

Case study report (Code DE8C)

Landwege e.G. - A producer-consumer cooperative enables regional and ecological food supply

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Context

Regional Context

The practice LANDWEGE e. G. (in the following Landwege) is located mainly in the city of Lübeck, which is an independent city within the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany. Lübeck is a regionally important urban centre located at the coast of the Baltic Sea and was once the leading Hanseatic city of Germany. Landwege itself is not a real agricultural business but an association that sells products of several organically producing farms in the Lübeck region and the surrounding area. Most of the shops are located within the city of Lübeck with one additional shop in the city of Bad Schwartau. Most member farms are not located in Lübeck itself but in the surrounding districts of Ostholstein, Segeberg, Stormarn and Herzogtum Lauenburg. Therefore, the analysis of the regional context takes the four districts and the city of Lübeck into account.

Geography and nature conservation

Lübeck and its surrounding area are rather flat: Lübeck's elevation is located at only about 13 meters above sea level. The city of Lübeck, as the center of the region, and the Baltic Sea traditionally play a major role in the economic and cultural image of the region. Other important water bodies are the river Trave that runs through Lübeck and several lakes like the Ratzeburger See, Hemmelsdorfer See or the region around the Großer Plöner See. 10.5%¹ of these water bodies, but also several forests, meadows or coastal regions are conservation areas under the Natura2000 directive by the EU (Bundesamt für Naturschutz 2019).

¹ Estimated value based on Federal agency for Nature conservation 2019: conservation areas in Germany I

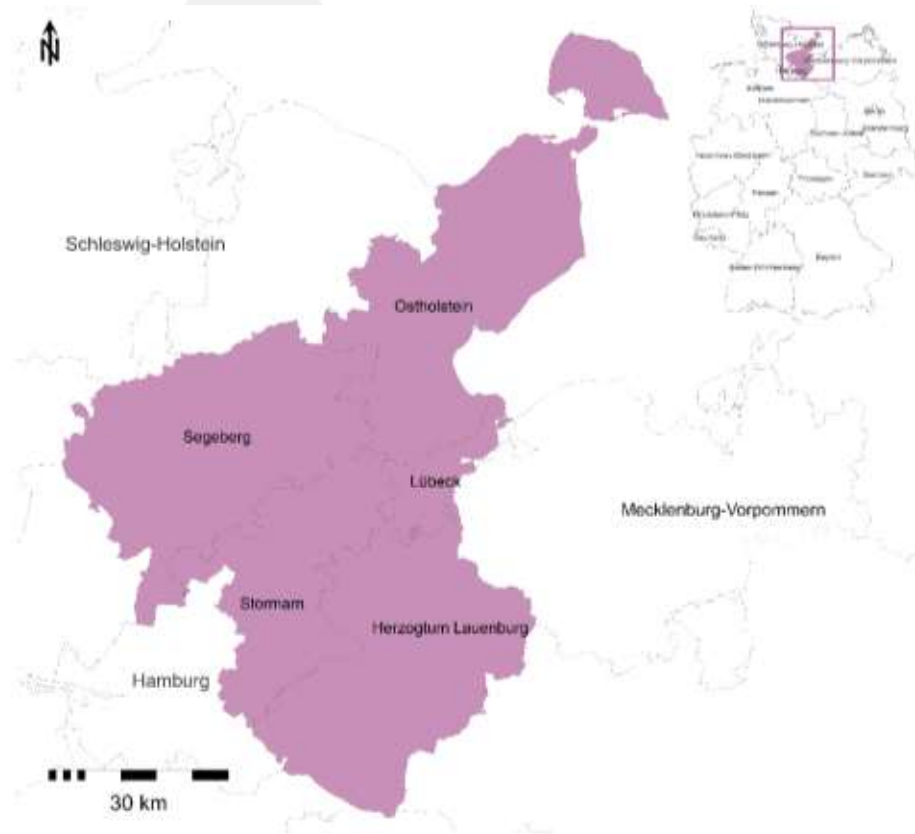


Figure 1. Study Area

Source: own illustration, created with RegioGraph

Demography

In 2018, the city of Lübeck had about 217,298 inhabitants. The districts of Segeberg and Stormarn are slightly more populated, while the districts of Ostholstein and Herzogtum Launeburg count less people. About 1,134,271 inhabitants lived in the whole region in 2018. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of inhabitants had increased by about 44,000. The population density in the whole region is at about 228 people per km², which is a higher than the population density in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (about 183 people per km²). Within the region, Lübeck as an independent city has by far the highest density with about 1,014 people per km², followed by the district of Stormarn with about 317 people per km². The other districts show values below the federal average of Schleswig-Holstein (see Table 1) (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 31.12.2018).

Name	Population	Area [km ²]	Population density (people per km ²)
Lübeck, Hansestadt, independent city	217,198	214.19	1014.04
Herzogtum Lauenburg, district	197,264	1263.07	156.18
Ostholstein, district	200,581	1393.02	143.99
Segeberg, district	276,032	1344.47	205.31
Stormarn, district	243,196	766.21	317.40
Total study area	891,075	4980.96	227.72

Table 1. Population of the study area

Source: Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 31.12.2018

The age structure of the population roughly corresponds with the age structure of the district of Osnabrück and the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. In comparison, there are fewer people aged 15 - 30 years (15.1%) in the region than in the federal state (16.2%) and slightly more people aged 30 - 65 years (48.1% vs. 47.5%) and over 65 years (23.4% vs. 23.0%). Within the region, the age structure is relatively homogeneous with only small deviations such as a higher share of young people living in Lübeck and a slightly lower share of young people living in Ostholstein (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018b).

In terms of education, the region shows a diverse picture. The share of young people graduating from school with an entrance qualification for universities is about 36.8%, which is slightly higher than the share of Schleswig-Holstein (35.4%). The share of young people leaving school without graduating is at about 8.7%, which is comparable to the share of the federal state Schleswig-Holstein (8.5%). Differences occur between the districts in the region. In Stormarn almost 50% of the graduates have an entrance qualification for universities, which is the highest value in Schleswig-Holstein. On the other hand, in Ostholstein only 24.6% obtain this qualification when leaving school (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018a).

Economy

In 2018, about 38% of the 1,134,271 people in the region were employed, which is roughly equivalent to the employment share of Schleswig-Holstein. The district of Segeberg has the highest employment rate (40.2%) while the district of Ostholstein has the lowest (36.2%).

The unemployment rate is slightly below the value of Schleswig-Holstein (2.6%; Schleswig-Holstein 2.8%) (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019).

The share of employees working in the primary sector was below the average of Schleswig-Holstein in 2016. While in the region around Lübeck 1.8% worked in this sector, the rate on federal state level was 2.4%. The share of primary sector employers is also slightly lower than the federal state average (1.2% vs. 1.3%), as is the share of primary sector businesses (5.9% vs. 9.5%). The urban area of the city of Lübeck and partly the semi-urban district of Stormarn have an effect on these low shares. For example, the more rural districts of Ostholstein and Herzogtum Lauenburg have a higher share of employees and employers in the primary sector than the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018c).

There is a heterogeneous picture within the region concerning the secondary sector. The share of employees in this sector in the region is 20.9%, which is slightly higher than the federal average of 19.2%. The shares in the districts Stormarn (24.4%), Segeberg (23.6%) and Herzogtum Lauenburg (21.7%) are even higher. Ostholstein and the city of Lübeck however have rather low values (16% and 18.2%). While Ostholstein and Lübeck are below the regional average, the other districts are above average. Lübeck's relatively low employment rate in the secondary sector can be explained primarily by a low share of people in construction (approx. 24% of all people employed in the secondary sector; national average for Schleswig-Holstein: 32%), while in Ostholstein it is more likely due to a low share of people employed in manufacturing and industry (approx. 55% of all people employed in the secondary sector; national average: 62%) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018c).

Looking at the employment rates in the tertiary sector, the region (77.3%) has a very high share comparable to the share of the federal state (78.4%). The values for Lübeck (81.6%) differ from other districts because the area is much more urban.

The total GDP of the region is about € 33.7 million, which is more than one third of the GDP of Schleswig-Holstein (37.4%). However, the region encompasses 39.1% of the population of the federal state, resulting in a GDP per capita of about 29,942€. In the city of Lübeck the GDP per capita is at about 38,200€, which is the highest value in the area, while the district of Herzogtum Lauenburg has the lowest (21,900€). The GDP of each district only partly reflects their share of population (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 2019).

Agriculture

The analysed area comprises a size of about 500,000 ha. Of this area, 57.3%, or 287,520 hectares, were used for agriculture. Especially in Ostholstein (64.2%) and in Stormarn (61.9%) the share of agricultural land was significantly above this average. As expected, the share in Lübeck was lower (25%), as it is rather urban. In the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein however, the overall percentage of agriculturally used area is at 62.6%, which is much higher than the 57.3% of the analysed area. This is probably because of the large agricultural areas in the north of Schleswig-Holstein (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

In general, arable land is the most important form of agriculture in the region (80% of the agricultural area) compared to permanent crops, permanent green or livestock farming. By far the most important crops in the region are wheat and winter wheat, covering about 34% each of the agricultural area in the region. The region is known for corn production; 67.1% of the corn production in Schleswig-Holstein takes place in the region around Lübeck, but overall corn production plays a rather little role in the federal state.

Within the region, about 4.1% of the farms implement organic agriculture; in the city of Lübeck even about 11%. In the districts of Segeberg (3.4%) and Ostholstein (3.2%) however, there are less ecological farms. The 4.1% is even a higher value than the federal state average (3.6%), but both values are still far below the German average of 7.2% (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

Of the 3,644 farm businesses in the region in 2010, 3,201 worked on land that was at least partly owned by the farmers themselves. There are 2,764 farms working on land that has been at least partly leased from farmers. The average lease fee in the region was 279€ per hectare with the highest value being 345€ per hectare in Ostholstein and the lowest value being 218€ per hectare in Lübeck. In general, there seems to be a mixture of owned and leased land on almost every farm within the region (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

Of the 6,281 people employed in the farming sector in the region in 2016, only 16% were regular permanent workers. Most of the workers were either family members of the farmers (44%) or seasonal workers (40%). In Segeberg even about 64% of the workers belonged to the family while in Herzogtum Lauenburg and Ostholstein seasonal workers are very common on farms (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

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More than 90% of the farms in the region are individual enterprises. Partnerships and especially legal persons hardly play a role in terms of farming. The more urban area of Lübeck has a slightly higher share in legal persons running farms, but that might be because of the rather small total number of farms in Lübeck (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

In 2010, 2,390 farm businesses in the region (out of the 3,644) were owned by someone aged 45 years or older (65.6%), which represents a higher share than the federal average. Of these 2,390 businesses, 1,535 have not defined their succession yet (64.2%), which, in turn, is a smaller value than the value for Schleswig-Holstein (68.6%) (Statisches Bundesamt 2018d).

Interim conclusion

All in all, the region offers a diverse picture, which is not really surprising, as the region covers such a large area in the south of Schleswig-Holstein. The city of Lübeck and some areas in its surroundings can be considered the urban centre of the region. The district of Stormarn is located between the cities of Lübeck and Hamburg and therefore represents the comparatively wealthy commuter route of both cities. This can be interpreted by the rather small agricultural activity, a low unemployment rate and a high educational level. The other districts have their own individual features, but they can generally be described as more rural. Especially in the district of Ostholstein, there is more agricultural activity, fewer young people and lower levels of education. Like in the whole federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, the farming style seems to be rather conventional than organic. Nevertheless, the Landwege practice is good example of how to establish a distribution of organic food.

Origin of the practice

Origins of the idea

The reason for the founding of Landwege was the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, which made many people more concerned with nutrition, the environment and agriculture. Soil contamination and food contamination were major issues at that time. A group of eight people had a desire to make a difference regionally and founded an association in 1987 (Landwege e.V. 2021). In the first years, the association did a lot of information and education work on the subject of ecological agriculture, nature conservation and landscape preservation. The idea was to inform, advise and motivate the population and farmers to act in a more environmentally friendly way and to make a stance for healthy nutrition. Discussion events were held and thus the topic was established more profoundly in the society. In the beginning, the initiative was strongly supported by the voluntary commitment of a small group that met weekly for years (DE8C/Int. 8).

Over time it became clear that the initiative mainly operates in two task areas: One area included non-profit educational work, information and advice on the topics of organic farming and nature conservation. The other encompassed economic sales, dealt with the connection of regional producers and consumers and the marketing of healthy food from the region in the city (DE8C/Int. 8).

For financial, tax and legal reasons, these areas of responsibility were then separated in 1988 (DE8C/Int. 4).

This promising practice now focuses more on the cooperative, as this is where the greatest innovation takes place. Nevertheless, the associated non-profit association is discussed in this paper, as both have a common origin. The following therefore often distinguishes between the Landwege cooperative and the Landwege association.

The producer-consumer cooperative Landwege

Thus, in 1988, the producer-consumer organisation was founded, from which the present cooperative developed in 1999: the Landwege cooperative (EVG Landwege eG 2021).

The cooperative proved to be the most sensible legal form in which producers and consumers are organized equally. The producer-consumer cooperative marketed healthy, organic products from the region in Lübeck. Initially, sales were made by ordering from three farms and the pick-up at a private garage and weekly markets. Soon the garage was no longer sufficient and the desire grew to offer a wider range than what the few farms offered. In this way, the product offer would depend less on the season. In 1992, the first Landwege supermarket was opened. Sales developed dynamically and the store space had to be expanded (DE8C/Int.4, DE8C/Int.14,). During the 1990s, concepts were developed and structures created that placed the business model on more stable and sustainable feet (DE8C/ Int.14).

The federal state of Schleswig-Holstein supported the business for 5 years in its early days. Even if it was not a big financial support, it was perceived as appreciation and motivation (DE8C/ Int.14).

The association Landwege

After the cooperative split off, the association focused on education. The association aims to promote organic farming, nature conservation and environmental education. An important concern is to give visitors ideas for a sustainable lifestyle in harmony with nature (Landwege e.V. 2021).

It became clear that the work could not be done solely by volunteers. Applications were made to the employment office for support of the association through a job creation scheme, which was approved, thus initially a planning security of 3-4 years could be granted (DE8C/Int. 8).

In 1993, the farm Ringstedtenhof and farmland could be leased from the city of Lübeck and the project “youth nature conservation farm Ringstedtenhof” started. In 1995, the first nature kindergartens was established (DE8C/ Int. 8, LANDWEGE-Umweltstiftung 2021). Gradually, the voluntary work was replaced by financed professional positions and the educational institution was established (for more on the financial support of the association see section “Actors Involved” and more on the tasks and goals of the association see section Style of Activities promoted). In 2009, a second nature kindergarten was established, which is operated by the association (Landwege e.V. 2021).

In 2008, the Landwege Environmental Foundation was established to further expand and secure the work of the association in the long term. The foundation's capital is thus used for sustainable and regional projects (LANDWEGE-Umweltstiftung 2021).

Promoters, motivations and targets

The educational work intended to shape the producers and consumers of the next generations and gear them towards more environmentally friendly habits. Educational projects on sustainable development for young people were well received. The discussion events and guided tours on the few already existing organic farms ensured an increasing public discourse in the region and quickly gained popularity (DE8C/ Int. 8). The strong interest, in addition to the increasing sales market of the cooperative, resulted in a rapid growth of the association.

Constraints and conflicts

The business model of Landwege sets less priority on economic benefit than conventional agriculture. The goals of social change, environmental protection and nature conservation, as well as ensuring that the population of Lübeck has access to organic food from the region, are the prioritized goals, which led to conflicts with some stakeholders (DE8C/ Int. 8, DE8C/ Int. 14). Thus, it could not be avoided that a few farmers left due to differing financial goals. The Landwege cooperative thus emphasizes that their partners need to bring the same values along (DE8C/Int.8).

Favorable conditions

Particularly at the beginning, the many years of voluntary commitment, perseverance and personal dedication of the pioneering work in Lübeck were decisive for success (DE8C/Int. 8). After that, human resources were critical to success. At some point, volunteer positions were converted into formal employment. At Ringstedtenhof, teaching positions and "voluntary ecological year" positions were created with public funding. This was crucial for

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the educational work at the Ringstedtenhof. While farmers must take time off for visiting school classes, teachers are fully dedicated to education (DE8C/Int. 3).

The location of the large city of Lübeck, with a population of over 200,000, proved to be a favorable prerequisite for Landwege. The compact settlement structure with surrounding farmland within the territory of the city of Lübeck enabled agriculture in the urban area. The urban population demands and can afford organic food (DE8C/Int. 3).

The Chernobyl nuclear disaster strengthened the environmental movement and the awareness of healthy and ecological food. The awareness and increased demand served and strengthened Landwege and was reinforced by the organisation's activities (DE8C/Int. 8).

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany caused an upheaval of the agricultural structures in East Germany. Landwege in Lübeck (located at the border to the former GDR) was able to take advantage of this historical moment and gain new member farms in Eastern Germany (DE8C/Int. 14).

The basic prerequisites for the establishment of Ringstedtenhof were access to land and infrastructure, for which political support was necessary. Over many years, politicians have decided to continue supporting the educational work of the farm (DE8C/Int. 8).

Actors involved

Description of actors involved

The producer-consumer cooperative Landwege

The main actors involved are the 150 employees of the cooperative working in the retail sector, which includes the five organic markets in Lübeck and Bad Schwartau, as well as employees in production (processing kitchen and a bakery) and administration (DE8C/ Int. 14). In total, there are 800 members of the cooperative (EVG Landwege eG 2021). The 30 member farms are also part of the cooperative. Most of the farms are located only 40 km from Lübeck and have their own sales, usually in the form of a farm store (with a delivery service or a stand at the weekly market). The farms can hardly be compared with each other because the agricultural structure and size are very different (DE8C/Int. 14). With a few exceptions, they rely on their own identity and profit from the spatial proximity to the Baltic Sea. Summer tourism allows for high seasonal sales (DE8C/Int. 14).

Consumers and the urban society play an important role for the cooperative, as they represent the sales market. The Landwege cooperative aims to communicate goals as transparently as possible and to convince with products of a sustainable and regional supply.

The association Landwege

The association has about 200 members. The city of Lübeck plays a major role in the development of the association Landwege. Since 1993, the city has made the Ringstedtenhof with its 90 hectares of agricultural land available on favorable lease terms.

The association relies on various sources of funding. The city of Lübeck finances the position of the managing director, the state of Schleswig-Holstein, which was already convinced of Landweg's idea in the first years of the association at the end of the 1980s and supported the association financially (DE8C/Int.14), has been paying an extracurricular teacher with 15 hours since 1993, and regional foundations are constant and reliable sponsors. Project-related funding guarantees the attractiveness and the offer of the association.

Politicians are also important players for Landwege. On the one hand, the financing of the association depends on political will. On the other hand, the representatives of Landwege try



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to convince politicians of their goals through open communication and also to push other sustainability issues in the city (DE8C/Int.8).

Style of farming

Resources activated and adaptability

The producer-consumer cooperative Landwege

In the beginning, the Landwege association was very much based on volunteering work. A group of eight people met weekly for several hours to work on new ideas and projects. The initial period was also strongly supported by idealism and commitment (DE8C/Int.8, DE8C/Int. 14).

After the separation from the association, a suitable legal form had to be identified. Initially, it was a private organisation for which private individuals were also liable. The ordered products from the farms were first collected from a garage. This facility was provided by a private individual (DE8C/Int. 14).

The association Landwege

The first professional position was financed by the city of Lübeck. First, the management position was filled (two people, each with half a position) in 1988 (DE8C/Int. 8). After that, negotiations were held with the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. The state finances an extracurricular teacher (15 hours per week) since 1993 (DE8C/Int. 4). In 1997, two positions for the voluntary year (Freiwilliges Jahr) were established. For about ten years these were the only human resources. In 2002, an old barn was renovated and equipped with a teaching kitchen. In 2003, an ecotrophologist was hired through a foundation to implement projects about nutrition in the teaching kitchen (DE8C/ Int. 4). In 2007, two additional positions were created through the Federal Employment Agency. Since the beginning of the 2010s, the foundation of a local public-sector bank (Sparkassenstiftung) has financed one position for its own nutrition project (DE8C/Int. 4, DE8C/Int. 8).

Farming approach

The producer-consumer cooperative

The cooperative markets regional and organic food directly, bringing producers and consumers closer together. The cooperative has about 800 (private) members and over 30 member farms. The memberships can be acquired through the purchase of cooperative shares. In return, the members benefit from special offers of the Landwege cooperative.

The over 30 member farms are all organic and sell their products in Lübeck with the help of the Landwege cooperative. The products are distributed directly through five full-range retailers, four of them in Lübeck and one in the neighbouring city Bad Schwartau. In order to be able to offer customers organically produced products all year round and not rely solely on the mostly seasonal vegetables and fruits from the member farms, the five markets offer a full organic range of around 6,000 products that are certified by (national) organic farming associations Demeter, Bioland or Naturland. The member farms provide about 30 percent of the sales (EVG Landwege eG 2021). The products of the member farms are labeled with a specially developed regional seal with a reference to the farm (Lorenzen 02.-04.09.2020). Thus, the customers recognise regional products and have direct access to regionality with the aim of strengthening regional organic agriculture. Most of the member farms have their own direct marketing through a shop on their own farm or a stand at the weekly market, an additional offer for recreational activities (for visitors at the weekends) or touristic offers, as they are closely located to the Baltic Sea (DE8C/Int. 3, DE8C/Int. 14). Through the marketing of the Landwege cooperative, the member farms and their products are visible and promoted in the city. They profit from this in their own sales (e.g. farm shops, delivery services, market sales, leisure activities). Despite the cooperative, they retain their independence and, for example, sell only part of their yield via the Landwege cooperative and can (but do not have to) take over the cooperate design of Landwege for their farm shop (DE8C/Int. 14).




In line with the cooperative idea, the cooperative is a democratic and self-governing form of organisation with a general assembly, a board of directors, a supervisory board, and a farmers' assembly (EVG Landwege eG 2021).

Through the cooperative form of organisation, many members and member farms appreciate the opportunities for active participation and co-design. The farmers' assemblies

are perceived by the member farmers as a valuable institution for self-monitoring, but also for networking between the farmers in the region independent of their organic farming association. The farmers' assemblies are also used for cultivation planning among the farmers throughout the season, thus the seasonal assortment is coordinated (DE8C Int. 14). The cooperative emphasizes its flat hierarchy, in which team-orientation and the interest of the community have priority over individual interests. The Landwege cooperative builds bridges and cooperation between farmers. Furthermore, annual meetings enable long-term goals to be set and, together with other events, strengthen social cohesion (DE8C/Int. 4).

The association Landwege

In addition to the cooperative, the non-profit association Landwege has emerged from the Landwege initiative (see section "Origin of the Practice"). The association aims to promote ecological thinking and action. There are three main fields of activity:

-  the promotion of ecological agriculture,
-  nature conservation and
-  environmental education.

An important concern of the association is to give visitors suggestions for a sustainable lifestyle in harmony with nature (Landwege e.V. 2021).

For this purpose, the association operates the youth nature conservation farm Ringstedtenhof. The city of Lübeck supports the association by leasing the municipality-owned agricultural land and the farm to the association under rather good conditions. The association in turn leases a part of it to a local farmer. This farmer, as well as the association itself, farm organically (Bioland) (Landwege e.V. 2021, DE8C/Int. 8).

The sublessee farms a total of around 84 hectares. About "40 ha of this is used as arable land, and another 44 ha of permanent grassland is used for grazing and fodder production. The farm has a herd of suckler cows with Angus and Galloway cattle, fattening pigs, and a flock of meat sheep" (Landwege e.V. 2021; translated by the authors).

The second farm has been managed by the association itself since 2012. It is a mixed farm with about 6.5 hectares. There is arable land as well as permanent grassland with portion pastures for the sheep. In addition to the sheep, the chickens on the farm also belong to the

operation of the association. In addition, for a wider range of offers and the variety of educational work, mainly tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers are grown in two foil greenhouses. On the field potatoes, beet, carrots and other vegetables and cereals are grown. In addition, a 950 square meter herb garden with old herbs, vegetables and flowers belongs to the Ringstedtenhof. The entire yield is currently consumed exclusively internally within the educational projects and is not sold externally (Landwege e.V. 2021).

The wide (mostly educational) offer is mainly used by external school classes and kindergartens from Lübeck. In addition to the youth nature conservation farm Ringstedtenhof the association runs two nature kindergarten. Sometimes the association also offers adult education (Landwege e.V. 2021).

The pedagogical positions have been created on the farm for this purpose only and are funded by foundations or publicly (DE8C/Int. 4, DE8C/Int.8). Thus, the association is dependent on external (public) funds and is politically desired (see section “Resources activated and adaptability”).

Innovation introduced and transferability

What is innovative about Landwege is the direct marketing on such a large, regional scale. This means that the goods produced do not reach the world market and are not exposed to competition with other products of other producers. Producers and consumers are brought together closely, which is reflected in a cooperative business model. Thus, producers are close to customers’ wishes and customers know where their food comes from and under what conditions it is produced.

In addition, it is special that Landwege (cooperative and association) has a comprehensive sustainability goal and is committed to a wide range of sustainability issues in the city outside of organic agriculture, food and environmental protection, such as social projects.

Environmental issues

Any measures implemented by Landwege take into account the concerns of the environment. Although the marketing of organic produce in the city of Lübeck is significantly

higher than the average in northern Germany, the positive impact on the environment is not directly measurable. The reason for this is the comparatively low land use by organic compared to conventional agriculture (DE8C/Int. 3).

However, it can be assumed that a regional and seasonal food supply decreases traffic and thus transport related emissions. The cooperative enables access to the sales market and thus provides an incentive to convert to organic farming or to start such an organic business (DE8C/Int. 8, DE8C/Int.14).

Nevertheless, there may be some indirect positive influence on the environment. The ecological education work of the association may lead to a more conscious consumption, especially among school children and thus the future generation, who may act as multipliers. The association itself implements numerous conservation projects on its farmland. One example is the 5,000 m² pure flower meadow to increase biodiversity (Landwege e.V. 2021). In addition, Landwege's impact breaches the limits of the cooperative and the association, influencing local politics and the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (DE8C/Int. 8).

Synergies and networking

Relationships with the local community

Through its own supermarkets, Landwege is visible in the public space and the urban landscape. This awareness is supported by broad public relations and the media appearances of Landwege. Local anchoring and identity are the heart of the marketing strategy and part of the corporate identity. The trust of its customers is crucial for Landwege. (DE8C/Int. 8)

The Ringstedtenhof has been an established educational institution on sustainability issues for a long time and is well known among the urban population.

In Lübeck, ecological marketing and education are directly associated with Landwege. Its broad involvement in environmental policy issues lead to a positive response from the population. As a big regional player Landwege thus gains influence on the local politics (see section “Policies”) and can assert itself against critical voices in the city leadership. Parents whose children have participated in the educational program at Ringstedtenhof in particular are lobbying for long-term support for the association from the city (Workshop 27.4.2021).

Synergies enabled

Synergies occur primarily in the area of the association's educational work. Thousands of pupils visit the youth nature conservation farm Ringstedtenhof every year and experience organic farming firsthand. Schools are supplied daily with fresh fruits and vegetables from member farms, financed through an agricultural project by the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (DE8C/Int. 8). There are two permanent partnerships with local schools that regularly use the farm's premises for their lessons (DE8C/Int. 4).

Social engagement is also reflected in the public relations work in the city (see Networking established). Landwege is also active in the field of refugee work and regularly employs refugees through the voluntary ecological year (FÖJ) (DE8C/Int. 8).







The legal form of the cooperative is associated with synergies. While Landwege offers regional, organic products to the urban population, the member farms benefit from the guaranteed sales market.

Networking

Landwege (the cooperative and the association) does not see itself as a purely agricultural enterprise that offers organic produce from the region to the urban population and conducts ecological educational work, but is committed to broader ecological and social change (DE8C/ Int. 8).

The local ties to the city of Lübeck and the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein have led to a broad developed network in recent years: The Landwege association is a co-founder of the federal working group “educational farm” (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Lernort Bauernhof e.V.) (DE8C/Int.8). The working group is an association of people, initiatives and organizations working in the field of education and farming. Their goal is to let children, young people and adults experience the agricultural everyday life and the creation and processing of food (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Lernort Bauernhof e. V. 2021).

Their task is

-  to build a network of "educational farms"
-  to connect agriculture and school
-  to organize trainings for farmers and educators
-  to set standards for the quality of education at the farm
-  to inform about the special opportunities of the farm as a place of education
-  to initiate research on the topic of "education at the farm".

(Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Lernort Bauernhof e. V. 2021)

Landwege cooperative is part of the Association of Organic Processors, Wholesalers and Retailers (Bundesverbandes Naturkost und Naturwaren Bundesverband Naturkost Naturwaren (BNN) e.V). The association “represents the interests of the organic food and natural goods sector on a political and economical level. The association participates in the constitution of national and international legislative projects, for example in the enhancements of the EU-Organic Regulations. Furthermore, it issues press relations and is active in public relations” (Bundesverband Naturkost Naturwaren (BNN) e.V. 2021).

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The Landwege Association is engaged in education for sustainable development and is active in several networks (e.g. "norddeutsch und nachhaltig"; Bildungsportal der Norddeutschen Partnerschaft nun - norddeutsch und nachhaltig 2021).

Furthermore, the Landwege cooperative works closely with the associations for organic farming Demeter und Bioland (EVG Landwege eG 2021).

The Landwege cooperative has an influence on local developments and social issues in the city. For example, it has contributed to Lübeck being a fair-trade city. It donates leftover goods to the "Lübecker Tafel", which distributes food to individuals and families in need and to social institutions. The Landwege cooperative also supports the national initiative "organic lunch box" (Biobrotbox). The initiative works to ensure organic breakfasts for school children from the first grade onwards. The movement gets by without public funding and lives solely on the support of volunteers (EVG Landwege eG 2021). Furthermore, Landwege co-founded the citizens' energy cooperative (DE8C/Int. 14).

Landwege is also involved in ecological initiatives. It has worked towards establishing organic and GMO-free agriculture within city limits. It also supports organic seed breeding, urban car sharing and sponsors the nationwide "urban cycling" (Stadtradeln) competition to promote cycling (EVG Landwege eG 2021).

The prerequisite for this influence and commitment is a solid network of local players (tax office, marketing office and legal advice) and contacts to city hall, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Chamber of Crafts, Lübeck Management and Lübeck Tourism (DE8C/ Int. 14). For urban and regional stakeholders, Landwege (cooperative and association) is a reliable and serious partner for all sustainability issues.

Policies and institutional supports

Policies

The operators of Landwege criticize the EU funding landscape for being too focused on the size of the farmland, and the fact that a cooperative does not fit the funding guidelines. Regional and local support has proven to be more sensible funding such projects (DE8C/Int.14). Furthermore, legal framework conditions, such as complex hygiene regulations and the Basic Data Protection Regulation, create an enormous bureaucratic and administrative burden, especially for small businesses like the member farms (DE8C/Int. 14, DE8C/Int. 8).

Institutional support

The important role of the city of Lübeck as a player in the early years of Landwege was recognized. Landwege has grown and developed into its current form and size only through reliable cooperation with the city. Most of the city's officials were positively disposed towards the project at the beginning and enabled the lease of the agricultural land and the farmland for the Landwege association (DE8C/Int. 8).

For achieving its goals, Landwege approached the political stakeholders with partners supporting similar ideas and goals. For example, the landscape conservation association "Dummersdorfer shore" was helpful in raising financial support (DE8C/Int. 8).

Nevertheless, there were also critical voices, which did not want to support the Landwege association financially any further. But a continuous dialogue in order to convince even individual stakeholders, who do not feel connected to ecological agriculture, was the key to success. Personal contacts and an open communication have proven to be very important for Landwege. A positive milestone was the opening of a market in 2007 by the mayor of the time. This was covered by media and led to a significant increase in acceptance among the urban population (DE8C/Int. 4).

As mentioned, Landwege has an influence on the city's politics. In recent years, resolutions by the citizens have ensured that the city's farmland must be farmed ecologically, the city became a fair trade city, and is a GMO-free municipality (EVG Landwege eG 2021).

Impact and perspectives

Impacts on rural regeneration and generation renewal

Holistic sustainable development is the motivation and goal of Landwege. The implementation succeeds only through credibility and by exemplifying it in everyday actions. The goals have been achieved by providing information and education from the beginning and by strengthening sustainable development, organic farming and regionality in the urban society. Besides the agricultural topics they are broadly integrated into many social developments and are well connected through networks and to politics. Lübeck as a city also offers many advantages for the development of Landwege. It represents a sufficiently large sales market, has agricultural fields on the territory of the city and its policies have been supportive (DE8C/Int. 8).

Economic impacts

Landwege presents a new business model that focuses on regionality and creates a link between consumers and producers. For the established and becoming organic farms, the cooperative guarantees access to the sales market. They can be sure that they will sell their products and that at secured and moderate prices. Because there is no "price dumping" at the Landwege cooperative, the farmers do not struggle at the limit of their economic existence. Their products are marketed directly, but still professionally. This also benefits the farm's own sales or the farm's other sources of income (e.g., leisure activities) (DE8C/Int.7, DE8C/Int.9). The Landwege cooperative has created over 100 jobs, mainly in the city of Lübeck and outside the agricultural sector. Through close partnership with existing organic farms and the establishment of new organic farms, it has also created jobs indirectly at the farms and agricultural sector (DE8C/Int. 8, DE8C/Int. 14). The processing of the products and direct sales increase the regional added value. This regionalises the food economy and makes it more resilient to developments on the world market. The costs are not borne by and the benefits do not accrue to individual farmers or entrepreneurs, but are shared among the members on a partnership basis.

Environmental and ecological impacts

Organic farming is promoted through the Landwege cooperative. New organic farms have been established as a result, as direct marketing offers them security (DE8C/Int.14). The regional food economy saves transport trips and thus avoids transport related emissions, since the transport distances are significantly shorter than, for example, those of imports from abroad. The Landwege association implements nature conservation and environmental protection projects. It provides education for sustainable development and raises awareness of sustainability issues among the next generation.

Social impacts

The Landwege cooperative enables many people in the city to have access to a regional diet. It creates a common responsibility for agriculture, nature conservation and nutrition. The democratic governance gives consumers and producers the right to participate and have a voice. Thus, consumers and producers form a unit and act in the common interest. The farmers' meeting of the cooperative provides a platform for an exchange of experience between farmers in the region, which they value highly because they can learn from each other (DE8C/Int.7, DE8C/Int.9). The marketing of regional products, the visibility in the urban landscape and the networking between farmers as well as strengthening the urban-rural relationship also increases regional identity. Landwege networks extensively with other initiatives in the city of Lübeck and is also actively involved in social projects. The Landwege association runs education for sustainable development, organic farming, and nutrition education (DE8C/Int.8).

Perspectives

Landwege has clear visions for the coming years. By the year 2023, Landwege aims to realise the ecological potentials in the area of delivery (cargo bikes) and aspires to structurally develop the Ringstedtenhof. In addition, they dream of the "organic city" of Lübeck. (DE8C/Int.8)

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Annex 1. The list of interviews

Code.	Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Gender	Role	Place and date of the interview
DE8C/ Int. 1	Sara Sommer	Female	farmer	Via phone; 28.08.2020
DE8C/ Int. 2	Jens Maier	Male	practitioner	Via phone; 07.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 3	Alexander Schroeder	Male	practitioner	Via phone; 17.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 4	Steffen Kirsch	Male	partner from a network	Via phone; 22.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 5	Stefan Lehrer	Male	farmer	Via phone; 24.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 6	Tim Diederich	Male	farmer	Via phone; 24.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 7	Dieter Lowe	Male	farmer	Via phone; 25.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 8	Mathias Nacht	Male	cooperative member	Via phone; 26.09.2020
DE8C/ Int. 9	Ulrich Oster	Male	farmer	Via phone; 01.10.2020
DE8C/ Int.10	Christian Moench	Male	practitioner	Via phone; 23.10.2020
DE8C/ Int.11	Erik Faber	Male	farmer	Via phone; 28.10.2020
DE8C/ Int.12	Torsten Wannemarker	Male	practitioner	Via phone; 06.11.2020
DE8C/ Int.13	Melanie Bachmeier	Female	partner from a network	Via phone; 06.11.2020
DE8C/ Int.14	Jürgen König	Male	cooperative member	Via phone; 07.11.2020

Table 2. Interviews