing of new technologies, services, products and systems in real-life contexts" (Westerlund & Leminen, 2011).



Adapted from Femenías & Hagbert (2013)

SERVICES OFFERED BY THE FNA

The FNA aims at building a worldwide network of peers in order to facilitate exchange of knowledge. Based on their experience and contextualized research, peers are capable to identify needs and problems in order to bring solutions and strategies to bring together and reinforce their SRFN models. We use Bachtermärt and THE BAZAAR as our models, a combination of academic and field research, offered to like-minded individuals or organizations.

The SRFN model is built on constant communication and knowledge exchange because we need to build up on what other are doing and combine it with our experiences and skills. In a similar spirit, the FNA homepage (<http://foodnetworkacademy.org/>) is the platform for our initiatives, where our members and everyone else can find the information about the movement we want to create, how the tools and knowledge we can contribute can be accessed, and where they can get in contact with their peers and start engaging with them.

The FNA carries out its mission by offering concrete tools to our three target audiences: Food-system entrepreneurs, universities and research institutions and citizens/consumers.

TARGET GROUP	SERVICES	OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES
1) Food-system entrepreneurs	1.1 Facilitation	<p>-Support for like-minded entrepreneurs who would like to initiate their own food-system initiative inspired by the SRFN model. This includes:</p> <p>-Identifying and engaging similar initiatives (initially in Europe and Asia, but expanding worldwide in due time).</p>	<p>-Startup-coaching, which includes:</p> <p>*Viability Analysis (“SRFN model check-list”): A set of suggested guidelines and actions that are present in our two food system networks based on the SRFN Manifesto, a document that details the principles and sub-principles that make up this model;</p> <p>*Route map: Elaboration of a comprehensive project plan;</p> <p>*Budgeting and financial assistance.</p>
	1.2 Network-building	-Creating network of these initiatives to share practical experiences, emphasize the importance of the social aspect of the SRFN model and discuss key factors for the success and failure of these kind of projects.	-Interactive map at our website (http://foodnetworkacademy.org/) with all like-minded initiatives.

TARGET GROUP	SERVICES	OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES
2) UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS	2.1 Academic-practitioner exchange	Research questions are paired with real needs coming from the various stakeholders in the food system.	Research topics (undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate).
	2.2 Courses	Academic curriculum focused on alternative food systems using a “systems thinking approach” and inspired on the SRFN model	Summer-schools and workshops
	2.3 Study tours	Real-life experience is offered to students, so they begin getting in contact with all relevant stakeholders of the food system	-Guided excursions to the different initiatives (and their accompanying partners) that make up the FNA network.

TARGET GROUP	SERVICES	OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES
3) CITIZENS AND CONSUMERS	3.1 Engagement	Offer a platform for students, graduates and the general public to engage with the initiatives that make-up the FNA network	-3 different platforms to be found within our website (http://foodnetworkacademy.org/): * Knowledge platform * Volunteering platform * In-house research platform
	3.2 Round-table debates	Participatory approach that will present the key elements of the SRFN model to the general public (including children), co-created with universities, research centers, and other vocational/ professional institutions	-Series of round-table debates on topics such as : *The food system of the future. *Social entrepreneurship in the food value-chain. *The role of local and regional food in the sustainable development of food. These round-table debates will have the presence of professionals, academics and

			advocates knowledgeable in these topics, and will be moderated by the FNA.
	3.3 Interactive exhibitions	Organize an interactive experience targeted at the general public to raise awareness of the principles and values behind a SRFN model as an alternative framework with which to design and implement sustainable and equitable food-value chains.	An interactive “museum” focused inspired by the SRFN model, with exhibitions created through partnerships with local/regional donors, volunteers, and partners.

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