

**Local Sustainable Food Systems
In Policy and Practice
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**Re-connecting producers and consumers
in Europe:**

communities, knowledges, markets, policies

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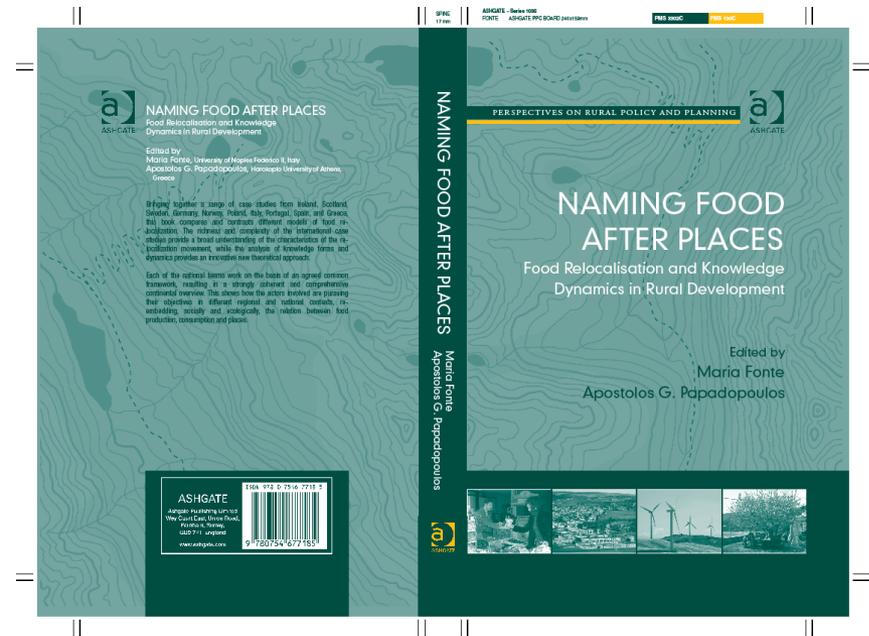
Summary

- 1. Different strategies of food re-localization in Europe
- 2. Re-connection in Italy: GAS
- 3. Local embedded markets: de-commodification?
- 4. Policies for the local



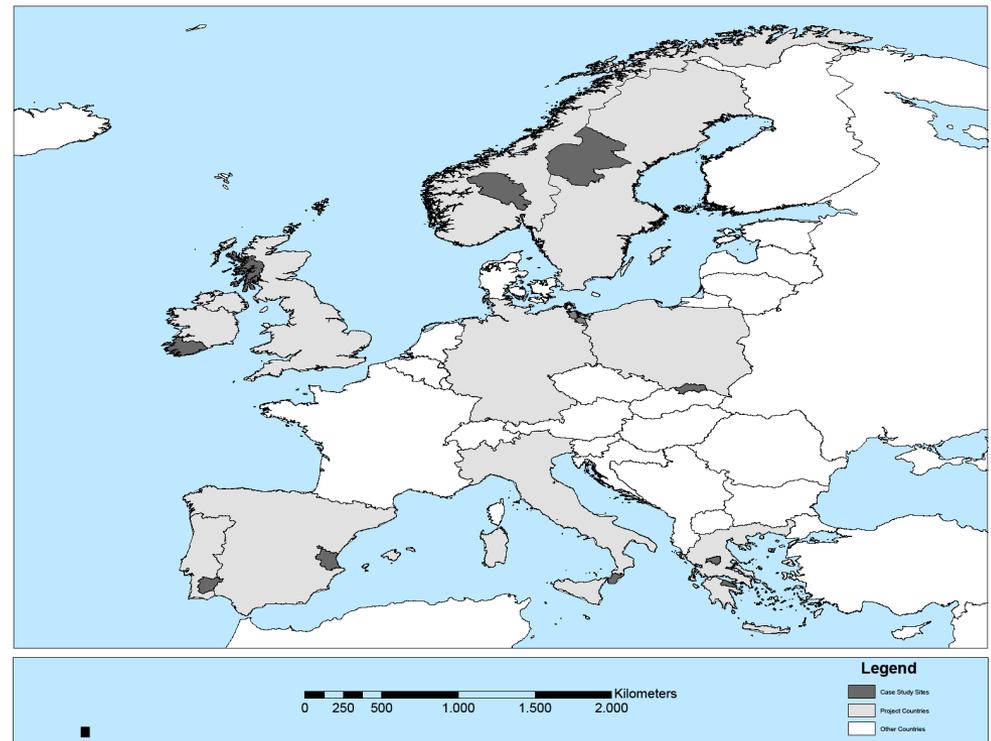
References

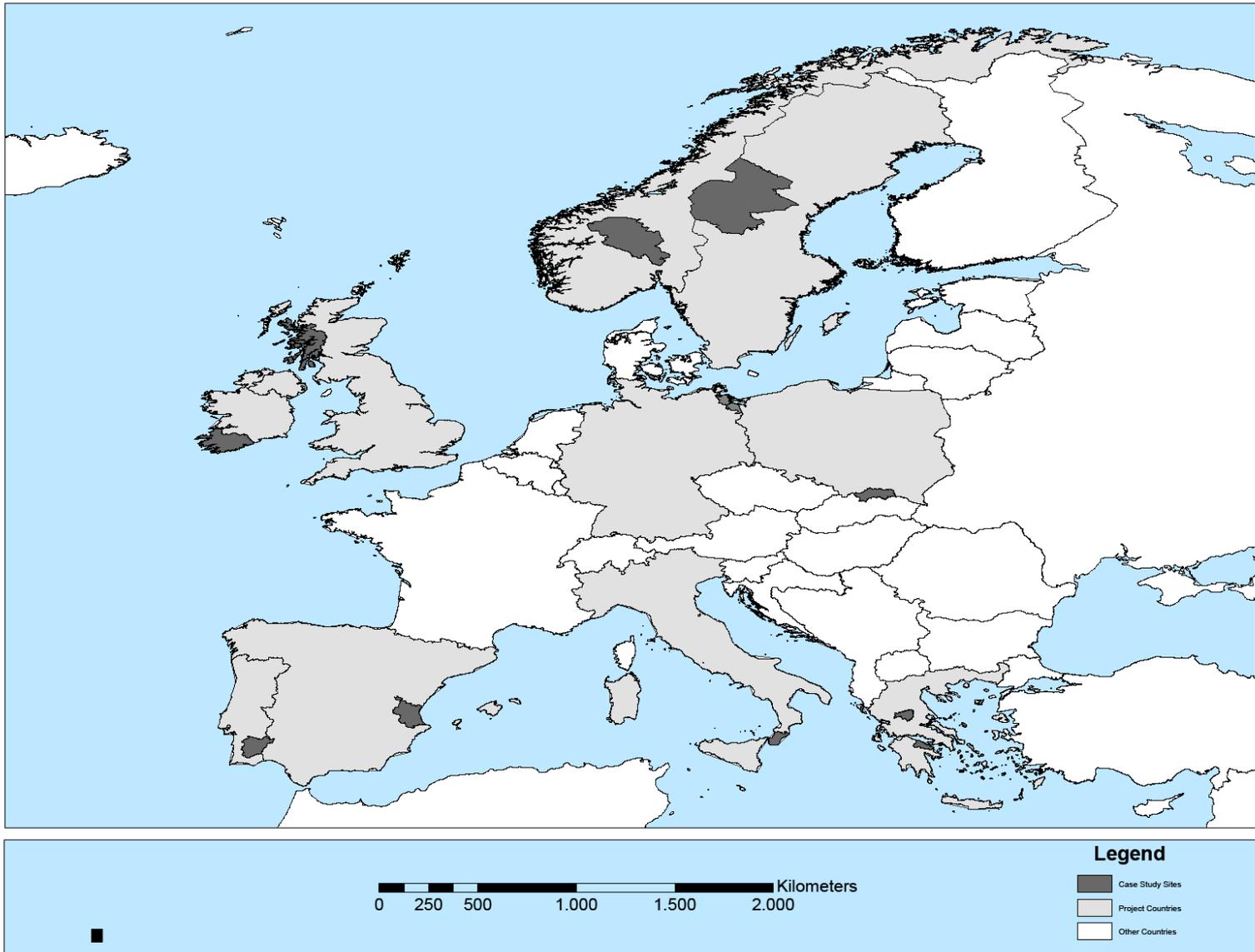
- Fonte and Papadopoulos (eds.) *Naming Food after Places*, Ashgate 2010
- Fonte, M. Knowledge, food and place, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 2008, 3.



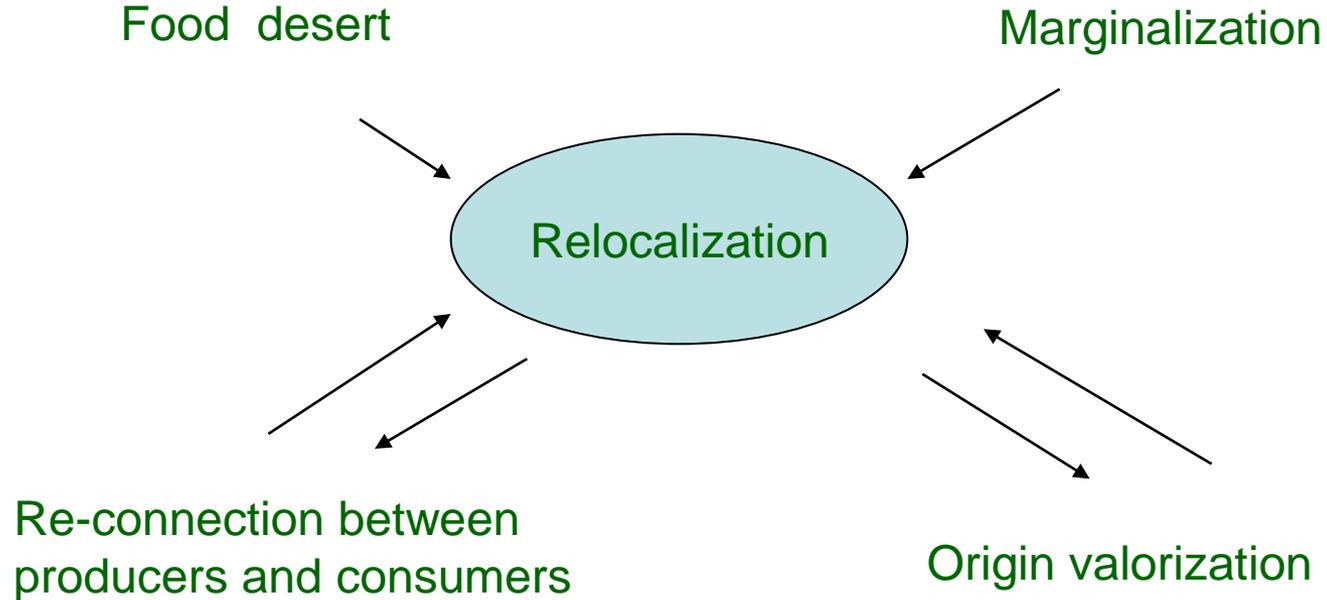
The Europe's green ring in the Corason project

- Case studies' countries:
- Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Germany (East), Polony, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal





Relocalisation strategies and agro-food contexts



Source: Fonte 2008

Main characteristics of the two strategies

	Re-connection (local food)	Origin valorisation (locality food)
Context	Food desert	Marginalization
Limit to sustainability	Environment, relational 'goods'	Low income, unemployment...
Resources	The specificity is lost	Specific to the place
Quality	Fresher, healthier, better for the environment	Local identity
Place of exchange	Local market	Local and extra-local market
Producer	Post-modern (post- productivist) farmer	Post-traditional farmer
Consumer	Local (also the tourist, but it is not the main target)	Local and distant (identity based / aesthetic / ethic)
Other important actors	Civil society actors and social movements	Local institutions and producers associations
Certification	Less important (participative)	More important (third party)
Knowledge system	Local knowledge is lost. It need to be re-built in interaction between peers	Local lay knowledge is re-vitalised in interaction with managerial and scientific knowledge

TAB 1. Re-connecting the producer and the consumer in the local food network

Ireland, C.- Farmers' Market

The C.- Farmer Market (in Tipperary, South east of Ireland) was established by the C.- Development Association, a civil society organisation, with the aim of attracting people in the village of C- during the Saturdays, and to promote the selling of a wide range of local products.

Scotland, Skye and Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association (SLHDA)

Isle of Skye Seafood (IOSS)

The Skye and Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association (SLHDA), in Scotland, was set up in 1995 and is a network of actors committed to supporting horticulture on Skye and teaching horticultural skills that have gradually been lost.

Sweden, Eldrimner initiative.

Eldrimner is a rural network for small-scale refinement of agricultural products with a centre in Rösta, in the municipality of Ås, in Jämtland. The project is targeted to meet the needs of local small-scale food producers, farmers and entrepreneurs in the food-refinement business and aims at creating better conditions for small-scale production and distribution in the region.

(East) Germany, Netzwerk Vorpommern

“Netzwerk Vorpommern” is a food-coop association promoted in 1995 by a group organic food consumers in the region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, with the aim of establishing a regional network for environmental-conscious consumers, promoting the creation of local market channels for organic products and strengthening the relations between organic producers and consumers. Then the initiative gradually grew, with various activities supporting new projects for a sustainable local and regional development

TAB 2. Origin-of-Food Strategies

(Regional speciality products, consumed or not locally)

Portugal (Alentejo)

Barrancos Cured Ham PDO certified

Barrancos Cured Ham Not certified

Spain (Valencia Region)

Utiel-Requena PDO wine

Requena sausages Protected Geographic Indication

Greece (Lake Plastiras / Nemea- Corinthia)

Mavro Messenikola wine production “Quality Wine Produced in Specific Region” (VQPRD)

Nemea wine production (VQPRD)

Italy – South (Calabria)

The construction of the “*Aspromonte National Park Product*” certification

Fratelli Fazari Olive Oil Firm / Palizzi Wine IGT / Canolo local economy

Poland (Malopolska Region)

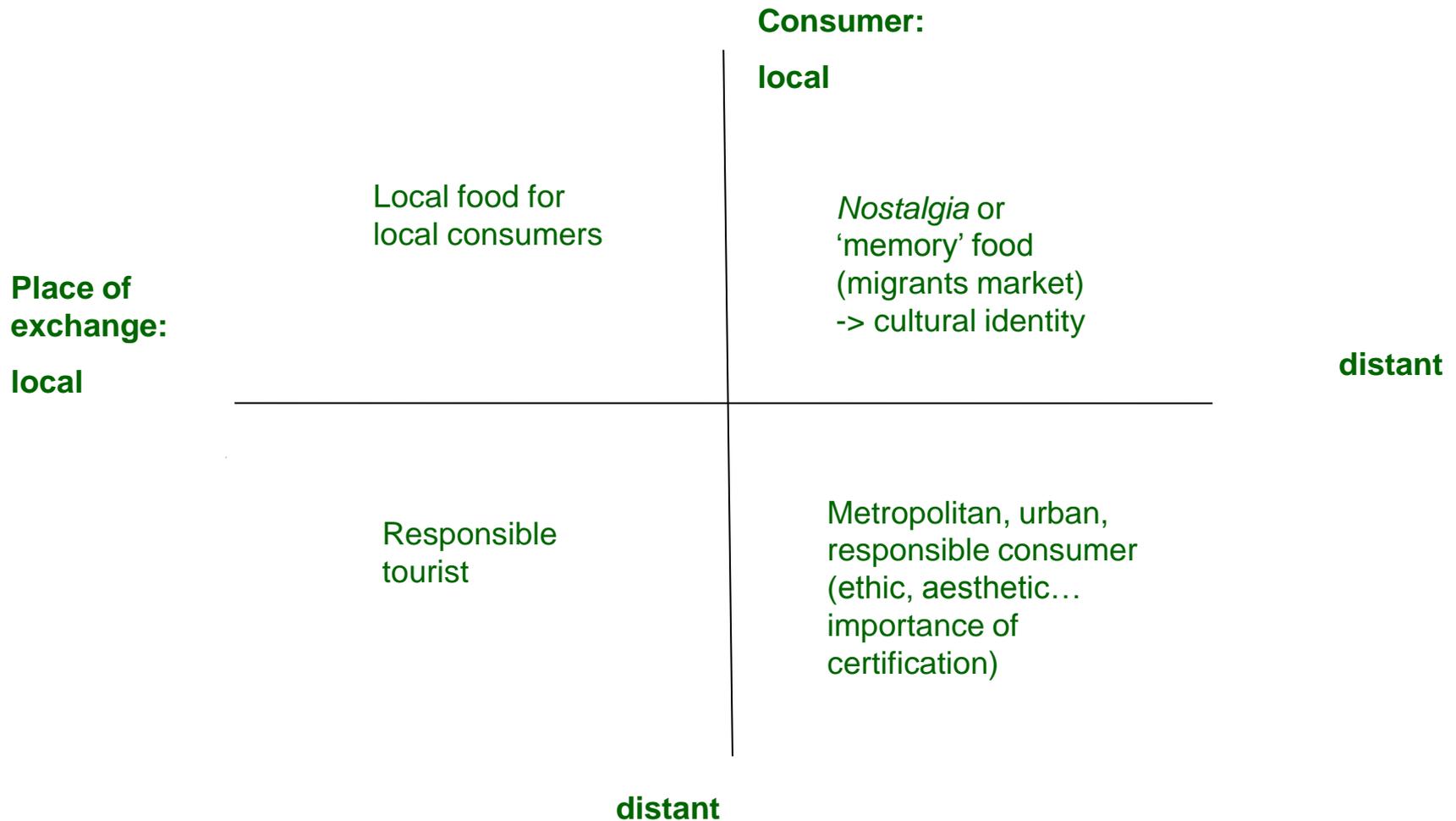
Oscypek cheese

Norway (Valdres)

Valdres rakfisk brand (traditional fermented fish)

Kurv frå Valdres BA (traditional salami)

The local and the market: gaps and re-connections



Local markets: from the warm sociality to the cold negotiation

Consumers Place of exch.	Social interaction btw producers / consumers	Rural development Strategy
<i>Local / Local</i>	Face-to-face iterative relations	Local development through the strengthening of local economies and communities
<i>Distant / Local</i>	Face-to-face iterative relations / discontinuity of places	Memory (nostalgia) markets
<i>Local / Distant</i>	Discontinuous face-to-face relations	Rural tourism
<i>Distant / Distant</i>	Market connection, through certification as information and trust mechanism	Product / commodity strategies. Certification to access differentiated (nested) markets

A re-conceptualisation of the local

- Local: physical and geographical proximity, with defined territorial boundaries (closure)
- Local: localised (place-based) networks that coordinate themselves laterally and horizontally, rather than vertically. They don't move through a set of nested hierarchy of scales (local, national, international), but through multiple (transboundary) networks of autonomous local groups → the social and political construction of scale as social collective action
- Localities **connected** with each other across regions or countries: multiplication of local practices, that do not need to become 'cosmopolitan', but still are 'connected' (Sassen, 2006)

Initiatives of re-localisation in Italy

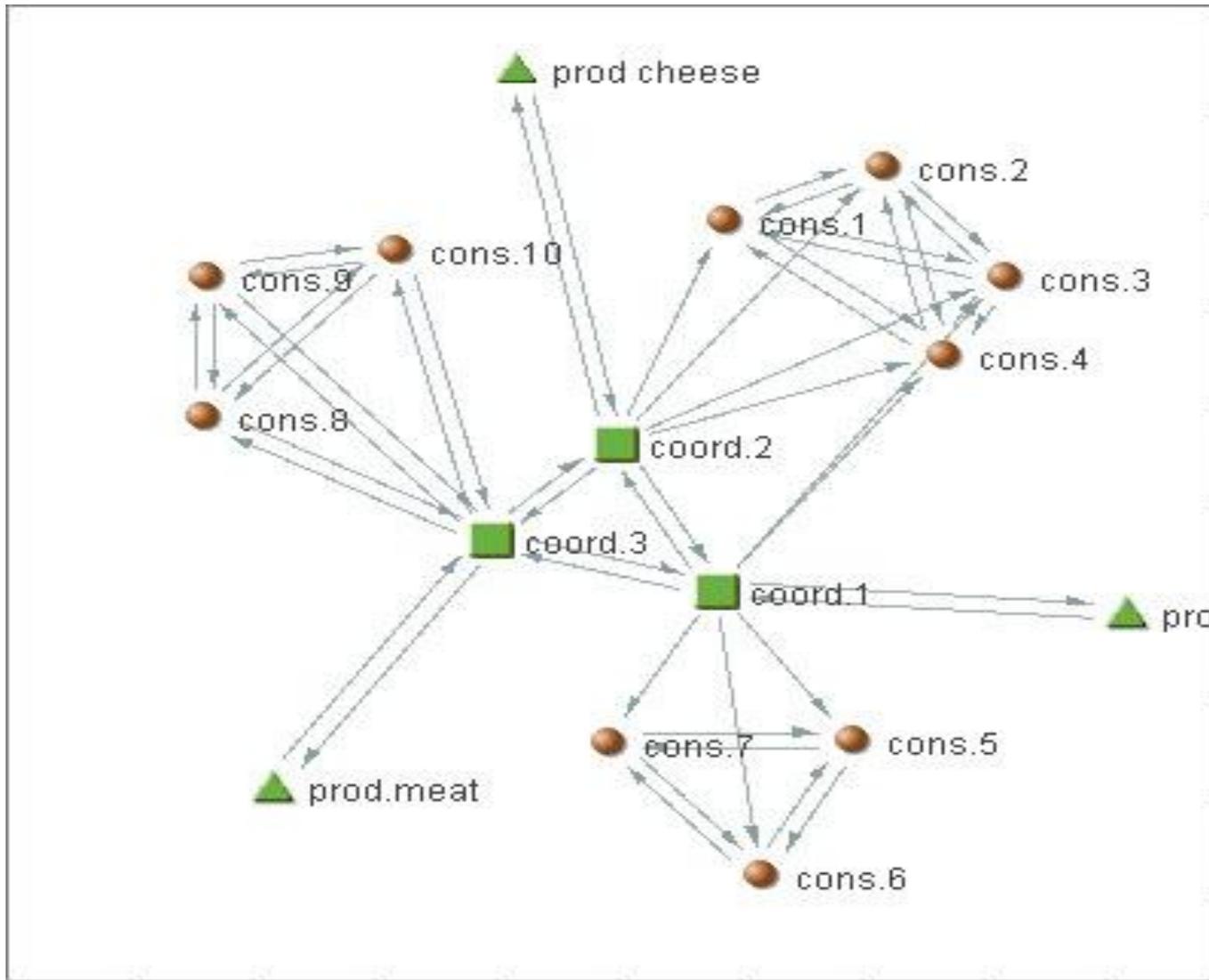
- Since the 1990s, an explosion of initiatives aimed at re-connecting the producers and consumers, that range from more traditional to more innovative ways:
 - 66,300 farms practise direct selling to consumers, with an increase of 64% since 2001;
 - more than 700 farmers' markets
 - More than 750 Solidarity Purchasing Groups (GAS)
 - 17% of Italian consumers buy regularly from farmers
- (Coldiretti Agri2000, 2010)

Solidarity Purchasing Groups

- GAS are groups of families (or consumers) who share a critique of the dominant model of consumption and try to build an alternative solidarity economy, changing the way they buy their food (and other goods).
- The first GAS was born in Fidenza (Parma) in 1994, strictly connected to the experience of 'Budgets of Justice' started in 1993, with the objective to modify the structure of the family consumption according to ethical principles of respect to the environment and other people (Don Gianni Fazzini).
- Today more than 750 GAS are connected in national and local network (www.retegas.org). In their web page we can read:
- “ A solidarity purchasing group chooses the products and producers on the basis of respect for the environment and the solidarity between the members of the group, the traders and the producers... these guidelines lead to the choice of **local products ... , fair-trade goods (...)** and **reusable or eco-compatible goods....** “

The GAS: self-organised (digital) networks

- Each GAS may be a formal or informal group, usually of around 20/30 families. If it grows more than that, another group is organised, maybe under the supervision of the old one. To maintain a limited size is considered important in order to be able to develop personal relationships among all the members of the group.
- In each group, coordinators (in rotation) manage the provision through direct contact with producers. Producers, usually local producers, are chosen through personal contacts or information from other GAS.
- Goods are delivered in points of collection, that can be a public place (a town square) or the premises of a social/political organisation, very often a fair trade shop or the venue of an association.
- Groups of the same town or region tend to connect in a network (Internet), with the aim of exchanging information on local producers, make joint orders for products, to organise joint social initiatives or only to exchange ideas and experiences.
- Usually each GAS has a monthly assembly and once a year the national network holds a national meeting.
- Importance of Internet



Source: Brunori, Guidi, Rossi: On the new social relations *around* and *beyond* food. 2008 Arlon (www.suscons.ulg.ac.be)

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Local food and local markets

- Local food stresses the importance of *new forms of exchange* as places where to start to build new social relations
- Against the 'commodifying everything' approach, we envisage in LF a process of *de-commodification* (see Appadurai, 1986. The social life of things) and *active resistance* to globalization (van der Ploeg), to its processes of standardization of techniques and dis-empowerment of local communities
- This implies stating the difference between 'local markets' vs. global markets



Local markets vs global self-regulated markets

- Polanyi states the difference between local markets vs global, self-regulated markets:
 - ‘The typical local markets ... are an adjunct of local existence... Are essentially neighborhood markets, and though important to the life of the community, they nowhere showed any sign of reducing the prevailing economic system to their pattern’ (p.62-63)
 - ‘On the local market, production was regulated according to the needs of the producers, thus restricting production to a remunerative level. ... Local trade was strictly regulated’ (p.64)

Nested (embedded) markets

- Recently van der Ploeg, Nico Polman, Henk Oostindie and their colleagues from Wag Uni use the concept of ‘nested markets’ to indicate markets where the *specificities* of resources, places and networks are important
 - They may be analysed through the concept of ‘common pool resources’ -> ex. local knowledge / local varieties / local food culture...
 - In such markets collective actors and hybrid forms of governance are important

The politics of the local in Europe

- Since the CAP reform, European policies have been extremely important for the strategy of quality and origin valorisation of food
 - A shift away from productivity objectives, toward quality and multifunctionality; Regulation 510/2006 (repealing 2081/92) on PDO and GI, Regulation on organic agriculture, etc...
 - The second pillar: Rural development policy
- ‘Local’ (national, regional, municipal) policies are more important in the ‘re-connection’ strategy. More than policies, importance of normative intervention that contextualise and introduce flexibility as regard to the application of European or national norms and regulation:
 - In Italy I would recall a national law that in 2001 has extended the possibility for farmers to sell, with fiscal incentives, their own products and, in minor percentage, products from other farms or the establishment of a national register of traditional products that allows for derogations to the EU hygiene norms.
 - Farmers markets and short supply chains are usually supported at municipal and regional (departmental) levels. For GAS groups it has been important to be recognised, by some regions, as ‘not-profit associations’ in order to participate to calls for projects in the field, for example, of culinary education in schools...

For a politics of the local: few final thoughts...

- 'Local' is not the opposite of 'global'. It is rather a different modality of governing food production around reconciled economic, social and environmental values.
- The local not as 'closure', but as multi-scalar, that generate 'global' formations organised around lateralised, horizontal networks (Sassen)
 - the construction of the local as a political collective action that runs through localities, rather than global institutions
- First objective of policies: strengthen social (rural/urban; trans-boundary) networks organised around the **specificity of resource and place** able to :
 - fight the asymmetries of power of *local* and *global* élites
 - valorise and re-built local knowledge and local culture of food, that is bio-cultural diversities of food
 - favour the participation of civil society (no-profit associations; cooperatives, etc.) in the design and formulation of policies

thanks...

