

Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Helsinki

ORGANIZING NATURES
JUSTIFICATION AND CRITIQUE IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN
FINLAND

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

To be presented for public discussion with the permission of the Faculty of
Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki, in lecture hall Suomen Laki, Porthania,
on the 4th of December, 2021 at 12 noon.

Helsinki 2021

Publications of the Faculty of Social Sciences 198 (2021)
Sociology

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Cover photo: Sergio Souza / Pexels

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ISSN 2343-273X (print)
ISSN 2343-2748 (online)
ISBN 978-951-51-7027-9 (pbk.)
ISBN 978-951-51-7028-6 (PDF)

Unigrafia
Helsinki 2021

ABSTRACT

As societies are facing increasing pressures set by environmental problems, the need to find alternative solutions has become more urgent. In this context, agriculture and food have been identified as one central sector, where change is needed. In the search for alternatives, organic agriculture has emerged as a central option to transform agricultural systems to more sustainable ways of operating. Additionally, organic agriculture aims to address other problems associated with the industrialization of agriculture and food, such as those related to food quality. Organic agriculture offers an alternative way to understand what agriculture and food are about, bringing in other values than those of efficiency and profit. At the same time, organic agriculture has been a heavily contested issue, as some have questioned its capability to actually address the problems that food systems currently face. By using an analytical framework based on pragmatic sociology (or conventions theory), developed originally by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, this dissertation examines the development of organic agriculture in Finland.

The thesis is situated into the discussion concerning the values of organic agriculture. Previous discussions, most notably those rooted in political economy, have conceptualized the development and institutionalization of organic agriculture as a process where values are gradually replaced by economic incentives. Instead of being able to bring in alternative values, such as ecology, care or fairness, organic agriculture is seen as becoming increasingly market-driven. Not only is this development seen to make organic agriculture similar to conventional production in terms of principles and values, but also in its material composition, as organic products, for example, become only slightly different from their conventional counterparts.

The approach applied in this thesis challenges this view and aims to reverse this setting. Instead of taking organic agriculture as the value-driven alternative (and examining how it either loses or maintains these values), the various analyses examine how the value(s) of organic agriculture is constructed. From this perspective, the debate concerns whether organic agriculture offers a meaningfully different alternative, through which the sustainability of food systems can be achieved. Therefore, using the pragmatic sociological approach, the development of organic agriculture is not examined only as economization, but as shaping it according to various forms of worth. The thesis examines various conflict situations, where organic and conventional agriculture are set against each other, and where actors need to justify either alternative. The construction of these justifications is then analyzed as processes of sense-making, where actors shape organic agriculture according to different “orders of worth.”

The thesis is based on four research articles. *Article I* examines debates about organic agriculture in news media. Focusing on three different periods

(1982-88, 1995-2000, and 2008-2012) in two newspapers, Helsingin Sanomat and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, the article examines the development of justifications for and against organic agriculture. *Article II* examines the early period of organic agriculture in Finland. Focusing on the years between 1980 and 1991, the article shows how the difference between organic and conventional agriculture was already then a contested topic. The article examines how the difference between the two agricultural systems and their products was constructed through various forms of worth. *Article III* continues this discussion and applies the analytical approach of the thesis to the institutionalization of organic agriculture. The article analyzes various policy papers, strategies and studies on organic agriculture, asking, how the inclusion of organic agriculture was justified in them. *Article IV* then reverses this setting, using the case of organic agriculture to develop pragmatic sociology. By using the three empirical studies, the article focuses on developing the perspective green or ecological justification.

The findings of these individual articles are then elaborated into four central ways according to which the difference between organic and conventional agriculture has been constructed. First, the *green difference* describes how organic agriculture has been established as an ecological alternative that has the capacity to address environmental problems. Second, what is termed as the *problematic difference* addresses the economization of organic agriculture and the construction of the difference based on economic valuations. Third, the *contested difference* describes how the existence of a meaningful difference has been questioned, especially by those drawing from a natural scientific point of view. And, fourth, the *contextualized difference* examines how a national framework of reference has also questioned the existence of a difference, here with reference to the qualities of Finnish production and food. Together these form of constructing the difference between organic and conventional agriculture have influenced both the development of organic agriculture and Finnish agricultural production.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been long in the making, and it certainly has not been always easy. Luckily there have been numerous people who have offered their help and who have made this work possible. Even though a doctoral dissertation is attributed to one person, one cannot do it alone.

First of all, I thank my supervisors, Petri Ylikoski and Mikko Virtanen. Petri made this whole thesis possible by accepting to act as supervisor, and by promoting my initial work for the doctoral program for funding. After this, he has helped in coordinating a great seminar and giving very useful comments on some key moments. I also want to thank Mikko, who offered to act as a supervisor for my thesis later on. Mikko has been a tireless and demanding supervisor, who has always been ready to comment on texts and has spent countless hours discussing different approaches. Our discussions on sociology and university life more generally have been really inspiring, and his influence on this thesis is unmistakable.

I also want to thank the two pre-examiners of this thesis, Laura Centemeri and Pekka Jokinen, who both made perceptive comments on the text. Their statements pointed out things that needed improving, but also gave positive feedback that helped me finish this work.

I started this work as part of the Helsinki Research Group for Political Sociology, which has then morphed into the Centre for Sociology of Democracy. Attending the seminars as well as other activities of this group are always a pleasure, with conversations that are always both inspiring and encouraging. This group has also been central in developing perspectives on pragmatic sociology and justification theory, from which my work has benefitted significantly. A sincere thank you to Eeva Luhtakallio, who not only has coordinated the work of the research group, but has also helped me on several occasions along the way. I also want to thank Risto Alapuro for always giving encouraging comments. In addition, thank you to Georg Boldt, Veikko Eranti, Andrey Indukaev, Maija Jokela, Lotta Junnilainen, Jutta Juvenius, Jenni Kettunen, Anna Kukkonen, Taina Meriluoto, Tuomas Niska, Roosa Tuukkanen, Young Kyu Shin, Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, and Tuukka Ylä-Anttila. Thank you also to Laurent Thévenot, who has commented this work on different occasions.

I have also attended the seminar on Knowledge, Technology and Environment, or TOTEMI as it is more commonly known. In addition to Petri, Mianna Meskus and Karoliina Snell have also coordinated our seminar, as well as given great advice and encouragement that has been very helpful. In addition, thank you to Aaro Tupasela, Mikko Jauho, Jose Cañada, Lotta Hautamäki, Sampsa Saikkonen, Elina Helosvuori, Kamilla Karhunmaa, Marianne Mäkelin, Jaakko Taipale, and Heta Tarkkala.

Both groups have nevertheless helped my work tremendously and hopefully there is something to be found in the space between these two groups and traditions.

I also wish to thank the Doctoral Programme in Social Sciences, and the Centre for Consumer Society Research for funding this work.

Even though working on a PhD means sitting by your computer writing or reading endless books and articles, much of it also happens outside the office. First, I want to thank Aino Alatalo for all of the discussions over lunch or coffee (and via chat), where we have gone through actor-network theory, latest gossip and other important topics. Aino has always been a source of encouragement when I have started to doubt my own work, and has really helped me forward with this work in this way as well. I also want to thank Mikko Posti for good discussions about medieval philosophy and much more.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Jaakko Hovi, Antti Hyrkäs, Antti Kaihovaara, Joni Karjalainen, Johanna Koivisto, Valteri Koskinen, Antti Lehtinen, Aino Luotonen, Toivo Martikainen, Paula Merikoski, Liisa Mäkinen, Jussi Nuortimo, Akseli Peltola, Joonas Ranta, Tapio Reinekoski, Saara Salmivaara, Atte Vieno, and Sanna Väisänen. While I really like reading and writing sociology as well as doing research, for me it is all of the conversations with these people that make this work and being at the university really worth it.

Last, I want to thank my parents, Asta and Kari, and my brother, Juha. There has always been encouragement to read history and to be interested in current affairs in our family, and this has undoubtedly supported me on becoming a researcher. Once again, thank you to everyone!

Helsinki, November 2021
Tomi Lehtimäki

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Lehtimäki, T. 2019 Constructing common causes. Justifications for and against organic agriculture in the Finnish media. *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* 25(1): 97–115.

II Lehtimäki, T. 2019 Making a difference. Constructing relations between organic and conventional agriculture in Finland the emergence of organic agriculture. *Sociologia Ruralis* 59(1): 113–136.

III Lehtimäki, T. and Virtanen, M.J. 2020 Shaping values and economics: Tensions and compromises in the institutionalization of organic agriculture in Finland (1991–2015). *Journal of Rural Studies* 2020 80: 149–159.

IV Lehtimäki, T. and Virtanen, M.J. Differentiating natures, connecting environments. Pragmatic sociology and the emergence of green justifications. Full article manuscript, in review.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines organic agriculture and the attempts to transform agricultural systems into more ecological and sustainable forms. Within the overall framework of the environmental crisis, agriculture and food are seen as one of the major sectors where societies need to change their impact on the environment (UNEP 2021). Whether one considers climate change, soil degradation, the loss of pollinators, or eutrophication, agricultural systems are deeply connected with the environmental changes—or crises—that are gaining pace. As the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (2017, 3) notes in its report on the future of food and agriculture notes: "Much of humanity's progress has come at a considerable cost to the environment." In order to deal with the problems brought about by this past success, future agricultural practices need to find new ways that change this relation to the environment. In this context, there have been calls for not only transforming practices to lower environmental impacts but an overall transformation of food systems that would address problems brought about by the industrialization of agriculture and food (Marsden et al. 2018).

One such way to rethink and transform food systems has been promoted by organic agriculture. By challenging conventional modes of production, organic agriculture has introduced new principles of evaluating agriculture and food that aim to go beyond the productivist orientation of techno-chemical agricultural production, with its focus on high yields and maximized efficiency. Instead, organic agriculture emphasizes ecology, care for the environment, and fairness and health as guiding principles, according to which agriculture should be organized.

The introduction of new principles into agricultural production has included the integration of new elements into food systems. Understanding fields not only as production units but also as ecosystems brings into vision various new objects, as soils are now seen to be filled with microbial life and the fields themselves habited by different species. Previously visible mainly as pests and something to be eradicated, these new objects are now turned into subjects and qualified as central elements of food systems. At the same time, organic agriculture addresses concerns brought about by some consumers' mistrust toward techno-science, providing an alternative for the reliance on various agrochemicals. While new elements are ascribed with new positive qualities and integrated to novel ecological practices, previously established elements such as pesticides are then transformed from "economic miracle" to 'chemical risk' (Jensen and Blok 2008, 770).

Through this critique toward established forms of production, organic agriculture has challenged the conception that agricultural production is an economic activity (Murdoch and Miele 1999). In both its self-description and most social scientific research, organic agriculture is therefore characterized

as a value-oriented approach (e.g., Luttikholt 2007; Padel et al. 2009). By emphasizing new rationales for engaging in agricultural production that challenge industrial agriculture, organic agriculture aims to bring in “wider” concerns, which are contrasted to the “narrow” aims of economic profit and technical efficiency.

Through these developments, organic agriculture has been constructed as an ecological alternative for conventional production—acquiring a position where it can be in many instances argued to be the alternative now available for producers and consumers alike. It has gradually emerged as one of the central solutions that attempts to account for environmental issues in agricultural production. In this way, organic agriculture can be understood as one major form of ecological critique that promotes the political recognition of the new ways of valuing the environment (Centemeri 2017). It offers an alternative system that can be seen to directly address the questions related to ecological critique, as it integrates the various emerging ecological elements into its production practices, which are coordinated according to values that follow ecological principles.

Yet, despite its success, the growth of organic agriculture has not been without its problems. Organic agriculture has been constantly threatened by being understood as mere specialization, where it is turned into just another niche market for those who happen to prefer these special products. This form of economization reduces the general relevance and values of organic agriculture into individual preference and additional source of revenue, discarding the questions of wider change. Much of the previous research has focused on this opposition between the economic, on one hand, and social values and wider benefits on the other (see Kjeldsen and Ingemann 2009). Most notably, the discussion on *conventionalization*—the hypothesis that organic agriculture is gradually starting to resemble conventional production because of the pressures set by market competition and standard-based regulation—characterizes these concerns about organic agriculture not being able to maintain its critical resistance toward mainstream production (Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 1998; 2004a; 2004b). This development then presents a trajectory where the initial difference between organic and conventional is seen to diminish, as economic incentives are seen to become increasingly central in organic agriculture, and its practices become only a slightly modified version of industrial production. Achieving a widely recognized position therefore means that organic agriculture has become seen as part of the mainstream.

However, when examining debates about organic agriculture, it becomes clear that, instead of seeing it as having potential for extending their business, many scientists as well as others have voiced more general skeptical views about organic agriculture and its possible contributions to agricultural sustainability. While this skepticism has been present from the days that organic agriculture first started to receive attention, it is perhaps most prominently promoted by those drawing from a natural scientific viewpoint.

That is, instead of attempting to capture the organic market for additional profits, these critics have been skeptical of the possibilities of organic agriculture altogether. Drawing on studies comparing product qualities or assessing organic pest control methods, these critics claim that organic agriculture is actually not that different and does not have the capacity to bring about meaningful change nor significant impacts. This form of criticism or skepticism therefore offers an altogether different challenge to the legitimacy of organic agriculture and to its value as an alternative for conventional production when compared to the one posed by mainstreaming and conventionalization. One of my aims in this thesis has been to integrate this perspective into a framework that is used to analyze debates about organic agriculture.

Another version of this criticism focuses on the perceived lack of efficiency in organic production. As a shift into organic would result in lowered yields, this lack of efficiency in producing sufficient amounts is joined by the claim that organic agriculture is unable to “feed the world” (e.g., Connor 2008; see also Hurlings and Marsden 2011; Reganold and Wachter 2016; Tomlinson 2013). While some have offered organic agriculture as a solution to the increasing environmental problems, these critiques toward organic agriculture tie the survival of humanity to the use of agrochemicals. From this perspective, organic agriculture makes little or no difference.

I argue that the topics discussed above can then be drawn together into a question that concerns the difference between organic and conventional agriculture. It varies from the claims made by advocates of organic agriculture of providing a real change and alternative to discussion about how organic and conventional products are different in regard to some specific nutrient. I have taken this question about difference as the central focus of the thesis, as it can be considered to encapsulate what I see as some of the central discussions related to organic agriculture: how organic agriculture has been able to present itself as a genuine alternative for conventional agriculture; how the difference between organic and conventional has been considered to be diminishing; and how the skepticism toward organic agriculture has specifically questioned the existence of any significant difference. Examining the question about the quality and existence of this difference makes it possible to study the key issues of the politics of organic agriculture and agricultural sustainability.

The difference between organic and conventional agriculture is therefore not only confined to questions about, for example, the compositional differences or the pesticide residue of various products but deals with moral and political values guiding production and consumption. In these debates about agricultural production, the difference between organic and conventional is generalized into a transformation of the overall rationale of production. The difference between organic and conventional is also about the possibilities of constructing an alternative for the current modes of agricultural production that would take into account the environmental problems produced by industrial agriculture (see Campbell and Liepins 2001).

In this thesis, I have set out to examine the questions of how actors conceptualize the difference between organic and conventional agriculture and on what grounds they do it.

I have examined the debates about organic agriculture in the Finnish context, focusing on the years between 1980 and 2015. Even though organic agriculture remained a marginal practice throughout the 1980s, at least based on numbers of farms that amounted to no more than a few hundred, it started to gain recognition in public and official discussion. This showed, for example, in the two committees on organic agriculture (publishing their reports in 1984 and 1986). At this period, and leading to the first half of the 1990s, organics were mainly “regarded as a specialty in Finnish agriculture, not an alternative,” as Nuutila (2019, 166) phrased it, and organic pioneers considered mainly as eccentrics (Herman et al. 2018; Lähdesmäki et al. 2019). Yet, as I will show later, despite the belittling reactions and small numbers, organic agriculture was able to disturb agricultural markets and overall conceptions about Finnish food.

The developments in the 1980s led to the state program of financial support for conversion to organic farming, as well as hiring official advisors for organic agriculture. The gradual institutionalization of organic agriculture was connected to Finland’s membership in the European Union (EU), which, from 1995 onwards, sparked a quick rise in the number of organic farms. Already the committee reports had speculated on the possibilities of using organic production as a way to promote Finnish production in general, and this idea became more relevant with the opening of Finnish agricultural production to the EU markets. But now this rapid conversion to organic farming—organic farming itself being referred to as a “coping mechanism” for Finnish agriculture—and its gradual institutionalization began to raise questions about the motives of those engaging in it. The period examined here ends in the once-marginal movement being included in, for example, the Finnish “Country Brand” in 2010 and the government’s development program for the organic sector being published in 2014, becoming part of official agricultural policy. (Heinonen 2004; Herman et al. 2018; Nuutila 2016; Mononen 2012.)

During its growth and institutionalization, organic agriculture has been—and continues to be—a contested issue. This thesis therefore examines how organic agriculture has promoted an alternative way of understanding what agricultural production is about and how others have questioned its status as a legitimate alternative for conventional modes of production.

1.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Starting from this difference, and the opposition between organic and conventional, offers a productive approach, as it directs the attention to justification. Faced with competing alternatives, actors need to choose between them and to justify their preferences. That is, in order to solve the situation where organic and conventional agriculture are confronted with each other, actors need to decide why things should be done in a certain way and on what grounds.

To analyze the construction of justifications, I have applied the pragmatic sociology of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1999; 2000; 2006). Pragmatic sociology examines how actors attempt to generalize their positions, reaching beyond oppositions between particular stands and toward different forms of common good. As justifications are seen to articulate the contribution to the common good, this framework offers a productive way to analyze how the values of organic agriculture have been constructed in different situations. With these attempts to generalize issues, justifications aim to reach beyond private and particular interests and to establish new values as part of production and consumption. This offers a way to analyze what are considered to be the “wider issues” of agriculture and food (see Lampkin 1990, chapter 15)—but not in a way that considers them to be such issues by their essence, and instead, how they are made into issues that have public relevance.

Rosin and Campbell (2009) have especially emphasized how pragmatic sociology provides a way for moving beyond a model that starts out from the bifurcation between organic and conventional agriculture. Instead of a clear divide between organic and conventional agriculture, pragmatic sociology sees this difference as constructed in multiple ways and depending on the situation. In this thesis, I continue that discussion, developing the perspective based on pragmatic sociology and adding specifically the focus on contested differences. By focusing on various critical situations (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999), where organic and conventional agriculture are debated, one can turn the setting around. Instead of assuming a diminishing difference, the analysis focuses on how the difference is constructed. The analysis examines how actors attempt to generalize the value(s) of organic agriculture and to show how it is different from conventional agriculture. This approach is based in the move toward what Thévenot (2011) has termed the “disposition of the situation,” focusing on the situational construction of moral and political qualities (see also Blokker 2011).

There is no doubt that intensive political struggles are taking place between various actors engaged in agricultural production, and retailing and studying the political economy of production is relevant in this regard. My aim in this thesis, however, is to add to this discussion the equally-as-intense politics of

knowledge connected to construction of moral and political qualities. This complementary approach does not start out from the assumed superiority of alternative food production methods and construct its analytical framework on this assumption. Instead, it focuses on the struggles over meaning and knowledge that are, I would argue, an equally important issue related to alternative food movements and organic agriculture. While zooming in on the uncertainties related to situational coordination as well as the different forms of trials and testing (Blok 2015; see also Virtanen et al. 2021), the macro-approach of the political economy becomes more complicated.

The main research question in this thesis therefore is: *How has the difference between organic and conventional agriculture been constructed in the justifications and critiques about agricultural production and consumption?* Following this main question are questions about how an ecological alternative has been constructed through organic agriculture? How does this relate to other meaningful differences? And, how has this alternative been opposed?

This approach offers an analytical framework that examines how organic agriculture has been shaped according to different conventions of justification. Instead of a single trajectory based on market competition and economic value, it offers a more diverse view on the different processes that have shaped organic agriculture (Campbell and Liepins 2001; Kjeldsen and Ingemann 2009; Rosin and Campbell 2009). By applying this approach, I aim to show that it is not only economic structures and incentives that have shaped organic agriculture. While economic performance is a central part of the legitimacy of a production system, it is not the only option. It is joined by questions such as scientific credibility, trustworthiness, social benefits, and, to an increasing amount, environmental impacts. All these present different processes of sense-making that have shaped organic agriculture during its development. Differences then emerge from these processes of sense-making, where actors engage in debates about what the meaning of the situation is (cf. Farías 2014, 25).

Using this framework, I have analyzed how organic agriculture has been justified in various contexts, such as media discussions, policies, and various studies. The research object is therefore not primarily focused on the organic movement (from the perspective of social movement studies), although members of the movement figure as prominent actors in the various materials. The primary focus is directed at the various locations, where justifications (and critiques) have been constructed. This approach attempts to grasp the multiple ways organic agriculture has been qualified in these locations (cf. Silvast and Virtanen 2019). Nevertheless, it can be stated that key actors in these processes, in addition to the members of the organic movement, are the officials involved in making agricultural policies, researchers, members of central agricultural associations, as well as journalists.

In the following section, I will examine previous studies on organic agriculture, focusing especially on how they have conceptualized the values of

organic agriculture. In the third section, I will move onto discussing pragmatic sociology, outlining the analytical framework used in the thesis. Following these, the fourth section will present the materials and methods of the thesis and discuss some of the ethical questions related to the study. Finally, the fifth section presents the findings of the thesis. I will first present summaries of the individual research articles included in the thesis. After these, I will discuss how the findings contribute overall to the study on the development of organic agriculture. These findings are structured according to the various forms of differences that have been constructed between organic and conventional agriculture. They provide a constellation of differences that have been in play in the different debates about organic agriculture and that present different views on the construction of organic values.

Before moving on to the next section, a brief notion on the terms used in this thesis. Organic agriculture is not, or at least has not, been a single thing. Organic agriculture grew out of various traditions of “alternative” agriculture—a term that constructs a certain perspective. The general category of “organic” is indeed a result of the process of mainstreaming and institutionalization studied in this thesis. In Finland, this classification was performed during the 1980s, as the first committee on organic farming set out to construct this category to bring order back into markets. Before that, various terms, such as ecological, biological, and natural, were used to define these alternatives for conventional agriculture (conventional producers also continued to oppose the term “organic,” as it was seen to imply that conventional production was “inorganic”; see also Mononen 2008). The emergence of organic agriculture affects the definitions of conventional agriculture. Strictly speaking, conventional agriculture only becomes conventional agriculture when it is juxtaposed with an alternative—here, organic agriculture. The emergence of the ecological critique then makes possible the relational definition of previous agricultural practices as conventional, techno-chemical, or industrial agriculture. These practices existed before the emergence of this critique, but they acquire a new meaning through the emergence of this critical situation. Furthermore, as debates about organic agriculture focus on the definition of what is organic (Guthman 1998), I have attempted to avoid providing a definition myself. Therefore, the point is to emphasize that these definitions are not understood from an essentialist standpoint, and instead, how they are constructed is the topic of this thesis.

The use of the term “practice” is also in need of clarification. First, pragmatic sociology examines how actors construct justifications in practice. This implies a practice theoretical approach, where justifications are not interpreted only as discourse but also as practical tasks (see Thévenot 2001). However, in addition to this, a central part of my analysis focuses on how the conceptual pair of principle and practice is used by actors when making sense of various situations. This refers to instances where organic agriculture is said to offer principles as well as concrete practices. The analysis of justifications

then examines both organic principles (e.g., ecology) and practices (e.g., crop rotation, giving up pesticides) and how they are connected to each other.

2 MAKING SENSE OF ORGANIC VALUES: FROM MORAL DICHOTOMIES TO MORAL COMPLEXITY

In this section, I will discuss how the values of organic agriculture have been dealt with in previous research. I will start by briefly outlining how organic agriculture has been considered to be a value-driven approach to production, in which values are deeply embedded in practices. After this, I will discuss perspectives that have questioned whether or how these values are represented in current mainstreamed versions of organic agriculture. While these approaches, most clearly the discussion on the conventionalization of organic practices, have brought up useful aspects in the development of organic agriculture, they have also received significant critique. After outlining this critique toward conventionalization approaches, I will argue that this critique has missed some aspects of the debates on organic agriculture.

2.1 ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AS CRITIQUE AND ECOLOGICAL EMBEDDEDNESS

Organic agriculture has been commonly considered to be one of the main alternatives, if not the alternative, for conventionally produced food. It offers an alternative where guiding principles of production are focused on taking care of the environment and providing people with healthy food, while the farmer gets a fair share and in which precautions are taken considering the future development of food systems (see Luttikholt 2007). Although the diversity of organic values is emphasized by some authors (e.g., Kaltoft 1999; Tovey 1997), organic agriculture is nevertheless distinguished overall as the value-driven alternative. As Padel et al. (2009, 249) note: “The organic agriculture movement is by tradition value based and core values influence both, the thinking (theory) and the action (practice).”

This value-based “core” of organic production can be approached in differing ways, ranging from a more consensual understanding to a more critical one. Stolze and Lampkin (2009, 241) note that instead of engaging in public protest, the organic movement “opposed the predominant way of farming by demonstrating an alternative.” This presents a more consensual take on how one can understand the nature of organic values, where they operate as an alternative option that demonstrates another way to produce food. However, Stolze and Lampkin also see organic values as “rooted” in a

social movement, which emerged from the opposition to mainstream modes of farming.

Perspectives presenting organic agriculture as an alternative social movement frame values more specifically as critique (Michelsen 2009). According to Michelsen (2001b, 62–63), the standards and certificates are not just ways to distinguish organic products from conventional agriculture products but also reflect a critical stance toward the whole system of conventional production. Michelsen (2001a) also notes that:

Essential vehicles in the development of the concept of organic farming are values expressing a general criticism of mainstream European agriculture, and more general doubts about the interplay between man and nature as reflected in modern technology.

(Michelsen 2001a, 3; emphasis added)

Here, organic values are directed at conventional production, presenting a general critique and a call for change. In Finland, organic agriculture has been defined as a reaction to the negative impacts of intensive agriculture (Mononen 2008, 64). Organic agriculture has then been characterized as a “double phenomenon” (see Seppänen & Helenius 2004) where, on one hand, it is a set of defined rules on farming practices, articulated in certificates, but, on the other hand, it is a vision of a better way to produce food and organize agriculture.

Moreover, organic agriculture is not seen as promoting only abstracted values but connecting them to a different relation between society and nature. The critique of industrial agriculture is therefore directed toward practices that aim to “progressively ‘squeeze’ biological constraints out of the production process” (Murdoch and Miele 1999, 467). Instead of attempting to disconnect agriculture and food from the environment with various industrial methods, organic agriculture aims to “reconnect” production with nature. Organic agriculture builds on the idea that humans are an integrated part of nature and do not know the full consequences of their actions (see Padel et al. 2009, 247). According to Luttikholt (2007, 354), the attitude according to which “man and nature are considered to be an integrated whole” is one of the basic conceptions of organic agriculture, and nature is not seen as something external to production or society but instead something that is within them (Kaltoft 1999; 2001; Tovey 1997). Organic farming is seen to form a new bond with nature: “The organic farming movement can be seen as a radical gesture of reconciliation with nature, an embodied attempt to change the way we actually live in the (social/natural) world” (Vos 2000, 246).¹

¹ Although, it should be noted that some authors, such as Kakriainen et al. (2006, 132), associate organic agriculture specifically with a critique toward “materialist” values and is seen to promote “non-material values.”

This conception of the embeddedness of food production on nature is contrasted to the “extreme fetishization” (Vos 2000, 246) of the everyday conception of where food comes from. Organic agriculture has the potential of bringing into view the ecological basis of food, possibly contributing to its de-fetishization (Allen & Kovach 2000). The meaning of food is not exhausted by its nutritional content. Describing the views of Irish organic farmers, Tovey (1997, 25) notes that very few limited their views to only on-farm production and, instead, understood agricultural production as “inseparable from social issues, which ranged from rebuilding rural communities to avoiding exploitation of workers, overcoming the rural-urban or producer-consumer divide, creating an alternative lifestyle and alternative ways of relating to others and to nature.”

This social and environmental critique, which organic agriculture has presented toward conventional systems of production, make visible the relations within these systems and relations they have to their environments. Industrialization and globalization detach production and consumption, as in industrial production, “connections between what farmers do and what we end up eating become harder and harder for consumers to make” (Tovey 1997, 23). Therefore, in addition to bringing out the environmental impacts of production, these movements have challenged policies that were previously focused primarily on the production side (Tovey 1997, 23; see also Jokinen 1995; 1997). Organic agriculture is then considered to be part of “quality production,” which operates with the distinction of emphasizing quality over quantity and with the embeddedness of alternative food practices to local ecologies (Goodman 2003; Murdoch et al. 2000).

Another form of transforming agriculture and food systems, close to organic agriculture although not synonymous with it, is agroecology. Agroecology is both a field of study (i.e. the study of ecology of agricultural systems) and a more general approach to agricultural production (Migliorini and Wezel 2017, Plumecocq et al. 2018). It is then part of the same development of attempting to introduce or highlight the ecological aspects of agricultural production, although it is also argued to provide a way of going beyond re-embedding agriculture into local conditions (Lamine and Dawson 2018). Authors also emphasize that agroecology has an explicitly political dimension, which is concerned with the agency and autonomy of producers and citizens engaged in it, as well as challenging the status quo (Anderson et al. 2019).

While not the same as organic agriculture, many organic advocates emphasize that their methods are grounded on agroecology (in both its meanings). As Migliorini and Wezel (2017) also note, organic agriculture and agroecology share numerous principles and practices. The main difference is then perhaps that agroecology is not a certified or codified system of rules as is organic agriculture, and in this way has attracted more attention recently as it is seen more capable of offering a radical alternative (Anderson et al. 2019; Migliorini and Wezel 2017). Even though many have seen organic agriculture

as the main option for transforming food systems, many have also raised concerns about its transformative capacity. In social scientific research, these concerns have been primarily related to the institutionalization of organic agriculture through certification. I will therefore turn to this discussion in the next section.

2.2 CONVENTIONALIZATION AND THE DISCONNECTION BETWEEN PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

While the approach to organic agriculture presented above is a possible alternative for conventional production, a large portion of studies examining organic values have been primarily concerned with the loss of these values. One of the central discussions in the development of organic agriculture has been the *conventionalization* thesis (or conventionalization hypothesis), first introduced by Buck, Getz, and Guthman (1997) and later elaborated by Guthman (1998; 2004a; 2004b). By examining the developments of the organic sectors in California, this thesis suggested that, following its institutionalization and growth, organic agriculture has gradually started to resemble conventional production. Aspects of the conventionalization of organic agriculture are growing farm size and the application of economies of scale, firm-like management, the industrialization of organic practices, specialization, input substitution, and alienation from previous marketing channels (such as direct marketing). In the scenario presented by the conventionalization thesis, organic farming will develop along the same lines as modern conventional agriculture, replicating the same history. As Hall and Moggyorody (2001, 399) sum up these developments, the conventionalization hypothesis postulates that “smaller farms become bigger, debt loads increase with increasing capital intensification, labor is replaced by mechanization and other industrial inputs, and marketing become export-oriented rather than local.”

Later, elaborating on the thesis—and in replying to her critics—Guthman (2004a, 307) specified some of the processes considered to be contributing to conventionalization. First, there is the “political threat” of decreasing the ambitiousness of the organic standards, operating mainly through lobbying and pressure from agribusiness aiming to capture organic markets. Agribusiness actors entering the organic sector are assumed to lobby for less committed standards, which then would make organic production more cost efficient (see Vos 2000). Another aspect of this development is the fact that, in the United States, organic certification has been conducted by private actors. This arrangement has been claimed to lead to competition between these certifying agencies, where again the setting is assumed to produce the incentive to lower standards in order to compete for customers. Second, when

practicing this less committed version of organic agriculture, agribusiness involvement possibly undermines the livelihoods of “presumably more committed producers.” Agribusiness practices are therefore assumed to be effectively “lessening some of the distinctiveness” of organic farming, thus making it a conventionalized version of what it used to be (Guthman 2004a).

The problems presented by Guthman and others stem from the certification of organic agriculture (Guthman 2004c). Certification is seen to produce an abstracted and universalized definition of what counts as organic, making it possible for “uncommitted” actors to enter the scene. That is, while facilitating the growth of organic farming, certification creates new possibilities for “agribusiness accumulation” and the entry of agribusiness actors into the organic markets (Buck et al. 1997, 6). First, certificates are seen to bring about a shift to measurable quantities and shift away from more “holistic” organic values. An example of this quantification is the focus primarily on inputs (and their substitution) instead of more wide-ranging changes in production practices. It is assumed that organic farming becomes defined only as negatively through specific banned substances, thus neglecting the wider aims for social change. Second, when this has been set as the official way to define what is organic, these standards become subject to market competition. Less “committed” versions of standards are more cost efficient, which therefore incentivizes agribusiness actors to lobby for the lowering of requirements.

In short, Guthman’s (1998) argument is that the regulation of organic agriculture is a way to “legitimize accumulation” (p. 137) and make “organic agriculture safe for capitalism” (p. 150). We have therefore “become dependent on regulation to make nature safe and available” (Guthman 1998, 150). The integration of organic agriculture into mainstream markets transforms its values—from a critical, alternative movement into a market practice, directed by the logic of intensification, thus leading to the concrete diminishing of the difference between organic and conventional. In general, the conventionalization thesis assumes a development in organic agriculture that moves from an emphasis on sustainability to an emphasis on economic factors (e.g., Constance et al. 2008; Goldberger 2011). Thus, according to Guthman (1998, 136), organic farming was being transformed into just one niche of conventional markets, and “the idiom of a ‘purer’ nature is deployed to sell what is increasingly commodified nature.”

Therefore, conventionalization refers both to the change in organic farming practices and the organization of the whole food system. It is not just a process where organic agriculture loses its environmentally beneficial practices but also a change in the social organization of the economic structure of organic production and consumption. This is most evident in the conception that “agribusiness” involvement and supermarkets selling organic food implies conventionalization. While the earlier versions of the conventionalization thesis (Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 1998) presented a picture where agribusiness actors were motivated by the aim to capture the profits of organic

markets, Guthman's (2004a; 2004b) later version presents this as a structural change, which conditions—and effectively limits—the possibilities of organic agriculture.

Alongside the conventionalization thesis, another possibility for the development of the organic sector has been presented. Buck et al. (1997, 8, 11) already suggested that there could be possible bifurcation between the original, committed artisanal producers who were applying agroecological methods and the conventionalized version of organics promoted by agribusiness, not actually committed to organic principles (see also Coombes and Campbell 1998). In this conceptualization, the “wider agenda” of organic agriculture that aims for public benefits is maintained by a smaller group within the organic sector who still subscribe to the original alternative values. As, for example, Reed (2009, 280) expressed: “One element of the movement is increasingly referring to people solely as consumers, whilst others are trying to engage with them on a wider agenda.” The difference that previously existed *between* organic and conventional farming is now drawn (also) *within* the movement, thus maintaining a morally legitimate yet marginal form of organic agriculture. Bifurcation was therefore suggested by some (e.g., Campbell & Liepins 2001; Coombes & Campbell 1998) as a possible way for organic producers to resist conventionalization. That is, while the agribusiness version of organic practices was seen to resemble conventional agriculture, this was not characteristic of the organic sector as a whole, thus leaving room for resistance. However, later it has been noted that the idea of bifurcation follows the same lines as conventionalization, presenting a clear distinction between those committed to organic values and those motivated by profit (e.g., Darnhofer et al. 2010; Rosin & Campbell 2009; Schewe 2015).

The diminishing difference between organic and conventional agriculture, suggested by conventionalization and bifurcation viewpoints, affects the understanding of the relation between principles and practices in organic agriculture. As organic practices are said to resemble more and more those of conventional agriculture and actors engaged in it are more motivated by profits, this new reality appears to be disconnected from the image of organic agriculture (or that organic principles and values now appear only as an image). Through this process, “nature” becomes only a façade that masks the actual reality of production:

In this way, organic food consumption is an expression of how people internalize the meaning of nature, by which consuming more ‘naturalized’ commodities somehow legitimates what is effectively class-stratified consumption ... State regulation and intense civil society involvement in food quality, it is argued, may even further legitimize these new and lucrative forms of consumption by endowing agribusiness with an image of responsibility and caring.

(Guthman 1998, 148)

While the assumption therefore is that the values of conventionalized organic production have changed, there is nevertheless a sense of a disconnection between principles and practice or the image that, for example, consumers have about them and the actual practice (Clark 2015).

Other studies, even though not applying the conventionalization perspective or a political economic framework as such, have raised concerns about the status of organic values in current forms of production. These studies focus on whether organic values are represented in certificates and standards (Padel et al. 2009; Vos 2000) or how values are limited by regulatory processes and institutionalization (Kaltoft 1999; Tovey 1997), as well as market competition (Smith and Marsden 2004). While presenting illustrative analyses on the development of organic agriculture, they start with a similar analytical setting that examines how the values and practices are gradually diminished.

However, when examining debates about organic agriculture, one finds another challenge facing the organic movement that has been much less discussed in social scientific research. Those actors that are not committed to organic principles are not only attempting to capture the organic market but also take an overall skeptical view on the possibilities of organic agriculture (e.g., Connor 2007; Trewavas 2001). Instead of seeing it as having potential for extending their business, these critiques question the possibilities of organic agriculture altogether. Pointing to the rejection of, for example, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or the connections to biodynamics principles, organic agriculture is denounced as anti-scientific. Moreover, drawing on meta-analyses and other studies, these critics claim that organic practices do not have the possibilities to achieve the goals set for them.

Previous analyses based on political economic theorizing have mostly situated science and technology together with conventional, techno-chemical agriculture and the aims to conventionalize organic agriculture (e.g., Guthman 1998, 142–143). Allen and Kovach (2000, 227) note that:

The environmental consequences of synthetic fertilizers, for example, are not readily apparent; in order to see them, we need the lenses provided by scientists. Therefore, the argument that organic food is better than non-organic food implicitly and explicitly entails a critique of the scientific institutions that tell us otherwise.

Critiques based on scientific research and directed toward organic practices have therefore been assessed from the perspective of organic values—and not the other way around. While research results are used to support organic agriculture, all research that has questioned the effectiveness of organic practices is categorically rejected. Scientific research presents a highly different way to approach the relation to nature in agricultural production, contrasted to for example Vos (2000), who notes that knowing nature occurs “on the ground” and “through work.”

The argument is *not* that these critiques, based on natural scientific research, would reveal the truth about organic agriculture or somehow be completely objective. Instead, my argument is that, while analyses of market structures provide relevant insights, the results provided by political economic analyses are tied to the assumptions about the initial difference between the two forms of production (see Rosin and Campbell 2009, 45). It does not allow much room for positions outside the dichotomy between organic and conventional agriculture. In the next section, I therefore turn to approaches that advocate for a more “pluralist” view on the various sides of organic agriculture.

2.3 PLURALITY OF VALUE ORIENTATIONS: MOVING BEYOND MORAL DICHOTOMIES

While sparking intense discussion and research on the development of organic agriculture, critics have primarily pointed out that the conventionalization thesis presents a picture of the development of organic agriculture that is too rigid and straightforward (Tomlinson 2008).

First, the empirical validity of possible conventionalization has been assessed. Data from different studies and regions have presented some support for conventionalization and bifurcation in, for example, Germany (Best 2008); Ontario, Canada (Hall & Mogyorody 2001); Australia (Lockie & Halpin 2005); and Portugal (Truninger 2008) but have quite generally noted that the development of organic agriculture does not seem to follow the clear lines set in these models. For example, Lockie and Halpin (2005, 304) note that longstanding organic producers and those who have more recently entered the practice have more in common than what the clear division of the concept of bifurcation suggests. These studies have shown that there are groups of organic farmers who set economic considerations as primary and are less motivated by environmental concerns but note that the situation is much more diverse (Forsell and Lankoski 2017; Herman et al. 2018; Sutherland 2013; Sutherland & Darnhofer 2012). Sutherland (2011) has noted that some conventional farmers challenge this division, claiming to be “effectively organic” by their farming practices. Rosin and Campbell (2009), on the other hand, note that, in addition to conventionalization, a process of “organification” could be in place where agricultural practices in general might be turning to more ecological methods.

Studies have challenged the universality of conventionalization, questioning whether the results gained from the initial studies in California can be generalized to other social, political, and economic settings (Darnhofer et al., 2019; Kjeldsen and Ingemann, 2009; Michelsen, 2001; 2009; Tomlinson 2008). In addition to these studies situated in Europe, perhaps the most visible opposition has been presented by researchers studying the

organic sector in New Zealand (e.g., Campbell and Rosin 2011; Rosin and Campbell 2009; Schewe 2015). Studies have also suggested that changes could be about the professionalization of organic farming (Darnhofer 2006), leading to, for example, more efficient organic methods and lower prices for consumers. As Darnhofer et al. (2010, 71) note: “Conventionalization is a departure from organic values, but not all departure from the original practices of the pioneers is conventionalization.”

While Guthman, as well as her critics, has emphasized the exceptionalism of the developments in California where the first studies on conventionalization were conducted, I argue that this understanding that mainstreaming or institutionalization leading to diluted values and a commercialized, commodified version of organic agriculture and food can be found elsewhere as well. It can be found on many popular and informal accounts of contemporary organic agriculture, but it is also the stand of critical political economic analyses in general (cf. Campbell and Rosin 2011; Shapin 2006). This is partly because of the tension between the values the organic movement has attempted to promote and the economic means it has chosen to promote them with (Sutherland & Darnhofer 2012). Or, as Rogers and Fraszczak (2014, 337) have stated: “When your professional activity is founded on an activism valuing social conscience and anti-consumerism, the economic prerogatives of running a business further condition the limits to pursuing both activities.”

Second, the conventionalization thesis has been questioned based on the normative underpinnings associated with this approach. According to Lockie and Halpin (2005, 284), the “implicit, yet clear” normative element of the conventionalization discussion has been to “retrieve or save the organic sector from corruption by the patterns of practice and thought associated with conventional agriculture.” They continue that the not-so-subtle normative claim in the concepts of conventionalization and bifurcation is that the transformative potential of the organic movement is threatened by the conventional elements brought about by new entrants to the organic sector (Lockie and Halpin 2005, 304). Conventionalization can therefore be considered to be an approach that constructs its moral viewpoint from the perspective of the organic movement:

The prominence of these concepts in debates over organic agriculture may be motivated by the desire to make sense, in the absence of comprehensive data, of rapid processes of social change, or by the desire to make an ideological fit with movement goals that scholars identify with or have sympathy for.

(Lockie & Halpin 2005, 305)

These critiques take the normative dichotomies as political modes of sense-making and, instead of promoting them as analytical concepts for the study of change in agriculture and food, note that focus could be directed on “how ideas

of conventionalisation are used by researchers and organic activists in order to actively govern, discipline and steer the organic sector” (Lockie and Halpin 2005, 305). Indeed, Guthman (2004a) has also noted that the implicit aim of the initial studies (i.e., Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 1998) was to raise discussion on how organic agriculture ought to be developed:

Arguably, the unspoken purpose of these early interventions was to raise the important question as to whether organic agriculture was being practiced as it is imagined and to investigate the dynamics that were shaping it, precisely to open the doors to contestation about the direction organic agriculture ought to go.

(Guthman 2004a, 302; emphasis in original)

Even more clearly, Guthman (2004a, 308) later states that “the very existence of agribusiness participation” points to the direction that “deeper meanings of organic farming” are not included in the rules and regulations. How this is justified remains somewhat unclear, but it points to the fact that, from this perspective, there is no way to consider agricultural markets as bringing about change or morally driven action. This is because Guthman and others wish to retain organic agriculture as an alternative movement, which aims to transform or challenge capitalist markets. In her study, which also aims to diversify the view on organic agriculture and conventionalization, Mansfield (2004) offers an illustrative description of how conventionalization studies approach organic values:

Organic approaches are treated as exceptional not just because they are based on alternative production practices, but because these practices are backed by values that, while not completely coherent nor monolithic, tend to challenge both conventional agriculture and capitalist, non-sustainable production more broadly. Thus, it is values, worldviews, and knowledge systems, as they intertwine with specific practices, that are seen as threatened by the conventionalisation of organic production.

(Mansfield 2004, 218)

As Mansfield continues, foremost of these values is the alternative conception of nature-society relations.

Darnhofer et al. (2010), on the other hand, have criticized the straightforward focus on structural changes (i.e., Guthman 2004a) and suggested that the extent of conventionalization should be examined as whether there is substantial change in the core organic values. They then argue that instead of assuming that marketization and agribusiness involvement, as structural changes, bring about the changes in values, assessing the development of organic agriculture should be focused on the ethical principles and values “that are the foundation of organic farming” (Darnhofer et al. 2010,

68). However, even though this move usefully directs attention to the more detailed changes in values, their perspective is still somewhat connected to the division between organic and conventional values. The framework that they offer takes the organic values constructed by movement actors as the starting point for the analysis. Organic agriculture is therefore still defined by values as its “core” (cf. Padel et al. 2009). Although these values are conceptualized as changing and adapting, the four principles of ecology, fairness, care, and health are nevertheless the defining characteristics of organic agriculture, which set it apart from conventional agriculture.

Following these critiques toward conventionalization, studies have turned to more “pluralist” approaches that focus on the various ways organic agriculture is coordinated and valued, giving more room for action, negotiation, and multiplicity. There exists now a wide variety of studies—of which the articles in this thesis are a part of—that start their investigation by calling for more diverse conceptual settings (e.g., Campbell and Rosin 2011; Herman et al. 2018; Kjeldsen and Ingemann 2009; Orsini et al. 2019; Sonnino and Marsden 2006). Studies have suggested moves “beyond political economy” (Busch and Juska 1997) or “beyond bifurcation” (Rosin and Campbell 2009). Rosin and Campbell note that while bifurcation helped to make analytical perspectives more complex, it is still connected to the dichotomy of good organics and bad conventional production. Pluralist views suggest that, instead of conceptualizing the issues through an overall rigid dichotomy, dualism can be seen as something that actors use in order to make sense of different situations (see Vanderplanken et al. 2016, 6).

In this strand of research, pragmatic sociology—or conventions theory, as it has been called in agrifood research—has gained much attention (Ponte 2016). Rosin and Campbell (2009, 38) suggest that Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology provides means with which the inherent dualisms of conventionalization and bifurcation can be transcended. Andersen (2011, 440) has proposed that current organic food consumption does not suffer from a lack of moral elements—as might be inferred from the discussion on conventionalization—but instead from a plurality of competing moralities that pragmatic sociology is more capable of analyzing. That is, current forms of organic agriculture have not been depleted of values because of conventionalization, but instead the critique presented by the organic movement has opened up a complex mix of moral positions. Current issues related to food and agriculture present actors with “moral complexity” (Thévenot 2002b) that does not fall into clear lines where there is one inherently good and one bad option. Pragmatic sociology then turns normative conceptions into an object of analysis—not part of the conceptual framework. In the next section, I will discuss pragmatic sociology and how it can be applied to the issues presented above.

3 PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY: MAKING MORAL QUALITIES

In this section, I will outline the analytical framework used in this thesis. This framework builds mainly on Boltanski and Thévenot's original work on public justification (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2000; 2006), as well as Thévenot's later development of this perspective (2001; 2002; 2007; 2014; 2020). I am primarily concerned with public justification, as it captures the construction of organic values and how they contribute to the collective and common good (the "wider issues" of societal relevance and value orientation to agricultural production). The approach has been developed through various streams and continues to be developed by current research (e.g., Blok 2013; Centemeri 2017). Later in the discussion of the results of this study, I will also focus on some of the limits of this approach.

The first part of this section presents the basic element of the model of justification, which builds on situational judgment. In the second section, I will discuss the approach to temporality in pragmatic sociology and the shaping of agriculture and food into conventionalized formats. The third section sums up these discussions and presents the analytical model used in this thesis.

3.1 SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT AND GENERALIZATION

Boltanski and Thévenot's analysis of justification starts out from what are termed crisis situations (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). These are situations where previous activity has been interrupted and actors need to engage in reflection. Actors engaged in the situation attempt to make sense of the situation and to coordinate and order it in a way that makes it possible to decide on how to proceed. In attempting to settle such situations in a legitimate way (i.e., without forcing one's conceptions and solutions against others), actors are faced with the need to justify their claims and actions. Why is one's solution or definition better than others? Faced with this *imperative to justify* one's actions, actors are seen as attempting to rise to a more general, common level that transcends particular interests (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). In order to transcend the situation, actors are required to present it as an instance of a more general principle, which should be applied to resolve the situation. This in turn requires that actors are able to organize, compare, and evaluate the various elements enmeshed in the situation into a coherent whole.

Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006, 1) analysis focuses on the various "beings" that, as they note, are always considered to operate in a qualified state. This needs to be understood in the context definition of *qualification*. Focusing on

qualification, pragmatic sociology examines both the identification of issues and their categorization. This is based on two meanings of qualification, understood as (1) the identification and attribution of qualities and (2) the struggles of whether an issue, object, or a person qualifies as something to be included in a particular category (p. 359). Pragmatic sociology aligns with approaches that do not see qualities as inherent or fixed characteristics of objects but instead something that has to be constructed and negotiated (e.g., Heuts and Mol 2013, 136; Sonnino and Marsden 2006, 185). The meaning of a particular situation and the objects entangled in it are formed relationally. Only when placed in relation with other elements through equivalencies are the qualities of actors and objects formed. The general principles of, for example, efficiency or equality provide ways to assess them. Therefore, strictly speaking, actors are analyzed only from the perspective of the situation, where they appear in qualified states (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 1; see also Virtanen 2015, 82–88).

Critical situations are defined in relation to the disruption of habitual, non-reflexive action where these operations of qualification (or the making of equivalencies) emerge (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). The focus on the coordination of critical situations, where actors need to rely on conventions to establish order, presents a move away from “the disposition of the person” to “the disposition of the situation” (Blokker 2011, 252; Thévenot 2011, 42). What this means is that the focus is on the situational requirements of justification and coordination and not on the personal qualities of actors. This allows pragmatic sociology to avoid reducing justifications to individual preferences but also not to take various collective entities as such and instead as constructed (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). The focus is on the acts of generalization, where actors aim to show that their claims are not only private concerns but instead something that has more general relevance and is beneficial for others.

These situational judgments are, however, not seen as something based solely on ordering that is confined to the local or to the individual actors. As noted, the central task for public justification is that of generalization, which aims precisely to transcend the local—and at the same time the private and particular—and connect the situation and the elements in it to general principles.² These principles offer actors capacities, through which they can argue that the situation has more general relevance: “Shaping people and things in conventional forms produces capacities—or powers—to communicate and coordinate, that are needed for living in human communities” (Thévenot 2014, 10).

Acts, objects, and the overall situation are therefore qualified as something more general. The situation is not considered a singular event but instead an

² This can be contrasted to the approach to justification presented by Scott and Lyman (1968, 51), who note that actors engage in what could be termed particularization, where a justification for an act is based on the argument that the rules do not apply to the particular case.

instance that concerns more general principles, such as equality, efficiency, or traditions, that are seen to benefit the whole community. When organizing agricultural production, it is, for example, only rational not to waste resources, and we should use them as efficiently as possible. Such justification then mobilizes devices for accurate measurements, engineering skills, and calculated plans to achieve this coordination toward the common goal. While this can be understood in the case of the qualities of different objects, it should be noted that actors are qualified equally as well in these situations. Therefore, the requirement for a public justification is that it “must be made in accordance with a conception of a ‘common good’ that transcends [actors’] own selfish motives” (Jensen 2018, 4). As in pragmatism more generally, these motives are not seen to be inherent qualities of actors but something that are formed in interaction, as actors attempt to make sense of others and to explain themselves (Mills 1940). Actors are then also considered as qualified and plural, as they engage in action in different environments (Centemeri 2015).

Publicity is not examined as a sphere or an arena that actors enter to debate issues. Instead, publicity can be considered a quality constructed and debated in different situations. When constructing justifications, actors attempt to generalize their particular causes into issues that are of public interest. As Thévenot (2014, 16) notes:

Instead of presuming a (public) space of communication—understood in the narrow sense of information exchange—and because information requires shared formatting, we have to pay close attention to the prior transformation of personal concerns into the format which commonality demands.

This operation is termed communicating, where actors aim to transform issues into common ones and thus to “voice concerns.” Things are not viewed “down” from the public sphere, but, instead, as a task of being able to “rise” to the level of the public (Luhtakallio 2012). This does not refer to a focus on “bottom-up” politics only, which usually begins with grassroots movements. Instead, the focus on these prior developments of shaping things—starting “far below politics”—examines how things are transformed into common formats (Thévenot 2020). The same applies to various issues and objects that are not assumed to be of public interests as such. Instead, the focus of the analysis is directed to the operations through which things are qualified and shaped into being public—that is, they are connected to the common interest of the collective. Conflicts are examined as focused precisely on this status of things or issue of being publicly relevant—being relevant to the community. As various conflicts revolve around the question about the public relevance of a certain issue or thing, they at the same time engage in articulating what the common interest of a collective is.

While there can be numerous ways to compare and evaluate things, Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology focuses on the most legitimate forms of worth, which are seen to form coherent polities and rise to a level of

common good. These conventionalized formats—the *orders of worth*—are based on distinct principles according to which worth can be legitimately assessed. They present differing conceptions about how collectives can be organized and how these solutions are beneficial for the common good. The different orders of worth are taken as historically formed practices, and Boltanski and Thévenot identified them by examining both classical texts in political thought and through various sociological studies. The six orders of worth, identified in their original work (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2006), are *inspirational worth*, valuing creativity, spirituality, and charisma; *domestic worth*, based on traditions, close personal ties, and hierarchy; *renown or fame worth*, based on fame and recognition; *civic worth*, based on principles of equality and solidarity; *market worth*, based on competition and the accumulation of wealth; and *industrial worth*, based on efficiency, accuracy, and technical measurement. In their later work, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005 [1999]; 2005) explored an emerging network order of worth, whereas Thévenot and others suggested that a green order of worth should be added (Lafaye and Thévenot 1993; Thévenot et al. 2000).

Each of the orders of worth provides a principle of commonality and common good, according to which social relations can be organized. They provide ways according to which one can justify what is relevant in a given situation and how the situation needs to be resolved. The claim is that these different forms of worth all fulfill a certain set of requirements set for public justifications, thus forming a common model. Therefore, while presenting different conceptions about commonality, agency, and morality, together they are seen to form a common *regime* of public justification. The model therefore argues for a limited plurality of legitimate forms of worth. Values are not reduced to individual preferences, leading to “interminable moral disputes,” but justifications need to be adjusted to the circumstances of the situation (Thévenot 2002a).

In addition to justifications, the model examines *critiques* within the same analytical framework, as they are considered to be based on the same forms of worth as justification. Two kinds of critiques are considered: those situated within one order of worth and those where one form of worth is denounced from the point of view of another worth. Whereas justifications present a rise in generality, critiques are seen as acts of particularization. Critiques aim to denounce issues as limited to particular or private interests or simply having no general relevance. This perspective on critiques also presents Boltanski and Thévenot’s stance according to which critique is not presented “outside” of society but instead always situated within the order of worths. The impartial sense that critiques create while denouncing the selfish or partial actions of others can therefore be understood in the same way as acts of justification, as they attempt to transcend the particularity of the situation and appear as general. An example of a critique is then an instance where someone is accused of being a sellout who has given up his or her dreams (inspirational worth denouncing the market worth). But critiques can also be acts of unveiling,

where one justification is denounced only as a façade for the true and particular interests behind the justification (as is the case with accusations of greenwash, as discussed in the previous section).

The basic form of justification considered in this model necessitates that coordination operates according to a single principle of equivalence and that other forms of worth are ruled out from the situation. However, in addition to this, actors can attempt to solve the situation by forming *compromises* between forms of worth (Luhtakallio 2012; Ylä-Anttila 2010). In these instances, the requirement of specifying the form of worth is avoided and multiple principles can coexist. While compromise settings can be established on a rather general level, such as labor market negotiations, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, 278) emphasize that these arrangements are always vulnerable, and actors can demand that the principle of worth be specified. This can lead to unveiling where the compromise is a setting where one form of worth is used to cover the fact that the other principle is the actual one (p. 281).

Boltanski and Thévenot's model assumes that justifications and tests require the creation of equivalencies that relies on the "purification" of the situation (i.e., setting it up according to one order of worth only). Organic agriculture, as well as many other environmental or sustainability-related issues, posits problems for this, as they are in many cases compromises that attempt to combine numerous forms of worth. In this way, environmental issues especially challenge the previous political order, as they do not fit unproblematically to the established categories (see Blok 2013; Centemeri 2015; 2017). Yet, at the same time, numerous situations show how actors are capable of focusing on one order of worth, as they engage in debating, for example, the scientific credibility or efficiency of different farming systems. Conventions of justification guide what is considered relevant and what the particular situation is about. To clarify, my intention is not to define organic agriculture as an *inherently* compromised or composite entity. Instead, the analyses focus on the modes of valuation, through which organic agriculture as an object of contention is coordinated in various situations.

The tension between compromise and critique presents significant challenges for issues concerning sustainability that are commonly considered to require a "holistic" approach. Depending on the context, arguments emphasizing holism can be interpreted in different ways. It can be seen as a form of generalization, where justifications emphasize the need to look beyond the particular situation. However, the organic movement, together with other environmental movements, has grounded its cause on the perspective emphasizing the interconnectedness of the environment, economy, and social justice. From the perspective of pragmatic sociology, this form of holism can be interpreted as a compromise between different orders of worth.

The construction of equivalencies that are able to support justifications is considered not to rely only on argumentation or words but to involve various material objects and devices as well. While people can move from one order of

worth to another—and are required to do so—certain objects reside in particular orders of worth. The possibilities to coordinate situations are dependent on the support of these objects that contribute to the coherence of the situation (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Thévenot 2002a). While various material surroundings or environments are considered to be part of the action altogether, the incorporation of objects operates particularly through the construction of different *tests*. Centemeri (2015, 304) notes that “commensuration is the operation at the heart of the reality test designed to assess the legitimacy of a public attribution of worth.” Tests are arrangements that are considered to direct attention to what is relevant and to attribute worth in a legitimate way. The focus on tests therefore emphasizes the way pragmatic sociology examines the interconnections between what is considered to be “real” and “good” (Thévenot 2002b).

Each world is considered to establish a distinct reality test that is able to provide access to the reality of this world, and they take on highly differentiating forms (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 159–211). A test can refer to arrangements such as exams or scientific measurements.³ On the contrary, in the test of the inspired world, one detaches from the other and engages in a spiritual journey or in introspection. Engaged in this quest, one leaves behind norms and rules set by others and follows his or her own dreams. On the other hand, in the domestic world, actors engage in collective rituals, such as a family occasion. By exchanging gifts and giving speeches, actors establish the hierarchical relations between the participants, while the occasion itself shows who is truly relevant and valuable. Therefore, in addition to the engagement with various objects and evidence, tests are seen to provide an access to a reality that is connected to people’s “moral character.” Part of the reality confirmed in these events is the “true nature” of the actors involved, as tests qualify them as well. This approach is particularly useful in the case of organic agriculture, where “‘the social’ is part of many actors’ conception of what ‘real’ organic is” (Rogers and Fraszczak 2014, 325).

³ As the findings of this thesis emphasize the role of natural science and the use of research results in various debates, the interpretation of this in the context of pragmatic sociology is in order. I have interpreted justification that mobilizes this sort of knowledge as situating to the industrial worth, as it commonly refers to principles such as accuracy, measurability, and factuality. These justifications differ slightly from those that put emphasis on efficiency, even though these justifications form a coherent whole. They are brought together in justifications for techno-chemical methods that produce high yields with efficient methods, while at the same time discrediting alternative methods that they consider to be without any solid scientific backing (see e.g., Plumecocq et al. 2018). Regardless, it should be noted that science itself is a much more diverse phenomenon and practice, which from the perspective of pragmatic sociology is coordinated through multiple forms of worth (one needs only to think of how funding, fame, and recognition, and even inspiration and conceptions about genius and personal charisma, play a part in the academic world). Justifications for the efficient production of food are in many cases tightly connected to food security and the need to feed everyone equally.

Pragmatic sociology postulates a connection between justification and objectification (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1966). Tests are central in this process, as they enroll different objects and material arrangements, providing access to a certain reality that detaches claims from the particular persons and generalizes them. They are also essential when considering that worth cannot be permanently attached to actors and needs to be open for testing that confirms their actual worth. In this way, they join together a sense of reality and conceptions of justice. Establishing such a reality test is considered one of the key characteristics of a fully formed moral world and is also a central theme in *Article IV*.

Previous studies using pragmatic sociology in the analysis of organic food systems have examined the coordination of action in situations where qualities are less certain, and there is a need to find these certainties by relying on conventionalized forms (Bernzen and Braun 2014). In diversifying the picture on organic markets, they have shown how other forms, in addition to certification and markets, structure the coordination of action. Even though certificates and standards are central, there are numerous conventionalized practices according to which qualities are constructed (Truninger 2008). Studies have emphasized how reputation (renown worth), trust and personal relations (domestic worth), and “social benefits” (civic worth) matter in the coordination of food systems (e.g., Bernzen and Braun 2014, 1256). These analyses give more room for actors and agency, conceptualizing them as actively negotiating meanings (e.g., Truninger 2008; see also Campbell and Rosin 2011). Contrasted to the political economic analyses, this perspective then sees actors as capable of managing the different tensions that the growth of organic agriculture has produced (Andersen 2011; Rosin and Campbell 2009). The framework has been used to bring more nuance and to identify different practices in the coordination of organic production and food (see e.g., Bernzen and Braun 2014).

However, few of these studies have examined the construction of publicity in debates over organic agriculture. In part, this might be because of the fact that not many studies have directly examined debates where organic and conventional agriculture are set against each other. Furthermore, as I argue in *Article I*, authors using pragmatic sociology still unproblematically refer to some motives—mainly those associated with civic worth—as “altruistic,” “dedicated,” or “ethical,” while describing the activity of different organic actors (Bernzen and Braun 2014, 1257–9; Truninger 2008, 120). These motives are then contrasted to market and industrial worth conventions—not qualified as moral in this way.

These analyses emphasize the strand of research that draws from the economic sociological side of this tradition and emphasize the variety of (cognitive) formats in the coordination of action (cf. Ponte 2016). Contrasted to this, a political sociological approach emphasizes contestations between organic and conventional agriculture and examines the construction of justification in these conflicts (Luhtakallio 2012). Not only does this approach

focus on the construction of justifications, but it can also retain the focus on organic agriculture as critique. Rosin and Campbell's (2009) study points to this direction, as they briefly discuss critiques of organic agriculture. In their analysis, they note that organic agriculture was criticized as only "a niche market for wealthy consumers" (p. 41) and that it "fails in its capacity to supply a global society with a more consistent, productive, and reliable source of food" (p. 42). Both examples show how the legitimacy of organic agriculture is questioned on the grounds that it does not qualify as a general solution to the problems facing agricultural production.

Thévenot (2007; 2014; 2020) later expanded this approach, adding other *regimes* that build on other forms of worth. Especially relevant here is the regime of familiarity, in which actors find certainties through a feeling of ease and through shared commonplaces (see Blok 2015; Ylä-Anttila 2017). Whereas in the regime of public justification worth was achieved through generalization, in the familiar regime things achieve this through radical incommensurability. Things are invaluable and irreplaceable, as they cannot be compared to anything (Centemeri 2017). For environmental questions, previous research has conceptualized them through this tension between generality and publicity (see Blok 2015; Blok and Meilvang 2015; Centemeri 2015; 2017; Gladarev and Lonkila 2013; Luhtakallio 2018). The analyses in this thesis focus primarily on the regime of public justification and how organic agriculture has been shaped into public issue. However, in the case of nationality, the limits of focusing solely on publicity become apparent. I will return to this topic in the results section of this summary (see Section 5.2.4).

Before moving forward, the notions of generalization and the common good should be further clarified to avoid misunderstandings. As justifications are seen to emerge through conflicts and disputes, it should be clear that what is implied is not a "naive" connection between certain acts, objects, and the forms of common good. Actors certainly present their justifications from their own points of view, promoting certain agendas, and are therefore not in any way unbiased in their attempts to construct justification. At the same time, justifications are not seen to be reducible to the particular and to the private interests of those who make them. This is based on Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) claim that different arguments abide specific criteria, formulated as the polity model above. As mentioned, they are not interpreted only as subjective, as the theoretical framework accounts for the possibility of proof and the mobilization of various objects. Therefore, to some extent, it can be said that justifications are not products of power, but instead, conventionalized principles equip actors with powers.

Aligning subjects and objects with a conventionalized principle of justification is what makes it possible for them to detach from the particular and produce legitimate justifications. Successful justifications are those acts that are able to "hold together" and coordinate the situation in a legitimate way, producing a sense of reality while at the same time distributing

(attributing) worth.⁴ The approach is therefore situated between collectivism and individualism (Boltanski and Thévenot 2000, 213). Collective representations are not seen as something that exists above individuals, yet individuals are also not seen as independent from each other.

Focusing on these critical situations and acts of generalization, pragmatic sociology offers a framework for analyzing how the values and wider benefits of organic agriculture have been both constructed and contested. Focusing on the generalization of claims, it examines how different practices are connected to principles of common good. In the next section, I will turn to expanding this approach, focusing on how it can be applied to the development of organic agriculture.

3.2 JUSTIFICATIONS AS PROCESSES: TEMPORAL AND ANALYTICAL MID-RANGE

The focus on situational judgment on one hand and analyzing the development of public justifications on the other seems to present a contradiction. Moral qualities are considered to be situational achievements, but this thesis focuses on the development of organic agriculture. In order to develop this, I will discuss how pragmatic sociology examines temporality and how this connects to the analytical perspective of this thesis.

Boltanski has stated that the model originally presented in *On Justification* (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) received criticism for its lack of attention to historical change (Basaure 2011; see also Wagner 1999, 352). The time dimensions considered in the original model focused on either the “brief temporality of the situation” and the development of tests or on the “long-term and indistinct temporality” during which the conventionalized principles of justification have emerged (Basaure 2011). The mid-range temporal level, which can be thought to situate between these two, was left mostly unexamined. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005 [1999]) later focused on this issue by examining the development of capitalism in the post-war era, examining the transformation of the spirit of capitalism and the emergence of a new form of justification in the frictions and seams of capitalism and critique. Although not engaging in constructing “a ‘theory of change’ proper” (p. 485), this

⁴ It is clear that, in some cases, pragmatic sociology is in a disadvantage, as it is not always sensitive in analyzing, for example, structural inequalities that can influence the construction of justifications. This is, in my view, a direct result of the theoretical starting point that favors the focus on situational judgment as the focus of analysis and thus cannot be completely remedied within this model. However, it should be underlined that such arguments are in no way completely disregarded, as they figure prominently in various critiques that actors constantly produce. Furthermore, justifications and critiques are not taken as such, but instead, the focus of the analysis is directed specifically to the processes through which they are constructed.

analysis addressed this issue of change that appeared to be lacking in the original model. Meilvang et al. (2018, 34–35) present a slightly different categorization in temporalities, which does not account for the long-term or “indistinct” temporality of the orders of worth but instead interprets Boltanski and Chiapello’s work together with the long-term development. While some differences can be seen between these conceptualizations, Meilvang et al. focus on a meso-level, which they associate with Thévenot’s (1984) idea of investment in forms.

In this thesis, the focus is on this mid-range temporal change. Building on the notion of shaping things into conventional formats (Thévenot 1984; 2014; 2020), the analyses focus on how organic agriculture has been shaped according to the different imperatives set by these conventionalized formats, as well as the tensions between them (Centemeri 2017). The temporal mid-range can be considered as combining elements from the two other temporalities, examining how the difference between organic and conventional agriculture has been coordinated in different situations and how they have been shaped according to the conventionalized formats of justification.

Although pragmatic sociology has numerous similarities with ethnomethodology and the focus on situational accounts, the two approaches differ in their conception of temporality. As Thévenot et al. (2000, 266) note, the “analysis seeks a more systematic treatment of modes of evaluation beyond situational context,” and the focus is on “the cross-situational constraints imposed by the fact that one is attempting to produce a generalized argument and to refer to a certain *extra-situational value* of justification” (emphasis added). The principles of the orders of worth therefore offer reference points outside the situation (Basaure 2011) that enable actors to construct the “wider” meanings of particular issues (Boltanski & Thévenot 2000, 212). A similar difference exists also in relation to the actor-network theory, which builds on ethnomethodological theorizing (Bénatouïl 1999, 386; Fariás 2014, 28; Wagner 1999, 348; see also Blok 2013; 2015).

In critical situations, where the imperative to justify emerges, actors need to connect the particular situation to past events, forming an understandable and legitimate narrative. Temporality is central to how Boltanski and Thévenot understand the construction of justifications:

In the process of realizing something is going wrong one has to take a distance from the present moment and to turn backwards towards the past. Old things, forgotten words, accomplished acts, come back to one’s mind, through a selective process which links them to one another in order to produce a story which makes sense.

(Boltanski & Thévenot 1999, 360; emphasis added)

The conventionalized principles of worth make possible this selective process that constructs equivalencies to past events. Although Boltanski and

Thévenot do not explicitly state it, justifications involve the question of how to resolve the situation and proceed from it. Equivalencies are therefore created not only to link the situation to a past event but also to an imagined future (cf. Emirbayer and Mische 1998). More generally, they construct relations to principles that can be considered more general than the particular issue at hand and therefore exist “outside” the situation.

As the quotation above from Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) indicates, one way to approach this is to note that making the connection between situation and process is part of the task of generalization that public justification requires. An illustrative example of this in current environmental politics is the reoccurring debates on climate politics about whether individual weather events are evidence of a changing climate (e.g., Kunelius and Roosvall 2021). Climate science produced probabilities on the matter, but many non-scientists also engage in making such justifications that attempt to convince others about the urgency of the issue by referring to extreme weather events as proof. These events acquire their meaning when successfully situated into the larger process of a changing climate.

Through these qualifications, issues and objects are connected to the different worlds of justification, which at the same time continually reproduce these conventions. As another example, research is conducted on organic agriculture, which is in turn linked to past research and future projections. These references operate within a particular world, while also at times connecting with others through critiques and compromises. Nevertheless, the different worlds are seen to constitute different processes in regard to the justification of a particular issue, such as organic agriculture. That is, the development of organic agriculture is not analyzed as a single process, even though the different worlds are connected to each other in many ways. Furthermore, while the different worlds as such are seen to have a degree of internal consistency, the development of justifications should not be taken as a linear or cumulative process. As Centemeri (2017) has noted, identifying shifts and transformations in the forms of critique and justification can contribute to socio-historical analyses.

The concept of a situation presents rather extensive flexibility, and actors can situate their justifications in various temporalities. Taking an example like a car crash (see Boltanski and Thévenot 1999), in order to resolve the situation, actors seek solutions and attribute responsibilities by referring to abstract rules and the events of that particular situation (combining the indistinct temporality of the orders of worth and the particular situation). In the case of environmental politics and other political conflicts, the “context” that is constructed in justificatory narratives commonly spans much longer. While organic agriculture can be justified as a solution to agricultural overproduction (Schepel 1994), concerning possibly some decades of developments, advocates of organic agriculture commonly situate organic agriculture as defining a “new era of agriculture” (Reganold and Wachter 2016) that is connected to the centuries-long history of agricultural production (Rajala 2006).

Axel Honneth (2010) has criticized pragmatic sociology for its “strange voluntarism,” in which actors are, according to Honneth, seen as free to choose whichever order of worth they wish when justifying their case. As Hansen (2016) has commented, pragmatic sociology does not understand actors as free to decide whatever they want but instead conceptualizes them as situated and “constrained by the environment surrounding them.” Furthermore, this again underlines that justifications are not understood solely as “discourse,” detached from practices and their material consequences, as Fourcade (2011, 1726) has suggested. In addition to this material aspect, the temporal perspective adds a further constraining element to how action is conceptualized in pragmatic sociology. As discussed in the previous section, situations are defined in relation to the overall process of action and therefore as a continuation of previous events. Even though the situation disrupts the process of action, it is not set outside of it but instead is relational to it. Previous events do not determine action but nevertheless condition it. Especially as the pragmatist stance considers that justification can also fail, actors can revise their course of action, sometimes in radical ways (for a discussion on situational “creativity,” see Eranti 2016, 2018). However, this too is seen to operate in relation to the situational constraints. Justification and the creation of equivalencies are regarded as a practical activity in pragmatic sociology, and extending the context of the situation requires collective effort as well as devices that support it.⁵

The temporal mid-range can be taken also as an analytical or methodological mid-range. By applying the notion of shaping, justifications are not analyzed as single claims or utterances but as the practical activity that actors engage in. Justifications are examined as processes that unfold during longer periods of time (Centemeri 2017). In addition to this, the articles in this thesis examine how previously established justifications and tests in agricultural production have been dismantled and how new forms of worth, most prominently the green order of worth, have been established as a way to assess the value of agricultural production.

3.3 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYTICAL MODEL AND APPLICATION TO THE CASE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Emerging as a critical alternative for conventional production, organic agriculture has set up a critical situation in which there are two alternatives

⁵ A further element related to Honneth’s critique is the methodological “symmetry” applied in pragmatic sociology. Even though some actors might resort to some justifications more often (i.e., be “disposed” to do so), the analytical framework does not assume to know this beforehand. I will return to this issue in section 4 that discusses methods applied in the analyses.

and which necessitates actors—whether individual people, such as consumers or farmers, or policymakers—to settle the situation and to justify their actions. The focus in the analyses is on the coordination of these situations and how this coordination produces moral qualifications. Instead of starting from a perspective that takes organic agriculture as a value-based mode of production, the framework examines the construction of the moral positions. This allows the analysis to include different and competing modes of evaluation, according to which agriculture and food are assessed and qualified.

When confronted with the opposition between organic and conventional agriculture, actors rely on conventionalized formats in their attempts to transcend both the particular situation and particular motives associated with the different sides. These attempts aim to shape issues in a way that they are connected to different forms of common good. Through the imperative to justify, organic agriculture becomes shaped according to these conventionalized forms of worth, which then presents a process where organic practices become “rationalized” according to different forms of sense-making (cf. Fariás 2014). While conditions set by market developments and the attempts to capture organic agriculture for profit have undoubtedly affected its development, the pragmatic sociological perspective shows how the imperative to justify—arising from the confrontation of organic and conventional agriculture—is a central part in these developments. Change in organic agriculture does not result only from market developments that aim to capture it. Following from the notion that there exists a plurality of principles, there are also multiple processes of shaping, which in turn raise tensions between them. Therefore, conventionalization turns into multiple processes of shaping things into conventionalized formats. This process is more diverse and, most importantly, arises from the confrontation between organic and conventional agriculture, as it brings out the imperative to justify. Furthermore, central to the organic case is that it has challenged these established conventions.

By using this framework, I have attempted to move away from perspectives that start from the side of either organic or conventional agriculture. The aim has not been to assume that organic agriculture is the value-driven option, which would lead to, for example, questions of how these values are eroded by markets. A pragmatic sociological approach examines instead how different (agricultural) practices gain their worth as they are connected to general principles of common good. Pragmatic sociology can therefore be seen to reverse the focus of analysis in comparison to political economy. Instead of being mainly concerned whether there is an emerging disconnection between organic principles and practices, pragmatic sociology examines how this connection is made. This perspective is able to examine on what grounds movements such as organic agriculture present critique toward conventional agriculture as well as how the different alternatives are being contested and debated. It does not therefore discard the issue of how established practices

are challenged, as critique and justification are analyzed within the same framework.

Applying the model of situated judgment in examining critical situations provides ways to study the development of organic agriculture that has multiple benefits. First, this perspective sets controversies and contestations about agriculture and food as the starting point of analysis. By focusing on these situations where different alternatives have been debated, this perspective accounts for the contested nature of organic agriculture in these debates. Starting from the critical situation, pragmatic sociology presents a “symmetrical” account where the construction of moral qualities of both (or all) alternatives is the focus of analysis.

This is not presented as an objective account, even though I argue it presents a more balanced image of the development of organic agriculture. However, as a second point, my argument is that accounting for the contested status of organic agriculture is highly relevant in understanding how organic agriculture has developed. In focusing on the situational and pragmatic requirements of justification, the analysis examines the conditions that advocates for organic agriculture have faced when promoting organic principles and practices.

Third, while accounting for the criticism that organic agriculture has received, this perspective analyses how justifications have been constructed. The superior status of organic agriculture is not the starting point of analyses, and therefore, the analyses make explicit the grounds on which these values are constructed. Not only does this present an analysis of the justifications for changing agricultural production, it also shows how these alternatives have been opposed and dismantled (leading to the change in organic values and principles). Overall, all three points contribute to expanding beyond (political) economic motives that actors have, and debates concern issues not confined to markets and profit.

4 DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH PROCESS

The analyses conducted in this thesis are qualitative content analyses using different data corpuses. The data gathering process and the analysis of these data have been guided by the theoretical framework, outlined in the previous section. Following the focus in pragmatic sociology on both general principles and on evidence and testing, I have attempted to gather a set of data that would present a rich variety of justifications and a variety of proofs supporting these claims. The analytical framework has helped in interpreting the materials through the common notion of justification (and critique) but also in identifying “qualitative” differences between their assessments of organic agriculture.

This research setting was developed and adjusted during the course of the thesis work. When starting this thesis, my initial aim was roughly to study organic agriculture as environmental movement that has challenged conventional modes of production and been gradually able to institute ecological principles and practices to official agricultural policy and markets. While this initial aim to some extent maintained in the overall focus on “environmental critique” (Centemeri 2017), I soon realized that this presented a setting that was too simplistic to be able to grasp the variety of the empirical materials concerning debates about organic agriculture. When getting a closer look at the various debates, I was struck with how much more contentious the issue was and how widely the “green” qualities of organic agriculture were challenged. This needed, in my view, to be highlighted in the analysis in order to both represent the debates and account for the situations and conditions where justifications for organic agriculture were constructed.

The data gathering followed this developing setting. I started from the newspaper materials that were collected as part of the project “MainGreen—Mainstreaming Green Economy.” The project collected a vast corpus of newspaper articles from Helsingin Sanomat and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, focused on the periods 1980–1990, 1995–2000, 2004–2006, and 2008–2012. The materials from Helsingin Sanomat were all collected from digital archives and include all the articles that mentioned organic and biodynamic agriculture (although articles that only mentioned the word “organic” but did not discuss it in any meaningful sense were discarded). The materials from Maaseudun Tulevaisuus were collected from the online version (from the year 2000 onwards) and from microfilms in the National Library’s archive. Because of the vast number of materials in the microfilms and their rather laborious format, the criteria for this search were that the words “organic” or “biodynamic” had to appear in the title or the lead paragraph. Overall, this search resulted in 5,010 articles. From this set, I extracted a sample of 307 articles that were used in the analysis of *Article I*.

After this initial phase, I engaged in collecting the other sets of materials. This data gathering was guided by, first, following the issues brought up in the initial media data collection. After this, I conducted various archive and library searches, as well as searched for additional materials based on previous research on organic agriculture in Finland (e.g., Heinonen 2004; Mononen 2012). After conducting the analysis on newspapers in *Article I*, I supplemented the media data set with articles from Maaseudun Tulevaisuus that I then used in *Article II*. These sources did not meet the criteria used in the original media data collection but were searched later based on subsequent research on the early period of organic agriculture in Finland. They were all gathered from the “Experimentation and Practices” section of the paper, which presents summaries of field experiments and other studies for the practical use of farmers. They offered a useful source on knowledge production on organic methods. A description of which materials were used in each article can be found in Table 1.

The materials can be classified into four categories:

- *Media data*. The first one is the set of media data, collected from two Finnish newspapers, Helsingin Sanomat (HS) and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus (MT). In the periods the materials were collected from, HS was the biggest newspaper in Finland, while MT had the second widest readership. Even though HS has a dominant position in Finland, it represents a more urban view, while MT, owned by the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, represents the rural perspective.
- *Organic guidebooks and manuals*. This set includes books or booklets produced by advocates for organic agriculture. They provide information about organic principles and value and introduce and offer advice on farming practices. Much like the guidebooks used by Boltanski and Thévenot in their original study, these sources offer a rich collection of justifications as well as materials and objects related to organic agriculture.
- *Policy papers and strategies*. This set includes both official policy papers and strategies produced by the organic associations. Policies and strategies are central sources, as they state various goals and aims for developing organic agriculture. Policy papers also offer a useful collection of justifications, as they mention the benefits of different practices and, in some cases, make explicit why organic agriculture should be or has been included in policies. This set includes reports from the committees on organic agriculture that specifically engaged in inquiring the available knowledge on the topic and casted judgments based on them (more generally on state committees; see below).
- *Studies and research*. Last, I used various studies that have produced knowledge and assessed organic agriculture. This set

includes policy-oriented studies, market research, and scientific research. I have analyzed them as part of the overall knowledge production on organic agriculture, which aims to determine what organic agriculture is about and its worth relative to conventional production.

Some of the policy materials I have used are the reports of the three committees on organic agriculture, published in 1984, 1986, and 1991. These three committees, all headed by professor Martti Markkula, have been a central source for studying the early development of and the official response to organic agriculture (see Mononen 2012, 138). As Johanna Rainio-Niemi (2010, 241) has noted, state committees in general have been a “key institution in the history of governance” in Finland, and “hardly any major public policy reform has taken place without the involvement of one or several such committees.” At the same time, they have been ad hoc by nature and have operated as a central meeting place between state and civil society actors. They have represented a clear focus in reaching compromises and consensus on controversial and contested issues. Thus, they have provided possibilities for civil society participation but at the same time facilitated the management of critical elements related to different movements and issues. In this way, committees have operated as “sites of thoroughly politicized interest settlement” (p. 244). While committees in the Finnish or Nordic context, focused on this mediating and consensus-building function, have been juxtaposed to those focused on finding the “truth,” the committees on organic agriculture focused on natural scientific knowledge and made claims about what was unfounded in their view. In the post-war period, committees were modeled on the ideals of scientific inquiry but also disseminated social scientific research (Rainio-Niemi 2010, 252). They therefore present one form of bringing together social, political, and scientific knowledge, relevant in the contestations about organic agriculture.

The analyses performed in each of the articles can be described as systematic content analyses, guided by the theoretical framework. This consists of a close reading of all the materials, focused on identifying passages that presented definitions, statements, assessments, criticisms, and evaluations about organic agriculture and food (or conventional agriculture, when contrasted to organic agriculture) (cf. Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). The content analysis therefore produced a variety of qualifications (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), ranging from abstract statements about the state of agricultural production to specific methods and practices. Such statements include, for example, notions about the overall aims of organic agriculture and reports about different field experiments and yield sizes. As many of the sources used in the study were specifically focused on assessing the juxtaposition between the two agricultural systems, they also presented a variety of explicit comparisons between organic and conventional agriculture. Focusing on different statements helped to bring uniformity into the various

materials and to treat them as unified sets of data. All of these statements were first classified according to different themes, such as ecology, markets, consumers, health, and exports, using qualitative analysis software (*Atlas.ti*).

After the initial round of analysis, they were interpreted with the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter. This refers to the interpretation of the various statements as justifications and on what forms of worth they relied on when attempting to resolve the “critical situation.” In the presentations of findings, I attempted to balance between the specificities of the individual cases and in situating them within the rather general framework of the orders of worth. In addition, *Article I* examines the quantitative changes between justification (although not engaging in quantitative analysis as such). While the analytical process was primarily focused on the construction of justifications and on the relations between them, attention was paid to the status and nature of the different sources. The state committees, national organic action plans, and central organic guidebooks were given special attention because of their influence and scope. In addition, the analysis focused on issues, such as if the sources were particularly pro-organic or against it. Using this framework to interpret the sources as justifications and critiques helped to connect the heterogenous collection of sources.

The overall attempt was to bring together this variety of views and actors to examine different aspects through which the justifications of organic agriculture have been developed. This approach is guided by pragmatic sociology that emphasizes plurality in forms of worth and in the various proofs and materials that actors mobilize. It is also guided by the attempt to highlight the heterogeneity of organic agriculture and agricultural sustainability. That is, while the complexity of the phenomenon is the starting point of the analyses, it is also something that I have highlighted as a result (that needs to be considered). Both aspects are then grounded on relational thinking and the conviction that such a phenomenon should not be reduced to a single explanatory factor, such as economic incentives.

The research objects I have studied in this thesis are the justifications (and critiques) connected to organic agriculture. Through these materials, I have then examined the construction of justifications in different “locations” or “sites” (cf. Silvast and Virtanen 2019). These locations are then populated by numerous different actors. As I wrote in the chapter outlining the analytical framework (section 3), the focus is on the coordination of different critical situations, in which these actors are enmeshed in. From this point of view, the analysis of justifications takes an “actantial” approach towards the actors (see Bénatouïl 1999).

I have followed Reed’s (2008) interpretative approach that directs attention to the “bridging” between the meaningful worlds of the researched subjects and the researcher. The cultural aspect in interpretive sociology focuses on the investigation of different meaning structures, which refers mainly to supra-individual meanings and is not confined to “subjective” meanings that actors attribute to their actions. The theory of justification—

focused on sense-making and how actors account for things in critical situations—is then used as an analytical framework that “bridges” between the meanings of the actors studied and the meanings of the researcher (Reed 2010). In other words, the analysis is seen to be situated in the intersection of these two meaning systems.

Table 1. *Periods and used materials in the individual articles of the thesis*

	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Materials</i>
<i>Article I</i>	Justifications and critiques in newspaper media	1982–2012 (1982–88, 1995–2000, and 2008–2012)	Newspaper data from Helsingin Sanomat (“Helsinki Times”) and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus (“Rural Future”) ($n=307$; 72 articles from the 1980s, 84 from the 1990s, and 151 from the 2000s)
<i>Article II</i>	Constructing differences between organic and conventional agriculture	1980–1991	Guidebooks (<i>Alternative Farming Study Circle 1980, Rajala 1982, Kivelä & Pöytäniemi 1984</i>), Committee reports (1984, 1986, 1991), Research/studies (Mela 1988), Newspaper data from Maaseudun Tulevaisuus
<i>Article III</i>	Institutionalization of organic agriculture in official policies	1991–2015	Guidebooks ($n=3$; Rajala 1995, 2006; Schepel 1994), Pro Organics strategies ($n=3$; 2011, 2015, 2015), Official policy papers ($n=7$; e.g., Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2000, 2001, 2005, 2006), Research/studies ($n=6$; e.g., Agrifood Research Finland 1997, 1998, 2011; National Public Health Institute 2003); for a full list, see Appendix in Article III

The strengths of this form of analysis are that it makes it possible to incorporate a wide variety of views and positions. It also makes it possible to analyze changes between periods, which has been the goal in the analysis of how organic agriculture has been shaped into a publicly justified matter.

However, at the same time, there are also drawbacks. First of all, using textual and archival materials does not capture how actors, for example, can apply different principles in their everyday practices. An ethnographic approach could deepen the perspective, examining how, for example, producers and consumers make sense of differences when weighing the benefits of organic products (see Andersen 2011). Following this, an analysis of materials such as policy papers and strategies cannot fully grasp what kinds of effects they produce. While this is partially remedied by the historical scope that focuses on the development of organic agriculture, in this instance a more narrowed case study on, for example, a single policy initiative would complement the analysis performed in this thesis.

Before moving to the results, a few considerations on some ethical matters related to the interpretation of the issue. In a thesis that considers itself focused on studying the construction of moral positions, at first it seems hard to turn it into a discussion on research ethics and guidelines. Nevertheless, such conduct is useful to reflect upon, especially in terms of the results of the study.

As mentioned, I have used published studies as my materials, which does not bring up issues with, for example, the anonymity of the research subjects. In the cases where I have used published articles or studies as materials, it can be assumed that the authors' work might be taken under scrutiny and subjected to criticism, as the topic itself is already to some degree political. Still, it can also be assumed that not many considered themselves as becoming research subjects or their work becoming data when producing it.

Phillips (2006, 48), for example, concludes her review of food and globalization by noting that: "It is perhaps as food citizens that we can begin to become more analytically and politically engaged with projects centered on producing sustainable places that attend to food issues, rather than presume them as a backdrop." In studies concerning topics such as food, environment, organic agriculture, or political sociology more generally, it is commonplace to note that we should promote more sustainable practices (both in the environmental and social sense). However, what is considered to be environmentally sustainable is not something that I myself have qualifications to decide—especially in the case of organic agriculture, which is rather debated and contested. While there is consensus on some matters that are considered to be unsustainable, deciding what practices are truly sustainable appears too big of a task. Already by choosing a topic such as organic agriculture, it should be clear that I share the concern about the state of the environment, as well as many other problems identified in the current food system.

This view stems from the different versions of "symmetry" that have been put forward especially in French pragmatic sociology (Hansen 2016; Guggenheim and Potthast 2011; Wagner 1999). Not siding oneself to promote, for example, the alternative movement and against established practices (as a methodological stance) can invite criticism of not taking action, thus indirectly supporting established wrongs. A symmetrical approach can be viewed as

hiding one's opinions when everyone involved in the matter has some influence on it. Yet, the development of this methodological stance was exactly a reaction to previous conceptions about the moral positions of the researcher. From a symmetrical point of view, the researcher is precisely not outside or above the conflict but presents his or her view from a certain position. In this case, my aim is to produce a balanced and well-argued account on the chosen topic that will take part in the collective development of the aforementioned sustainable world.

5 RESULTS

5.1 SUMMARIES OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLES

5.1.1 ARTICLE I: CONSTRUCTING COMMON CAUSES. JUSTIFICATIONS FOR AND AGAINST ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN THE FINNISH MEDIA (1982–2012)

Article I examines how justifications and critiques have been constructed and debated in newspaper materials. The analysis focuses on how the public status of organic agriculture has been constructed in these debates. The data set was collected from two newspapers, Helsingin Sanomat and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus. I analyzed three periods, termed as the emergence of organic agriculture (1982–1988), its expansion and growth (1995–2000), and institutionalization (2008–2012). Using an approach inspired by Alasuutari et al. (2013) and Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio (2016), the analysis focuses on claims and statements made in the newspaper articles, instead of taking whole articles as the unit of analysis. By applying this approach, I was able to bring up a variety of actors and conceptions. The results showed that the discussion on morality of food production was much more diverse than the opposition between “good organics” and “bad conventional production” (cf. Lockie 2006), exploring the negotiations about the worth of different agricultural practices.

The first of the analyzed periods was characterized by the emergence of organic agriculture as a publicly discussed issue that started to gain recognition and official responses. Alongside the green critique presented by organic agriculture, this period was characterized by industrial justifications, focused on producing knowledge and precise definitions for organic agriculture. The green critique was therefore met early on with the industrial counter-critique, which considered green justifications to be ambiguous and organic agriculture in need of clear definitions and rules. The first committee on organic farming (1984)—reported extensively in both newspapers studied—presents one example of how official responses engaged in making sense of the claims made by the organic movement. In general, the materials discussed organic agriculture as a new phenomenon, aiming to make sense of it and situate it into a wider context. Based on the early media discussions, organic agriculture was not able to dismantle the previously set tests based on the industrial worth that placed value on the production of large quantities and with the use of agrochemicals.

The second period was characterized by structural changes in agricultural production, brought about by both Finland’s membership in the European Union (EU) and the gradual rise of environmental issues. Organic agriculture, boosted by the EU’s subsidy programs, saw significant growth during this

period, with farmers converting to organic in order to maintain production in these changed conditions. This brought a change also in the constellation of justifications, characterized especially in the rise of market justifications. Organic agriculture became justifiable in market worth terms, both as a business practice and in the way that it now appeared as one possible solution to “save Finnish agriculture.”

The third period, termed as institutionalization in the article, saw organic agriculture as included in the so-called country brand of Finland, as the report of the committee suggested that half of agricultural production should be made organic. However, organic agriculture was not in any way universally accepted in this period either, being challenged, for example, by local food as a competing moral framing of food production.

In addition to these common trends, identified in both newspapers, the changes in justifications were examined according to each newspaper. While the trends in market and industrial justifications were somewhat similar in both HS and MT, green justifications developed quite differently. The quantitative analysis indicated that environmental justifications were first rejected in MT but have since gained prominence and become accepted ways to coordinate discussions about agriculture and food. Although not including a quantitative analysis as such, this approach nevertheless made it possible to examine the relative amounts of different justifications during and between the different periods analyzed.

Article I also develops the analytical framework of the thesis by focusing on the conceptualization of publicity in pragmatic sociology. Publicity is commonly or colloquially understood through notions of the public (i.e., media discussion) or as public opinion. In this conception, to make a public justification would be to make it “in the public,” such as in a newspaper. In *Article I*, my aim was to elaborate on this view. Even though the discussion analyzed in the paper takes place in two newspapers, the justifications and critiques presented in them discuss the public status and relevance of organic agriculture. In other words, they discuss what relevance organic agriculture has for the “wider public” or whether there is any such relevance (see Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 7). The construction of public justifications is then analyzed as practical tasks, where actors aim to connect particular issues to the interests of the collective. Making justifications therefore does not focus only on the value of the particular issue (e.g., organic agriculture), but conceptions about the collective are constructed simultaneously in these processes.

In the debates about the justifications of organic agriculture, critiques denounced it as a practice that was considered to have no significance for the public. In the early discussions (1982–1988 in this article), organic agriculture was argued by officials and mainstream agricultural actors to be a marginal practice, that for example had no economic impact (market worth). The critique toward pesticides that organic advocates promoted was denounced as

irrelevant by the head of the first committee on organic agriculture, Professor Martti Markkula:

The majority of farmers and agriculture researchers—as far as I know—hold organic production to be a lot of talk about nothing ... Agricultural research and farmers' experiences indeed have not brought up anything which would suggest that changes are needed in current agriculture practice. Contemporary use of fertilizers and pesticides is not going to lead to a catastrophe—on the contrary, if anything, it is going to prevent one

(MT 25.9.1984)

Similar to critiques denouncing something as not publicly relevant, organic agriculture was in some instances denounced as a private matter. For example, in the later period (2008–2012), organic food was denounced as a health food trend for the upper middle class, thus not qualifying as a form of common good based on the civic order of worth. These two examples show how media discussions have denounced the public status of organic agriculture, qualifying it as either irrelevant based on various tests or as a private matter. And, as mentioned, the focus on this wide variety of claims made by different actors and in different periods made it possible to move beyond the rigid dichotomy of good organics and bad conventional production, displaying negotiations and contestations about the value of organic agriculture.

The examination (or focus) of publicity led to the observation that the discussions were not structured only through the dichotomy between organic and conventional or techno-chemical agriculture. Instead, discussions about the sustainability, naturalness, and healthiness (wholesomeness) in food production concerned nationality, situating Finnish agriculture as the counterpart for organic agriculture. This theme was further pursued in the later articles, and I will elaborate on it in Section 5.2.3.

5.1.2 ARTICLE II: MAKING A DIFFERENCE. CONSTRUCTING RELATIONS BETWEEN ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE IN FINLAND IN THE EMERGENCE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE (1980–1991)

Article II examines discussions about the difference between organic and conventional, focusing on the early years of organic agriculture in Finland (1980–1991) as a case study. Using committee reports, organic guidebooks, scientific studies, and newspaper materials, I analyzed how differences between organic and conventional were constructed in them. The focus on this early period in the development of organic agriculture offers a setting where organic principles and practices have not been affected by any possible conventionalizing processes. In addition, this research setting also provided a

possibility to examine the period when conceptions about organic agriculture were formed (building on the observations made in *Article I* on the first period of media discussions).

As argued previously, studies and popular accounts on the development of organic food commonly present a development where organic principles and practices slowly become de-radicalized and watered down, leading to a diminishing difference between the two systems. The most central of these discussions is the one on the conventionalization of organic agriculture, first suggested by Buck et al. (1997) and later discussed in various studies. *Article II* reverses this setting and argues that, instead of examining the ways in which the difference is diminishing, studies should focus on examining how various differences are constructed. This is based on the observations that organic agriculture remains a contested issue (e.g., in media discussions), and there is a need for analytical approaches focused on analyzing these situations. However, this is underlined by the findings of this article, which shows that differences have not been clear even in the early phases of organic agriculture.

In order to examine the making of differences, I applied pragmatic sociology to look at how actors have conceptualized meaningful differences. This setting draws from the focus on tests, evidence, and objects. With this analytical framework, the article therefore connects the discussion on difference and justification together, showing that justification of either form of production is dependent on the difference between them. In addition to showing how pragmatic sociology can be used to elaborate on the discussion on the difference(s) between organic and conventional, the article develops a tripartite typology on the ways differences are constructed.

First, differences can be made in different critical situations by articulating them through the various orders of worth. The orders of worth provide capacities to make organic and conventional equivalent in a legitimate way. Justifications and critiques therefore state that organic is, for example, better because it is more ecological or more committed to equality. Second, using the same approach, I argued that justifications and critiques denouncing the existence of significant or meaningful differences should be included in analyses of organic agriculture. As argued in the overall setting of the article, previous conceptual models have considered this possibility only through processes such as conventionalization, where differences have existed but have since been diminished by market forces and institutionalization. By analyzing these early discussions—situated in a phase of organic agriculture where no real conventionalization could have occurred—I demonstrated how the existence of significant differences was nevertheless still challenged. However, as a third option, the analysis demonstrated that even though differences were not found, actors still considered that they could emerge in the future. That is, with the development of organic methods or the increased significance of environmental issues, the difference between organic and conventional agriculture could become more significant.

While *Article II* is based on the analysis of early debates on organic agriculture in Finland, this model on the construction of differences is meant as a more general model for analyzing debates on organic agriculture. It draws from the observation, presented in all of the articles of this thesis, that organic agriculture is a contested topic and that these contestations that challenge its justification need to be integrated into further analyses. *Article II* concludes that the model of diminishing differences is not well-equipped for analyzing contestations about values. This is because in many cases, it is the difference itself—and more specifically, the existence of this difference—that is contested and debated. In *Article III*, we applied this analytical approach focused on the construction of differences in our analysis on the institutionalization of organic agriculture in official agricultural policies.

5.1.3 ARTICLE III: SHAPING VALUES AND ECONOMICS: TENSIONS AND COMPROMISES IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN FINLAND (1991–2015)

Article III, co-authored with Mikko J. Virtanen, examines the institutionalization of organic agriculture into Finland's official agricultural policy during the period between 1991 and 2015. This article builds on the observations made in *Article I*, in which media discussions presented a shift into economic (market) justifications during the rapid growth of organic agriculture. The developments in the 1990s provided an interesting point of departure for the analysis of organic values and the public justification of organic agriculture. As mentioned, *Article III* builds on the analytical approach developed in *Article II*, applying the focus on the difference between organic and conventional agriculture in the examination of the period of institutionalization.

We analyze institutionalization not only as inclusion into official policies but through the production and shaping of knowledge about organic agriculture. Following the overall analytical framework of the thesis, the analysis examines various sources that have gathered and produced knowledge about organic agriculture, shaping it according to conventionalized formats of justification. We examined the materials by focusing on the question of how the institutionalization of organic agriculture was justified (or criticized) in them.

Conceptually, the starting point in the article is the notion that institutionalization has commonly been understood as leading to the economization of organic agriculture. Furthermore, economization has been conceptualized as the loss, or significant reduction, of organic values. In this perspective to the development of organic agriculture—what Kjeldsen and Ingemann (2009) have summed up as the move “from the social to the economic”—organic values are seen to gradually become less important, as actors engaged in organic agriculture are increasingly driven by profit-motives

and organic agriculture in general coordinated through markets. Using pragmatic sociology, we provide a more diverse analysis of the constellation of value positions during the institutionalization of organic agriculture. *Article III* deals with the question of the “economic” and its place in political and moral sociology as well as part of the organic movement. This builds on the notion that, while organic agriculture is understood as “value-driven” and a political movement, it nevertheless operates as production and consumption, which makes it a useful case to explore this topic.

Our argument in *Article III* therefore is that the relation between values and economics should be further developed from previous models that treat their relation as a sort of a zero-sum game. While examining the coordination of organic agriculture as operating through multiple principles and in contested situations, we also add into the picture scientific research, which has played a part in shaping the knowledge and justifications in the construction of organic markets and policies.

The article presents three overall findings. First, while institutionalization has promoted economization, this operated by various forms of compromises, which aimed at bridging the opposition between alternative values and economics. One compromise that has been able to combine green, industrial, and market worths has been formed around organic inputs. This “wise use” compromise has been formed around the idea that giving up artificial fertilizers and pesticides reduces environmental impacts, focuses the farmer on the efficient use of resources, and lowers the costs of production, thus effectively connecting these principles of justification. Other compromises emphasized that the ecological benefits of organic agriculture could be achieved only through functioning markets. These compromises then presented economizing developments but as part of the attempts to achieve environmental and other benefits.

Second, the results showed that economization was not the only challenge for organic values. Knowledge production related to institutionalization relied on natural scientific knowledge, which questioned the value of organic agriculture and organic products. Organic products can be taken as compromises, as they should qualify according to the green worth based on their environmental and healthy qualities but also need to be tradable goods in organic markets. The commodification of organic production—or simply the focus on organic products from consumers’ perspectives—has been seen in previous research to direct focus away from wider questions, such as social questions related to production relation or environmental impacts of agricultural production. A similar focus on consumers and consumer choice was present in our materials. However, we argue that the focus on organic agriculture as an issue of consumer choice has not been the only challenge brought about by this process. The production of justified market objects (in this case, organic products) is commonly connected to accurate measurements and precise definitions of their qualities. Measuring product qualities offers affordances through which the difference between organic and conventional

can be grasped. While the green-market compromise in the form of various organic products has been successful, it has been constantly challenged by industrial critiques, which have questioned whether there are significant differences between organic and conventional products.

Third, institutionalization into Finland's official policy has operated through attempts to connect organic production with conceptions about the quality of Finnish production and nature. Policies have been constructed with the idea that organic and Finnish production share similar qualities, and organic production has the possibility to boost production that was explicitly framed as Finnish. The organic label as a recognizable sign brings in most clearly the fame (renown) worth. This is manifested in the attempts to produce a "country brand" for Finland, where making half of the farmed land organic was made a key task in creating such a brand. At the same time, while organic agriculture has been used to create a favorable image for Finnish production, it is nevertheless in tension with it. Creating a favorable image based on organic agriculture sets organic methods as superior and at least implicitly challenges conventional Finnish production, which many have considered to already be "organic enough."

The results therefore brought up themes, such as profit motivation, focus on products, and export orientations, that have been discussed in studies on conventionalization as well. When examined through the framework of pragmatic sociology, numerous uncertainties are revealed in the construction of moral positions related to these processes. Most importantly, we argue that institutionalization is not reduced to a single process, moving from values to economics, but instead consists of various relations between different principles.

5.1.4 ARTICLE IV: DIFFERENTIATING NATURES, CONNECTING ENVIRONMENTS. PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY AND THE EMERGENCE OF GREEN JUSTIFICATIONS

Article IV, co-authored with Mikko J. Virtanen, reverses the setting from the previous three articles, using the empirical case studies to engage in further developing pragmatic sociology. The article focuses on the discussion about the emergence of the green order of worth that has gained some attention in discussions about pragmatic sociology but has nevertheless remained underdeveloped (see also Section 3 of this summary). We therefore examine the conditions for the green order of worth by using organic agriculture as a case study. Following this, we situate this topic into the discussion about how environmental problems more generally challenge sociological theorizing and how pragmatic sociology contributes to this discussion.

The discussion on the possible emergence of the green order of worth has revolved around questions about its independence: Does it actually constitute a new form of worth and, if it does, in what way? Perspectives questioning its

status have conceptualized it as either connected to particular groups and issues, which can be accounted for by relying on previously conventionalized orders of worth, or they see green issues as incompatible with the model on justification altogether.

Continuing with the theme of differentiation, we examined how actors have attempted to differentiate ecology and the focus on the environment as something that is not reducible to the other orders of worth and is instead valuable in itself. This approach builds on the centrality of critique for the development of new forms of worth (e.g., Boltanski & Chiapello 2005a; Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; Lafaye & Thévenot 1993). Critique not only articulates the need for change in pointing out existing problems and injustices but also distances itself from previously established arrangements. Therefore, as Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, 47) note, the emergence of a new form of worth comes together with the critique of existing arrangements, articulating what it is not.

As mentioned in the section on pragmatic sociology, critiques are considered to be based on forms of worth, and our analysis therefore examined the qualities of the green order of worth. We present the different components of the green polity, as they appear in the debates about agricultural sustainability. In our case, the green principle values things are part of ecosystems and to the extent that they help these socio-ecological collectives to thrive and diversify. Green justifications and critiques have brought into vision various new beings (soil microbiota, insects, animals) and re-qualified others (most notably weeds and agrochemicals). This has operated through new categorizations, where the surrounding nature is no longer understood to be external to the production, and conversely, various agrochemicals are now qualified as not being part of production. Therefore, while organic agriculture remains controversial, it has been able to establish these new elements as part of agricultural policy. This has operated by constructing green justifications that are able to produce new forms of commonality around these entities.

However, continuing with the focus on scientific knowledge, we argue that it has set a significant challenge for the establishment of the green worth. This is because “knowing nature” operates centrally through scientific research, which has then operated as a central test in these debates. The green principle differs from this industrial reality test in numerous ways, and advocates of organic agriculture have attempted to distance themselves in this regard from the emphasis to quantification, efficiency, and a technical approach to nature. I will discuss the conclusions of *Article IV* more thoroughly in the next section on green differences.

5.2 DISCUSSION: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE

5.2.1 GREEN DIFFERENCE: ESTABLISHING AN ECOLOGICAL FOOD CHAIN

The summary of *Article IV* already presented some of the key findings of the thesis in terms of the green order of worth and ecological justifications. Here I will briefly elaborate on this topic, situating it together with the overall findings of the thesis. The main concern is how advocates for organic agriculture have attempted to establish differences in the various sections of the food chain and how these sections are seen to form a meaningfully different whole.

Advocates for organic agriculture have claimed that organic systems produce qualitatively different products, as they avoid the use of agrochemicals and intensive farming methods and apply holistic, ecological methods of production. Organic systems produce qualitatively different products, demanded by consumers concerned about their health and safety.⁶ In addition, both organic producers and consumers voice concerns about the effects that agricultural production has on the environment, and organic methods are seen to provide a solution for this.

These relations between production methods, products and consumers, and production methods and natural environments can be formulated into a series of causal influences, where meaningfully different methods produce meaningfully different results. The durability or strength of these relations concern the question of whether green equivalencies can hold up in conflict situations. Establishing the entire chain of production and consumption as a meaningfully different whole would make the green order of worth independent from other forms of worth. In other words, the organic food chain is seen to form an independent whole that is meaningfully different from conventional ones, based on its green qualities.

This perspective underlines the connection between justification and critique. In order to create green equivalencies between the different elements of the (organic) food chain, these elements need to be effectively differentiated from their conventional counterparts. As will be argued below, opposition to organic agriculture has challenged the existence of meaningful differences, which at the same time undermines the construction of the green equivalencies.

⁶ Although advocates for organic agriculture argue for a holistic view on production, where parts should not be separated from the whole, the questions about health benefits and environmental impacts nevertheless seem to present distinct topics that can be set apart at least analytically (cf. Tovey 1997; Tomlinson 2008). As will be shown below, those opposing organic agriculture have contested these relations.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized here, that this perspective focuses on the differences constructed in the level of public justifications. Environmental issues, however, also challenge this regime altogether, as they go against on the notion of common humanity that generalizes all those engaged in the community (see Blok 2013; Lafaye and Thévenot 1993). Various green things offer legitimate support for the coordination of action and conflicts, but the question remains, do these various green things operate just as materials and objects, or should they have the same kind of rights and value as humans. In other words, for some, nonhuman rights bring out the need to extend or completely transform the model, in order to bring about an ecological form of justice. Additionally, other forms of worth, noted to be central for environmental critique, do not operate on the level of generality (Centemeri 2017). The organic case examined here shows how various green entities are enrolled into communities in ways that their value is not reducible to, for example, the efficient use of natural resource or the aesthetic pleasure gained from nature. While the green worth has been mobilized in order to challenge conventional and environmentally unsustainable forms of agriculture, other ways presenting this critique are also possible.

5.2.2 THE PROBLEMATIC DIFFERENCE: ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATIONS AND IDEOLOGY IN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

As mentioned throughout this summary, the economic side of organic agriculture has been a focal point of discussion. In regard to the difference between organic and conventional agriculture, economization can be seen as both diminishing this difference and constructing it in a new way. Increased emphasis on market justifications has changed the overall values associated with organic agriculture quite significantly. During the latter half of the 1990s, there were numerous references made to the “idealist” past of organic agriculture, contrasting it to the changed situation, where many considered organic agriculture now justified in economic terms (i.e., market worth). As mentioned, *Articles I* and *III* examine this change in justifications, where civic, domestic, and (emerging) green worths were now joined by market and industrial justifications—the latter previously not considered widely as justifications for organic agriculture.

Because of the changed situation in Finnish agriculture brought about by the EU membership, as well as increased marketization in general, organic agriculture now had possibilities in market terms. It was seen to help Finnish products compete in the newly opened (internal) markets, as Finnish products could be branded as ecological, pure, natural, and healthy. And, of course, the EU subsidies boosted organic agriculture, making it possible to convert to organic and maintain production on farms that were otherwise considered unprofitable. The latter option is discussed, for example, in Kallio’s (1998) study, titled “Organic Farming in EU Finland,” where the possibilities of

organic agriculture as a “coping device” for maintaining the livelihood of Finnish agriculture was examined. Another indication of this change in justifications can be found in the title of Luoto et al.’s (1996) sociological study “Twig-Beards or Marketmen?” Just as in Kallio’s (1998) study, Luoto et al. (1996) identified a new group of organic farmers, considered to be guided by economic rationales (market worth) and to be skilled professionals (industrial worth). These qualifications were then contrasted to the “idealists” of the previous period—now referring to the “real” possibilities that organic agriculture provided.

The previous “idealism” of organic agriculture can be considered a situation where organic advocates were thought to be guided only by principles that are not connected to the realities of actual food production (cf. Chiapello 2003). This form of “idealism” therefore presents another version of the disconnection or discrepancy between principles and practices, as discussed in the case of conventionalization (see Section 2.2). Only here organic agriculture is not discredited because green or civic principles appear as a façade to actual market practices because the actual practices are not seen to measure up to market principles. But the discrepancy would not be a result of attempting to capture organic agriculture for profits; instead, it stems from the overall dismissal of the critique that the organic movement presented. However, as these references were made to past idealism, they also underline the change in conceptions and even more so the change in the type of justification, as the market worth had become more prominent.

While such developments boosted the justification and acceptability of organic agriculture, the change in the constellation of justifications nevertheless presented problems. As the market worth could now be considered a justification for engaging in organic production *in itself*, it could be considered a significant shift in the rationale of organic agriculture. The market worth was then used to construct the difference between organic and conventional agriculture in a way that operates independent of other forms of difference. Regardless of the critiques that there would not be significant differences between organic products or that organic production would not have significant environmental benefits, the market worth provides a way to construct a justified difference based on consumer demand and revenue. That is, even though some studies might not have supported the claims about the superior qualities of organic products, some consumers still consider them as the better alternatives, thus creating a reason to produce them. This has also provided organic agriculture with support in terms of national policy. The first committee on organic agriculture (1984) argued that this enduring demand for organic products justified supporting Finnish organic production, as the demand would otherwise be met with imported organic products. Throughout the period studied, the demand for organic products has been considered to exceed supply, which has then justified further investments into organic production.

However, it should be noted that organic agriculture was promoted by organic advocates by using market arguments as well (see *Article II*), even though these were not considered legitimate on a wider scale. Especially in the early debates about the possibilities of organic agriculture, its justification was discussed in many situations solely in market worth terms. While this presents a market critique and later a gradual process where organic agriculture is shaped (or rationalized) according to the market worth—thus supporting the critical, political economy-based analyses—it shows how organic advocates needed to convince others that their practices were actually economically sustainable.

Overall, these developments can be seen as producing a situation where it is not clear whether one is motivated by the values of organic agriculture (i.e., ecology, fairness, care, and health) or solely by economic gains. The period of rapid growth and the entrance of new actors to the business is followed by the impression that values and economics have become separate (cf. Lockie and Halpin 2005). At the same time, the period sees the emergence of explicit compromises between the market and other justifications. This produced a similar situation as that analyzed by Guthman and others in their discussion on conventionalization (Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 1998; 2004a), although brought about by different kinds of societal processes. Nevertheless, in my view, the issue is similar and related to the fact that while organic agriculture can be considered political action and guided by the aim of bringing other-than-economic rationales to food production, agricultural production is also economic action.

5.2.3 CONTESTED DIFFERENCE: NATURAL SCIENTIFIC CRITIQUES TOWARD THE ORGANIC-CONVENTIONAL DICHOTOMY

The exploitation of the lucrative niche market of organic food (the market order of worth) and the industrialization of organic practices (industrial order of worth) have not been the only challenges for the organic movement. In addition, there has been a significant and sustained critique toward organic agriculture, based on what I have termed as a natural scientific approach. This counter-critique draws from the industrial order of worth, but instead of focusing only on efficiency and productivity, it emphasizes accuracy and a natural scientific view on nature. Its major aim has been to test the claims made by organic advocates and to assert other differences as more significant than the organic-conventional one.

The interpretation I have presented in this thesis is that this form of counter-critique can be understood as an opposition between the industrial and green orders of worth and their competing conceptions of nature. Following this situation, a major challenge for both the organic movement and the green order of worth has been to establish a reality test that is able to hold up against critiques based on other forms of worth. While organic agriculture

and environmentalist thinking more generally have been able to challenge the legitimacy of both industrial agriculture and an instrumental relation to nature, the natural scientific critique has nevertheless been sustained.

A prevalent feature of these industrial critiques is the claim that organic methods affect only some of the qualities in a product and that other factors besides farming methods are in the end more significant. For example, the 2003 report by the National Public Health Institute noted that as the concentration of harmful components in foodstuffs are influenced by numerous other factors, it “is not obvious that there would be greater differences between organic and conventional products than between similar products of different years” (NPHI 2003, 9). Factors such as variety, climate, harvesting time, and methods influence product quality and do not follow the organic-conventional distinction. Based on measurements of, for example, nutrient contents, studies have claimed that the research knowledge does not amount to the conclusion that the organic-conventional difference would be the most significant one. These are just some of the numerous examples of how the capacities of organic (and green) methods are not seen as capable of producing significantly different results, thus challenging the green equivalencies presented earlier. Starting from the early reactions to organic agriculture, researchers in particular have asserted that other differences are more significant when compared to the organic-conventional difference advocated by the organic movement.⁷

Those skeptical of organic agriculture criticize it for having unscientific elements in it. Especially the connection to biodynamic farming and the opposition to genetic manipulation have drawn criticism from scientists. While noting that organic agriculture has positive elements that can be applied to agricultural production in general, they are nevertheless unwilling to accept the critique toward the techno-scientific organization of agricultural production. Those drawing from this natural scientific critique oppose especially the distinction between “natural” and “artificial” foods and production methods, stating that all things are in essence natural. Statements arguing that organic agriculture has positive qualities but at the same time needs to get rid of “unscientific” elements presents the attempts to shape (or rationalize) organic agriculture according to industrial worth.

It should be pointed out that just as advocates for organic agriculture commonly use market justifications, industrial justifications for organic agriculture were numerous in the materials. Natural scientific research and results are continuously used as justifications, presenting struggles that situate within the industrial order of worth. Advocates for organic agriculture commonly refer to the imbalance on how funds are allocated for research and development, presenting a critique toward conventional agriculture that still

⁷ Industrial critiques toward organic agriculture have affected the green critiques quite directly, as, for example, labelling organic products as “toxin-free” was banned in Finland to avoid the “indirect mockery” of conventional production.

remains within the bounds of the industrial world. The prominence of industrial justifications, while prompted by the connection to natural science and techno-chemical methods in agriculture, can be connected to the overall status of industrial worth in Finnish politics (see Luhtakallio 2012). Political conflicts are resolved with attempts to find the facts and to base decisions on sound evidence.

The natural scientific critique toward organic agriculture has nevertheless remained prominent, and my emphasis therefore is that it should be included more thoroughly in the analyses of organic agriculture. This suggestion is based on two points. First, analyses should account for the overall uncertainties related to widespread questions such as whether organic or conventional is a better farming system. Problems related to knowing such a thing or making it tangible should not be sidelined in analyses by simply taking organic agriculture as the more legitimate form of production. Uncertainties can be hypothesized as playing a major role in the decisions of consumers, farmers' decisions on whether to invest in organic farming, and so on. By not seriously considering this uncertainty related to the difference, studies risk presenting one-sided or only partial explanations on the development of organic agriculture. Second, whether the researcher is convinced or not of the existence of a significant difference—and sees skepticism toward organic agriculture only as an attempt to co-opt organic agriculture—the empirical analyses in this thesis show that they nevertheless play a major part in the justification of organic agriculture and the debates over agricultural sustainability more generally.

Examining this natural scientific critique by using the orders of worth has another benefit, which is based on differentiating the industrial and market worths from each other. From the viewpoint of the green critique, the market and industrial worths appear to be tightly connected and are almost inseparable. This is the case in situations where organic agriculture is understood as an alternative, ecological (and even spiritual) mode of production, set against mainstream techno-chemical production. Efficiency and the orientation toward profit maximization appear as the same thing. However, as seen in the previous section, green-market compromises have provided prominent justifications for organic agriculture and products. Differentiating between the market and industrial worths helps to identify the different dynamics associated with these orders of worth.

As market qualifications are more willing to accept green justifications as another form of demand, industrial critiques toward organic agriculture perceive consumers as emotional and irrational in their desire to purchase organic products (e.g., to avoid pesticide residue or to improve their health). In situations where there seems to be a lack of research results supporting the superior qualities of organic products, there seems to be no reason to purchase them. The market worth, on the other hand, focuses only on consumer preference and their willingness to pay extra for organic products. This difference can be seen in the differing reality tests constituted by these orders

of worth. Whereas industrial tests aimed to determine product qualities, the market test is based on the market performance of organic products and farms. Relevant questions are: Do consumers actually purchase organic products? Is organic agriculture actually able to produce revenue? Even though markets, especially in the case of food safety requirements, depend on both forms of coordination, tensions emerge between these two principles, and they present different “realities” for organic agriculture.⁸

The main effect of this natural scientific counter-critique has been to effectively challenge the existence of a significant difference between organic and conventional agriculture. The aim in this thesis is not to assess which of these distinctions is the most significant one but rather to integrate this discussion into the sociological literature on organic agriculture. I argue that taking into account this critique that questions the existence of a significant or meaningful difference between organic and conventional agriculture changes the perspective that is focused only on market developments and the economization of organic agriculture. The co-optation of organic production solely for profit certainly can be seen as presenting a threat for the organic movement. At the same time, focusing only on the challenge posed by “agribusiness” misses this other significant challenge to the justification of organic agriculture.

5.2.4 CONTEXTUALIZED DIFFERENCE: ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND THE NATIONAL COMMON GOOD

Intertwined with, yet distinct from the natural scientific differences is the difference based on nationality. The organic movement—as well as much of the social scientific research dealing with organic agriculture—has operated with the general distinction between organic and conventional (or techno-chemical) agriculture. In the Finnish case, however, this dichotomy has been challenged particularly with the domestic-foreign dichotomy. These claims overlap with the natural scientific counter-critique as many researchers have emphasized the superiority of Finnish food compared to imported food. As argued in *Articles I* and *III*, the main alternative that organic agriculture has been seen to challenge is not conventional but Finnish agriculture. The results therefore suggest that not only has this conditioned the development of more ecological forms of production in Finland, but that similar, more contextualized forms of the difference between organic and conventional agriculture should be accounted for in sociological models.

⁸ The consumers’ right to choose whatever is available in the markets comes close to what Thévenot (2007; 2014; 2019) has in his later work termed as liberal grammar. While this might be the more accurate interpretation in many cases, debates in the newspaper materials and policy papers nevertheless connected this issue consistently to the market common good.

As organic agriculture has different variations (Kaltoft 1999; Tovey 1997), the same could be said of conventional production, which in many cases appears to be a residual category referring to (almost) everything not organic. In this way, both social scientific and natural scientific studies have adopted the conceptual dichotomy set up by the organic movement (although integrated production and some other variations are at times acknowledged). Examining pragmatic qualifications of different agricultural systems and the construction of differences between them should give more room to variations made in these qualifications.

Even though many of the justifications for organic agriculture have been structured according to the generality of the green worth and global environmental problems, advocates for organic agriculture have situated their claims into this national context. Their justifications have therefore built on the conception that the qualities of Finnish nature and production offer exceptionally good preconditions for organic agriculture, offering an advantage for Finnish products in international markets (e.g., Schepel 1994), an idea that had its clearest manifestation in the report of the Country Brand Committee in 2010, in which organic agriculture was promoted as one of the key elements in creating the Finnish country brand.

The argument therefore is that this national recontextualization of the difference has significantly conditioned the possibilities of organic agriculture in Finland. Finnish production has been claimed to already have similar qualities to organic production, which then questions the existence of a significant or meaningful difference. Following this, the reason (i.e., justification) for choosing organic has similarly not appeared as clear or relevant. This can be further complicated by the setting where the differences between organic and conventional products are not clear enough, but there still exists a price difference, leading many to choose the conventional but Finnish alternative.

The intertwined relation between differentiation and generalization appears most clearly. If the organic alternative does not appear clearly different based on a particular form of worth (e.g., the green worth and environmental impacts), the connection between the particular issue and the general principle also appears less evident. If organic and conventional products are not seen that different based on the green worth, actors will choose based on other forms of worth that seem more relevant. Qualification and the meaning of organic agriculture are constructed relationally through the comparison between the two alternatives. On the other hand, differentiating between Finnish and foreign products has been presented in many situations as much more legitimate, forming a clear connection to a common good of the national collective.

The national common good offers a challenging subject for pragmatic sociology. Justifications based on nationality can be interpreted as domestic worth justifications. This could be deduced from the references to domestic production and the domestic-foreign dichotomy. Justifications that interpret

the emphasis on locality in organic agriculture as nationality support this interpretation. However, many justifications based on nationality or nationalism do not reference the principles central to the domestic worth, such as hierarchy or close personal relations, although trust is promoted in them.

The reason why I have not equated nationalist justifications unconditionally with domestic justifications or compromises is that nationality does not consistently go together with all of the requirements of generality. That is, justifications for the superior worth and qualities of Finnish production are based on exceptionalism, which in my interpretation occupies a middle ground in regard to the commonality of worth. National justifications are justifications based on a common good—the national common good—but at the same time, the form of worth is attached to a particular nation or nation-state. They can then be characterized as a “form of bounded generalization” that promotes a “local common good” (Centemeri 2017, 103). In addition, counterarguments opposing organic agriculture and supporting the status quo rely on particularization instead of generalization. As is the case with many other debates in environmental politics, these justifications aim to present the Finnish case as either an exception to the otherwise problematic practices of conventional production or as a particular case that has no general relevance for global environmental problems.

The emphasis on national justifications highlights the limits of the model of public justification, suggesting that analyses can be directed to other forms of worth and how they are in tension with the regime of public justification (Blok 2015, 130). While nationality as such is not a new phenomenon, in discussion on agricultural production or elsewhere, this operates as an example of the increasing challenges that the regime of public justification as a form of commonality is currently facing (Davies 2020; Centemeri 2017; Ylä-Anttila 2017). Developments in pragmatic sociology (e.g., Thévenot 2014, 2020) can therefore be helpful in further studies to make sense of new forms of commonality and critique, thus deepening the understanding on the debates about agricultural sustainability.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Organic agriculture presents one of the major attempts to shape peoples' practices into more greener forms and to deal with the ecological connections of society. As agricultural production is one of the major areas of activity where humans impact nature, studying organic agriculture offers a central case of attempts for ecologizing society. In Finland, the organic movement has challenged deep-seated conceptions about the relations between society and nature, as well as production and the environment. However, similar to some environmental sociological accounts (e.g., Dunlap and Catton 1979; Murdoch 2001), organic agriculture promotes a view according to which nature is not something external to society. Instead, human actions are seen as deeply connected to and mediated by various ecological relations. Organic agriculture therefore offers a productive case for sociological theorizing in its attempts to better account for environmental issues (cf. Blok 2013). In addition, it offers a view on the opposition, which alternative, ecological movements may encounter.

In this thesis, I have promoted a pluralist approach, which I claim offers a more accurate and productive view of the development of organic agriculture. According to this view, the debates about organic agriculture and sustainability are not reduced to a single, clear-cut dichotomy but are instead better grasped as a constellation of differences. Part of this approach is the suggestion that the contested nature of organic agriculture should be better accounted for in future research. My contention is that (pragmatic) sociological accounts are well disposed in taking up this task, as they are able to deal with various forms of sense-making present in these debates about sustainability.

This research can therefore contribute to the public discussion on organic agriculture. One such area is for example the numerous criticisms towards organic agriculture, where it is accused of being only an "ideology." Examining the pragmatic construction of justifications could then help to provide a way forward, beyond the opposition between ideologies and facts. Together with this perspective, the pragmatic sociological account could provide a more diverse account of these debates, opening up new perspectives and ways forward.

That is, while organic agriculture might not be considered more sustainable by some actors, this does not mean that one could deduce that conventional agriculture is therefore sustainable. In other words, debates revolving around the relative merits of organic and conventional agriculture limit actors from acknowledging that perhaps neither is the solution for the future. Looking forward would require actors to look beyond these two alternatives (see Reganold and Wachter 2016). But it is also clear that an incredible amount of energy has been invested in these two alternatives, making it hard to transcend

this opposition (Thévenot 1984). Examining various contestations and how actors manage them can nevertheless help in identifying openings that could lead to common solutions.

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