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Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) and Transformative Food Systems Narrative in Indonesian Megacities Using Real Utopias Perspective: *Transformative Collaborations with and for Whom?*

Meidesta Pitria [1] and Shuji Hisano [2]

Abstract

Our globe is rapidly urbanizing, with more than half of the world's inhabitants currently living in cities. Cities have been deemed heavily reliant on rural areas for food provisioning. Over the past decade, numerous activists in Indonesia have initiated food-related practices in urban areas to rework, realize, and challenge the current food system through community food initiatives (CFIs). Some scholars contend that similar food projects in cities of the Global South primarily emphasize food production without aiming for transformative outcomes. Nowhere is the possibility for change more significant than in cities, where the State or local government, as examined in this study, are closer to citizens, and the power and growth of decentralization have also contributed to cities' rise as critical powers. This study investigated the potential of CFIs for food system transformation, employing real utopias, transformative food systems, and transformative food politics as theoretical frameworks. The real utopias approach was applied to understand 1) critique and diagnosis as drivers of CFI emergence, 2) CFIs as initiated alternatives, and 3) CFIs' transformative strategies. This study employed case studies from three different CFIs with different types of food initiatives in the Jakarta-Bandung urban area, *Seni Tani, Kebun Kumara,* and *Selarasa Food Lab*, to better understand the transformative orientation of CFIs in Indonesian megacities. The data were collected using secondary resources such as social media, websites, and online articles. They were analyzed using a narrative approach with coding using NVivo software. This study found that the city's reliance on the lengthy food supply chain disconnected urban inhabitants from their food and nature, and unmanageable food waste became their main critique. Each CFI has a different approach to the State in achieving its dreams of providing alternative and transformation strategies. *Seni Tani* employed a symbiotic approach by expanding their relationship with the local government, academics, and international organizations. On the other hand, *Kebun Kumara* and *Selarasa Food Lab* adopted an interstitial approach. *Kebun Kumara* increased its cooperative endeavors with local businesses and creative industries, while *Selarasa Food Lab* expanded its collaboration efforts with other CFIs, mostly farmers groups. Each CFI's distinctive agenda and strategies may not have genuinely transformed the food system. Still, it is oriented toward achieving this, particularly in urban areas where regional and international development agendas are being addressed.

Keywords

Community Food Initiatives, Transformative Food Politics, Food System Transformation, Real Utopias, Urban Food Initiatives

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1. Introduction

Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities. Due to urbanization, city dwellers face challenges such as pollution-related health risks, worsening income equality, social isolation, scarcity of resources and space, climate change, and malnutrition (Moragues-Faus et al., 2022; Scharf et al., 2019). Moreover, food insecurity is becoming increasingly prevalent in cities. Nonetheless, earlier research has shown that development agencies primarily advocate for food security policy in rural areas, and there has been a persistent dichotomy between urban and rural policy (Tuholske et al., 2020; Wiskerke, 2015). Food was more associated with agriculture and rural policy and frequently delivered to urban areas via a long supply chain (Clendenning et al., 2016; Crush & Riley, 2018; Lang, 2022; Sonnino, 2009; Zeeuw & Drechsel, 2015). Food provision is a growing urban concern previously overlooked in urban studies (Slade et al., 2016; Zeeuw & Drechsel, 2015).

The rapid urbanization of the planet is shaping and reshaping our food systems. The issue is not only about how to feed the globe but also about what food we consume, how it is grown, processed, and delivered to our tables, and how it affects society's health, economics, and social relationships (Tefft et al., 2017). Industrialization has obscured the complex supply chains that bring food from distant to urban areas, with most of the food being produced in mega-scaled, technologically streamlined facilities (Steel, 2022). These chains, network, and ecosystem threats might be more complicated than we thought. In this sense, food has been commodified, and urban inhabitants have been served as pure consumers. As identified by Friedmann (1992), the main problems of industrial food systems are 'distance' and 'durability'. Scholars (Blythman, 2005; Mah & Thang, 2013; Morrow et al., 2023; Renting et al., 2012; Tregear et al., 2014) have discussed how to respond to the industrial food system with diverse approaches such as organic movement, Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), Civic Food Networks (CFNs), and Community Food Initiatives (CFIs). This study focuses on Community Food Initiatives (CFIs).

Nowhere is the potential for change more significant than in cities (Scharf et al., 2019) since in cities, the State, the local government in this study, is closer to citizens, and the power and the wave of decentralization have also contributed to the rise of cities as key powers, including transforming food systems (Moragues-Faus et al., 2022). Although food systems issues have historically been addressed at national and provincial levels, interest in urban food systems and the increasing engagement of cities and metropolitan districts in food issues are proliferating. (Tefft et al., 2017). Over the past decade, 'the urban' has gained much attention in regional and international development agendas (Fernandez-Wulff & Yap, 2018). Diverse actors, from policymakers to civil society, are increasingly engaging in food governance to address food system challenges (Moragues-Faus et al., 2017). This paper discusses Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) in urban areas, which include civil society.

In the urban context, it is essential to situate residents as the key actors in developing sustainable and resilient cities (Scharf et al., 2019) since there is a growing sense of citizen dispossession and exclusion, along with a growing need for involvement and a voice in decision-making processes (Kratzwald, 2015). However, further discussion about CFIs in urban contexts in Southeast Asian countries, and Indonesia in particular, is still limited and scattered (Aisyah Salim et al., 2019). Earlier researches were mainly conducted in European and American contexts (Chen, 2012; Hisano, 2021, 2022; Mazza, 2014; Morrow et al., 2023; Tornaghi, 2014; Veen, 2015). In line with Sovová & Veen (2020), we argue that the differences between food initiatives in the Global North and the Global South are often simplified, with activist movements

for alternative food systems as the main focus of the former and food production as the main focus of the latter. Rather than define the differences based on those binaries, we argue that seeing the potential that can be produced and brought differently from each CFI in each city for a transformative food system is essential.

1.1. Acknowledge the Diversity of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs)

The definition, traits, and positioning of CFIs are taken from Morrow et al. (2023) for this paper. According to Morrow et al., CFIs are driven by the specific needs, values, and concerns of people in different places and contexts who collectively come together to realize, rework, and challenge food systems. Morrow et al. suggested that CFIs may serve, work with, or comprise young and older adults, wealthy and poor people, newcomers and long-time locals, and various groups. Any stage in the food system, such as growing, distributing, preparing, cooking, and eating, can be included in CFIs. CFIs are food initiatives realized through collective actions that address different communities' resource and location-specific needs. CFIs include alternative and mainstream initiatives involving meeting various needs through agricultural production, food consumption, cultural inclusion, and civic engagement.

Morrow et al. (2023) suggested that CFIs offer opportunities for collective actions that are responsive to the needs, resources, and capacities of specific communities across a diversity of geographic scales (local, short supply chains), locations (urban, rural), practices (growing, preparing, eating), and concerns (health, sustainability) across the food system. Through official and informal structures, cultural norms, and normative frameworks, CFIs can serve as places for fostering community and negotiating diversity. By focusing our attention on CFIs, we can better understand how they work together toward transformative food systems.

1.2. Real Utopias

The community should be interpreted in more than just good ways. Morrow et al. (2023) proposed exploring CFIs as sites for creating and contesting communities instead of assuming they are composed of cohesive, bounded, or pre-existing communities. Such contestation and creativity are enacted through food-related practices, governance, and negotiation across differences. Discussing CFIs is not only to highlight their success story or positive change they have made but also to offer a more nuanced picture of CFIs by understanding both the 'troubles' and 'hopes' of CFIs and their trial-and-error process. The real utopias approach is in line with these arguments. Real utopias, which were first introduced by Erik Olin Wright in 1992, are characterized by looking for accessible waystations and institutions that allow for incremental progress in a world of imperfect conditions for social change (Wright, 2020). 'Utopia' implies developing visions of alternatives to dominant institutions that embody aspirations for a better world, while 'real' refers to proposing desired alternatives that are viable and achievable (Fonte & Cucco, 2018). Wright emphasizes designing social institutions to promote fulfilling and meaningful lives through a process driven by trial and error and focuses on creating practical alternatives to existing social structures. Wright acknowledges the complexities of social change and the need for pragmatic solutions that can be implemented within existing constraints (Burawoy, 2005). Thus, this paper employed a real utopias approach as the theoretical framework. Subsequently, three analytical frameworks in envisioning real utopias within a broader framework of 'emancipatory social science' are introduced for further analysis in this

paper, which are theories of 1) diagnosis and critique, which tell us *"why we want to change the current system*"; 2) alternatives to existing institutions and social structures, which tell us *"where we want to go"*; 3) transformation strategy, which tells us *"how we get there"*.

Wright's concept of real utopias offers a pragmatic approach to envisioning social change through incremental steps and practical experimentation. However, it also raises questions about how such approaches can truly challenge and transform existing structures (Burawoy, 2005). Hence, to develop the idea of food system transformation in real utopias frameworks, elaboration with other works of literature that discuss to what extent and how food initiatives can underpin transformative food systems is needed.

1.3. The Role of CFIs in Transformative Food System

Societies should seek to recover an appreciation of food's multidimensional roles beyond that as a global commodity and to transform the current industrial food system. Yet, the question remains how and by whom this transformation will be undertaken: whether Big Food remains hegemonic in guiding a transition through technologies of the bio-economy or whether we will witness the more rhizomic spread of grassroots initiatives effectively performing this transformation that will birth a food system that works within our planet to deliver healthy food for all (Antoni-Komar et al., 2020). This study explored the latter by examining CFIs' efforts toward the transformative food system processes (Hebinck et al., 2021) and transformative food politics (Levkoe, 2014, 2011) that are signposts for sustainable food system transformation. The approaches offered by Hebinck et al. and Levkoe have helped this study develop the idea of transformation in the real utopias project framework and understand the efforts and politics involved in answering 'how to get there' in the real utopias approach.

Thus, this paper aims to explain how and to what extent the narratives of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) in Indonesian megacities such as Jakarta and Bandung aim for transformative food systems. Furthermore, this paper aims to unpack the transformation strategies of the CFIs and their relationship with the State, specifically local government. This study is expected to contribute to less discussed food initiatives in Southeast Asia and show the more nuanced and complex picture of CFIs in achieving a more transformative food system.

2. Methods

Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world, with Java Island being the most populated island. Java island, where most of the biggest cities are located, is home to almost 60 percent of the Indonesian population. It contributes to 59 percent of the GDP. Indonesian cities have become more dependent on rural areas for food production. The Special Capital Region of Jakarta only produces 2 percent of its food, while Bandung City, another big city located 150 km from Jakarta, only produces around 3 percent. Indonesian Minister of National Development Planning has forecast that the population in Jakarta and Bandung will reach 75 million by 2045. If the metropolitan areas of Jakarta and Bandung meet, they will become one megalopolitan urban area (Tempo. co, 2018). Thus, this paper chose CFIs in Jakarta and Bandung, two of the biggest Indonesian cities and future megapolitan urban areas, as case studies.

Previous research (Hebinck et al., 2021) discussed exploring the transformative potential of urban food. According to that study, different urban food initiatives have different

focuses and potentials. Hence, this study tried to look at different kinds of CFIs with different urban food practices. After that, we identified three CFIs with different types of urban food practices and mentioned transformative food systems as their goal. This was done with a search engine machine by identifying CFIs in Jakarta or Bandung and explicitly promoting the transformative food system narrative in their social media and website. They are *Seni Tani* in Bandung, *Kebun Kumara* in Jakarta, and *Selarasa Food Lab* in Jakarta.

TABLE 1. CASE STUDIES AND DATA COLLECTION

CFI	***Seni Tani***	***Kebun Kumara***	***Selarasa Food Lab***
Established in	2020	2016	2021
Locations	Bandung	Jakarta	Jakarta
Data Sources	- Instagram (602 posts, from first post in 2020 to last post in March 2024) - Articles from their website (20 articles)	- Instagram (1257 posts, from first post in 2016 to last post in March 2024) - Articles from their website (19 articles)	- Instagram (99 posts, from first post in 2021 to last post in March 2024) - An article that was written based on an interview with them (November 11th, 2023)
			Total Instagram posts: 1958 posts; Total articles: 40 articles

The study was conducted using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis, which social scientists have become interested in using better to understand the social world and the production data, enables us to explore the role 'stories' play in constructing identity (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). The focus of narrative analysis has shifted, not merely to information collection (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992) but towards a more interpretive turn (Rabinov & Sullivan, 1979, in Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Other scholars (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) have used narrative inquiry to understand experience. Earthy and Cronin suggested that the researcher's reflexivity becomes valuable with a focus on the social construction of the story and uncovering the 'truth' no longer becomes the object of analysis. Although narrative data has been focused on collaboration between the researcher and participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), a wide range of sources can provide access to narrative data already in the form of text since the three roles of researcher identified by Plummer (1995) of producer, coaxer, and audience continue to be relevant[3]. This study used narrative analysis and textual sources of narrative data to

[3] Plummer (1995) in Earthy & Cronin (2008) argued that storytelling as part of the narrative approach is central to symbolic interaction, enabling stories to be viewed as joint actions involving *producers, coaxers,* and *consumers*. This shifts the emphasis away from seeing a story as representative of an individual life to focusing on the story's social production and consumption. As a producer, the researcher will be aware that the story is a version of a 'life'; it is not 'the life' itself, not as a representative of life but a part of the life creation and identifies issues or events that are significant to the individual telling their story. As a coaxer, the researcher's research question might limit and shape the story and secondary data they collect. As a consumer, the researcher has an active role in interpreting the data, including secondary data.

understand the CFIs' positioning and transformative food system narrative. One advantage of textual sources of narrative data is that it may be feasible to include much larger data, which is Instagram and each CFI's website, in this paper. Instagram was chosen as one of the data sources because it is ranked 2nd as Indonesia's most-used social media platform after WhatsApp (Global Digital Report 2024). Instagram is known for its growing popularity and capacity to attract and engage a large and active audience (Howe, 2024). All CFIs in this study use Instagram as the leading platform to share their activities and collaborations with small businesses, communities, organizations, and the government.

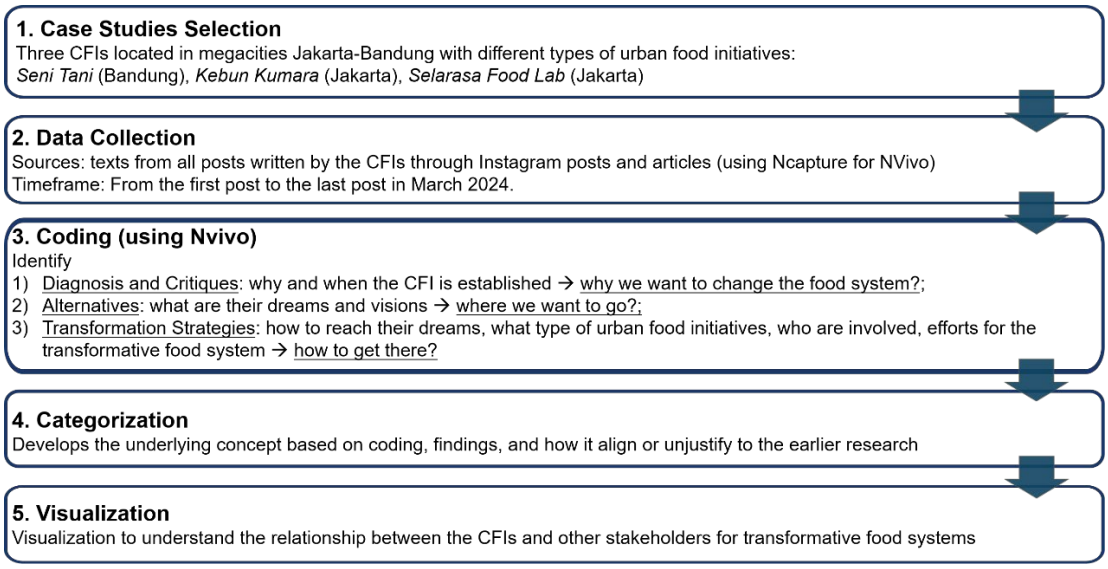

FIGURE 1. METHODS

3. CFIs as Real Utopias Projects: Toward Transformative Food Systems

In this section, we explore the findings, from how they were established, how they narrate themselves as CFIs, and their main activities and forms of food initiatives. Furthermore, three analytical frameworks of real utopias, theories of 1) diagnosis and critique, 2) alternatives, and 3) transformation, are discussed based on how the three CFIs apply them in practice. Each CFI's narration explores each theory to highlight the diagnosis and critique from the communities to the current food system, the alternatives they offered, and the transformative strategies they are applying to reach their dreams and vision, as shown in **Table 2**. Likewise, the table summarizes how CFIs express the ideas of transformative strategies toward transformative food systems, each with a different approach, struggle, and collaboration to achieve their goals.

3.1. About the CFIs

3.1.1. *Seni Tani: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Bandung*

Seni Tani in Bandung was established at the end of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Seni Tani* is a part of the more extensive community named *Komunitas 1000 Kebun*, established in 2015 as a community of gardening enthusiasts and practitioners in Indonesia emphasizing an organic approach. *Seni Tani* was started by gardening on vacant land in urban areas to enhance

TABLE 2. CFIS AS REAL UTOPIAS PROJECTS (WRIGHT, 2020) FOR TRANSFORMATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

CFIs as real utopias projects	**Diagnosis and Critiques** ***(Why do we want to change?)*** *A diagnosis and critique of food commodification for urban inhabitants*	**Alternatives** ***(Where do we want to go?)*** *Prefiguration of communities as key actors for urban food provisioning*		**Transformative Food System** ***(How to get there?)*** *Identify transformative strategies for realizing the desirable alternatives*			
	CFIs' Drivers and Concerns	**Dreams and Vision**	**Challenges and Development Direction**	**Types of Urban Food Practices and the Segment of Food Chains in each CFI** (Hebinck et al., 2021; Marshall, 2015)	**Transformative Food System Processes** (Hebinck et al., 2021)	**Transformative Food Politics and Relationship to Local Government as part of the State** (Fonte & Cucco, 2018; Levkoe, 2011, 2014; Wright, 2020)	**Narration about Steps toward Transformative Food System**
***Seni Tani*, Bandung** (Since 2020)	Urban vacant land; city reliance on the lengthy food supply chain; unmanageable waste; carbon emission; agricultural land conversion; COVID-19 affected youth depression and social disparity; current food system is not on the farmer's side	to establish a system that shortens the distance between producers and consumers with transparency and economic certainty for farmers (with CSA)	1) need to get a new place to move and continue the main gardening area for CSA; 2) trial and error in gardening practices	Community gardens and short food supply chains (Hebinck et al., 2021) P, PR, PD, RC (Marshall, 2015)	3) influencing consumer decisions through CSA 4) mobilization of key actors (content creators, governors, minister) 5) reclaiming or recreating urban space 7) taking an integrated approach by identifying economic, social, and environmental aspects 8) using participatory approaches	1) collaborative activities with local businesses and SMEs, other CFIs, educational institutions, local government to national government, and international organizations such as FAO and RUAF 2) comprehensive food system approach: from production to waste management 3) reflexive localization by scaling up to the local and national government and scaling out to other CFIs Symbiotic relationship with the State (collaborate with local government)	*"Our movements are still limited, but we believe that to create change, we need to start with small steps.. do gardening and returning to the local products and market. We live as a community; the solution must come from the community."*
***Kebun Kumara*, Jakarta** (Since 2016)	Urban inhabitants have been disconnected from nature; there is something wrong with the current food system; urban should give solutions, and the inhabitants should grow their own food; waste management problem	to have urban kids generation that are educated about nurturing their relationship with nature	1) invite people to join a new thing is not easy; 2) trial and error in DIY gardening practices; 3) had to move and do not have permanent space for gardening anymore 4) adaptation to pandemic 5) the activity extended to include edible landscape design and build services	Educational food initiatives and urban agriculture (Hebinck et al., 2021) P (Marshall, 2015)	3) influencing consumer decisions through the promotion of home gardening and *Toko Kumara* 4) mobilization of key actors (content creators, activists, artists) 8) using participatory approaches	1) collaborative activities with local businesses and SMEs, influential people or content creators, communities and organizations, other CFIs, and educational institution Interstitial relationship with the State (ignore the government)	*"Do it with your friends, colleagues, boss, partners, and kids. Do it again tomorrow and then every day… Grow a garden at home, school, and even the office, and nurture ourselves and the people around us!"*
***Selarasa Food Lab*, Jakarta** (Since 2022)	City reliance on the lenghty food supply chain; farmer's income is very low; urban inhabitants have been disconnected from their food source; all the people should be connected and get the same benefits in the food system	to support farmers, local food, and consumers to have better connections and to distribute local products with less waste, less import, and less exploitation of nature (as a food hub)	1) to implement the short food supply chains in the city 2) land is very limited in the urban area	Short food supply chains and food justice (Hebinck et al., 2021) PD, RC (Marshall, 2015)	3) influencing consumer decisions through short food supply chains 4) mobilization of key actors (content creators, activists) 8) using participatory approaches	1) collaborative activities with other CFIs, local businesses and SMEs, communities and organizations, and influential people or content creators 3) reflexive localizations by scaling out, and collaborating with other CFIs Interstitial relationship with the State (ignore the government)	*"How do we build trust in the people around us and the farmer network around us so that we can all work together and have greater power to express choices outside the mainstream food system."*

community food security. High levels of youth depression during the pandemic and Bandung City's dependency on imported foods became the main reasons for starting their community garden on vacant land owned by the local government.

> *"This initiative encompasses the urban land utilization for food gardens through sustainable agriculture and urban youth empowerment to be urban farmers." (Seni Tani)*

During the first gardening preparation, they realized that the waste management system was also an issue in Bandung. The vacant land was full of trash, and they spent more time managing the trash and initiating composting as part of their main activities. After the pandemic started to recover, they focused more on Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) or *Tani Sauyunan.* Their main activities are *Tani Sauyunan, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Composting, and Tani Bestari, or community garden, as an* interactive place to learn about gardening.

3.1.2. *Kebun Kumara: Food Education for Jakarta Urban Dwellers*

The second case, *Kebun Kumara* in Jakarta, was established in 2016. They started the initiative by learning permaculture and growing their food. Since 2017, they have developed, tested, and matured their teaching and learning approach to accommodate the most basic needs of those living in the city, from young to old.

> *"We are a group of city kids thirsty for knowledge more holistic to help us lead better, meaningful lives… We failed many seeds, killed countless seedlings, and injured too many worms. However, this process taught us what years of our education could not achieve – that matching our nature with nature births a sense of mindfulness like no other."* (*Kebun Kumara*)

Their main activities are public workshops, from composting to gardening, to help urban dwellers gain skills that empower their sustainable journey from home. They also organize workshops for corporate employees to amplify collective awareness and a more profound sustainability experience. Their children's programs assist schools with ecological education and support parents with outdoor nature experiences for their young ones. While the COVID-19 pandemic triggered many CFIs to emerge, *Kebun Kumara* had to adapt their education activities, which were always held offline, to online. In 2022, *Kebun Kumara* also started a new edible landscape project to assist individuals and institutions in building their edible landscape.

3.1.3. *Selarasa Food Lab: Food Hub in Jagakarsa, South Jakarta*

Also located in Jakarta, *Selarasa Food Lab* is this study's third case and the youngest CFI. It was established in 2021. Jakarta's food supply, which depends on sources from outside regions such as West Java, Banten, and Central Java, motivated the initiation of *Selarasa Food Lab. Selarasa Food Lab* become a food hub that liaises between farmers and farmers or farmers and consumers in Jagakarsa, Jakarta. They met with farmers, gathered to form networks, and held special programs to help Jagakarsa farmers connect with farmers and consumers.

> *"Seeking justice for the quality and price of food commodities consumed every day cannot be done alone" (Selarasa Food Lab)*

Selarasa Food Lab started by mapping Jagakarsa farmers and found that there were at least twenty-eight independent agricultural land points with more than fifty home-processed food products spread across Jagakarsa (Kota Kita, 2023). Thus, *Selarasa Food Lab* is also developing a shared kitchen to process vegetables and produce processed food. Their programs include *Pasar Selaras* as the farmer's market, *Odong-Odong Tour*, which allows visitors to learn about urban agriculture by visiting farmers' groups and experiencing urban farming, *Majelis Sayur* as a regular meeting between farmers' groups and the public, and *Kuliah Tumbuhan* or *Kultum*, a knowledge-sharing or workshop session. The following uses the real utopias approach to analyze how and to what extent transformative food systems are narrated in these three CFIs.

3.2. *Why We Want to Change*: Diagnosis and Critique of the Current Food System

Today's events are instead the results of institutions, practices, and social structures. The diagnosis and critique of society tell us, "Why do we want to leave the world in which we live?" and why we want to change the current system (Wright, 2020). This study analyzed their critique of the current food system to answer the question.

3.2.1. Disconnection between Urban Inhabitants, Food, and Nature

The study found that the city's reliance on the lengthy food supply chain and the urban inhabitants' disconnection from their food and nature were their main criticisms and the driving force behind their initiative. While previous research (e.g., Cattivelli & Rusciano, 2020; Nemes et al., 2021) discussed food initiatives as a consequence of COVID-19, the primary concern of CFIs as case studies in this study is more rooted in the disconnection between urban inhabitants and their food. Besides, *Seni Tani* and *Selarasa Food Lab* argued that the industrial food system is not on the farmers' side. *Selarasa Food Lab* suggested that everyone should be connected and get the same benefits in the food system. That is why *Selarasa Food Lab* proposes more activities to unite the urban farmers and encourage them to exchange their ideas about what is wrong with the current system. They argue that the fact that farmers' income is meager because of the long food supply chain also demotivates urban youth to become urban farmers. Kloppenburg et al. (1996) saw this process as 'distancing disempowers'.

3.2.2. The Lack of Food Waste Management Program

Seni Tani and *Kebun Kumara* saw food waste as a huge problem in Indonesia. They argued that composting food waste would reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfills. Currently, almost all household solid waste in Indonesia is mixed, and there is a lack of composting programs or formal diversion programs designed to deal with food waste and recycling waste (Warshawsky & Soma, 2022). Hence, those three CFIs, particularly *Seni Tani* and *Kebun Kumara*, have made composting one of their primary practices. *Kebun Kumara* developed a collective composting idea in response to Jakarta's waste issue, and *Seni Tani* developed 'lasagna compost' to provide better soil for their community gardens.

Food waste management as an initiative has not become a part of urban food practices with transformative potential from previous literature, mainly discussed in Western countries (Hebinck et al., 2021). This finding also supports Sovová & Veen's (2020) argument that food

initiatives in Indonesia, considered part of the Global South, are not always related to food production and security.

3.3. *Where We Want to Go*: Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) and Their Alternatives

Wright (2020) proposed that the second task of emancipatory social science is to develop a coherent, credible theory of the alternatives to existing institutions and social structures that would eliminate, or at least significantly mitigate, the harms and injustices identified in the diagnosis and critique. The theory of alternatives tells us "Where we want to go." To answer that question, this study analyzed the narrative of the dreams and goals of the CFIs.

3.3.1. CFIs' Dreams and Visions: All Actors in Food System Should Be Connected

Seni Tani proposed that SFSCs are important for the ecosystem. *Kebun Kumara* proposed to have educated urban kids who understand the importance of building relationships with nature. *Selarasa Food Lab* emphasized the importance of the connection between all actors in the food system and food distribution with less waste, less import, and less exploitation of nature. Although their dreams differ, those three CFIs have a similar idea: they propose that all actors in the food system (i.e., farmers, consumers, producers) should be directly connected to each other and reconnected with nature.

3.3.2. The Challenges and Dynamics: Limited Land in Urban Areas and Trial Error Process

CFIs often face challenges and dynamics to adapt and reach their goal. *Seni Tani* still relies on privately owned and government-owned lands, meaning they do not have any self-owned place to conduct their activities, such as gardening for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). *Kebun Kumara* also faced the same challenge a few years ago, and currently, they do not have a permanent place for gardening and organizing workshops. *Selarasa Food Lab,* although they do not do gardening as one of their main activities, agreed that limited land in urban areas is challenging for growing foods. Unlike many CFIs that emerged during the pandemic, in *Kebun Kumara*'s case, COVID-19 truly affected their activities, primarily offline education programs organized for years. However, with those limitations, they initiated offline and online collaborations with restaurants and schools. They used their open spaces as knowledge-sharing areas, such as workshops and training related to gardening and food education. *Seni Tani* and *Kebun Kumara* acknowledge that trial and error during gardening has become common. While *Selarasa Food Lab* acknowledges that breaking the extended supply chain is challenging, "How can we break the distribution chain? Why buy the second price when you can buy the first price?"(Kota Kita, 2023). CFIs face these challenges and troubles by following Wright's real utopias theory, which states that trial and error are part of incremental change toward social change.

3.4. How We Get There: Three CFIs and Their Roles for Food System Transformation

The theory of transformation explains "How we get there?". The theory of transformative strategy helps us understand how we can collectively contend with obstacles and take advantage of the opportunities to move us toward social emancipation.

3.4.1. Each CFI Engages with Different Types of Urban Food Initiatives

To first understand "How we get there?", this study mapped the type of urban food initiatives to understand which part of the food system the CFIs sought to tackle. As mentioned earlier, we applied urban food initiatives from Hebinck et al. (2021), differentiating urban food initiatives into categories: 1) (peri-) urban agriculture; 2) community gardens; 3) food networks and policy; 4) short food supply chains; 5) food justice organizations; 6) care and educational initiatives. In this study, a CFI could have more than one initiative to achieve their goal, namely *Seni Tani* with short food supply chains and community gardens, *Kebun Kumara* with educational food initiatives and urban agriculture, and *Selarasa Food Lab* with short food supply chains and food justice as their urban food practices. Furthermore, each CFI specifically mentioned the kind of activity or term for their main practice: *Seni Tani* with CSA, *Kebun Kumara* with education for urban kids, and *Selarasa Food Lab* with Food Hub.

We also applied Marshall's framework (Marshall, 2015), dividing the food initiatives into categories: primary food production (P), processing food (PR), packaging and distributing food (PD), and retailing and consuming food (RC). This study found that the three CFIs are engaging in more than one type of food initiative, revealing that the food-related practices are indispensable to each other. With CSA as their main practice, *Seni Tani* actively promotes and organizes composting, gardening, and collaborating with local small businesses to process, distribute, and sell foods. They also organize commensality as part of their communal activities, implementing the farm-to-table experience with a potluck system. *Kebun Kumara* actively promotes composting, seedlings, and gardening from our home. They recently started an online market, *Toko Kumara*, to sell seeds, composting packages, and cooked food in collaboration with other CFIs. *Selarasa Food Lab* focused more on the process after production, such as processing food in the shared kitchen, packaging, and retailing products through their shop, and organizing an open kitchen as a medium for food sharing. We can see that since *Kebun Kumara* and *Selarasa Food Lab* currently do not have a permanent space for urban gardening, their activities are more related to promoting urban food production at home for *Kebun Kumara* and connecting the networks of farmers groups and CFIs for short food supply chains for *Selarasa Food Lab*.

3.4.2. Transformative Food System Processes: Urban Inhabitants as More than Consumers

We further analyzed how food system transformation requires processes that are signposts for sustainable food system transformations, as suggested by Hebinck et al., (2021) such as 1) adoption of a city-region perspective; 2) creation of spatial synergies; 3) influencing consumer decisions; 4) mobilization of key actors; 5) reclaiming or recreating urban space; 6) strategic planning for the future; 7) taking an integrated approach; and 8) using a participatory approach. All of the CFIs at least applied points 3 (three), 4 (four), and 8 (eight). They all tried influencing consumer decisions, specifically urban inhabitants, through different initiatives from CSA, gardening workshops, and short food supply chains.

This study found that although the transformative processes used the term 'consumer', the consumer in these CFIs is involved in more than the production-consumption process. In *Seni Tani*, CSA members, as the consumers, were involved in regular meetings to discuss the progress of CSA. In *Kebun Kumara*, they raised awareness of food by actively promoting growing our own food at home. They provide seedling and composting sets for those interested in growing their food. In *Selarasa Food Lab*, the meeting and discussion with farmers, activists, and the public raised awareness of choosing locally grown and produced food through a short food supply chain (SFSCs). Giving more space for the consumer to decide what food they eat, how their food is grown and processed, and how the food comes to the table is like putting them more as prosumers[4], not merely consumers. Although scholars in the domain of food studies hardly used the concept of prosumption as such (Veen et al., 2021) and some scholars (Dusi, 2017; Ritzer, 2015) believe that prosumption potentially becomes a form of exploitation, the involvement of consumers in these three CFIs showed that CFIs might empower urban inhabitants to have more roles in urban food, reducing the 'distancing disempowers'.

These three CFIs also applied mobilization of key actors. While *Kebun Kumara* and *Selarasa Food Lab* more often collaborated with content creators, activists, and artists, *Seni Tani* also collaborated with the people from the local and national governments. Although these CFIs have different forms and types of collaborations with key actors, their collaboration with influential actors can potentially underpin to accelerate change. Their collaborations with diverse individuals, communities, and institutions also support point number 8 (eight), using participatory approaches to enhance multiple relevant stakeholders to design, plan, or develop urban food systems.

3.4.3. Transformative Food Politics: Collaboration Building and Small Steps with Urban Everyday Politics

Finally, we drew upon three processes of food system transformation by Levkoe (2011, 2014) to understand to what extent the transformative food politics are implemented by the CFI's three processes of food system transformations: 1) collective subjectivities, which is the shift from individualized market mechanisms as the mode for change to collaborate mobilization around collective needs; 2) a comprehensive food system approach that integrates social justice, ecological sustainability, community health, and democracy throughout all aspects of the food system; 3) reflexive localization which is about building multi-scalar strategies to provide opportunities to build multi-scale collaborations. The three CFIs showed different approaches in applying transformative food politics, particularly in building collaborations for collective subjectivities, for "reclaiming the food as commons". Levkoe suggested that collective subjectivities point to broader and more diverse relationships. This concept of collective subjectivities aligns with the mobilization of key actors, as mentioned above. This study mapped the collaborative activities of each CFI by identifying their collaborators mentioned in their

[4] Prosumers are people who practice prosumption. Prosumption, first established by Alvin Toffler in 1980, is the interdependence of production and consumption that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the two. An example is Ritzer's concept of Mcdonaldization, in which customers perform the work of self-service, from ordering to picking up meals and disposing of the waste.

social media, websites, and newspapers. This study found that each CFI has a different pattern of collaboration, as shown in **Figure 2**. *Seni Tani* interacts most with local businesses, SMEs, and government. *Kebun Kumara* has the highest interaction with content creators and corporations. *Selarasa Food Lab* interacts significantly with other CFIs, communities, and organizations. Not every CFI may apply three transformative food politics processes as Levkoe proposed. **Figure 2** below shows the progress of building collaborations with diverse stakeholders.

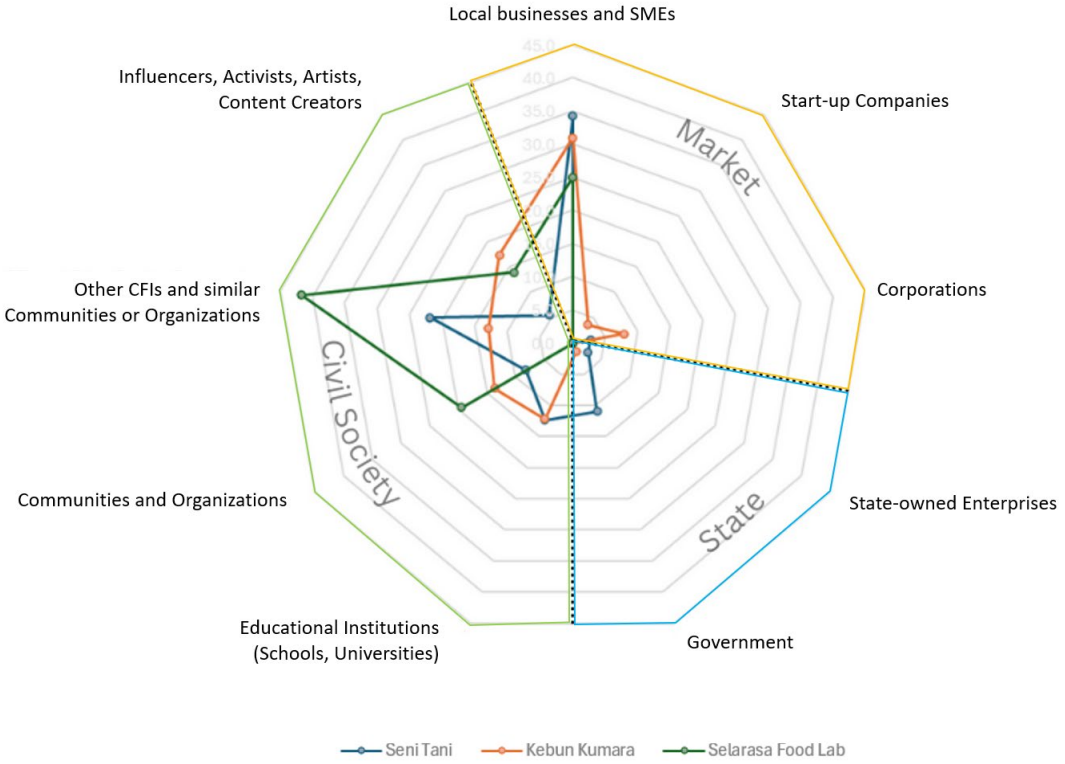

FIGURE 2. COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES AND NETWORKS OF THE CFIS

Source: Author's analysis

Another finding is that not every CFI aims to take such big steps and invite every stakeholder to join their movement. *Seni Tani* and *Kebun Kumara* mentioned the importance of small steps towards transformation. *Selarasa Food Lab* mentioned the importance of building trust with urban farmers first. In the case of *Kebun Kumara*, they actively ask their followers on Instagram to reflect on their contributions to nature and their food. *Kebun Kumara* encourages people to 'do it yourself, again, tomorrow, and every day'. This reminds us of urban everyday politics (Beveridge & Koch, 2019), which can have transformative potential because politics is inseparable from and constitutive of the urban everyday. Everyday life is the locus where hegemony must be enacted. It is, therefore, in the everyday place that hegemonic formations can be revealed, criticized, and ultimately challenged by counter-hegemonic projects, including food (Kipfer, 2002 in Beveridge & Koch, 2019). Community Food Initiatives in reshaping urban space for community gardens and establishing alternative urban food systems of the everyday by offering food hubs and SFSCs are examples of urban everyday politics proposed by Beveridge & Koch (2019). This idea of urban everyday politics questioning the viability of the everyday is aligned with the real utopia approach, which emphasizes incremental steps toward viable alternatives. Urban everyday politics might then have little to do with performing a political

identity ("being activist") but rather trying to change the conditions of daily life ("doing activism") (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Bobel, 2007; cf. Bang, 2009 in Beveridge & Koch, 2019).

Furthermore, by using the real utopias perspective from Wright (2020), collective strategies of CFIs that can push a system toward social emancipation for the transformation of the food system can be classified into three broad categories according to their relationship to State institutions: *ruptural ("smash the State"), interstitial ("ignore the State"), and symbiotic ("use the State")*. The operations of ruptural are a complete break with existing forms, sharp discontinuity, and rapid change. Interstitials firstly operate in niches, cumulatively creating enlarged spaces for non-commodified, non-capitalists with a more diverse approach. Lastly, the operations of symbiotics in the short term are in the interest of the State, later shifting the balance of power towards broader social empowerment. Three CFIs have different relationships with the State. *Seni Tani* explicitly mentioned their dream of advocating for the government. *Seni Tani* actively promoted their activity to the public and collaborated with the government, from the local to national level, meaning they engaged more with the State. They also mentioned wanting to collaborate more with media, academics, and organizations to promote their movement. *Kebun Kumara* focused on education for urban kids and collaborated more with the private sector. *Selarasa Food Lab* actively collaborates with other communities and has less connection to the government. There seems to be a relationship between the type of urban food initiatives and their goals as CFIs. There also seems to be a relationship between how they build the collaboration networks and their relationship with the State. This study needs further analysis to understand those relationships.

4. Conclusion

This paper examines Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) as real utopia projects to understand the narratives of transformative food systems. The discussion revolves around three analytical frameworks: diagnosis and critiques (why we want to change?), alternatives (where we want to go?), and transformation strategies (how we get there?). The paper presents case studies that explain how transformative food systems were narrated in three CFIs in two of Indonesia's largest cities, Jakarta and Bandung.

The first part of this study discusses the narrative of diagnosis and critique of current food systems. It points out that the emergence of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) in Indonesia is not always related to food production issues, as previously assumed. Each CFI has its own diagnosis and critique of the food system. The CFIs argue that while food security at the community level is important, the root of the problem lies in the disconnect between urban inhabitants and their food sources, as well as the city's reliance on a lengthy food supply chain.

The second analysis focused on alternatives or where we want to go to answer the diagnosis and critique. They proposed Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) that aim to achieve three main goals: 1) establishing a system that shortens the distance between food producers and consumers; 2) educating urban children about nature and food production; and 3) ensuring that all participants in the food system receive equitable benefits. However, CFIs' journey toward more transformative food systems is not without challenges. Their contestation and creativity are enacted through different kinds of urban food initiatives with different challenges and dynamics. Their main challenges were their limited urban land and the trial-and-error

process in doing their activities. CFIs often have to be adaptive in facing uncertainty, such as during COVID-19 and the uncertainty about the land for conducting their core activities. This discussion raises a further question: "How do we build more sustainable CFIs to achieve food system transformation in the near future? To what extent must the CFIs be adaptive in facing such challenges?"

The third analysis focused on the discussion about the transformation strategies of the CFIs for food system transformation. Each CFI has different but more than one type of urban food initiative and different processes of transformative food systems, emphasizing urban inhabitants as prosumers which are more than consumers. This paper also discussed the possibility of including urban everyday politics as an approach to implementing transformative food systems in urban areas. Furthermore, this study concludes that their narrative of food system transformation was not only about building a relationship with the State but also with other stakeholders. They identify and develop transformative strategies, collaboration, and relationships with the State, market, and civil society to achieve the desirable alternatives to answer "how we get there".

This paper's central question is: "How and to what extent are transformative food systems portrayed in community food initiatives in Indonesian megacities such as Jakarta and Bandung using a real utopias perspective?" While it is acknowledged that each community food initiative (CFI) in Jakarta and Bandung may not encompass all aspects of transformative food politics and systems as outlined in the frameworks, each CFI does offer its own unique approaches and challenges in striving for transformative food systems. The CFIs also emphasize the significance of taking incremental steps and adopting a pragmatic approach to transformation. However, it is essential to recognize that efforts toward transformative food systems should not solely focus on short-term accomplishments with only a small group of collaborators. Further exploration of their vision for the long-term process of food system transformation is imperative. Achieving long-term food system transformation requires sustained commitment and active involvement from diverse stakeholders, as it is not just about transformation for certain parties, but rather about creating food systems that benefit everyone. It is evident that realizing, reshaping, or challenging the current food system is a complex journey, but efforts are being made to achieve this. Subsequently, it is critical to conduct further research encompassing a more diverse range of CFIs in Indonesian and Southeast Asian cities to expand the discourse on the role of CFIs in transformative food systems. This will provide an opportunity to contemplate the intricate relationships between civil society, the market, and the state in future urban food systems.

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