

## **ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS AS SPACES FOR THE RE-TERRITORIALISATION OF FOOD. THE CASE OF TURIN**

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*Abstract: Alternative Food Networks (AFN) can be variously defined and can assume very different forms, according to the degree and the focus of their "alternativeness", which can be identified in issues like the relationships between actors, the connections between places, the processes of production, and so on.*

*However, what characterizes most of the practices which can be defined as AFN is the definition of a new relationship between places of consumption (mostly cities) and places of production (mostly productive rural areas), based on the relocalization of a part of the food system, which can be explicitly stated as aim of the AFN, or just observed as the product of practices of short food supply chain.*

*The aim of this contribution is to explore the role of AFNs in reconnecting cities and rural areas - as well as producers and consumers – starting from the results of an empirical study developed in two rural areas (Collina Torinese and Roero) surrounding the city of Turin.*

*This specific study is part of a wider interdisciplinary research (AFNIA – Alternative Food Networks an Interdisciplinary Research) aiming at the analysis and the interpretation of the role and the characteristics of Alternative Food Networks in Piedmont, integrating geographical, economic, sociological and environmental perspectives.*

*The starting point of this part of the research is the analysis of the localization of more than 600 producers involved in different typologies of AFNs in Turin (farmers' market, solidarity purchasing groups, other forms of direct sale).*

*Crossing the data about the localization of these producers with the rate of direct sale among local producers, it was possible to identify some areas which seems to be particularly involved in "feeding the city" through AFNs.*

*The two analyzed in the research are the Collina Torinese and the Roero, two hilly rural regions, the first contiguous to the urban area of Turin and the second about 40 km south-east from the city.*

*The research presented in this contribution investigates in depth, with an eminently qualitative methodology based on interviews, how AFNs develop in these territories, mostly from the producers side, analyzing local projects and policies aiming at supporting short food supply chains; the motivations of producers in participating at AFNs; the territorial effects of the involvement of a considerable number of farmers in this networks.*

*The objective is to understand whether the reconnections between the city – as space of consumption – and this rural areas – as spaces of production – can be considered as more or less explicitly pursued step toward the partial re-territorialization of the food system.*

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### **1. Alternative Food Networks: a territorial perspective**

The current dominant globalized food system can be represented as characterized at any scale by a widespread productivistic approach, market oriented, ruled by few large-scale powerful economic actors, usually transnational corporations (Morgan et al. 2006).

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This scenario brought to what Morgan et al. (ibid.) define as de-territorialisation of food, which can be declined into the disconnection between production and consumption of food, the disembedding of food from its places of production, the disentwining between the phases of the food chain and the dimensions of food (Wiskerke, 2009).

The notion of deterritorialization harks back to the rich debate on territoriality, coming from Deleuze and Guattari (1991) and used in the geography and spatial planning debate to describe the cycles of productions and reproduction of territory through the action of the networks of actors operating in it (Raffestin, 1980).

Magnaghi (2010) considers the deterritorialization as a structural factor of the present economic system, based on efficiency, driving to a sprawled urbanization and the weakening of the relations between societies and places, territories, landscapes, environment (and food).

The relations of power that sustain this system are considerably unbalanced, as most of the decisions affecting the system are taken by few very powerful political and economic actors, while there is a significant loss of power both of producers and consumers.

Despite the still important role that rural areas play as spaces of production, they have been affected by a devaluation, both cultural and economic, as they are mostly considered not as places, but as neutral supports for industrial agriculture.

This system produces "placeless foodscapes" (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000), where the relationships between food and the place where it is produced are broken and what most of people eat are homogeneous and standardized products, which come from a globalized non place-based value chain.

Such a system optimizes the efficiency of the food chain and production costs, but it has several negative externalities, such as: downward pressure on farm incomes and consequent loss of jobs, skills, expertise and knowledge in the agricultural sector; increase in environmental pollution, in the form of waste, dependence on fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions, consumption of water resources for production; loss of agricultural biodiversity and natural ; decline of the organoleptic quality and the diversity of products; increased competition for land, land grabbing and new forms of food colonialism; increase of diseases related to obesity and wrong eating habits, especially in the population groups with the lowest incomes (Wiskerke, 2009).

In this context, the heterogeneous landscape of alternative agro-food networks (or Alternative Food Networks - AFN), is one of the main dimensions (the other two are public procurement and urban food planning) of what is commonly called "alternative food geography" (ibid).

With the definition of AFN we mean those networks of production, distribution and consumption of food which propose and practice models that can be considered as alternative to the ones of the conventional food system, based on agro-food industry and large-scale retail trade. The *alternativeness* of these networks can be based on a very different range of factors, such as the relationships between the actors of the network, the relations that are produced between the places of the network, the distribution of power, the environmental sustainability of the production and distribution processes, the social justice of the network, and so on. (Goodman et al, 2004, Goodman et al, 2012).

Notwithstanding the vagueness of the definition, according to Jarosz (2008), we can identify AFNs in four major ways: (1) shorter distances between producers and consumers; (2) small farm size and scale or environmentally sustainable farming methods; (3) the existence of "alternative" food purchasing models and venues, usually based on human relationships and proximity between consumers, producers and/or retailers; (4) a commitment to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food production, distribution and consumption.

Within this variety, we can identify several different examples of AFNs (such as farmers' markets, Solidarity Purchasing Groups, Community Supported Agriculture, urban collective gardens, local food cooperatives, etc.), which assume different meanings, according to the geographical context and social milieu in which they emerge.

The focus of the *alternativeness* of these heterogeneous practices could be on the *food* which is produced, distributed and consumed within or through them (e.g. organic productions, traditional recipes, ancient cultivars, quality food specialties, etc.), or on the relational model of the *networks* which bring food from farm to fork (e.g. community supported agriculture, direct sale, fair trade, consumers-producers pacts, etc.) (Watts et al, 2005; Wiskerke, 2009).

Another well-known and useful classification of AFNs, both on the food and the network side, is proposed by Marsden et al. (2000), which distinguish between *face to face* AFNs (based on the direct relationships between the actors of the food chain), *spatial proximity* based (basing their alternativeness on the relocalization of the food chain) and *spatially extended* (where the alternativeness is embodied by food, even if travelling worldwide).

Obviously, it would be a mistake the attempt to strictly classify these various and changing practices and to define a neat division between AFNs and the so-called conventional food system. Frequently, in fact, we assist to blurring relationships between alternative and conventional practices, which coexist in the same places, and sometimes mix in the same networks and practices (Sonnino e Marsden, 2006).

A critical perspective is also demanded for what concerns the relationships between AFNs and the relocalization of the food system. Falling in the so-called "local trap" (Born and Purcell, 2006) or "unreflexive localism" (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005), often the debate evokes a coincidence between local food and alternative food. Actually, at the local scale – however understood – the inequalities and distortions of the conventional food system are often reproduced, even if with a minor spatial extension.

Supporters of the relationship between an increase in proximity and fairer and more sustainable food systems, either locally or globally, are aware that even localized systems can reproduce the dynamics of spatial and social injustice unsustainability (ibid.) and that it is necessary to define precisely which negative aspects of the conventional system can be at least partially solved by small scale alternative models (Allen, 2010).

The risk of uncritically assigning positive value at the local scale is also to deny the political dimension of the local, denying the multidimensionality of the scale and sub estimating both the role of powerful supra-local actors in addressing local dynamics and practices (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005) and the presence of localist reactionary and defensive attitudes of some local actors (Hinrichs, 2003). Most scholars working on this themes agree that it is not enough (and in some cases not even necessary) to increase the physical proximity between producers and consumers and between stages of the supply chain, instead we must seek to build a new relationship between food and places, weakened by agribusiness (Casey, 2001; Feagan, 2007).

AFNs often – explicitly or implicitly – aim to a spatial reorganization of the food systems, moving from a dominant globalized food geography, uninterested to the specificities of places, to the construction of a new relationship between food and places. Trying to summarize the rich debate on these issues, we can identify four different aims, declared or practiced by AFNs.

The first is the *relocalization* of the food system (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002), often considered as a reduction of the *food miles* and a growth of the market share of local food. The relocalization of food can be imagined starting from an idea of "local" based on extension, with the identification of an

optimal circular area within which food can be considered as "local", or with a more complex understanding of "local", as a variable scale, produced by relationships between people, places and resources (Sonnino et Marsden, 2006; De Kremer et De Liberty, 2011).

A second spatial shift of the food system, often mentioned in the debate is the re-regionalization (Kneafsey, 2010). One of the key dimensions of the spatial perspective in studying food systems is the analysis of the *foodshed* of a city or an area (Kremer and De Liberty, 2011), that is the set of (usually not contiguous) areas where the food consumed in a place comes from. If the analysis of the foodshed can be seen as the assessment of existing dynamics, the idea of regionalization (or re-regionalization) is usually used with a regulatory meaning, trying to define which should be the areas from where (not only local) food should mostly come from, in order to achieve more sustainable or just food systems. As the difference between re-localization and regionalization is decidedly nuanced, regionalization can be considered an upper scale process that connects different "locals" in a complex and open food territorial system (Clancy and Ruhf, 2010).

Another concept often mentioned in the debate, which supports and enriches ones of relocalization and re-regionalization is the one of the *re-embeddedness* of food in places (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006), local ecologies (Murdoch et al, 2000) and social networks (Sage, 2003). This is a potentially very useful analytical category because it includes the spheres of the cultural, social and political environment (horizontal dimension) and the institutional sphere (vertical dimension) of food systems (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006).

According to the territorial point of view guiding this contribution, however, a concept that better than others can synthesize the characteristics of alternative geographies of food and AFNs is reterritorialization, understood as opposed to the deterritorialization which characterizes practices attributable to the conventional system (Morgan et al, 2006).

As suggested by Dansero and Puttilli (2013), this territorial approach – related to a wider field of research<sup>3</sup> – is particularly valuable for studying the AFNs for two reasons. First, because these practices can be seen as a redefinition of the relationship between food and territory, the reaffirmation of social relationships, a new economic and cultural relation between places, producers and consumers. In addition, the concepts of territory and territoriality (for a recent overview, see Raffestin, 2012) – mostly used in the Italian and French contexts (Saquet, 2012) – may offer a new analytical perspective for what concerns, food networks, with particular reference to their spatial configurations.

This approach it can be considered fruitful to investigate the already mentioned reterritorialisation of food through AFNs, which can follow the deterritorialization deriving from the weakening of the relationships between food networks and places characterizing the conventional industrialized and globalized food system.

According to this approach, the territory is not only considered as a delimited area, but also as the result of the action of multiple networks of actors operating in a particular place, compared to other places and with existing resources (Raffestin 1980; Dematteis 1985, Turco 1988).

From a territorial approach, Dansero and Puttilli (2013) propose to consider AFNs starting from three complementary dimensions:

- spaces: the organization of AFNs in space, specifically the physical and functional distance between the actors participating in the network. The focus is on both the spaces of production - from where a new urban-rural linkage can be developed - and the spaces of sell and consumption, which often become new spaces of socialization.

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<sup>3</sup> See, among the many references, the conference organized by FAO in 2013, named "A Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition and Rural Poverty Reduction".

- resources: the type of resources used in AFNs. These resources can be very varied: at one extreme, they can be highly locally specific, unavailable or unreproducible elsewhere, while at the other extreme, they can be standardized resources, reproducible anywhere. Is the food sold in the AFN the expression of a specific place or a specific network of actors? At which extent the relational, cultural and material resources mobilized through the network come from the milieu of specific places?
- relationships: the type of social relations between the actors who belong to the AFN. At one side, we can find experiences with an explicit community dimension, based on face-to-face relations and trust, on the other side more structured, market oriented, organizational models. Which is the main aim of the AFN? A new space of market for economic activities? A new space of social relationships? The support to the development of a weak area? How do these different aims mix together in each practice?

In the next paragraph, we will analyze the role of alternative food networks in the food system of Turin, trying to underline their territorial configuration, referring to the conceptual framework described above, even if a more detailed analysis will be developed in the next months of researching.

## **2. Turin: a case study**

### **2.1. The local context**

In the Northwest of the country, between Milan and the French borders, with a population of 900.000 (almost 2.3 million if we consider the *città metropolitana*), Turin is the fourth biggest Italian city for population. After centuries as capital of the Duchy and then of the Kingdom of Savoy and few years as first Italian capital (1861-1865), in the XX century the city grew as a company-town, around the huge automobiles plants of FIAT, in the Southern neighborhoods of Lingotto and Mirafiori and the flourishing satellite activities.

In the last decades, the city has been the location of one of a dramatic transformation both physical and symbolical. Many factories closed and has been substituted by brand new portions of city. This material change went with a remarkable process of re-invention of the city's image, which had its turning point in the 2006 Winter Olympic Games (Dansero and Puttilli 2009). In about fifteen years, the city shifted in the collective imagination of Italians from a grey industrial city to a vibrant city and a tourist destination, based on creativity, cultural heritage, cinema, museums, innovation and food (Vanolo 2008).

Turin belongs to a territorial system where food is a mature economic, social and cultural asset, which contributes to a regional development increasingly based on high-quality food production (wine, chocolate, nuts, cheese, etc.) and food and wine tourism, which – as mentioned above - are gradually taking the place of heavy industries in the economic system and in the discursive representations of the area.

The acknowledgment of this assets, stimulated by some strong and very active stakeholders (e.g. Slow Food, Eataly), brought to the organization of several initiatives and events aiming at promoting and protecting typical food products (e.g. Salone del Gusto, Terra Madre, Cioccolato, etc), which made of Turin one of the recognized national "capitals of food" (Torino Strategica, 2013).

## **2.2. Alternative Food Networks in Turin**

In a city where food plays such an important role in economic, cultural and political life, there are many examples of practices that can be defined as alternative food networks, according to the very inclusive definitions proposed above.

Before enumerating the main AFNs identified in the urban area and interpret some of them at the light of the territorial approach proposed, it is necessary, to make an briefly introduce some specificities of AFNs in the Italian food system. As already highlighted, one of the most debated issues in this field is the presumed (declared and practiced) alternativeness of the different forms of food networks (Jones et al, 2010; Watts et al, 2005).

In the Italian context, though, the deterritorialization of food practices is still only partial, albeit threatened by different cultural and economic models (Helstosky , 2004) . People still use to cook fresh food at home daily (only 20% of the Italians use to buy pre-cooked food<sup>4</sup>), to buy it at food markets (80% of the Italians buys part of their food at local markets<sup>5</sup>), sometimes directly from producers.

Obviously, this does not mean that Italy and Italians are not a node of the globalized agroindustrial driven food system, for what concerns flows of goods, flows of workers and the concentration of power.

In a food system of this kind, common in many countries of southern Europe, it is still more difficult to define the boundary between traditional habits, "conventional" food practices and alternative food networks (Dansero and Puttilli, 2013).

In this paper, the focus will be on two typologies of AFNs, well represented in Turin: farmers' markets and Solidarity Purchasing Groups (GAS – Gruppi d'Acquisto Solidale).

### *2.1.1 Farmers' markets*

The growth of farmers market in the more economically developed countries is one of the main evidences of the renewed interest of consumers for fresh and local food, with clear information about its provenance (Govindasamy et al., 2002)

In Italy, there are about 1000 FMs, mostly concentrated in the Centre and North of the country, mostly organized and managed by professional agricultural organizations, notably Coldiretti<sup>6</sup> (Marino and Cicatiello, 2012).

In some cities, including Turin, however, there are two types of markets where farmers can sell directly .

The first are the municipal markets that take generally every day in different parts of the city. There, a specific sector of the market is reserved to producers. Among the about 45 daily food markets of Turin, 38 are those that host agricultural producers, mainly selling seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables (but also cheese, meat, honey, eggs, and so on).

In most of them, however, it is very difficult to distinguish the stands of local producers from those of vendors who sell products coming from conventional channels (such as the wholesale market). Here, the identification of local producers comes from the direct relations between producers/sellers and

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<sup>4</sup> Coldiretti, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Nielsen, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Coldiretti is the main agricultural organization in Italy. Founded in 1944, has now 1.9 million members all around Italy (70 % of all Italian farmers) ([www.coldiretti.it](http://www.coldiretti.it)).

consumers<sup>7</sup>. Only in a few cases, the area reserved for producers is clearly identifiable (through descriptive panels), usually where it has been the object of specific development projects. The most striking example in this sense is the Porta Palazzo market , where every day a variable number of farmers (over 90 stalls on Saturdays), sell their products under a metal roof in Art Nouveau style , which is a historical place of socialization for the people of this popular neighborhood of Turin ( Black, 2012). The second type of farmers markets in Turin are the periodic markets organized by various organizations. The main role, in this sense, is played by the farmers' organizations, notably Coldiretti, which through the program Campagna Amica organizes more than 600 markets throughout Italy. In Turin, there are around 15 farmers markets, most of which (8) organized by Coldiretti under the initiative Campagna Amica. Other organizers are Slow Food (with two "Mercati della Terra"), the CIA – Confederazione Italiana dell'Agricoltura and other associations and networks like ASCI - Associazione Solidarietà Campagna Italiana or Genuino Clandestino . If municipal markets are spread throughout the city, with at least one market in each of the 23 historical neighborhoods of Turin, the farmers markets belonging to this second typology are mainly concentrated in the historic center of the city, with a particular concentration on the square in front of the City Hall (Piazza Palazzo di Città), where almost every weekend there is a farmers' markets, organized by one of the actors mentioned above. The degree of declared opposition of these practices to the conventional system is much variable. It is low in the case of the markets organized by organizations of farmers such as Coldiretti or CIA; while on the other extreme it is much more explicit for what concerns markets like the ones organized by the network Genuino Clandestino (that uses the spaces of the Autonomous Social center Askatasuna) .



Figure 1. Distribution of farmers' markets in Turin

<sup>7</sup> Each producer, actually, have to show visibly on his/her stand a certificate, attesting the main characteristics and the localization of its farm.

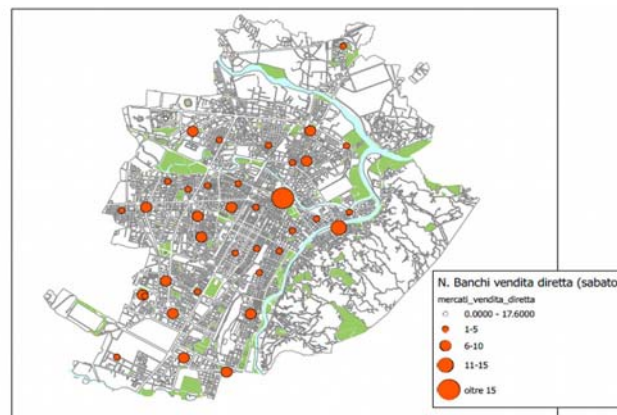


Figure 2. The distribution of producers in municipal markets in Turin

At the provincial scale (Città Metropolitana) the number of farmers' markets grows to around 70, mostly concentrated in the periurban area of Turin. The density of this kind of AFNs decreases in rural areas and around smaller towns. Their total number in Piedmont is of about 150<sup>8</sup>, mostly concentrated around the main urban areas of the region.

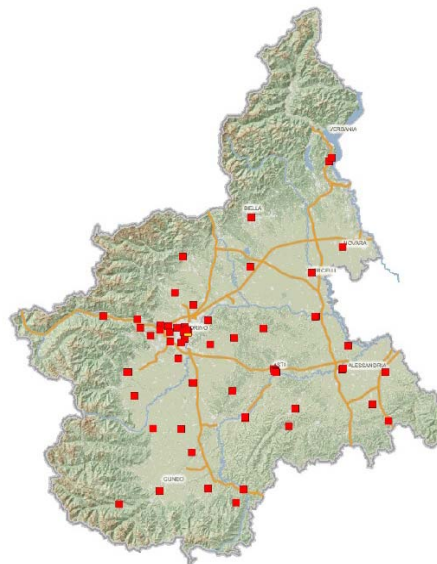


Figure 3. The distribution of GASs in Piedmont

The panorama of the farmers' markets of Turin is characterized by a big variety of organizers, aims and political engagement of the farmers' market in Turin and in Piedmont, which would make useless an analysis of these practices as a whole.

A common trait is the local provenance of producers, mostly concentrated from few areas of Piedmont, notably the hilly regions of Roero and Collina Torinese and the foothills areas between Turin and the Alps.

<sup>8</sup> The exact number of farmers' market is variable, because some of them are organized only seasonally or not on a regular base.



A big variety concerns the characteristics of the products sold in the markets, strictly related to the mission of each market. Most of them are populated by conventionally produced local products, while some exceptions can be found in the few organic food markets or in more explicitly political markets, such as the ones organized by Slow Food, selling mostly products coming from the Slow Food Presidia, or the ones organized by Genuino Clandestino, where most of the products are not-certificated organic and come from small size alternative family farming.

### 2.1.2 The GASs (Solidarity Purchasing Groups)

The *Gruppi d'Acquisto Solidale* (GAS) or Solidarity Purchasing Groups are a form of organized critical consumption, which emerged in Italy since the 90's, structured around the collective purchase of products (not just food), whose suppliers (often producers) are usually selected according to criteria of environmental sustainability and social and economic justice. If in the case of farmers' markets, consumer choices are only partly guided by explicitly political reasons related to the support of an alternative food system (Marin and Cicatiello, 2012), for the member of GASs, the support and the definition of alternative models of consumption and production are almost always the core of the activity of the organizations (Graziano et Forno, 2012; Grasseni, 2013).

The extreme organizational variety of the GASs and their different levels of formalization (from totally informal group to formal associations) makes it very difficult to make an exhaustive census. The national network Rete GAS has about 1.000 self-reported groups throughout Italy, even if they represent only a part of the total number of these groups of consumers.

In the municipality of Turin there are about 70 self-reported purchasing groups and their number increases to 120 across the whole Città Metropolitana, with a strong concentration in the urban area of Turin.

The number of the members of each GAS can considerably vary, from few families, to more than 100 families for the biggest ones.

The choice of the products bought by the members of the GASs depends on the mission of the GAS itself. Some of them are focused on local food, some others buy only organic food, with no care of its geographical origin, while others are more focused on social justice and fair trade. It is very difficult though an exhaustive analysis of the characteristics of these AFNs, due to their mainly informal nature.

For what concerns relationships, a relevant topic is the networking of many GAS at the metropolitan scale, in order to make big orders of specific products, usually not locally produced: in particular, oranges (as well as lemons and tangerines) coming from Southern Italy. The choice of big collective purchases for some specific products is related to one of the most problematic issues related to GASs, that is logistic. The informal and voluntary based nature of these groups makes them often inefficient, for what concerns deliveries and purchases. For this reason the network GAS Torino, with other networks of Northern Italy, launched small-scale projects of Small Organized Distribution (PDO) in opposition to the Great Organized Distribution of large scale retail (AA.VV., 2013). These projects are expression of the network of actors working together through and for a more aware and environmentally and socially sustainable consumption of food (social cooperatives, local produce stores, etc.).

Moving from the relationships between GASs to the relationships between each of them, it should be noticed how most of them emerge from already existing networks, with different degrees of formal organizational structure, such as cultural, religious, political or sport associations, groups of workers, neighbors, and so on.

### 2.1.3 The provenance of producers

Some key issues to be investigated in order to understand the "territoriality" of AFNs are the provenance and the characteristics of producers participating to them, in terms of farm size and structure, production processes, multi-functionality, promotion of alternative visions of the rural.

At the current progress of the research here presented, it is possible to propose some reflections about the geographical localization of producers participating to AFNs in Turin.

The map of Figure 5 shows the localization of more than 600 producers involved in farmers' markets, GASs or other typologies of AFNs not presented in this paper.

Most of them comes from an area within 50 km from Turin, witnessing the importance given to the local provenance of products sold through the AFNs, beyond their processes of production. A specific concentration of producers can be noticed in three areas:

- The hills surrounding Turin on the eastern and southeastern side of the metropolitan area.
- The Roero hilly region, about 40-50 km south of Turin
- The foothills areas between the urban area of Turin and the Alpine valleys of Susa, Chisone and Pellice.

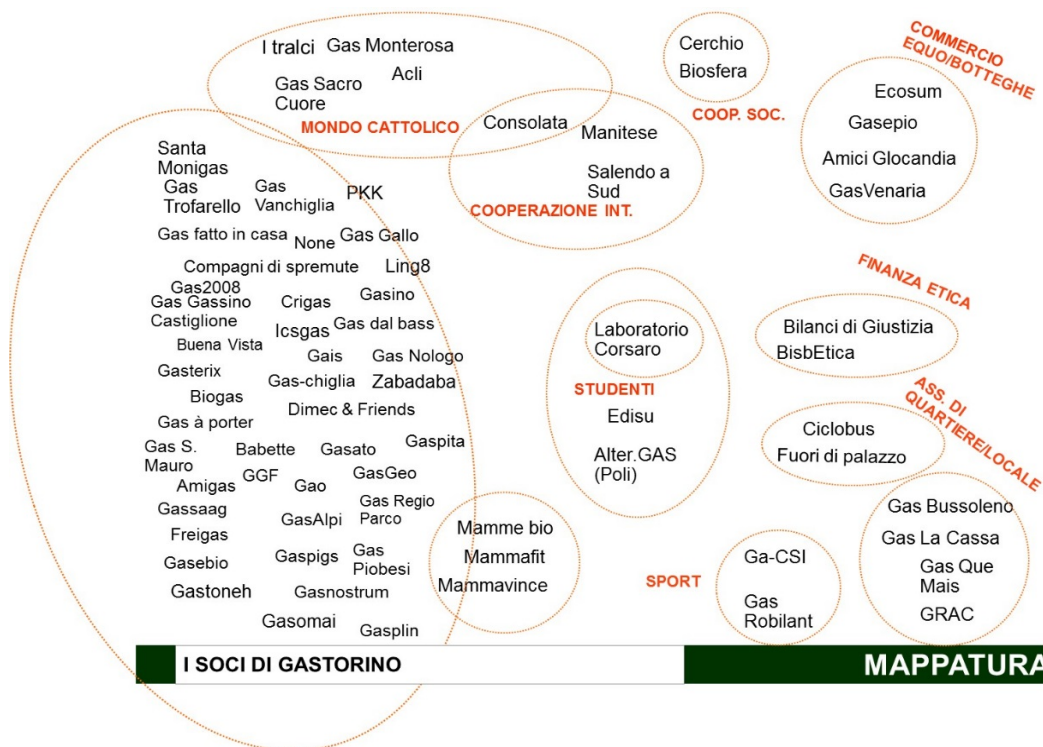


Figure 4. The social networks of GASs in Turin

These three sub-regions are very different for what concerns their agricultural and economic structure and their relationships with Turin. It would be then very useful to analyze more in depth the reasons of the concentration of producers participating to alternative food networks in this areas, in order to understand if it can be related to the development of a new relationships between urban and rural, possibly through the reterritorialization of food practices and networks.

The foodshed of GASs is broader than the one of farmers' market, as it is most common to find in the "basket" of the consumers participating to collective purchases products coming from other regions and other countries. The main motivation of the purchase of some products is not in this case their

local provenance, but their being representative of an alternative model of food production and distribution. Figure 6 shows the main clusters of producers providing food to the GASs of Turin from outside Piedmont, usually with the intermediation of Rete GAS. With the exception of olive oil, mostly coming from Liguria, the closest region to Piedmont where it is produced, the choice of the other products and producers is mostly related to ethical or environmental issues, such as: sustainable fishing practices (fish coming from Mar Tirreno), support to populations of Emilia-Romagna after the 2012 earthquake (purchasing the Parmigiano Reggiano produced in the areas devastated by the event), support to organizations (namely Libera) fighting mafia in Southern Italy, by cultivating lands confiscated to mafia.

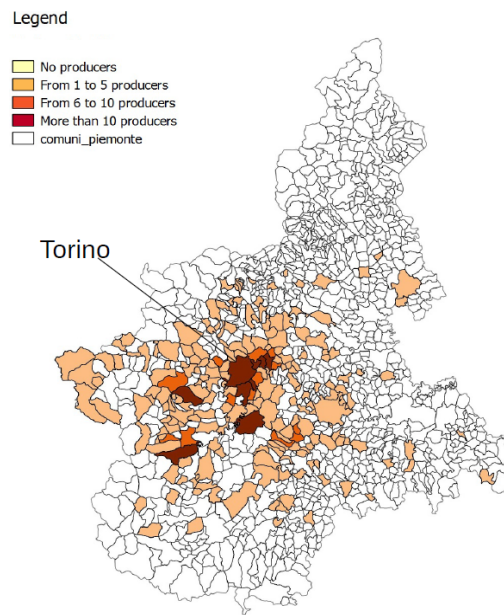


Figure 5. The provenance of local producers participating to AFNs in Turin



Figure 6. Some clusters of Italian producers involved in Solidarity Purchasing Groups in Turin

### 3. Conclusions

Figure 7 tries to relate different kinds of AFNs existing in Turin to different dimensions of the spatial reconfiguration of food systems described above. Even if such systematization could be useful, it does not represent the heterogeneous complexity of the many different kinds of AFNs existing in a city like Turin.

From a methodological point of view, it will be necessary, for the continuation of this research, to analyze each AFNs separately, using general conclusions on for a final summary.

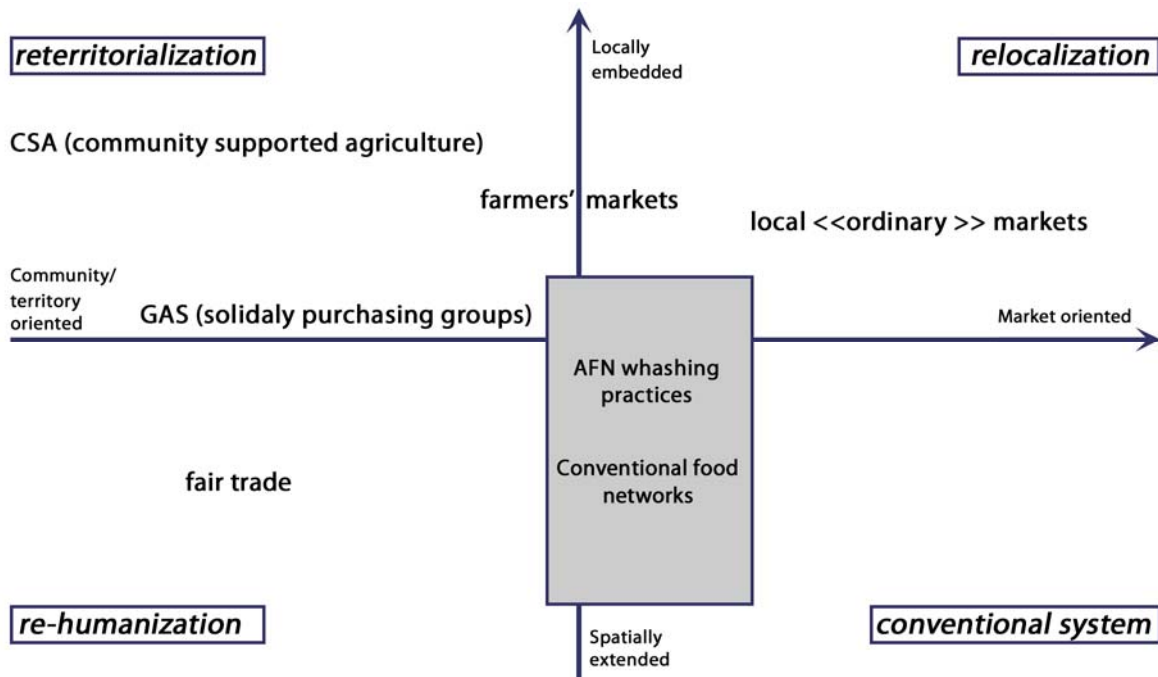


Figure 7. Spatial reconfigurations of the food system according to the different typologies of AFNs

Some of the already mentioned main topics common in the debate about AFN clearly emerge even from this still general overview on these practices in Turin such as:

- The need of a critical gaze, trying to understand how the "alternativeness" of these practices relates to the conventional system to whom they are anyway strictly related too
- The need of avoiding an unreflexive understanding of the local scale, as panacea of the negative aspects of the food system.
- The idea of the niche. Are AFNs niche practices? How do they relate with other practices which are common in Italy (e.g. buying fresh food at the market), which are not explicitly alternative, but which cannot be considered only as a part of the conventional system?
- At which scale AFNs maintain their "alternativeness"? Which can be the balance between small scale, place based practices and wider practices, able to effectively affect the food system at a regional, national or even broader scale?

For what concerns the territorial approach proposed in this paper, it is possible to summarize here some main topics.

### **Spaces**

AFNs emerge from and produce specific relationships between the places of production and the places of consumption. A main point is that they are generally considered, by most of the consumers participating to these networks, as places in their complexity, wherever they are, and not simply as economic spaces of production. It has already been discussed how the localization of producers involved in AFNs can be used as an evidence of their strategies and aims. Another relevant issue is the role of the places where producers (or their products) and consumers get in contact, which sometimes become places where the often hidden food system (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999) emerge and become evident. It is the case of markets, here notably the market of Porta Palazzo, which is one of the main places of sociality in the city.

### **Relationships**

The reflections about the relationships which characterizes AFNs can be consumers-consumers; consumers-producers; producers-producers.

This overview on AFNs in Turin shows a big variety of relations, which extend from mostly market-oriented corporatist relationships, like those of markets organized by farmers associations, to purely community-oriented ones, represented for example by the more "alternative" markets.

Many AFNs, emerge from and reproduce existing relationships, both in a positive and negative sense. It would be useful to better understand which new relationships emerge through AFNs, both from the consumers and the producers side, as they can be the starting point of new, more equal relations between places.

### **Resources**

Exploring the resources that AFNs mobilize means more than considering the type of food produced, sold and consumed through them. Considering food, however, could be a useful starting point, as it allows to observe how some of them considers it merely as an economic good, even if high quality, fair, sustainable, and so on. In other cases, though, food is the vehicle for the development of new social, environmental and economic models at any scale, starting from the valorization of the local unreproducible material and symbolic resources, with new cultural and economic framework coming from outside. In this sense, one of the aims of the further steps of the research is to understand if and how in those areas where producers participating to AFNs in Turin are localized, their participation is part of a project (not only institutional) of local development through the reterritorialization of food.

## **4. References**

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