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GOVERNANCE OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS THROUGH THE LENSES OF EXPERIMENTALIST GOVERNANCE: INSIGHTS FROM THE CITY OF BOLOGNA

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To all women in science

Ringraziamenti

Ho deciso di scrivere questi ringraziamenti nella mia lingua madre, per poter far fluire i miei pensieri attraverso il mio cuore. Credo che scrivere questa sezione sia la parte più difficile di questa tesi: da un lato mi richiede di aprire tanti compartimenti emotivi non sempre facili, dall'altra è una conferma che il mio dottorato sta davvero finendo (e adesso? Calma, ci pensiamo dopo).
Non voglio perdermi in banalità riproponendo la narrativa che vuole raccontare le difficoltà del percorso di dottorato che alla fine termina, nonostante tutto, con un gran successo.
La verità è che il mio percorso di dottorato io l'ho amato.
E non perché sia sempre stato felice. È stato anche triste, difficile, e molto doloroso.
Ma mi ha insegnato a plasmare la mia vita per farla diventare coerente con la donna che voglio essere. Mi ha resa orgogliosamente incapace di accettare di diventare una figura stereotipata e plasmata dal conservatorismo sociale, anche e soprattutto all'interno del mondo accademico.

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Sono profondamente convinta che ciò che siamo non sia che un enorme puzzle composto dai pezzi che ci hanno lasciato le persone che incontriamo.
Alcune sono le cornici, altre sono proprio quel pezzo lì che serviva per completare quella figura; altre sono quel pezzo che cercavi da tanto ma sembrava perso tra tutti gli altri; altre sono quelle parti coloratissime; altre sono pezzi un po' meno utili, che forse il puzzle sarebbe stato più bello senza, ma comunque fanno parte della figura; altre sono pezzi che non ci sono più, e l'occhio cadrà sempre su quel vuoto; altre sono le ombre; altre non vi si riesce a trovare il posto fino alla fine del puzzle; altre sono pezzi che ancora non ci sono; altre sono sempre state lì.
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(e adesso? Il dopo è arrivato. Apri gli occhi, sorridi, accendi la musica e buttati. La vita è bellissima!)

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Abstract

This research comes at a time of concern over the resilience of the current food system. Current practices have proven to be disruptive from an environmental, societal, and economic point of view and have raised international awareness that translated into a complex and lively set of innovations, also known as Alternative Food Networks (AFNs).
AFNs have emerged in recent years, driven by a shared commitment to challenge and transform the conventional food system. Available literature already provides definitions and conceptualizations of AFNs. However, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the governance of AFNs, which would allow us to gather a holistic vision of the set of innovations these networks generate. Available literature already highlights some features of AFNs that still need clarification and advocates for a better understanding of their transformative role. To do this, I make use of rich qualitative data from the study of two farmers market Associations in Bologna, and I apply process tracing to look specifically at the causal mechanism involved in the internal governance of the Associations and to trace their participation and influence on the municipal food policy process in Bologna (chapter 6).

Two research questions guide the thesis:

RQ1: To what extent and effect does the internal governance of AFNs align with an experimentalist governance framework?

RQ2: What are the relations between modes of internal governance of AFNs and their engagement in municipal food policy?

This research highlighted a new set of relations and innovations from the two case studies that enrich the debate on AFNs and their governance. Moreover, it unveiled a set of relations among AFNs, neighbourhoods in the city of Bologna, the municipality of Bologna, and the Emilia Romagna region that provided novel knowledge of the complex relations and mechanisms related to the interaction of AFNs with policy-makers and their attempts to contribute to the creation of a transformative local food policy.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I provide a literature review of the scholarship on AFNs, highlighting the research gap in their governance. In Chapter 2, built on a literature review on experimentalist governance, I present the analytical framework that guided this thesis. In Chapter 3, I describe the methods and methodology used for my study, the context of which is explained in Chapter 4. The empirical analysis of this research is carried out in chapters 5 and 6, where results are presented and later discussed in chapter 7.

Introduction and research questions

> *"There's one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate."*
> *Barack Obama, 2014*

The effects of a changing climate are increasingly unavoidable, and the agricultural sector is arguably one of the most impacted by climate change. Climate change is set to impact agricultural productivity by, for example, increasing weather disruptions that can harm soils and threaten water, impacting the health and well-being of agricultural workers and livestock, and increasing desertification, among many others. The complexity and urgency of these and other threats have led authors to call for research on sustainable transformations (Ortiz-Bobea, 2021). When it comes to such transformations, the importance of the social sciences has been widely acknowledged (Stern & Diets, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2014; Adger et al., 2013).

Research topic and gap in the literature

This research comes at a time of concern over the resilience of the current food system. Current practices have proven to be disruptive from an environmental, societal, and economic point of view and have raised international awareness that translated into a complex and lively set of innovations carried out by different actors at different levels in society. This topic is not new, and these trends and narratives have been identified across the food studies literature and beyond, providing knowledge on the transformation the agriculture sector has faced, is facing, and is likely to face. This research contributes to the scholarship of studies on Alternative Food Networks as transformative and innovative practices toward transforming the food system. Throughout this thesis, practices are understood broadly as situated real-world activities involving the interconnections between of humans, materialities, discourses, and knowledges.

AFNs have, in fact, emerged in recent years, driven by a shared commitment to challenge and transform the conventional food system. These movements advocate for food production and consumption alternatives, prioritizing sustainability, social justice, and community well-being. This collective effort represents a response to the shortcomings of the dominant agro-industrial

paradigm, offering innovative solutions and alternative visions for the future of food production and consumption. One prominent example is the global rise of food sovereignty movements. These movements, including La Via Campesina, focus on empowering local communities and small-scale farmers to regain control over their food systems. The concept of food sovereignty asserts the right of individuals and communities to define their agricultural policies, ensuring that food is produced and distributed in a manner that prioritizes local needs and environmental sustainability. The emergence of these movements is a process that scholars from different perspectives have widely studied. One example is provided by Whatmore & Thorne (1997), who identifies the emergence of a counter-movement to the globalization of food that they define as the "alternative geography of food." Other scholars focused on shifting consumption and production processes, identifying new local "food complexes" (Murdoch et al., 2000). Some others concentrate on the intrinsic quality of products produced by these networks, identifying the emergence of "quality production areas" (Ilbery et al., 1998).

The emergence of these social movements reflects a growing awareness of the interconnected challenges food systems face. They play a vital role in reshaping the food production and consumption narrative as they continue to gather momentum. The importance of these movements was also noted by intranational and international institutions and governments (European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013; Galli & Brunori, 2013).

For this reason, scholars also call for a deeper exploration of a regional and institutional building of AFNs in light of the modifications to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that triggered a regionalization of rural policies (Sonnino & Marsden 2006). This reform confirms that institutionally, there is a perception of the importance to relocalize food policies, albeit with variations across different regions and levels of government. At the local level, many municipalities and regional governments recognize the value of AFNs in promoting community resilience, economic development, and social cohesion. At the national and international levels, institutions have increasingly acknowledged the importance of AFNs in achieving broader sustainability goals. However, challenges persist in integrating AFNs into mainstream policy frameworks that have historically favored conventional agribusiness models. However, literature still fails to capture the intricate set of relations and practices that these movements are bringing to the table, the way they challenge conventional practices from both a food production and organizational point of view. In this research, therefore, I want to address this gap by exploring the relations not only of AFNs internally, but also in relation to the creation (or not) of a municipal food policy.

Bridging two fields of study: AFNs and Experimentalist Governance

However, there is still a need to capture these innovations and how they relate to the current food system. This calls for a deeper understanding of the governance of AFNs, which would allow us to gather a holistic vision of the set of innovations these networks generate. Available literature already highlights some features of AFNs that still need clarification and advocates for a better understanding of their transformative role. In doing so, I turned to governance studies, specifically experimentalist governance, to build a framework capable of grasping all these novel aspects.

Experimentalist governance, developed by Charles Sabel, emerged in the wake of governance studies that started during the '90s (Eckert & Börzel, 2012) when the top-down governance approach was challenged as new complex and unpredictable challenges started to arise. Experimentalist governance is based on the belief that local actors know better what is doable and desirable for their context and that complex challenges must consider context differences. Sabel & Zeitlin (2012) argue that complex challenges can best be addressed by giving local actors autonomy and creating a collaborative network where all involved actors meet and share knowledge and best practices. Seemingly impossible challenges can, then, be split into multiple local problems that local actors will face and provide solutions for, generating an iterative cycle of learning capable of providing solutions suitable to the heterogeneity of actors. This conceptualization resonates with the narrative that revolves around AFNs as realities capable of tackling food systems issues at a local level, providing novel solutions and practices adapted to the context's specifics, and it guides this research. I used a case study methodology to bring together scholarship on AFNs and experimentalist governance to gather knowledge on how these networks operate in a local framework and how and to which extent they advocate for transforming the current food system.

The context of the study: the European, national, and regional legislative framework

The empirical part of this research is conducted through two case studies: Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato. The two case studies, both farmers' markets Associations, are based in the city of Bologna (Italy) in the Emilia-Romagna Region. This context is particularly interesting for

studying AFNs as the region covers an area of 2,245,300 hectares, of which 90 % is rural. Approximately 47% of the territory is Utilized Agricultural Area, one of the biggest shares in Italy. Nearly half of the region comprises plains, while the remaining comprises hills and mountains, constituting 27% and 25%, respectively. The Emilia Romagna region's major urban centers align with the ancient Roman Via Emilia, traversing the entire region in a northwest-to-southeast direction, effectively dividing the plain zone from the hills and mountains. Cereal crops, mainly maize and wheat, dominate the agricultural landscape, complemented by vegetables and permanent crops, while approximately 26% is dedicated to pasture and meadows supporting the animal farming sector (ISTAT). The agriculture sector is one of the key drivers of the region's economy, which counts 44 PDOs and PGIs products in the food sector and 40 in the wine sector (according to European regulation 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs). The importance of food culture and tradition is intertwined with a strong industrial drive, represented by the structure of farms in Emilia Romagna and the transformation of farms' structure. In Emilia-Romagna, over the last 40 years, there has been a pronounced reduction in agricultural enterprises. In 2020, farm enterprises were slightly less than a third of those in 1982. The consequence is a significant increase in enterprises' average size, which 2020 reached almost 20 hectares of used agricultural surface, more than double that of 1982 (7.5 hectares). Emilia-Romagna stands out nationally for the high incidence of more structured legal forms (partnerships and corporations) and the share of agricultural cooperatives. Nevertheless, the region is also politically oriented towards organic production, and it is the sixth region in Italy for organic farms (10,4% of regional farms are organic) (ISMEA) and the fifth for territory cultivated with organic methods (18,5% of the agricultural area is for organic production) (SINAB).

Considering the political framework, the region strongly depends on payments from the Common Agricultural Policy. The European Commission's work program for 2022, approved on October 19, 2021, outlined six priority objectives. Among these, the first focused on implementing the European Green Deal, particularly on achieving greener and more sustainable agriculture and implementing the Farm to Fork Strategy. In 2022, the Commission collaborated with member states to develop ambitious national strategic plans aligning with the Common Agricultural Policy and the Green Deal. This included proposing new rules for sustainable pesticide use to achieve a 50% reduction in biodiversity strategies. Apart from energy supply challenges (following the Russia-Ukraine conflict), the Commission highlighted the effects of climate change on Europe, underscoring the importance of the European Green Deal. The Commission president called for the Union's commitment to an ambitious biodiversity agreement at the global conference in Montreal in late 2022.

2022 marked the 60th anniversary of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), initially aimed to support farmers, improve agricultural productivity, ensure stable food supplies, preserve rural areas, and enhance sector competitiveness. Over time, new challenges were added, including climate change, biodiversity protection, and food security. The EU's latest CAP reform, initiated in 2018 and formally adopted in December 2021, introduced changes such as a new implementation model involving national strategic plans (NSPs) and modifications in income support and payment distribution. The reform also addressed climate and environmental aspects, allocating funds for climate change mitigation and ecological schemes. The role of the CAP aligns with the EU's sustainable growth framework, established in 2015 with the Agenda 2030, consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The European Green Deal aims to promote efficient resource use, shift to a clean and circular economy, restore biodiversity, and reduce pollution. The new CAP for 2023-2027 emphasizes fairness, environmental sustainability, and results-based approaches. As part of its broader strategies, the EU introduced the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, focusing on sustainable agricultural practices and ecosystem protection.

The Emilia-Romagna region in Italy approved its Rural Development Programming Supplement, aligning with the national and EU strategies. With a budget of 913.2 million euros, the region focuses on environmental and climate goals, income support, rural development, knowledge, and innovation (report 2022). The strategic choices in Emilia-Romagna concentrate on key areas such as agricultural competitiveness, environmental sustainability, participatory approaches, support for marginal territories, and forest management.

At the local level there is interest and commitment to develop a transformative food policy that can be retraced via the adhesion of Bologna to the MUFPP. However, a local food policy has not been developed yet. I will explore the reasons why this has not happened yet through looking at the engagement of AFNs and the relations between the internal governance of two farmers' markets Associations and the municipality in the creation of a local food policy. I will expand upon these relations in chapter 6, as part of step 2 of the process tracing analysis carried out.

Research questions and thesis overview

The food system is undergoing a series of transformations that are fostered not only by innovations brought by grassroots experiences but also by renewed policy-makers' awareness. However, understanding the innovation that grassroots experiences bring is more complicated

because they are not necessarily structured in a way that provides empirical data and accessible information. Instead, these initiatives are often informal or operate with different frameworks. For this reason, the objective of this research is twofold. The first is to study AFNs through the lenses of a locally adapted experimentalist governance framework to capture the innovations, relations, and practices that AFNs develop. Building on this knowledge, the second objective is to unveil how these networks engage with institutional actors and their role (if they have one) in creating a transformative and innovative local food policy.

Two research questions guide the thesis:

RQ1: To what extent, and effect, does the internal governance of AFNs align with an experimentalist governance framework?

To do this, I make use of rich qualitative data from the study of two farmers market associations and their related practices (chapter 5) and apply a framework for experimentalist governance that has been adapted to local conditions (chapter 2).

RQ2: What are the relations between modes of internal governance of AFNs and their engagement in municipal food policy?

To do this, I build on RQ1, and apply process tracing to look specifically at the causal mechanism involved in the internal governance of the two Associations and to trace their participation and influence on the municipal food policy process in Bologna (chapter 6).

Together, these two questions, provide additional insight into the potential of municipal governance for sustainability transformations, as elaborated upon in the discussion of this thesis (chapter 7). To understand the importance of studying AFNs in the context of climate change and related social-ecological challenges, the first chapter of this thesis will highlight state of the art on AFNs by identifying debates that are still active, and it will introduce the governance research gap as well as the importance of shedding light into the governance practices of AFNs. The second chapter provides a literature review of experimentalist governance, focusing on its emergence and applications in sustainability-related challenges. It concludes by building and describing the analytical framework that guides this thesis. The third chapter introduces methods, the methodology used to gather data, and the data collection activities. The fourth is the first analytical chapter, and through the data collected and the analytical framework, it looks at the case studies through the lenses of experimentalist governance. This chapter sheds light on the innovative practices that revolve around building internal rules that often operate outside the legal framework, building trust, and the mechanisms created to challenge conventional practices and hold members accountable for their actions. The fifth chapter represents the second analytical

chapter. and, through the use of a process tracing approach, it unveils the relations that these realities create with institutional actors and highlights the presence of four different levels of actions in the Emilia Romagna region, revealing a compartmentalized structure that hinders the creation of a circular experimentalist model and fails to capture innovations brought by AFNs. The sixth chapter is dedicated to discussing what was found in this research and to the conclusions.

Chapter 1 - Alternative Food Networks and Governance: the state of the art

1.1 Definition of Alternative Food Network and Alternativeness: dichotomy or two sides of the same coin?

The definition of AFNs has been at the center of a long debate, where scholars attempted to theorize and define the complex instance of these realities. To understand their characteristics and how they distinguish from the conventional food system, I will draw on prominent contributions that summarize three key elements: the definition of AFNs, the core forms of AFNs, and the differences among AFNs based on their geographic location.

- Feenstra (1997: 28) defines AFNs as: "rooted in particular places, [AFNs] aim to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, use ecologically sound production and distribution practices, and enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community."
- On a similar note, Marsden et al. (2000: 424-425) claim that short food supply chains "can potentially 'short-circuit' the long, complex and rationally organized industrial chains […], through developing new quality definitions associated with locality/region or speciality and nature, new associational networks can be built. […]. These supply chains engender different consumer relationships and may engage different conventions and constructions of quality (Thevenot 1998). A key characteristic of short supply chains is their capacity to re-socialize or respatialize food, thereby allowing the consumer to make value judgments about the relative desirability of foods based on their knowledge, experience, or perceived imagery".

- According to Allen et al. (2003: 61) these initiatives not only challenge the food system, but they also share a political agenda. In fact, "these new agrifood initiatives (AFIs) engage the imaginations, hopes, and energies of people located in very different sites within the agrifood system. They affirm a shared political agenda: to create food systems that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially just".
- Whatmore et al. (2003: 389) add to the discourse by defining "`alternative' and/or `quality' and/or `local' food networks" as "overlapping but nonidentical collective nouns [that] consolidate a multiplicity of food networks from organics and fair trade to regional and artisanal products […]. What they share in common is their constitution as/of food markets that redistribute value through the network against the logic of bulk commodity production that reconvenes `trust' between food producers and consumers; and that articulate new forms of political Association and market governance.".
- Following Jarosz (2008: 232) "AFNs are defined in four major ways: (1) by shorter distances between producers and consumers; (2) by small farm size and scale and organic or holistic farming methods, which are contrasted with large scale, industrial agribusiness; (3) by the existence of food purchasing venues such as food cooperatives, farmers markets, and CSA and local food-to-school linkages;2 (4) by a commitment to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food production, distribution and consumption."
- To summarize, AFNs are defined as "efforts to respatialize and re-socialize food production, distribution and consumption in North America, Europe and Australia. In conceptualizing and defining AFNs, researchers […] conceptualize AFNs in relation to rural and regional development, various forms of capitalist restructuring, and as an ecological and social vision and discourse embracing environmental awareness and progressive social goals" (Jarosz, 2008: 231).

Based on these characterizations, it emerges that there is not a universal definition of AFNs. Still, there is, nevertheless, shared consensus among scholars on the core characteristics of AFNs: the attention on localness, quality, sustainable farming practice, social justice, and political action to counteract the capitalistic agrifood system.

1.1.1 Core forms of AFNs

Considering how AFNs organize and take form, different initiatives fall under the umbrella of AFNs. Scholars have widely explored these. These are summarized in the following table.

Table 1 - Different forms of AFNs. Source: personal elaboration

Form	**Description**
Farmer markets (Brown; 2001)	Recurrent markets at fixed locations, where farmers personally sell their agricultural products
CSAs (Adam, 2006; Feenstra, 1997)	CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture, involves a community of individuals who commit to supporting a farm operation. The farm becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, and both growers and consumers mutually support and share the risks and benefits of food production. Members or shareholders pledge in advance to cover the farm's anticipated costs and the farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's produce throughout the growing season and the satisfaction of reconnecting with the land. Members also share in risks, such as poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests.
Cooperatives (Anderson et al., 2014; Fonte & Cucco, 2017)	Cooperative alternative food networks, whether organized formally through cooperative legal structures or informally through cooperative governance approaches, offer an alternative to the dominant food system. They aim to reconnect farmers and consumers in more direct ways, sell directly to various markets (local, regional, and global fair-trade), establish alternative market channels like CSAs, farm-to-school programs, buying clubs, and farmers' markets, and promote environmentally sound food production, distribution, and consumption. The history of cooperatives reveals two main views: one sees them as self-help groups focused on members' interests to contribute to overall community

	welfare, while the other views cooperatives as a radical economic project with societal implications, challenging the capital-centric discourse associated with neo-liberalism.
Urban gardens (Bell et al., 2016; Barthel et al., 2013)	In the early stages of industrial city development, philanthropists and politicians recognized the challenges faced by the urban poor and proposed urban gardening as a solution, allowing them to cultivate vegetables and fruits. This practice emerged in the nineteenth century amid the shift from feudal agrarianism to urban industrialism, addressing the scarcity of fresh food. Economic downturns, particularly in the 1930s, and the impact of world wars further fueled the development of urban gardens. Urban planners and advocates recognized their potential not only in providing food but also in contributing to clean air and leisure opportunities.
Community land trusts (Rosenberg & Yuen, 2012)	Community land trusts (CLTs) are adaptable organizations addressing diverse community needs through flexible land uses. While many CLTs concentrate on owner-occupied housing, some extend their focus to non-residential development. Literature indicates that CLTs are expanding their roles in supporting non-residential development, including in urban agriculture. In this context, CLTs secure land access through various arrangements like fee simple ownership and leases, offer programmatic support for agriculture, and actively engage in agricultural production.

Food policy councils (Harper et al., 2009; Schiff, 2008)	Food Policy Councils firstly emerged in North America to connect neighborhood food initiatives with communities shaping policies for equitable and healthy food systems. Serving as both a forum to address food issues and a platform for coordinated actions, these councils have a varied history since the establishment of the first one in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1982. They operate at state, local, and regional levels, with some showcasing notable success stories while others disband or transform into different entities. Discrepancies in defining "food policy councils" highlight uncertainties about their roles, including whether they primarily work on policy, implementation, or recommendation, their governmental or non-governmental status, and their relationship with alternative food movements such as community food security or sustainable agriculture.
Community gardens (Teig et al, 2009; Guitart et al., 2012)	The term "community garden" typically denotes open spaces managed by local community members for cultivating food or flowers. Research highlights the potential of community gardens to provide fresh produce and introduce nature to urban settings. While akin to urban agriculture, community gardens differ from privately managed backyard gardens belonging to individual families. In their literature review on community gardens, Guitart et al, (2012) identify non-profit organizations, such as cultural and neighborhood groups, as the most prevalent operators of community gardens. Other operators involve various entities, including faith-based organizations, hospitals, jails, women's or senior

	centers, housing complexes, or residents cultivating vegetables for profit.
Eco-labeling (Erskine & Collins, 1997; Yokessa & Marette, 2019)	Eco-labels are simple signals used by competitors to encourage consumers to choose eco-friendly products. According to Erksine & Collings (1997) they are increasingly employed by firms to communicate the higher quality of their goods. The growing market for green products has led to a significant rise in the number and diversity of eco-labels, with a six-fold increase in environmental labeling observed between 1990 and 2010. These labels can be part of an environmental policy, either through creating public eco-labels or imposing mandatory ones, offering alternatives to taxation and norms. Additionally, eco-labels serve as a policy instrument, providing incentives to producers to attract consumers with a high willingness to pay. Eco-labeling, proposed in Agenda 21, encourages consumers to alter their consumption patterns for sustainable development. The European Commission introduced a European-wide eco-labelling scheme in 1992, focusing on sustainability and aiming to promote products with reduced environmental impacts throughout their life cycle while providing consumers with better information.
GAS (Gruppo di acquisto solidale) also known as SPG (solidarity purchase groups) (Grasseni, 2014; Signori & Forno, 2016)	SPG are an Italian experience of AFNs that exhibit novelty in relational, political, and ecological aspects, as highlighted by Grasseni (2014). These groups, formed by individuals pooling resources to collectively purchase and distribute food and commonly used products, distinguish themselves as "solidarity-based." The concept of solidarity guides their product choices, extending from group

	members to small producers, the environment, and those adversely affected by unjust wealth distribution. While their growth was initially limited in the 1990s, GAS have become widespread in Italy over the last decade, with a higher concentration in the Northern regions.

This table does not aim to include every form of AFNs, as these initiatives are in constant evolution, as proved by Stella et al. (2022), who developed a new conceptualization of "food village" that is part of the umbrella of AFNs. Some forms of AFNs are more frequent, institutionalized, and integrated into the standard practices. Farmer markets, for example, are a long-dated practice and one of the most common embodiments of AFNs. In this research, I will use a qualitative methodology to analyze two farmers' markets Associations.

1.1.2 Farmers markets

Farmers markets are here defined as recurrent markets at fixed locations, where farmers personally sell their agricultural products (Brown, 2001).

Farmers' markets are often self-organizing and locally controlled, shaped by local community norms, values, and culture (Lyson et al., 1995). They serve as platforms allowing producers and consumers to "short-circuit" the conventional supply chain (Sonnino and Marsden 2006) and embody personal interactions based on authenticity and trust, providing a stark contrast to the typical grocery store experience (Pietrykowski 2006).

The concept of farmers' markets is strongly related to the short food supply chain philosophy, as the concept of "short supply chain" is exemplified by farmers' markets, representing direct sales from producers to consumers. These markets emerged as a contrast to the "long supply chain," where agricultural products typically pass through one or more intermediaries before reaching consumers (Sini, 2009). Rediscovering the significance of a direct relationship between producers and consumers has led to the resurgence of the short supply chain.

Farmers' markets serve not only as spaces for commerce but also as valuable sampling frames for exploring diverse topics. Recent investigations using farmers' market consumers as subjects have delved into attitudes toward chemical use in agriculture and produce quality (Anderson et al., 1996; Govindasamy et al., 1997; Kitasei, 1992; Swanson and Lewis, 1991). Other studies have explored attitudes toward sustainable agriculture (Stephenson and Lev, 1998), food safety

(Preston et al., 1998), and waste food recovery within the context of farmers' markets (Price and Harris, 1998).

Farmers' markets, initially established for economic and social reasons, have multiple objectives. They aim to increase local agricultural production, stimulate the formation of new businesses, and promote local products. Additionally, these markets provide an alternative marketing route for farmers, fostering direct interactions between producers and consumers while eliminating intermediaries. The markets also serve as educational platforms, informing consumers about product certification and the process of obtaining products and offering learning opportunities for farmers in marketing strategies (Aguglia, 2009).

Farmers' markets, found in both rural and urban areas, are seen as "keystones" for rebuilding local food systems, simultaneously enhancing income and human capital while educating customers about seasonal limits and making local food more visible in public spaces (Pascucci et al., 2011).

Beyond these objectives, farmers' markets contribute to improving the quality of life by bringing vitality to city centers and suburban areas, incorporating recreational activities into the market experience. The preservation of agricultural heritage and the rediscovery of the historical role of farmers are other vital aspects (Aguglia, 2009).

Consumers, drawn to farmers' markets not only for access to high-quality, locally produced food but also for social and environmental considerations, express concerns about farmland protection, small farm viability, and the desire to support organic conditions, animal welfare, as well as issues related to food safety, security, and diversity (Brown and Miller 2008; Beckie et al., 2012). In some countries, such as the USA, food safety concerns add to the reasons for the popularity of farmers' markets. Recent surveys indicate that consumers show a heightened interest in locally grown and made products due to perceived increased risks associated with imported goods, including concerns about terrorism (Hamilton, 2002).

Notably, the affordability of food is a frequently cited motivation for the development of farmers' markets. However, this last aspect opens up two issues. The first one concerns some authors' worries about the niche turn these initiatives take. In fact, products sold at farmers' markets are not necessarily cheaper than conventional outlets. The problem of prices is complex as it involves breaking a system that leads consumers to think that buying cheap food is possible. It involves political and production issues, organic certifications, and analyzing what a farmer's market is in that specific context.

This opens to the second issue regarding what a farmer's market is. The term "farmers' markets" may be loosely applied to various sites, including "public" or "municipal markets," "terminal markets," "farm shops," "farm stands," "curb" or "tailgate markets," "flea markets," and "swap meets." (Brown, 2001). It is essential to note that, in a genuine farmers' market, some or all vendors must be producers selling their own products. Pyle (1971) emphasized that not

everything labelled as a farmers' market truly fits the definition, and other gatherings may adopt the form and function of a farmers' market under different names. This confusion called for a legislative intervention, and now norms around farmers' markets differ from country to country. According to Brown (2002), studying farmers' markets (and direct selling in general) is a complex undertaking because of the complexity of interactions these selling channels embody and the heterogeneity of the topic.
Different state regulations might skew the results. For example, regulations in different countries present differences regarding approved products, especially meat and dairy-related ones. This leads to studies on farmers' markets that frequently present results merely as averages (Brown, 2002), lacking accompanying details that would facilitate a more in-depth analysis. For these reasons, this research analyses the Italian context, particularly the Emilia Romagna region and Bologna's legislations, where the two case studies' objects of this research are located.

1.1.3 Differences among AFNs

Even though scholarship overflows with definitions and conceptualizations of AFNs, several scholars claim that the realm of AFNs remains under-theorized; however, this depends on the fact that AFNs are context-dependent, making it hard to formulate universal theories. For this reason, another string of scholarship can be identified for its contribution to shed light on differences among these networks. Being context-dependent implies that these networks are not necessarily homogeneous regarding practices, values, and activities. Several researchers focused on this topic by providing insights into differences among AFNs within the same context or between different geographic areas.

The first topic concerning differences is geography. Researchers focusing on AFNs mainly developed theories and paradigms based on AFNs in North America or Europe, leaving the experience of Southern AFNs unexplored (Fendrychová & Jehlička, 2018). Several scholars have pointed out differences between North American and European AFNs (Barbera et al., 2014; Marsden, 2004; Parrott et al., 2002) that explain intrinsic differences based on the context. The concepts of quality and embeddedness, as well as the motivations to join an AFN (of both consumers or producers), differ consistently based on the context, and it is yet further evidence of why AFN scholarship cannot be homogeneous or provide universal theories.

However, AFNs differ consistently in the European context as well. As pointed out by Parrott et al. (2002), for example, the emergence of AFNs in Europe as a counterforce to industrialized agriculture is far from being uniform. Southern countries, for instance, always tried to resist the increasing pressure and incursion of the mechanized and standardized agrifood industry (Moran, 1993; Bérard & Marchenay, 1995; Buchin et al., 1999). The same can't be said for Northern

European countries, with well-established standardized and centralized food supply chains and industrialized agriculture (Mason & Brown, 1999). However, recent events related to food scares and climate change weakened the legitimacy of this system, and consumers started to question the current food system, seeking alternatives. Hence, the rationale behind the emergence of AFNs in Europe differs regarding values and time, as northern European countries seem to have lagged.

1.1.4 What is "alternative"?

Alternativeness calls for something that is counteractive to something else that is considered conventional. Several scholars use this dichotomy (Treagar, 2011) to distinguish AFNs from "conventional" systems, which rely on industrialized production and food transformation methods, global value chains, and corporate modes of financing and governance. Scholars like Sonnino and Marsden (2006) indeed use the concept of conventional and alternative food networks. Still, instead of considering these as two separate systems, they think of them as competitive and linked one to the other.

However, using the concept of "alternative" is complicated as it recalls something subtractive and not additional. It describes something the conventional system is not rather than what the alternative means. In numerous examinations of specific types of AFNs, such as Farmers' Markets (FMs) or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), there is a prevalent practice of not clearly defining and justifying the criteria that categorize a chosen type as "alternative." Instead, researchers often hint at the characteristics and advantages of various AFNs during contextualization. Subsequently, in presenting empirical findings, they report and discuss selected features without explicitly outlining expectations. This lack of explicit expectations weakens the contributions, as it can lead to conflations between features and benefits of different AFN types and false assumptions about the specific AFN considered.

Consequently, the tendency to use the term "AFN" as a convenient shorthand rather than as a foundation for meticulous examination and theorizing poses challenges to advancing knowledge in this field. To overcome this limitation, the concept of alternativeness upon which this research is based is formulated by Watts et al. (2005), who distinguish "weaker" and "stronger" forms of AFNs based on their engagement with conventional food supply chains. This distinction is not a dichotomy like previous scholars advocated but instead intended to be a continuum on which different AFNs can position themselves. This concept of alternativeness introduces a rationale in identifying a network as alternative or conventional without posing too many constraints.

However, this conceptualization doesn't come without blind spots, as it is strongly dependent on the researcher's perception and, in general, is highly subjective.

1.1.5 Embeddedness and localness: differences in AFNs and the debate around the local dimension

The aspect of re-localization deserves a specific explanation since the concepts of "local" and "alternative" are not necessarily tied and reliant on one upon the other. Marketing a product as local does not mean that this automatically involves some alternative circuit for its production and distribution and vice versa; it does not mean that it embodies positive externalities for the environmental context and the socio-economic system. Quantifying and measuring localness and embeddedness often involve subjective decisions that can influence the outcomes. Researchers may rely on diverse indicators, such as distance, relational networks, or cultural affinities, leading to methodological disparities that hinder establishing a cohesive body of knowledge. The fluid and dynamic nature of AFNs exacerbates the problem of localness and embeddedness. These networks are highly context-dependent and subject to constant changes influenced by economic, social, and environmental factors.

Consequently, a static or narrowly defined understanding of localness and embeddedness may fail to capture the evolving nature of AFNs, limiting the applicability and relevance of research findings over time. It also may hinder other values that AFNs do not envision. This has been explained by Sonnino & Marsden (2006), who, based on a case study carried out in Iowa, defined two kinds of localism: defensive localization (that advertises local food to carry on patriotic values as well as xenophobic practices) and diversity-receptive localization (that recognize that the interests of "locals" are relational and open to change). Using a localization lens, other scholars advanced different theories. According to Mardsen et al. (2000), AFNs can be divided into three main types: direct relationship (where consumers purchase the product directly from the producer/processor based on direct personal contact), spatial proximity (where goods are produced and sold at retail in a specific region or place of production), and spatially extended, where local value and regional identity are incorporated into the product itself and transmitted to consumers outside the area.

To sum up, the concept of local is still lacking in theorization and is still subject to criticism, and it must be thoroughly analyzed from case to case. In this research, the context of local retraces the differences between AFNs in Northern Europe and Southern Europe. In southern European countries, particularly Italy, food culture is based more on a highly regionalized production

involving many small family businesses. It emphasizes the commitment to quality, often defined more in cultural than formal terms, and that finds its expression in direct sales practices, both within the company and in urban or local markets (Barbera et al. 2014).

1.1.6 The concept of "quality" in AFN scholarship

The concept of quality is used as a motto by AFNs to position them in the market. As said before, the concept of quality is blurred and does not have a clear definition. However, in the context of food, the concept of quality is tied to the contrasting mainstream industrialized food industry that produces and commercializes low-cost, convenient, and always-available food (Harvey et al., 2004). The concept of quality used in the scholarship of AFNs is often used as a contrasting characteristic: quality is everything that conventional food is not. This statement, however, is not only incorrect but also poses potential risks. Conventional food is regulated by strict legislation and standards that regulate food production to ensure food safety. This means that the concept of quality mentioned here has to do with other elements that somehow go beyond the pure nutritional characteristics of food. It incorporates values such as aesthetic attributes, nutritiousness, traceability, a known place of origin, etc. What emerges is that the concept of quality is not only strictly context dependent. It is also the result of the interaction among different concepts that reflect differences in farming systems, culture and traditions, consumer perception, policy support, and framework (Renting et al., 2003). This is also supported by Treagar (2003), which demonstrates that the connection between geographic origin and unique product characteristics, a definition of quality in a specific context, cannot be used to describe AFNs in the UK, as their concept of quality differs.

According to scholars such as Parrott et al. (2002), the topic of quality has not yet been sufficiently explored. The concept of quality was analyzed only in abstract terms, trying to explore the notion itself rather than how it translates into practices. They affirm that quality has been treated generally as a "sugar coating" around the product without covering issues like production, technological knowledge, and network building. However, quality assumes a different role when dealing with consumption. This is because of what is defined as a "cultural woke" of consumers who are no longer considered passive actors looking for quality products. This enhanced a stream of research (Miller, 1998; Miller et al., 1998) that, even though it shed some light on consumer behavior, still failed to build theoretical frameworks on food quality (Parrott et al., 2002; Dixon, 1999, Murdoch et al. 2000). The concept of food quality, even though misses some theoretical framework from geographers, has been considered by economists and food marketing scholars. Henson (2000), for example, theorized three different types of quality: product-oriented (that involves characteristics of the products such as color, smell, and nutritional elements), process-oriented (for example, organic products, fair trade, animal-friendly, etc.) and

user-oriented (which is defined by the consumer experience and perceptions of the product). While the first two types of "quality" can be objectively measured and quantified (for example, by nutritional values or organic certifications), the third one cannot, as it is subjective and dependent on each consumer's perceptions. Aware of the limitations of the concept of quality and the differences between AFNs in North and South Europe, this research considers the idea of quality that is entrenched in what some researchers defined as the "Italian territorialist school" (Magnaghi, 2005; Dematteis et al. 2005) which ties the concept of quality with the idea of territory. The territory is not considered a mere geographic space but a complex of material and immaterial relations. Thus understood, I refer, in fact, to a territorial system, a crossroads of complex economic, social, cultural, and environmental relationships organized in overlapping but not coinciding scales.

1.1.7 Sustainability in AFNs: economic, social and environmental

AFNs have emerged as a response to the shortcomings of conventional food systems, aiming to foster sustainability across economic, social, and ecological dimensions. The examination of AFNs reveals a multifaceted impact beyond immediate economic considerations.

Economically, AFNs contribute to the resilience of local economies by creating direct market channels for small-scale producers. Farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and local food cooperatives establish a direct connection between producers and consumers, reducing the dependence on large-scale intermediaries. This fosters economic sustainability for local farmers, as they receive a fair share of the consumer's expenditure, leading to increased profitability and the preservation of agricultural livelihoods. AFNs often embrace fair trade principles, ensuring producers are compensated equitably for their labor and resources. Socially, AFNs strengthen community ties by fostering relationships between producers and consumers. The emphasis on local sourcing creates a sense of community identity and belonging. Consumers develop an increased awareness of the origins of their food, leading to informed choices that support local businesses and sustainable agricultural practices. Participatory models like CSA encourage shared responsibility and cooperation, creating a community-based support system for producers and consumers. These social connections contribute to individuals' well-being and build a more resilient and interconnected society. Environmentally, AFNs champion sustainable agricultural practices that prioritize ecological health. Localized production and distribution reduce the carbon footprint associated with transportation in conventional supply chains. Furthermore, AFNs often promote organic farming methods, biodiversity conservation, and soil health, contributing to the overall sustainability of agricultural ecosystems. By minimizing synthetic inputs and prioritizing regenerative practices, AFNs play a role in mitigating environmental degradation and promoting long-term ecological resilience.

However, challenges persist in ensuring the comprehensive sustainability of AFNs. Limiting market access and consumer price sensitivities may constrain economic viability. Also, AFN activities are not always profitable and require farmers to rely on conventional outlets (Brown and Miller 2008). Additionally, economic sustainability is not always forthcoming, as some scholars analyzed the negative impacts of AFNs in some communities by creating distortions (Ilbery & Maye, 2006). Some studies carried out analyses confirming that social inclusivity can be an issue if AFNs inadvertently exclude specific demographics due to affordability or accessibility barriers. From a socio-economic standpoint, specific localized food initiatives may perpetuate existing inequalities among participants, showcasing a tendency towards insularity and defensiveness instead of openness (Allen et al., 2003; Goodman, 2004; DuPuis and Goodman, 2005).

Environmental sustainability requires ongoing efforts to address the ecological impacts of agricultural practices and transportation within AFNs. Moreover, even if they shift towards direct selling, some producers might continue to produce with intensive modes (Winter, 2003), and empirical analysis confirming the hypothesis that AFNs are more environmentally sustainable is still lacking (Sonnino e Mardsen 2006).

1.1.8 The role of trust in AFNs

The dynamic of relationships provided deeper insights into understanding the role of trust in AFNs. The emergence of Alternative Food Networks as a prominent field of food studies analysis is attributed to their ability to directly link producers with consumers, fostering the assumed outcome of trust. However, this potential for trust between producers and consumers should not be taken for granted, as trust is not an automatic outcome of participation in these networks. Moreover, the concept of trust valid for the two case studies might differ significantly from other contexts. For example, a study by Martindale (2020) on Chinese alternative food networks highlights how trust is based on how farmers shape the image of food that must suit consumers' perceptions. In that context, trust is built around multi-sensory food qualities and aesthetic criteria advertised through social media to satisfy the perception of safe food. The same cannot be said for the two case studies, as, for example, both realities organize cultural events and advocate for the recognition that fruits and vegetables can be “ugly” and different from the shape and colors that the food industry advertises as desirable. This opposite perception of what safe food is, crucially demonstrates how AFNs are context-dependent and embeds the context specificities.

Referring to them as 'short food supply chains,' Alternative Food Networks are characterized by their ability to bring producers and consumers into closer proximity. The rediscovery of closeness between producers and consumers is believed to facilitate a process of (re)embedding the farming and agricultural sector with forms of "morality," ultimately fostering trust (Sage, 2003). In farmers' markets, this trust can be seen as a quality that enables individuals involved in interactions to expect others to adhere to 'normal' patterns and routines in social life, thus taking the continuity of social reality for granted.

Trust in AFNs is intricately connected to vulnerability and risk, shaping people's expectations of what constitutes everyday life. Trust is established in these networks as both buyer's and seller's expectations are met. Buyers anticipate that sellers provide quality, safe, sustainable, and ethically produced products with specific expertise. Conversely, sellers expect buyers to be willing to accept possibly higher prices and non-standard/supermarket appearances of food and to grant more flexibility and patience regarding the quantity, seasonality, and diversity of the products on sale (Lee, 2000). It is when these expectations are met that trust is formed (Martindale, 2020).

However, the level of trust is not only external (producer-consumer) but also internal (member-vs-member). Even though it is stated that trust is built when buyer-seller expectations are met, a previous step must be taken. This involves buyers approaching sellers with the understanding that all network members share the same set of values. This, however, shouldn't be taken for granted as these networks build reliability thanks to the development and adoption of internal rules that create dynamics that should be captured to understand how vital these relationships are. One example is the participatory guarantee system, which has been studied in literature and is adopted by Campi Aperti. At the same time, il Mercato Ritrovato claims to have a model that does not fully resemble that but is very close.

1.2 Alternative Food Networks: a systemic categorization of available literature

To sum up, the evolution of AFNs and their recognition by both scholars and institutional actors highlights their importance and calls for a deeper understanding of their characteristics, their role in the sustainability transformation of the agrifood system, and the development of local communities. The available literature is rich, providing exhaustive definitions and categorizations of AFNs. The body of literature concerning AFNs expanded and reached a point

where researchers started to question and challenge its assumptions, calling for a reflection to understand what research has found so far and take stock to reflect on future developments (Treagar, 2011). To provide some clarity in the broad realm of research on AFNs, Treagar (2011) provides a systemic categorization of three main strings of scholarships that concern AFNs.

The first one is the political economy path, which focuses on the political and economic realities that shape those initiatives that aim to relocalize food and describes AFNs as movements that fight the threatening forces of global capitalism. Studies in this category provide knowledge against contextual troops shaping the food system, how these can contribute to the emergence of AFNs, and the values these networks carry, such as localism (Allen et al., 2003) or quality (Parrott, 2002). The second is rural sociology, which shares with the previous branch the perception of the conventional food system as a highly problematic and unjust context but differentiates on the focus of its contribution, which is focused on re-humanizing food production and consumption and on unveiling the marginalization effects that mainstream or conventional food systems create. This field produces knowledge mainly in case studies focused on a micro-level, capable of providing expertise and insights from inside these networks, hence providing a deeper understanding of behaviors and motivations and to which extent these networks diversify from the conventional system. The third strand of literature comprises studies on governance and network theory, which provide knowledge at a meso level, where food systems are conceptualized as a cluster of actors carrying out their activities at a regional level. This research branch focuses on interactions and negotiation processes among these actors, how competing forces work, and the nature of collaboration and conflict at a meso-level (ibid).

1.3 The governance of AFNs: gap in the literature

The literature review above highlights the transformative potential of AFNs and the new values they bring. Scholars from different disciplines delved into these new values, contributing to creating novel debates that are continuing and calling for further understanding. However, available literature seems to focus primarily on finding definitions and paradigms for defining these networks. Hence, knowledge of concepts such as embeddedness, quality, alterity, and community development evolved quickly, raising questions and research challenges while still being far from closed debates. However, how these networks self-organize, arise, extend, and face struggles is poorly understood. These bottom-up realities can, in fact, be relatively small, informal, and utterly detached from institutions and political actors in their context. Or, quite the

opposite, they can be institutionalized, with formal rules and tied relationships with other actors of society (Duncan & Pascucci, 2017).

Nevertheless, no matter the size of these realities, they create a wide net of relationships involving different actors and practices that work as a support system to carry out their activities. Hence, their success and impact are determined by practices and surrounding actors that can hinder or facilitate their activities. This calls for a better understanding of the governance of AFNs, their organizational modalities, their interactions, their agreements, their tensions, and how relationships take shape both inside and outside the boundaries of the initiative. Shedding light on the governance of AFNs can provide valuable insights into potential innovations that AFNs bring to the table, from both a food production and consumption point of view, that have not been unveiled as of yet. It also helps enrich the current debate on their values, as studying their governance means delving deeper into their agreements (whether they are formal or informal) and internal rules, the roles of actors involved, how knowledge is produced and shared, and to what extent policymakers perceive these realities and interact with them.

However, as explained above, research on the governance of AFNs is still lacking.

The available literature on the governance of AFNs often comes together with topics related to the scaling up or scaling out of AFNs (Beckie et al., 2012), or it refers to issues such as institutionalization challenges (Mendes, 2008). Still, it needs to analyze the concept of governance per se.

Some hints towards a governance turn in AFN studies and shifts towards a more relational perspective can be found in the contributions that enrich the debate about AFN values mentioned in the previous paragraphs. One example is the debate around the localness of AFNs. Authors like Sonnino (2006) detangled the concept of local, analyzing it from a border perspective and not just a pure "geographic" one. Even if they do not openly mention governance structures, it calls for a more comprehensive understanding of relationships within the food system to define what is local. In addition, in their contribution, Campbell and MacRae (2012) raised other interesting points adding to the debate about alterity. The creation of the NGO Local Food Plus, aiming to certify local producers, brings light on the agency of AFNs and their role in the conventional food system, highlighting the importance of relationships with different actors at different scales. Moreover, the debate around quality intrinsically refers to some sort of rules and standards that, by definition, cannot be developed internally but need to be defined together with customers and also to be aligned with other AFNs in the same context.

In their contribution, Bavec et al. (2017) apply the new institutional economic approach (NIE) to six French short food supply chains (SFSCs) to shed light on ownership rights allocations, collective decision-making procedures, and the associated transaction costs. In doing so, the authors concluded that studies on the governance of SFSCs are insufficient and affirm that

scholars have not considered this topic yet. Their analysis shows that different networks present different governance structures that depend on the geographical location and public support's presence (or absence). These insights are beneficial because they shed light on the need to capture these relationships to understand the transformative potential of these networks and to capture the dynamic of their relationships with different actors. For example, their study found that networks with limited public support present a stronger motivation for cooperation and relationships based on trust. Online platforms present dynamics that are more similar to the market ones, and their governance mechanisms are "coordinated through price and quality signal with no or few administrative governances" (Bacec et al., 2017; 286). They conclude by stating that different governance structures can influence the sustainability and success of these networks.

Carbone (2017) offers other insights by affirming that the functioning of food chains depends on several factors, including the kind of governance. The author subsequently analyses the stakeholders participating in different food chains and their roles. In particular, when analyzing a short food supply chain, the author confirms that in these networks, customers tend to privilege face-to-face relationships, and stakeholders that take part in these networks are bound over ideology-driven behaviors. This finding provides insights into the novel kind of relationships that may arise in these networks that are less market-driven and more political or ideology-oriented.

Paciarotti and Torreggiani (2020) presented a contribution focusing on the logistics of SFSCs and how and what should be improved to enhance their performance. The exciting aspect is that even though they don't specifically mention the topic of governance, in their insights, they clearly reference relationships among farmers and how they should build vertical and horizontal cooperation and adopt an open approach toward innovation.

Nevertheless, even though the governance of AFNs is still in its early stages, literature shows hints that there is a demand for a deeper understanding of governance dynamics in AFNs. This is stated in Reina-Usuga et al. (2020), which confirm that traditional debates around agrifood governance only focused on the role of market forces and public policies but do not take into account the role of civil society as a driver of innovation and governance mechanisms.

Even though these contributions advance some topics that broaden the research on networks, relationships, and socio-political dynamics of AFNs, research on their governance is still insufficient and scattered. For example, understanding how AFNs relate to existing dominant food systems is crucial to understanding their activity in terms of expansion, diffusion, and internal practices. Moreover, institutions are built to sustain and accommodate the current food system, and policies and regulations inevitably favor corporate food system players. For example, until 2008, farmers' markets in Bologna were classified as playful/cultural activities instead of

economic ones. How external actors act and relate to AFNs impacts their organizational form and vice-versa, but to what extent this holds is still unclear.
Understanding the governance of AFNs can also provide insights into the level and type of innovations created and the way through which this innovation reaches other actors. This research aims to add to this debate by looking at the governance of two farmers' market Associations in the city of Bologna through the lenses of Experimentalist Governance to learn lessons about their organizational modes, practices, and relationships with institutional and other external actors. I also support the idea that by studying the governance of AFNs, it's possible to add to debates on quality, embeddedness, and alterity, as they miss a building block that consists of a broader understanding of AFNs in terms of socio-politic and relationship dynamics.

To study the governance of AFNs, the next chapter introduces the topic of experimentalist governance and builds an analytical framework through which the selected case studies will be analyzed. Experimentalist governance, first conceptualized by Sabel (2011), aims to tackle seemingly impossible problems by decomposing them into more minor issues that local actors will tackle. The main goal of an experimentalist governance setting is to foster cooperation, build trust, and discover new practices and/or solutions. This concept resonates particularly well with issues related to climate change and sustainability, as it will be presented in the next chapter. Moreover, it resonates well with the complexity of the current food system's issues and the challenges that AFNs face trying to provide a countermovement to the established food system. Moreover, I mobilized the experimentalist governance approach in order to specifically focus on the governance of AFNs in an attempt to create a contribution that revolves around this topic.
In the next chapter, I will present the concept of experimentalist governance and its theorization. I will trace the emergence of governance studies aiming at counteracting the top-down approach that proved not to work with contemporary complex challenges, and I will present the experimentalist governance framework. Later, I will delve into the available literature on case studies that analyzed experimentalist governance in sustainability-related domains and use these findings to develop the analytical framework that guided this research.

Chapter 2- Experimentalist governance: state of the art and analytical framework

2.1 Governing complexity: the outdated fashion of top-down approaches and the emergence of governance research

AFNs are an example of complex bottom-up initiatives that try to find their footing in a well-established food regime. These initiatives try to modify rules, practices, and values to create new and more sustainable or just ways of producing and consuming food. The current crisis of which the agrifood sector is suffering is characterized by complexity, volatility, and uncertainty, which creates equally complex challenges that our society has to face. Moreover, these challenges are also described as persistent, as they are unstructured, rooted in different societal domains occurring in different contexts, and involving a wide range of actors (Hisschemoller, 1993). In addition to that, according to Loorbach (2010), society has become increasingly complex, and this complexity unfolds across three levels: the level of society itself, the level of problems faced by society, and the level of governance as a way to deal with these problems. This reinforces the importance of governance when dealing with complex problems and sustainability transitions. This has been widely recognized, not only by scholars (Bos & Brown, 2012; Brassett et al., 2010; Loorbach, 2010) but also by institutions such as the European Union (Clapp & Cohen, 2010; European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013). As a response, the field of governance has started to evolve and provide knowledge that, based on theory and case studies, enriches current knowledge with theoretical frameworks.

Over the past two decades, the literature on governance has grown exponentially (Morgan, 2018). The increased focus on this topic is attributed to the correspondingly abrupt systemic changes that happened within states, markets, and other networks when it comes to the adopted modes of governance (Morgan, 2018). Increased volatility and the emergence of new and complex challenges led to the failure of the mainstream way of governing, which, as Keohane et al. stated, "can be reasonably well characterized in terms of a principal-agent model" (Keohane et al., 2013).

This can be described as a vertical power relationship setting between two actors called, respectively, principal and agent. The principal is "the sovereign people with respect to the legislature, the legislature with respect to the administration, the top administration with respect to subordinates" (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2012:411); the principal is supposed to know ex-ante the collective goals and to possess the necessary knowledge to provide guidelines and precise

activities to pursue aforementioned goals. The agent, by contrast, is the actor who should implement the general orders and achieve the goals set by the principal.

From the New Deal, the dominant style of public administration was a command-and-control, top-down one, where relationships among actors were structured in a principal-agent fashion (Sabel & Simon, 2011). This approach, however, has proven to have several limitations as it works only under specific conditions. Scholars like Sabatier (1986) and Mazmanian (1979) identified sufficient conditions for the top-down model to work. Among these is the presence of clear and consistent objectives that serve both as a standard of evaluation and legal resources, the provision of implementation processes legally structured to enhance compliance, and the critical role of officials that had to prove to be skilled and fully committed to the policy objectives. These objectives must be met in a relatively stable socio-economic context where political support has to be maintained throughout the lengthy implementation process.

There is increasing agreement among scholars (Loorbach, 2010; Jessop, 1997; Meadowcroft, 2005; Pierre, 2000; Scharpf, 1999; Hill, 2004) in recognizing that a top-down approach model is incapable of providing sustainable solutions and practices, but at the same time it is impossible to govern societal change without it (Loorbach, 2010). This implies that the research of new modes of governance is required to create a new balance among all actors that might contribute to generating new ideas and knowledge and, generally, to facilitate and accommodate all informal network processes through which new and alternative ideas might generate and provide valuable knowledge and insights to policy-making processes (Loorbach, 2010; Héritier, 1999).

A contribution to understanding why top-down settings fail is provided by Sabel and Zeitlin (2012), who claim that these forms of decision-making fail for two main reasons: ignorance and uncertainty. Due to a lack of information, state officials cannot fully know how best to manage a series of circumstances; often, they lack access to knowledge that might only be held by local actors because of their proximity to the context. On the other hand, in a top-down setting, officials might also experience uncertainty due to the need to have complete knowledge to meet the final goals and not having that knowledge; in case of abrupt changes, novelties, or whatever disturbance may appear, neither officials nor local actors know how to react, exposing a dangerous raw nerve in the mechanism. In the case of ignorance, it is necessary to build a system that considers those voices. At the same time, the uncertainty scenario asks for a solution that allows generating a system capable of exploring knowledge and different possibilities.

2.2 Research in governance: looking for alternatives to the top-down model

The realization that top-down, principal-agent settings are outdated has acted as a propeller for governance studies, to the point that some scholars refer to this as "governance fever" (Hill, 2004). It is nevertheless interesting to explore the common ground that these new modes or frameworks share, as they seem to consistently step away from a hierarchical conception of the administrative state, to the point of claiming that ''The administrative state is now less bureaucratic, less hierarchical, and less reliant on central authority to mandate action. Accountability for conducting the public's business is increasingly about performance rather than discharging a specific policy goal within the confines of the law" (Frederickson and Smith 2003, 208). Hence, it seems that transformations in governance aim to add a horizontal dimension to those governments that operate alongside a traditional and hierarchical vertical framework (Kettl, 2002). Empirical research and governance literature are flourishing, and three research lines can be found. The first one adopts a historical and descriptive approach and includes empirical studies that use systematic reviews and historical analysis to provide some descriptive classifications (Hood, 2002; Keohane & Sabel, 2013; Halliday, 2022). The second line is based on case studies and aims to provide guidelines or best practices, trying to unveil what works and what doesn't (Bardach, 1998; Brassett et al., 2010; Roep & Wiskerke, 2012; Wengle, 2016). The third line is based on a mix of both the previous ones and is focused on the study of the present, drawing from developed theories and case studies to develop a framework practical for replicability purposes (Sabel & Herrigel, 2018; Bos & Brown, 2012; Boyne 2003). No matter what the line followed or the governance mode chosen to govern an issue, the bottom line is that different frameworks developed have some points in common: they don't rely on mandatory controls or draconian penalties, they encourage the inclusion of different actors of society, they realize that a purely top-down approach is outdated, and they reconsider the role of hierarchies.

2.2.1 Three modes of governance: from top-down to post-hierarchical modes of governance

The interest in post-hierarchical modes of governance, as well as the governance turn in European studies (Eckert e Börzel), emerged in this context of novel conceptualizations. Keohane and Sabel (2013) untangled this evolution process of governance modes admirably. They recognized how "international law and world politics are less and less dominated by states" (2013: 724), as many different actors are building institutions and affecting people's lives without asking for the consent of governments. This is true for transnational institutions, public-private agreements, NGOs, and non-state entities. With the rise of new societal challenges, technological

advancement, and globalization, this global pluralism allows new actors to be involved in decision- and policy-making. This process accommodates a wave of new modes of governance that are now evolving alongside the traditional ones. According to the same authors, it's possible to identify three modes of governance.

The first one they defined as "integrated international regimes" includes all institutions created mainly after the First World War (like Bretton Woods Monetary System, Air Transport Regime, WTO), characterized by a top-down principal-agent relationship. The system that accommodated the rise of these kinds of institutions was characterized by a concentration of power in a small number of states with shared common interests. However, as we saw before, these structures fail when uncertainty and ignorance enter the scene. Together with these two causes for failure, another one should be added: consent. When consent is lacking, a top-down structure is likely to fail, and this has happened when international regimes have started to receive less support (one good example is the UNFCCC created in Rio in 1992).

The second mode of governance is identified as regime complexes, multiple non-hierarchical sets of institutions (like the Forest Stewardship Council, bilateral initiatives, clubs like the G8, subnational action like California's emission trading system, etc.). This mode emerged as a response to the gap created by the slow reaction of top-down institutions that are unable to confront change and become obsolete. This facilitated the emergence of regime complexes that can be defined as "an array of partially overlapping and non-hierarchical institutions governing a particular issue area" (Raustiala & Victor, 2004 p. 279). In this context, other ways of decision-making can also be found as the top-down mode proved lacking. Several scholars have tried to map the new modes of governance and practices that emerged (Moragues-Faus et al. 2022). In her article, Jess Halliday mapped six conceptualizations of modes and practices of governance. She identified four modes of governance: networked governance and collaborative governance (that focus on interactions between actors), multilevel governance and polycentric governance (that focus on interactions between governance structures, entities, or levels), and two practices to strengthen governance, namely reflexive governance and adaptive governance. These new conceptualizations distance themselves from the top-down approach, proposing new practices of decision-making, inclusion, and engagement.

The third mode is the so-called experimentalist governance. Even though experimentalist governance shares some concepts with other notions, such as network governance or collaborative governance, it has been developed through its own evolutionary path (Wolfe, 2018). This mode of governance is rooted in the work of John Dewey in 1927, in his article "The Public and its Problems," which introduced the concept of democratic experimentalism. According to Dewey, the elitists' opinion that supports the idea that technical experts are the only actors with

the required knowledge to govern complex problems is wrong. He claimed that what was needed instead was the inclusion of citizens in public debates as "only the man who wears the shoe knows best where it pinches (…) even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied " (Dewey, 1927).

In this matter, Sabel and Keohane describe Experimentalist Governance as "a set of practices involving open participation by a variety of entities (public or private), lack of formal hierarchy within governance arrangements, and extensive deliberation throughout the process of decision making and implementation." (Keohane e Sabel, 2013). In this sense, experimentalist governance can be defined neither as top-down nor bottom-up, as deliberation in this regime is based on the shared perception of a common problem from which shared goals that are openly set are derived. The implementation of those goals is left to lower-level actors because of their better knowledge of local conditions, and discretion is given to them provided they report regularly and engage in a recursive cycle of learning, sharing, and reframing of the common goals.

Before 1980, organizations were characterized by a hierarchical and closed structure. In this century-long period leading up to 1980, goal setting preceded and remained separated from the development of actions to achieve those goals. Parliament or headquarters, representing voters or shareholders respectively, determined the overarching objectives. Ministries, administrative agencies, or high-level managers divided intricate tasks into more manageable components. Organizational routines dictated the methods for executing and evaluating task compliance. Subordinates were incentivized based on their adherence to instructions, while middle managers scrutinized activity to ensure alignment with the established plan. This hierarchical division of labor was perceived as the most effective solution to the challenge of bounded rationality (Simon, 1997), acknowledging the limited processing capacity of individual human beings. It was considered the only way actors within organizations could effectively tackle complex tasks. Notably, stability was a crucial prerequisite for hierarchy.
By envisioning a circular and iterative model of decision-making and learning, experimentalist governance does not reject the concept of hierarchy. Still, it proposes a redistribution of powers functional to meet the goal. Hence, every actor involved in the goal is granted autonomy and must provide knowledge and practices through a reporting activity that will serve as a base to revisit or reinforce the goal.

2.2.2 Experimentation

The evolution of post-hierarchical modes of governance gave rise to a period of exploration and experimentation with governance practices. It is then essential to consider the term "experimentation" and what it means regarding governance. According to Bos & Brown (2012),

experimentation is a crucial instrument to support the transition to sustainability and the development of new knowledge. They also point out that experiments in governance are relatively new, as experimentation is typically linked to technological domains and a laboratory setting. Abbott (2017) considers non-state voluntary commitments in the climate change domain as experiments if they involve trying different approaches. Eneqvist & Karvonen (2021) use the term experiment to refer to laboratories, platforms, and innovation districts that different actors create to help cities meet their sustainability goals. They add that experiments can also refer to governance practices that seek a more horizontal decision-making process, value cooperation, and have a fluid distribution of responsibilities. Finally, Sabel and Zeitlin (2012) use the term experimentalism to develop the concept of experimentalist governance as a framework to deal with complex problems in a context of uncertainty and high volatility. This formulation encompasses all three lines of research in governance, providing historical perspective, case studies, framework formulation, and an analysis of what works and why. Because of the completeness of this formulation and its relevance and consistency with the challenges faced by the food sector and, more in particular, alternative food networks, this approach will guide this research, and it will be thoroughly explored in the following paragraphs.

2.3 Experimentalist Governance

The concept of experimentalist governance evolved within this vast and intricate discourse. It brought to the table a model that encompasses the classic principal-agent relationship without neglecting it or aiming to replace it fully, sustains the concept of learning from experience, and encourages the distribution of power and responsibilities among all those actors that may be more capable of providing good practices and knowledge.

It is in this context of transformation that scholars like Sabel and Zeitlin added to the governance debate with their theorization of Experimentalist Governance. According to the authors, Experimentalist Governance is likely not only to be found but also to arise spontaneously whenever two main scope conditions are met. The first one is a polyarchic distribution of power (in the absence of which one or more actors may be dominant, or there may be a struggle for dominance leading to the imposition of decision instead of cooperation), the second is strategic uncertainty (in the absence of which actors may be convinced to know better how to pursue their ends and hence do not take into consideration joint exploration) (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2008, 2010).

Beyond this common ground, however, there are still some unanswered questions. First, it is still unclear which conditions (other than the abovementioned two) should be met to deploy the

innovative potential of experimentalist governance. Second, authors still debate whether the polyarchic distribution of power and strategic uncertainty are sufficient conditions for experimentalist governance to arise and what would happen if those conditions are either not met or only partially met (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2012). Finally, authors like Kumm (2012) suggest that the two presented scope conditions are insufficient for learning behavior, as wide acceptance of the issue and liberal democratic constitutionalism should both be met. This is also raised by Fossum (2012), who affirms that the transformative power of Experimentalist Governance may be overrated. Finally, Borzel reiterates that since Experimentalist Governance coexists with other modes of governance rather than replacing them, speaking of "new architecture" or "deep transformation" of governance may be too premature. Borzel also affirms that further research is needed to understand the importance of scope conditions and whether experimentalist institutions develop when those are partially or not met.

In its most complete form, Experimentalist Governance appears like a multi-level architecture with four main features working iteratively and a penalty mechanism (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2011).

First, a broad framework goal and metrics for measuring the achievement are established. Examples include "good water quality" or "safe food". Local units (which can be countries, regions, municipalities, industries, researchers, etc.) are then given autonomy and discretion to pursue these goals according to their knowledge. This autonomy is intended to stimulate research and learning from different perspectives, as different know-how, technological, economic, social, cultural, and political conditions may provide very different and promising results. To maintain this autonomy, local units must report regularly on their performance and cooperate in knowledge building, presenting their results, and collaborating in implementing the best one(s). The fourth feature is represented by a phase of peer review, where the results obtained by the local units as well as the broad framework are discussed and, if needed, revised in light of the knowledge that emerged; this takes place at different levels depending on how the multi-level architecture is built. Some architectures, like the Montreal Protocol, for example, established the presence of special thematic committees in charge of monitoring the results from different actors. Depending on the findings, news, and discoveries, even the goals, metrics, and decision-making procedures themselves are periodically revised by a widening circle of actors. And the cycle repeats.

The potential of this setting is to provide autonomy to all the involved parties to develop the solution best suited to the social context or economic sector and foster cooperation to exchange knowledge and best practices. Even if the scope conditions are met and all participants agree to the broad goal, cooperation may not arise spontaneously, and the process can encounter impasses if actors decide not to cooperate. Actors may not wish to present their results to others when "others" are perceived as competitors, and there may be a tendency to cover up for failures or

mispresent results. For this reason, a penalty default mechanism is conceived to maintain cooperation and allow the iterative cycle to perpetuate and unblock deadlocks (Eckert e Börzel 2012). The rationale behind a punishing mechanism is to ensure that actors actively learn and share knowledge, avoiding voluntaristic defections. The existence of a punishing mechanism is evidence that experimentalist governance is not a hierarchy-free scheme, and it does not exclude interaction between hierarchical and non-hierarchical modes, as it relies on a central authority in a position to impose actors to cooperate and enforce punishment if the requirements are not met. Nevertheless, experimentalist governance privileges non-hierarchical settings, favoring forms of dynamic accountability (Eckert e Börzel, 2012). For this reason, hierarchy in an experimentalist governance scheme may appear in novel ways that are part of the learning process itself. In particular, "[i]n a world where standard rulemaking produces such unpredictable consequences as to be unworkable, the easiest way to generate penalty defaults is to (threaten) to engage in traditional rule-making" (Sabel e Zeitlin 2012; p.9). Authors like Eckert & Börzel (2012) question whether the shadow of hierarchy works as a penalty default or should be considered as a scope condition instead, contributing to fostering open questions about this new setting.

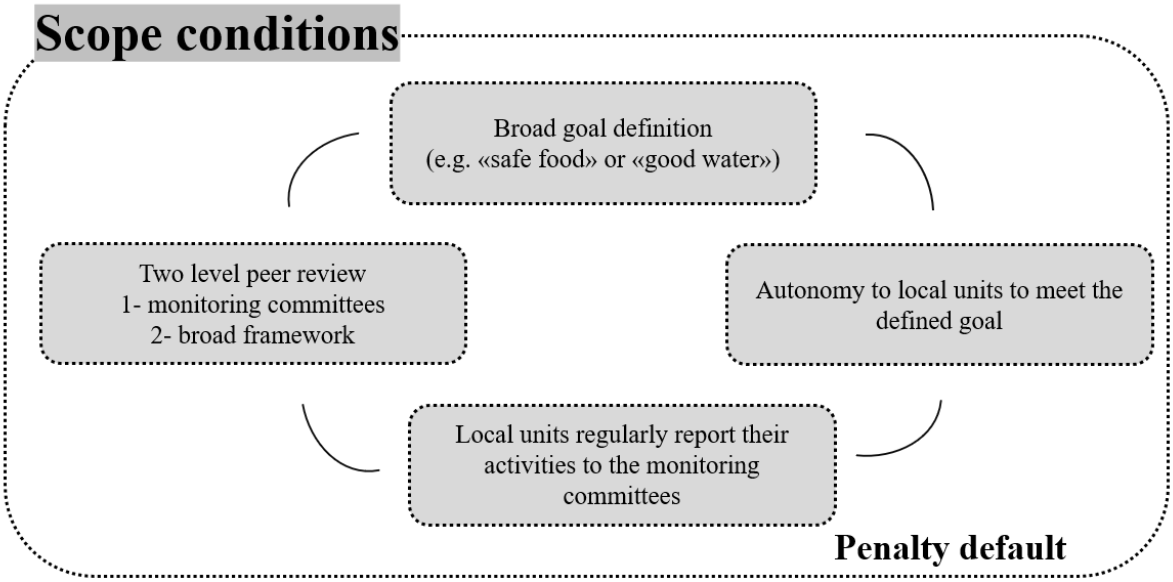


Figure 1 A visual representation of experimentalist governance. source: personal elaboration

2.4 Experimentalist governance in practice: a sustainability perspective

The literature on experimentalist governance remains expansive, covering domains from automobiles to tuna fishing (Herrigel, 2018; Keohane e Sabel, 2013). In what follows, and in line

with my objective of developing a targeted framework for experimentalist governance at the local level for alternative food networks, I present a review of the literature on experimentalist studies concerning food and sustainability. Building on the literature, it is possible to outline four highlights that emerge from the literature that inform the theoretical framework. The first concerns the criteria for emergence: as noted, an experimentalist setting may arise if some scope conditions are met. However, this topic is still debated in the literature, and a more insightful understanding of the issues revolving around the topics of food and sustainability can help grasp insights into the conditions that are likely to favor the development of an experimentalist setting. The second highlights the extent to which experimentalist settings are expected to function. Available literature confirms that experimentalism should not be considered the final tool for solving complex issues. Instead, it should be considered a process capable of tackling seemingly impossible challenges. This resonates with the need to build a local framework that involves local actors with limited agencies that try to advocate for a food system transformation. The third aspect concerns the novel set of actors expected to act toward transforming the food system. A more local approach to food calls for local action, and the literature evidences a growing tendency for local actors to engage in experiments to tackle agrifood-related challenges. This wave of innovation calls for deeper understandings of relations and practices that develop from actors already embracing more experimentalist practices. This opens for the fourth and last highlight, which calls for a deeper understanding of what experimentalism means at a local level and to what extent "experiments" can fall into an experimentalist governance setting.

A) Criteria for emergence

The food system is in deep crisis following an increase of escalating inequalities (Allen & Wilson, 2008) that pose significant challenges to the sustainability, health, and equality of food production and consumption. One of the critical issues is the prevalence of food insecurity and hunger. Economic disparities, inadequate distribution networks, and inefficient supply chains contribute to this problem, leaving millions without sufficient nourishment. Another critical concern is the environmental impact of the food system. Conventional agricultural practices, such as heavy pesticide use, deforestation for agricultural land, and excessive water consumption, contribute to biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and water scarcity. The extensive carbon emissions from transportation, refrigeration, and food waste further exacerbate the system's carbon footprint, accelerating climate change. Furthermore, the industrialization and commercialization of the food system have led to the proliferation of highly processed and unhealthy foods. This has contributed to a rise in diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes. The dominance of large-scale monoculture farming also poses risks, as it can lead to a loss of crop diversity and make the food system vulnerable to diseases and pests (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). However, the transformation of such a complex system is easier said than done.

The agrifood system is a complex web of interdependent components: production, processing, distribution, and consumption (Gaitán-Cremaschi et al., 2018). It involves intricate relationships between farmers, suppliers, retailers, consumers, policymakers, and other stakeholders, making it a multifaceted and challenging system to manage and transform.

Several scholars (Morgan, 2018; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012; van der Heijden, 2016) argue that such complexity needs to be addressed locally to provide solutions that adapt to the local context. Following a one-size-fits-all solution will end up with failing to recognize the root causes and potential solutions of the crisis, leading to inadequate support for farmers, insufficient regulation, and a lack of investment in sustainable and equitable agricultural practices, exacerbating the challenges faced by the agrifood system. However, creating new knowledge and sharing best practices is also advocated, as a holistic vision is necessary to address the agrifood crisis (Conceição & Mendoza, 2009; Donald et al., 2010).

These tendencies are traceable empirically: on the one hand, there is a growing trend of initiatives aiming to develop local food systems and alternatives to the corporate food regime (Agyemang & Kwofie, 2021; Allen & Wilson, 2008; Clapp & Moseley, 2020; Donald et al., 2010). On the other hand, actors are sharing experiences and knowledge to build a more sustainable and just as good of a system. This is the case of The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (an international agreement on urban food policies signed by over 200 cities worldwide), for example. According to the literature on experimentalist governance, these current trends fit with the fundamental assumptions that make this mode of governance appealing, and this is confirmed by several case studies where an experimentalist governance approach has been adopted when dealing with food-related issues (see Moragues-Faus et al. 2022; Sabel & Zeitlin 2007; Sabel et al., 2019; Wengle 2016).

B) Function

The second aspect relates to the extent to which Experimentalist Governance should be expected to function. This mode of governance should not be confused with a panacea capable of providing a solution to matters of high politics, such as the agrifood crisis. Experimentalism should be interpreted instead as a way to deal with a seemingly impossible problem by breaking it into more minor issues and dealing with them with an experimentalist approach. There is no experimentalist governance institution dealing with the agrifood crisis per se. Still, experimentalist settings can be found in specific matters, like what happened within the HACCP regulation (Wengle 2016) and The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA; Sabel e Zeitlin, 2007), the case of the Irish

dairy industry (Sabel et al., 2019), and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (Keohane e Sabel, 2013).

C) Expanding actors

The third aspect signals how experimentalist practices are expanding at a smaller scale. Numerous case studies from the available literature indicate that a new range of actors (like cities, private companies, NGOs, and other civil actors) are engaging in experimentalist practices to tackle agrifood-related challenges (Denny et al., 2016; Roep & Wiskerke, 2012; Sabel et al., 2019; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2007; Wengle, 2016). This is not surprising given that one of the main recommendations of scholars is to engage local actors and act locally. However, it is unclear how these actors engage and create relations that can fit with an experimentalist setting, if scope conditions are locally met, and if new scope conditions can emerge. This raises the necessity for further investigation (e.g., are local authorities aware of the context they represent? Is protecting its context a local authority's only interest?).

In the field of local food systems, new forms of governance are also arising, bringing new values like cooperation and collaborative governance (Kang et al., 2022). Matschoss and Repo (2018) analyzed -a database created by the European Project CASI that collected a sample of 141 climate action experiments from the EU-28. Among these, 19 were considered governance experiments, the majority of which (68%) focus on citizen participation, confirming that policymaking is no longer a process where only elites can participate but the involvement of non-state actors is advocated.

D) Need for a local-level framework

The fourth aspect is that the term "experimentation" is, in fact, present in the discourse about local alternative food network initiatives (Roep e Wiskerke 2012). Still, it does not necessarily fit with the experimentalist governance theorization. Moreover, available literature analyses experimentalist settings in intranational or international settings and develops reflections and insights that fit this action level. However, literature also proves that some experimentalist settings are growing locally (Herrigel, 2018; Wolfe, 2020). Hence, a local theoretical framework for experimentalist governance is needed as it allows for the capture of the specificities of a local context, the distinguishing of experimentalist settings from pseudo-experimentalist ones, and the adaptation of the original conceptualization to local dynamics. According to Keohane and Sabel (2012), the willingness to create an experimentalist governance setting is not always enough.

Attempts to create experimentalist governance settings may fail, resulting in the failure of the whole setting or in the creation of pseudo-experimentalist settings. This is because this framework is not an "automatic and inevitable response to all situations marked by diversity and uncertainty" (Keohane and Sabel, 2013). The call for local action advocated by the experimentalist governance setting did, in effect, spread as uncertainty and ignorance may also be found locally. This creates a cascade effect that pushes local authorities to rely on even more local actors to provide knowledge and explore new possibilities. In particular Eneqvist and Karvonen (2021) underlined the importance of experimentalist governance settings in cities that are engaging in activities to meet their sustainability goals by identifying five different roles that municipalities can have. The first one is visioning, as municipalities should frame values and norms (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997) to promote a clear direction for the envisioned future. After that there is facilitating; after promoting a long-term clear vision, municipalities facilitate the creation of networks of stakeholders and interactions among them, by providing support in the creation of contracts, building trust and work as guarantor (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Hölscher et al., 2018). Similar but somehow different is the supporting function, where municipalities act as passive actor and, instead of guiding and leading, they operate as support for whatever need is perceived in the experimental setting (Bulkeley & Kern, 2006). The fourth function is the amplification: municipalities can help scaling up results and replicate them by internalizing them in regulations and legislation or by establishing new protocol and sharing it with their networks (Mey et al., 2016). Finally, municipalities are expected to have a guarding function in protecting public values and maintaining democracy (Karvonen, 2018; Pierre, 2011). This said the reasons why experimentalist governance spread locally remain under investigation. For this reason, the following section puts forward a theoretical framework for experimentalist governance at a local level.

In the context of this research this theoretical framework will serve the purpose of analyzing the governance of AFNs. The focus on cooperation, learning processes, horizontal relationships, rule revisions in light of new findings, and relationships based on trust are all elements that resonate with the values of AFNs. For this reason, this framework could serve to both understand the governance of these realties and also to foster the knowledge on how the relationships in these networks take place, how internal rules are defined, and how these networks relate with external actors.

2.5 Experimentalist governance and AFNs – developing a local framework

Drawing from the available literature, I develop an analytical framework to help identify and assess processes of experimentalist governance at a local level.

As mentioned above, the debate on scope conditions is still open and evolving. Nevertheless, in its original formulation, the authors suggest that polyarchic power distribution and strategic uncertainty are the two main scope conditions for creating and developing experimentalist governance settings.

For this research, scope conditions should be reframed based on the localness of the proposed framework. While a polyarchic power distribution is a fundamental condition in a macro context, the same is not so clear in the local context. Local authorities hold jurisdiction over specific domains, but they also work under national or regional legislation that often restricts their room to maneuver in their specific field. That said, local-level politics are often polyarchic, and power is broadly distributed across local actors.

The second condition is strategic uncertainty. This condition also holds. Uncertainty brought about by climate change and political uncertainty, even global pandemics, are experienced at all levels. Local-level actors are just as likely to suffer from a lack of staff, necessary resources, or time to meet the needs of the governed communities. However, strategic uncertainty needs to be reframed to suit the local level. In the original experimentalist governance framework, local authorities are considered to have all the necessary knowledge and to act only to pursue the general well-being. However, as stated above, local authorities may not have sufficient resources to collect said knowledge, or even if said knowledge is, in fact, present, local authorities may prefer to pursue other interests as they may suffer from political or economic pressure by more powerful actors. For this reason, strategic uncertainty should be reframed to consider the uncertainty derived from other sources like government instability, lack of transparency, and availability of resources.

In a local context, scope conditions should also be investigated to explore why particular governance arrangements (for example, those governing AFNs) emerge and are organized in a specific context. Literature provides examples of the heterogeneity across the movement of AFNs (Watts et al., 2005; Wilson, 2013), making it impossible to build a unique paradigm on why alternative food networks emerge. Nevertheless, according to Cremaschi (Cremaschi, ref), transformations occurring in the agrifood system are likely to take two directions (both aiming to create a resilient and inclusive agrifood system for the future) centered around sustainability

and technology: the technological pathway focuses on innovations like precision agriculture, vertical farming, and artificial intelligence to increase productivity, efficiency, and food security; the sustainable pathway emphasizes regenerative practices, reduced environmental impact, and equitable food access. Alternative Food Networks fall in the last category. However, some alternative food networks develop formally, growing in reputation and power (e.g., Slow Food). In contrast, others remain bottom-up, niche initiatives that involve a small group of producers or consumers and do not necessarily aim to develop further. Several authors examined these differences (Watts et al., 2005; Duncan & Pascucci, 2017), and the governance setting is a crucial element in developing and growing these realities. From the literature review, I conclude that in an experimentalist governance setting, the ability and willingness to research and adopt a structured governance may be a prerequisite.

As mentioned before, experimentalist governance settings build around a common perceived problem. In this formulation, the main driver is the perceived dissatisfaction with the actual agrifood system and the willingness to create viable local alternatives that embody a different set of values. The perceived problem, however, as well as it may link and connect to a global problem (such as climate change, agrifood policies, urban development, etc.), is rooted in the local context where it appears. This means that the experimentalist setting that may arise will be adapted to the related global problem and the context where the problem is perceived. In addition to that, the "implementation by lower-level actors" feature assumes a different meaning. In a local experimentalist governance framework, the lower-level actors would directly implement the shared goal by creating local networks or other structures.

In sum, the four main steps articulated in the original framework also hold at a local level, but they should be reframed to adapt to the local context. Given the more circumscribed range of action, I expect that the local architecture of experimentalist governance will look less formal, as actors participating in the process are more likely to be common citizens with time and budget constraints. Indeed, with AFNs, many actors are volunteers. This differs from the supra-national level, where participants are often salaried and/or hired experts who take care of the assigned functions and structure. For this reason, when establishing the goal (as per the first step conceptualized by Sabel), it should be as specific as possible and coherent with the available resources of the parties involved and the power they can exercise. The autonomy of the local units becomes an implied characteristic rather than other cases of experimentalist settings at a macro level (e.g., the Montrèal Protocol) where the autonomy of local units had to be somehow codified.

The focal point in this framework is the cooperation among the parties since values such as trust and community-building are focal in Alternative Food Networks. Limited resources and power may contribute to the diffusion of resignation or a lowering of joint efforts. For this reason, robust mechanisms to promote, stimulate, and facilitate cooperation must be conceived to promote, in particular, the creation of personal relationships and moments where participants meet in person.

The final aspect considers the penalty default. As noted above, theorists claim that experimentalist governance requires a punishment mechanism when cooperation is not spontaneous. However, the source of penalty defaults valid for national or international experimentalist governance settings may not be suited for the local context. Alternative Food Networks are mainly based on trust relationships and transparency. For this reason, the threat of being excluded from the network may be severe enough because, given the localness of the setting, actors may be very careful not to lose both their reputation and access to a niche network in the context in which they live or operate. The final distinctive element in local experimentalist governance includes another crucial feature: interaction with institutional actors. In the traditional framework of experimentalist governance, the commonly shared problem is recognized by national or even international authorities. This means that authorities may provide both autonomy to local actors and financial, institutional, political, or technical support. The same is not necessarily true for AFNs. AFNs, as stated before, may arise because authorities did not perceive or accept an emergent challenge or choose not to act. For this reason, actors engaging in AFNs may not receive sufficient support from more powerful authorities, or they can even be ignored. On the contrary, authorities may recognize the issue that local actors are trying to resolve but may be incapable of providing sufficient support due to a lack of resources. In both cases, the relationship with institutional actors is a crucial building block in a local experimentalist governance framework, as it may hinder or enhance the actors ‘efforts.

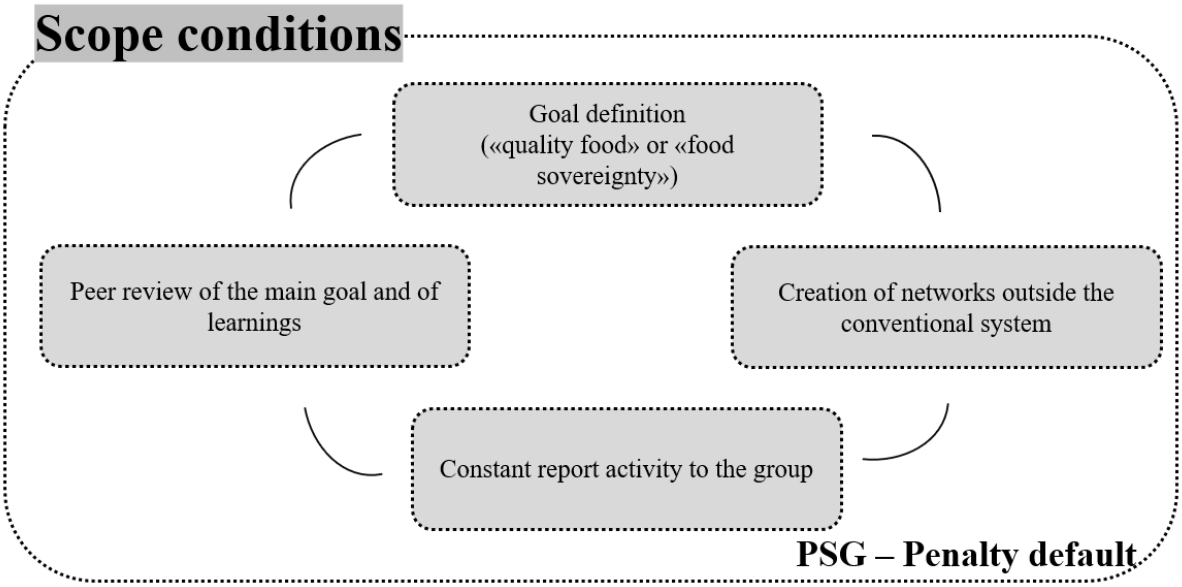


Figure 2 - Conceptualization of a local experimentalist governance framework. Source: personal elaboration

Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology

In this section I outline the research design that informed the data collected for this thesis. I start with a review of case study methodology. To support data collection on the cases, I made use of questionnaires, interviews, document analysis methods and process tracing as a data analysis technique. Each of these methods were selected for their relevance in addressing my research questions on the characterisation of a local framework for an experimentalist governance for Alternative Food Networks and their political and social role in shaping public discourses on food. Together, these methods are aligned with my goal of gaining an in-depth knowledge of the selected realities, allowing for a holistic vision of the selected context that is crucial when analyzing governance.

3.1 Case study as a methodology to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon

A methodology is the broader framework that guides the entire research process. It encompasses the philosophical underpinnings, theoretical perspectives, and the overall approach to studying a given phenomenon. Methodology answers the question of "how" the research will be conducted. The methodology I selected for my research is a case study one.

The foundational premise of a case study, and arguably its defining characteristic, centers on the concentration of investigative efforts on a singular instance of the element under examination (Denscombe, 2010). The rationale for focusing on fewer cases, rather than a multitude, is rooted in the logic that delving into individual cases may yield insights with wider implications, insights that might remain concealed when employing research strategies aimed at encompassing numerous instances, such as the survey approach. Despite the specific focus of case studies, the methodology mandates the adoption of a holistic approach, rejecting an isolated factors paradigm, this means that in case studies it is suggested to emphasize relationships and social processes as a whole instead of restricting the attention to single and specific issues. This imperative arises from the recognition that comprehending one element necessitates an understanding of the intricate interplay among various elements. It is noteworthy that the chosen case not only must be existing already, but will also likely continue to exist once the study has finished (Yin, 2009). The case study is not thus artificially generated, like in the case of an

experiment. That said, importantly the contextual and instance-oriented nature of the case study does not restrict the applicability of its findings solely to the specific case in question.

3.1.1 The importance of the choice of a case study

The existing literature, represented by scholars like Denscombe (2010) and Yin (2009), underscores the importance of criteria in the case selection process. Notably, case studies deviate significantly from the random selection principle typically associated with classical experiments and large-scale surveys, as they are chosen based on distinctive features. The selection of a specific case involves a conscious and deliberate choice from a plethora of possibilities, guided by specific and distinctive features that form part of the researcher's criteria.

In the realm of case studies, the initial selection of cases hinges on their relevance to practical problems or theoretical inquiries being investigated. In the process of case selection, Yin and Denscombe (Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2010) emphasize the importance of choosing cases based on their alignment with practical problems or theoretical inquiries under investigation, as well as considering how the cases will be used. Moreover, once this foundational criterion is established, the selection of a specific case incorporates a multitude of other considerations. These additional factors encompass the intended utility of the case study and the degree of flexibility afforded to the researcher in selecting a particular case. Moreover, in the practical realm of research, marked by constraints related to time and resources, considerations of convenience are likely to factor into the selection of cases.

3.1.2 Limits of a case study approach

Case study methodology is a valuable research approach that provides in-depth insights into specific phenomena. However, it has its limitations.

One of the primary limitations and a point which is the most vulnerable to criticism of case studies is their limited generalizability. Since case studies often focus on a single or a few cases, it can be challenging to extrapolate findings to broader populations. This makes it difficult to make universal claims or draw sweeping conclusions (Denscombe, 2010).

Also, case studies heavily rely on qualitative data, which can introduce subjectivity and researcher bias. Interpretation of findings may vary between researchers, and personal perspectives can influence the results. Some criticism also arises regarding the quality of data collected which can be perceived as “soft”. This approach is sometimes considered lacking rigor and also thought to create biases on collected data caused by what some researchers define as the

"observer effect" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). However, considering the last issue, researchers like Monahan and Fisher (Monahan & Fisher, 2010) participated in the discussion by proposing some insights about how the observer effect might, in fact, prove some benefits. Another limit is represented by the difficulty in replication. The unique nature of case studies makes it challenging for other researchers to replicate the exact conditions or experiences, hindering the validation of findings through independent verification.

3.2 Selected cases

The rationale guiding my case selection is grounded in the case's relevance to existing theory, in accordance with Yin's perspective (2009). These chosen cases serve the dual purpose of both "theory-testing" and "theory-building," drawing from Layder's (1993) categorization. Significantly, these selected cases contain pivotal elements of particular importance, and I could anticipate specific outcomes if the theory holds true. This follows what Silverman (Silverman, 2018) and Mason (Mason, 1996) defined as purposive-theoretical sampling, which consists in choosing cases based on specific and critically thought parameters.
More specifically:

> *theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position … and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation. (Mason, 1996: 93–4).*

Hence, guided by the concept of purposive sampling (Silverman, 2013; Mason, 1996), the ratio behind the choice of a case study Denscombe (2010) and Yin (2009) and the contributions profiled by the research questions, I identified five features that the selected studies had to meet.

1. Given my aim to gain deeper insights into the governance of Alternative Food Networks, the chosen cases needed to be active for at least five years. The reason behind this threshold is that farmers' markets need some time to emerge and go through an experiment phase, finding consumers and farmers willing to join and sell their products. This ensured a higher likelihood of

tracing governance mechanisms and, ultimately, the iterative processes associated with experimentalist governance, if present.

2. The case had to be a network that identified itself as a farmer's market. This decision stems from the importance of farmers' markets in the cultural and political landscape of Bologna and given the political focus and the recent farmer market regulation in Bologna. Furthermore, the choice of farmer markets is interwoven with cultural dimensions, as this type of network enjoys considerable recognition in the city of Bologna.
3. The selected case needs to have internal rules that are more strict than the national legislation. Farmers' markets are regulated by Italian law, however the Italian regulation does not fit with the values of AFNs, and simply regulate the possibility to sell products directly from farmer to consumer (see chapter 4). For this reason, the selected case must have internal rules that embrace the values carried on by AFNs which are exposed in chapter 1.
4. The selected case needs to have contacts with the municipality. This aspect is crucial since an experimentalist governance setting aims to solve a perceived common goal by engaging with all crucial actors. Moreover, in the definition of a local framework for an experimentalist governance, the development of relationships with the Municipality is a building block.
5. The selected cases do not only limit its activities to selling products, but must also engage in other relevant socio-political activities. This criteria was chosen because this research also aims to unveil the role of AFNs in the public political discourse on food.

According to the official website of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, in 2023, there were 31 farmer markets throughout the week, organized by 11 networks, as presented in table 2.

Table 2: list of farmer markets in the Province of Bologna

Market	**Location**	**Organizer**
Mercato Contadino Biologico VAG 61	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato Ritrovato	Bologna	Mercato Ritrovato
Mercato contadino di via del Pratello	Bologna	Campi Aperti

Mercato Campagna Amica	Bologna	Coldiretti Bologna
Mercato contadino di Villa Bernaroli	Borgo Panigale	Produttori Agricoli di Borgo Panigale
Mercato contadino di Bazzano	Bazzano	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato contadino di Sasso Marconi	Sasso Marconi	Local farmers, Municipality, Sasso Marconi's turistic office
Mercato biologico di Piazza Verdi	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato contadino di Castello di Serravalle	Castello di Serravalle	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato contadino di via Piave	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato Campagna Amica di via Po	Bologna	Coldiretti Bologna
Mercato Campagna Amica di piazzetta Don Gavinelli	Bologna	Coldiretti Bologna
Mercato contadino di Savigno	Savigno	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato biologico Vicolo Bolognetti	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato contadino di Crespellano	Crespellano	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato contadino di via Segantini	Bologna	Local farmers

Mercato Campagna Amica via S. Giuseppe	Bologna	Coldiretti Bologna
Mercato contadino biologico via Gobetti	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato di Calderino	Monte San Pietro	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato contadino di Monteveglio	Monteveglio	UIT Colli Bolognesi
Mercato della Terra di Imola	Imola	Slow Food
Mercato contadino biologico di via Pieve di Cadore	Bologna	Campi Aperti
Mercato Ritrovato	Bologna	Mercato Ritrovato
AgriPianoro	Pianoro	Not specified
Cambio a Imola	Imola	IAT Imola
Mercato Contadino di Piazza Aldrovandi	Bologna	Piazza Martino BIO
Mercato del Novale	Bologna	Slow Food, Eta-Beta Cooperative, Serpellini's Farm
Mercato agricolo di Campi Aperti	Casalecchio di Reno	Campi Aperti

Mercato del Centro	Casalecchio di Reno	Not specified
Mercato della Croce	Casalecchio di Reno	Not specified
Mercato di San Biagio	Casalecchio di Reno	Not specified
Mercato di Ceretolo di Casalecchio	Casalecchio di Reno	UIT Colli Bolognesi

Among these cases, only two networks met the above mentioned criteria

Table 3 - Selected networks and matching criteria. Source: personal elaboration

Organization	> 5 years	Internal statute	Contact with municipality	Socio political activities
Campi Aperti	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
Coldiretti Bologna				
Produttori Agricoli di Borgo Panigale	x			x
Mercato Ritrovato	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
UIT Colli Bolognesi	x		x	
Local farmers, Municipality,	x		x	

Sasso Marconi's turistic office				
Slow Food	x	x	x	x
IAT Imola	x		x	x
Local farmers				
Slow Food, Eta-Beta Cooperative, Serpellini's Farm	x		x	x
Piazza Martino BIO	x			x

Following from this, I selected two case studies of farmers' markets Associations based in the city of Bologna: Campi Aperti and Il Mercato Ritrovato.

The chosen cases represent both diversity and consistency. Even though the two cases have the same legal form (they are both Associations which in Italy gives them the status of "persona giuridica" [legal person]) and are based in the same city, they present significant differences in terms of values and organizational structures (see chapter 4 for a more elaborate explanation). The imperative to incorporate diversity in my analysis is derived from the need to understand and test the relevance and implication of different governance models. This decision is also informed by the literature on the organizational structures of AFNs, which reveals the existence of polymorphic and isomorphic networks (Duncan and Pascucci, 2017). This diversity is explicitly reflected in the two selected case studies. Taking into account the convenience factor, the selection of both the research context and the case studies was influenced by the need for familiarity. This choice ensured that I could navigate the research terrain with ease, especially given that my research commenced during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3 Document analysis, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as methods to collect qualitative data

Methods are the specific techniques and tools employed within the chosen methodology to gather and analyze data. They are the practical steps taken to conduct the research. In my research, that

is framed around a case study methodology, qualitative data have been collected through document analysis, a questionnaire and interviews to understand the perspectives, motivations, and challenges faced by different actors within the two Associations. A process tracing tool was also used to analyze the collected qualitative data and trace the causal mechanisms that link the role that the selected cases have on the political discourse on food in the Municipality of Bologna.

The selected methods provided depth and breadth to the data collected and allowed for triangulation. In what follows I present an overview of these methods and how they were applied to this research.

3.3.1 Document analysis

To ensure the robustness of the research, it is important to corroborate interview and questionnaire data with additional sources, employing a triangulation approach as advised by Denscombe (2010) and Yin (2009). Documents and observations serve as valuable complements to interview content. Consequently, I opted for document analysis, given the extensive history of the two entities, which has generated a wealth of documents related to their activities.

Document analysis provides several advantages. Documents typically offer permanent data sources, available in formats that can be cross-checked by others. They contain copious information, particularly in the form of meeting transcripts, facilitating efficient data collection in terms of time and cost. Nevertheless, document analysis carries inherent disadvantages. Meeting records, whether publicly accessible or restricted, often present a selective portrayal of events. This selectivity may result from various factors, including caution in recording sensitive information or instances when matters are discussed "off the record." Such considerations raise questions about source credibility. Moreover, documents constitute secondary data, not originally generated for research purposes and this may provide information which are either redundant or not fit for the purpose.

Nonetheless, this method, when combined with interviews and questionnaires, serves the dual purpose of supporting triangulation and capturing information not disclosed during interviews, especially matters considered public knowledge. Consequently, for this research, document sources were judiciously selected to ensure their credibility. More specifically, the chosen sources encompassed public documents from the Municipality of Bologna and the Emilia Romagna region, research papers, public documents from the two Associations' websites, recordings of key municipal meetings related to food policy formulation, and information extracted from emails exchanged within the Campi Aperti mailing list over a one-year period, from September 8, 2022, to September 8, 2023.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was formulated in accordance with the guidelines outlined by Denscombe and Yin (Denscombe, 2010; Yin, 2009), with the aim of gathering data for subsequent analysis. This method proves particularly suitable in situations involving a substantial number of respondents across various locations, especially when the desired information is relatively straightforward, concise, and non-contentious. It is most effective when respondents are expected to possess the capacity to comprehend and respond to the questions, and when the prevailing social climate encourages open and candid responses, conditions that were met in the two selected cases.

The questionnaire was directed to the members of the 2 case study Associations. The number of members is constantly changing, at the time of the analysis the total number of members was 132 members for Campi Aperti and 51 for Il Mercato Ritrovato, for a total of 183 individuals.

To ensure the case's adequacy for generalization and overall utility, the questionnaire should encompass essential characteristics such as the type of products, juridical form of the members, and organization size, as recommended by Denscombe (2010). Nevertheless, given that this information was readily accessible on the Association s' websites, I opted for efficiency in the questionnaire design. As such, I refrained from collecting data already available through these alternative sources, focusing instead on gathering previously unavailable information, thereby optimizing the questionnaire's utility and avoiding interviewee fatigue.

The questionnaire was prepared using the Google Form platform. It included both open and close questions, and it was sent to 2 volunteers, one from each case study, to test both the clarity of the questions and the time required to complete it. Both volunteers provided useful feedback: they both found the questions interesting and were motivated to reply, as they not only asked for information but left them the opportunity to express their feelings. Two questions were reported to be phrased in an unclear way, and were reframed after the test.
The test was also useful to provide an estimate of the time necessary to fill the questionnaire and it was added in the description of the study to provide as much information as possible to those who choose to participate.

After this step, it was distributed to the totality of members over the month of November 2022 via personalized emails that included a presentation of me and my research, the reasons why I was contacting them and the data that I wanted to collect via the questionnaire. It was also made clear that the participation was on a voluntary basis and that the collected data would've been

treated anonymously and in an aggregate form. To improve the response rate I also included the possibility to do a phone questionnaire.

Key actors from both cases were also involved in the distribution process. Namely the market representative from Campi Aperti (whose contacts were provided to me by the President of the Association) and the coordinator of Il Mercato Ritrovato. They were asked to provide a first overview of my research and explain to their affiliates that they would receive an email with a request to fill in a questionnaire. In addition to this, two reminders to fill in the questionnaire were sent in May 2023 and October 2023.

While utilizing this method confers several advantages, such as cost efficiency, ease of setup, broad outreach, and the ability to gather copious standardized data through uniform questioning, it also presents certain drawbacks. Notably, pre-coded questions can introduce bias into the findings, aligning responses more with the researcher's perspective than the respondent's viewpoint. The inherent structure of questionnaires can inadvertently impose a framework on answers, potentially reflecting the researcher's preconceptions rather than the respondent's genuine insights.

Furthermore, questionnaires provide limited opportunities for researchers to verify the accuracy of respondents' answers, and pre-coded questions can sometimes frustrate respondents, deterring them from full participation.
Recognizing these limitations, the questionnaire was thoughtfully structured to blend both open and closed questions. The questions were crafted with gender-neutral phrasing for clarity and inclusivity. Additionally, the questionnaire included some personal questions about feelings, motivations and values but the answers were not compulsory and the respondent could decide the length of the reply. In addition to this, a question about political orientation was included, it was framed reminding that the data would be treated anonymously and that the reply was voluntary. The closed questions were designed to offer a wide array of response options, including the opportunity to add additional considerations.

The replies were collected via two different questionnaires with identical questions. This allowed me to collect the same data while knowing the Association from where the answers came from.

The questionnaire is composed of different sections, some of which activate only if a specific answer was provided. For this reason the time required to fill in the questionnaire was variable depending on the provided answers.

Appendix 1.1 containes a scheme of the questionnaire highlighting the dependency of some sections.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews depart from the conventions of casual conversations, embodying a set of underlying assumptions and contextual understandings (Denscombe 1983; Silverman 2017). This method was selected to gain profound insights into individuals' opinions, emotions, feelings, and experiences, offering a unique avenue for accessing privileged information unattainable through alternative means.

For this research, a semi-structured one-to-one interview format was adopted. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer maintains a predefined list of topics and questions to be addressed (Denscombe, 2010). Nevertheless, flexibility reigns, allowing for dynamic exploration of the interviewee's ideas and a broader discussion of the researcher's inquiries. Responses are open-ended, accentuating the interviewee's capacity to elaborate on salient points. The one-to-one mode was preferred for its ease of arrangement, particularly advantageous given the diverse agendas of the interviewees. Furthermore, this format affords greater control over the interview's dynamics, ensuring that the expressed opinions and perspectives stem from a single source—the interviewee.

Nonetheless, it is prudent to acknowledge the inherent disadvantages of this approach. Research on interviewing has demonstrated that people's responses can vary depending on their perception of the interviewer's characteristics, including sex, age, and ethnic background. These personal attributes of both interviewees and interviewers may influence the extent of information divulged and the honesty with which it is shared, thereby affecting the data's reliability.

From June 2021, a total of 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted, encompassing a diverse array of actors from within and outside the two case studies. Notably, four interviewees participated in two separate sessions at different points in time.

Repeated engagement with the same interviewees fosters a strong sense of collaboration and trust. Over time, participants become more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences, leading to richer and more candid responses. This trust and rapport-building are particularly important when dealing with complex topics, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the interviewees' perspectives, and also in the context in which the research was conducted as it was carried out mainly remotely at least until the easing of Covid-19 emergency measures in late 2021. Also conducting interviews at different points in time enables an iterative approach to data collection. The insights gained from the initial interview sessions can inform the development of subsequent interview questions, allowing for a deeper exploration of emerging themes and

nuances. This iterative process helps refine the research focus and ensures that no critical aspect is left unexplored

Table 4 - List of interviews and interviewees. Source: personal elaboration

Organization	Number and date
Fondazione Innovazione Urbana (Municipality of Bologna)	Interview no. 1 – May 2021
President of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 2 – July 2021
President of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 3 – September 2022
Professor of sociology at the University of Padua	Interview no. 4 – July 2021
Professor of Geology and Environmental Impact Assessment at the University of Parma	Interview no. 5 – July 2021
Member of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 6 – July 2021
Member of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 7- May 2022
Researcher and trainer in Global citizenship, Agroecology and Migration at CISV	Interview no. 8 – November 2021
Coordinator at Campi Aperti	Interview no. 9 – November 2022
President of Il Mercato Ritrovato	Interview no. 10 – September 2022
President of Il Mercato Ritrovato	Interview no. 11 – October 2023
Member of Comitato di Gestione of Il Mercato Ritrovato	Interview no. 12 – November 2022
Member of Comitato di Gestione of Il Mercato Ritrovato	Interview no. 13 – November 2022

Referent of Participatory Guarantee System at Campi Aperti	Interview no. 14 – November 2022
Councilor at the Municipality of Bologna in the following themes: school, new architectures for learning, adolescents and neighborhood school projects, environmental education, agriculture, agri-food and water networks.	Interview no. 15 – December 2022
Councilor at the Municipality of Bologna in the following themes: school, new architectures for learning, adolescents and neighborhood school projects, environmental education, agriculture, agri-food and water networks.	Interview no. 16 – February 2023
General Directorate of Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing of Emilia Romagna region	Interview no. 17 – January 2023
Slow Food Bologna	Interview no. 18 – July 2023
City councilor at the Municipality of Bologna	Interview no. 19 – July 2023
Major's delegate at the Municipality of Bologna	Interview no. 20 – July 2023
City councilor at the Municipality of Bologna	Interview no. 21 – July 2023
City councilor at the Municipality of Bologna	Interview no. 22 – August 2023
President of San Donato - San Vitale neighborhood	Interview no. 23 – October 2023
President of Santo Stefano neighborhood	Interview no. 24 – October 2023

President of Porto Saragozza neighborhood	Interview no. 25 – October 2023
President of Savena neighborhood	Interview no. 26 – October 2023
Member of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 27 – November 2023
Member of Campi Aperti	Interview no. 28 – May 2023

3.4 Process tracing

Process tracing is a fundamental tool of qualitative analysis (Collier, 2022). This method involves the systematic examination of the causal mechanisms and sequences that underlie a particular phenomenon or event of interest.

One of the key characteristics of process tracing is its focus on the temporal dimension of causality. Unlike some other research methods, process tracing is concerned with the unfolding of events over time and seeks to uncover the causal chains that link different variables together. This temporal focus allows researchers to dig beneath the surface of correlations and associations and to explore the mechanisms that drive social phenomena. Process tracing is often used when researchers want to answer questions about how and why certain events or outcomes occurred (Beach & Pedersen, 2018; Collier, 2011). However, it's crucial to specify that the focus being on the temporal dimension should not be confused with the concept of "sequence of events" from a cause (C) and an outcome (O). This is because causal mechanisms are more than a mere sequence. Analyzing a sequence of events, in fact, can tell a lot about who did what and when, but is not sufficient to explain why or how these events took place. For this reason, sequences of events do not qualify as mechanistic explanations (Craver & Darden, 2013).

In applying process tracing I followed Beach and Pedersen (2013; 2016) approach and conceptualizations. They identify four variants of process tracing and two different modalities by which process tracing can be carried out. The four variants are summarized in the following table.

Table 5: Four variant of process tracing. Source: personal elaboration from Beach & Pedersen, 2019)

	Theory testing	Theory building	Theoretical revision	Explaining outcome
Research purpose	Is a hypothesized causal mechanism present and does it function as theorized?	What is the causal mechanism between the cause and outcome?	Why did the mechanism break down in this case?	What mechanistic explanation accounts for the historical outcome?
Analytical focus	Theory focused	Theory focused	Theory focused	Case-focused

Considering the two modalities Beach and Pedersen (ibidem) identified two conceptualizations of mechanisms. In this section I will focus on the one that guided my research which is the minimalist understanding of mechanisms. In this case mechanisms are often theorized and understood at a relatively high level of abstraction (Bennet & Checkel, 2014). This means that mechanisms linking a cause (or a set of causes) to an outcome are not fully unpacked. The unveiled causal mechanisms, then, are either superficial (because of lack of specification in both parts of the process and the causal logics connecting them) or incomplete (because even if the parts of the process are specified, the logics are not). The minimalist approach, however, is not less valuable. In fact, theorizing causal mechanisms in a minimalist fashion is appropriate when the black box of causality that the research is aiming to "open" is relatively new and complex, and it serves as a starting point for future research and follow-up to a more systemic understanding. Several scholars, like Nina Tannewalds (Tannewalds, 1999) adopted this approach and were able to unveil plausible links between a cause (or set of causes) and outcome that created the basis for future reflections and studies.

One of the strengths of process tracing is its ability to provide rich, detailed, and context-specific insights. By following the causal process step by step, it's possible to uncover the hidden dynamics and contextual factors that may be missed by other research methods. This depth of understanding is particularly valuable when studying complex social phenomena, where causality is often multifaceted and context-dependent. Process tracing allows researchers to capture the "how" and "why" of a phenomenon, which can be crucial for theory development and policy recommendations (Beach & Pedersen, 2018; Collier, 2011; Machamer et al., 2000).

Another strength of process tracing is its flexibility. This method can be adapted to a wide range of research questions and settings. It can be used in both qualitative and mixed-methods research designs and can complement other data collection techniques, such as surveys or experiments. Process tracing can also be applied to historical, contemporary, and comparative research, making it a versatile tool for social scientists.

However, process tracing is not without its weaknesses. One of the main challenges is that it can be highly resource-intensive. Following the causal process in detail often requires extensive data collection and analysis, which can be time-consuming and costly. This can limit the feasibility of using process tracing in some research projects, particularly those with limited resources or tight timelines.

Another weakness of process tracing is the potential for researcher subjectivity and bias. Since process tracing involves making judgments about the causal links between variables, it is vulnerable to the researcher's interpretation and perspective. Different researchers may come to different conclusions when conducting process tracing on the same data, which can raise questions about the method's reliability and validity. To mitigate this issue, researchers often use rigorous procedures and engage in reflexivity to minimize the impact of subjectivity (Beach and Pedersen, 2019).

Since this method allows to delve into causal mechanisms, it was used to shed light on the connection between the studied cases and their role and participation in the public political debate that revolves around food sustainability and the definition of a food policy using the data collected through interviews, questionnaire and document analysis.

In this research, the goal is to analyze the experimentalist governance theoretical framework at a local level for alternative food networks, which necessarily include, as a building block, the creation of relationships with public institutions. In this case, to validate and test this aspect, I will use a theory building minimalistic process tracing approach, with the aim of opening up the black box of causality between the adoption of experimentalist governance practices by alternative food networks (cause) and the effective participation an influence in the political discourse on food policy (outcome).

According to Beach and Pedersen (2019), building theories on mechanism is a creative and iterative process that doesn't fit with step-by-step instructions. However, the two authors suggest some good practices and recommendations that can be summarized in three steps. The first one is that, since the aim is to build a theory on mechanisms connecting a cause to an outcome, the selected case should incorporate the mechanism that is to be explained, at least in principle. The second step is to define the key theoretical concepts which are the cause and the outcome, which should be known. Finally, once the case is selected and both cause and outcome are sufficiently theorized, it's time to collect empirical material that should constitute fingerprints of causal mechanisms between C and O.

The steps that I followed are summarized in Figure 3:

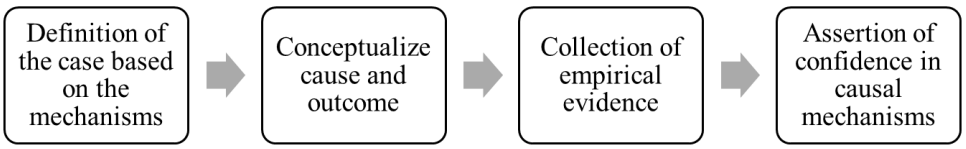


Figure 3 - Steps followed in the application of process tracing. Source: personal elaboration

Definition of the case based on the mechanisms

Since process tracing is an in-between case method, it is sufficient to consider a single case study. Among the two case studies of this research, Campi Aperti proved to have a governance mode that embraced experimentalist governance practices. Also, Campi Aperti has a long history of building relationships with the Municipality of Bologna and engages in political campaigns for the creation of a just and sustainable food system.

Conceptualize cause and outcome

The conceptualisation of cause and outcome has been carried out through a literature review on the political and historical context of Bologna and the history of Campi Aperti. Together, data collected through interviews and questionnaires were also used to conceptualize the cause and the outcome.

Collection of empirical evidence

Data and evidence have been collected through the methodologies explained in this chapter.

Assertion of confidence in causal mechanisms

In order to evaluate the accuracy and validity of empirical evidence and prove if data collected can be considered causal mechanisms, I followed available literature about the validation and test of collected data (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; Collier, 2011). To test the validity of assertions, process tracing methodology provides four different tests that are summarized in table 6:

Table 6 - Tests in process tracing. Source: personal elaboration from Beach & Pedersen (2019)

		Sufficient for affirming causal inference	
		No	Yes
Necessary for affirming causal inference	No	Straw-in-the-wind	Smoking-Gun
	Yes	Hoop	Doubly-decisive

Data that pass the Smoking-Gun and Doubly-Decisive tests are rare in social sciences (Collier, 2011), but nevertheless sufficient leverage can be found by combining multiple Straw-In-The-Wind and Hoop tests. Moreover, since my approach is a minimalist one, the data collected are not expected to pass the most rigorous of these tests.

3.4.1 The importance of process tracing in social science research and policy studies

Process tracing has become a crucial method for causal inference in qualitative social science research, particularly in case study research designs and policy studies (Collier et al., 2010; George & Bennett, 2005). Considerable literature now exists on the goals, philosophical foundations, and process tracing methods. Recent advances in qualitative research design, reflecting a broader interest in the field, have significantly refined process tracing as both an independent tool and as complementary to other research methods (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Bennett & Checkel, 2012; Collier, 2011; George & Bennett, 2005; Hall, 2006). According to Kay and Baker (2015), process tracing holds substantial potential for addressing key research questions in the policy studies field, reflecting a growing interest in its application.

Process tracing offers distinctive advantages to policy studies, particularly its potential to provide a more robust method for comprehending causality within case related to policy change This approach facilitates comparability between individual case studies. In addressing significant policy problems, the method recognizes the interconnected nature of states, companies, civil society organizations, and individuals within the policymaking system. Analysing their mutual influences becomes essential for understanding and studying policy responses. As a valuable

method, process tracing can effectively identify and describe policy events, elucidating the singular or multiple paths through which they unfold (Collier, 2011). Moreover, process tracing methodology allows the unveiling of information even based on poor, fragmented, or imperfect data. This is confirmed by Checkel (2006, p. 365), who asserts that process tracing can still provide a "how-we-come-to-know nuts and bolts for mechanism-based accounts of social change [and directs] one to trace the process in a very specific theoretically informed way,". This is further supported by Winward's (2020) research on mass violence in Indonesia. Though, in this research, the author recognizes that the research is based on imperfect data, they provide motivations that support the validity and robustness of the data which are considered sufficient for the project.

The research on food policy and food system transformation still lacks a process-tracing analysis, although some process-tracing studies have been carried out in the agriculture (Uden et al., 2018) and climate change (Parker, 2010; Vanhala, 2017) domain. There are a few reasons that I believe can explain this lack of research:

1- The complexity of the problem: using a process tracing approach helps dig deeper into mechanisms that operate in complex real-world cases (Bennett and Checkel, 2013; George and Bennett, 2005; Rohlfing, 2012). However, the complexity and uncertainty of the food system's challenges suggest the adoption of a minimalist process-tracing approach. This approach is used when there is "little knowledge of what types of mechanisms link a given cause and outcome and under which conditions a particular mechanism provides the link." (Beach & Pedersen, 2019; p. 246-247). Using a minimalist approach doesn't diminish the validity of process tracing. Still, it doesn't provide a complete and comprehensive explanation of the phenomena, as the main goal is to trace and test whether mechanisms are present in the first place.

2- An ongoing process: literature on process tracing focuses on processes or events that are concluded, limited in scale, or refer to a specific policy domain. The food system transformation is an ongoing process that is neither concluded nor limited in scale and also refers to a wide array of policy domains creating different nexuses with other sectors (such as the agriculture-energy nexus). The fact that this is an ongoing process helps to understand why process tracing analyses in this domain are either limited or not present yet.

3- Absence of data on grassroots experiences: when dealing with the transformation of the food system, literature points out the importance of social movements that find representation in grassroots alternative food network experiences. However, these realities are not always engaging with policy-making structures. Moreover, the reporting of their activities and practices, when done, is not done in the same way that a more formal structure is held accountable for. This results in a lack of potential data and knowledge that is the basis of process tracing.

To overcome these limitations, this research is based on two case studies and aims to unveil these data and capture practices and relations that would get lost otherwise because of a lack of

reporting and documentation. However, some more grassroots initiatives that do not connect with policy-maker realities have been excluded (as mentioned in chapter 3).

Nevertheless, process tracing delves into causal mechanisms to unveil the causes of policy change, making the black box's mechanistic properties visible.
Process tracing can be applied to within-case analysis, small-N case-comparative designs, or single-case scenarios. The literature identifies three process tracing variants (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; George & Bennett, 2005; Hall, 2006). The first variant is case-centric process tracing, aiming to explain outcomes in a specific case by determining the mechanistic explanation behind the outcome. This variant is chosen by researchers dealing with cases perceived as highly complex, multifactorial, and context-specific, resisting straightforward generalization (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). The second set comprises theory-centric process tracing variants, encompassing theory building and theory testing. Theory testing follows a deductive approach, assessing the presence and functionality of causal mechanisms according to existing theory. It is employed when deductions about a causal mechanism linking X and Y exist for a particular case or when deductions from existing theorization can be easily made (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Conversely, theory building is inductive and aims to formulate new theories by examining the causal mechanism between X and Y based on empirical evidence from a specific case (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). This approach serves two purposes: firstly, when evidence points to an existing correlation between X and Y, but uncertainty remains about the linking causal mechanism, and secondly, when the outcome (Y) is known, but uncertainty exists regarding its cause (X) (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). These variants are applicable for drawing causal inferences concerning policy change.

This opens the topic of causation and what mechanism we should trace. In daily life, humans rely on causation to explain past events, make realistic predictions, and influence the future (Brady, 2011). The search for causes is ingrained in our behavior, evident in statements like "X caused Y." Causal explanations facilitate event understanding, prediction, and proactive decision-making.
In philosophical discussions on causality, three common types of intellectual questions emerge: psychological and linguistic (exploring the meaning of causality in our usage), metaphysical or ontological (delving into the essence of causality), and epistemological (investigating how we discern the presence of causality) (Brady, 2011).
According to Brady (ibidem), four distinct approaches to causality can be identified and can provide answers to questions about causality:

- Neo-Humean reg-ularity (approach to causation based on correlation)

- Counterfactual (approach to causation based on the contraposition “If the cause occurs, then the effect occurs; if the cause doesn’t occur, then the effect doesn’t occur either.”)
- Manipulation (approach to causation based on a laboratory experiment setting, where specific conditions are created to produce an effect starting from a cause)
- Mechanisms and capacities (approach to causation based on the research of mechanisms that lead from a cause to an effect)
- Following Brady’s conceptualization, social sciences must develop a method that embraces all these approaches as they all capture some aspects of causality. An excellent causal inference should meet all these criteria:

(1) Constant conjunction of causes and effects required by the neo-Humean ap-proach. (2) No effect when the cause is absent in the most similar world to where the cause is present as required by the counterfactual approach. (3) An effect after a cause is manipulated. (4) Activities and processes linking causes and effects required by the mechanism approach. (Brady, 2011, p. 1056).

To understand the concept of mechanisms, I turned to Beach and Pedersen's theorization of causal mechanisms, which guided my research.

Some scholars use the term process-tracing to denote research that tracks an empirical process through a sequence of events from the cause (or set of causes) to the outcome (e.g., Mahoney 2012). This research takes the form of an empirical narrative detailing actions such as "actor A did X to actor B, who then changed its position on issue Y," etc. However, causal mechanisms encompass more than just a series of events. While a sequence of events reveals who did what, it fails to address why or how these events are causally linked. Describing a series of events may offer a plausible narrative of what happened, but it falls short in addressing the crucial causal question of why things occurred.

The core of making a mechanism-based claim involves shifting the analytical focus from identifying causal effects to explaining the linkage of causes to an outcome. This transition means moving from causes to outcomes to understand the productive processes in between. Mechanisms (which are different from causes) represent causal processes *triggered by* causes, establishing a productive relationship with outcomes. Approaching causation through mechanism-based terms entails explaining occurrences by analyzing the productive processes linking a cause (or set of causes) with an outcome (e.g., Bhaskar 1978; Bunge 1997; Machamer 2004; Machameret al., 2000; Salmon 1998).

On a similar note, some scholars regard mechanisms as intervening or mediating variables positioned between the cause and outcome (King et al., 1994; Weller and Barnes 2014). Theoretically, treating a mechanism as a variable involves converging it into a counterfactual

understanding of causation. Counterfactual causation is the assertion that a cause (or mechanism) yields an outcome because the absence of the cause would result in the absence of the outcome, assuming all other factors remain constant (Woodward, 2005). However, according to Groff (2011: 309) mechanisms are processes that exercise a causal power in a real-world scenario and do not find any logical meaning in a counterfactual-world formulation.

Building on that, Beach and Pedersen (2019) formulated two coherent positions surrounding the nature of causal mechanisms, which are designed to align with the empirical tracing of processes within cases: a minimalist and a maximalist understanding of the nature of causal mechanisms.

In the minimalist approach, causal mechanisms are theorized at a relatively high level of abstraction, as the causal processes linking a cause to the outcome are not fully unpacked in detail nor necessarily known. In a maximalist approach, causal mechanisms are not only fully unpacked but also empirically studied, and this results in an approach that is less abstract than the minimalist.

It may be prudent to adopt a minimalist approach at the outset of a project, leaving mechanisms as basic "sketches" with unspecified parts and causal logic. When substantial uncertainty exists regarding the linkage between a cause (or set of causes) and an outcome, or when multiple mechanisms could plausibly connect them, a plausibility probe becomes a necessary step. This involves assessing whether there is any evidence of a link before delving into the detailed tracing of a comprehensive mechanism. Conversely, tracing a comprehensive mechanism makes sense when there is a robust belief that a specific mechanism may be at play, and we want to test its adherence to or deviation from theory. Additionally, if there is compelling evidence of a causal relationship, tracing the mechanism helps identify how the causes and outcomes are interconnected.

3.5 Summary

To sum up a case study methodology allowed to delve deeply into these networks, capturing the complexity of interactions, power dynamics, and decision-making processes. This holistic approach was crucial for testing the applicability of experimentalist governance principles. The evolution of AFNs over time is a critical aspect of governance research, and the two selected case studies have been active for at least 15 years. Experimentalist governance emphasizes the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in decision-making processes. Case studies provide a platform for engaging with these stakeholders.

Finally, this research does not aim at enumerate frequencies nor to generalize results to the whole universe of AFNs, but it rather wants to explore what conditions (both internal and external) are favorable or unfavorable for the adoption of experimentalist governance practices. The findings offer in-depth insights into specific categories of AFNs in a northern Italian context, but the findings can also be used to inform broader governance discussions. And with further research aimed at analyzing multiple case studies across different regions and contexts, researchers can also identify common patterns and best practices.

Chapter 4 - Study context and case descriptions

The goal of this research is to study farmers' markets in Bologna as part of a study on AFNs and their transformative potential in the development of a local transformative food policy.
I will do so by analysing the two case studies through the lenses of the analytical framework developed in chapter 2.
In this chapter I will expand the topic of farmers' markets, previously introduced in chapter 2, to focus on the Italian context and the legislation concerning these initiatives. Following, I will provide a description of the two case studies, exploring their history and their composition.

4.1 The Italian context: farmers' markets history

In Italy, the decline in the importance of neighbourhood food markets, which were once vital sources of fresh produce for the urban population, can be attributed to the evolution of the food industry and the rise of large-scale organized distribution. Lifestyle and consumption styles and the changing role of women within the family have further contributed to this shift (Aguglia, 2009).

As they are defined in this thesis, farmers' markets diverge significantly from the traditional local market. Changes in this newer format have led to a decrease in stalls managed by farmers themselves, with a prevalence of "traders" who sell goods bought from larger distribution structures like general markets and agri-food centres. These traders function as additional intermediaries in a chain that can no longer be defined as short. However, contemporary farmers' markets, organized distinctly, offer added social and cultural value not found in traditional city markets. They often serve as platforms for sharing and exchanging information (Aguglia, s.d.; Brown, 2002; Galisai et al., 2009).

Direct sales are considered a crucial opportunity by farmers for ensuring a secure income or enhance earnings from primary production. This holds true for farmers in marginal areas or very small producers, including those cultivating for self-consumption. Such producers can leverage direct sales to find a commercial outlet for their products, mainly when periodic surpluses occur or when seeking to increase the value of primary goods through transformation activities.

From an economic perspective, the seasonal and territorial characteristics inherent in direct sales offer significant cost savings in terms of production costs, for example by respecting the natural cycle of seasons, the need for excessive energy consumption is minimized. Moreover, selling products on a local scale eliminates long-distance transport, leading to savings on storage, packaging, and fuel costs. Bigi (2005) underscores the advantages for farmers in using the short channel, emphasizing more significant revenues, demand stability, and the ability to influence prices directly.

According to Aguglia (2009), the reduced production costs and the absence of intermediaries significantly impact pricing, making products sold through direct channels generally more cost-effective for consumers than traditional channels. This cost savings for consumers corresponds to the producer's opportunity to secure a more suitable income, reclaiming a portion of the value often lost in various stages along the supply chain. However, as mentioned before, this topic is debated and requires further analysis that will be carried out in the following chapters.

Considering the development of these channels in Italy, the trend is different from the rest of Europe. Farmers' markets developed quickly in North America, Canada, New Zealand, and North America (Beckiet et al. 2012). Italy has witnessed a delayed surge in direct sales, remaining a marginal aspect of distribution organization (Lazzarin and Gardini, 2007). The country counts 63,600 farms engaged in direct sales, predominantly concentrated in the northern and central regions. Tuscany has the highest farm-level sales, closely followed by Lombardy and Piedmont (Aguglia 2009).

These farms predominantly sell fresh fruits, vegetables, and/or processed items such as wine, olive oil, canned vegetables, or fruit. With their recognized value addition and extended shelf-life, processed products find a suitable niche in direct channels like farmers' markets, allowing for greater flexibility in product placement timing (Cicatiell & Franco, 2008). However, a mere 8% of farms engaged in direct sales to consumers actively participate in farmers' markets as most farmers prefer customers to visit the farm directly (Coldiretti 2009).

4.2 The Italian context: Italian farmers’ markets legislation

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the experience of farmers’ markets has gained significant momentum and generated a growing interest from the public and media. Previously unnoticed by institutions, these realities captured the attention of local administrators, both regional and municipal, recognizing their value in local development processes and territorial marketing strategies. Collaborative promotional actions, often involving various organizations, further support and highlight these initiatives. In 2001, the possibility of direct sales by Italian

agricultural companies was formalized through Legislative Decree 228/01. This law granted agricultural entrepreneurs registered in a national register the right to sell their products directly at retail, primarily sourced from their respective companies. Farmers were permitted to engage in various activities, including transformation, manipulation, conservation, marketing, and valorization, with the only requirement of notifying the municipality of residence.

However, two communications from the Ministry of Productive Activities later deemed this form of sale inadmissible for the fruit and vegetable sector. In 2006, law no. 81 brought about deregulation, eliminating the requirement for notification of the start of activity for retail sales conducted by agricultural companies. Subsequently, the Financial Act of 2007 established new revenue limits for company product sales, beyond which trade regulations apply. This allowed entrepreneurs to retain tax benefits associated with agricultural activities. The most important turn happened in 2007 with the formal recognition of farmers' markets initiatives through the Ministerial Decree in late 2007. This decree explicitly addresses the creation of markets reserved for direct sales by agricultural entrepreneurs to satisfy consumers' needs for agricultural products directly linked to the production area. This regulatory recognition has provided a precise legal configuration for markets, reinforcing what was established by the Orientation Law. It also regulates their conduct in commercial activities, clarifying persistent uncertainty where local authorities often treat farmers' markets as "cultural events." Additionally, it has paved the way for formulating appropriate financial support tools.

The decree further defined the conditions for establishing markets reserved for direct sales. It mandated municipalities to authorize agricultural markets that met specific standards and encouraged consumer awareness through information campaigns on the qualitative characteristics of agricultural products.

Regionally, administrations are increasingly issuing tenders to promote the establishment of farmers' markets, particularly within the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programs. Notable examples include Piedmont, where direct sales constitute 6-7% of agri-food trade, involving around 3,300 agricultural businesses and receiving a financial allocation of 700 thousand euros for 2009. In Tuscany, the "Short Supply Chain - Regional Network for the Valorization of Tuscan Agricultural Products" project was initiated in 2007 and supported by regional contributions. Funding of approximately 2.3 million euros between 2007 and 2008 was granted to support producers' markets, local shops, supply chain pacts, and other culinary and cultural events. In Lazio, regional law 24 December 2008, n. 28 allocated contributions to promote markets reserved for direct sales, benefiting municipalities and agricultural entrepreneurs. In Sicily, 42 farmers' markets were established in December 2008, financed by the Regional Department of Agriculture, with an allocation of 1 million euros (Aguglia, 2009).

Following the lead of Tuscan experiences, regional governments have actively promoted and supported the development of producers' markets through concrete actions and legislative measures.

Tuscany initiated research and monitoring actions and pilot projects, leading to the introduction of specific financial support instruments in May 2007. Other regions like Lombardy and Lazio have also defined specific measures to support these initiatives. National significance was achieved through the "orientation law" (Legislative Decree 228/2001), which empowered the practice of direct sales, expanding it to include the marketing of products purchased from third parties and placing it outside the ordinary trade regulation. These recent measures in support of farmers align with community-level indications concerning the 2007-2013 rural development policy.

With the context for farmers markets in an Italian context describe, we now turn to a description of the two cases analysed in this thesis: Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato.

Box 1 - Farmers' markets regulation of the city of Bologna. Source: personal elaboration from Municipality of Bologna's official document

Farmers' market regulation in Bologna

The current farmers' markets regulation for the city of Bologna was published in 2022 and it updated the previous regulation that was created thirteen years earlier, in 2009.

This box will summarize the main elements of the regulation.

Article 1 - OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION
This article describes the purpose of the regulation, which is to regulate the conduct of markets for the direct sale of agricultural products (called "farmers") on public or private areas, to meet the needs of purchasing local agricultural products and with a direct link with the production area. Farmers' markets pursue the goals of food education and consumer guidance and want to affirm the cultural value of food, understood as an expression of identity and history.

The farmers' markets for the direct sale of agricultural products pursue the objectives of collaboration between citizens and administration for the care and regeneration of urban common goods contained in the specific regulation of the Municipality of Bologna approved on 05/19/2014 and specifically:

- Application of the city's "food policies" (Food Policy);

- Promotion of social innovation, through the activation of connections between the different resources present in society and in the area where the market is located
- Promotion of local development through the valorisation of territorial resources and the creation of a relationship of trust between consumer and producer, also promoting greater knowledge of quality local productions;
- Favour the guarantee of payment of a fair price to producers and the possibility of an alternative distribution of their products, which does not negatively impact work in field of family-run agricultural businesses;
- Diffusion of peasant culture and knowledge and bringing the community closer to the problems and needs of the agricultural world, also through promotional initiatives
- Spread the culture of certified organic agriculture, governed by EU regulation 2018/848;
- Create "places" for the exchange of knowledge, for education on taste, for the training of citizens who are aware of correct nutrition;
- Allow direct knowledge, also promoting their use, of local productions that are poorly publicized by mass communication;
- Protection of the environment, also through the reduction of consumption for the transport of goods and waste resulting from the related packaging;

Article 2 – MARKET VENUES

This article regulates the venues where farmers' markets can take place establishing that direct sales can be exercised on privately owned areas or public spaces. In the case of sales in a private area, the person with the availability of the area, as coordination and management person, communicates to the Municipality the intention to carry out the market by communicating the market project. In the case of public spaces (which are identified by resolution of the Council), proposals for the identification of new areas can also be presented by trade associations, or by associations or single or associated companies, with a coherent corporate purpose, who act as stakeholders of an organized group of producers and are evaluated, in 90 days, in relation to compatibility and integration with further uses of the proposed area, coherence with the Municipality's Food Policy and the ability to pursue the purposes referred to in the art. 1 paragraph 4 of this regulation.

Article 3 - PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING THE MANAGER IN A PUBLIC AREA

The Municipality publishes the list of available areas, also indicating the essential characteristics of each market. In the notice, for each area, the municipality identifies some "qualitative objectives" and reserves the right to evaluate whether the received proposals

comply with the standards/objectives set out in the notice. At this point the interested parties present the project proposals, for each individual market, which contain all the elements referred to in this regulation and the municipality proceed with the selection of the best project.

Article 4 – MARKET PROJECT

This article includes all the elements that the market project should include, among which the proposed market regulations; the calendar of days and market hours; an indication of the range of agricultural and processed products offered; the types and frequency of the proposed educational, cultural or demonstration activities.

Article 6 - DURATION OF CONCESSIONS

The duration of the assignment of the contract to the managing body of a market is 5 years, renewable for another 3.

4.3 Campi Aperti

> *What's Campi Aperti?*
> *Campi Aperti is a lot of things. It's an Association, a meeting place, the union of people, a community of producers and consumers. All this mix developed thoughts and discussion of food sovereignty in a period of 20 years. But if I really have to explain it like I would explain it to my grandma… I'll say that Campi Aperti is a union between farmers and citizens that decided to realize farmer markets, so that citizens have the opportunity to consume good and wholesome foods.*
> *From an interview with the President of Campi Aperti, May 30th 2022*

Campi Aperti is a farmer and co-producers Association born in Bologna (Italy) in 2009. The origins of this Association, however, date about ten years before, and it's precisely in these years that it's crucial to focus on understanding the values and uniqueness of Campi Aperti.

At the end of the 1990s, a few agronomists believed in the possibility of producing at a small scale with organic practices, operating outside the speculative dynamics of the market. They decided to create a network capable of bringing together farmers and consumers (that were started to be called "co-producers"). The former could sell their products without withstanding the market speculations, while the latter could have access to quality food and support local producers. The prices of the products were determined between producers and consumers and not by the market.

The original network was composed of the members of four farms and two collectives from the Department of Agrarian Studies of the University of Bologna: *Capscicum* and *Kontroverso* (this collective was attributable to the political area of autonomy, in which reasoning about food and the food issue was beginning to arise and take shape). Together, they created a new collective called "Coordinamento per la Sovranità Alimentare" (coordination for food sovereignty), which only later became *Campi Aperti*. The socio-political context at that time was also crucial to understanding Campi Aperti's values. At that time, the agriculture sector was suffering from a transformation carried on by legislations such as the Common Agricultural Policy, which fostered processes like land concentration and posed small farmers with the risk of being unable to carry on their activities. This is confirmed by the Agriculture Census in 2000, which showed that the number of farms reduced abruptly since 1990 (-28,5%) and the size of farms was constantly increasing (from 8 hectares on average in 1961 to 13,6 in 2000) (ISTAT, 2000). Moreover, 58,2% of the Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) was owned by less than 12% of total farms. The G8 events in Genova also took place, which signed a crucial moment of collision among civic society, politics, and police forces.

A crucial element in the history of Campi Aperti is their contact with XM24, a historic social center in the city of Bologna, where the Kontroverso collective was based. In this setting, the first embryonal version of the farmer market was born. The context of the social center always carries a stigma, so there were worries about whether the market would find a customer base. Due to the socio-political context and word of mouth, more people learned about this market and started buying their food at the collective's market. These favorable conditions called for the organization of other markets, and in 2006, a new one was added in another social center in Bologna, Vag61. The following year, another market was born in the Savena neighborhood in the city of Bologna, which, however, was formally recognized as a cultural event, not as a farmer market. The collective started to grow and in 2009, it created a formal Association called *Campi Aperti*. This allowed the members to start to actively engage with the Municipality in finding new venues for their markets and to ask to be recognized as farmer markets in a more stable fashion, without risking their activity to be interrupted and dependent on the municipal council at the time.

They adopted a statute that incorporates and embraces what was stated in the Declaration of Nyéléni (Sélingué, 2007) on food sovereignty. The statute includes "*the internal relations of the Association, as well as the rights and duties of the members towards the Association itself*" (Campi Aperti statute).

> *Campi Aperti is an Association that practices self-management in every area of Association life, for this reason, it eschews any principle of decision-making delegation. That is, every strategic decision pertains to the shareholders' meeting*

which, from time to time, can be delegated to groups or individuals within the meeting. It functions as representing the decisions taken, mediating with third parties, or developing proposals.
(Campi Aperti's statute)

Due to its political values and the context from which it emerged, Campi Aperti was skeptical about the possibility of fruitful cooperation with the Municipality and was worried about the fate of those producers that were considered "irregular" as they were also selling processed products (such as flours, bread, sauces, etc) without being compliant with health and hygiene directives established by the European Union and tailored to the agri-food industry. For this reason, they refused to provide the list of producers to the trade councilor of the time.

However, the irregular status of some producers did not go unnoticed. The Association started to receive dangerous notifications given the Association 's newborn status and the controversial and delicate context from where it emerged. For this reason, the following year, they decided to launch the self-denunciation campaign *Genuino Clandestino* ("clandestine wholesome"). This decision, but above all the names chosen, aroused many doubts and lengthy debates, it was the first time a decision was made in the assembly with a majority vote and not unanimously. The number of producers had grown significantly; not all of them came from the same political-cultural background and some of them were scared that this campaign would lead to the Association being forced to end its activity. However, despite the doubts and worries, the campaign became a national network, and other realities sharing the same values and struggles of Campi Aperti adhered. This campaign marked the political turn of the Association, which from that moment never stopped organizing workshops, events, debates, and demonstrations to raise awareness on the topic of food sovereignty and managed to create a delicate and openly critical dialogue and relationship with the Municipality of Bologna.

Campi Aperti defines itself as a "Community fighting for food sovereignty", they're part of *La Via Campesina*, they created the national network *Genuino Clandestino*, and today count more than 150 producers (that varies constantly over time, as many more producers ask to become part of it) and 8 farmer markets happening throughout the week in the municipalities of Bologna and Casalecchio di Reno.

4.4 Mercato Ritrovato

What is Il Mercato Ritrovato? It's a market born from Slow Food Bologna, the Province of Bologna and the film library of Bologna. We were called "il mercato della terra" before. At first it was just a small square where about 20 producers used to

gather every two weeks on a Saturday morning. We were small, and didn't even have a parking spot. Now we are about 50, divided in two squares, with a pedestrian street and with two markets per week.
From an interview with the President of Il Mercato Ritrovato, October 10th 2022

The origins of *Il Mercato Ritrovato* are tied with Slow Food Bologna. The Slow Food foundation organizes farmer markets all around the world also known as "*Mercati della Terra*". One of these was organized in Bologna. However, the former province of Bologna[1] felt the need to create its own market, after realizing that the historic context was calling for more wholesome sources of food and after noticing that other experiences of farmer markets in the Province were born and became successful. This was the main driving force at the basis of the creation of Il Mercato Ritrovato. It was born from a project that put together Slow Food Bologna, the Cineteca Foundation of Bologna and the Metropolitan City of Bologna.

The market is organized in a private area owned by the Cineteca Foundation, that provides the market with the necessary market areas in a historic well known square in the center of Bologna. Il Mercato Ritrovato, then, can be described as the fruitful result of the cooperation among different institutional and private actors that aimed to create a space where producers and consumers could meet, carrying on sustainability related values and providing recreational areas.

Il Mercato Ritrovato started its activity with a texting phase: from november 2008 until July 2009, the market was active on saturday mornings every other week and it was closed during the summer.It, then, started to grow, and from the summer 2011 it was active also on monday evenings. Then, more farmers tried to approach this Association and wanted to sell their products in one of their markets. This called for a big step in the history of the Association: expanding the market area. The market was organized in a private area, and it depended on the availability of the Cineteca Foundation. However, thanks to the importance that the Municipality of Bologna gave to the process, the process of expanding to another market venue was smooth. During 2011 and 2012 the street in front of the market venue became a part of the market, and the pedestrianization of the street was tested. To do this, the cooperation of the Municipality was crucial as it influenced the traffic of the area. Finally, from 2017 the market was able to expand and it included two squares connected by a pedestrian street.

Il Mercato Ritrovato, even though it was a former Slow Food's farmer market, adopts a statute that differs from the one that is applied to "*Mercati della Terra"*. The Association statute is

[1] In 2015 there was a reform of the Regional and local government system. This changed the shape of institutional actors and the former province of Bologna is now called "Metropolitan City of Bologna".

stricter, and it was modified in order to welcome customers' doubts, producers' requests and to address ambiguities. The modification of the statute was a long process, requiring about six months for the writing process and about one year to become active.

Today, Il Mercato Ritrovato is a renowned farmer market in the city of Bologna, and managed to maintain smooth and polite, although occasional, relationships with the Municipality. The Association is now composed of about 50 members, and organizes events and workshops to teach traditions, cooking lessons and recreational activities.

Chapter 5 - Analyzing the case studies through the lenses of experimentalist governance

The first section of this chapter considered the two types of scope conditions, namely, uncertainty and power distribution in relation to the two Associations. The second section explores the goal definition of the Associations through shared goals with focus on the internal motivations and reasons different members had for becoming part of these networks. To deepen the analysis, and in line with theories of experimentalist governance (Sabel & Simon, 2011; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012b, 2012a), the concept of self-governance is introduced to better understand how these networks created their own rules and how these rules relate to more conventional practices. The third section is dedicated to the practices that the individual members carry out in order to reach the shared goal of the Association, with a deeper understanding of the relations created both inside and outside the Association. To further illustrate these practices, the case of Genuino Clandestino and Mag6 are presented, highlighting the particular politics of Campi Aperti. The fourth section delves deeper into the decision-making process of each Association highlighting the two different models, even though they come from the same context, the role of assemblies and how they redefined their goals throughout their history. The fifth section interrogates the concept of penalty default exploring how these realities maintain their values and control whether each member is respecting them, thus articulating the role of trust and the adoption of Participatory Guarantee Systems.

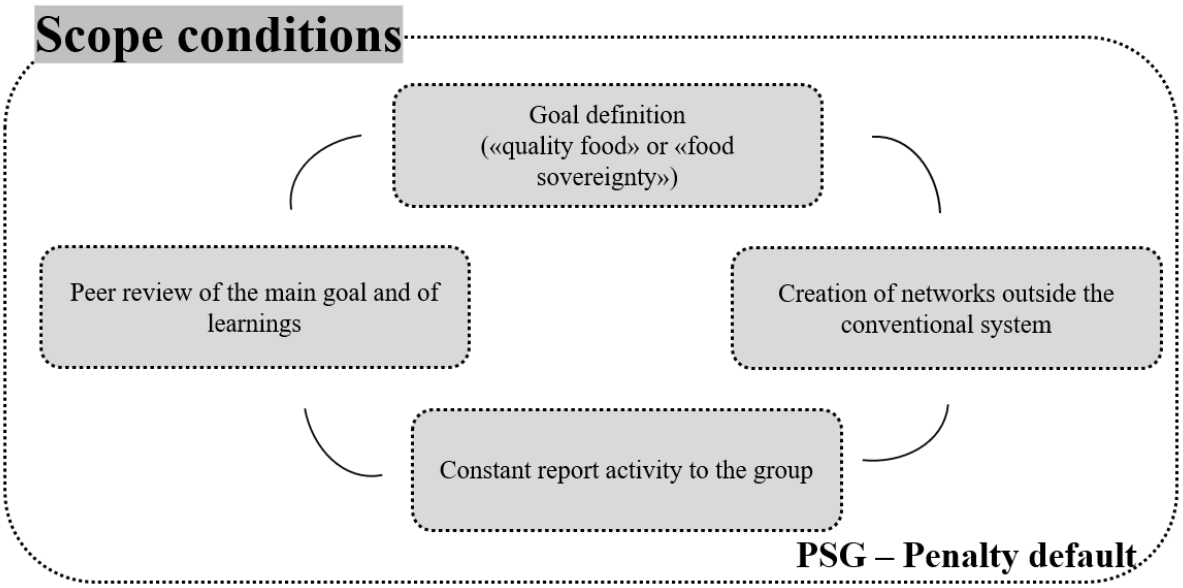


Figure 4 - Experimentalist Governance framework at a local level. Source: personal elaboration

5.1 Scope conditions: strategic uncertainty and polyarchic distribution of power

AFNs emergence and existence are tied to the cooperation of other actors in the same context. The creation of networks per se requires that different actors realise they share a common interest and gather together to accomplish it. However, this poses some new challenges as these grassroots experiences are based on relationships that transcend the market settings and formal contractual rules, and create a whole new set of values, regimes and rules creating new challenges and opportunities to develop novel practices. Another element that creates challenges is the uncertainty underlying the creation of these networks. These realities are born from bottom-up initiatives and are not mandated by law, leaving the actors organising it without an institutional orchestrator and without guidelines, increasing the complexity in the setting up phase.

Both Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato, for example, didn't start their activity immediately but underwent a phase of experimentation that lasted several years. They needed to understand how to relate with the surrounding actors, if they would've had customers, if enough producers would have join to be able to create a market. This level of uncertainty was perceived differently in the two cases as the two realities emerged from completely different context.

Campi Aperti, for example, was born from social centres, and this determined a cultural stigma in terms of lack of trust towards the people that used to associate with these realities. Social centres are often considered places that gather people that do not fit into society, places into which, "*normal people feel like they don't have a reason to go*" (interview no. 3). Social centres, also, are often organised around occupied venues, going openly against institutions and rules, with members constantly risking to be removed from their headquarters. According to a member of Campi Aperti, this creates a lot of ambivalence about the relationships and how the Municipality perceives occupations, no matter the type of activities carried on. For this reason, the emergence of Campi Aperti was immediately perceived as a "fight" with the Municipality, and at first it operated only inside the protected environment of social centres. However, this prevented their innovative ideals to be shared also with other members of the society and they slowly started to put a foot outside XM24 (historic social centre of Bologna where Campi Aperti was born) only years after they were born. The uncertainty accompanying Campi Aperti from its beginning caused their activity to emerge in public squares with years of delay. However, uncertainty didn't disappear: their existence now is tied to the Municipality of Bologna and the people that are part of it, as they organise markets on public venues. To obtain the permission to sell their products they had to follow a standard procedure that consisted to the participation to a

public tender where they had to show their project and what they intended to do with the area. If selected, they had the permission to use that area for one year, and then they had to repeat the same procedure again. This procedure was revised after a long debate and dialogue with the Municipality, and today the duration of the contract for the use of public areas is extended. However, the venues where they organise their markets is still subject to an end date, creating uncertainty in terms of how long their project can last.

Mercato Ritrovato had a different experience as the Association was born from Slow Food and from the desire of the Municipality of Bologna to organise a farmers' market. However, at first Mercato Ritrovato didn't know if they has enough producers to organise a market, and at first they had to organise their markets only twice per month. The experimentation phase lasted long and for several years producers couldn't sell their products during the summer, as the market was not active. This generates uncertainty for the members who necessarily had to find other outlets to sell their products and couldn't rely on the farmer market only. Also, Mercato Ritrovato is organised on a private space (Cineteca di Bologna) that gives them the possibility to use the area. However, this means that Mercato Ritrovato is not really independent and can use the area as long as they respect some rules defined by the owner of the area. This poses some challenges in terms of expressions of political thoughts, as some members of the Association openly declare that they don't expose themselves too much politically, because that venue is "*too nice to be lost on political struggles that we know we can't win*" (interview no. 13).

All these elements create uncertainty that also ties with other macro elements namely national and European legislations, the phenomenon of urbanisation and climate change.

For this reason, these realities not only face uncertainty arising from the context they are part of but also other causes of uncertainty that are beyond their control.

To sum up according to interviews, different kind of uncertainties were identified and can be classified in these categories:

1- Economic: AFNs aims to create an alternative the corporate food system where the farmer has more say in the matter of price definition and type of crops they decide to grow. However, according to respondents to the questionnaire, only a minority of people the income from selling their products on farmers' markets is enough to sustain themselves.

Only 20,6% of respondents from Campi Aperti declare that their income is sufficient to sustain themselves (and their family).

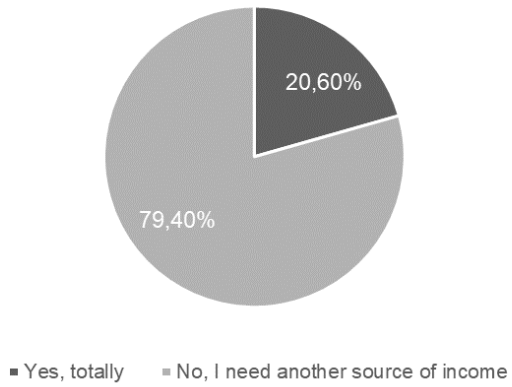


Figure 5 - Responses to the question "Is the income from working in Campi Aperti enough to support your family?". Source: personal elaboration

The same is valid for Mercato Ritrovato, where the proportion is very similar. 80% of producers cannot afford living only out of the market's earnings

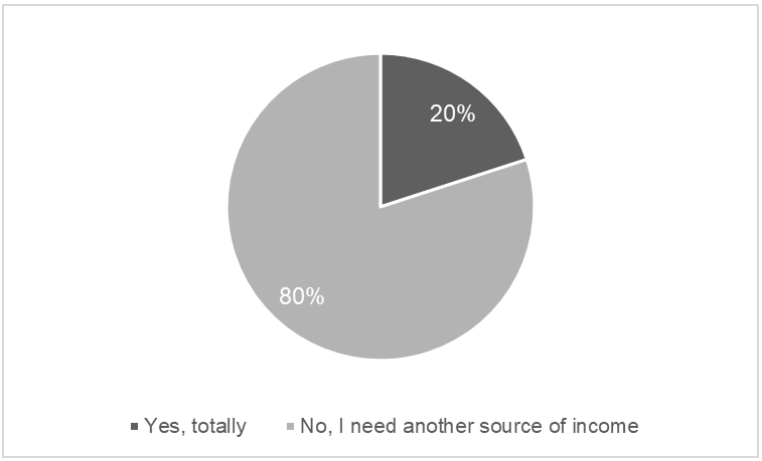


Figure 6 - Responses to the question "Is the income from working in Il Mercato Ritrovato enough to support your family?". Source: personal elaboration

2- Political. Both members of the Associations recognise the crucial role of the Municipality and the importance of having and maintaining good relationships with it. However, the activity of these Associations is highly dependent on the composition of the municipality at a specific time, meaning that when elections come it arises uncertainties about whether the next Major and municipal council will either support or hinder these initiatives. There is, however, a big difference between the two case studies of this research. As mentioned, Mercato Ritrovato is organising its markets on a public venue, hence their stability depends on the willing of the owner of the venue to let them pursue their project. Behind their project, however, there are several important actors included the Municipality of Bologna, making it less likely for this activity to be shut down. The same cannot be said for Campi Aperti, that still highly relies on obtaining

permissions from the Municipality to organize its markets, and also need to relate with the President of the neighborhood where the market is organized

3- Climate change. Climate is the only macro trend mentioned by the interviewees' members of the two associations. Being their activity highly context dependent, their perception of other trends like urbanisation and migration was not considered a decisive threat even though it was acknowledged. At the contrary, climate change was perceived as a crucial source of uncertainty and risk, also given the fact that the structure of the farms part of the Associations are usually very small and sometimes very likely to be left out of the PAC payment system. Some interviewees declare that they received few thousands of euros from PAC subsidies, with which they could only cover the cost of gasoline for their agricultural machineries. This leaves these farmers with a big uncertainty concerning the availability of water, the possibilities of having extreme weather events and, more in general, to fill the consequences of events they cannot forecast.

According to Sabel (2013), an experimentalist governance setting can develop in context where power is equally distributed, and no actor can prevail over the others. Literature on AFNs suggests that these networks often revision power relationship as part of their counteractive nature, advocating for a horizontal distribution of power and a certain refuse towards hierarchies. However, literature also evidenced that AFNs do not necessarily consider a redefinition of decision-making practices, and sometimes only focus on the attributes that the food must have. These realities, then, only focus on the food and not on the whole supply chain (which includes production practices, power relationships, decision making practices, etc) being a weaker form of alternative food networks (Watts et al., 2005). In the case of Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato the concept of power is considered; in both Associations there is a tendency to make power relationships horizontal, and every member has equal power compared to the other. However, when it comes to promote an alternative for food chains in a city, other actors should be part of the process and in this case the polyarchic distribution of power is not respected. The Municipality of Bologna, for example, is a crucial actor for these Associations as they depend on its legislations and political guidance. Clearly, the power of the Municipality is not equal to the one of the Associations, making it difficult to create a real experimentalist setting.

5.2 Broad goal definition

The emergence of AFNs is based on a set of values that are highly context-dependent and, as evidenced in the literature, vary consistently based on the geographic context of the AFN. Emilia Romagna and Bologna's context is evidence of a growing culture towards short supply chains

and a political engagement towards organic agriculture. Also, the cultural relationships that the population has with local products and traditions, the increase in awareness of health and food quality that abruptly increased after the Covid-19 pandemic, and the political left-wing progressive context that calls for an open critique of current food systems create fertile terrain for the emergence of these initiatives.

Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato were born in a context of open critique of the current food system that was explicated differently, one being more cultural (Mercato Ritrovato) and the other more political (Campi Aperti). This difference is already evident in their mottos: on their official website Campi Aperti's description is: "Community fighting for food sovereignty". In contrast, il Mercato Ritrovato's description is: "The best quality of the territory, guaranteed by our farmers and artisans. And then laboratories for kids and adults, music, dances, and events".

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to briefly explain why they decided to become part of the Association.

Considering Campi Aperti, reasons can be classified into three main categories:

- **Creation of a different market**. There was a perceived need for a different market capable of giving small producers a space to develop and not be "smashed" by big corporations and capitalistic market rules. Respondents often refer to this as the "only" opportunity for producers that are either small in size and/or carry out an activity that doesn't embrace monoculture and intensive practices to have an income.
- **Care for the environment**. Many producers decided to enter Campi Aperti because they found a place where farmers were seen as food producers and as land and territory preservers. In fact, according to interviewees and respondents to the questionnaire, farmers should be defined as "guardians of the territory" due to the preservation and care activities they carry out to maintain the health of soils and water.
- **Community-driven and political values**. Producers choosing to be members part of Campi Aperti found a community capable of pursuing concrete political campaigns and developing a system based on trust and on mutual support. This allowed the reappropriation of production and community autonomy.

Considering Mercato Ritrovato, reasons can be classified into two main categories.

- **Notoriety of the market**. Mercato Ritrovato enjoys a particular reputation as both Slow Food and the Municipality of Bologna promote it. For this reason, producers considered the possibility of selling their products in such a famous venue very rewarding and desirable.

- **Dissemination of culture**. Producers became part of this Association because of the cultural focus of its activities, laboratories, and organized events. It is considered an opportunity to communicate with the final consumer and explain the value of local food and production.

Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato embody different values and attract different sets of producers. Still, both carry out the mission of providing local, wholesome food produced with organic and biodynamic farming practices and attempt to create a reconnected community of producers and consumers, a new imaginary of agriculture, and a new role for farmers as active actors in the food system.

The differences between the two case studies are firmly rooted in their history. Paragraph X mentions that Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato were born from different stances and contexts. However, when asked about the reasons for creating the two Associations, interviewees from both realities pointed out two specific events that do not necessarily correlate with the transformation of the food system.

Il Mercato Ritrovato, the previous Mercato della Terra (farmers' markets organized by Slow Food), emerged because the Municipality of Bologna wanted to create a city's farmer market after the Italian law of 2007 officially recognized farmers' markets. The Mercato della Terra already existed and was removed from the Slow Food context. A shared effort with different actors created a new market supported by the Municipality and hosted in a private venue. Later on, members of Il Mercato Ritrovato, still using Slow Food markets' guidelines, perceived the need to move forward and create their own *disciplinare.* This means that the awareness of food-related topics was already there and somehow protected by the presence of the municipality and by the guidance of Slow Food, which provided a first set of rules. The support of such important actors at the basis of forming this Association testifies how the presence of producers that share strong values can be helped and facilitated and can lead to the emergence of innovative networks.

In the case of Campi Aperti, the event that triggered the motivation to create a more structured alternative network to produce and sell food was the Genoa protests that occurred during the 28th G8 summit in 2001. The first members of Campi Aperti were moved by both an intense political critique of the current food system and by a shared sense of distrust towards institutions. This mix of beliefs led to strong nonconformist and sometimes rebellious actions (as several interviewees confirmed by saying that they openly infringed the law), which didn't find any outlet outside this system because that would mean creating relationships with the same institutions considered part of the problem. In 2001, however, a severe series of events happened in Genoa.

The 2001 Group of Eight Summit (G8) took place, bringing together state and government heads of the eight wealthiest countries in the world. The selection of Genoa as the G8 meeting venue immediately raised significant concerns. Doubts were fueled by the strong mobilization of

demonstrators opposing neoliberal economic trends, coupled with incidents from previous international meetings. The protests aimed to draw global attention to the issue of economic control by a small group of powerful individuals, who, leveraging the economic, political, and military influence of their nations, asserted themselves as the world authority over national sovereignties. Criticism was directed at the neoliberal policies and ideologies advocated by supranational organizations like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. The first informal Campi Aperti network members shared these values and discontent.

Genoa events ended with the city witnessing clashes between protesters and police, resulting in widespread damages and the fatal shooting of 23-year-old Carlo Giuliani. Amnesty International 89ecision the G8 summit in Genoa as the most severe abuse of human rights in a Western country since World War II.

Members of the collectives and early Campi Aperti network strongly shared the values at the basis of the protests that happened in Genoa and, triggered by the events, tied together to give shape to a more structured and politically active reality. Since then and before becoming an official Association in 2009, the Campi Aperti network worked mainly in social centers and squats and tried to "*fight the stigma towards social centers*" (interview no. 3) By slowly expanding to other public venues. This clarification helps to understand the strong cultural and political orientation and differences between the two case studies, as their origins are very different and rooted in different domains of action. Both are tied to food-related issues, but the topic was first approached from different points of view.

5.2.1 The role of self-governance

The literature gap on the governance of AFNs fails to capture the practices of self-governance in AFNs. Literature provides some examples of self-governance of small-scale fisheries (Basurto et al., 2017) or delivery-service providers but still lacks understanding how micro-level networks build governance structures that define internal rules and foster innovation and the creation of networks. However, the concept of self-governance is not new for scholars.

Over the past three decades, a transformative shift in governance has unfolded, challenging conventional notions of hierarchical rule. This emerging governance imagery views governance as a collaborative and complex process involving various public authorities and private stakeholders in self-governance. Activities such as participatory planning, network governance, and new public management embody this novel approach, collectively termed the politics of self-governance (Sørensen & Triantafillou, 2009).

One notable aspect of this new governance perspective is the redefinition of society from a governance burden to a valuable resource. Citizens, businesses, and organizations are recognized as knowledgeable contributors to effective, efficient, and democratic governance. The once-clear division between state, market, and civil society is increasingly blurred, as all are seen as crucial contributors to public governance through their self-governing capabilities.

The term 'self' in self-governance encompasses a diverse array of public and private agents, acknowledging their shared capacity to act within social and political contexts. Self-governance is viewed as autonomy, not in isolation, but within situations where external forces do not wholly determine the governing of the self. This broad definition allows the exploration of diverse ideas, arguments, and interventions seeking to utilize and enhance self-governance (ibid).

The questioning of boundaries between the public and private sectors has transformed the private sector into a potential co-governor. Market-like and civil society-like forms of self-governance have been introduced into the public sector, emphasizing competitive games and norm-based collaboration. This new governance approach fosters incentive and motivation-based governance, encouraging active contributions from public institutions, employees, and users of public services in defining, implementing, and evaluating governance performance. This emerging governance imagery represents a significant shift in understanding public governance over the last three decades. It diverges from classical liberalism by embracing a more interventionist approach that aims not only to correct but also to augment and improve. This new governance perspective targets a broader range of entities, including communities, business councils, policy networks, and public agencies, seeking to enhance their effectiveness, efficiency, and democratic qualities.

The cases of Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato fit these conceptualization as they developed a form of self-governance that is particularly evident in their internal set of rules.

Once created, the Associations defined their own rules called "*disciplinare*" (for Mercato Ritrovato) or "*statuto*" (for Campi Aperti). Becoming a member of the Association implies the acceptance of the set of rules and adapting every production practice to the ones allowed by the Association. But these rules not only involve a production domain; they also define rules in terms of decision-making, power relationships, and the general address of the Association that contributes to defining and shaping their goal.

This form of self-governance demonstrates how these realities built their governance system and can create internally shared rules that differ from those promoted by national law and are shared and respected (under penalty of exclusion) by all members.

The different internal rules, formalized through the statutes of the two Associations provide a useful overview of their internal values. These rules are subject to changes or modifications whenever ambiguities are perceived. These internal rules are developed horizontally in both Associations, where all members are welcome (through general assembly meetings) to participate and agree upon the rules. The rules end up in documents that bring a series of practice innovations.

The first one concerns the fact that these markets' rules differ from the national legislation. According to Italian law, producers selling their products in farmers' markets can sell up to 49% of products produced by other farmers, following a "prevalence" rule. Producers must sell only their products in fresh and processed staples by being a member of these Associations. In case they use other inputs in processed products, they must declare it and ask for permission from the general assembly that, evaluating case by case, can grant the permission or not.
Hence, actors create new rules and frameworks that can be inspired by national laws but are not a copy of them. This defines their alternativeness and how they distinguish themselves from a current food system that they realize is disruptive and incompatible with social and environmental challenges.
Innovation brought by novel practices is also present in the ways the members create community and support each other. From nterview no. 28 a member of Campi Aperti declared:

> *I was part of a reality similar to Campi Aperti, with the same beliefs but less efficient and organized. I have been part of Campi Aperti for a year, and I feel that everything that was already a feeling of community has multiplied. Last year, for example, I broke two ribs during a night shift. The next morning, a producer from Campi Aperti came and fixed my stuff. He had known me for two weeks. Here, I got the measure of what it means to be in a community. There is a level of mutual help incomparable to conventional production and commercial realities. You are never alone, even in realities like mine where basically you are alone.*

The internal rules helps build a sense of community That fosters new relationships beyond commercial contracts. Farmers become friends more than colleagues and are listened to. The importance of sharing practices, doubts, and ideas also builds a new role for the farmer, who is no longer a passive actor.
During my research, members of the two Associations were asked to express their feelings after becoming members. The majority of respondents report that they feel part of a community, less alone, and understood. They confirm that they found people that have similar beliefs and helped them become more politically and socially active. A lower proportion of respondents also

reported that they feel lees afraid of the consequences of economic losses, that they gained market power, and that, without the Association's support, they couldn't have sold their products.

Table 7 - Questionnaire respondents' feelings after becoming member of Campi Aperti. Source: personal elaboration

I feel part of a community	25
I feel less alone	9
Intellectual exchanges have increased	21
Material exchanges have increased	14
I feel understood	6
I found people who think like me	15
I am more politically active	15
I am less afraid of the consequences of economic losses	3
I gained market power	5
Without Campi Aperti I coudn't have sell my products	1
Good propaganda	1

Table 8 - Questionnaire respondents' feelings after becoming member of Mercato Ritrovato. Source: personal elaboration

I feel part of a community	4
I feel less alone	2
Intellectual exchanges have increased	2
Material exchanges have increased	2
I gained market power	1

5.3 Autonomies to local parties to meet the common goal

The core of an experimentalist governance setting is to give each actor the autonomy to pursue the final goal. These Associations provide clear guidance and a set of values to which every member should adhere but leave every producer to act independently.
This is because every member knows better their knowledge and the possibilities to pursue the final goal. Both Associations have different rules but are united by the goal of building networks capable of creating a new food system.

This requires farmers to develop new skills and to work outside formalized systems and implies, by definition, that farmers should work with other people to reinforce the goal of the Associations. To assess this autonomy, looking for relations that support the goal is crucial. By

building autonomous, less formalized sets of relationships, members of the Associations support their goals.
To reach the goal they used autonomy from formalised systems to build different kinds of relations that allow for that experimentalism.

Moreover, at the local level, collaboration is vital to be alternative, and part of the alternativeness at the local level is to be autonomous in specific decision-making processes. By analyzing the activities and collaborations carried out by these Associations, it emerges that they create frameworks outside the legal framework and novel relationships outside the formal systems that allow them to reinforce their goal.

What emerged from the gathered data is that being part of this network means trust is crucial. By creating relationships based on trust, the Associations can create new networks and practices that go beyond the mainstream and create innovative and alternative ways of building new trust in and from new actors.

For example, members of these Associations do not believe that organic certifications can fill the gap between consumers and producers as they perceive that certifications only work for global markets. Still, for local markets, these are not needed. Members of these Associations are not asked to have an organic certification as direct contact with other producers and consumers will build trust and work as a certification mechanism. To understand how the Associations and their members reinforce their goals, it's vital to unveil the set of formal and informal relationships they carry out, as these would be missed otherwise because of the absence of reporting obligations.

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to provide information about their collaborations inside the Association, with "collaboration" meaning any voluntary exchange, even unofficial, aimed at sharing information, resources, personnel, raw materials, skills, etc.

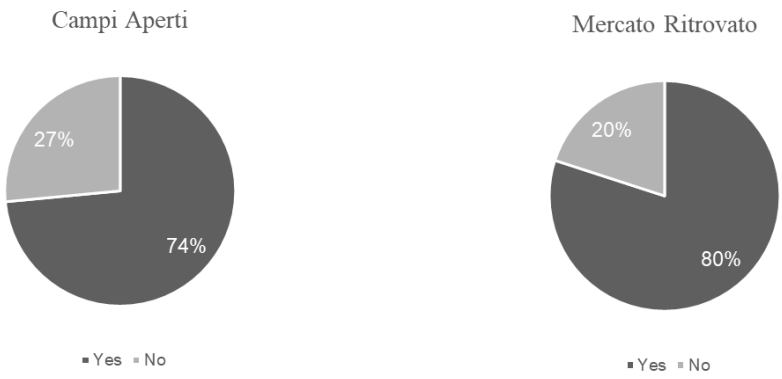


Figure 7 - Answers to the question "do you have internal collaborations with other members of the Association?". Source: personal elaboration

Both members of Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato are extremely active in terms of internal relations. Farmers build personal relations and exchange production advice and inputs, generating new knowledge. Respondents were asked to provide the reasons for the internal collaborations, and the answers are summarized in the following tables.

Table 9 - Internal relations in Campi Aperti. Source: personal elaboration

Organization of the markets	11
Production advice	13
Supply of inputs	8
Sale of output or semi-finished products	6
Personal relationships	14
Coordination for participation in events	8
Employment contract	1

Table 10 - Internal relations in Il Mercato Ritrovato. Source: personal elaboration

Organization of the markets	3
Production advice	6
Supply of inputs	4
Sale of output or semi-finished products	2
Personal relationships	5
Coordination for participation in events	0
Employment contract	0

Respondents were provided with a set of possible reasons for collaboration that were extrapolated from interviews, document, and internal mailing list analysis, and the option "other" was added so that respondents could add any other reason for collaboration that was not included on the list.

As it is evident, in both cases the majority of collaborations revolve around personal relationships and production advice. The political drive of Campi Aperti emerges as members actively engage in autonomously organizing events outside the borders of the Association and then share the information on the mailing list. Events, nevertheless, respect the rules of the Association and work as reinforcement of the Association's goal. Cooperations inside Mercato Ritrovato are much more based on economic reasons, which resonates with the history of the Associations. The majority of these relationships, however, are still based on personal relationships and production advice.

Some internal collaborations are also based on economic exchange, as in the case of people part of the Association who are also employed by other farmers, or there are activities of buying and selling of products.

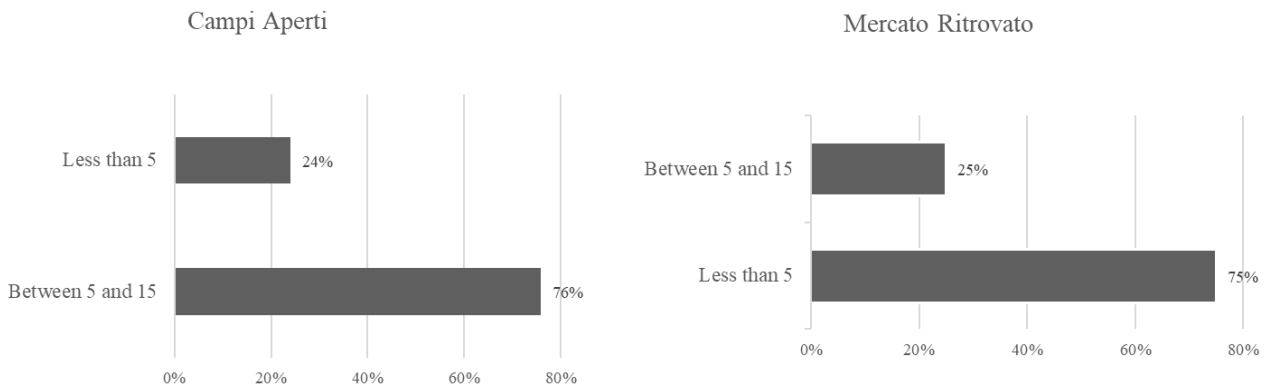


Figure 8 - Intensity of collaboration among members of the two Associations. Source: personal elaboration

In terms of collaboration intensity, most farmers collaborate with between five and fifteen members, and the minority has relationships with less than five members.

Respondents were also asked to provide information about external relations.

Figure 9 - Answers to the question "Do you cooperate with someone outside Campi Aperti/Mercato Ritrovato?". Source: personal elaboration

The differences in this case become more evident. Even though the majority of Campi Aperti's respondents claim to cooperate with external actors, a big percentage of the respondents (41%) claim not to, raising suspects whether the absence of cooperation stems from the absence of willingness or other reasons. According to data gathered by interviews, it's likely that many respondents do not activate to engage in cooperation outside Campi Aperti either because they're still in an experimental phase of their activity or because they adhere to Campi Aperti for political reasons and leave the Association to speak for them, remaining somewhat in the shadow.

This helps build the idea of the positionality of the farmers that are part of Campi Aperti. This is also confirmed by the differences in answers with Mercato Ritrovato, for which 80% of the respondents claim to cooperate with external actors.

Table 11 - External relations in Campi Aperti. Source: personal elaboration

Public administration (municipality, region, metropolitan city)	7
Third sector (social cooperatives, voluntary associations, social enterprises, etc.)	10
Civil society (active citizenship groups, collectives, etc.)	11
Private (businesses, etc.)	5
Other farmers to create production chains	1
University	1
Young farmers for experimentations	1
Schools for environmental education projects	1
Friends outside the Association	1

Table 12- External relations in Mercato Ritrovato. Source: personal elaboration

Public administration (municipality, region, metropolitan city)	0
Third sector (social cooperatives, voluntary associations, social enterprises, etc.)	6
Civil society (active citizenship groups, collectives, etc.)	4
Private (businesses, etc.)	9

Campi Aperti has less intense but more variety of external relationships than Mercato Ritrovato, which has less variety of relations but is more intense. Campi Aperti's members seek to create relations with schools, the third sector, civil society, universities, and the Municipality of

Bologna. Members of Mercato Ritrovato, conversely, create relations mainly with private actors and civil society, and respondents claim to have no contact with the Municipality.

This diversity influences the practices carried out by the two Associations. For Campi Aperti, "*Nothing is taken for granted here*!" (interview no. 27) because their markets are organized on public venues and need public permissions. Moreover, their political drive is a propeller for the creation of relationships that work not only as an alternative channel to buy and consume food but also as a political statement and constant research for frameworks that counteract capitalistic logic.

Conversely, members of Mercato Ritrovato don't feel the need to contact the municipality, considering that their market is organized in a private space. The president of Mercato Ritrovato confirmed: "*We don't really have contacts with the Municipality, at the end of the day what could we possibly want from them? We're in a private area*" (interview no. 11). Nevertheless, Mercato Ritrovato organizes weekly events to raise awareness on the topic of the origin of food, cooking and baking workshops, and food culture dissemination.

This proves that the two Associations, even if they're active in the same context, present differences in the way they perceive the public actor, and how they relate to challenges posed by the food system. This is particularly evident in the case of Campi Aperti. Having to deal with a public institutional actor with which they have difficulties in finding compromises, they feel the need to constantly look for new networks also by creating frameworks outside the legal framework. Two examples are Genuino Clandestino and Mag6.

5.3.1 Genuino Clandestino and the fight for a right price

Genuino Clandestino is an example of their activity of creating a new network and engaging in an open political. This initiative is promoted by Campi Aperti but works outside its boundaries and generates a national network that holds together different realities that recognize themselves in the value of Genuino Clandestino.

The Genuino Clandestino case incorporates a series of values that allow us to understand the complexity of this Association and how it encompasses the topic of food, addressing issues that go beyond the mere production and embrace the whole set of rules and practices that characterize the current agrifood system. In fact, Genuino Clandestino touches the topics of peasant resistance, food sovereignty, civil disobedience, and social justice and is also an awareness campaign.

Genuino Clandestino is a community fighting for food self-determination. It was born in 2010 as a communication campaign to advocate for the possibility of small farmers creating processed products from agricultural surpluses. These products, derived from healthy, organic, fresh, and local raw materials, paradoxically operate clandestinely due to legal restrictions on their sale imposed by Regulation (EC) 852/2004.

This movement is, in essence, a form of agricultural resistance and political response to the need for legislative adaptation. To bridge the gap between local realities and existing regulations, members chose to self-report, using the term "Clandestino", which is usually related to illegal immigrants, not only to raise awareness but also to amplify the voices of local agricultural entities engaging in direct sales.

Recognizing the value of short supply chain dynamics, Genuino Clandestino aims to protect and enhance all activities and practices that eliminate intermediaries. This, in turn, reduces transaction costs, ensuring fairer prices for producers and broader access for consumers to local, ethical, and quality products. In the nexus of direct knowledge between producers and consumers, the movement thrives on mutual trust. This campaign quickly gained momentum, culminating in a documentary and a book project, documenting the journey of Genuino Clandestino.

Evolving into a national movement, Genuino Clandestino now comprises 26 Associations operating in 10 Italian regions, organizing biannual national meetings to discuss food sovereignty, self-managed distribution, access to land, territorial autonomy, and quality assurance for peasant products.

Genuino Clandestino stands as a noteworthy response to the prevalent trend of privatization and neo-liberalization not only in Italy but on a global scale. This movement is part of a network that originated in the "red regions" of Italy, specifically Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, and subsequently expanded nationwide.

Other movements within this network include the Association of Rural Seeds (Associazione Semi Rurali), fighting against limitations on seed sales imposed by European and Italian intellectual property laws, and the Campaign for the Access to Land (Campagna per l'Accesso alla Terra), which seeks to curb the sale of public land or collectively acquire land to support young farmers. Both Associations have developed property-linked alternatives to preserve "commons." Rural Seeds advocates for recognizing local varieties as "endangered" species, while the Campaign for the Access to Land uses a quasi-"shareholder" structure for communal land acquisition.

Genuino Clandestino, among these initiatives, emerges as particularly promising. It proposes a "non-label" concept to counter the complexities of certifying organic production or registering products as Geographical Indications (GIs). The movement addresses the challenges faced by small producers attempting to survive in an environment where large-scale distribution demands

standardized volumes and qualities. Certification processes, including organic certification, often impose financial burdens and bureaucratic disciplines that may compromise traditional methods of production. Genuino Clandestino proposes a short-chain network where producers sell directly to consumers or groups of buyers, bypassing traditional marketplaces.

However, these products do not carry traditional certifications; instead, Genuino Clandestino openly declares them as un-certified. This approach involves a participant certification process where consumers and other producers engage in understanding the product and its production chain. While limiting the possibility for expansion, this system enables farmers to make enough money to survive, prioritizing personal autonomy over surplus. Operating in Bologna's Campi Aperti's markets, Genuino Clandestino forms practical networks with buyers and implements strategies to share knowledge without hindering productive activities. Despite the challenges, the movement aims to sustain its initiative over time. Regardless of its future success, Genuino Clandestino's creation of a "non-label" challenges the logic of capital accumulation and private interests, using property as a mechanism for branding. By linking certification with local knowledge, the movement offers an alternative to traditional property regimes in agriculture, engaging in a form of political action that reshapes social relations and challenges the dominance of agribusiness.

Farmers affiliated with the Genuino Clandestino network, as well as Terra/Terra, Campi Aperti, and other regional movements, are actively involved in grassroots food activism. Their model of food sovereignty revolves around human relations characterized by mutual dependence, cultural diversity, and respect for the environment. These peasant activists are part of the political network of the *"centri sociali autogestiti"* (self-managed social centers), which originated from occupied universities in Italy during the mid-eighties and early nineties.

The ironic label of Genuino Clandestino mockingly challenges the official certification of food products by juxtaposing the contradictory terms "genuine" and "clandestine." The underground wholesomeness of their products, unavailable in mainstream grocery stores, is distributed directly by the producers to consumers or through Solidarity Purchasing Groups. The authenticity of these products is rooted in a renewed sense of trust and solidarity, and their hygiene standards surpass commercial products due to ethical production practices.

These narratives underscore challenging questions, exposing the contradiction and impracticality of favoring the "legal" intensive agricultural model while opposing "illegal" independent informal agricultural practices based on a model of "just sustainability."

5.3.2 Mutual pact with the solidarity finance cooperative Mag6

Another example of Campi Aperti's activity in engaging in different frameworks is represented by the mutual pact with Mag6, a solidarity finance cooperative based in Reggio Emilia with which they finance activities of different members.
The mutual agreement between Campi Aperti and Mag6, signed in November 2018, aims to address the diverse needs of both entities. This collaboration taps into each of their unique resources and specializations, fostering a mutual network that aligns with their shared intention of instigating social change. Their collective vision is geared towards sustainability, horizontal structures, and community alternatives that stand in opposition to prevailing market norms (Campi Aperti, 2023).

The agreement revolves around four areas of collaboration: mutual financing, organizational analysis, "tutoraggio senza prestito", and Support and promotion of MAG6

Mutual Financing

The financial instrument allows Campi Aperti's members to receive funding from Mag6, facilitating solidarity investments without the need for financial guarantees. This initiative operates on community guarantees, ensuring responsible and community-supported investments. The working group overseeing this instrument is dedicated to collecting interested parties, introducing them to Mag6, organizing tutoring meetings, building a comprehensive database, and exploring ways to reduce borrowing costs.

Organizational Analysis

This involves drafting role descriptions for the main bodies of Campi Aperti. The collective sharing of roles within the Association forms the basis of an organizational analysis. Roles are continuously defined, and the path taken involves reflecting on these roles for the overall functionality of the Association. The process is divided into two moments: creating descriptions based on current perceptions and envisioning desired future roles. A revision of the organization is achieved by defining the desired role descriptions and seeking approval in the assembly.

“Tutoraggio senza prestito” – TSP (tutoring without loans)

TSP is a pilot project initiated in 2020, providing tools for economic management to members of Campi Aperti. It offers theoretical and practical tools for economic management, with a four-year duration. The project involves five meetings in the first year and subsequent annual check-ups. Each participating company is assigned a Mag6 Tutor for the entire duration. The acquired tools are useful to raise awareness and support informed decision-making and fostering confidence in individual and collective strategies.

Support and Promotion of Mag6

Campi Aperti supports and promotes Mag6 through continuous donations in favor of Shared Sustainability. This initiative contributes to a community form of economic support for Mag6’s activities, aiming to reduce loan costs for financed members and provide free training in various areas of expertise within Mag6. This mutualistic area emphasizes the collaboration and promotion of Mag6 by Campi Aperti, enhancing awareness within the extended community through exhibitions, events, and interactive storytelling sessions.

5.4 Local units reporting and peer review

5.4.1 AFNs and hierarchies

In an experimentalist setting, units must regularly report their activities to provide knowledge to revisit and adapt activities towards the final goal. This results in a flow of actions that, if represented visually, resemble a circular cycle. As mentioned in Chapter 2, experimentalist governance revisits the concept of hierarchy that was predominant in the previous century.

In the context of AFNs, the role of hierarchies, and more generally, the distribution of power in the food system and the fact that farmers are at the bottom of the decision-making process, is also challenged. Different case studies (Diesner, 2020; Manganelli & Moulaert, 2018; Manganelli, 2020; Alberio & Moralli, 2021; Bos & Owen, 2016; Cox et al., 2008), for example, show that AFNs tend toward a more horizontal power distribution and consider hierarchies a dangerous concept to which they want to provide an alternative. Hierarchies are considered necessary when the food supply chain comprises many actors; hence, it is one of the nodes to be challenged.

However, the gap in the knowledge of the governance of AFNs do not provide sufficient information on how these networks practically implement novel practices that go beyond hierarchies and top-down decision-making models. Some insights are found in literature when considering the rise of food sovereignty movements such as La Via Campesina.

5.4.2 Differences in AFNs: evidence from literature and case studies

AFNs do not necessarily come with organizational and governance innovations or a strong political identity.

This was explored first by Watts et al. (2005), who highlighted that the "alternativeness" of AFNs is based on their conveyed values, goals, and the level of radical departure from conventional market principles. The degree of opposition to conventional market principles categorizes them as "weaker" or "stronger." These networks, in fact, can represent bottom-up organizations rooted in ethical values or simply work as brief market channels (Gori & Castellini, 2023).

According to Watts et al. (2005) in analysing alternative systems of food provision, distinctions should be made between weaker and stronger AFNs based on their economic engagement and potential subordination by conventional Food Supply Chains in a globalized and neoliberal context.

Later, Duncan and Pascucci (2017) also contributed to this knowledge by identifying two different kinds of organizations of AFNs: isomorphic (that retrace conventional governance structure) and polymorphic (that differ from the former because they provide novel structures and decision-making procedures).

Polymorphic and isomorphic forms of alternative food networks represent diverse approaches to redefining the global food system. Polymorphic networks are marked predominantly by community and democratic relations (Duncan & Pascucci, 2017; p. 331)

On the other hand, isomorphic networks emphasize the replication of successful models and the establishment of consistent standards, aiming for a more universally applicable alternative food system.

Data collected from the two case studies resonates with both these findings, as Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato present differences in their values, mode of action, internal rules, and power relations.

Analysing Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato's organizational chart, it's evident that

Campi Aperti has a more circular organizational chart and a structure that revolves around a general assembly in which decisions are made using a sociocracy model. Conversely, Mercato Ritrovato has a leaner structure. The general assembly is still crucial, but they elect a management committee that becomes the central node of the organization.

This results in two visualizations, one more circular and the other resembling a lean-managerial structure.

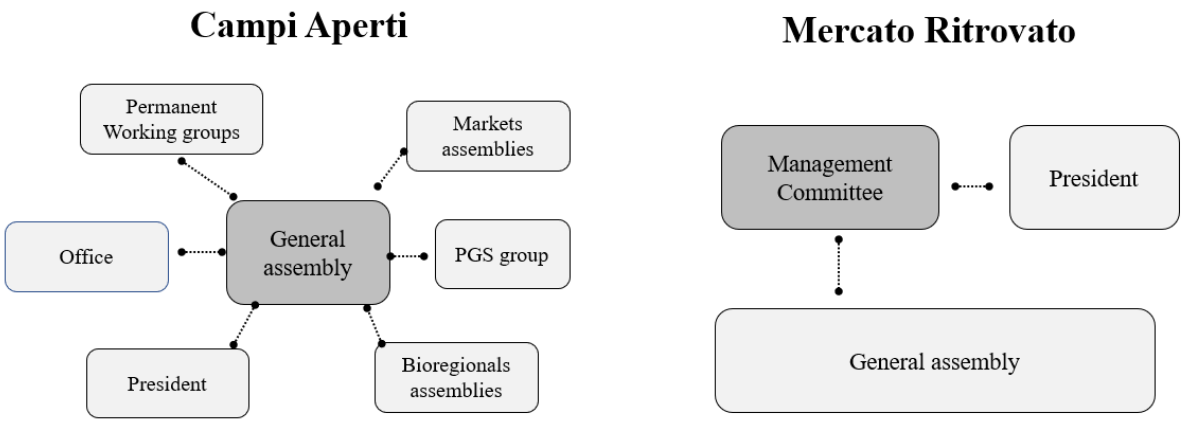


Figure 10 - Organization charts of the two case studies. Source: personal elaboration

The flow of information in the two realities is highly influenced by the organizational structure. As seen before, revisiting goals and practices in experimentalist settings is crucial. This has been experienced differently by the two realities, which had to face changes in their own rules and statutes.

In both Associations, the general assembly is the most important body. Mercato Ritrovato also has a managing committee composed of seven members who make more practical decisions and aim to increase the efficiency of the decision-making process.

> *The assembly is the supreme body," (interview no. 12) confirms an interviewee. Specific topics require a vote of the assembly—for example, changes to the market calendar or modifications of the statute. "If there are requests from members, then a certain number of members must fill in a request to the assembly. It is all covered by the statute anyway. For example, what if we need a company that produces wine? Then, the management committee meets and searches for companies. (interview no. 13)*

Considering the meetings, Mercato Ritrovato adopts a democratic model with a majority vote, and the President is the legal representative required by Italian law in an Association. Their internal rules are based on the *disciplinare* that Slow Food Torino created for *Mercati della Terra* in 2008. Hence, their internal rules were already codified since Mercato Ritrovato detached from Slow Food. For this reason, the Association members did not have to engage in the rule-creation process that Campi Aperti had to undergo when the Association was created. According to an interviewee of Mercato Ritrovato their *disciplinare* was changed to make it stricter compared to

the Slow Food one, for example, imposing rules concerning processed products or rules about the area where food is produced. These changes happened to solve some ambivalence or confusion that came from customers. "*We modified our internal rules once. It was a big change. After that…mmmmh… no, we never felt like we needed to change again*" (interview no, 11). Their modification and goal revision happened once when their *disciplinare* was modified from the Slow Food one. According to an interviewee, this change determined a crucial moment for the Association as several members decided to leave because they were unwilling to comply with stricter rules. "*The previous disciplinare was written in a way that was also open to traditional agriculture. It has been restricted. Also, rules on bread and baked products were changed. Now these products are made with local flours and rules were adapted to the territorial context"* (interview no. 11).

Campi Aperti followed a different path. "*The principles are the same, they were never modified. But we nevertheless changed a lot. Every now and then a problem comes up and we have to solve it not only using common sense but also by defining changes to the statute*" (interview no. 27) confirmed an interviewee. The process of the modification of Campi Aperti's *statuto* is a never-ending one. Rules changed multiple times but, unlike Mercato Ritrovato, changes were not abrupt and did not lead to members being forced to leave the Association because non-compliant with the new rules. According to an interviewee

> *We are a community, therefore, sometimes there are arguments similar to the one you have with a partner", and "Deciding everything in an assembly is impossible. Once we had assemblies that lasted 15 hours. Now we are adopting tools to hold useful assemblies, using notions that are part of the consensus method, introducing sociocratic mechanisms, and ensuring that everyone can talk. (interview no. 27)*

The absence of an intermediate body (like in the case of Mercato Ritrovato) makes the general assembly of Campi Aperti a crucial body upon which all decisions have to pass. However, several members lament that assemblies are not efficient and often lead to fights, waste of time, or barriers for some members (especially new) who feel overwhelmed and do not actively participate. However, Campi Aperti has a mailing list that is active and on which members exchange information and start discussions that, when not settled, are brought to the general assembly. It can be confirmed that the mailing list works, somehow, as a filter for the topics that are brought to the general assembly or solved easily via email. For example, during the year-long monitoring of the mailing list, a total of 1240 messages were exchanged, 3,3 emails on average per day. The topics discussed via emails can be divided into seven categories:

1. Activism topics: for example, invitations to participate in petitions, sharing concerns about legislations, sharing experiences of other networks, etc.

2. Achievements: when the Association achieves certaingoals, it is communicated via the mailing list. For example, the communication about the Regional decree with which it was made possible to produce processed food in home kitchens, and for which Campi Aperti worked and advocated for two years, was shared via the mailing list.
3. Events: practicalities about important events, even if discussed in the general assembly or in working groups, always run on the mailing list so every member is aware of what is needed and can volunteer to take on a task. At the same time, events outside the Association and inherent with the values are shared in the mailing list with the subject "*per conoscenza*" ("fyi").
4. Important topics: some urgent communications are also shared via the mailing list. The urgency is highly context-dependent and it can extend from problems during a market venue or call for help during the flooding events that happened in 2023 in Northern Italy.
5. Suggestions: several communications concern suggestions about readings, movies, and documentaries that concern topics related to the Association.
6. Network: other communication concerns the creation of new networks. These for example are represented by requests coming from other networks that want to get to know Campi Aperti or propose a collaboration.
7. Transcriptions of meetings: even though Campi Aperti has a server where all documents are stored, after every meeting the final transcription is also shared via the mailing list.

It is clear that the two Associations present a different decision-making model: one is more concerned about efficiency and trying to make activities smooth and easy for the farmer, and the other is all about active participation and engagement at the risk of incurring inefficiency and redundancy of communication. To assess whether the members of the case studies feel represented by the decision model, they were asked, via a questionnaire, to express their feelings on the decision-making process.

Table 13 - Summary of the answers from the questionnaire about the decision-making process. Source: personal elaboration

	Campi Aperti	Mercato Ritrovato
Does the decision-making model adopted by the Association allow you to have an active role in decisions?	• Yes – 65% • No – 29% • Partially – 6%	• Yes – 60% • No – 20% • Partially – 20%
In your opinion, are decisions in the organization made together?	• Yes – 85% • No – 15%	• Yes – 90% • No – 10%
Do you feel part of the decisions made by the organization?	• Yes – 82% • No – 18%	• Yes- 80% • No – 20%

To sum up, when it comes to the revision of their activities, the two Associations rely on the general assembly and on stimuli coming from consumers. However, the changes in their internal rules followed two different paths, few and abrupt changes in the case of Mercato Ritrovato and frequent but mellow changes in the case of Campi Aperti. Both Associations try to envision horizontal decision-making processes and the structure revolves around the general assembly or working thematic groups, although Mercato Ritrovato also adopts a managing committee to avoid overloading the general assembly, while Campi Aperti uses a mailing list to engage and share all kinds of communication that is perceived as useful for the life of the Association.

Both cases, however, show a willingness to learn and change their processes whenever they feel these do not match the Association's goal anymore.

5.5 Penalty Default

Experimentalist settings are characterized by cooperation among all parties that are either coming spontaneously or is held together by using punishing mechanisms known as penalty default, aimed at stimulating cooperation when it's not spontaneously forthcoming. In experimentalist settings, cooperation is a crucial value that allows each actor to be autonomous in pursuing the primary goal. In AFNs, cooperation among the network members is a crucial feature. Observing AFNs from this perspective allows for understanding the importance of relationships based on trust among all actors.

In the case of the two Associations, the value of trust is not only implied but also openly embraced, considering that no organic certification is required to be part of the Association. To be a member of these realities, it's crucial to adopt organic or biodynamic production practices that often go beyond organic regulation. Producers declare their production practices to the other members and to customers, and are only subject to control before entering the Association. Also, consumers trust the quality of the products even if producers do not have an official organic certification because the Association, with its regulations and values, functions as a warrant.

This environment of trust enables each member to pursue the Association's values without having to constantly justify actions or ask for permission. According to a member of Campi Aperti, "*Relationships are the only thing that we have that can defeat the neoliberal and capitalist system*." (interview no. 9) a member of Mercato Ritrovato also states that "*both rules and trust are important, but without trust, rules are useless*." (interview no. 12). From this stem the fact that in this setting, the mechanism holding the parties together is trust. Trust is an enabler for creating relationships and networks and a deterrent to opportunistic behaviors. The efficacy of trust is also proved by the number of members excluded from the two Associations over the years, which is four for Campi Aperti and three for Mercato Ritrovato. This shows the importance of trust as a silent mechanism that enables cooperation and allows the members of the Associations to build relationships and share ideas and knowledge without the fear of incurring behaviors like unfair competition. Moreover, being part of these Associations is not mandated by law, so becoming a member is already considered a commitment to the cause and already works as an enabler of trust. Selling products through this channel is not necessarily convenient. As mentioned above, producers need a secondary source of income, so to be part of these Associations, producers must dedicate resources in terms of time, willingness to cooperate and discuss, support towards other producers, and an explicit engagement in organizing activities.

5.5.1 Participatory Guarantee System

The shift from a peer-reviewed organic certification system to a Third-Party Certification (TPC) system has accompanied the rapid expansion of the organic market (Nelson et al., 2015). TPC systems, governed by external organizations, are responsible for developing organic standards and verifying producer compliance, often perceived as the most reliable method. However, critics argue that TPC systems do not allow for the adaptation of organic production to local cultural and ecological contexts and values, undermining local networks that promote close producer-consumer relationships (Mutersbaugh, 2004; Nelson et al., 2015; Fouilleux and Loconto, 2017).

Some voices in the literature caution against TPC systems steering organic practices toward the patterns of industrial agriculture, reproducing neoliberal forms of governance, and betraying original social and agroecological ideals (Allen et al., 2003). Conversely, the proliferation of eco-labels as compliance verification has led to consumer confusion, contributing to distrust and dissatisfaction with TPC models (Moon et al., 2017). Additionally, financial, bureaucratic, and organizational requirements pose barriers to widespread TPC application, particularly for small-scale farmers who struggle with high certification costs and documentation demands.
As a consequence, TPC systems may exclude long-time practitioners of holistic agroecosystem management from organic markets, resulting in significant social and economic repercussions.
For these reasons and amid the rise of alternative agri-food networks, there has been a growing interest in adopting alternative and participative practices dedicated to ensuring the authenticity of organic productions. These practices, best known as internal control systems (ICS or group certification) and participatory guarantee systems (PGS), have gained attention (IFOAM, 2003;; Zanasi et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2016).

ICS functions as a quality assurance system for groups of smallholders, with third-party certification bodies only inspecting the system's overall functioning. The certification body conducts a limited number of inspections on a random selection of smallholders, and the final decision involves the entire group. Conversely, PGS is described as "locally focused quality assurance systems [that guarantee organic] producers based on the active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks, and knowledge exchange" (IFOAM, 2003). PGS simplifies bureaucratic procedures for small producers, who often find the extensive documentation required by third-party certification overwhelming. Additionally, PGS helps cut costs by avoiding the involvement of private and/or foreign certification bodies. The emergence of alternative institutions, such as PGS, since the 1990s seeks to go beyond organic, emphasizing the singularity of territory, its people, and resources.

Analyzing the concept of PGS is particularly important in this research, as Italy is the first Western country to recognize the value of PGS and, more precisely, Emilia Romagna region with the regional law 19/2014 that defines Local Participatory Guarantee Systems as "co-designed and managed with the active contribution of the producers themselves, consumers and users and all other interested parties and are based on trust, solidarity networks and the exchange of knowledge" (Emilia Romagna RL 19/2014).

Studying PGSs is difficult as they are mainly adopted by grassroots initiatives that often escape official reports.
PGSs operate locally within agricultural communities, employing direct sales strategies. The success of these systems revolves around three key factors: simplification (involving the reduction of bureaucratic procedures, intermediaries, and transaction costs, leading to a general decrease in expenses), access to organic products in local markets at more affordable prices compared to those offered by large-scale distribution channels, and fostering local development by promoting and enhancing regional products (Sacchi, 2015).

Notable networks that have embraced PGSs include the Brazilian Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia, Certified Naturally Grown (USA), Nature et Progrès (France), Keystone Foundation (India), and Organic Farm NZ (New Zealand). Some PGS initiatives, such as the Brazilian and French ones, anticipated national organic regulations that established third-party certification as the official guarantee system. In some instances, like Namibia, PGS is the primary assurance system for local markets (Sacchi, 2019). Latin America stands out as the continent with the highest awareness of the participatory approach's meaning and value, showing the most outstanding PGS recognition in national legislation.
An intriguing exploration of social innovation practices within AFNs that adopt PGSs emerges when examining the Italian experience. One noteworthy example is the *Genuino Clandestino* campaign, initiated in 2010 as a communication effort advocating for the free processing of organic, fair, zero-food miles agricultural surplus.

Current data from the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (collected through the IFOAM Global PGS Survey in 2015) and insights from Katto-Andrighetto and Kirchner (2017) indicate the existence of 250 PGS initiatives involving approximately 130,000 farmers worldwide. These initiatives, both well-established and in early stages, are dispersed across 73 countries globally. However, these data are collected by voluntary declarations, which means that potential initiatives might escape this analysis. For instance, in Italy, despite IFOAM

indicating the presence of four operational PGS, the work of Sacchi (2019) shows the existence of 17 networks of farmers currently participating in participatory schemes.

5.5.2 Participatory Guarantee System in Campi Aperti

According to an interview with a member of Campi Aperti, PGS *"is not as unknown as many people think or as those who hear about it for the first time think it is" (*interview no. 14).

According to the interviewee PGS is a fundamental tool and also a revolutionary aspect of agricultural life and organic agricultural production.
Campi Aperti implemented this system immediately over 10 years ago as a mutual self-control system. In the Emilian territory, there are also other realities, e.g., from 2015 onwards, Campi Aperti has tried and experimented with a PGS in the Modena area but without success. According to the interviewee, Modena is very small compared to Bologna and therefore probably more reluctant to innovate openness and sociability and more closed-minded.
PGSs work in Parma with the DES (solidarity economy district, made up of gas producers who have set up this GP system for about 7-8 years as a system to self-verify who the agricultural companies of the territory are, how they work, what they do, and why they offer their products in the solidarity economy world.
This system also allows very small farms that cultivate land in a bio-permaculture biodynamic way to have non-invasive and low-impact farming systems which, however, are not certified at ministerial level because they are either very small or because they are unable to sustain the costs at the start of the business.
Campi Aperti has a permanent PGS group that works by allowing members to start up and sell products in the area. It gives many realities the chance to survive.
Partly also because ministerial organic certification has lost some luster in the last 15 years.
The interviewee declared that they were organic ministerially certified from 1993 to 2010 and then decided not to be certified anymore due to economic difficulties, as the certification has different costs based on the institution. Prices depend on the surface and on the presence of a processing laboratory, for example. The interviewee also complains about the fact that some certifiers require a payment for every authorized label. The referent of Participatory Guarantee System at Campi Aperti confirms:

> *This means that if I make a cherry jam, I have to put an authorized label on it. If the following year I put a little ginger in the same jam I have to ask for a new authorization for a new label and this is not doable if you have a small activity. (interview no. 14).*

The credibility of certification, they complain, has become much looser, especially since the agroindustry entered the world of certification. For example, companies like Coop or Esselunga[2] have all their organic products. Now, all supermarket chains have their own certified organic supply chain, and this process began about ten years ago. The first to bring certified organic products to Emilia Romagna was Coop. This economic maneuver led to certified organic products that have been increasingly known, used, and bought, but on the other hand, it has caused a loosening of the networks and controllers.

> *This resulted in farming companies with 100 hectares of land producing tomatoes and beans for the coop and being organic certified. This is an exaggerated extension of land. And for sure, they won't use pesticides but that is not the real meaning of organic farming. It is not enough not to use pesticides; but we must stop cultivating land until it no longer produces anything. Organic production is a much broader thing. (interview no. 14)*

claims an interviewee.

In recent years, many small organic farms have been founded and they would have no way of existing if the participatory guarantee did not exist.

The interviewee claims that this practice is revolutionary because

I opened a farm in 1993. At that time, if you did organic farming, farmers would have laughed in your face saying that you would never survive and that to cultivate, you either use fertilizers or you don't produce. This was the culture and idea of local farmers. 30 years ago to be able to declare to the world (and to the citizens who live around you and to whom you sold your products) that you used organic practices you had to pay the government for an organic certification. Consequently, at least what was the reality 30 years ago, if you were an agricultural producer who used poisonous fertilizers and carried out treatments without criteria and without respecting waiting periods, you didn't have to pay a single cent. That's absurd! Those who protect the territory and produce healthy products had to pay! And those who poison the land weren't even controlled! Things have changed over the years. Now they are doing something. But to use any poison in agriculture you only need a license that you obtain with a few hours of online courses. I don't even know if they inform about side and harmful effects on the environment and consumers. (interview no. 14).

Producers in Campi Aperti know their land and they declare to other members their practices and the way they produce their products. "*I put my face in it because I declare it even without a certification. The farmers take responsibility for themselves*" (interview no. 14).

[2] Coop and Esselunga are two of the main retailers in the italian territory.

The interviewee also wants to clarify that PGS is not a self-certification. A self-certification is valid as long as the farmer makes a declaration. Contrary, a PGS involves a group of farmers from the area that check and control if the statements are true.

To become part of Campi Aperti the first step is to pass the PGS control.

When asked how this practically works within the organization, the interviewee explained the process that is articulated in 5 phases:

1. A new company asks to join Campi Aperti
2. The PGS group organizes a visit to that farm
3. A group of producers of the same type of products as the applicant is created and visits the company to verify that everything they have declared corresponds to the truth. These visits are open to co-producers.
4. The applicant is informed that there is an internal statute with rules on farming practices and processed products (for example ingredients not produced by them must come from Campi Aperti's network, or if this is not possible it must come from fair trade networks and certified organic farms that must be approved by the Association).
5. If what is declared by the applicant on the participation request form is true the applicant becomes a member of Campi Aperti. If what is declared differs from what is found during the visit there is a phase of a request for clarifications. The interviewee also claims that the attitude is also taken into account "*If someone tells lies or tries to make you believe something that isn't the case, this aspect is also evaluated*" (interview no. 14). If the applicant is not compliant with the statute nor willing to modify their practices to be compliant, they exclude them and they cannot be part of Campi Aperti.

Visits to companies, however, are not only made in case of new applicants as there are different situations:

- Entry visits are visits made to new companies that ask to enter.
- Then, there are supplementary visits that happen for different reasons. One example is for production integration: if a member wants to add new products, a visit is needed (for example, if a farmer produces pumpkins but also wants to plant a vineyard, a PGS visit is requested). Visits are also made when active collaborations are created. This is the case to give opportunities to start their activity. These collaborations can have a limited or permanent duration based on the types of products, as the interviewee explained:

> *New and young companies with little land, that don't know if they will be able to buy it or find more to rent etc, but to start producing an income you must have an agricultural project and land to cultivate, but you can however, find a neighbouring farm with which to collaborate and also produce something else and with which you can make a starting income" (interview no. 14).*

- Then there are visits for what are called “exemptions” which are requests made to produce something that is not foreseen by the statute and is valid for only one year. For example, if a farmer produces cheese and wants to bring ravioli with his cheese to the market but does not have the wheat to produce it, the farmer must request an exemption to buy flour from another Campi Aperti producer. After a year, the farmer has to decide what to do. Either to start growing some wheat or to ask for the situation to be evaluated.
- Finally, there are reporting visits: generally, this is discussed in the PGS group, and a decision is made on how to proceed based on what the report entails. In any case, when a report arrives, the subject of the report is personally and verbally involved. The PGS contact person goes to the reported company to chat. This experience is shared by the interviewee:

> *Some time ago, there was a report of a company that was reported for selling goat’s cheese but didn’t seem to have goats: so we wondered where does the milk come from? It turns out that this company had difficulties (it moved from one country to another) and had sold the company it was on, moved to the new one, and bought the goats back which were previously sold to another farmer. But over time, they did everything without notifying anyone, because, in that period, they had bought milk from a nearby company. It’s not easy because the trust is broken. It was revisited anyway, they apologized, and nothing happened from there. (interview no. 14)*

There are also reports of companies being expelled when some serious matter arises: for example labour exploitation, fake production, and promiscuous companies. In this case, the process is longer because the expulsion is never immediate. There is a first warning and a first contact. After the 3rd warning, another visit is organized to understand the reasons behind the failure to comply with the rules. If these reasons are considered irreconcilable, the producer is expelled.

PGS in Campi Aperti has a structured organization: each market has two PGS representatives. These are part of the PGS group, which has two contacts. This group receives the reports that may occur during the markets and manages these peculiarities. The group deals with integrative visits, collaborations, and exemptions. However, some flaws were also pointed out by the interviewee:

> *Despite Campi Aperti’s values, we remain small and petty human beings. It has happened and continues to happen, that some try to fool us. It also happens that sometimes companies were not accepted because those who made the visit do not want competition. (interview no. 14)*

Since Covid onwards, the situation in the markets has deteriorated: many problems have arisen in terms of competition. For example, within markets, some producers do not want other

producers with the same type of product to enter. It is reported to be a very serious problem. These events, however, given the transparency of the activities (there are exchanges on the mailing list that raise the topic) of the Association are pointed out during assemblies and are now being resolved. "*Monopolies must not be created. If you are unable to earn your income in Campi Aperti you will have to find other ways of selling your products*" (interview no. 14).

Summary

This chapter delved into the governance of the two Associations capturing a set of relations, rules and framework that would have been lost without a case study analysis. By analysing the two case studies through the lenses of experimentalist governance it is possible to draw some conclusions whether the two cases comply or not with the analytical framework.

Both case studies present features that resonates with an experimentalist governance setting as they both create novel frameworks that go beyond a top-down managerial approach. The goal definition of both Associations underwent an initial phase of experimentation during which novel forms of knowledge were created through the collaboration of all members. To pursue this goal, both Associations created and developed relations inside and outside the border of the Associations, with which they could reinforce their goals and values. In this sense, the case of Mercato Ritrovato presented less experimentalist traits as the set of relations didn't include institutional actors and it didn't create novel frameworks or protocols. Conversely, Campi Aperti engage in relations with different actors outside the Association, among which the Municipality of Bologna with which they try to build a cooperation to bring their values into institutional debates. Moreover, they also expand this through the creation of novel commercial venues (Emporio Camilla), political actions (Genuino Clandestino) and novel way of financing (pact with Mag6). Both associations show flexibility in terms of broad goal redefinition and peer review based on new challenges and new knowledge, However, even in this case, Campi Aperti proved to be more compliant with an experimentalist approach, as they admit to constantly discuss and adapt their *statuto* based on novel findings, challenges and necessities. Conversely, Il Mercato Ritrovato only modified their *disciplinare* once, and never felt the need to modify it again. From a penalty default point of view, Campi Aperti adopts a participatory guarantee system that has been recognised by the Emilia Romagna region and also by literature, as an innovative tool to provide a local organic certification. Il Mercato Ritrovato presents a similar procedure that, according to the president

> *Is similar to the PGSs adopted by Campi Aperti but It is not that codified and structured. However, we are few, we know each other. We gather together to sell out products, if someone is trying to fool us, sooner or later we'll find it. (interview no. 11).*

It was possible to explore the internal governance of the two Associations in this chapter using the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter 2.
What emerges is that both associations present an internal governance that aligns with the experimentalist framework, although not completely.

By mobilizing the experimentalist governance concept, it was possible to capture not only the set of relations put into place by the members of the two Associations but also to shed light on other innovative aspects. For example, it was possible to capture how internal rules (that can differ from the national legislation) are created and revised and how this happened in an informal setting. This provides valuable insights into understanding that rules can be defined and followed also outside of institutional settings and that farmers' values and motivations are, indeed, crucial and decisive in determining their willingness to cooperate and take part in the Associations' activities. Concerning the type of relations and partnerships created, the analysis of these two case studies supports the point made by Carbone (2017), which is that ideology-driven behaviors bind stakeholders that take part in SFSCs.
This analysis also provides insights into the "degree" of innovative relations and practices the two Associations carry out. This is particularly true in the case of Campi Aperti, which is, as presented in this chapter, more politically driven than Il Mercato Ritrovato and can count on weaker support from the Municipality of Bologna. The combination of these two elements results in creating partnerships and agreements that are, indeed, new and innovative, as envisioned by the conceptualization of experimentalist governance. Experimentalist governance intends to foster the exploration of different solutions and the creation of novel schemes and agreements that are functional to reach the common goal. This aspect is present in both Associations (although in Campi Aperti, it's more evident) as they both engaged in a form of self-governance that allows them to differentiate from the mainstream food system, not only from a production point of view but also from a relational and power-dynamics one.
By analyzing their internal governance through the lenses of experimentalist governance, it was also possible to contribute to the discussion about the difference in AFNs, as both case studies, although similar on some levels, also present crucial internal and external differences that influence (and influence) their activities. It also sheds light on cultural phenomena (for example, the stigma that affects Campi Aperti as they were born from social centers) and on the heterogeneity of values that are present in a small context and that results in different clusters (as

it is confirmed in paragraph 5.2 listing the reasons why the members of the Associations decided to join the network).

To conclude, it can be stated that both case studies resonate with an experimentalist governance setting, but it is also true that there are still elements missing in order to have a "full" experimentalist setting.

Concerning the scope conditions, both associations faced uncertainty, although in different ways, as explained in paragraph 5.1. However, more considerations need to be made when it comes to the polyarchic distribution of power. Internally, both Associations revised the concept of power and hierarchies, which resulted in two organizational charts (paragraph 5.4.2) that, although different, envision a horizontalization of power and consider the general assembly the most important organizational body. However, to reach the goal of the two Associations, namely challenging the conventional food system (although in different ways), there is the need to involve other actors. In particular, the Municipality of Bologna is a crucial actor that must be part of the experimentalist setting. However, in this case, the polyarchic distribution of power cannot be met, as the Municipality is more powerful, and both Associations depend on this actor and on its political guidance and regulations.

Some considerations should also be made concerning the second "building block": creation of networks outside the conventional system. This aspect is crucial because it provides autonomy to the single farmers to actively work in creating novel forms of relations in order to pursue the Association's goal. However, what emerged is that while in Campi Aperti, the research for novel forms of relation is very active in Il Mercato Ritrovato this is less true. Campi Aperti, in fact, presents a history of novel forms of relations (the Genuino Clandestino network, Emporio Camilla, mutual pact with Mag6) that can also be found in internal collaborations among members. Conversely, Il Mercato Ritrovato does not present novel forms of relations. As shown in Table 5, most relations are based on economic reasons, which resonates with the history of the Association. However, this aspect partially fails to meet the second building block of the theoretical framework.

In the following chapter, I will use the process tracing methodology to trace the external governance, namely how these networks interact with the Municipality of Bologna, and try to create their own space in the political arena. In particular, I will investigate their role in creating a city food policy.

What emerges, and I anticipate what will be better explained, is a tension between internal and external governance mechanisms, rules, and norms. This is because the internal governance of the Associations can be, even with some limitations, considered experimentalist. However, analyzing the interactions between these associations and the municipality, it emerges that an

experimentalist setting with the institutional actors present in the context in which the two associations operate is absent. Nevertheless, the governance of the two associations allows them to engage actively with the Municipality of Bologna. Even though an experimentalist setting is still far from being created, some hints suggest the presence of some attempts to include the values and innovations of these networks from the Municipality of Bologna. In the following chapter, this aspect will be investigated in detail.

Chapter 6 - Unveiling the Role of Alternative Food Networks in the Development of a Food Policy in Bologna through Process Tracing

In recent years, the emergence of alternative food networks (AFNs) has challenged the conventional paradigms of food production, distribution, and consumption. These networks, often characterized by their emphasis on local, sustainable, and socially equitable practices, have gained traction as potential catalysts for shaping transformative food policies. A big part of the debate around sustainable agriculture, as well as the recommendation coming from FAO, the EU Commission, and the declaration by the United Arab Emirates that guided the recent COP28, pushes towards a transformation of food systems based, at least in part, on a re-localization. The is made visible through the creation of novel, innovative urban food policies. The role of AFNs in these processes of food policy making is prominent, and it is crucial to understand to what extent they contribute.

This chapter explores the roles played by the two Associations in the formulation and development of a food policy in the city of Bologna through the application of process tracing. Process tracing offers a nuanced understanding of causal mechanisms by tracing events, decisions, and interactions within a specific context. This method is particularly well-suited for unravelling the multifaceted contributions of alternative food networks to policy development (Kay & Baker, 2015). In the case of Bologna, a city renowned for its rich culinary heritage and vibrant community engagement, this method can shed light on how, and if, AFNs have influenced the evolution of local food governance.

Bologna's journey toward a novel food policy is marked by the collaboration between grassroots initiatives, local government bodies (e.g. MUFPP network), and civil society organizations. By conducting in-depth interviews, analysing archival documents, and observing meetings, it was possible to discern the role of the two Associations in shaping policy agendas, influencing policy priorities, and fostering innovative solutions to address pressing food-related challenges.

Aligned with the method, the hypothesis informing this chapter is that the two case studies of this research have fostered a bottom-up approach to policy development but still face difficulties in the policy-making procedures followed by the city of Bologna. This hypothesis is articulated in two separate hypotheses that are elaborated and tested in this chapter.

6.1 The steps of process tracing

The importance of exploring the "black box" of causality when it comes to the role of AFNs in the transformation of food systems is timely, in particular given the noted shift towards a re-localization of food production and consumption with the aim of achieving more sustainable food systems. Process tracing provides a robust method to shed light on this knowledge gap.

The method employed in this research follow Ricks and Liu (2018) and Beach and Pedersen (2019) work, employing a minimalistic approach to process tracing (Tannenwald, 1999). More specifically, the steps that I followed are summarized in figure 11.

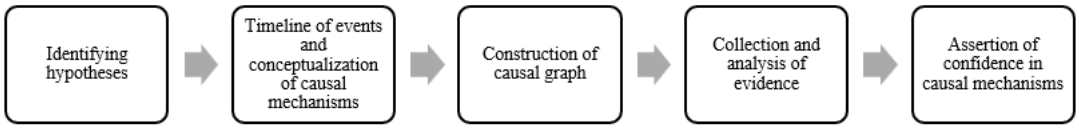


Figure 11 - Process tracing steps. Source: personal elaboration

6.2 Step 1: identifying hypotheses

In process tracing, the first step is to identify hypotheses. In the process of hypothesis formulation, it is crucial to consider a diverse range of alternative explanations (Bennett & Checkel, 2015). For the purposes of this research, this has been addressed through the literature review and with the data gathered through interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires. The resulting hypotheses are the following:

H1: The presence of an experimentalist mode of governance in AFNs is not aligned with the governance logic of municipalities, with impacts on participation and innovation in municipal food policy processes.H2: Both top-down and bottom-up conditions for transforming food systems are unmet in municipal food policy making processes, and there is an absence of the recursive cycle envisioned by experimentalist governance

6.2.1 First hypothesis

The first hypothesis assumes that the way AFNs govern themselves has a direct influence on their relationships with other actors. Building on the preceding analysis, it is of note that Mercato Ritrovato presents less intense characteristics of alternativeness if compared to Campi Aperti,

and is also somehow protected by the Municipality of Bologna, with which they maintain minimal but dependent, and non-conflictual relationships.

This hypothesis also builds on the empirical evidence that AFNs put forward forms of food production and provisioning that provide an alternative to the conventional system, characterized by disproportionate economic power and political influence held by major corporations, negative environmental and social externalities, and negative impact on human health. In doing food systems differently, these coalition of actors comprised of peasants, urban dwellers, scientists, and individuals simultaneously put forward novel visions for food production, supply, and consumption. These coalition do not merely protest; they actively oppose the status quo, demonstrating that alternatives are practically feasible and yield various co-benefits like ecological protection of the land, community building, and enhanced well-being. This is a key reason why many scholars, practitioners and citizens argue that AFNs are likely play a pivotal role in sustainable food system transformations (Mount, 2012; Poças Ribeiro et al., 2021; Whatmore et al., 2003; European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013).

This research starts from the position that the transformative potential of AFNs is rooted not only in their internal values and novel practices but also in their ability govern themselves in ways that can facilitate the establishment of long-lasting relations and internal rules. This ability can act as an incubator for creating and developing new practices and relationships with policymakers in creating new food policies.

By initiating processes of collaborative learning, these movements at the local level build networks and open for mutual support and cooperation, they raise awareness among citizens about distortions in food markets across national borders and they bring to the table concrete and context-adapted alternatives. These relations nurture solidarity and social fairness values, inducing institutional flexibility within the public and private organizations involved. The data presented in the previous chapter evidence that the two case studies embody two values and behaviours that signal the transformative potential of AFNs. The first one is the politicization of food. Particularly evident in Campi Aperti's case, producing food within an alternative framework is not only an ecological choice but a political manifesto, almost provoking policymakers to prove that an alternative is feasible. Moreover, their political activity is not made through electives or representatives but is self-governed and built internally.

The second is represented by the way that AFNs are embedded in their local contexts and challenge the globalization dimension promoted through conventional food production. This often manifests as strict rules when it comes to the origin of the products and in, for example, education activities aimed at reconnecting producers and consumers, understanding seasonality, the actual colour, shape, and taste of fruits and vegetables, comprehend why food cannot be extremely cheap and learn how the prices are (and should be) formed. As one participant noted:

> *If you buy something from the discount you'll never throw it away. Don't you will ask yourself why two courgettes last 20 days in your fridge? There is clearly something wrong. We need to teach it to people. We need to enter into people ['s mind], educate and understand them (interview no. 18).*

Another explained:

> *I was able to directly meet the people who consume my products and start building relationships, explain my work, explain my products and why there are no strawberries or peppers on my stall in January, what are the environmental costs to produce and consume those staples out of seasonality, explain why the prices of my products will never be able to drop to the levels of any discount store because those prices hide very high social costs in terms of exploitation of labour and the environment. (interview no. 3).*

To conclude, the first hypothesis assumes that the type of governance adopted by the Associations influences the ways in which the Associations engage with the Municipality and impact, the role, and influence they have in the definition of political guidelines.

6.2.2 Second hypothesis

As noted above, the second hypothesis is that, when it comes to governance, top-down and bottom-up conditions for transforming food systems are unmet, and there is an absence of the iterative cycle envisioned by experimentalist governance. With reference to the cases, it is clear that the municipality of Bologna still resonates with top-down approaches, having difficulties in finding common grounds with more horizontal organizations that challenge power and hierarchies.

As emerged from interviews and as it will be later further analyzed, actors from the Municipality of Bologna look at these realities with a strong market-oriented lens, failing to capture the variety of innovations and still considering them some niche realities that operate outside market logics. The hypothesis builds on the literature reviewed in chapter 2, that puts forward five important functions municipalities can play in supporting the governance of sustainability transformations. In the case of AFNs, particularly the two that are the focus of this research, the assumption is that these functions are seldomly met, as policy protocols are already well established and built around a conventional food system that do not adequately account for the presence of civil society and grassroots initiatives or, at least, do not consider them as priorities. Further, the literature still fails to capture the nature of interactions between AFNs and institutions, but it's nonetheless

possible to infer that AFNs are usually not supported thoroughly by municipalities. Moreover, municipalities are not always (certainly rarely) coherent actors with clear, singular visions and target, but are, instead, "different departments, individuals, and political interests that need to cooperate, and ignore, compete, and struggle with each other" (Hölscher et al., 2018, p. 147).

Hence, based on available literature and evidence, I hypothesize that both the top-down (in this case represented by the Municipality of Bologna) and the bottom-up (in this case the two case studies) fail to meet and create circularity and collaboration which is crucial for the development of experimentalist settings that proved to be beneficial in reaching sustainability goals.

6.3 Step 2: Timeline of events and conceptualization of causal mechanism

According to Ricks and Liu (2018) it is crucial to identify a sequence of events in a timeline that should end shortly after the outcome of interest and will go back far enough to capture the emergence of the theorized causal variable. The aim of this step is to clarify the processes, identify major events that shaped the outcome, and provide a "face validity" test for the hypotheses that must be tested.

In the case of this research, this step is slightly modified. In fact, it is not possible to establish a clear outcome let alone a specific date, first of all because it is still an ongoing transformation process and also because the focus of this research is not about analyzing a specific event but a process instead. It is also unlikely to assist to a sharp shift in approach towards the conventional food system. According to collected data, this is unlikely not only because of the complexity of the topic but also because the level of analysis, which is the urban level, is incompatible with a national (let alone global) shift. This is because, in Italian legislation and the context of Bologna, competencies are shared among different actors. The municipality, where the two realities are operating, only have competences in the municipal territory. This mean that the municipality doesn't have competences in the productive system because farmers or big production companies are not base in the city. Conversely, the metropolitan city hasn't had competencies after the Del Rio reform (that was previously mentioned). And finally, the region that should be the one conveying the financial means, providing the political address, and that has a power on the productive tissue, proved to be inactive when it comes to AFNs as it's perceived as a local topic.

However, Italian legislation also doesn't come to help. Municipalities have the competence of managing farmers' markets. But this means that farmers' markets are managed only from a

logistical and practical point of view (i.e., venues, fees, schedule, etc.). Municipal farmers' markets regulations do not involve the production system, which is not a municipality's competence and hence is left on producers that can either follow the national legislation or engage in the creation of tailored rules that represent different values. Nevertheless, an increased awareness on the topic of food policy can be observed. The following timeline presents the main events concerning the two case studies and associated legislation.

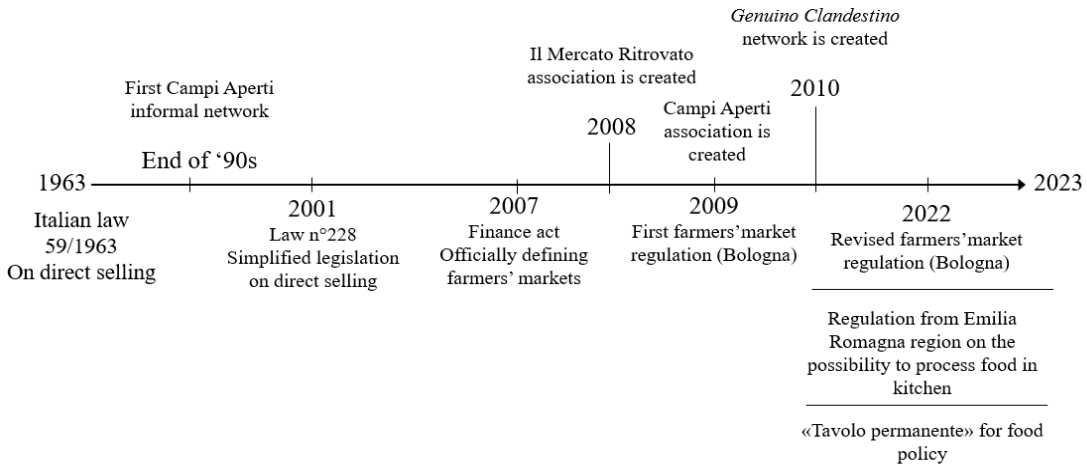


Figure 12 - Timeline with main events in Italian, Regional, and municipal legislation and Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato's milestones. Source: personal elaboration

According to the timeline, activities concerning food increased abruptly after 2007. In this year a national legislation officially recognized farmers' markets, and this led to the creation of the two formal Associations object of this research. Throughout the years the activity of Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato was mainly focused on establishing in the territory and finding regular customers and producers to join the Associations. However, particularly Campi Aperti, struggled in finding support from institutions and advocated for new legislations concerning the possibility to produce processed food in home kitchens and for a new farmers' markets regulation to update the one created in 2009. These milestones happened only in 2022 when the post-pandemic era signed an awakening towards sustainability and quality food and, how interview no. 21 confirmed, corresponded with a series of administrative deadlines from the municipality side.

After establishing a timeline with the main events, the following step is to conceptualize causal mechanisms. According to Beach & Pedersen (2013, p. 101) "[...] if we expected X to cause Y, each part of the mechanism between X and Y would leave the predicted empirical manifestations

that can be observed in empirical material. Detecting these manifestations, or fingerprints, requires the development of carefully formulated case-specific predictions of what evidence we should expect to see if the hypothesized part of the mechanism exists".

In practical terms, this means that conceptualizing causal mechanism involve thinking about what evidence should be observable if the causal theory is valid. As mentioned before, a process tracing study unveiling causal mechanisms on the topic of AFNs participation in the creation of a local food policy has not been carried out yet. For this reason, the conceptualization of causal mechanisms follows a minimalistic approach and is based on empirical data gathered through interviews, questionnaire and document analysis that increased the confidence in causal mechanisms. However, because of the minimalistic approach, this conceptualization does not aim at unveiling the whole set of causal mechanisms, but it aims at providing a starting point to build further research.

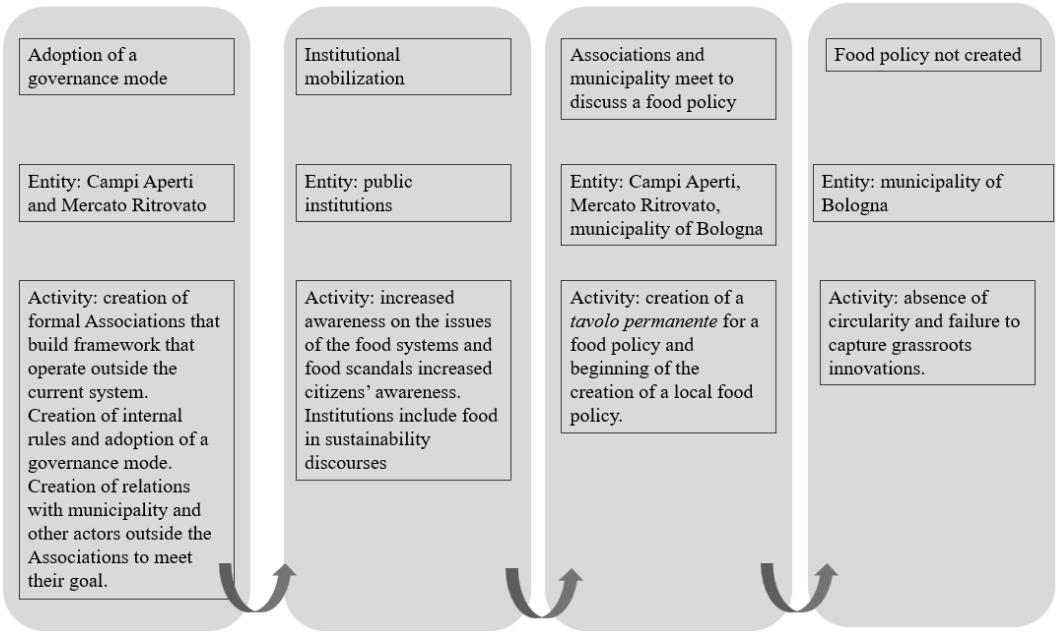


Figure 13 - Conceptualization of causal mechanisms in terms of entities and activities. Source: personal elaboration

The conceptualization of causal mechanisms in figure 13 is represented by four box including the entity and activities carried out.

According to the two hypothesis the adoption of a governance mode - that resonates with the analytical framework developed in chapter 2 - by the two Associations allowed the two case studies to create relations with the Municipality and enter the political discourse on the creation of a food policy. However, a local food policy is not yet present, and available data on municipal

efforts to engage with food related topics highlight an effort on topics such as food waste and food education in school. This signal that the innovations brought by the two Associations are not captured by the municipality that still lack a food policy. Hence, the second hypothesis builds on this and consider this absence as a symptom of a lack of circularity in the practices of the municipality of Bologna, that prevent the creation of a transformative local food policy.
The arrows connecting the boxes represent the causal mechanisms. Causal mechanisms are explained by the evidence that I should be able to observe if the hypotheses formulated above are valid.

6.4 Step 3: Causal graph

The causal graph serves as a visual representation of the chronological cause-and-effect relationship between X and Y. It outlines the timeline and illustrates how X leads to Y, helping to identify the independent variable(s) crucial to the investigation. The causal graph structures the inquiry process effectively by showcasing each instance where the involved actor (whether an individual, organization, or group) made choices that might have influenced the outcome (Ricks and Liu 2018).

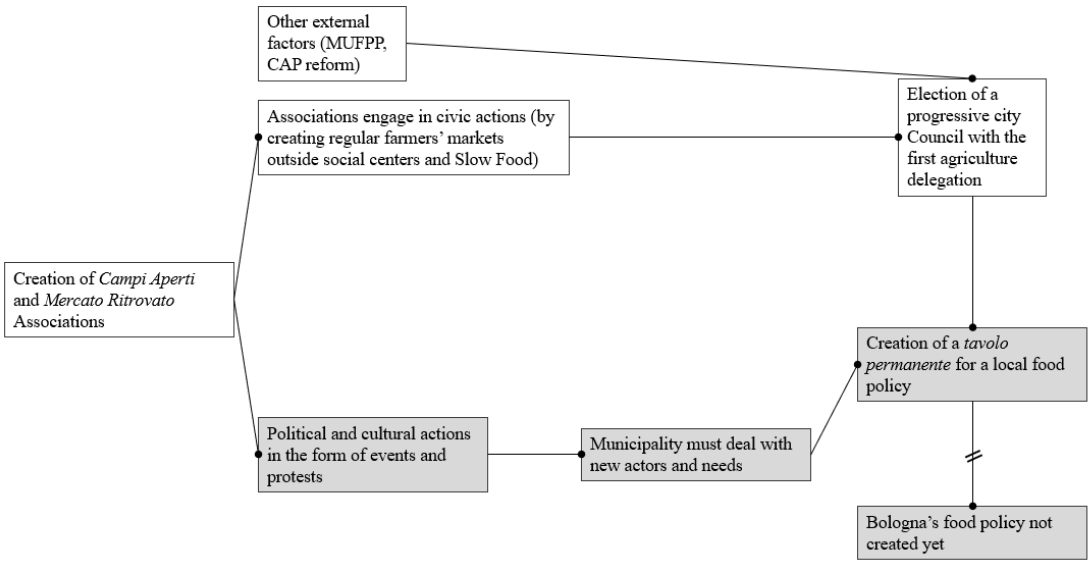


Figure 14 - Causal graph. Source: personal elaboration

The causal graph presented resonates with the minimalist approach to process tracing I adopted throughout the analysis. By bringing together the timeline, the causal mechanisms and the two

hypotheses, the causal graph guides the data gathering process and the final testing phase. It also highlights that the processes that are studied in this chapter do not cover the reasons that contributed to the election of a progressive city Council. In fact, these are considered as external factors and their understanding go beyond the scope of this research.

6.5 Step 4: Collect and analyse evidence,

Data collection and analysis serves the purpose of providing sufficient evidence to test the hypothesis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis (including recordings of municipal meetings dealing with food related topics, Campi Aperti's mailing list, and municipal and regional official documents).

6.6 First causal mechanism

Data collected must provide evidence for three different causal mechanisms. Chapter 4 and 5 provided evidence on the adoption of a governance mode by the two case studies, their stories and the way they engage with the Municipality.

Further evidence, however, is needed to capture the difference between the two case studies in the way they approach the municipality. As evidenced in chapter 5, the two Associations engage with the challenges of the current food system in two different ways, one being more political and the other more cultural. They also present different set of relations with the municipality. Campi Aperti was born from a social centre that is, by definition, quite distant from institutions. Nowadays, their relations with the municipality are not easy and are often conflictual. Conversely, Il Mercato Ritrovato was born from Slow Food and from the intention of the municipality of creating a local farmers' market. The relations between the municipality and Il Mercato Ritrovato hence are almost taken for granted, how interview no. 10 confirmed:

> *The province of Bologna wanted to organize a farmers' market with its own funds" and "We are part of a discussion table with other farmers' markets. It is a tool we use to be heard, not for particular reasons but strictly for organizational issues.*

Nevertheless, both Associations were able to enter the institutional debate on food, as they participated to institutional meetings on food related topics and brought their visions and expectations. The two speeches resonate with their internal values and goals and evidence the differences in action of the two Associations. The presentation of Mercato Ritrovato started by expressing appreciation for the fact that the municipality is expressing interest in food related

topics. Then the Association advanced some recommendation for the creation of a participatory food policy that include citizens as well

> *We hope that there will increasingly be a citizen component as well. In our jargon we call them co-producers and we think they are important actors on which to lay the foundations of a dialogue between the city and its territory. I certainly look forward to the food democracy table can also be a tool for finding synergies (Mercato Ritrovato speech, municipal meeting, December 2022).*

Even though the activities of Mercato Ritrovato lean more towards a cultural approach, the Association still provided a political opinion by reminding that it is crucial to support farmers' markets not only via a municipal regulation, but also by engaging in activities aiming at including other producers. The municipality of Bologna introduced the concept of "ius cibi" which consists in recognizing food as a common and fundamental good and not as a commodity subject to sale. The Association highlights that having a network of local producers is part of this concept, as having access to local and sustainable food is a citizen's fundamental right.

> *I think it is important to support farmers' markets, for example by facilitating the participation of other local producers, which is not straightforward. We ask the municipality to promote this way of doing agriculture that brings local agricultural food. I would say that this partially reflect what ius cibi is. It is a citizen's right to have access to wholesome food and have relations with those farmers who really care of the territory, who really lowers the environmental impact of agriculture and who really produce food that is first and foremost fresh as well as good. And this is the big difference between our type of small peasant distribution and large organized distribution. (Mercato Ritrovato speech, municipal meeting, December 2022).*

The innovation and sense of community that both Associations develop is also evident in the recommendations provided in these meetings. Il Mercato Ritrovato, for example, suggested the adoption of a common disciplinary brand as an instrument of promotion for local farmers' markets. The Associations remark the need to support all farmers' markets in the city that, as noted in chapter 3, are copious and, according to Mercato Ritrovato are "*one of the most particular things of our Bolognese territory*". Further recommendations expressed by the Association covered more practical issues such as the necessity of access to pedestrian areas or the provision of common equipment for recycling glasses. Finally, Mercato Ritrovato remarks the importance of farmers' markets as "*[they] are not only places of commerce and exchange of goods but they are places of sociality, they are safeguards of culture and vitality in the territory and contribute in a fundamental way to making an active city*" (Mercato Ritrovato speech, municipal meeting, December 2022). The Association concluded its speech by expressing their support for the food democracy table (the municipality intended to create a permanent table on

topic of food democracy and food sovereignty) as they consider it a useful tool to create synergies.

The speech of Campi Aperti resonates with their political action as it criticizes the municipality which is described as inactive and incoherent. The Association remarks that moving the current food system towards small production carried out with agroecological practices is the only solution to the current ecological crisis and to the challenges of the current food system. The speech was carried out by the president of Campi Aperti that shared her experience:

> *As a farmer and agricultural producer I have experienced firsthand the effects that the agro-industrial production and distribution model has on farmers, however I understand that perhaps from the outside certain concepts are a little difficult to identify. [this model] is characterised by enormous power concentrated in few hands. Corporations hold the patents for the seeds of fruit plants, they hold the production of fungicides and manage the distribution chain which reaches the final consumer directly. This model sees on the one hand farmers that have the role of mere production tools, that are denied any decision-making freedom, that are forced to submit to market logic that mainly favours intermediaries. On the other hand, there are the consumers depicted as passive actors, and therefore whose only possibility of choice is relegated to which packaging to choose from a supermarket without being able to question the production processes underlying that product" (Campi Aperti speech, municipal meeting, December 2022).*

The president of the Association claim that her choice of leaving the large-scale distribution was not easy as the current legal framework is built around this kind of industry that should be dismantled: She noted:

> *I rejected this model because it led me to get into more and more debt with each production cycle. It forced me to have increasingly tighter rhythms in cultivation operations, always pushing me to become more technical, increase the gross marketable production to try to guarantee myself a minimum income which I never managed to have (Campi Aperti speech, municipal meeting, December 2022).*

The president of the Association proceeds by declaring that leaving the large-scale distribution allowed her to regain the right to be able to directly sell her products, moving outside those barriers that are set by the agroindustry, by the distribution chains, and with the connivance of legislators that help these actors maintain their dominant position. The speech of Campi Aperti aims at helping the political actor to realise that there is a real counteractive force operating in the city, which can bring the transformative strength that is needed for a transformation of the current food system. This speech resonates with the political connotation of the Association. They believe that the discussion on ecological transition is still centred on PDO and PGI products and this is contradictory because it doesn't seem to take a distance from long supply chain. Moreover, the Association believes that the current debate on food waste still focuses on actions towards the

final consumer without recalling the responsibility of the large players who are the primary cause of food waste. They claim that what the municipality is doing is still not enough as it is crucial and urgent to abandon the large-scale distribution logic, and to do so the municipality should stop facilitating the creation of new supermarkets and start concretely supporting the emergence and the proliferation of peasant food networks. The Association concluded its intervention with an open question to the municipality that, however, was not addressed during the meeting

> *We need to move away from the large-scale distribution model. And It's not just us, small farmers, who say it: ISPRA says it, the UN also says it, FAO says it. And so today we are here to ask what does the municipality of Bologna say? What space does the municipality want to create for these small virtuous networks?" (Campi Aperti speech, municipal meeting, December 2022).*

Through the adoption of a governance model these two Associations were able to organize markets that are not only profitable, but also to create relations and networks among members and other actors that contributed to creating a real counteractive reality. Their visions and values are held together by internal mechanisms that differentiate these Associations from other markets that only meet to sell their products. The activity of these Associations, in fact, goes beyond selling their products and this emerged from the data collected and analysed in chapter 5. Hence, the organisation of their activities is clearly different from the framework adopted by the municipality but structured enough to create strong networks capable to interact with the municipality in a political debate.

6.7 Second causal mechanism

To shed light on the second causal mechanism it is crucial to analyse the intricate set of relations happening among actors that are involved not only in the creation of a food policy, but also on the organisation of the markets and on the creation of the current legislation. Gathered data allowed for a first analysis of the processes that bring together the two Associations (that proved to adopt a governance model) and policymakers in defining a food policy. According to the collected data, it's possible to map four different levels of actors in the context of Bologna. The first is the Region; the Municipality of Bologna represent the second; the third is the neighbourhoods and their presidents, and the Fourth is AFNs. Each level provided their experiences and perceptions on the topic of food policy. The Region, the municipality and the neighbourhoods also provided their perception of the two case studies.

In the following sections, I will analyse the data collected, pinpointing the main findings of each of the four levels of interactions. I will conclude with analysing of the highlights emerged during

the municipal meetings on food related topics. These data will serve to the testing phase that will be carried out in the next paragraph.

6.7.1 Region's Perception

The Emilia Romagna region deals with agriculture related topics through the Agriculture, Hunting, and Fishing Department. This department has a director who coordinates approximately 750 people divided into different operational divisions called "structures" and "work areas" and is supported by approximately 20 managers and by the AGREA agency that depends on the Region and deals with CAP payments. The Region distributes around 600 million € every year in the form of direct payment to farmers, making agriculture a very supported sector because, unlike others, it has a wildly fluctuating profitability and "*it's not easy to lay off a farmer, [because] he shouldn't lose his business, this is why we take care of supporting risk management*" (Interview no. 17).

According to the Region, the main challenge, as well as the biggest political topic, is sustainability and it revolves around two paradigms: organic farming development and the reduction of chemicals. The Region moves alongside these values and tries to push forward efforts on converting conventional farming to organic: today 25% of cultivated area in the region uses organic methods.

When it comes to discussion about food sustainability, an interviewee from the region confirmed that "*food is made by the industry, no longer by us"* (interview no. 17). An opinion or a critique did not follow this strong statement. Still, it was used to justify the topics that are part of the regional agenda and the positions that the Region is taking.
The first topic concerns labelling and the European debate around nutriscore[3].
The distancing of citizens from the agricultural sector has brought the idea of food further and further away from their mode of production, which is why there is a need to label processed food to help the consumer understand the nutritional value of products. The Region doesn't look favourably on Nutriscore because it's likely that traditional products from the region would be labeled with a red light, as many regional products contain animal proteins or processed fat. This means that in order not to scare the customer, the traditional product should be distorted by subjecting it to an intense nutritional transformation. The interviewee noted

[3] Nutriscore is a five colors nutrition label system that aims at simplify the nutritional values of a product by providing an overall score for the nutritional value. It is currently adopted on a voluntary basis. Italian government is currently opposed to this initiative.

> *It is a policy that distorts food. We believe it's way more important to inform the consumer. The problem of putting a traffic light is that it tells you that it is dangerous to eat either a gram or a kilo of it, and nowadays consumers have no idea of what they eat and cannot hence deal with this information. (interview no. 17).*

Another topic of concern is artificial proteins. There is a strong debate because "*big capitals are gliding on this topic. The population is increasing and there are more mouths to feed. Will the earth be able to feed her everything? I do not know. This is why artificial proteins are important"* (interview no. 17).

Concerning this topic, the interviewee claims that an important problem involves wheat, and the debate that revolves around the topic from the beginning of the Russian-Ukraine conflict. The general worry about the possible shortage of wheat was disproved by the interviewee who claimed that while in the 1960s the EU had a shortage of raw materials, with a strong CAP, it ended up having a surplus. To date, more wheat is produced in the EU than consumed. However, it is recognized that Italy cannot have autarky because it has a production deficit. Here there is a lack of soy proteins because it is not possible to produce them at competitive prices if compared to Brazil and the USA. For this reason, the Region strongly believes on the importance of maintaining a global commercial flow for food staples.

Another topic perceived as one of the main problems for agriculture is the climate. With the increase of extreme weather events (which compounds with the usual market problems) the climate brings new risks to which the Region is reacting but at a pace not fast enough. Climate change brings new parasites that infest more, there is significant and growing external pathogen pressure, and it jeopardizes the goal of reducing chemical inputs.

Finally, the last perceived issue is workforce. In advanced economies, agriculture is no longer attractive; there is a very low generational turnover. Agriculture has ups and downs, it does not provide permanent employment, and the interviewee claims that it would be ideal to have workers who come only in times of need and not all year round. However, these rules are not regional but are based on national policies.

From what was said until now, it appears that the Emilia Romagna Region takes care of issues that are macro compared to AFNs and local food policies and does not engage in activities aimed at transforming the food system. Instead, the activities are based on following European and global debates and protecting the farmers.

Nevertheless, when asked about the perception of AFNs, some insights emerged.

The region perceives farmers' markets as realities that were born as a response to market problems, which act without the intermediation of the then prevailing distribution model, which had a global and not local approach. The idea of farmers' markets is developed with the concept

of sustainability linked to the short supply chain (which in the Italian regulation is conventionally settled at around 70km). The Region tried to offer support through the rural development program, but it was not decisive, as it was the mayors' action.
The Region decided to help municipalities renovate buildings to be used as farmers' markets, through the allocation via tender of 1 million euro. This allowed to finance about 7 markets. The rationale behind this project was to support the activity of farmers who sell their products. Not every farmer can harvest, prepare the product, and create a market or directly sell it on its farm. Traditionally, each phase corresponds to a profession (farmer, logistics, trader).
However, the perception of farmers' markets differs from the one expressed by the Municipality (which will be analysed after). "*There is space for farmers' markets, if you walk down the street, you can see the stalls. Farmer markets arrived here 15 years ago, Coldiretti [4]was among the first to bring them with the "Campagna Amica" project"* (interview no. 17).

According to the Region, the most traditional and consolidated form of bringing the agricultural world closer to the citizen was that of agritourism and educational farms. In this case, it is not the countryside that goes to the citizens but the citizens that go to the countryside. In general, the experiences of AFNs are not contemplated in regional legislation and are considered "*spontaneous things"* (interview no. 17).
The only legislation contemplating direct selling activities is law 15/2021, with which the Region established an agricultural consultancy body. Farmers' interests are carried forward by their representatives that creates associations or cooperatives. Those with more than 2000 members can be registered and participate in the resolution to contribute. AFNs do not have the numbers and organization to participate, and there is no farmers' market Association.

6.7.2 Municipality perception

For the first time in history, the Municipality of Bologna has a Councilor with a delegation to agriculture. This is something that the city of Bologna never had before because agriculture related topics were usually dealt with by the Department of Commerce. This Department used to deal with agriculture topics from a commercial and productive perspective without considering a cultural dimension, and the lack of a more holistic view was one of the reasons that pushed toward the creation of a more specific position.

[4] Coldiretti is the major association of representation and assistance of Italian agriculture. It represents the majority of farming production in Italy and is highly criticized by AFNs because it protects big farm companies and doesn't advocate toward a transformation of the food system advocated by AFNs.

This office is not very structured yet, as the Councilor has also other delegations other than agriculture, these are schools, new architectures for learning, adolescents, agri-food and water networks, and education for peace and non-violence. However, in an attempt to promote the transition toward a more sustainable food system and to support the Councilor, the Mayor of Bologna gave a delegation to an expert professor who works together with the agriculture Councilor.
Together they try to promote policies and projects consistent with the idea of having a "food city" based on some shared pillars: fight against food waste, conscious consumption, local production, solidarity, and the right to quality food for those who cannot afford it.

The Municipality reminds that until 2015 The Province had a delegation for agriculture: after the Del Rio reform (2015), all competencies are centered in the Region and this is considered a problem. This belief is built based on the fact that other Italian municipalities (like Milan and Florence) that have a delegation for agriculture, can have an urban planning structure that follows the territory and can have a major impact on the city's food system.

The "anomaly" of the presence of io agriculture because at a city level was raised by several interviewees (interview no. 19, 20 and 22) as the city of Bologna does not have large farms or production companies in the municipal territory. These are present at a metropolitan or regional level, and this explains both why the delegation to agriculture has always been metropolitan and why municipal policies and rules focus mainly on food waste, food consumption, and food awareness.

6.7.2.1 Municipality's perception of AFNs

The Municipality perceives Campi Aperti and Mercato Ritrovato as two different companies that arise from a network of small producers in the province. Campi Aperti is considered a network more oriented towards organic that is also working on promoting its food policy. In contrast, il Mercato Ritrovato is considered as a reality carrying out a vital communication campaign from a cultural point of view, and to be a very important moment of aggregation on Saturdays. Both realities are recognized to have an essential function in promoting food by selling it and building a narrative around it.

However, the Municipality of Bologna feels that these realities are trying to build a food policy that is, in their words, "*their food policy"* (interview no, 15). This doesn't resonate with the idea of creating a holistic vision for a transformative food policy and is an important piece of evidence for the two hypotheses. The "we vs them" narrative proves to be recurrent.

The Municipality believes that the importance of AFNs grew over the last 20 years for different reasons: because of the European regulations that have concretized the organic movement ("*organic agriculture is the most regulated nowadays*", interview no, 16), and because of the public awareness that began to increase in the 80s after several environmental crises. The first environmental crisis involving, among other, the territory of Bologna (the methanol scandal[5]) triggered these cultural and social movements and resulted in consumers' more interest in the origin of the products.

"*Rediscovering that food is a political matter and is strictly related to agriculture seems banal, but it is a very recent rediscovery. Those who live in the city do not question the product's genesis*" (interview no. 16).

However, there is the perception that this awakening created the problem of two different clusters of citizens that move at different speeds: the upper-middle-class elite who are attentive and can afford to buy local organic food, and the lower class who eat unhealthy food because they don't have money as the problem of obesity and diabetes, which is mostly common among the lower classes, confirm.

Related to this, an interviewee pointed out that Campi Aperti is strongly critical of the Municipality because they blame them for investing too much in large-scale retail. Still, according to the interviewee from the municipality, the Association fails to understand that only a niche can afford to buy their food at farmers' markets. Moreover, the farmers that are part of the Association are not enough to be able to feed the city.

Nevertheless, they consider Campi Aperti a very well-prepared educated elite who has combined environmental issues with social sustainability. However, the attention of public opinion arises from environmental emergencies and fear for one's health. According to an interviewee:

> *Organic is booming in children's products. Campi Aperti brings an important upgrade in quality, and in their concept of food sovereignty, there is also the valorization of work. The members clearly realized that the conventional system (both distribution and production) had great limitations. But I don't know if it can be replicated for everyone, in a complex society we would always need the supermarket. Sure, there is a lot of room to improve the contact between producer and consumer, but I don't think that in 20 years, we will eat what the farm near our house eats. We can criticize large-scale retail trade as much as we want, but it has created the middle class of food and allowed even larger populations to eat better and at adequate prices. This step was necessary, and now there is a margin to return to a direct relationship between producers and consumers. (interview no. 16).*

[5] The methanol wine scandal refers to a fraud that happened in the late '80s in Italy. It was perpetrated by adulteration of table wine with methanol and resulted in several deaths, poisoning, and permanent disabilities.

6.7.2.3 Food sustainability and food system transformation

The topic of food sustainability and food system transformation was also debated. The Municipality of Bologna remarks that they have become national representatives of the "zero waste" network (*Spreco Zero*), which is a network of municipalities that works to fight food waste. The topic of sustainable food production also enters the public discourse, as the Municipality recognizes that there is the need to create an agricultural model that brings back agricultural biodiversity values as far fewer vegetables are produced than needed ("*fruit has almost disappeared and livestock farming has almost disappeared as well*", interview no. 16). Moreover, they highlight the importance of giving a new role to the use of land, especially by companies that not only intend to use different agriculture practices (including organic and more advanced techniques for sustainability) but that are also willing to explain to citizens what they do and bring up a citizen-agricultural production relationship that has been lost for some time.

Considering the long-term view of the agriculture sector, the Municipality recognizes the complexity of the challenges the sector must face. Still, it provides a vision for future goals: the reconversion of agriculture towards an organic farming model and the recovery of a circular economy. The problems perceived by the actor are the impoverishment of organic substances ("*because soil that becomes impoverished takes many years to regain balance*", interview no. 16), the introduction of synthetic fertilizers (which are high in energy consumption), and the changes toward an increase in meat consumption that happened in the 50s and 60s.

Hence, the municipality recognizes the problems of the "new agricultural model" born from chemistry and the industrialization process that introduced new inputs into the production cycle, and this resonates with the set of critiques expressed by AFNs.
The Municipality admits that the objective of that agricultural model was to maintain high yields (to produce feed for animals and to feed people), and this led to an increase in such an environmental impact that the agricultural system today cannot survive if farmers do not provide more inputs to the soil. They also recognize a problem with logistics as "*getting food to the city is a complex issue*" (interview no. 15). They also identify that this process of industrialization of agriculture led to less awareness of the issues of the agriculture sector from citizens as they are completely disconnected from it. From this point of view, the municipality recognizes the need for more local consumption as investing in local production results in less energy input. They also admit that there is the difficulty in changing consumer lifestyles as it is not within everyone's reach from an economic point of view.

Considering the involvement of AFNs, the municipality confirms that there are some projects in progress that involve AFNs. These projects attempt to accompany AFNs versus a more overall idea of food system that also includes the municipality's vision. The Municipality cannot intervene in the Associations' policies, but they can agree on guidelines and values and encourage their activities within the limits of the law. This particularly refers to Campi Aperti that challenge the Municipality by asking them to be exempted from paying the waste and public land tax. This request was based on the Association's activities being zero waste. The Municipality responded by creating exemptions, but on the other hand, these Associations are, in fact, businesses, and must comply to tenders that regulate farmers' markets.

From this emerged the first element of tension between the Municipality and Campi Aperti: the interviewees from the Municipality confirmed that all farmers' markets present in the city of Bologna recognized the efforts to improve embodied in the new farmers' markets regulation with the exception of Campi Aperti.. The Municipality believes that if farmers' markets don't work, it doesn't depend on how much they pay in taxes but on the fact that the market is not in the right place at the right time and fails to intercept the right dynamics (how citizens live in that area, for example). Also, the interviewees don't perceive this discontent in a dramatic way because a dialogue remains, and the conflict is not necessarily considered separatist.

Other projects were also mentioned that do not directly involve AFNs: the municipality, together with the civic coalition, has undertaken a project on the future of the Apennines, where agricultural issues are relevant. Even the recent flood emergency has brought to light a very strong debate on the future and protection of the territory which led to internal discussions regarding the regional urban plan rules that concerns building on hills. During the '60s, the Region strongly limited the possibility of building on hills and today nothing can be built with the exception of what is allowed by the regional urban plan. As the interviewee confirms:

> *This has created a funny dynamic whereby nothing can be done on the hills, but if someone had an old shed, they could knock it down and make a terraced house, and this happened. If someone has a farm and wants to expand it, they can't do it because it can only be rebuilt on an existing surface. And therefore we are discussing a possible variant to the general urban plan, on how to give more concessions to farmers because essentially the problem that clearly emerged during the flood is that the hill, not having a precise function, does not even have the protection of the territory that requires the prevention of hydrogeological instability. Therefore, very simply, if it is not convenient or there is no possibility of cultivating, the economic motivation for farmers to take care of the crops is lost. (interview no. 21).*

6.7.3 Neighborhood perception

Figure 15 - Bologna's neighborhood map. Source: Wikipedia

The Neighborhoods of Bologna are decentralized institutions and represents citizens' first approach to the Municipality. They are a municipality sector that takes care of parts of the territory. The neighborhood president does not have the powers of a mayor because the neighborhood does not have the powers of the municipality. Throughout the various reforms, the neighborhoods have taken on three main roles:

1. They are the first point of approach for citizens because the public relations office (URP) is managed by the neighborhood
2. They manage local school educational services, from nursery to middle school
3. They are in charge of the care of the community (with the latest reform) that is, acting as a point of reference for territorial stakeholders (parishes, neighborhood houses, etc.) for aspects relating to initiatives relating to the protection of the territory and the care of it.

Considering the topic of food, five of the six neighborhoods host markets from the two case studies of this research and also have different perceptions of the phenomena as these areas in the city of Bologna present different demographics, history, and characteristics.

I interviewed presidents in neighborhoods that host either Il Mercato Ritrovato or Campi Aperti farmers' markets to understand their perception and relationships with these realities and grasp potential differences or novel ways of interacting that differ from the relationships with the Municipality, being the neighborhood the first point of contact of citizens.

Neighborhoods have relationship mainly with Campi Aperti Association because the neighborhood defines the market venues, whilst il Mercato Ritrovato does not need these kinds of relationships as the market is organized on a private area. All interviewees are aware of these Associations and describe these markets as composed by farmers and producers that sell what they can produce, with high quality and local wholesome food. A neighborhood's president said

> *Obviously, when possible, we try to favor farmers' markets for a very simple reason: because those are places where people meet. We want to encourage all those actions that can contribute to attack a big problem that we notice especially in elderly or foreigners: loneliness. [...] We have a significant number of elderly people: 1 over 4 citizens is over 60 years old, and 1 over 10 citizens is over 80 years old. We are talking about thousands of single-residential units, loneliness of elderly is a very important issue because it fuels other types of fears: detachment, non-sharing, fear of scams, etc. The markets are crucial because people can meet, for many elderly people shopping is the only reason why they go out before locking themselves in their houses. (interview no. 25)*

Neighborhoods are aware of the beneficial effects that these venues have on community but are also worried because these markets often present higher prices comprared to the large-scale retail they would like to counteract. Interviewees claim that they are aware of the high quality of the products sold by the two Associations, but are also worried that some families and other fragile citizens might end up being excluded, and express concerns about the risk that these venues become elitist markets.

In general, neighborhoods are more interested in the community-driven value of these initiatives but remain skeptical about the possibility to have farmers'markets, or other forms of alternative food sourcing, as the main source to feed the city. One interviewee claims:

> *I see them not as elitist realities but as realities that are not an answer to the topic of food system transformation. The market is a place where you go to get supplies of primary goods and maybe you take the opportunity to have a chat and cope with a type of fragility which is the social one. It is clear that those who have to go to Caritas suffer from economic fragility and cannot be satisfied with these markets. Agricultural producers also contribute to many things but not to that of giving support to the low threshold. This does not mean that they are elitist but it is not convenient to go there. The fact that their supply chain is short should be seen in the price, but what we see is that although the supply chain has clearly been reduced, the final price is higher [than supermarkets]. (interview no. 25).*

Some others also pointed out the fact that even if these realities want their alternativeness to go noticed, the difference between them and large scale distribution, in administrative terms, does not exist. This mean that they are in fact individual producers who sell their products and cannot be exempted from paying the public land tax or it cannot exempt them from participating in a tender to be able to organise and participate to the market. In general, some neighnorhoods' presidents perceive that these Associations would like to receive a special treatment which, currently, is not permitted. A neighborhood's president states:

> *Campi Aperti is an anomaly because it is an alternative network closer to social centers but which must respect the rules compared to others. Campi Aperti does not believe in organic product declarations and certifications, on the other hand if a product is organic it must be certified. (interview no. 26).*

Some other areas of the city of Bologna (such as the San Donato-San Vitale neighborhood) have more sensibility towards topics of community and social identity. In these area, for example, activities with Campi Aperti network are more intense and they relate also with other activities and projects that emerged together with the neighborhood. This is a proof that synergies with institutions can happen and bring new initiatives. This is the case of Emporio Camilla, which is a self-managed cooperative in Bologna (the first in Italy), whose members are not simply customers, but also owners and, once a month, workers. In this neighborhood Campi Aperti market is exempted from paying the public soil tax. The difference in perception of different neighborhoods emerged clearly when another interviewee defined the relationships with Campi Aperti as an "open discussion" and was worried that the Piazza Verdi's market (one of the most central squares in Bologna that is highly attended by students) would become just a moment of food consumption with loud music, that was considered "*a little outside the box*" (interview no. 26) for a farmers' market.

The topic of prices was raised also by neighborhoods' presidents. They confirm that "*We are a population still attentive to freshness, in our collective imagination the stuff in the supermarket is not fresh"*(interview no. 24) but nevertheless "*This city must address the problem of the cost of food"* (interview no. 26). From one side this confirms that the population is attentif to the topic of freshness and has a sensibility toward food sold at farmers' markets and produced locally, as this represent the imaginary of fresh food. However, accepting to pay a premium price that recognises these qualities seems to be hard. Another neighborhood's president claims

> *In the Ugo Bassi6's market, which I remember as a market with great offers, tomatoes cost 13 euros per kilo. I would like the possibility of finding products that cost a little*

[6] The interviewee refers to *Mercato delle Erbe*, an historical covered market in the city center of Bologna that do not qualify as AFN but nevertheless represents a direct selling experience.

less, the city is starting to struggle when faced with these prices. Sometimes we don't realize it. But food is also a problem as it is housing. We cannot avoid the issue of costs, because if making myself a plate of wholemeal pasta and organic tomatoes costs me €7 per plate, the average family cannot afford it. The whole issue is also linked to the quality of the food, we must not create the high quality high income dichotomy, otherwise we have done everything wrong. Politically this is an important issue, to make sure that wholesome food can be accessible. (interview no. 26)

Data gathered from the neighborhoods provide a clearer vision of the mismatch between the perception of "good food" and what is considered a "fair price". According to the interviewee they consider problematic that everything that is not "*industrial*" can become mainstream only based on people's economic possibilities. This perception seems to link the consumption of food from alternative food circuit only to someone's financial means. However, how literature highlighted and how the experience of the case studies proves, many other factors define the choice of consuming and buying food form alternative realities. For example the emergence of Campi Aperti's market is strongly linked to self-governed social center that do not represent elitists realities, if anything the opposite.

Another important topic has been brough by the president of a neighborhood that hosts the market of a social cooperative that was born from a collaboration process with local producers, and local institutions. When asked to explain why this experience was special or considered valuable the interviewee claimed:

This is the best situation we have in the area because it is a social enterprise. And doing social enterprise means having a business that works, but unlike other markets. A farmer's market instead is particularly about the farmer…Who produces the stuff they sell?. At this cooperative everything is produced by people and the owners must be present at the market on Sundays. But the owner must be there because he must be able to explain what he does and what he doesn't do. This is one of the most beautiful and loved markets in Bologna. They increased the number of stalls. I don't like going to buy from producers who buys their products at retail or big vegetables markets, and the legislation does not identify a very strong restriction on this. I thought I saw boxes with market labels from other manufacturers. Farmers markets? I would squeeze these realities very much. Because I want to buy from the producers.(interview no. 26)

Without knowing it, the interviewee was describing what happens at the markets of the two case studies. In fact, products available are produced by the farmers who are there to clarify any doubts, to build relationships and to figure as quality warrants Moreover, as mentioned before, these realities have their own statute that is not a copy of italian legislation. This brings two different issues:

1. Lack of knowledge: institutional actors criticize the case studies, in particular Campi Aperti, accusing them of not being sufficiently "special" or "valuable" to expect a special treatment.

However, when they are asked to describe their ideal reality, the description matches what the two case studies already do. This means that the institutional actor is not fully aware of what innovations these realities create and how they detach from the conventional food system

2. Loss of potential relations: what expressed by the institutional actors so far clearly recognise the values and transformative potential of the case studies. Yet, the absence of communication creates a short circuit among realities that prevent to create potential fruitful collaborations even though the proximity between AFNs and the neighborhoods could facilitate this process. In fact, an interviewee confirmed that

> *It is a little easier to work together because they come from the bottom and therefore their requests can go beyond the fact that they are private actors, because they do their job but certainly we can help them in that sense. We can involve them in projects. It is clear, however, that everyone is a little inside their own "barricade", we are a public actor and we cannot favor the private sector. At most, the private sector must work with us to do things that can be put at the service of citizens. So there is a lot of mediation work that needs to be done but I see a lot of potential"(interview no. 26)*

6.7.4 AFNs perception

During the pandemic period, Slow Food Bologna (SFB) worked on a manifesto for the city's food policy. They wrote it, published it and gave it to the municipality of Bologna when Virginio Merola was major[7]. There was a post-pandemic moment during which a document on the future of the city was published and shared among the institutional communication channels, but it did not contain any reference to food. SFB then intervened asking for an inclusion of food related topic, and presented their vision of food policy. "*Let's say that in the end in this enormous document it turned out that there were 4-5 sentences on food*"(interview no. 18) commented a SFB's interviewee, that also declared: "*I don't know what the Municipality and the new mayor did with it*."

SFB also remarks that they were the promoters of the meetings to create a food policy keeping one important thing in mind: Bologna signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) but it was not advancing any food policy discussion. According to the interviewees, other italian cities are progressing, even small cities. SFB also highlight the importance of "starting from the bottom" that is an approach that, according to them, the municipality is not adopting.

According to interviewees from SFB, Campi Aperti (CA) and Il Mercato Ritrovato (MR), AFNs are not participating in the transformation of the food system. This is because, in contrast to other

[7] Virginio Merola was the major of Bologna from 2011 to 2021. He was part of Partito Democratico, one of the historic left-wing party in Italy

Italian cities, Bologna started the process of creating a food policy by deciding a food policy manifesto without listening to all realities that are part of the food sector in the city. Moreover the European Union provides some fundings for the development of urban food policies, some Italian cities applied and received these fundings and are now capable of dedicating resources to the creation of food policies. This is the example of the cities of Milano and Bergamo. SFB suggested that Bologna would apply to obtain European funds for the development of the city's food policy, but the municipality responded by saying that it had too much to do and did not have enough people who could take care of it, so they decided to opt for other priorities.

As mentioned before, the mayor gave a delegation to an expert professor from the University of Bologna who works together with the agriculture Councilor and this is considered highly questionable by the two Associations and SFB for several reasons, the most important being that this professor brings topics based on his own research field, which is food waste, and operates in an academic manner and not in a political one. This is a problem according to SFB, because a food policy is a political matter and it is not just about food waste. Moreover, this professor has objectives that are linked to his skills and experiences, and has little to do with a shared participation in the creation of a food policy.

SFB continues by admitting that they don't perceive openness from the municipality. This is grounded on the fact that they had a long year-long negotiation for the new regulation of farmers' markets that didn't result in a clear cut transformation from the previous one or in political standpoints.

According to available documents, it also appears that in 2022 the municipality approved the new farmers' markets regulation, and created a new "tavolo permanente" (permanent table) for the food policy. However, according to and interviewee "*at the end of 2022 the municipality had a series of administrative deadlines that they had to resolve and this helped obtaining some recognition, because something had to be done let's say. That's why 2022 seemed to be such a productive year*" (interview no. 19).

Concerning how these regulations have been perceived, the interviewees from SFB, CA and MR believe that the municipality has always had different treatments based on the final users. "*The new farmers' markets regulation somehow put everyone on the same level. Many things of our requests were not listened to, we were told that things would be done and we have been waiting for two years*" (interview no. 18) claims an interviewee. "*The new regulation doesn't include some aspects that we discussed in the assemblies*" (interview no. 20) pinpoints another interviewee. An interviewee from CA made a stronger statement by declaring "*Who wants Campi Aperti? Legacoop brings to the municipality thousands of votes and millions of euros. Campi Aperti is a den of communists and anarchists who don't vote*" (interview no. 9).

However, this feeling of being left out is not only expressed based on the contents of the new farmers markets regulation, but also on the modality through which meetings about farmers' markets or the food policy are organized. "*I found out about the meetings at a dinner… so you go figure the methods they use*" (interview no. 18) complained an interviewee.
Among the interviewees there is the perception that the municipality still perceives the food policy as a "thing" while SFB, CA and MR remark that it should be considered as a connection of ideas, people, needs, and demands. This aspect remarks a first barrier between these two systems as they clearly fail to understand each other stances. As mentioned in the first paragraph the municipality perception on the necessity to transform the food system is somehow related to the AFNs one and also shares some points. However, when it comes to practical matters, there is a failure in addressing these shared points.

SFB, CA and MR also recognize that this document is very difficult to be created as it involves a whole world with different and often conflicting needs. But they also perceive that it is precisely its strength, that is: being able to create something that keeps everyone united to reach a common goal. However, some interviewees have a strong feeling towards this. One claimed: "*I don't see this tendency*" (interview no. 9), while another added "*I don't even see the attempt*. *This seems like many little pieces that we work on only because we need to. But when they [the municipality] talk about food policy they talk about it as if it was something abstract, but it isn't, it's very concrete"* (interview no. 18)

This raises worries from SFB, CA and MR about the possible consequences of a failure in creating a food policy that moves along two main topics. The first one is the fear of ending up with a crystallized and hypothetical manifesto (therefore useless) that is a dangerous precedent in history. It would represent a clear proof of the failure of a political process that is crucial to counteract the agrifood system issues. Interviewees are also worried about the political backlash that this can have: typically, they point out, failures in political processes are seldomly re-opened and corrected because of pride and shame of institutions, and for the fear of being criticized by electors. "*If something fails there is no way the municipality will consider admitting their mistakes and try a new learning path. They'll just put it aside and go on with other things*" (interview no. 2). The second concerns a sense of worry about the fact that without a food policy the city might develop without rules. For example SFB is concerned about the recent abrupt touristic development of the city and the risk of the city being transformed into a "*touristic park, exactly like it happened to Venice. We are small, we must protect the things we have without selling them off*" (interview no. 18). Also Bologna is a student city and SFB highlights that "*student are the generation (excuse me for the overused term) that will have to make decisions. But has anyone ever educated you from this point of view? We are not doing anything about these*

kids. The medical faculty teaches two hours on nutrition. When you think about how students eat in Bologna...no one cares about it" (interview no. 18).

When faced the problem of AFNs being a niche reality, the interviewees shared the perception that this problem is created because consumers cannot distinguish products from an organic market to those coming from a discount store. In particular they criticize the municipality for not being able to create a correct information campaign and leave consumers in ignorance. The perception of AFNs is that the municipality is favoring the spread of a propaganda revolving around a fake problem that is the fact that prices of products from farmers' markets are higher than retails' products. To counteract this SFB created an informative document explaining how the prices of the products sold at their markets are created and why consumers should be worried when a product is too cheap. CA and MR also have some practices aiming at the transparency of the prices of their products. For example CA discusses the prices during their assemblies (that are open for participation also for consumers) and creates a common price list for all markets and producers. These efforts in education and transparency should be facilitated from the municipality, according to the Associations. However, as observed in the previous sections, it's unlikely to expect the municipality to act in this sense as they themselves have not a clear understanding of the prices of farmers' markets' products. SFB interviewee declared that

People don't want to understand that you can't compare the tomato you buy at the farmers' market from the organic producer with the one you buy at the discount store. You have to make an equivalent comparison. If you consider the prices per kg of organic products, then the prices from farmers' markets are not higher than organic products from supermarkets, so it is a false problem. (interview no. 18).

CA interviewee declared

> *The bread that our producers make has organic wheat, requires a particular oven, it is made in the family, etc. Does it cost €9 per kg? Sure, but it's all there. If I compare it with the same organic bread in the supermarket, it will be more expensive because the supply chain is longer and not as transparent. (interview no. 6).*

However, even if the municipality complains about the fact that farmers' markets are not accessible by every citizen, the two Associations perceive that the non-accessibility to markets is not considered a problem at the municipal level.

According to interviewees it is clear that the narrative is now building a narrative according to which farmers' markets are for rich people, discount stores are for the poor, and supermarkets are for the middle class.

An interviewee, however, do not think that the problem in Bologna's municipality is ignorance, but also the presence of stronger pressions by investors from large scale distribution. She claimed:

> *Do you realize how many supermarkets and hypermarkets open in Bologna? You should go to Corticella8, they appear like mushrooms. Every two months another supermarket opens and it is enormous. They look like legos that are placed on the territory. Is there a need? They [the municipality] tell you there is, because commercially they have certain agreements. That's okay. But let's not mystify them, let's not say that there is a need. What should be said is that there must be a plurality of offers. But at the farmers' markets they [the municipality] don't even give us water and electricity, but they allow hypermarkets to build enormous building in certain areas…do you understand? This is where something is broken, we don't have the political strength. (interview no. 18).*

According to the municipality the presence of farmers' markets is strongly protected and favored when possible. But according to AFNs, farmers' markets are given just the bare minimum. For example many farmers' markets are organized in areas in the city of Bologna that are defined as "restricted traffic zones". To enter these areas vehicles must have a permit that that can be obtained by buying a daily permit for a maximum limit of three daily permits per month [9]. A trader can buy an unlimited pass for the restricted traffic zone for €120 per year, but Campi Aperti producers do not meet these criteria and need to buy daily permits. This means that for some days of the week farmers cannot reach their markets because they don't have the permit for their vehicles leaving stalls empty and encouraging the perception that these markets are not working. When farmers reported the problem to the municipality they were "bounced" from one department to the other to find the person that was in charge for mobility, and this led to a consuming process that didn't produce any solution. The same experience has been reported for another CA's market that was considered an experimental event and for which producers have to take care of putting signs to block the vehicle traffic in the area and remove them when the market ends.

6.8 Third causal mechanism

The previous sections collected evidence on different perceptions on the topic of food sustainability and related issues that are perceived by what I identified as four levels of interaction: the municipality of Bologna, Emilia Romagna Region, the neighborhoods of Bologna and AFNs (represented by the two case studies of this research and Slow Food Bologna).

In this section I will delve into the topics that emerged during municipal meetings on the topic of food as they represent the piece of evidence capable to uncover the mechanisms at the basis of

[8] Corticella was a previous neighborhood of the city of Bologna that is now part of the Navile neighborhood.
[9] These rules are valid at the moment in which this thesis is written (2023).

the absence of circularity in the creation of local food policy. These meetings took place in the years 2021 and 2022 and the gathered data are supported by interviews carried out with the participants to these meetings.

The first meeting that started a discussion on the topic of food policy was organized in 2021 and was attended by several actors of different nature. Little by little the circle narrowed and the following meetings were attended by a smaller crowd. According to interviewees, these meetings were not advertised to citizens. Participants were contacted by the Municipality that asked them if they wanted to participate and also invited them to expand the invitation to invite other actors that might be considered important for this process. This led to participants at the meeting not being sure about how widespread and structure the selection of participants was, as it relied on individual invitations and not on an established protocol.
When asked about the absence of a protocol, an interviewee explained that usually discussion tables are structured by councilors, or associations, or companies, or other entities that deal with the matter. The participation of municipal councilors is based on their interest in participating to the discussion; moreover, they participate at the table as audience but not as part of the administration.

What emerged in the meetings can be clustered in different topics:

Need for a homogeneous policy

Participants at the meetings expressed their favor towards what can be defined as homogeneous policies. Participants, in this sense, would prefer clear goals from the Region as any tide of reform must necessarily be regional because the municipality can only carry on reforms related to the territory and cannot go further. As reported by participants a food system transformation is highly reliant on interventions on the production side upon which the municipality cannot legislate because the municipal territory doesn't have big production companies.

Dialogue between municipality and AFNs is at its early stages. AFNs instances start to be considered

Interviews with participants confirmed that the values and issues that were raised by the Associations are being perceived and taken into account also by members of the administration. The current administration is supported by different parties, each with a different sensitivity and awareness towards the topics of food systems and sustainability, but they can all be united in the progressive and green area.

A political group, for example, committed to lowering the taxation of occupation of public land to favor farmers' markets even though they didn't know to which extent farmers' markets could be capable of nourishing the city. This means that there are, indeed, some members of the administration that are detached from the narrative that consider AFNs as valuable realities only as long as they are capable to feed the whole city, and realize that without accommodating legislations this could never be achieved. Some participants reports that the two Associations are not involved in the definition of guidelines in the agrifood sector. And this appear evident because in municipal documentation criticism of the agri-food industry is not present, and food related topics only revolve around food education, food waste, and the right to safe and affordable food.

Another topic that emerged consider some hypothesis on why the relationship between the Associations and the municipality are not well established yet, considering that the case studies of this research have been active for more than a decade. Some participants gave their about AFNs realities. A member of the council declared:

> *Let's face it: producing by making alternative choices is not an economic choice, it is a choice that is made because you believe in it and there is a philosophy of life behind it, so those in Bologna are very politicized experiences. I respect that world a lot, but I also know that it has an extremely politicized orientation. So I think that there is an irreconcilable political attitude on the part of certain subjects in contrast to the institutions which is part of their philosophical political substratum" (interview no. 23).*

The case of Campi Aperti in this sense is emblematic because there is no political convenience for either party to give consideration to the other. From the Association point of view, the municipality is considered "*the enemy by definition*", from the municipal side there is awareness that this reality will never give them consent, as a member of the council declared

> *Those people will never vote for us and politics is also made up of this. At a certain point someone has to tell you that what you're doing is good. So if you do things for someone who will never tell you that you are doing well, even if perhaps you are doing better than someone else would do (e.g. the farmers' market regulation has flaws, yes of course but at least we did it), then there is no convenience of mutual political recognition and this is a big problem" (interview no. 23).*

Another element that emerged is that there is no adequate structure to carry on a dialogue between these realities. Several interviewees consider this a crucial point as they realize that it is exactly in AFNs that it is possible to find the innovation that would not come from anywhere else. So at a certain point, if the institutions want to fulfill the task of moving society towards more

sustainable models, it is necessary to interact with these realities. This has been recognized by an interviewee who confirmed

> *If the farmers' markets don't tell us that we are good... well, unfortunately we have to do without them. How you do it? I do not know. but I would start by doing something different and propose that the municipality should be the one to connect our electors and these realities instead of the contrary which I admit is a bit strange". (interview no. 24)*

AFNs are not considered central actors for a transformation of food systems

AFNs are considered as entities that participate in institutional dialogue, sometimes in a non-institutional way. Participants from the municipality believe that the collaboration with these realities is at its maximum, but they don't think that the problem of food systems transformation could be solved by working only with AFNs because currently the response they give to the consumer is very small compared to what a city needs. Few markets, in fact, cannot satisfy a city demand for food, and participants feel that the urgency now is not to provide more support to existing farmers' markets, but to intercept those realities that are existent but not virtuous yet. This perceived feeling, however, seem to evidence a trap: participants, in fact, believe that by including other less formal networks it would be possible to create more farmers' markets. These participants believe that with an increase in the offer (e.g. numbers of farmers' markets) the prices of their products will be pushed down, according to demand-offer market rule, and this will give access to groups of consumers who are not going to farmers' markets for economic reasons. They also believe that some farmers' markets are not always reachable or accessible in terms of venues. This seems to evidence another belief: if a market is not working or is present in venues that are not practical to reach by all citizens, it should not be considered a municipal responsibility. There seems to be a missing piece in the mechanism, as the venues that these markets can occupy depend on the neighborhoods and on the municipality's regulations. This means that even though the municipality perceive that these realities are indeed an important actor, they also accuse them to not be able to provide a sufficient offer to satisfy the needs of a city. However, these limits are also dependent on the regulations itself, that prove difficult (or at least tedious) for producers to organize farmers' markets.

Several actors claim their role in proposing a food policy

Different participants at these meetings claim that they were the one that proposed and stimulated the formulation of a food policy.

Participants recognize that the sensitivity towards the topic of food emerged several years ago from the previous administration. Some participants claim that they always interacted with the municipality, trying to stimulate them towards actions that concerned food waste and food education and confirm that Merola's administration paid a lot of attention to these issues. Interview no. 23 believe that with new administration it was time to propose a further step by making existing actions synergistic and giving a unified direction. This would provide a uniform perspective and the possibility to report and measure results. Other participants admits to have strongly pressured the municipality to understand that the food issue is urgent because it involves human health, poverty, solidarity, sustainability and satisfying food needs is something essential and primary that should come before other priorities. This discussion helps to understand that a circularity in the municipality of bologna is still absent. The topic of food policy is perceived and values are shared among a big plethora of actors but somehow always fails to fully enter a political discourse either because they're not captured or because there are not structures that are capable to take into account these stimuli and put systematize them.

"Food sovereignty" and a strong critic toward the policy-making procedure enters the political discourse

Participants at the meetings confirm that the food policy is a food sovereignty issue. One participant admits that "*if tomorrow there is yet another war we don't know where to get food*" (interview no. 23).

However they also realize that this political vision has few implementation tools because only the regional and national level have a real impact on agricultural policies. For example it is pointed out that there is no national governance on the problem of drought. So this means that if the municipality decide to ban the cultivation of water demanding crops in the territory, producers or traders will buy these products from somewhere else, and this will cause a disadvantage to local producers. In order not to create asymmetries between social and environmental issues, an organic and homogeneous national legislation is perceived as necessary as it will avoid the emergence of economic imbalances that will be paid for by the consumers. Some participants, however, consider this an utopia because "*anything that is not bare cash flow is not perceived as value*"(interview no. 21).

Other participants also pointed out that the policy-making procedures of the municipality of Bologna are not consistent with a food policy. In fact, a food policy is a cultural and political act, and with the instruments that the municipality has it will prove difficult to translate it into practice. This is also because some political parties inside the municipality do not know what farmers' markets are: some participants confirm that the minority describes farmers' markets as

"*rave events or producers that are not HACCP compliant*", demonstrating a lack of knowledge on the italian legislation on direct sales.

However, even in the majority there are some difficulties as they are a very composite coalition with five lists and very different sensitivities.

Other than this it is perceived that there is a lack of ability to communicate with all the plurality of actors that should be involved in a food policy. Typically the institutions are capable of interacting at high levels (large cartels, larger category associations, agri-food industries). At that level, however, discussions take place in in an unbalanced situation because big economic actors are politically more powerful than the local authority. "*Let's face it: the Municipality is worthless when you have Confagricoltura [10]in front of you*" (interview no. 23). In contrast, there is no ability and sensitivity to interact with a plurality of heterogeneous actors, even controversial ones (for example the two Associations are considered more difficult to control) who could provide strength to innovative policies. Some of these realities are also perceived as difficult to interact with, because they are very small and they have no capacity and time.

One participant at the meetings admits

> *If there is a small association of organic farmers with family-run businesses... how do you talk to them? they don't have time for administrative negotiations, they have to stay in the countryside. There is a difficulty that becomes a vicious circle because on the one hand you struggle to communicate, on the other you need to create relationships with them because the existing cartels will never carry out innovative policies. (interview no. 24)*

[10] Confagricoltura (General Confederation of Italian Agriculture) is the organization representing and protecting Italian agricultural businesses. The employers associated with Confagricoltura represent two thirds of the total Italian companies in the sector and hire over 500 thousand workers.

6.9 Step 5: Testing hypothesis

The data collected and the analysis conducted until here provided valuable insights to test the validity of the causal mechanisms and of the two hypothesis.

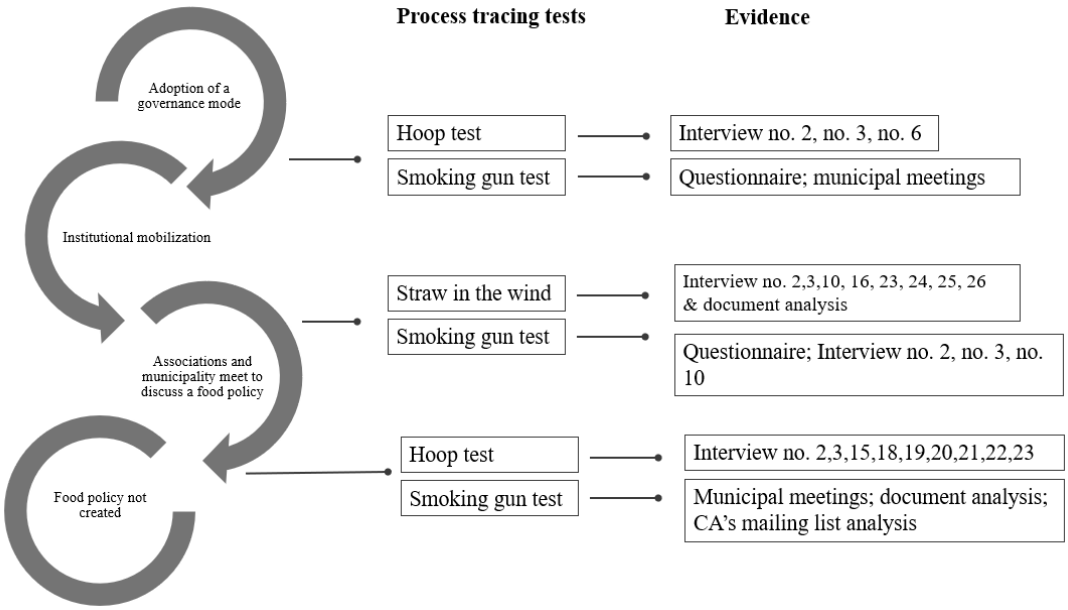


Figure 16 - Summary of the causal mechanisms and process tracing tests. Source: personal elaboration

The data collected are used to assert confidence in the causal mechanisms and on the two hypotheses. Even though none of the empirical evidence passed a doubly-decisive test, the combination of hoop tests, smoking gung tests and straw-in-the-wind tests, are sufficient to increase the confidence. Finding pieces of evidence that pass doubly-decisive tests, however, are very unlikely in real-world case studies (Raimondo, 2020).

6.10 Testing the first hypothesis

First hypothesis: The adoption of a governance mode by AFNs allows them to engage in relationships with the municipality and have a role in the definition of political guidelines toward the creation of a local food policy and a transformation of the food system

Based on the data collected it is possible to make some reflections on the first hypothesis before accepting or rejecting it.

The first reflection is based on how the meetings for the food policy were organized. The organization was non-systemic and this is a symptom of a form of inexperience by the municipality which is clearly approaching new issues, never addressed before, and with methods still being experimented. The idea of including more subjects in the definition of the food policy in order to accommodate different requests is crucial, but it was done informally. In particular, some of the interviewees declared that they found out about the meetings during a dinner, or through word of mouth. This inevitably failed to intercept realities that are not sufficiently structured to have contact with the municipality, but could, nevertheless, bring innovations and useful insights. The two case studies of this thesis, however, were summoned because they are known in the area.

This notoriety, however, does not come by itself, it is not automatic, but can be attributable to the fact that these entities are organized, they are both Associations (a legal recognized form) and adopted a governance mode. The adoption of a governance mode means that the members of these Associations comply to internal rules and there are internal protocols to be followed, making it a formal actor that attracts producers, realize profits, and create a uniform front. There are also other factors that should be taken into account: the two Associations are relatively large and well-known in the area, Mercato Ritrovato was born from Slow Food and takes place in a very popular venue in Bologna. Campi Aperti has several markets during the week in different areas of the city. However, in selecting the case studies, other producer networks were intercepted which however were not structured in a formal way and did not have a governance model. These networks were not present at the meetings on food policy. To increase the confidence on the role of the adoption of a governance mode, interviews and document analysis demonstrate that relations between Campi Aperti and the Municipality were present even before that Campi Aperti became an official Association and that farmers' markets were recognized by the Italian legislation. The intensity of these relations was different because the legal framework didn't consider farmers' markets, because the soon-to-be Association was still at its early stages with provisional rules, and because their first market venues were inside social centers that are, by definition, locations were institutions are not welcomed.

However, to increase its robustness, there are other elements that must be considered. These two realities include a rather large number of producers, but are still smaller than a trade association, one having around fifty members (MR) and the other just over 150 (CA). Nevertheless, their structure has allowed them to adopt very specific and complex internal rules, attracting producers who consider their internal structure as a guarantee of efficiency, as was confirmed by data gathered through the questionnaire.

Furthermore, the innovation brought by these two realities lies in the horizontality of their structures (although Campi Aperti demonstrate a greater orientation towards a sociocratic model compared to Il Mercato Ritrovato that still maintains a more rigid form) which allows a continuous adaptation of their objectives and internal rules which resonates with the variability and complexity of the agri-food system issues.

Consequently, a governance structure allows to build credibility and seriousness which becomes interesting for the policy-maker. Consequently, creating a dialogue with local institutions becomes possible and proves to be useful for both parties. Thus the requests of the two entities on the topic of farmers' markets were listened to and sometimes accepted, even if only partially, and brought benefits to all the other farmers' markets realities that did not participate in the negotiations due to lack of structure, human resources, time or other reasons. The legislator is considering these realities because they are no longer informal groups, but rather Associations recognized by the Italian legislature that move, grow and are an integral part of the territory, have a voice, and claim to be heard because they base their requests on grounded reasons.

Further proof lies in the awareness that the neighborhood presidents and members of the administration who were interviewed have on the two case studies. The interviewees were asked to tell their perception of the alternative food realities in the city of Bologna. The realities that the interviewees gave as examples were Mercato Ritrovato, Campi Aperti and Arvaia. The latter is a CSA member of Campi Aperti which was not considered in the research as it is not a farmer market.

The interviewees declared that they were aware of the realities that are the object of this research as they were structured to the point of organizing activities that, quoting a neighborhood president, "*the population is aware of. If they were no longer there, the citizens would notice*." Furthermore, the internal structure of the case studies also allowed them to organize and carry out projects with external parties, consistent with the values carried out by the two realities, one being more political and the other more cultural. As demonstrated in chapter 5, internal and external relations of the two realities are intense. In the case of Campi Aperti the possibility to have relations and collaborations also became codified in their internal statute. This has allowed the two Associations not only to continue to carry out their activities and expand their values, but also to be listened to and welcomed in a political arena that must accommodate the requests of citizens, and has realized the added value brought to the community of Bologna by the two Associations.

For these reasons, the hypothesis according to which the adoption of a governance - that resonates with an experimentalist framework - by these realities makes them actors who actively participate

in the political life of the city is accepted. It is also important to note that other elements might facilitate the role of AFNs in public political discourse, for example the fact that both the case studies are organized in a legally recognized form (Associations).

6.11 Testing the second hypothesis

Second hypothesis: both top-down and bottom-up conditions for transforming food systems are unmet, and there is an absence of circularity between top-down and bottom-up.

Even if the adoption of a governance mode that resonates with an experimentalist framework allows the Associations to engage in relationships with the municipality and have a role in the definition of political guidelines toward the creation of a local food policy and a transformation of the food system, this process is far from being codified and formally represented in a food policy. This is because all actors part of this process are struggling for different reasons. From one side, the Emilia Romagna region seems not to have a clear perception of the two Associations. Moreover it needs to hold together stringent policies from the European Union and protect one of the most important Italian agricultural regions. From the other side the municipality and the neighborhoods of Bologna are experiencing a municipal structure with a new councilor, with new responsibilities and the need to work to respond to the novel set of expectations that cities have on acting for the creation of local food policies. Also, the two case studies do not comply with reporting and communication standards that institutional actors performs, and this prevent them to communicate and capture their innovation, Moreover the lack of resources and/or willingness to collaborate with the municipality also hinder the possibility to develop a stable relations. All actors interviewed, that I divided in four different “levels” express values that resonates with a transformation of the food system toward a more localized and organic model, with different levels of polarization and different means.
However, the four levels of action also comes with four different goals.
This is visually represented in Figure 17.

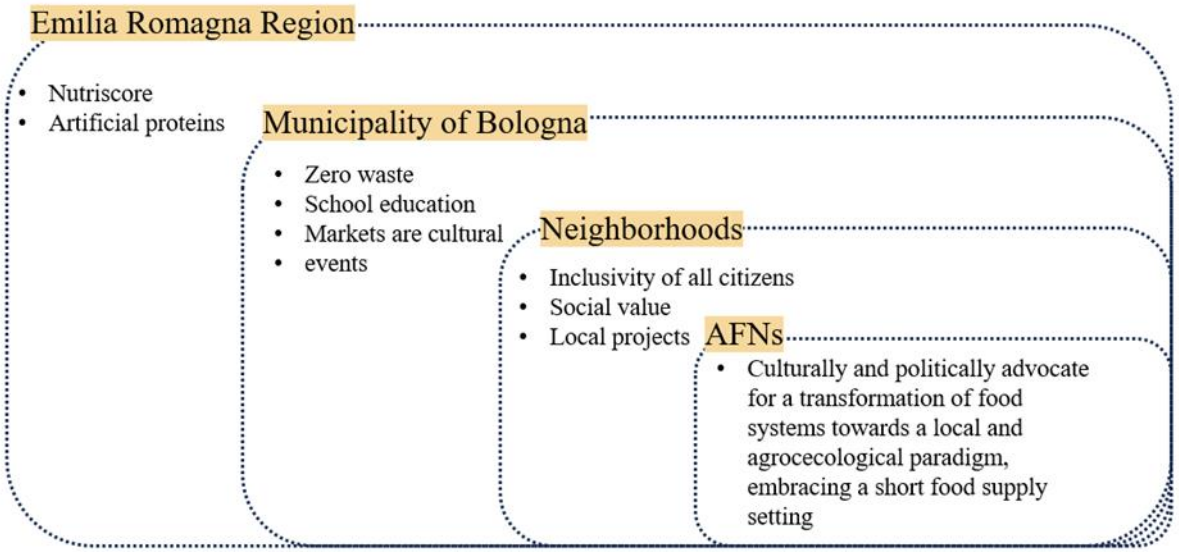


Figure 17 - Visual representation of the four levels of actions and related goals. Source: personal elaboration

Farmers from the case studies claim that both municipality and region are not taking seriously the challenges faced by short supply chain (aka "*filiera corta*") and lament the fact that they have to comply with rules that are built for industrial agriculture, even though they represent the transformation that municipality wanted to obtain.

Neighborhoods, which have more local contact with these realities, still have a scattered vision that depend on different sensitivities of the neighborhood's council, and is not guided by a uniform local policy. Yet, neighborhoods' focus is on granting the inclusivity of all citizens and create projects with different actors, not only farmers' markets.

The Municipality have several goals in terms of food that are somewhat split in two categories: a first category of goals that fits the one carried on by the Associations, and the second category that fits with regional objectives. Moreover, the municipality and the Associations seems to speak different languages, where both realities fails to capture each other necessities and find compromises.

Finally, Emilia Romagna region focuses on higher debates like the nutriscore, and artificial proteins. These debates do not take into account daily struggles of the territory but somehow are needed to protect the agriculture sector of one of the most important Italian regions. At the same time, municipalities do not have legislative power in agriculture related topics, as they can only act inside the municipal territory, while the remaining topics are all managed by the region. The region has a perception of AFNs and, more specifically, farmers' markets that is not shared with farmers' markets. They recognize Coldiretti as the major actor promoting direct sale, while the member of the two Associations can't understand "*how you can consider Barilla and Aia*[11] *as*

[11] Barilla and Aia are two of the most important Italian food corporations

"farmers" (interview no. 10). Also, Emilia Romagna region claims to provide help to these alternative realities through funding, but looking deeper into the payments from CAP it's clear that the greening and sustainability payments (among which it would be necessary to have a wider view to understand every chapter of expense) are a small percentage of the total payments. Also, Emilia Romagna region interviewee remarked the funding initiative developed for municipalities. The initiative aimed at funding renovations projects to host farmers' markets. However, the amount of capital destined to this initiative was 1 million €, and was capable to finance only 7 or 8 farmers' markets in the whole region.

This overview, based on data gathered and on dynamics explain further in this chapter, confirms that all these levels of action are proceeding in separate straight paths, with few moments of contact as summarized in Figure 18.

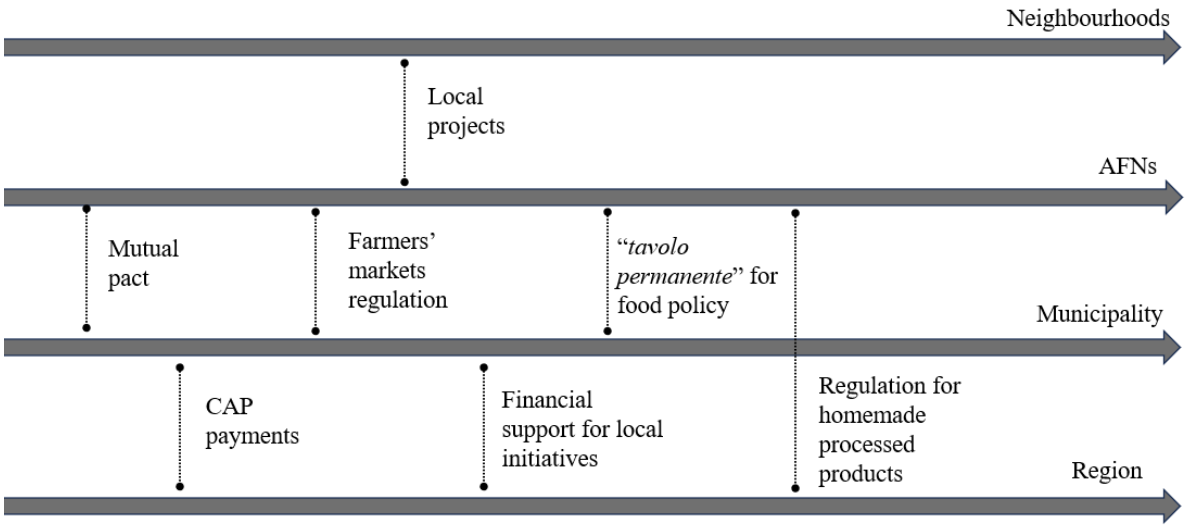


Figure 18 - Visual representation of the linear characterization of actors' action. Source: personal elaboration

For all the abovementioned traces, the second hypothesis is confirmed, as data gathered support the absence of a circular dynamic that prevent all actors involved in the creation of a local food policy to develop a concrete experimentalist governance setting. These governance innovations, in fact, remain contained in the two Associations.

Summary

This chapter used process tracing to analyze the political discourse revolving around the topic of a food policy which the city of Bologna (as member of MUFPP) is expected to produce. The hypothesis that guided this analysis were twofold: from one side I hypothesized that the adoption of an experimentalist governance mode by the two Association would provide them sufficient

means to be included in the political debate around food policy. According to the data gathered, this proves to be true. The two Associations, that are both well established in the city, are capable to bring their innovations into institutional buildings and advance claim and critiques to the current legislation. Their innovative governance mode revolves around horizontal relations, trust, cooperation and goal revision and allowed them to continue their activities for decades, even though the current legislation was not favoring their activities and, sometimes, it proved to hinder them. Nevertheless, their flexibility and the internal framework proved to be efficient and capable to adapt to complex challenges and obstacles, via the elaboration of novel forms of relations. This innovation, however, is not captured by the institutional actor. This is proved by the evidence collected from both the municipality and the neighborhoods. Their internal rules still resonates with a top-down logic and fails to include actors that provide innovations in a different form. This results in few contact points that translate in poor outcomes (for example a farmers' markets regulation, or a mutual pact). As claimed in the second hypothesis, the two Associations, the neighborhoods, the municipality and the region are all moving in straight direction and fail to build a circularity that is crucial to develop a more localized food system. The two Associations, however, thanks to their innovative governance agreements, are adopting a circular model that is well expressed in their internal structure (even though in the case of Campi Aperti it is more visible than in Il Mercato Ritrovato) but is not exported in other institutions.

Studying the governance of the two Associations allowed to gather more information on a set of relations and innovations that would go missed otherwise. It also led to confirm that the adoption of a governance mode make AFNs more likely to enter the political debate and participate to institutional debates. However, it also allowed to highlight the different level of discussion that are taking place in the context of Bologna, and how these levels are still strongly compartmentalized. Even though the current food system issues are perceived by all levels of discussion, they are not addressed in a homogeneous way. The complexity of the issues, then, is not broken down into smaller challenges, but remain in its entirety making it harder to elaborate a solution.

In the following chapter I will further discuss the findings of this research, how the gathered data helped me addressing the research questions and what recommendations I have for further research.

Chapter 7: Discussion & conclusions

In this thesis I explored the governance of two AFNs based in the city of Bologna to better understand the intricate set of relations and innovations that these realities develop, and how, and if, they are intercepted by institutional actors and integrated in local food policies. Available literature shows that AFNs are active in creating new narratives and practices aimed at transforming the current food system towards more environmental, economic and social sustainability. However, current literature still fails to fully capture the governance of these networks. AFNs often operate within informal structures or adopting novel frameworks and practices that are either outside the legal framework or that envision practices not contemplated by the current system, hence making it difficult to be accounted for. They also often operate alongside different market structures that value voluntary commitment, alternative form of goods and services provision and informal relations (for example the case of Emporio Camilla). In this thesis, I have shown how studying the governance of AFNs can help to uncover relations, practices and frameworks and that this is important because the way AFNs organize their governance influences their practices and relations with other actors.

AFNs are becoming increasingly recognized as key actors in the transformation of the current food system, for example, by the European Commission (European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013). The way that these networks can transform the food system is influenced by institutions, who are in charge of providing political vision, guidance and rules, and with which AFNs have to engage. However, there is still little knowledge on how AFNs and public institutions build relationships and how these results in outputs such as food policies.

This opens the need to study the governance of AFNs at two level: internally and externally. Analyzing the internal governance of AFNs allows us to capture the wide set of rules, frameworks and relations that hold the member of the networks together, and can shed lights on how transformative they are and to which extent they represent an alternative to the current food system (Watts et al. 2005). The study of the external governance of AFNs allows to capture the way these networks build relations to reinforce their goal, and, in particular, how this can reach the political debate.

To build this knowledge, this research studied two farmers' markets Associations in the city of Bologna that were selected through purposive-theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2018; Mason,

1996) and studied with a case study methodology. The analytical framework that guided the study of their governance builds on a re-conceptualization of experimentalist governance (Sabel, 2013) that builds on the available literature on case studies of experimentalist governance settings and on available literature of local food systems. Informed by the literature review summarized in chapters 1 and 2, this research seeks to answer two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent, and effect, does the internal governance of AFNs align with an experimentalist governance framework?

RQ2: What are the relations between modes of internal governance of AFNs and their engagement in municipal food policy?

I answered to these research questions through two empirical chapters. In the first one (Chapter 5) I analyzed the two case studies through the lenses of the analytical experimentalist governance framework developed in Chapter 2. This chapter unveiled the differences between the internal governance of the two Associations and shed light on how the internal governance is both influenced by the conditions in which the two Associations were created and influences the set and type of relations between the Associations and the municipality. However, the analytical framework proved unable to capture the causal mechanisms that linked the modes of internal governance and the engagement of the two Associations in the creation of a local food policy.

Chapter 6 seeks to address this through the use of process tracing. Through extensive qualitative data collection and analysis on the two Associations and the institutional actors involved in the creation of a local food policy, I shed light on the causal mechanisms that can explain the way these Associations engage in the creation of a local food policy and the role of their internal governance in that.

To answer the second research question, I used a process tracing methodology to understand the The governance of the two Associations allowed for the creation of a series of innovations, norms, and frameworks that have been widely explored in this research. I argue that their governance determines the strength of these networks. Even though the two Associations move alongside different (although somehow similar) sets of values, their strength is perceived not only by the civil society but also by the Municipality, which cannot exclude them from consultations and meetings. This has been evident with the formulation of the new farmers' markets regulation, where, in particular, Campi Aperti activated a solid political campaign towards the Municipality, with specific requests about their needs and inviting the Municipality to finally make a political move that openly recognizes the importance of these alternative networks. Studying their external

governance brought to light several insights that will be presented in the following discussion and that move alongside a crucial finding: tensions between the internal and external governance mechanisms of the two Associations. This is because while internally, the governance of these associations resonates with experimentalist values and provides novel forms of knowledge creation and innovative practices and norms, they don't meet the same externally. In fact, creating a "city" experimentalist setting would require the involvement of a wide arena of actors (one of the most important being the Municipality of Bologna) that are not cooperating in the way envisioned by an experimentalist setting. The analysis carried out in Chapter 6 helped to delve deeper into this aspect, analyze the relations and perceptions of different actors that are part of the Municipality, and provide useful insights to further understand how the relations between AFNs and institutional actors evolve and develop.

In what follows, the empirical data presented in Chapter 5 and 6 are discussed to be able to answer to the research questions and draw the conclusions of this research. The analysis is structured around four key insights:

1. Differences in AFNs leads to different internal governance and distinctive relations with the municipality.
2. Mismatch between the experimentation carried out by AFNs and municipal rigidity.
3. Tensions with local public institutions.
4. The role of the municipality as a bridging actor.

7.1 Differences in AFNs leads to different internal governance and distinctive relations with the municipality.

The two Associations, even if they are based in the same city, developed and emerged from two different contexts.

Campi Aperti's first appearance is dated at the end of the '90s when the members of four farms and two collectives from the Department of Agrarian Studies of the University of Bologna (Capscicum and Kontroverso) gathered together motivated by the mission of creating a system capable to allow farmers to produce at a small scale with organic practices, operating outside the speculative dynamics of the market. The climate of discontent for the turn of the agricultural sector - ascribable to a series of policies that fostered processes like land concentration that

threatened the existence of small farmers – and the fact that the two collectives were attributable to the political area of autonomy fostered the creation of a network with strong political values and strongly critical towards institutions. Conversely, Mercato Ritrovato developed from a protected and more institutionalised niche. The Association was a previous Mercato della Terra, which are farmers' markets organised by Slow Food, and its creation was stimulated by the desire of the Province of Bologna to create a farmers' market in the city of Bologna. The venues in which the farmers' markets are organised are also a signal of the differences between the two Associations. Campi Aperti's first markets were organised in social centres, and it took several years before other venues outside social centres were created. Conversely, Mercato Ritrovato's venue was always the Cineteca of Bologna, a private area that was given to them from the Municipality.

The difference in the context from which they emerged also influences their internal governance. As analysed in Chapter 5, both Associations present elements of innovation and a set of relations that resonates with an experimentalist setting, however in the case of Mercato Ritrovato this is less evident and less pronounced. Both associations present a sort of iterative cycle when it comes to their activities, as both Associations developed a shared goal and a series of relations to reinforce it. Moreover, they created internal frameworks and rules that provide members with a guidance about what is allowed and what is not, marking the boundaries of what is allowed in the Associations and what represents ground for exclusion. However, the extent to which they can be considered experimentalist is different as Mercato Ritrovato still present an internal structure that resonates more with a managerial structure, having a Comitato di Gestione that is in charge of carrying out day to day activities to provide more efficiency in the General Assembly's decisions. In contrast, in Campi Aperti every decision revolves around the General Assembly, and even though there are working groups for specific themes, every decision is shared with all members. The goal revision is also different in the two associations, as Campi Aperti declared to be a reality that makes a lot of mistakes and learn from them (which finds representation on their rules and protocols that are constantly updated based on learning processes), while Mercato Ritrovato has only undergone one major *disciplinare* modification.

These findings of this thesis highlight that the different governance and relations created by the two Associations are influenced by two factors: relations with the municipality and the main goal of the Association. Based on whether the Association can count on the support of the municipality, the internal set of rule and relations – hence the governance - change.

For example, Mercato Ritrovato has already established a peaceful relation with the municipality that provides a support that is somehow "taken for granted". On the other hand, in the case of Campi Aperti, relations with the municipality are more dynamic and sometimes conflictual.

Campi Aperti openly challenges the municipality, as it is noted in paragraph 6.6 that summarises the speech that Campi Aperti did during a municipal meeting for the creation of a food policy. Their motivation in challenging the municipality comes from the strength of the network they created and is grounded on their strong political identity.
This also confirms that the fact that Campi Aperti emerged from a context that is distant from institutions doesn't prevent them to engage with the municipality and to look for relations.

This is also supported by the replies received from the questionnaire where participants were asked with which actors they collaborate with outside the Association. Zero respondents from Il Mercato Ritrovato declared that they collaborate with the public administration, compared to 35% of the respondents from Campi Aperti.
This significant difference is important because it also suggests that these two networks struggle to create a common front capable of facing the municipality and the Region. Mercato Ritrovato never exerted pressures on the municipality, as they were already guaranteed a long-lasting and functional marketplace with a stable clientele. However, some members of the Mercato Ritrovato are also members of Campi Aperti. Therefore, they are aware of the battles that Campi Aperti is carrying out on a political and organizational level. Indeed, the values promoted by Mercato Ritrovato are far from political activism, and this acts as a limit to creating a genuinely transformative front that can bring together these networks and that would be crucial to activate a transformation in the food system.

This leads to the second element that influence the governance and relations of the Associations: the main goal. As mentioned in Chapter 5 the goals of the two Associations are different even if they are carried out in an apparently equal way (namely farmers' markets). Both associations aim to re-localize food production and shorten the supply chain, but the way they carry out this has more of a cultural nuance in the case of Mercato Ritrovato, and a more political one in the case of Campi Aperti. As mentioned in Chapter 3 this difference is already evident in their mottos: on their official website Campi Aperti's description is: "Community fighting for food sovereignty". In contrast, il Mercato Ritrovato's description is: "The best quality of the territory, guaranteed by our farmers and artisans. And then laboratories for kids and adults, music, dances, and events".

These results contribute to enrich the debate on weaker and stronger alternative systems of food provisions started by Watts et al, (2005) that builds on the concept of quality developed by

Goodman (2004). Watts et al. (2005) confirms that the turn to quality food production and the turn to reflexive localism (also mentioned in paragraph 1.1.6) represents weaker form of food provisions as they mainly focus on the food per se, and not on the networks through which products circulate. Data gathered by the two case studies supports this statement but also call for a further conceptualization. In fact, I argue that internal governance and the main goal of the network are also two elements that can contribute to define whether an alternative form of food provision is weaker or stronger. In the case of this research, for example, Campi Aperti can be defined as stronger form of alternative food provision, compared to Mercato Ritrovato which is a weaker form of alternative food provisioning. However, this difference would be missed if the concept of quality was the only one adopted. In fact, in terms of quality both Associations are similar: they both take distances from the Italian legislation that allows farmers participating in farmers' markets to sell up to 49% of products not produced by them. They also allow organic form of productions and have internal rules to define what is admitted or not in terms of localness. However, considering the internal governance and the main goal of the Associations it emerges that Campi Aperti aims at challenging the whole food production and supply chain, while Mercato Ritrovato is mainly focused on food production and direct selling.

To conclude, evidence about the internal governance of the two Associations allow me to confirm that both Associations present a governance model that resonates with an experimentalist setting, even though not fully as previously mentioned in the summary of Chapter 5. I also argue that understanding to which extent the internal governance of the two case studies aligns with an experimentalist governance framework provided useful insights to understand the values and norms that the two different networks adopt as well as their history. By analyzing the internal governance of the two Associations through the lenses of experimentalist governance, it was possible to gather information about a whole set of relations that would have been lost otherwise. Hence, I argue that analyzing whether the internal governance of these case studies fits with an experimentalist governance framework is not crucial per se. Still, it becomes crucial because it allowed unveiling previously unknown norms, practices, and relations envisioned and called for by an experimentalist governance approach.

Analysing the set or relations and the way the two Associations communicate with the municipality provided the basis for the next finding.
Campi Aperti's existence is characterised by a substantial lack of support from the institutions, as it developed in a context that is, by definition, far from the political system. Nevertheless, the Association managed to create a whole alternative network that can potentially allow new farmers to begin their activity as members of Campi Aperti without needing the large-scale distribution. Thanks to their internal rules, the Genuino Clandestino campaign, the Participatory Guarantee

System, the pact with Mag6 to finance farmers and other activities, and the creation of alternative outlets (Emporio Camilla), this association created a whole set of formal and informal rules that can provide a complete, viable, and sustainable alternative to the large-scale distribution.

In the case of Mercato Ritrovato this is not met, as the main characteristic of this Association is the renowned venue where the markets take place, and the fact that the Association is economically convenient for the members as they can count on a solid economic square. However no other networks are present inside the Association. For example, an interviewee member of Mercato Ritrovato claimed that "I don't support Genuino Clandestino. Either you're compliant with legislation or you can't sell your products as organic or your processed products" (interview no. 13).

In general, relations between Mercato Ritrovato and the municipality are based on the fact that Mercato Ritrovato has already obtained favourable conditions that can easily be taken away in case relations become too tense. Conversely Campi Aperti developed its own system without the support of the Municipality and has less political constraints which result in an environment of open criticism towards the institutions. Circling back to the literature review carried out in chapter 2, what emerges contributes to enrich the knowledge about the role of municipalities in facilitating experiments (Eneqvist & Karvonen, 2021). According to the authors, in fact, municipalities could provide guidance and support to foster innovation and experimentation at the local level. Municipalities should frame values and norms (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997) to promote a clear direction for the envisioned future, facilitate the creation of networks of stakeholders, support the development of these networks, and promote the scaling up and diffusion of novel knowledge. However, I claim that what emerges from this thesis could enrich this knowledge by providing evidence that even though innovation is present, municipalities are not necessarily aware of it or willing to accommodate it. It is, in fact, necessary to investigate the internal municipal dynamics to understand if the innovation that is created is welcomed and accommodated by these institutional actors and, if not, why. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Bos & Brown (2012) claim that experimentation is a crucial instrument to support the transition to sustainability and the development of new knowledge but they also point out that experiments in governance are relatively new, as experimentation is typically linked to technological domains and a laboratory setting. The novelty in these experimentation means that not all actors involved might be ready to join the experimentalist process. According to Keohane & Sabel (2013) experimentalist governance is represented by a set of practices involving open participation by a variety of entities. However, if these entities are not on the same page and willing to embark in a learning process, this might result in conflictual relations or resistant behaviours. In the case of the municipality of Bologna, I argue that the institutional mechanisms present a rigidity that

creates a mismatch with the experimentation of the two Association, in particular with Campi Aperti.

7.2 Mismatch between the experimentation carried out by AFNs and municipal rigidity

Building on the first finding, the second main finding is the discovery of a mismatch between the rigidity of the municipality in addressing and welcoming innovation and the experimentation carried out by AFNs.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, both Associations have adopted governance modes that are aligned, to different degrees, with experimentalist governance. However, I argue that the main reason for the absence of a "city" experimentalist setting is the lack of the polyarchic distribution of power's scope condition.

According to Sabel & Zeitlin (2010) without a polyarchic distribution of power one or more actors can be dominant, and it can lead to unbalances that prevent from the creation of an experimentalist setting.

The internal governance of the Associations can have transformative traits but if the Associations want to meet their goal (namely the transformation of the current food system) they need to engage with institutional actors and they need these actors to collaborate. However, the Municipality has more political power than the Associations. Interestingly, according to data gathered (interview no. 2, 18, 22), the Municipality also has less political power than other agricultural associations (Coldiretti, which has its headquarters inside the Ministry of Agriculture or Confagricoltura) and other corporations (such as Aia, Barilla). This means that there is also a problem in polyarchic distribution of power that involves a whole set of actors involved in the food system and prevent from the creation of an experimentalist setting.

An experimentalist setting can prove to be beneficial for institutional actors because, as Bos & Brown (2012) envisioned, experimentation is a crucial instrument to support the transition to sustainability and the development of new knowledge. Empirical evidence (European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013; Brandy, 2023) confirms that AFNs can bring the innovation needed for a transformation of the food system, but their transformative potential remains trapped in informal networks or in more formal networks whose values are not envisioned in local policies. According to data gathered and shown in sections 6.8 and 6.11, AFNs are the only actor, among all actors involved in the creation of a local food policy, attempting to create a circularity in relations and sharing of knowledge. Without the inclusion and collaboration of all institutional actors a transformative

food policy capable of challenging the current food system could not be carried out. This is significant when considering Sabel's recommendations exposed in Chapter 2: that it is crucial to involve local actors in the development of transformative policies.

Drawing from literature (Aguglia, 2009; Agyemang & Kwofie, 2021; Brandy, 2023; European Commission. Joint Research Centre. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies., 2013), it is evident that the ideal food system to strive for is one that is based on local production, incorporates organic practices, and promotes the development of a short supply chain that becomes progressively less reliant on external inputs. Nevertheless, capacity to interact with such approaches is lacking at the intermediate levels, as experimentalist governance practices are not yet normalized. Initiatives and projects show that there is, indeed, an understanding of the need for collaboration and exchange, as exemplified by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). However, the goals of institutional actors may not necessarily align entirely with those of grassroots movements, or they may only partially coincide.

As mentioned above, the lack of a polyarchic distribution of power hinders the creation of a transformative and inclusive local food policy. In fact, alternative food networks at the city level lack sufficient agency. They depend on the municipality and, my analysis suggests that attempts at co-production and co-design carried out by the municipality may never lead to success because they imply a disproportionately unbalanced allocation of powers. Furthermore, AFNs take risks by openly opposing institutions, including the risk of not being heard, being excluded from projects, and not receiving assistance when needed. This is particularly evident in the case of Campi Aperti.

From the interviews, the institutional actor acknowledges the benefits of this initiative but simultaneously demonstrates resistance to welcoming requests that propose a revision of well-established and ingrained rules. This is exemplified by the evidence exposed in Chapter 5 and 6, where farmers from Campi Aperti complain that while the municipality declares the intention of creating a city with a sustainable food system, it still fails to encourage the realities that are, in fact, providing this opportunity. For example, Campi Aperti still face difficulties in organising markets as some Campi Aperti's markets are organized in areas subject to restricted traffic zones; the vehicles that farmers use to bring their products to the market are not allowed to cross these areas and must rely only on daily permits, which are generally used on an extraordinary basis by those who have to cross these areas. These permits are not designed to be used regularly and there is a limit on the monthly daily permits purchasable. This means that farmers are not allowed in these areas for the remaining days, which becomes a significant burden for the smooth organization of the markets.

However, according to interview no. 16, some vehicles that these farmers are using are not allowed in the city centre, because they violate European regulations on the vehicles that are banned from circulation. This example based on a daily problem, demonstrates two crucial points: first it shows that these realities are dependent on the Municipality to carry out their activities. Even if they create innovative networks and novel frameworks, they cannot be exempted from respecting national or European regulations. This put these Associations in an unbalanced power relation with the Municipality. Second, it shows that municipalities cannot grant every protection to these realities as they also need to respond to other regulations (this point will be discussed in section 7.4)

Based on the data analysed in Chapter 5 and 6, I also argue that the Municipality is still far from reviewing internal practices and provide support to these networks that are providing an alternative and, sometimes, controversial set of rules for the creation of a more sustainable food system. However, I claim that this inaction from the Municipality is not all due to an unwillingness of reviewing internal practices. In fact, as pinpointed in Chapter 6, some municipal actors and some neighbourhood's presidents are aware of the need to change internal practices in order to provide novel ways of creating consent and bringing novel innovations that arise from informal or non-institutionalised context. In fact, there are some attempts to create more horizontal practices (for example the creation of a *tavolo permanente* for a food policy) which, however, are still far from becoming routines and are still missing protocols and frameworks. At the same time, it is also true, as mentioned in section 7.1, that the Municipality is also responding to other powerful actors (such as corporations or large agricultural associations that are favoured by the current legal framework) to which it seems far to detach from to favour local initiatives.
This is partly due to a lack of perception of the potential of AFNs. Some institutional actors interviewed, for example, demonstrate that they do not have a clear understanding of the two Associations, and they do not see why they should be granted a favour treatment. This is made visible, for example, in the argument used to refuse to grant Campi Aperti the exemption from the land usage tax, namely that there is no point in granting this Association an exemption to a tax that all users of public land must pay to be able to sell products, also because "we don't know where they come from" (interview no. 24).

However, data collected also demonstrates that some institutional actors recognise the importance of these Associations, in particular in the case of neighbourhoods' presidents, as they are more directly in contact with the territory and these grassroots experiences, and they can experience more directly the social and economic value created by these markets. This is particularly interesting because the strongest perception of the utility of these realities came from a neighbourhood (San Donato – San Vitale) that presents some social and economic

vulnerabilities. This enriches the debate in literature that consider the risk of AFNs creating niche spaces for consumption (Barbera et al., 2014; Brown, 2001; Goodman, 2004). Part of scholarship on AFNs, in fact, reflect on the economic imbalances that these realities might create and on the "elitist" turn that AFNs might take, as they might exclude part of the population with economic constraints.

What appears, however, in the case of the networks covered by this research is different and seems to move in the opposite direction. Markets organised in less rich areas seem to be more well accepted and welcomed, and their value is more emphasised.
The prices of the products sold by these networks are, for obvious reasons, higher than products grown with intensive techniques, exploitation of labour, and subjected to reverse auctions. However, this has not created elite market niches. Particularly evident in the case of Campi Aperti, is the attendance of markets by university students, a component of society that notoriously has limited economic means. When asked about their perception of this phenomenon, some interviewees recognized the value of the locations where these markets are organized. For many, social centres represent a home and a family and a set of values that are also supported through actions considered political, including the purchase of food from these realities. Furthermore, Campi Aperti markets are organized in different areas and times in Bologna, and customers are not homogeneous. The customers of Campi Aperti are, as already mentioned, students, but also families, elderly people, and, obviously, a component of the population from a wealthier economic class. This also holds for Mercato Ritrovato, even though the location does not change during the week, as it became a landmark for Saturday's morning activity.

Campi Aperti's case also depends on the neighbourhood in which the markets are located. Some neighbourhoods are known for being more prestigious, while others have more vulnerable contexts. In the interviews with the presidents of the neighbourhoods, what emerged is that in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods, there are many more initiatives and more willingness to support these alternative food realities, and the attempt to create circular relations carried out by Campi Aperti is welcomed. This is because the price of the products is only secondary, while the benefits provided range on different fronts. Creating a community becomes fundamental, especially in areas with social vulnerabilities. Creating communities stimulates the emergence of new bonds and support systems, allowing for the integration of those who are alone or foreign citizens, as well as creating the basis for the exchange of new ideas and the birth of possible new realities. This happens when circular and iterative cooperative models develop, as envisioned in the conceptualization of experimentalist governance.

The mismatch between the innovative characteristics of AFNs and the business-as-usual approach of the municipality is also traceable in the perception of institutional actors interviewed (interview no. 2) according to which society will never be able to live without supermarkets because they have created the middle class of food consumption, and these alternative networks not only have a price list that is beyond the reach of many families, but also would not be able to produce enough food to feed the entire city. In this regard, it is helpful to remember that what holds together these realities is a set of shared and strong values, but for the members, participating in these networks (even if it provides personal and economic benefits as seen from the answers obtained) also represents a cost in terms of energy invested on rethinking their production model, leaving a system with practices already well-oiled and supported by current legislation. Other costs are represented by commitments that go beyond the simple working day, as they include moments of meeting to share and resolve problems, organization of events (cultural and/or political), etc. Consequently, the criticism that sees these realities as not sufficiently large and capable of nourishing an entire city is vague because AFNs need to create circularity and synergies with the municipality that can provide them sufficient support to expand their practices, as mentioned in the previous section.
AFNs' size and capabilities depend mainly on single actors' voluntary commitments. But a transformation of the food system cannot rely solely on private initiatives. The role of the institutional actor is fundamental, as recognized in the literature, in sustaining and facilitating these experiments, as well as incentivizing other economic actors to adopt new practices with incentives or policies.

In light of what I exposed until now, I argue that this mismatch, compounded with the rigidity of the municipality, hinder the transformative potential of AFNs. Even if evidence shows that this potential is present and that experimentalist governance practices are developing, this remains incompatible with the mainstream. Moreover, my research shows that this mismatch can furtherly be explained by two elements: tensions between AFNs and local institutions and path dependency.

7.2.1 Tensions with local public institutions

Alternative food networks often encounter tensions with local municipalities as they navigate the complex interplay between grassroots initiatives and more formalized governance structures.

One source of tension arises from regulatory frameworks that do not align with the decentralized and diverse nature of alternative food networks. Zoning laws, health regulations, and licensing requirements are designed for large-scale producers, hence posing obstacles for small-scale

producers. The clash between the flexibility inherent in alternative networks and the rigidity of municipal regulations hinders innovation and limits the growth of these networks. This has emerged prominently in the case study object of this research as they either accept the space and possibilities granted to them by institutions without challenging the municipality (which is the case of Mercato Ritrovato) or they fight to obtain more recognition and legislation that accommodate their needs (which is the case of Campi Aperti).
While alternative food networks contribute to local economic resilience and sustainability, these tensions highlight the need for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between grassroots movements and local governments. Bridging this gap requires a shared understanding of the benefits these networks bring to communities, a willingness to adapt regulatory frameworks to accommodate alternative food networks' diverse and decentralized nature, and the adoption of novel practices to capture innovation.

In particular, interview no. 22 confirms that there is a need to revisit the way that the municipality builds its consent and create novel legislation. the interviewee noted that capture innovation should be above the goal of consent building. What she meant, is that innovation should be captured and facilitated even if it comes from actors that are notoriously not providing political support. This was particularly referred to Campi Aperti, that are openly critic towards the municipality. The importance of this findings lays on the fact that even though AFNs might encounter barriers and might develop tension in their relations with institutions, they might also foster awareness on the fact that innovation and new knowledge do not necessarily need to pass through political consent. Hence, I argue that tensions and conflictual relations are not necessarily disruptive as they can be useful to raise novel awareness on the need to capture innovation following different protocols.

7.2.2 Path dependency

Related to the previous pattern, I identified "path dependency". What I mean by this term in this context is the tendency of institutions to treat AFNs with the same modalities reserved for the food industries that the AFNs are challenging.

The concept of path dependency is not new in agrifood system studies. In the early 1980s, resistance to change emerged as a systemic phenomenon, aiming to elucidate how seemingly suboptimal designs (like the QWERTY keyboard) or unsustainable modes of production became popular and dominant within societies (Arthur, 1988; David, 1985). Empirical evidence reveals that when historical circumstances and initial strategic decisions set a particular trajectory, a

complex interplay of coevolving factors develops, reinforcing these choices. Consequently, dislodging the initially established trajectory becomes challenging.

To articulate this phenomenon, researchers turned to the concepts of path dependency and lock-in (David, 1985; Jacquet et al., 2011; Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995; McGuire, 2008). Lock-ins function as "blockages," excluding alternative views and practices, making the system resistant to potential alternatives. Path dependency underscores the crucial role of history, illustrating how past choices influence present decisions, where initial movements in one direction trigger further moves in the same path. More recently, the term "inertia" has emerged in social sciences (Stål, 2015) to denote resistance to change in agri-food. It is used interchangeably with "lock-in" at the individual level to describe a reluctance to change and, at the system level, aligns with path-dependency, indicating how entrenched routines, social habits, infrastructure, and organizational logics impede or decelerate shifts in agri-food systems.

What emerges from the data gathered in this research is that policymakers still fail to think “outside the box” and to create new means of communication and collaboration with AFNs. These realities are expected to provide the same services as supermarkets (e.g., cheap and abundant food) even though they move alongside a different set of values and production practices. Also, the modalities with which the Municipality interacts are still rooted in a top-down managerial fashion that fails to capture the innovative character, and in turn, the transformational potential, of AFNs. This has also been discussed by scholars who recognize a lack of reflexivity among policy makers that continue to adopt historically dominant solutions (de Krom & Muilwijk, 2019). In general, there is recognized resistance toward a change in direction when making the food system more sustainable (Conti et al., 2021).
This highlights a mismatch between the innovative potential of AFNs and the rigidity of the institutions. Institutions, in fact, should have the function of enablers, but in this case, the implications of their practices are that they are hindering innovation or at least keeping it very quiet. The data presented in this thesis sheds light on policymakers' rigidity and the institutional barriers that appear when a different and, maybe, controversial innovation is brought to the table.

I also argue that this mismatch can be explained by tensions between AFNs and local institutions and path dependency. Together, these elements contribute to the creation of lock-ins that hinder the development of novel forms of innovation. This is also visible in this research, and it represents the third main finding.

7.3 Lock-ins do not encourage innovation

In the previous paragraph I highlighted the mismatch between the transformative potential of AFNs and the rigidity of the municipality. The third finding of this research is that the rigidity of the municipality leads to lock-ins that hinder and discourage innovation.

This has two impacts: the first one is that farmers engaging in alternative practices remain trapped in informal systems. The second, as a consequence of the first, is that farmers are unable to formalize the innovations necessary to move beyond the current state of the art. Hence, innovations that can challenge status quo remains blocked.

The rigidity of policy makers and institutions translates into a series of barriers in approaching different governance modes. This means that when novel and potentially controversial innovations are arising, institutions tend to refuse them as they are not compliant with internal rules.

According to iPES (2016), the agriculture industry is being maintained by several lock-ins, among which is the concentration of power. Social movements (among which AFNs), aim to challenge these lock-ins in different ways and with practices that, as mentioned before, are highly context-dependent. By analysing the distribution of power and the mode of governance of AFNs, it is possible to grasp more knowledge on how these realities attempt to challenge the power dynamics embodied in the food system.

The concentration of power in food systems, in fact, acts as a lock-in, reinforcing other disruptive mechanisms. Current food systems concentrate market and political power on a limited number of actors, bolstering their economic and political dominance. This concentration is evident in sectors like industrial agriculture, where a few agribusiness firms control significant portions of the seed, fertilizer, and agrochemical markets (iPES food, 2006; Renwick et al., 2012). Additionally, corporations hold considerable power in commodity export circuits where up to 90% of the global grain trade is controlled by four agribusinesses (Murphy et al., 2011). Dominant actors also influence the framing of issues and solutions, securing demand for their products. Lobbying and influencing research agendas amplify their impact (OpenSecrets, 2016). The emergence of supermarkets and large-scale retailers concentrates power at different nodes in the food chain, reinforcing prevailing dynamics favouring uniform crop commodities.

In chapter 1, I highlighted the potential of AFNs in creating an alternative food system capable of mitigating the negative impacts of specialized industrial agriculture. Despite these benefits, the widespread adoption of such systems prompts the question of why industrial modes persist. Understanding this requires examining the context in which farmers and communities opt for

industrial production. The interdependence between industrial agriculture and food systems is emphasized, evolving alongside broader transport, energy, finance, and manufacturing sectors and nexus. Identifying the specific lock-ins or mechanisms perpetuating industrial agriculture becomes crucial for fostering a transition to diversified agroecological systems. These lock-ins encompass political structures, agricultural market organizations, and conceptual barriers, representing both the challenges and potential entry points for change in breaking the cycles that support industrial agriculture.

Related to the lock-ins is the problem of co-optation.
Despite the potential of diversified agroecological systems to improve food system outcomes, resistance from powerful actors who benefit from the status quo slows its adoption. The global trade and processing industry's resistance to alternative models that favour local production and shorter value chains poses a significant obstacle.
Considering the co-optation phenomenon, AFN products, initially distributed through alternative channels, have witnessed significant growth. This expansion, especially among more affluent income groups, has earned the attention of large-scale retail supermarkets. These supermarkets now allocate shelf space for AFN products, often branding them under their labels and subjecting AFN producers to the stringent cost-price disciplines of supply chain management (Goodman, 2009).

This process is often referred to as co-optation and captured the attention of several scholars (Goodman, 2009; Ajates, 2021; Sumner & Wever, 2015; Navin, 2015; Sonnino, 2006) that aimed at addressing the issue and analysing its implications. This resonates with the open debate around the distinction between conventional and alternative food systems and reflects on the behaviour that policymakers adopt toward these realities.

In particular, the creation of alternatives that revolve around the concept of quality and embeddedness not only creates an opportunity to find products that embed alternative and more sustainable values, but also represents a profitable trend that food corporations might capture. In the words of Morris and Young (2000, p. 105): “it is these different methods and systems that are responsible for the reshaping and reorganization of food supply networks as producers and other actors are forced to modify methods of production and processing, build new relationships with others in the supply chain and adapt to new regulatory pressures”. On one side this confirms the transformative potential of these initiatives but also raises new problems concerning to what extent these new values will be diluted in an already consolidated system. This results in tensions between the conventional and alternative landscape, where actors in the conventional food system

"will wish to maintain 'business as usual,' albeit by appropriating the language of sustainability ('greenwashing')" (Sage et al, pp. 1-2).

These disputes extend beyond semantics, evolving into substantial political debates that mirror diverse interests, agendas, and values. Within the food production-consumption chain, influential entities have the potential to manipulate policies, posing challenges for smaller producers seeking product differentiation and added value. An example of this is provided by Guthman (2004), which sheds light on the history of organic agriculture in California and, more specifically, on how agri-business involvement in organic farming has transformed the landscape, triggering what they term the "unleashing of the logic of intensification" (Guthman, 2004, p. 307).

Under the influence of agri-industrialization, Guthman contends that organic farming in California has experienced a shift towards a "conventionalization" of the practice. This transformation is driven by the entrenchment of intensification expectations in land values, placing constant pressure on organic farmers to embrace technologies and cropping systems that maximize crop value per hectare. In the process, the ability of farmers to engage in a profound form of organic farming—employing rotations of marginal-value crops for fertility and non-commodity crops for pest control—is compromised.

Another example of the intersection of alternative and conventional food provisioning is exemplified by the organic products market in the UK, where supermarkets currently dominate sales, accounting for 70% or more. Integrating AFNs' products into mainstream retail reflects a dynamic transformation in the food industry, marked by evolving consumer preferences and strategic adaptations by both alternative and conventional providers (Goodman, 2009). Data gathered through this research allow to contribute to this debate. Municipal and Regional actors, for example, consider the Campagna Amica markets, organised by Coldiretti, as farmers' markets. This means that the stances and novel values brought by the two Associations risk of being diluted in a narrative carried on by powerful actors that little to do with AFNs.

To conclude, what I noticed is that this rigidity represents the biggest bottleneck to create an iterative circular model and to create a local food policy. Because if the municipality is not able to revisit its internal practices, then these innovations remain confined or will always remain informal without the possibility of scaling up or scaling out. Moreover, this will pose the risk of AFNs to be co-opted by more powerful actors and this will enhance confusion about the real set of innovations brought by AFNs. This leads to the fourth finding of this research, which is the fact that there is a need for more than local approaches for a transformation of the food system.

7.4 Municipality as a "bridge" actor and the role of regional actors: the need for more than local approaches for a sustainability transformation

Until now I have demonstrated that AFNs have the transformative potential to provide an alternative solution to the current food systems. This research has also shown that there is a mismatch between these innovations and the rigidity of the municipality. This leads to a series of lock-ins that hinder innovations and confine these networks to informal niches. The data also shows, as I will argue, that

this behaviour from the municipality represents the biggest bottleneck in the creation of a food policy.

With the involvement of institutional actors, including the municipality, other farmers could find incentives to join these transformative realities, creating a true experimentalist structure that so far remains limited only to the realities (although with differences and not utterly compliant with an experimentalist structure).
In creating an urban food policy, it seems that neither the municipality nor the region are fully including these Associations, even if they provided crucial innovations capable of potentially transform the food system. This does not mean that these Associations are openly hindered (although some interviewees from the two case studies believe this to be true), but that support tools are not provided to explode their transformative potential.

According to some interviewees who are members of both Associations, the municipality's intention is precisely to hinder these realities for political and economic reasons. These Associations show that it is possible not only to produce and sell food differently from current practices, but also to revisit internal governance mechanisms, moving towards collaboration and horizontal principles that do not yet exist in Italian institutions. According to some interviewees, institutional actors are "literally frightened" (interview no. 3) by these transformations because it would lead them to question the validity of an entire decision-making apparatus. However, as highlighted by the interviewees, the objective is not to reject institutional governance but to create shared paths that do not favour large companies or large private investors because this is not what the territory needs most. This attachment to already established practices, however, is a form of

path dependency that is part of the Italian institutional culture already studied by vast scholarship (Sabetti, 1996; Servillo, 2012) and which helps to understand these behaviours.

Therefore, a further important aspect is to understand the institutions' response. This is because the main obstacle for creating an experimentalist setting is not so much in the internal organization of these networks but in the connection with the local government.
In support of this statement, data was collected from interviews with regional actors, who were asked what perception they have of alternative food realities. Their comments were vague and superficial because only trade Associations with more than two thousand members can participate in the discussion tables, which means only larger trade Associations are visible to the Region. This threshold of members is necessary to attend the meetings and give opinions and contributions. Consequently, the size and numerical aspects become fundamental.

This is of interest for two reasons: it questions the concept of "local" and raises an issue in the size of alternative food networks, as they do not always become large enough. As noted, to start a fundamental transformation of the food system, it is essential to consider local practices as relevant. But the doubt about what is local, at this point, is twofold. Not only what is considered 'local' to alternative food networks but also what is considered "local" to institutions. An Association with more than two thousand members refers to a "local" concept closer to regional or national contexts rather than local ones. This means that the recommendations from the UAE declaration regarding the review of internal policies should pass through aspects strictly related to food and organizational ones. The lack of contact with the territory produces poor results and limited knowledge of the context. An example is the tender issued by the Region in 2022 to finance the creation of markets reserved for the direct sale of agricultural products. According to one interviewee, this call, for which one million euros were allocated, managed to finance only seven or eight projects in the whole region. According to the region, these realities are still marginal and are not recognized as potential transformative drivers of the food system.

The second aspect concerns the size of AFNs. The local nature of AFNs indicates that these networks are destined to remain small regarding turnover, members, and areas of activity. An interviewee from Campi Aperti, in fact, confirms that for alternative food networks, the narrative should not revolve around scaling up these practices but rather around "contamination" and diffusion of practices that should be adapted to local features. When some networks become too large, they risk exploding because they are based on self-governance mechanisms carried out autonomously, which already present minor tensions (Manganelli, 2018). This does not mean that self-governance models are not functional or invalid, but rather that the resources and energy to be allocated to the governance of a very large network are equally demanding. For example,

an interviewee from Campi Aperti believes the Association is already too big and should be split. This might sound counterintuitive and counterproductive because it fails to create a strong, united network that challenges institutions and large companies. However, I argue that we should overcome the idea that transformative drivers must necessarily come from an extensive and influential network, as one of the main reasons why the food system needs to transform is precisely to avoid the concentration of power on a few actors. With this, I also claim that the bottleneck represented by the municipality also contributes to validate this narrative according to which only extensive network have the possibility to be heard and to participate to political debates. The municipality is not envisioning the functions recommended by scholars (Eneqvist & Karvonen, 2021) and contributes to keep these realities informal or unexplored.

This claim resonates with the literature reviewed in chapter 2 on the beneficial effects of experimentalist governance: the creation of an experimentalist setting doesn't depend on the dimension of the actors involves, but rather on their role and potential contributions to create knowledge. The creation of an experimentalist governance could help overcoming the current narrative according to which only actors that meet specific requirements in terms of dimension and distribution are considered valuable to provide knowledge and could tackle this bottleneck.

This concept, however, remains to be explored since both the municipality and the region still think in terms of size and numbers. What emerges from the data collected is that public actors still struggle to seize the opportunity to connect these realities with broader issues of agricultural production. It is also worth mentioning that the legislation recognizing farmers' markets was only enacted in 2009, and no other updates followed that. Before 2009, these venues were considered cultural events even though a whole production system, which followed production protocols for sustainable agriculture, was behind them. The public sector has not yet begun to manage the presence of these realities from a political perspective.

As showed in Chapter 6, there are few moments of contacts among the different actors that should engage in the creation of a food policy. Moreover, there are substantial differences in the topic they touch. The topics that the Emilia Romagna region considers important are CAP and the nutriscore. This resonates with the fact that the region wants to protect those productive realities that represent the majority of the local agriculture sector. The region is not taking into account AFNs, they have a vague perception of these realities and consider them valuable only from a cultural point of view.

Conversely the municipality knows who AFNs are and could be the connecting actor between the micro and meso level. However, as evidenced before, the municipality still fails to capture the potential transformative power if AFNs, and therefore cannot have the role of bridging actor.

In the previous paragraph I analysed the mismatch between the municipality and AFNs, as well as the rigidity embodied in the municipality. However, in this paragraph I claim that this behaviour is due to the fact that the municipality is blocked as it does not only reply to the micro level, but also to the meso. This is worsened by the problem in terms of responsibilities because the municipality can only create laws and regulations that involve the municipal territory, but since the big productive actors are outside the municipal territory, no municipal regulation can influence the agricultural production. This means that the municipality can provide political guidance, but it cannot change the production system, which is something that the region should do.

To advocate for this change, however, it's crucial to enter the regional political debate, and this is possible only for trade associations with at least 2000 members and this does not include local networks. This makes it impossible for AFNs to engage with the regional actor, first of all because they do not have the numbers to possibly enter the political debate, and also because according to the two Associations, they do not want to scale up and grow.

For these reasons I claim that more attention needs to be given to multi-level governance because the focus on the micro is not enough. For example, transformations in the production system must happen at a meso level requiring meso actors to step in. I also argue that the benefits that experimentalist governance could provide are twofold. First it serves as a valuable contribution in analysing the decision-making processes and assess whether it is circular and iterative or if it still stuck to old practices. And secondly, I argue that both actors at the local and meso level could benefit from more experimentalism as it would allow them to incorporate a wide set of innovations that are either informal or substantially different from conventional practices. This opens to the need to research relations among different levels of actors.

To conclude I claim that the city and region are still far from understanding the relevance of AFNs. Politically, the two Associations are still considered "little markets," and there are no political-institutional attempts to create a transformative food policy yet. Since Bologna is part of the MUFPP, there is a public commitment to producing aa local food policy, but the direction of it is still unclear. It is also still unclear whether it will only regulate big players or consider other actors. What emerges from this research is that institutional actors are not ready yet to build

a circular model capable of connecting European regulations and regulations created for the context and built through the engagement of farmers.

These two case studies could have a significantly more significant impact if institutions could capture their innovations fully. Both AFNs and institutions prove to be not ready for the creation of an experimentalist setting. AFNs are more mature because they self-regulate, they value debates, and they want to be recognized but they are not always aware that they must connect with the institutions. The public sector, however, still seems confused about the objectives and type of food policy it wants to produce and what political lines it wants to follow. Moreover, institutional governance still seems strongly oriented to a top-down mode.

I argue that there is still an idea of a "managerial government" of food in both Emilia Romagna and the municipal level. Furthermore, AFNs, which represent grassroots initiatives, are split. One reality (Mercato Ritrovato) has no intention of entering into a discussion with the institutional party because Mercato Ritrovato is already settled as it is, the regulations suit them like this, and the venue on which they sell their products is protected. The other reality (Campi Aperti) is interested in getting in touch with institutions but is highly critical of the institutions and is unwilling to accept compromises.

7.5 Implication for experimentalist governance as framework and process tracing as analytical tool

In chapter 2 I highlighted the potential of experimentalist governance in addressing seemingly impossible problems by breaking them down into smaller more localized problems and leave local actors the autonomy to address them. By creating a safe space for experimentation, actors engaged in an experimentalist setting can encourage the exploration of novel ideas and approaches. This can lead to the development of innovative solutions to complex problems, ultimately driving progress and societal advancement.

This conceptualization resonates with the transformative potential envisioned for AFNs in providing an alternative to the current disruptive food system. The state-of-the-art on AFNs captures this potential but still fails to understand their governance structures and how these reflects into novel practices and novel way of creating relations with policymakers.

For this reason, through the development of a local experimentalist governance analytical framework I studied two farmers' markets Associations through the lenses of this governance model. This proves valuable for several reasons: first of all, it allows to capture formal and informal relations that are created to reinforce the goal of the network. Secondly, it can help spot bottlenecks and understand where innovation fails to progress and expand. Finally, it can help by providing knowledge of where iterative cycle are present and could be possibly scaled up, and which actors are not included in the iterative cycle. However, experimentalist governance alone is not capable of providing explanations about these findings. For example, if studying AFNs through the lenses of experimentalist governance allows to account for the actors that are excluded from the setting, it does not provide knowledge on the reasons behind it.

To do this it is crucial to unveil processes and mechanisms that provide explanations. For this reason process tracing proves to be a powerful instrument when coupled with experimentalist governance frameworks. This is because traditional quantitative methods may establish correlations, but they often fall short in explaining the underlying mechanisms. Moreover, process tracing is particularly well-suited for studying decision-making processes which resonates with the goal of studying the evolution of the two Associations and (their contribution to) the creation of a local food policy.

By bringing experimentalist governance and process tracing together it is possible to grasp a wide set of information that can provide novel insights on how relations are built and why, how and to which extent innovation develop, what actors are involved in these processes, and where and if bottlenecks are present.

Bringing together these methods represent an element of novelty as it made possible to develop robust knowledge about a highly context-dependent topic (AFNs), by capturing novel aspects (internal governance, relations and frameworks) and, in doing so, using a research framework that can be applied to different context and replicable. General assumptions do not resonate with the highly context-dependence characteristic of AFNs. However, their transformative potential, their popularity and their development require to build knowledge on their characteristics. However, to do so it is importance to use methods that are capable to both grasp the localness and to provide a replicable robust framework. I claim that by bringing together experimentalist governance and process tracing it is possible to reach this goal.

Summary

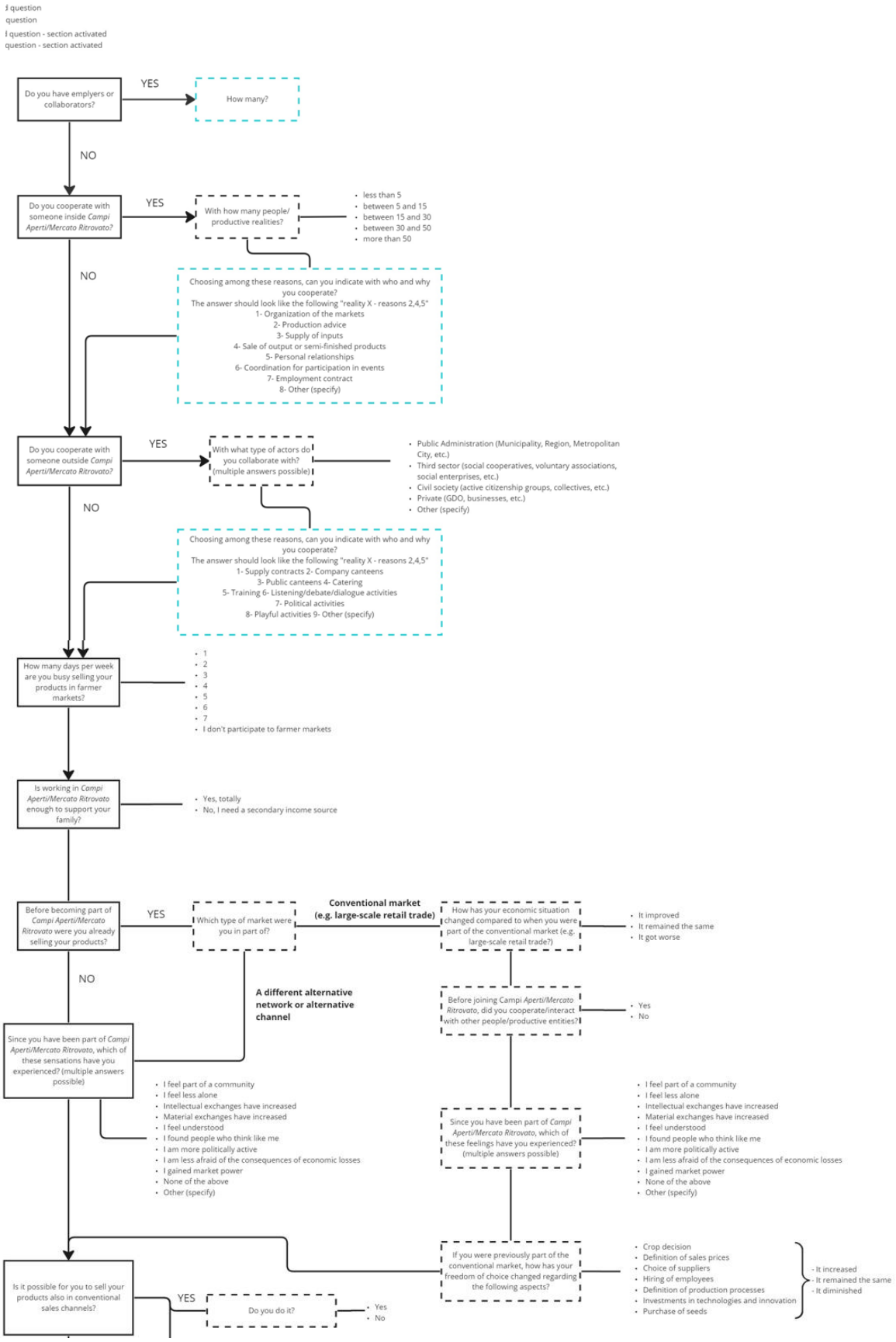
Circling back to the research questions, this research aimed to contribute to the research gap on the governance of AFNs by studying them through the lenses of experimentalist governance. This proved to be a successful setting when dealing with complex, context-dependent, and volatile issues. Moreover, this research aimed to determine which mechanisms, if present, could explain the role of AFNs in the definition of a local food policy.

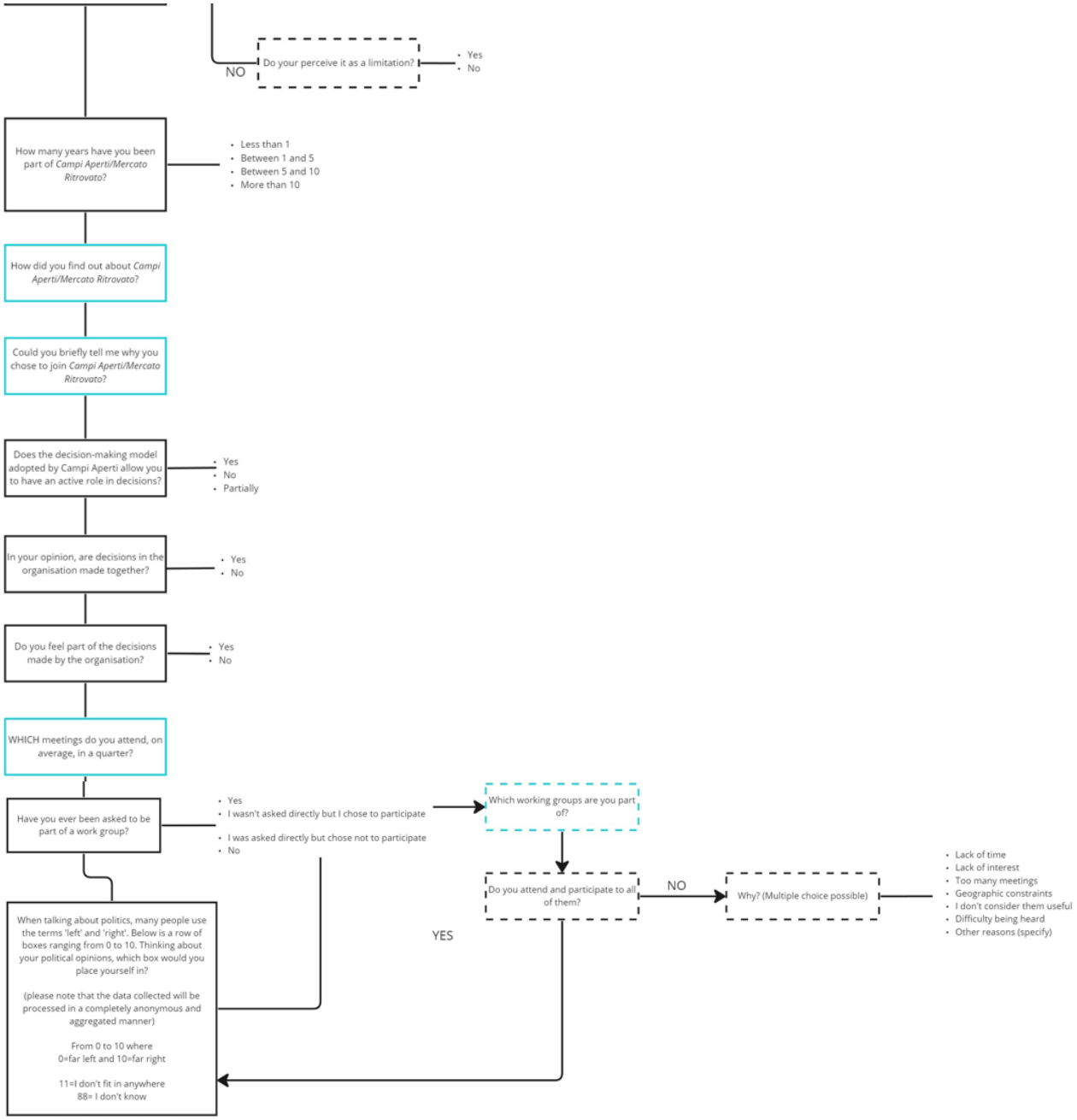
Without research on the governance of these realities, these novel aspects would be missed because these realities do not document their relations and practices, and reporting them, when done, is not done in the same way that a more formal structure is held accountable for. By studying these realities, I uncovered a whole set of relations that serves a different kind of food system that is not being supported by the dominant one that, as we know from the introduction, is disruptive.

Then, to reply to my first research question: an experimentalist governance setting is indeed present inside these Associations, and they do bring to the table all the novelty aspects scholars advocate for. However, the municipality of Bologna still resonates with a top-down governance model despite an early horizontalization of governance due to the creation of FIU (Fondazione Innovazione Urbana). The same can be said for the Emilia Romagna region, which still adopts a top-down managerial vision, fails to contact local instances, and, unlike the municipality, doesn't show any attempt to horizontalize its practices yet. For this reason, the absence of an experimentalist approach and the willingness of different societal actors makes the answer to the second question trickier.

AFNs are creating new practices and providing viable solutions and alternatives to the mainstream food system, but institutional actors have not yet incorporated their advocacy. The willingness to create a change in food systems through these grassroots initiatives is not sufficient if the same vision is not shared with political actors. This is because the absence of a shared vision will not meet the scope condition of experimentalist governance about the polyarchic distribution of power. Institutional actors have more agency and financial power than AFNs but lack the knowledge and innovation in practice. Yet, there is limited recognition of these realities, and we are still far from having a real experimentalist setting.

Appendix 1.1 – Questionnaire




NO
Do your perceive it as a limitation?
Yes
No
How many years have you been part of *Campi Aperti/Mercato Ritrovato*?
Less than 1
Between 1 and 5
Between 5 and 10
More than 10
How did you find out about *Campi Aperti/Mercato Ritrovato*?
Could you briefly tell me why you chose to join *Campi Aperti/Mercato Ritrovato*?
Does the decision-making model adopted by Campi Aperti allow you to have an active role in decisions?
Yes
No
Partially
In your opinion, are decisions in the organisation made together?
Yes
No
Do you feel part of the decisions made by the organisation?
Yes
No
WHICH meetings do you attend, on average, in a quarter?
Have you ever been asked to be part of a work group?
Yes
I wasn't asked directly but I chose to participate
I was asked directly but chose not to participate
No
Which working groups are you part of?
Do you attend and participate to all of them?
NO
Why? (Multiple choice possible)
Lack of time
Lack of interest
Too many meetings
Geographic constraints
I don't consider them useful
Difficulty being heard
Other reasons (specify)
YES
When talking about politics, many people use the terms 'left' and 'right'. Below is a row of boxes ranging from 0 to 10. Thinking about your political opinions, which box would you place yourself in?
(please note that the data collected will be processed in a completely anonymous and aggregated manner)
From 0 to 10 where
0=far left and 10=far right
11=I don't fit in anywhere
88= I don't know

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