

Territorial agrifood systems: a Franco-Italian contribution to the debates over alternative food networks and their role in just agrifood systems transitions in rural areas.

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Abstract

The increasing diversity of food networks and initiatives has given rise to a variety of analyses and approaches among which the literatures on “Alternative Food Networks” (AFN) and the “quality turn” stand out for the role of European and more specifically French and Italian contributions and the richness of the debates between authors from different horizons. These debates focus especially on the transformative power of local and/or alternative food networks at the scale of larger agrifood systems and the risks of territorial and social inequity that they may embody, thus raising social justice issues. However, in the AFN literature, the classical opposition between alternative and conventional food networks often leads authors to overlook the effects of possible interactions between these different networks and stakeholders, while in the “quality” literature, the central focus on specialty products leads to a lack of consideration of entire food diets and agrifood systems as well as often, of social justice issues. We thus argue for an intertwined approach that aims at assessing food systems at a territorial scale, by delimiting the research object by starting from the territory instead of from specific initiatives considered in isolation, and thus taking into account various initiatives and different ambitions – and their combined effects in facilitating – or not – just sustainable transitions. Based on two case studies in Southern France and Northern Italy, we demonstrate how this approach can be applied and contribute to wider debates over the key questions related to the AFNs’ transformative power and social justice.

Introduction

Alternative food networks (AFNs) are increasingly present both in the societal debates and in the scientific literature, but the expression lacks a clear definition (Tregear, 2011; Dansero and Puttilli, 2014). It encompasses a wide variety of recent initiatives such as Community Supported Agriculture groups (CSA), farmers’ markets, community gardens, and other kinds of marketing schemes that have gained ground in Western countries in recent decades. These are not always new, and part of this recent and current dynamic appears as the effect of a revival of rather traditional forms of exchange and interaction. Despite blurry definitional boundaries, the notion of AFNs generally refers to networks that try to link producers and consumers in more direct ways and/or at the local scale and are promoted by civil society organizations (which lead some authors to label them Civic Food Networks, see Renting and al. 2012). They involve consumers and farmers in the promotion of food-related issues

neglected in conventional supply chains. This is why they are called “alternative”: because they oppose mainstream food systems’ principles of distance and standardization (Goodman 2002; Allen et al. 2003; Lamine 2005). However, in the AFN literature, the fact that these networks are considered as autonomous objects and most often studied in isolation often leads to a failure to examine the interactions between these alternative networks and more conventional stakeholders.

Other kinds of initiatives, such as collective local brands and geographical indications (GIs) also aim at developing supply chains and marketing schemes that differ from mainstream food systems (Brunori 2007; Tregear et al. 2007). These initiatives usually stem out from other kinds of stakeholders than those involved in AFNs; they are mostly endorsed by producers’ organizations linked with other agrifood chains actors (processors, retailers etc.). They also mostly focus on specific products, whereas AFNs would rather include a diversity of products. They aim at reaching distant consumers, whereas AFNs rather develop short food supply chains. The studies about these two types of initiatives also form quite distinct bodies of literature relying on different conceptual approaches. This is why we distinguish between them here and will in our analysis refer respectively to GI type and Civic Food Networks (CFN) initiatives, even though some authors would include such initiatives in a wider definition of AFNs (see Deverre and Lamine 2010 for a review). The literature respectively devoted to these two categories of initiatives give different definition of the term “local”: while in the AFN literature (focused on what we will call here Civic Food Networks or CFNs), the adjective “local” tends to be defined in terms of positionality and proximity between different actors of the commodity chains, in the literature about GIs and “localized food systems” (Muchnik 1996), “local” relates to a notion of “anchorage” within particular territories (Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014). Indeed, in most studies about CFNs there is no clear spatial delimitation of the case studies like there is most often none in the actual operating mode of the initiatives, whereas GI and localized food systems studies are focused on delimited areas as are the qualification processes which they study.

Throughout the studies we have conducted over the last years, we have observed that the food systems barely fit into such circumscribed boundaries, but borrow from different models instead. Indeed, at the regional scale which will be our focus here, we always find a co-presence of CFNs, relocalisation of public food procurement, local food chains based on traditional varieties and recipes, collective brands, GIs (both PDOs - Protected Designations of Origin - and PGIs - Protected Geographical Indications) etc. In some cases, GIs represent the final outcome of a process of formalization of local informal initiatives (Brunori, 2006); while reversely, in other cases, groups that fail in their GI-certification project are progressively integrated into more informal networks. We assume that this division between the two approaches contrasted above results from the partitioning of knowledge between various disciplinary branches and theoretical backgrounds. Therefore, we argue for an intertwined approach that draws from different bodies of scientific literature in order to build a relevant research framework for assessing food systems at a territorial scale, by delimiting the research object by starting from the territory instead of specific initiatives. The main features of this approach are that it is *dynamic* (, *systemic* and *pragmatist*, as it is based on the analysis of agrifood systems changes *over time*, it considers the diverse actors and institutions involved in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food products in a given territory, and their *interdependencies* and finally it jointly tackles the changes in *visions* and arguments and the changes in concrete actions and *practices*. Our objective is to show that this “territorial agrifood system” approach offers new perspectives to explore two fundamental questions raised by both AFN and “quality turn” literatures: Do alternative food networks only provide alternative options for their own participants or do they also influence larger agrifood systems (Allen et al., 2003)? Is the “local”

(whether defined in terms of proximity or of spatial anchorage) a source of territorial and social inequity (the “elitist localism”, DuPuis and Goodman 2005) or is it a basis for more social justice and fairness?

In the first section of this paper, we show that the genesis of the different approaches to alternative food networks (in its more encompassing meaning, i.e. including the “quality” literature) results from the influence of different more general theories as well as from their anchorage in different socio-political contexts. We identify two main divides related to this specific anchorage: a classical US/Europe one, but also a less commented Anglo-Saxon/Latin¹ one. At the interface of these fundamental debates, and borrowing from more general theoretical strands that also cross this Anglo-Saxon/Latin divide, we then suggest our own approach based on the concept of the territorial agrifood system. In the second section of this paper, we apply this approach to two case studies - Southern Ardèche in France and the hinterland of Genoa in Italy - and conclude with a discussion of how this approach can contribute to wider debates and to the two key questions related to transformative power and social justice.

1. Recent and current debates over AFNs

1.1. A lasting US/Europe divide?

The debates over alternative food networks have developed from the late 1990s onwards, in an intellectual context that is characterized by two main approaches to agrifood systems changes. Roughly speaking, we can identify on the one hand, more critical approaches inspired by political economy and mainly located in the USA and, on the other hand, more optimistic ones focusing on actors’ agency and mainly located in Europe.

Among the critical approaches, food regime theories have concentrated on negative trends in global food relations and their effects on poor farmers (Friedmann and McMichael 1989), as well as on the adaptation of the global food system to the growing criticisms it has confronted, as is exemplified by the emergence of a “corporate environmental food regime” (Campbell 2005). Food regime theorists have described AFNs as forms of resistance to and within these larger trends. Within this wider “critical” view, AFN scholars have amply criticized the AFN’s potential elitism (Hinrichs 2000; Winter 2003; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Tregear 2011) and questioned their “transformative potential” by showing that they might be less “really oppositional” than simply alternative (Allen et al. 2003), as we will discuss below.

Among the more optimistic approaches, it is mainly within European scholarship that AFNs (whether CFN or “GI type”) have been analysed as networks and places for experimentation with alternative paradigms of rural development, through their focus on viable forms of agriculture and fairer relations between producers and consumers (Van der Ploeg et al. 2000; Renting et al. 2003). AFNs do indeed offer new options for agriculture and rural futures, in a context where the relatively decentralized governance of rural development, which characterizes Europe as opposed to the USA, potentially

¹ “Latin” refers here to countries where Romance languages are spoken (mainly French, Spanish, Portuguese) both in southern Europe and Latin America. Here as indicated in the title we will consider mainly the French and the Italian literature.

allows the participation of a wide variety of actors in the definition of local development models. This leads to what can be seen as a “more reformist” European perspective where AFNs but also their scholars are also more directly involved with public policies (eg., rural development and multifunctionality, see Fonte 2008). This resonates with the fact that American AFN scholars tend to focus more on radical forms of opposition to the industrial food system; while European ones would rather focus on the possibility of reforming public policies and the food system (Goodman, 2004).

These different stances have to be related to specific socio-political contexts that characterize the USA and Europe: different public policies as mentioned above, different agricultural histories and social structures, different human and social geographies, and different kinds of rural/urban links. However, this contrast between a North-American “oppositional” standpoint versus a more reformist European perspective is partly blurring today, while it is important to specify whether it is the actors’ perspective or that of scholars which is more radical or more reformist (or both perspectives). Indeed, AFN *actors* might express radical positions; for example, when in some direct sales schemes, such as CSAs or the like, they aim at creating “real” reconnections between production and consumption based on the suppression of all intermediaries, while *scholars*, on the other hand, might discuss and question this radical stance by showing, for example, that they still rely on market-based mechanisms and do not avoid asymmetries nor reach a large social range of farmers and consumers (Lamine, 2015). Moreover, even in the context of a more reformist European scholarship, we find more radical and critical currents, and the debate about potential inequalities in food access and about food justice has gained importance in Europe in the last years (Hochedez and Le Gall, 2016).

1.2. A more significant Anglo-Saxon/Latin divide?

While most literature reviews about AFN approaches tend to overlook the literature found in Latin countries (Deverre and Lamine, 2010), we suggest that reintroducing this literature in the debate might reveal a second divide between Anglo-Saxon and Latin countries, even *within* Europe. In France and Italy (and in some other Latin countries, even *outside* Europe, especially in South America), specific approaches have been developed in recent decades, such as districts or localized agrifood systems (SYAL) approaches. These approaches are anchored in distinct intellectual heritages: institutional economics and learning organisations in Italy (Saccomandi and Van der Ploeg 1998; Iaconi and al 1995), marshallian theory of industrial districts (Courlet, 2002), conventions theories (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991; Nicolas and Valceschini 1995) and the regulationist school in France (Allaire 2002). They are also anchored in specific socio-political contexts, as Latin European countries are characterized by strong rural development policies, a certain importance of short supply circuits and small farms, and a longstanding presence of quality signs. GIs for example have long been developed in Southern Europe, since the 1930s in France and Italy for example, and were developed later on in the Mediterranean region (Pratt 2007) and in other parts of the world, such as Latin America (Requier-Desjardins et al. , 2003). This has led to a wide literature which seeks to understand the way they relate to specific qualities of specific products found in specific territories. In France, these approaches have been articulated since the 1990s on within a specific approach and research community called SYAL (French acronym for “localized agrifood systems”). SYAL are defined as “production and service organizations (units of agricultural production, agrifood enterprises, markets and stores, restaurants, services, etc.) [that are linked] by their characteristics and by their relationship to a specific territory” (Muchnik 1996; Muchnik and de Sainte Marie 2010, p. 13). In Italy, starting from the 1990s, an intense

debate on agri-food and rural 'districts' has developed in the academy and beyond (Iacoponi et al. 1995; Brasili and Fanfani, 2006) that has given way to the incorporation of these concepts into national regulation as recognized governance patterns. In France too, the scientific work about quality signs has influenced the evolution of regulations over time. Symmetrically to this "applied" use of the academic work in public policies, academics have studied the impacts of public and private regulatory systems as well as the particular expressions of territorial governance that are set up around these initiatives (Muchnik et al. 2008; Requier-Desjardins 2010; Belletti et al. 2017).

However, these approaches most often focus on specialty products and neglect ordinary ones. Italian agri-food districts, for example, codified into a national law in 2001, were defined based on a criterion of local specialization, following the definition of industrial districts. The study of these initiatives, focused on products and production systems, also overlooks the role of consumption and of consumers. Food practices and diets cannot be addressed in a holistic way through these approaches, not least because the average diet is not only composed of specialty products. Moreover, these "qualification systems" have been criticized for favouring processes of specialization of agricultural production (for example, in wine or olive production in some French, Italian or Spanish regions), which has ambiguous if not detrimental effects on the social and ecological dimensions of rural development (Belletti et al, 2015). In contrast, the CFNs include a larger diversity of ordinary food products, which makes it possible to tackle their impacts on food practices and everyday diets but also their potentials and limits in terms of fairness (among producers and consumers as well as between producers and consumers) and social justice, as in the case of Italian GAS or French Amap networks (Lamine 2005; Brunori et al. 2011; Grasseni 2013), as well as, potentially, their ecological dimensions.

Of course, the boundaries between the two kinds of initiatives (GI type and CFNs) and accompanying literatures are rather blurry and some initiatives or networks embody intermediary forms, as the case of Slow Food shows. Indeed, whereas the debates on GIs have initially focused on production systems and producers, neglecting consumers and civil society's potential roles, a bridge with the Alternative Food Networks' concern for overcoming the production/consumption gap (Goodman 2002) has been provided by local food networks developed around local breeds and varieties and traditional recipes, to which Slow Food has given an unprecedented visibility in the public space (Miele and Murdoch, 2002; Fonte, 2006; Brunori, 2007). In the manifesto of Slow Food founding father, Carlo Petrini, the concept of consumers as co-producers was introduced (Petrini, 2005), while the Wendell Berry aphorism 'eating is an agricultural act' has become the key principle of Slow Food initiatives. However, given the characteristics of products promoted by Slow Food – high quality, low quantities, high price – more than one scholar has identified an internal contradiction in the Slow Food discourse when applied to the daily food of masses of people (Pratt, 2007).

Beyond these US/Europe and Anglo-saxon/Latin divides, the recent intellectual context is also characterized by the emergence of new approaches to processes of change in complex systems, emanating from fields other than agrifood studies, but that have increasingly been incorporated into them, such as Sustainability Transitions theory, Actor Network Theory, or more recently Assemblage theories. Sustainability Transitions approaches² focus on transition mechanisms defined around a

² While we can consider that Sustainability Transition frameworks also encompass social-ecological systems approaches (Ollivier et al., 2018xx), here we consider socio-technical transition approaches which themselves include many strands among which Transition Management (TM) and Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) are the most known (Markard et al. 2012). xx

particular technology or sector, either for understanding past transitions as in the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) approach (Geels 2004; Geels and Schot 2007), or for governing transition toward a specific sustainable goal as in the Transition Management approaches (Rotmans et al. 2001). The MLP approach conceptualizes transition as the processes of regime reconfiguration under the pressure of the landscape (exogenous economic, political, and cultural context) and the ability of niches (spaces where radical innovations are developed by small networks of actors) to be integrated in the sociotechnical dominant regime. Actor Network Theory approaches focus on socio-technical controversies, alliances, enrolment processes and visions alignments within networks (Callon 1986) and allow adopting a more ethnographical stance in order to understand how actors progressively change in their visions due not only to relational processes but also to socio-technical devices and artefacts. Finally, assemblage theories, inspired by the work of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, allow to understand the dynamics of the development of systems as the progressive coordination of independent entities, retaining their autonomy and the capacity to have multiple links and multiple belongings, within '(re)territorialization' processes (DeLanda, 2006; Levkoe and Wakefield 2014; Brunori et al. 2016). These different approaches are increasingly used both in European and North-American scholarship - for example, (European) transition approaches are now often mentioned by US scholars (as for example in Hinrichs 2014) - which tends to "reduce" the historical theoretical divide.

However, we contend that strong divides still exist that deal with the empirical framing of the food systems under study when addressing the question of how can sustainable transitions be achieved. As we have seen, the (mainly latin) GI literature focuses more on specific products, while (more US and anglo-saxon) CFN literature more often tackles the diversity of ordinary products. On the other hand, by focusing on alternative and specific initiatives, both strands of literature overlook the diversity of initiatives that are accessible to consumers and farmers in a given place.

.Our objective here is to introduce a territorial agrifood systems approach, that could contribute to bridging this gap between the two main kinds of initiatives and literatures, by delimiting the research object by starting from the territory (and the diversity of initiatives) instead of starting from specific initiatives, thus taking into account various models and different ambitions – and their combined effects.

The different scientific strands above also raise two key questions that have aroused intense debates, and our hope is that our territorial approach will bring some new insight into these controversies. The first question has to do with AFNs' transformative potential and can be worded, as suggested by Allen et al. (2003): do alternative food systems only provide alternative options for their members or do they influence the larger agrifood system? Even though some authors both in North-American and also increasingly in European contexts consider that alternative food networks are laboratories for food democracy (Hassanein 2003; Levkoe 2006; Renting et al. 2012), many studies show that food citizenship often remains defined by the consumers' freedom and ability to define their choices rather than by their participation in discussions and actions aiming at a deep transformation of the food system (see Allen and Wilson 2008; Guthman 2008 and Goodman et al. 2011 for a wider discussion of these issues).

The second question deals with social justice, which is one of the key issue that is explored in the more critical approaches we have presented above. The debate about potential inequalities in food access and about food justice is much more present in the North-American scholarship (Mares and Alkon 2011; Agyeman and McEntee 2014) where it has been on the agenda for a few decades (Clancy 1994; Koc and Dahlberg 1999), than in the European one. The social justice focus, far from being marginal within agrifood studies, could appear as their next step, after three preceding periods that have focused mainly on agrarian issues (in the 1980s), on environmental ones (in the 1990s) and on food ones in the 2000s (Constance 2008). However, most of the literature about social justice in agrifood systems is about urban areas and urban food strategies (Allen and Guthman 2006; Friedmann 2007; Jarosz 2008). In rural areas which will be our focus here, social justice issues might be of different nature. Specific risks exist in these rural areas as opposed to urban situations in terms of social justice, despite the common idealization of rural community solidarities. Even though the closer relationships might lead to greater concern for vulnerable social categories, the lack of public institutions and programs specifically targeted at marginalised groups in rural areas, both on the farmers' and consumers' side, might not be offset by these local solidarities. Poverty is more scattered and underprivileged population is thus often more difficult to identify, while farmers' access to resources also represent specific social justice issues that need to be tackled in an approach focused on just sustainable transitions.

We suggest that a territorial approach might help to explore these two key questions. On the one hand, it allows to empirically delineate "territorial agri-food systems", and to study their transformations over time and under the influence of both alternative civic food networks and more conventional or hybrid initiatives. On the other hand, it allows to explore the way social justice is addressed – or not – throughout this diversity of initiatives and changes and whether or not this leads to a process of just and sustainable territorial development. Do proximity (key to CFNs) and spatial anchorage (key to GIs type initiatives) form a basis for a just and sustainable territorial development or are they a source of territorial and social inequity and "elitist localism" (DuPuis and Goodman 2005)?

2. A territorial agrifood system approach

2.1. Approach and methods

The concept of agrifood system has been suggested, at least in France, long ago by the rural economist L. Malassis and is mainly used at the global scale (Malassis 1996; Rastoin and Gherzi 2010) and/or to qualify different kinds of agrifood models (Fournier and Touzard 2014). Our own approach is applied at the territorial scale – the geographical scale we favour in our studies is that of small regions that are called in France “bassins de vie” (“living areas”). In academic work, the territorial “stance” has been explored mostly through a paradigm of relocalisation (of production/consumption links), utilising notions such as the foodshed (Kloppenburger et al. 1996) or regional food systems (Clancy and Ruhf 2010), or through a focus on the production side, as in the case of territorialized food systems (Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014). Our own approach of territorial agrifood system aims at encompassing the diversity of actors involved in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food products at the territorial scale (farmers, middle men, processors, CSOs, agricultural institutions, local authorities, etc.) (Lamine 2012; Lamine 2015). This approach borrows from different theoretical frameworks mentioned above – food regimes theory, sustainability transitions theory, and ANT – its key principles.

The first one, key to all these theoretical strands despite their differences, is to analyse the interactions between the different components and actors of the socio-technical system (here the agrifood system) in a dynamic way. However, while these approaches – and especially sustainability transitions - may be criticized for overlooking actual changes in practices that individuals or collectives may implement (Shove and Walker 2007), as well as the variety of visions and possible controversies between actors and social groups, we rely on ANT but more generally on French pragmatist sociology in order to better address these aspects. To this theoretical strand, which shares with the American pragmatism the concern for the contested emergence and construction of public problems (Dewey 1927), we borrow the key principle to give consideration to the trajectories of visions, paradigms and controversies over time (Cefaï 1996; Chateauraynaud 2011).

This approach to agrifood systems transitions is systemic, historicized and pragmatist (Lamine et al. 2015). It adopts a systemic and historicized standpoint as it aims to study how transition processes result from the transformation of the interdependencies between the different components and actors of the agrifood systems over time. It is a pragmatist approach because it studies the different and sometimes conflicting visions of what an ecological transition should be among these diverse actors, their possible controversies and compromises, as well as the actual changes in these actors' practices. In our approach, based on the three key principles presented above, we consider territorial agrifood systems as systems of actors and institutions that may have different visions and aims guiding their actions but yet are interdependent. Of course, they are at the same time inserted in visions, actions and interdependencies which may relate to other geographical scales. Despite the fact that retracing “inter-scalar pathways” remains a pressing challenge in food studies (Weiler et al. 2015), we suggest that the choice of the territorial scale allows tracing empirically the diverse manifestations of the global that reflect in actors' and networks visions, actions and trajectories, relationships and interdependencies which can be empirically accessed at the territorial scale.

Previous studies focused on transition towards organic agriculture and other forms of ecological agriculture at the scale of territorial agrifood systems have shown that these ecological transitions result from a diversity of transition mechanisms that rely on a combination of civil society action (lobbying, grassroots initiatives and their diversity), private actors' efforts, and on governance innovations (public policies, market mechanisms, collective action), with a key role of civil society grassroots initiatives in influencing both private and public action (Lamine et al. 2012; Bui, 2015; Bui et al. 2016). These diverse transition mechanisms act on the different components of the agrifood systems and allow more ecological paradigms to progressively be adopted, legitimated and put into action. The inclusion in the analysis of not only diverse AFNs in a given territory but also diverse conventional or hybrid actors and initiatives (Dansero and Puttilli, 2014) allowed us to show how hybrid relations may develop and lead to the emergence or reinforcement of new visions and discourses about social justice and models of development that influence collective action (Brunori et al. 2013; Bui, 2015). In the case studies we present below, we rely on these findings while putting more emphasis on social justice and fairness issues.

Our analytical framework consists of different steps which we followed in the two case studies, despite these being anchored in different temporalities and perspectives³:

- An analysis of the reconfiguration within the regional agricultural sector (types of production, of farms, of circuits);
- An identification of the diversity of agrifood initiatives at the territorial scale (whether they belong to CFN or GI type categories) and of the main territorial(ized) agrifood public policies over the last 25 years;
- Focused monographical analyses of successful or failed initiatives and projects carried out by civil society and private actors (such as farmers, cooperatives or processors) and of the governance innovations or modes of coordination they implement;- An analysis, of the interactions between the identified initiatives and between them and public authorities and programs. In order to tackle our two key questions about the contribution of these initiatives to territorial agrifood system's transitions and about social justice, we study how these diverse actors interact, how power relationships are changed over time, and how common visions are possibly forged (or not) about future transitions and key issues such as fairness and social justice.

This analytical framework was applied to two cases in France and Italy and allowed us to characterize the territorial agrifood systems transitions in these two regions. In each case, our empirical data come from a series of interviews with key actors (farmers, civil society leaders, intermediaries, local authorities etc.) as well as ethnographical observations of diverse events, meetings and interactions. In Ardèche, 50 interviews were carried out as part of different research projects from 2009 to 2016, and various events were observed, ranging from agricultural organizations' or CSOs' general assemblies to local markets and events devoted to organic and local products as well as seminars and debates bringing together researchers and local stakeholders. In Liguria, 39 interviews were carried

³ The Ardèche case study is a longitudinal case study based on lasting although non intensive fieldwork and participation in various networks from 2009 to 2016, whereas the Ligurian case study is a case study based on intensive doctoral fieldwork conducted between June 2011 and August 2015.

out with a wide panel of stakeholders (farmers, greengrocers, restaurant owners, consumers, development brokers etc.) and various collective events were attended, such as general meetings, seed exchanges, training days and side events of local markets (seminars and debates). These investigations were completed by the analysis of personal archives of stakeholders (reports of the meetings were important decisions were taken, drafts of specification notes, press statements and newsletters).

. The choice of these 2 case studies is justified by the characteristics and the recent evolution of these territories, where we find different initiatives around the valorization of local products (such as GIs), a relatively large place for organic agriculture, and a diversity of initiatives dealing with social access to local quality food and farmers' access to resources (see table below).

	Southern Ardèche	Genoa hinterland
Average size of the farms	62% farms < 20ha in Ardèche (French average is 55ha)	94,4% farms < 5ha 58% < 1ha ⁴ (Italian average is 6,3ha)
% of organic farmers	about 15% vs 4.5% at the national scale	2,3% vs 2,7% at the national scale
GIs	Chestnut (PDO) Wine (PDO and PGI) Picodon cheese (PDO) 75% of all farms in Ardèche combine diverse productions ⁵	Olive oil (PDO) Basilic (PDO) Wine Anchovy (PGI) Focaccia (PGI)
Diversity of AFNs	Lively farmers markets, farmers shops, school procurement initiatives, AMAP etc.	GAS, farmers markets, farmers shops, delivery systems, Slowfood groups, etc.
Social justice issues	Focus of some alternative networks on poor families' access to food, and on farmers' access to resources.	"Agricoltura sociale" promoted by the Region to foster social reintegration Care about fair prices of food products for consumers as well as for producers

Both regions, despite their difference in size and population (3,500 km², pop. 140,000 for southern Ardèche; 1,600 km², pop. 268 000 for Genoa hinterland) share several common features. That is, contrasting population densities between littoral or lowland valleys and mountainous areas⁶; a strong 'pull' factor leading to increasing population (for example, over the last 20 years in Ardèche, after more than a century of decline); a declining farm population and smaller farms than the national average⁷; a co-presence of GIs-type initiatives that often emerged in an earlier period, and of CFNs, that were launched by civil society actors more recently.

⁴ ISTAT : 6° censimento dell'agricoltura italiana

⁵ <http://rhone-alpes.synagri.com/portail/07---les-cles-de-l-agriculture>

⁶ Within Genoa hinterland, Istat records great density variations: between 950 hb/km² on the coast and 72hb/km² in the mountains.

⁷ However, whereas the small size of the farms is often linked to a diversification of the agricultural activities in Ardèche, in Liguria, it is a sign of specialization in floriculture or other crops with high added value.

2.2. The Southern Ardèche case

Southern Ardèche (France) is a rural region that has long been attractive to neo-rurals (Rouvière 2015). A variety of initiatives have developed over the decades, often launched by these new comers in interaction with local farmers and inhabitants but also by agricultural actors and devoted public rural development programs. This region has undergone a strong loss of agricultural land and in terms of farming population (a decline of 33.5% in farm numbers from 2000 to 2010 - Agreste, 2016) . Today, regional agriculture remains quite diverse, and about 15% of the farms are organically run. This current structure of local agriculture is the result of a profound reconfiguration process. Indeed, this region used to be much more orientated towards fruit production, which had been a successful agricultural industry from the post WW II period to the 1990s, with good levels of recognition of the local fruits quality and a well-organized chain based on local actors - the local fruit cooperative used to be the largest one in Europe - that were well inserted into larger markets. Fruit from southern Ardèche was exported to the big cities and consumer markets through intermediaries based in the Rhone Valley. In the early 1990s, this sector collapsed as it lost its competitiveness vis-a-vis new specialized regions both in France and in Spain (that had recently entered the European common market), with more favourable climate conditions for fruit production. In this context of crisis, many farms stopped their activities, while those who strived to remain in the fruit market had to undertake profound changes in their productive and marketing strategies. Some diversified their fruit production, in order to provide more diverse and more direct outlets, others turned to other products, such as wine as this production was “relaunched” through quality schemes in the same period (see below), or to organic farming which would allow them to get better prices and contracts for their products, or to the inclusion of processing and direct sales operations, or even to non-farming activities such as eco-tourism. Many farms combined these different strategies.

From the early 1990s on, local farmers groups with the support of agricultural extension services public rural development programs have tried to develop strategies in order to valorize their products through GIs. In this region, wine and chestnut are the two main products today concerned with GIs (the Picodon goat cheese also has a PDO since 1983, but many producers sell directly without belonging to it). As both grapes and chestnuts have to be transformed, the success of these initiatives depends on the mobilization of processors. In the case of the wine sector, the different local cooperatives worked together in the “re-launch process” of the local vineyards (Boyer and Reyne, 2005), through the creation in 1994 of a union of these cooperatives. This union has led to economies of scale, coordination efficiency and a standardisation of local wines but also to segmentation strategies, with a diversity of wines of different qualities, including organic ones). In the same time, other wine producers who wanted to keep the singularity of their wine and closer links to consumers have created, either individually or through small collective networks, and outside these cooperatives, their own wine making infrastructures, often joining the “natural wine” (“vin nature”) movement that is gaining importance in France (Barrey and Teil 2011). This shows the recomposition that occurs over time between more institutionalised and more alternative forms of organisation. We can observe similar processes of qualification in the chestnut chain, with a similar “re-launch process” that has been strongly supported by public programs, through the involvement of public research in the genetic improvement of chestnut tree cultivars (see Dupré, 2002), and the involvement of agricultural extension services and local authorities in the organisation of the chestnut sector. Here, the Regional Natural Park (PNR des Monts d’Ardèche) plays a strong role, as chestnuts constitute one of the main

crops produced in the mountainous area it covers. While the large processing firms⁸ have supported the creation of a PDO for Ardeche chestnuts (obtained in 2006) and devoted a part of their processing activities to this regional production, many smaller chestnut producers have started or continued processing their own production in much smaller processing units, as has happened in the wine sector.

These initiatives have contributed to the dissemination of new visions for local agriculture and its revalorisation; however, they do not have much impact on the food practices and diets of local inhabitants, as these are not just made of wine and chestnut! In the meantime, other types of initiatives have emerged in the region, seeking to develop the local production of basic food products, such as vegetables, meat, milk and fruits, and their valorization on local markets, and to reach a larger part of the local population. Involving not only flagship products, such as wine or chestnuts, but also the larger diversity of local products, the local chamber of agriculture in conjunction with the chambers of trade and crafts and with once again the support of public funds, initiated a collective brand named “Goûtez l’Ardèche” in 1994, a rather pioneering initiative at that time. It is used on a diversity of products from the whole department of Ardèche that are sold in all sorts of outlets, ranging from local grocery stores to large supermarkets, and is also valorized in local restaurants, which is of key importance in this very touristic region.

In parallel to these “institutionalised” initiatives, diverse civil society and farmers’ initiatives have flourished in their efforts to valorize local products for local markets: producers’ collective shops, local box schemes, farmers deliveries, and farmers markets, which are now present in many villages on a weekly basis during the summer season, most often initiated by local inhabitants and/or farmers with the support of the municipalities. Among these diverse grassroots initiatives, the collective farmers shops are noteworthy in that they introduce new modes of marketing based on collective involvement. The shops are ran by the farmers, each of whom has to spend half a day every week there and know the other products, which allows the customers to always have a direct access and link to a farmer. Six have been created in this small region since the mid 1990s. Most often, these are established by neo-rurals but they also involve local “traditional” farmers who find new outlets and diversification opportunities in the context of agricultural crisis described above.

Agricultural extension services and local authorities have sometimes supported these grassroots initiatives, even though most of them have been developed without much institutional and technical support. These initiatives have also impacted more conventional actors over time as some local supermarkets (not all) have increased the share of local products in their purchases, while in the recent period many schools have reoriented their procurement towards more local and organic products.

The analysis of the diverse initiatives that have emerged along the last 25 years suggests that it is the articulation of civil society and private initiatives and territorial public policies which appears as a key factor in order to better support farms’ resilience and the territorial agrifood system’s transition, as has also been demonstrated in previous studies in nearby regions (Lamine, 2012; Bui, 2015). However, this transition is by no way ideal for all the actors involved and raises indeed social justice issues. In the recent period, several local CSOs, based on a growing criticism linked to the fact that most initiatives often reached rather wealthy and/or committed consumers – whether local ones or tourists in the

⁸ this sector is characterized by the presence of historical operators, as 3 processing firms have been in the region for about a century, and transform not only local chestnuts but mainly imported material as the local production is still insufficient.

summer season – and exclude poorer social groups while not addressing the main farmers’ difficulties, have started to tackle social justice issues and to work on access to local quality food as well as on farmers’ access to land, agricultural knowledge and support. Three initiatives are worth mentioning here, among a larger diversity of initiatives that aim at more vulnerable groups, whether on consumers or on farmers’ side. The first one involves a local box scheme which is part of a national network of social insertion enterprises that market vegetables produced by formerly unemployed people, who work on two-year contracts and are accompanied in their future professional projects in the meantime. Operating within a national project, this scheme develops “solidarity boxes” that are delivered to local poor families, in interaction with local social services and with an educational program about diets and food practices. The impact of this initiative on families’ food practices and on their conceptions of quality food and their links to their territory has still to be assessed, as well as the possible extension of this program to more households, as today it reaches only about 25 families in the small town of this “solidarity economy” structure. The second initiative has been launched by a local farmers’ organization based on the observation that about 30% of local fruits and vegetable production is not marketed because the products are too small, too ripe, or because the harvest period is limited due to work organisation constraints. A “gleaning project” was developed in 2016 with the support of local social institutions and local farmers, where low-income households go into the fields with the farmer, harvest the remaining fruits and vegetables, and also take part in cooking or processing workshops⁹. The third initiative focused on farmers’ access to agricultural knowledge and support and aimed at setting up appropriate ways to support the farmers or future farmers who are not well attended by the conventional agricultural services because of their rules and frames. However, the last two pioneer initiatives were financed through public funds that have since been redirected to other priorities in a context of political change at the larger regional scale, which shows the fragility of such initiatives, due to their dependence on public support.

Besides showing the importance of the articulation of diverse initiatives (whether they belong to the CFN or to the GI categories) and territorial public policies, in order to better support farms’ resilience and sustainable transitions, this case study also shows the complementary role of alternative and conventional initiatives and networks. Of course, the three initiatives described above only reach a limited part of local consumers and farmers, we can consider them as social experimentations aimed at tackling these issues and likely to be a basis for future dissemination. Our dynamic and pragmatist stance allows understanding how the dissatisfaction over GIs initiatives on the one hand, and the criticism and controversies over social justice issues on the other, led to launch new initiatives that tackle these issues, through permanent “re-differentiation” processes (Lamine, 2015) that result from the confrontation of alternative and conventional networks. In operational terms, these results call for the articulation of these different initiatives and forms of support in efficient modes of governance within a coherent territorial agrifood project.

2.3. Hinterland of Genoa

The hinterland of Genoa, as well as Ardèche and many other mountainous regions in Europe, has suffered a strong rural exodus during the twentieth century. Whereas coastal cities have grown, the rural areas in the region have been marked by social decline. Agriculture has been particularly affected

⁹ see <http://civamardeche.org/Glanage-social>.

by this demographic decline: Istat census records an abandonment of land, the equivalent of 35% of arable land between 1961 and 1970 and to 19% for all the following intercensal periods. Many farms have disappeared since the 1960s, and further decline is continuing, with a decline of 40% in the number of farms in the province of Genoa between 2000 and 2010 (Rica 2006, Istat 2010).

All the farms haven't been affected in the same way, however. The crises have mainly concerned livestock farming, wine growing and market gardening, while they have spared other sectors, such as floriculture, production of ornamental plants and trees, and olive growing. Over recent decades, dairy producers, wine makers and market gardeners have implemented several initiatives to protect and reassert the value of their activities. With the help of regional and local authorities, they have built 'specific local food products' networks in order to benefit from qualification for GIs.

Drawing on a pattern initially dedicated to wine qualification, some producers and other stakeholders have banded together in *consorzi di tutela*, established for quality definition and control. Among these numerous protection associations that have been created since the 1990s, four obtained European recognition. Backed up by regional authorities, two groups of producers have obtained a PDO – for olive oil in 1997 and for basil in 2005 – a consortium of fishermen, wholesalers, transformers and owners of canning factories secured a PGI for anchovies in 2004, and a consortium linking dairy farmers, restaurant owners and bakers gained a PGI for a kind of focaccia stuffed with cheese in 2012. However, most of the *consorzi* applying for a geographical indication have failed to achieve such recognition. Some have disappeared, others eventually took other paths of development.

On the one hand, many *consorzi* have opted for geographical collective brands (MCG¹⁰) registered at the regional Chamber of trade. This regional qualification process mimics that of PDOs: it focuses on unique plant varieties to promote vegetables – *Antichi ortaggi del Tigullio* – and on typical breeds of dairy cows to promote cheese – *U Cabanin*. Furthermore, the regional Chamber of trade, as in Ardèche, has created two specific marketing schemes that integrate food products qualified by GIs with a broader range of food products grown, raised or crafted in the region. The brand "*Gusta Genova*" aims to help consumers in identifying these local food products, whereas the brand "*Genova-Liguria Gourmet*" sheds light on the restaurants whose chefs revisit traditional recipes to promote local products.

On the other hand, some initiatives stemmed from civil society actors seeking to protect endangered food products. Over the last decade, some inhabitants have joined the Slow Food association and have created local branches (*condotte*) to protect specific food products that were about to disappear. In Liguria, 8 *condotte* protect 15 food products – a purple asparagus, a black chicken, traditional net fishing methods, etc. – and through the Slow Food qualification schemes that are called *presidi*. They amount to geographical indications as each of them focuses on a specific product, whose consumption is rather rare. Even though their qualification does not rely on any certified label, the enhancement of Slow Food products also relies on a quality sign that is broadly acknowledged at a national and even international scale. Products are disseminated through conventional distribution circuits, ranging from local groceries to supermarkets, and within a dedicated network: the specialty store *Eataly*, the 14

¹⁰ Marchi collettivi geografici.

restaurants members of the “Chefs’Alliance”¹¹ and 2 street markets labelled as “Earth markets”¹² by the Slow Food national association.

Besides the diverse initiatives that have developed in this region, one group particularly stands out. Initially founded by a history student, a restaurant owner and a few farmers, the *Consorzio della Quarantina* has shifted away from its first ambition of labelling a specific variety of potato with a PDO, towards the development of an much larger network of restaurants, collective shops, groceries and farmers’ markets open to many other local products. While criticizing the qualification schemes on which geographical indications rely, the members of the *Consorzio* built a discourse on food that opposes mainstream supply chains and differs from existing alternative food initiatives. On the one hand, they protest against the commodification of food. On the other hand, they reject any kind of standards, even quality specifications required for GIs implementation, since they consider them an obstacle to the maintenance of biodiversity and cultural diversity. Furthermore, they refuse to promote an upmarket product that would be mainly sold to tourists as a travel souvenir and cause social exclusion. If they share common arguments with other alternative food networks present in the region, they do not rank them in the same order. For example, while enhancing the taste and healthiness of traditional varieties as members of the Slow Food *condotte* might do, the members of the *Consorzio della Quarantina* display food products as fruits of farmers’ labour in the very first instance.

This prioritization is particularly clear in one of the first initiatives they set up in the early 2000s: *prezzo sorgente*. Literally meaning “price at the root”, the expression refers to a method of calculation that better takes into account the real production costs and the amount of hours worked for growing and harvesting every product. It aims at protecting local inhabitants’ access to the products as well as aligning farmers’ income with the national minimum wage, thus raising social issues. This alternative method of calculation of prices is made very explicit through flyers that are distributed to the different stakeholders interested in the product and through regular meetings¹³. By doing so, the members of the *Consorzio della Quarantina* do not only change the attributes which we usually regard as determinants of value, but also the way value is distributed along the food chain and the food chain scheme itself. They reframe the potato value by addressing the issue of social justice and the social cost of this activity. Social justice issues are addressed by focusing on questions of fairness and solidarity between producers and consumers (and other actors).

The qualification system is built upon a principle of territorial solidarity that is constantly rekindled through the relationships between small farmers, restaurant owners, grocers and consumers. These stakeholders are not only treated as agents positioned at different steps of the supply chain for adding value to the products, but also as inhabitants of a same geographic area, who share concerns about quality that extend far beyond the production of food. Actually, the potato variety that gives its name to the group is rather the symbol than the result of its activities. When they explain why they participate in the group, the members of the *Consorzio* put forward the maintenance of terraced landscapes, the conservation of biodiversity, or the transmission of knowledge and know-how. Such

¹¹ *Alleanza dei cuochi*

¹² *Mercati della terra*

¹³ Moreover, one of the conditions to retail the products promoted by the association in a shop or in a restaurant is to visit farmers who produce them at least once a year.

criteria allow a wide range of ordinary food products to qualify under the name of the symbolic potato – such as corn, grain, chestnut flour, and different varieties of fruit and vegetables. Over the last decade, as their objects and objectives have evolved, the members of the *Consorzio della Quarantina* have changed the status of their group, turning it into an association “for the Earth and rural culture”. Inhabitants of the hinterland and of the city of Genoa, as well as citizens living outside of the region have joined the association. The *Consorzio* is now acting on the national stage for the recognition of peasant agriculture and promoting participatory research in the plant breeding process. Involved within broader social movements, their claims have led to the drafting of legislation, as at the end of the *Campagna per un’agricoltura contadina* initiative¹⁴, and keep on fostering public debate and giving food for thought about the future of agriculture.

As in the Ardèche case study, the Genoa hinterland study reveals that change is initiated by the combined actions of civil society (local inhabitants) and private actors (farmers, shops, restaurants etc.) who are in this case gathered in a large multi-actors network. We can assess similar transition mechanisms than in the Ardèche case, that rely on this combination of civil society action and private actors, and on governance innovations. In this case, these mechanisms relied on the transformation of a classical “consorzio”, initially focused on one specific agricultural product and its valorization, and thus engaging mainly agricultural actors, into a much more encompassing civil society organisation. This network has set up innovative governance tools such as the rules elaborated for price calculation that allow for greater fairness in the food chain and also aims at influencing public policies at a larger scale. In this sense, like in the previous case, criticism and controversies over social justice issues (although framed differently as it is more fairness than access to food or resources that is central here) due to the confrontation of alternative and conventional actors and networks led some social actors to tackle this issue “in action”..

Discussion

Our territorial agrifood system approach aims to bring into play the diverse actors and actions that contribute to changes in visions and practices related to food in a given region, no matter whether they originate in more conventional or alternative networks or from the production or consumption side. In order to study food systems at a territorial scale, our research framework delimits the research object by starting from the territory rather than from specific initiatives in isolation. This territorial agrifood systems approach allows the analysis to escape from the classical opposition between alternative and conventional networks, and describe unstable networks whose evolutions often go beyond these borders. It relies on a combination of principles borrowed from different theoretical frameworks, that lead to take into account the diversity of actors involved in agrifood systems transition; to analyse their interactions in a dynamic way (through longitudinal studies dealing with trajectories over a time span of about 25 years) and to also study the trajectories of visions, paradigms and controversies over time. Taking into account this diversity of visions and the possible controversies between the diverse actors as well as their change over time, allows to analyse their effects in terms

¹⁴ The initiative was launched in 2009 as a petition claiming for the recognition of peasant agriculture in Italy. The growing interest of an increasing number of citizens led the main supporters of this campaign to draft a framework law that was presented to the Parliament in 2013 and turned into four bills that are being discussed since 2014.

of both re-differentiation processes (with new forms of action being set up to address social justice issues, for example) and in terms of legitimation processes (of certain visions and models such as organic farming). This systemic, dynamic and pragmatist approach helps to identify mechanisms of transition that are actually complex and diverse. It shows that these mechanisms of transition rely on these legitimation processes, and on a combination of action by civil society, private actors and public policy, which goes along with a need for formal territorial governance in order to coordinate these diverse types of action.

This territorial approach can be used both in an analytical perspective as has been presented here, and in a transformative perspective (Popa et al. 2015). From a transformative perspective, the goal is to set up a research action process that allows for a reflection on how a “shared future” takes form in a broader community of rural actors which also includes scientists. This perspective is close to the notion of civic agriculture (Lyson 2004), but our approach encompasses the diversity of actors involved in agricultural and food issues (and not only farmers). Such an approach has the potential to create collective responsibility through the inclusion of scientists, citizens/consumers, farmers, business people, educators and politicians alike, all of whom represent the different components in a given territorial agrifood system. In this perspective, it offers an alternative to the neoliberal tendency of putting the responsibility on individual initiative and on market tools, as is still often the case in many alternative food networks, even though most of those would doubtlessly claim to fight this tendency (Goodman et al. 2011; Agyeman and McEntee 2014).

We can now get back to the two fundamental questions of AFNs and agrifood studies debates about transformative power and social justice. Our findings confirm those of previous papers that have attributed the potential influence of AFNs on larger agrifood systems to processes of legitimation of new discourses and visions, their direct influence on consumers’ and farmers’ practices by offering them new alternatives, and putting pressure on public policies such as local procurement for school canteens (Morgan and Sonnino 2007; Dubuisson-Quellier et al. 2011). However, in our two cases, the categories of initiatives that allow such processes to occur involve not only AFNs in the restrictive meaning of civil society grassroots initiatives (CFNs), but also more “conventional” and hybrid ones, belonging to the “GI/specialty products” type. Indeed, different types of initiatives have an influence on discourses and visions but also on practices through the new marketing and procurement alternatives they provide to both producers and consumers. They also influence more mainstream actors (eg supermarkets) that increasingly adopt some of the elements of these diverse networks, such as their products or discourses (support for small and local farmers, for example). Finally, in both cases, these various initiatives influence public action at the territorial or national scale. Thus, actual changes are catalyzed by different kinds of initiatives based on both CFNs and *ordinary* products, on the one hand, and on GIs and *specialty* products, on the other. Even in the Italian case where endangered (and thus specialty) products are initially these initiatives’ main focus, their evolution over time leads them to also include more ordinary products. By doing so, they extend the principles initially adopted for specialty products to everyday food, and suggest a more systemic thinking about local agriculture and food system. Moreover, as other scholars have demonstrated, one of the risks of the alternative/conventional opposition is to overlook the contingency of the “dominance” of conventional food systems and “the constant work required to maintain them, while marginalizing the diversity, scope, and potential of actually existing food practices” (Sarmiento, 2017: 488). In that sense, what we observe in both cases are processes that aim at (or lead to) ensuring more visibility for the

actual diversity of agricultural and food products, practices and networks, beyond the classical and more institutionalized “quality way” focused on specialty products.

Therefore, if the “transformative potential of AFNs’ question” that has been enunciated 15 years ago (Allen et al., 2003) has to be reformulated today, it is because, as our two case studies suggest, the analysis should not only focus on AFNs’ influence investigated in isolation (i.e., by excluding other kinds of initiatives) but rather on the larger landscape of diverse networks, not least because the critical capacity of grassroots initiatives lead more conventional actors to adapt and change some of their practices. Attention then turns to the question of coordination within this larger foodscape (ref xx) or ‘networks of networks’ that *de facto* includes both CFN type grassroots initiatives - and “Gi type” ones. This raises the issue of territorial governance which would of course take different forms in different institutional contexts. In the Italian case, where territorial policies have been severely weakened in the past decade, the civil society organization under study takes the lead in this territorial governance, with a strong dependence on its leaders’ personal involvement. In France, territorial public policies and public institutions are still strong in comparison. In the region under study, despite a recent decrease of public financial support to many alternative networks that is weakening them, there are still strong institutions devoted to rural development, such as a natural regional park, a “pays” (the main intermediary for rural European funds, although also threatened in the current context) and a chamber of agriculture that also benefits from public funds. With the recognition of the notion of “territorial agrifood project” in national legislation in 2014¹⁵ and the support of national funds in 2016-2017, these rural development institutions decided to set up such a project. The capacity of this project to create an effective multi-actors governance structure that also encompasses marginalized forms of agriculture, farmers and consumers thus allowing to tackle major issues of social justice will have to be assessed in the near future. The role of civil society actors will probably be to reinforce their focus on the issues and actors that are *de facto* excluded by this “institutionnalisation process” of the territorial agrifood system, in order to give greater priority to social justice in this transition and feed the permanent “re-differentiation processes” (Lamine, 2015) that operate alongside institutionalisation or conventionalization processes. In that sense, if we suggest to go beyond the classical alternative/conventional opposition, it is not mainly based on an optimistic vision of the potentials of hybridizations and combinations, but rather on a critical perspective focused on the effects of the alternative/conventional confrontations (and controversies) in terms of re-differentiation processes.

Social justice, which was our second cross-cutting question, thus appears as one of the key issues that is renewing the ‘alternativeness’ of AFN’s. In this respect, the territorial agrifood project which has been set up in Ardèche in 2017 does *include* some key “social justice” related issues, such as farmers’ access to land and public food procurement, thanks to its capacity to involve most territorial decision makers. However, as initially framed, it *excludes* many alternative organizations that aim to incorporate marginalised categories of both producers (through access to resources’ issues) and consumers (through solidarity box schemes, gleaning projects etc.). In the meantime, these organizations, which are highly dependent upon the involvement public institutions (local authorities, social services), are strongly affected by the reduction in public financial support mentioned above. Indeed, the gleaning project had to be stopped due to the disruption of public support, and while many box scheme systems can be set up without any public support, their extension to less favored families

¹⁵ Loi d’Avenir agricole – Law for the future of agriculture (Law n° 2014-1170, 13 oct. 2014)

is dependent upon such support not only in terms of funding but also in order to identify the families in need of assistance. Therefore, the risk we see, within the current process, is an increasing divergence between on the one hand, more institutionalized transition processes that might be efficient in terms of “democratizing” local and organic products by making them more accessible in local markets, local restaurants and schools, but might tend to overlook “strong” social justice issues; and on the other hand, radical initiatives that still flourish – both in the French and Italian cases, introduced mainly by new, incoming inhabitants, who are not the most socially vulnerable, while the few more “socially committed” CSOs are unlikely to continue their actions focused on marginalised social groups in the absence of any public support.

Conclusion

While previous reviews and papers have highlighted a US/Europe divide within the AFN literature (Parrott et al. 2002; Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014), we have shown that the relevant “divide” is perhaps rather between Anglo-Saxon and Romance language scholars, largely due to the specific socio-political contexts in which their respective approaches and studies are anchored.. However, such divides have to be relativized due to international influences both within the academic world and also increasingly within policymaking circles and social movements (Edelman 2005). Strong interactions and influences between the different strands and literature lead to new kinds of combination and mutual recognition.).

Borrowing from different theoretical strands, we have suggested a systemic, dynamic and pragmatist approach to agrifood system transitions and applied it to two case studies. This has allowed us to show that it is the combination of a diversity of initiatives that may lead to (relatively) just agroecological transitions. Indeed, we have demonstrated that in these cases, transition mechanisms rely on a combination of actions taken by civil society and its civic food networks - AFNs in the restrictive sense - and private actors, such as GI type initiatives or collective marketing ones. These transition mechanisms are reinforced by specific governance innovations, involving public policies, dedicated market mechanisms, including novel price formation in the Italian case, and collective action in general. While the literature often overlooks the possible complementarities of alternative and conventional networks and the effects of their confrontation and reciprocal influences over time, our systemic, dynamic and pragmatist approach allows to analyse the influence of a variety of actors and initiatives on the legitimation and development of ecological paradigms and social justice visions at the scale of territorial agrifood systems, not least through the processes of re-differentiation that result from conflicts of visions and controversies.

To this approach one could oppose the unstable boundaries of the territory. The territory might be stabilized at a scale for public action but this may be more unstable as a scale for economic or civic action – despite the fact that our cases present relatively « thick/strong borders » due to their topography and cultural identity. Indeed, rural territories are very diverse and the two considered here are quite specific. They are anchored in the specific socio-political contexts of France and Italy, where there are still quite strong territorial authorities and policies, a strong attachment to local products or local origin, and strong territorial identities (particularly in these two regions). It thus raises a question

for further research, namely, its applicability to other kinds of regions, such as more specialized and less attractive ones where the diversity of initiatives might be much more restrained.

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