

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Commoning the food system: Barriers, opportunities and resilience strategies on the case of CampiAperti, Bologna, Italy**

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**Commoning the food system: Barriers,  
opportunities and resilience  
strategies on the case of CampiAperti,  
Bologna, Italy**



**By**

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**PhD**

**March 2022**

# **Commoning the food system: Barriers, opportunities and resilience strategies on the case of CampiAperti, Bologna, Italy**

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## Abstract

The concept of 'Food sovereignty' was articulated by the global peasant movement La Via Campesina in 1994, in response to the neo-liberalisation of agriculture. Most academic research on food sovereignty focusses on the global South, and only little attention has been paid to the European peasant movement and their strategies to build food sovereignty in a context in which, according to European La Via Campesina, the EU Common Agricultural Policy is putting a small farm out of business every three minutes, and agro-industry emits one fourth of all carbon emissions in the continent.

This thesis discusses the transformative potential of food production and the de-commodification of foodstuff from a commons and commoning perspective. Analysing the case of CampiAperti, a producer Association in Bologna, Italy, I demonstrate multiple production systems in use-value through the lens of the peasant condition where farmers have taken ownership over the production stages of their selected craft, and through commoning have put in place an agroecological value system based on animal and labour rights. In exerting their value system, two autopoietic mechanisms were developed to assert their ecological and social boundaries from the state, capitalist system and free-riders. The first one is the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS), and the second is the collaborative price-mechanism (CPM). The PGS is instrumental to self-certifying their foodstuff, which raises the critical question of boundaries and enclosures from a commons perspective. While the CPM is used to eliminate competitive behaviour amongst producers by setting their own 'just prices'. This mechanism is scrutinised on competition, and on the tension between guaranteeing a livelihood for farmer and the affordability of their foodstuff for consumers. Both PGS and CPM mechanism defy the capitalist logic of neo-liberalisation of the food system as well as the logics of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and thus these mechanisms are strategic political tools to emancipate from the capitalist food market and are employed to self-govern their own markets. Foodstuff is evaluated as a common good, arguing that the created food system is a closed commons circuit.

Conducting fieldwork on farms, markets, and assemblies, the study addresses the possibility of materialising food sovereignty by examining production and distribution of foodstuff in use-value. It utilises a practice-centred approach and draws on a mixed-method, multi-sited ethnographic strategy to explore how individuals take responsibility of their re/production and examines the producer's commitment to participate in self-governing the food system through commoning. The ethnographic study is supplemented with a discourse and conversational

analysis to get a deeper understanding of CampiAperti's organisation and of their complex horizontal governance structure.

**Keywords:** commoning, use-value, solidarity economy, social movements, food sovereignty

## **Dedication**

**This research is dedicated to CampiAperti**

**&**

**To the Genuino Clandestino Movement**

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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

AFN	Alternative Food Network
ASL	Azienda Sanitaria Locale (Local Health Unit)
CA	CampiAperti
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CMDA	Computer-Mediated-Discourse Analysis
CPR	Common-Pool-Resource
CSA	Community-Supported-Agriculture
CPM	Collaborative-Price-Mechanism
DA	Discourse Analysis
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
ER	Emilia-Romagna
GA	General Meeting
GC	Genuino Clandestino
GAM	General Assembly Meeting
GAS	Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale
IFOAM	International Federation of Agricultural Movements
LVC	La Via Campesina
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra
NAS	Nuclear Anti-Sophisticazione
TAK	Traditional Agricultural Knowledge
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
PGS	Participatory-Guarantee-System
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWOOF	World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farm

## Glossary

This is a short list of key terms employed in this thesis. A brief definition is provided for each term. These definitions are contested.

**Autopoiesis** Autopoiesis is a particular aspect of autonomy, one that coincides with a higher degree of resilience. It is the capacity of living cells to reproduce and organise themselves (Varela and Maturan in De Angelis 2017: 236). Adopted by De Angelis (2017) to explain how society can be viewed as a self-organised system that generates its own components for reproducing the system, which regenerate and organise themselves.

**CampiAperti producers** CampiAperti producers consist of *produttori primari* and *produttori trasformativi*. Produttori primari, or primary producers, produce things like vegetables, fruits, legumes and eggs for the market without transforming them into an end-product. *Produttori trasformativi*, or secondary producers, are described as producers that transform grain into bread or pasta, grapes into wine, olives into oil and so on. Thus, in the English version I will refer to them as primary and secondary producers.

**Commons** The intersection of a material and immaterial resource system, also known as a commons-pool-resource-system (CPR). The critical approach of the commons interrogates the tension between communities and capital over ownership of the commons. Communities claim the commons for the material and immaterial resources to secure their livelihoods and aim to radically transform the dominant socio-economic structures for producing social wealth. In contrast, capital claims ownership to enclose the commons to guarantee the continuation of production and wealth accumulation.

**Commoning** The continuous activity and daily engagement of making and re-making the commons (Federici 2019, De Angelis 2017, Shiva and Mies 2014). It is the reproduction of the commons through shared practices. It is a quest for a different set of modes of (re)production. It aims to reveal how capitalist enclosures have de-valourised and rendered invisible the myriad, situated relations and practices of reproduction that exist between people and the resources on which they rely on. Commoners are focused on resisting the logic of capital accumulation while also creating new forms of working, living and being in common. Commoning requires political action and is a focal juncture of social struggle to subvert the capitalist relations.

**Craft/Craftsmanship** Academic literature describes crafts and craftsmanship as cultivating a particular skillset through constant endeavour and exchange with the same tradespeople over their life span. Critical perspectives on craft addresses the distinct labour, bodily experiences, and social and material knowledge that define craft. (Ingold 2013). It is shaped by, and shapes, relationships, communities and place.

**Entrepreneurial farming** Entrepreneurialism is used to expand one's own autonomy in producing food within a value system that consists of interconnecting social, ecological and animal dimensions. In capitalism, entrepreneurialism orientates one's production to the structure of the global market. From the perspective of the commons, production follows self-governing ethical production rules whereby the market is subordinated to production in order to respect nature.

**Exchange-value**        The price of a traded commodity. It is the commodification of labour into wage workers and products into commodities. The value of exchange is determined by the amount of labour time that was spent in production. The increase of exchange-value is achieved by repressing labour rights, which is enabled by ethical and ecological value systems that expand commodity production. In the commons, the exchange-value is replaced with social relations based on a different value system.

**Nature**                In Political Ecology, nature is viewed as the network of relationships of non-human populations with their environment. Nature is the complex flows of matter and energy that are not driven by human activity. Provided that nature is unaffected by interactions with humans, it is governed by its own laws. These laws are undermined when humans interact with nature. For Marx, nature separated from society has no meaning. It is through exerting the *will to power* that people exercise over nature, of the processes of appropriation that ascribe a meaning and an intensity to human transformative actions over nature. Different strategies for appropriation of nature in different ecological contexts – be they cultural or capitalist – generate politicized ecological processes that are the effects of power strategies. These processes increase the alienation of nature as a result of industrialisation extending to agriculture. In employing agroecological methods, farmers employ a new value system that generates an intrinsic relation to nature in order to overcome the divide between nature and social interaction.

**Social Reproduction**        The process of social reproduction includes a particular organisation of the ensemble of inter-individual relations of co-existence. The organisation of the relations of co-existence cease to be an order established by the ‘natural formation of the structure’ and establishes itself as an autonomous source of determination. Social reproduction and use-value are complementary to each other.

**Social Wealth**                Social wealth, also known as common wealth, is the self-governance of collective production and distribution. The production of goods, services and knowledge is a reciprocal circuit which benefits the producers, the users and the ecological system. It orientates a value system that re-articulates the political economic premise of a commodity. The circular flow of social wealth addresses the “the right to work” and “the right to good food” within an autonomous ethical and social framework. The co-created and co-organised social wealth strengthens autonomy of the self-organised labour processes and co-enjoyment of products and services.

**Use-value**                Use-value is comprised of labour and enjoyment of the end-product. In the autonomous organisation, interdependence of social subjects and the confrontation with nature take place in two interrelated processes. The activity of labour and the transformation from natural material into an end-product is decided by to the person who will use it. The user of the end-product does not simply consume the product, they recognise the different qualities of the end-product, which brings them enjoyment of the end-product. From the capitalist perspective, use-value cannot exist without exchange-value.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

“As neoliberalism converts every political or social problem into market terms, it converts them to individual problems with market solutions. This conversion of socially, economically, and politically produced problems into consumer items depoliticizes what has been historically produced, and it especially depoliticizes capitalism itself. Moreover, as neoliberal political rationality devolves both political problems and solutions from public to private, it further dissipates political or public life: the project of navigating the social becomes entirely one of discerning, affording, and procuring a personal solution to every socially produced problem. This is depoliticization on an unprecedented level: the economy is tailored to it, citizenship is organized by it, the media are dominated by it, and the political rationality of neoliberalism frames and endorses it.”

Wendy Brown, Political Scientist (2019), Neo-liberalism as an anti-commons

The commons, or making a commons, is the doing and making of commons that involves a direct and profound engagement with the daily activities and experiences of the commoners through which the commons are composed. The practice of commoning has been part of our culture and the organisation of humankind since forever. Social reproduction was diverted from the means of production by capital in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, destroying social relations within the communities (Federici 2004, Desmarais 2007). It is claimed that through commoning, social reproduction and production became equally important again (Kloppenborg 2010, Shiva and Mies 2014). This thesis contributes to theorising how the commons are created in food production. In particular, it investigates the reproduction of materials for the production of foodstuff, and how practices of cultivating a craft provide opportunities to participate in and stimulate a self-governed food system.

In the past two decades a revival of interest into the commons and commoning has emerged. With the proliferation of neo-liberal trade agreements in the early 1990s, the Zapatistas, Mexican indigenous living in Chiapas, were one of the first to recognise the danger of neo-liberalism and the new stage of global capitalism. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994 the Northern American Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, USA and Mexico came into effect. They rose up on that day, occupied the capital of Chiapas, San Christóbal, and declared war on the ongoing

expulsion of their territories, occupied coffee plantations and forced governments to re-distribute land. Their action sparked the global anti-globalisation movement against the World Trade Organisation and, more importantly, invoked a discussion on alternative livelihoods models with the focus on communities self-governing land, water, and production (Holloway 2005).

This PhD is one of many contributions in the past two decades to study alternative models to the continuous neo-liberalisation of nature and life itself (Hardt and Negri 2000, Dalla Costa 2001, Federici 2004). I come from the anti-globalisation movement, where resistance to the privatisation efforts of nature was at its peak by the end of the 1990s. The neo-liberal conceptualisation of nature assists new patterns that consist of new technologies and a new arrangement of power and production. As Moore (2015: 2) puts it: “the economy and the environment are not independent of each other. Capitalism is not an economic system; it is not a social system; it is a way of organising nature”.

Theorists describe the privatisation of nature as an attack on the local farming systems across the globe, which was facilitated through the removal of national trade barriers (McMichael 2013, Potter and Tilzey 2007). In effect, trade liberalisation withdrew food security in subsistence economies, enclosed knowledge in farming practice and privatised seeds (Kloppenburg 2010) threatening the general survival of farmers (McMichael 2013). With the end of communism in 1989, neo-liberal trade went global and the new construct of new global flows de-territorialised food production and distribution that Hardt and Negri describe in their seminal book ‘Empire’ as ‘progressively incorporates the entire global realm’ (2000: xii). The centre of power was no longer defined by the mother and periphery structure, rather by a ‘decentred and de-territorialising apparatus of rule that operates within expanding and open frontiers’ (Reid 2005: 238). The asymmetry of globalisation had blurred specific components of identity and place, giving way to a distorted understanding of ‘culture, knowledge, nature and society’ (Escobar 2001: 141).

Paying attention to the sharpening class divisions amongst farmers and farmers networks (such as Fair Trade), between farmers and corporations, and amongst trading blocs (McMichael 2013), food production is organised in a ‘wage hierarchy’ managed along the structured class divisions of gender and race (Federici 2004) and is regulated through thwarting competitive behaviour coupled with the transformation of productive processes itself (Hardt and Negri 2000). Global food production orientates toward valuing the monetary value over nutritional value (Guthman 2008) and sharpens with the categorisation of food into variegated

components convenient such as artisan, local/global, organic food, regional, and so on, with each of them having specific arrangements of production designed to meet the economic and/or social factor of the consumer's specific class system (Goodman 2004). The diversification of foodstuff mediated by capital cherishes the 'objectification of food' (Guthman 2008, Patel 2009) underscoring the alienation to, and in, food production, interrupting any direct contacts between farmers and the consumers (Fonte and Cucco 2017).

In response to the deep transformative, capitalist potential of socio-natural relations and the growing social inequity in ownership<sup>1</sup> over resources necessary for producing food (Patel 2008), peasants and farmers across the globe radicalised farmers anew and encountered the social control of corporations and the states with their paradigm food sovereignty, which emerged with the formation of the global peasant movement La Via Campesina at the eve of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1994<sup>2</sup>. The formation of the WTO was followed by a mushrooming of global summits across the globe where free trade agreements were signed. The term 'free trade' is used to describe the uncontrolled extraction of local resources for the global food economy, omitting the growing inability of local farmers and peasants to access resources for their local and subsistence food economies. As I have joined and helped organise numerous anti-globalisation protests that were organised in front of the erected walls of the global summits protected from riot gear police, I have listened to farmers coming from across the world convening at each alternative summit. Coming from these iterative global conventions new solidarities emerged and a surge of transnational alliances erupted (Featherstone 2008), such as coffee trade being established between Zapatistas in Mexico with Bristol, UK and Milan, Italy to support local Zapatistas communities; the peasant movement in Karnataka, India teaming up with anti-GMO campaigners in Europe and the Brazilian land rights campaign Movimento Sem Terra; movements from the North such as Reclaim the Streets and the French peasant organization Confédération Paysanne forming an alliance on the financialization of nature (Della Porta et al. 2006). In other words, the movement was global, and resistance was

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<sup>1</sup> Ownership over resources is not here understood in a Westphalian sense, where resources are allocated for individual ownership (Jessop 2016). Owning is here understood of being able to make decisions in the way resources are used, and those decisions can be done individually and collectively.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed account about the history of La Via Campesina in conjunction with to what great lengths corporations had gone to impose their rules on farming and life itself, can be found at Desmarais, A. 2007.

transnational as was the flow of capital<sup>34</sup>. It was at one of those alternative global summits in Genoa in 2001, where the founders of my research group CampiAperti heard about the paradigm food sovereignty listening to the rage of the French cheese farmer Jose Bové, who raved against the economic impacts for small and artisan farmers because of food liberalisation.

## **1.2. My interests in the commons**

My interest in the commons had slowly emerged during these conventions. Like anybody else, participants of the diverse anti-globalisation movements were searching for a compass that would make sense of the major socio-economic shifts in the early stages of economic neo-liberalism. Slogans like “Another World is Possible” or “The World is not for Sale” became soundbites, because in reality, we had no idea what the alternatives were. Unlike the social movements of the 1970s, when social movements had worked with trade unions and local governments to push for reform, in the 1990s trade unions and governments collided with capital effectively breaking the link with civil society (Della Porta et al. 2006). Following in the footsteps of the Zapatistas, I co-founded the London Social Forum in 2001, with the notion of coalescing a wide range of citizens from different and same sectors to forge alliances and make new projects. In the course of two years, we organised eighteen different workshops and pushed the notion for changing the political landscape with the Greater London Authority under Ken Livingstone. At the same time, we organised workshops together with activists from other European countries for the European Social Forum. At these events I concentrated on the labour aspect of migrants, and the tightening migration control with each round of trade liberalisation. The commons itself was still very experimental and discussion revolved around understanding the fast-moving developments of neo-liberal capitalism. I was part of an annual summer school where a group of about 25 people discussed the commons from an Autonomist Marxist perspective in the period between 2004 and 2011. In the discussions, in which I participated, the focus was primarily on feminist theory, ecology and labour, which has influenced the way I approach my research.

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<sup>3</sup> The slogan “our resistance is as transnational as capital” was the banner of Reclaim the Streets in London at the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1999 protest against the G8 in Cologne, Germany. At that protest over 100,000 came to block the financial district in London. The protest activated comrades in Seattle to organise a demonstration against the World Trade Organisation on N30, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1999. N30 had become the official beginning of the global protest movement, where revelations of malpractice and corruptive behaviour at these negotiations by corporations and G8 states.

In the meantime, after fifteen years I moved from London, the epicentre of financial capitalism, to a mountain top in the Modenese Apennines, Emilia-Romagna, Italy, into the heart of industrial monocultural Parmesan cheese production. Originally coming from Bavaria where I spent my childhood holidays in the fields with the cows, I was shocked to see that all the cows are now chained up and never see any daylight. At my childhood family farm farmers only milked the cows, which was then transported to a different site. Cows had not been given the high amount of protein feed yet, that swelled their udders to a size that makes them unable to walk. I had heard about the horrendous new conditions on farms, but until then I had never seen this with my own eyes: cows chained up, even giving birth in chains and unable to turn to see their calf let alone to lick the calf. Since my children are going to school with the farmers' children, I had plenty of social opportunities to talk to farmers about the agricultural history of this place. I also realised that these entrepreneurial farmers knew very well that what they are doing harms the animals, but they realised that they were trapped in a system from which they had no idea how to get out because there is only one main system. By talking to them I became interested in looking for alternative models within food production.

From the anti-globalisation movement, I have heard of Community Supported Agriculture and of the permaculture design concept, as alternative models to the industrial food system and started reading about these practices. The main principle of permaculture is that food production is designed holistically where nature is observed first before it is interacted by humans (Holmgren 2002). Activists from the anti-globalisation movement set-up a permaculture centre in Devon, where I attended an Earth Activist Training course in 2011 under the guidance of Starhawk. This course opened my eyes about nature and the possibilities for humans to interact with nature peacefully. This experience led me to interrogate whether food sovereignty was possible in Europe. I learnt about the Genuino Clandestino movement and their self-organised farmer's markets in Bologna and in Rome from activists. I visited their farmer's markets in Bologna and was amazed by the complex horizontally organised self-governance of their food system. What set them aside from the CSA, and triggered my research, was their collaborative self-setting price mechanism system and their motivation not to replicate the relations of competitive behaviour that spirals down the foodstuff, and at the same time creating an alternative food system covering the whole spectre of the food system. Added to this was their striking ability to use methods of resistance into their locality by occupying spaces in urban centres for many months despite their clandestine status as farmers<sup>5</sup>. Their internal conviction of having the right to access the city as farmers underpins their radical

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<sup>5</sup> The status of clandestine farmers is part of my discussion in the following chapters.

action. Experiments like these would have immediately been violently banished in Central or Northern Europe by the state, which underlines to view local struggles as ‘particularities’ (Mansfield 2004).

### **1.3. Research gaps**

With neo-liberal capitalism overriding old social and economic concepts and alliances during the 1990s, activists explored new strategies in an attempt to move away from authority and from the hierarchy of previous labour struggles, at the same time, the need emerged to discuss the shift of social relations between civil society and the state. Influential in the debate was John Holloway, who conceptualised the ‘power from below’, which he termed as ‘power to’. As opposed to ‘power over’, power-to is presented “as an alienated capacity, a potential that seeks actualisation but is limited by a power ‘from above’” (van de Sande 2017: 26). Holloway argues that power-to breaks through this alienated form of itself and thus creates spatial-temporal cracks in the texture of capitalist relations and structures (2005). Influenced by the Zapatistas, Holloway opened up the orthodox Marxist approach and placed the anti-globalisation movement into a more anarchic locus with the attempt to concentrate on the empowerment of, in a Gramscian sense, a political and civil society (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

Next to Holloway’s analysis of reclaiming power from the state, was Hardt and Negri’s contribution to understanding the new capitalist relations under neo-liberalism and moved the analysis from trade union’s power to the multitude, re-enforcing the notion of prefigurative politics. The declining power of nation-states to capital had mobilised civil society in ways that had motivated new subjects to organise their own biopolitical organisation (2000). Hardt and Negri influenced the anti-globalisation movement with their writings and a new form of self-organisation emerged around the creation for new food systems. The new food movements experimented with a wide range of decision-making mechanisms, with what Sitrin refers to as “trying to build a democratic process in which everyone can participate in decision-making” (2010: 64). The challenge was to re-organise the capital’s management of production and reproduction in such a way, with civil society turning workplaces into the locus of resistance (Böhm et al. 2007).

In this light, food production had become a defining struggle to alter relations in production from the market towards nature, life and the local community and hence the struggle posits over resources confronting directly capital’s interests (De Angelis 2007). With the state at its side, capital’s penetration into tearing apart livelihoods and work from nature was facilitated.

The overarching question of my thesis is whether food sovereignty in Europe is possible in the sense of bringing together the broken links of reproduction and production in a narrative of European politics. Adapted to the experimental horizontal and inclusive decision-making structure from the movement, CA initiated a self-organised food system leveraged around production and distribution in the Zapatistas sense of 'doing by walking the path' (Holloway 2005). CA had no road map apart from their strong conviction for owning autonomy in work and from the state and to re-establish a link with nature at work. Their initial loose organisational style grew into a complex multiple non-hierarchical governance structure over the years in order to adapt to the changed circumstances of their growing network. The novelty here is that the self-governance structure of CA supports the self-organisation of each of their colleagues' autonomy in production, at the same time invoking a reciprocal relation, as such each participant has a responsibility in the self-organisation of CA. The existence of CA is defined by the self-organisation of their food system where alternatives to capital's food system were experimental. The anti-globalisation movement of the early 2000s had no alternatives as it had not yet developed anything to capital's growing penetration into the biosphere (Hardt and Negri 2000). Two new appropriation processes from capital were occurring. The first one was on re-setting the standards of value in production (De Angelis 2007, Scott 1976), which was feasible through the integration of 'real subsumption' of labour into the global market (Hardt and Negri 2000: 255). Concomitant to this process is the disciplinary mechanism for creating a world market with a deepening proletarianization. Therefore, the intention of self-organised labour involves re-appropriating capital in production and reproduction and organising around biopolitics that disrupts capitalist's attempts to continue the cycle of private appropriation of public goods, which is the expropriation of what constitutes the common (Hardt and Negri 2000: 301). With the reclamation of production as a commons, the commoners inject a new value practice (De Angelis 2017), here at CA a new prefigurative politics is organised around reconciling labour processes with nature. The underlying questions are: what does the social self-organisation of a new food economy look like and is self-organisation a strategy to emancipate from capital's production process?

#### **1.4. Literature and contributions**

I situate my study in the field of political ecology. The thesis explores the link between ecology and politics, and the reasons for this are diverse. First, I position the alternative food economy as an ongoing contestation for resource allocation and for the recognition of producers and farmers attached to a socio-ecological value system. Thereby, producers are entangled in power relations for advancing their commitment to producing food with alternative methods and

practices. Political ecology is the re-configuration of 'nature' and 'is always mediated for humanity by social relations of production' (Tilzey 2018: 2). In this thesis I investigate the struggle for transforming production from market dependency into a peasant-based agriculture.

Second, political ecology problematises knowledge production and examines 'why and how particular forms of knowledge predominate' (Moragues-Faus 2017: 14). The access to alternative knowledge and the processes for co-producing knowledge is coupled with a knowledge-based practice (Fonte 2008). Knowledge production in alternative food economies accompanies the process from market dependency towards an alteration in autonomous production relations. I discuss this with the exploration of how a craft is learned and elucidate the construction of knowledge.

Third, political ecology has emphasized the democratisation of the food system and provides a compelling construct to include food politics and food sovereignty (Swyngedouw 2014). A place-based analysis contributes to deciphering the relations of a food system into who, what, how, for whom and exemplifies a deeper understanding of the socio-natural construct (Alkon 2013: 665). It supports the recognition of transformative potential of local food systems and constitutes local food systems as a political force since nature is contingent on the socio-economic trajectory (Swyngedouw 2009). In my thesis, the features of a place-based analysis offer guidance in my research.

Political ecology, or more precisely the political ecology of food, exhibits the relations of power as the premise for the frame. Robbins defines Political Ecology as "empirical, research-based explorations to explain linkages in the condition and change of social/environmental systems, with explicit consideration of relations of power (2004: 391). The approach tends to examine factors leading to resistance and discusses the 'relationship between material/discursive power of the hegemonic class fraction' (Tilzey 2018: 3) from a capital/class nexus. The premise is primitive accumulation, outlining the process of separation from the means of production for the purpose of capital's accumulation. For Marx it was the divorce from the land that led many to poverty and migration, and in the debate for food sovereignty the access to land is still the key for mitigating poverty and hunger (Patel 2009, Tilzey 2018). The focus on accessing land was eviscerated with the continuous separation from other means of food production, such as seeds (Kloppenburg 2010, Shiva 1991, Castree 2007) and water (Bakker 2004), portraying the resistance to the privatisation efforts by capital. This has implied – within academic literature - a greater methodological focus on the mechanism of capital exhibiting the de-and re-regulation process under neo-liberalism (Castree 2007), or the conflict that was created in communities



and with the state (Shiva 1991, Bakker 2004). Less attention has been paid to how producers strategize their struggles to 're-appropriate resources from capital' (Kloppenborg 2010) in particular contexts and relations, that combine ecological, political and economic dimensions. Little research has been done on how producers acquire and co-produce new cognitive material, form relations and congruences to build new food systems as well as how their strategies are reproduced. Only very recently, new research emerged that considers the food system not in relation to capital but to the community (Centemeri 2018, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, Kawano 2018). This is explored in three ways: production and reproduction, market, and the social wealth.

In order to investigate these three dimensions, I will use the growing literature on the commons that is centred around the features of autonomy, governance and ownership (Bresnihan 2014). The commons are situated in use-value, from which new relations, context and congruences are built in order to strive for market autonomy. To conduct my analysis, I enter into a dialogue with existing theories and positions that debate alternative food economies and transformative politics. I engage with two bodies of literature: one regards debates on market dependency, entrepreneurialism and subsistence; the other regards the link between food sovereignty and the commons. In the literature review I outline the main debates in both fields. My intention is not to offer a complete and detailed account of these rich and contested debates – a task beyond the scope of this study – but to focus on the arguments that are relevant to my research.

### **1.5. The theoretical context**

The thesis is guided by three main questions, which are discussed in the next section (section 1.5):

1. What is the significance of autonomous labour?
2. How is the conceptualisation of the commons in food sovereignty realised?
3. Are CampiAperti -market commons?

The thesis considers these three questions in relation to creating a food system through commoning, in the context of the Association CampiAperti located in Bologna, Emilia-Romagna in Italy. CA was chosen for three reasons.

First, CA is one of the many new food economies that had emerged across Europe (Goodman et al. 2012) in response to the intensification of standardisation in food production (McMichael 2005) and dispelled the exploitation modus of the middle-men. New food economies experiment with a variety of self-governance models, and in Bologna three of those models

dominate the new food economy, which to some extent are woven together. The most popular one is the organised consumer-model called Gruppi di Acquisti Solidale (GAS), who buy their staple and vegetable products directly from selected producers and consumers and self-distribute amongst their members (Signori and Forno 2016); the second consumer model is Community Supported Agriculture, where consumers share with the producer the risk of income in buying in advance their output share (Allen 2003); and lastly, the self-organised participatory-guarantee-systems organised by producers, converging farmers under one common ecological and economic ethos alongside creating direct market opportunities (IFOAM 2020). While the two former models have been discussed extensively in the food sovereignty debate and in the literature for alternative food economies, studies into the participatory-guarantee-system have not been done so far despite its growing popularity in Europe (IFOAM 2020). The diverse implementation of these models indicate that they follow a 'particularistic militant' fashion and are specifically shaped to the local socio-economic conditions of place (Mansfield 2008).

Second, the rise of the Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in the early 2000s had pursued an ecological and economic ethos to subvert the enforced production standards that led to an increased exploitation rate of farmers, workers and nature pushing them to deprivation, marginalisation and destruction (Tilzey 2018). The conventional food system does not ease the tension that pushes farmers to higher productivity rates at the expense of unsustainable production output from the land, animals and workers. The relentless extraction of resources avoids caring for the reproduction of soil matter, for the expansion of genetic diversity or for the well-being of workers and animals. It doesn't work with the seasons and doesn't replace organic petro-chemicals with real organic matter; it maintains distant control over food production. On the contrary, CA offers an interesting ground to investigate how the ecological and economic ethos that subverts the modus operandi of mainstream capitalist agriculture come into being in practice.

Third, an important debate interrogates the 'emancipatory role' and 'food democracy' of AFNs in the face of assimilation and co-optation of alternatives (Moragues-Faus 2017). The concept of food democracy faces criticism by food sovereignty activists who argue that food democracy promotes ideals of market-based production that fit well into the neo-liberal market and 'reinforces neo-liberal subjectivities' (Guthman 2008, Fonte and Cucco 2017). The implementation of market-based structure replicates the hierarchal decision-making structure, and participation processes that should alter the production standards that are subjected for co-optation (Moragues-Faus 2017). The binary of conventional and self-organised food systems

underpins the paradox of ecological values and the competitive behaviour of the market system of the conventional organic food sector. The absorption of organic food production into the market had already occurred in the 1960s, which led to the organic movement in the 1970s, which campaigned successfully for the introduction of the organic labelling system (Fonte and Cucco 2017). Food sovereignty offers a pathway to delegitimise the dualism of production standards and market conformity and interrogates the maintained market dependency in production and calls for investigating the transformative potential of the whole food system (Edelman 2005, Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011, Tilzey 2018). The way this is achieved combines policy reforms and collective action and on the example of CA, I investigate this on a place-based trajectory.

In this thesis, I focus on the dissolution of market dependency in production since it expresses the need to replace capitalist methods and inputs and offers a new understanding of the ecological, economic and political dimensions in new food systems. The conventional food system is enforced with a policy system that undermines the efforts of, and experimentations in, new food systems. A better understanding of why these political tensions emerge and how and what strategies are developed to face the marginalisation of policy legislations may contribute to the debate on the emancipatory role in the food sovereignty discussion and beyond. In addressing these questions, I echo Guthman's (2008: 1172) call to "interrogate the micro-politics of various activist projects, in terms of what strategic decisions under-gird them, how these strategies are operationalized and what sort of subjectivities they create", as well as "to consider how place-based contingency shapes outcomes".

This thesis introduces alternative food economies in this debate, investigating the critique of neo-liberal food production and capitalism itself; inquiring what an alternative production could look like; it interrogates the self-organisation of food economies and whether self-organisation is a form of emancipatory strategy. It does so by approaching the alternative food economy in their relevance to the under-studied and under-examined environmental, economic and political dimensions in the debate. These dimensions transcend the struggle for access and control of resources and engage with them in ways in which 'food' informs the politics of grassroots struggles for alternative socio-ecologies beyond the scenarios set by trade liberalisation and privatisation of nature. In addressing these questions, a better understanding of an improved value practice in production standards, emancipation from the market and a co-responsibility producers and consumers, expressed in the alternative economy, can provide pathways for enhancing social agency and the transformative potential. In the following section, I elaborate on the objections and specific questions, driving my investigation.

## **1.6. Research aims, questions and rationale**

In this thesis I aim to critically discuss the emergence of an alternative food system in its effort to emancipate itself from market dependency by looking at the practices, experimentations, and relationships between CampiAperti producers and consumers in Emilia-Romagna (Italy). Considering the neo-liberal context in which the alternative food system is situated, I examine self-organised strategies for overcoming socio-economic barriers and opportunities for transforming and establishing new social relations for a new food system.

The explorations of CampiAperti in Emilia-Romagna will contribute to broader debates regarding the possibilities, challenges and transformative potential of alternative food economies in specific historical and geographical conjunctures. Drawing on field-based empirical research and on analytical tools derived from political ecology and food sovereignty literatures, specifically on the commons literature in relation to Van der Ploeg's analysis of the transformation of the 'peasant condition' during neo-liberalism, my thesis introduces the conceptualisation of commons and commoning as a political strategy to subvert market dependency in production and in distribution.

In addressing my research questions, I seek to achieve three interrelated objectives. First, to better understand the socio-economic factors that are making the transformation to new food systems nearly impossible. I seek to theoretically and empirically elucidate particular political conjunctures of self-organised strategies with state power for creating opportunities and overcoming barriers. This avenue of enquiry expects to contribute to debates on transformative politics and on the creation of the commons. Second, to illustrate ways in which CampiAperti's alternative food system substitutes capitalist-intensive methods with peasant-based agriculture on their individual farms and the strategies that are developed to enhance autonomy on their farms. This objective seeks to expound the alliance-building beyond the individual farm in the form of commoning centred around knowledge production of agroecology and crafts making, at the same time shedding light on the political and economic challenges and circumstances. Third, to unpack the contradictions of the existence of a market in an alternative food economy and critically assess entrepreneurial behaviour in conjunction with the generative practice of alliance-building. This objective seeks to 'inform' their consumers on their alternative production system illuminating the articulation of a politics of everyday life in an effort to politicise their production. Each of these objectives corresponds to a particular research

question and a set of sub-questions. All of these questions are related with a specificity of the case-study analysed for addressing the objective in question.

Given the theoretical and contextual rationales outlined here, the research questions informing the study are as follows.

1. *What is the significance of autonomous labour?*
  - 1.1. How was the knowledge of the farming or production profession acquired?
  - 1.2. What is a virtuous production cycle on a micro-farm?
  - 1.3. How is autonomy of a production site developed?
  
2. *How is the conceptualisation of the commons in food sovereignty realised?*
  - 2.1. On what principles and values are the participatory-guarantee-system and the self-managed market system founded?
  - 2.2. How are principles and values enforced and managed?
  - 2.3. How do they interact with each other?
  - 2.4. What are the impasses and advantages of self-organisation?
  - 2.5. What is their interaction with the state?
  
3. *Are CA-market commons?*
  - 3.1. How does the interaction of autonomy and market exchange reconcile?
  - 3.2. How is the exchange-value calculated?
  - 3.3. Is competition on the market really contained?
  - 3.4. What role do consumer play at their markets?

## **1.7. Chapters Overview**

The thesis is structured into nine chapters, including this introduction (chapter 1) and the conclusions (chapter 9). Chapter 2, literature review assesses existing literature that informs current understandings on the alternatives practices transforming the food system and their historical socio-political context. Building on the theoretical underpinnings presented in this introduction, the chapter is divided into four parts. Section 1, ‘unpacking alternative food economies’, critically disentangles the theoretical premises of the three main approaches in altering the food system and details the seminal contribution of Friedman and McMichael in outlining Food Regime Theory (FRT), the autonomist Marxist approach by Tilzey and Bernstein,

and lastly, Van der Ploeg and Scott following the Chaynovian/Wageningen school. Section 2 discusses the history of the Common Agricultural Policy and the commodification of foodstuff during the modernisation period and drawing out the adaptation to facilitate global trading of foodstuff. Section 3, 'the organic movement during the modernisation period' outlines their objectives and strategies taken from the double-movement by using Polanyi (Guthman 2007). Section 4 links historical materialism with the food sovereignty movement and outlines that the current resistance to the food system connects with the European peasant uprisings, underpinning the political impact of modern resistance in making history.

Chapter 3, Conceptual Framework, presents the design that is used for establishing the research aim. It discusses the theoretical implication of using the design of the commons/commoning and introduces the convergence of commons and peasant-based agriculture by critically assessing the usage of the concept of agroecology in European agricultural production when re-embedding global food supply chain structures into the use-value of craft making. It puts forward some challenges related to farm structure, measure of productivity and knowledge production. Moreover, it draws upon on methods and strategies of building emancipatory relations with the state. I introduce the notion of the autopoietic mechanisms as an element of autonomy (De Angelis 2017) and embody the individual production sites as a commons coalesced into the CA horizontal governance structure conducted by a commitment for participatory democracy. This chapter concludes by outlining the participation and the role of the consumers from a producer's perspective in the self-organised food system (Centemeri 2018).

Chapter 4, the 'Methodology Chapter', covers the approach drawn upon in empirically researching the 'self-governed food system' lived experiences, practices, and discusses practical and ethical challenges encountered conducting fieldwork. Using critical realism as the philosophical research design, I explain how findings are derived from using research methods borrowed from ethnography, conversational analysis, discourse analysis with its findings verified by using triangulation. This chapter explains the rationale for utilising a mixed-method, multi-sited ethnographic strategy to generate rich empirical data (De Walt and de Walt (2011). It outlines how the farmers and sites were identified and defined by categorising their diverse and heterogenous crafts into 'transformed' and 'non-transformed' producers. It concludes by discussing ethical issues and positionality, with a key concern on linguistics, and the fact that conducting fieldwork on their farms, meetings and markets required a much more detailed attention to vernacular spoken language.

Chapter 5 introduces the reader to my case study CampiAperti. It provides a brief historical review of their founding history, their aims and principles with the objective to alter the ecological and socio-economic conditions in farming. This is followed by contextualising their struggle “Struggle for food Sovereignty” in Bologna and setting the local scene for describing the governance structure of CampiAperti. I briefly outline the connection between Genuino Clandestino and CampiAperti.

Chapter 6, 7, and 8 detail the empirical findings of the research. Chapter 6, ‘the ‘return’ to production in use-value’, focuses on practices and experiences made in taking responsibility for developing a craft using the contradictory term ‘peasant’ drawn on the debate in food sovereignty and rural sociology between Tilzey/Bernstein and Van der Ploeg. Following the Marxist and Wageningen school, I discuss the strive for autonomy in production, a key feature in developing the peasant condition, and explore the process for re-joining production and reproduction, the ‘visibility’ of food production and finding a balance in the ‘human-ecological-interaction’ when exerting a craft. The underpinning here is the centrality of use-value in production, and the ability to develop a production site along agroecological principles. The chapter investigates how agroecological principles are applied to the processes of setting-up a production site, it explores the obstacles and barriers that emerge at the various stages of their development by analysing producer’s stories and experiences, and it discusses how knowledge, methods and practices through commoning are acquired to substitute market dependency. This chapter considers the specialisation of a craft in use-value as an emancipation from capital and is termed here as ‘the transition period to autonomy’: it also discloses forms of ‘structural coupling’ with capital (De Angelis 2017) as necessary to achieve autonomy in production. Finally, it examines how productivity is measured in relation to the producer’s farm structure and to their human capacity in developing responsibility over the whole stages of their craft.

Chapter 7, ‘the autopoietic mechanisms - production and markets as a commons’, follows the notion of autonomy and discusses the developed strategies by CA-producers in an ‘evolutionary form’ for protecting and expanding their individual, autonomous production sites (De Angelis 2017). Based on social interactions at their meetings, farms and markets, these autopoietic mechanisms are explored on their self-regulated value practice of self-governance. The chapter examines the self-constructed boundaries to their markets critically in relation to the concept of the commons. It then goes on to illustrate the mechanism for setting a ‘just price’ during the negotiation process between producers and consumers. It ends with a discussion of different

sets of categories determining the 'measurement on the just price' of the developed craft calculated between production and productivity.

Chapter 8, 'the market – struggles, opportunities and limitations', discusses structural coupling as an aspect of 'urban commoning' in relation to social movements and consumers for accessing the urban spaces in Bologna for creating a self-governance market as commons. This chapter critically assesses the monetarily exchange of foodstuff by addressing 'competitive behaviour' amongst producers as well as the social aspects emerged from the formed relationship between producers and consumers. It ends with elaborating on the composed relations of the common good and the production of the social wealth.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis and provides a summary of the key empirical findings and wider implication in relation to the themes 1) craftsmanship and food sovereignty; 2) use-value and resistance 3) common good and social wealth. It argues that theorising the multi-dimensionality of developing a craftsmanship in food production central to materialising food sovereignty and a peasant-based agriculture is recognising the prevalence of commoning, and for identifying how use-value in production forms new socio-ecological relations and responsibilities for a self-governed food system and how the common social wealth is nurtured and cultivated.

### **1.8. Context of Writing the Thesis**

My research was disrupted by personal and societal circumstances. First, my father died after a long illness. The impact of his death had broken apart our relations amongst sisters. It has caused personal distress, which inevitable interrupted my focus on writing the thesis. Shortly, after my father had died, my husband was diagnosed with a tumour. This decisive moment had caused the psychological well-being of our children, especially the younger one. He was very scarred and needed special attention to get through this difficult time. At this point, I delayed writing my PhD for one year, and focused all my attention to the well-being of my family. Upon my return, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. We live in Italy, and as it happened, we were circled in the epicentre. Therefore, the restrictions for personal movement were severe. Our children stayed mostly at home for about fifteen months, which were punctuated by sporadic periods of them going to school. Instead of working on my thesis in the morning, my time was dedicated in sorting out their online learning, and deal with their unaccounted stomping into my room asking for food, movement and learning support. As such, rather than working constantly on my thesis, my working schedule was broken into small units a day.



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### **Claudia's family story**

*Claudia's 20 hectares of traditional family farm sit very close to Bologna city centre. Claudia is a woman in her fifties, and she told me that when she was growing up all the land around her farm to the Bologna city centre was farmland. Everybody was a farmer around here. Every day farmers would load their foodstuff and bring it to the market. There were markets everywhere in and close to the city centre, anytime of the day, in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. Bologna was full of people selling and buying foodstuff. Back then, shops in the city centre were purchasing local foodstuff. Now, there aren't many shops left in the city centre that would do that. Nowadays the markets are not occupied by farmers anymore. They are buying their foodstuff from the wholesale centre, and are called dealers. During the 1970s, the city of Bologna had decided to turn half of the farmland close to the city into housing estates. They offered compensation to the farmers to leave their land. But this transformation did not occur rapidly. There were problems with the pay-outs to the farmers and the whole transformation process took many years. Before the mechanisation of agriculture every member of the farm would work for the farm. "Grandma would take out the seeds of the vegetables. We only grew vegetables. It didn't matter whether the seeds came from the biggest or the best-looking vegetables. We would save the seeds from any plants for the following year. Once the first plant nurseries sprang up, we would buy our seeds from them. It saved a lot of time and work on the farm. Everybody around us was doing it, so we were doing it as well. You didn't think of what kind of impact it could have in the long-term. Farming is hard work. All the farmers knew each other, and we all knew what was going on in the local markets, in the city centre. You were part of a community. It was a gradual transformation in modernising all our farming activities. I grew up in that way. When there was a pest, we would call the agronomist. The agronomist would tell us what kind of chemicals to spray onto the plants. I was so naïve about organic farming when I intended to switch to organic in the early 2000s. I thought it was a matter of simply switching from convenient fertilisers and pesticides to buying organic products from them. That's what they told me at one of these events, which the seed companies organise, where they explain to the farmer how organic agriculture works. They encourage farmers to turn to organic food production because more and more people want to buy organic food. When I decided to go organic my brother and my dad, who were in charge of the farm, said that I was crazy. My dad forbade me to go organic. I wanted to go organic already twenty years ago, but my dad told me only over his dead body. I insisted to turn to organic at least*

*in the wheat production. At the Bologna University a new grain project had emerged, “Virgo”, in 2012, a five-years-long project that had looked for farmers that wanted to switch to organic. After my dad died, I started taking over the farm and switched five years ago to organic farming. I didn’t care what my brother had to say about that. I told him to do his vegetable production on his side of the land, and don’t come close to my land. Through the Virgo project I’ve got to know a professor who had helped me to go through the transformative process from conventional to organic food production. He told me first of all to attend a biodynamic course to understand what “organic” actually means. This course opened my eyes. As I said earlier, I thought I would just switch to organic fertilisers. Even though I am not practising biodynamic methods on the farm, I’ve learnt to grow my vegetables organically with the help of the professor. At the beginning it was tough. The plants didn’t grow, they just remained small. My impulse was to feed them. But the professor insisted to leave them alone. I didn’t believe him that they could grow without fertilisers. But they did. I was also worried that my whole life existence was going down. I participated on this project, and I started growing different types of grains that I mainly use for self-consumption. The problem is that you can’t sell the grain on the market. The competition from the industrial market is too tough to be able to sell your grain. The expenses for cultivating, milling, and packaging drives up the price for a 1kg of organic grain. And then also the quality of the seed is different than the ones you find in the supermarket. Who is going to buy a kg of organic flour for €2,50 to €3,00 when you find flour for half of the price? I make pasta out of the grain. A bag of pasta of my grain costs about €2,50. The price depends on the grain. Spelt is more expensive than organic wheat. At the supermarket the pasta cost ca. €0,80. Hardly anybody buys organic pasta. I’ll do it because I’ve got the land. I can’t leave the land fallow. I am running a 20hectare farm and I rely on the sale of the vegetables. Now, I am an organic farmer, and I am with CampiAperti. I am very proud of it”.*

## **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces and critically reviews the three different schools of thought which lay the ground for the political economy framework of the food sovereignty debate, namely, Food Regime Theory, the Marxist tradition, and the Wageningen school. The first two schools of thought are centred around the capital-state-nexus, whilst the Wageningen school brings forth a perspective from the peasant economy itself. This is followed by contextualising these schools in the formation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) during the modernisation period and a critical review of the organic movement during this period. In the context of neo-liberalisation, I conclude with the global food sovereignty movement against the hegemony and the struggle for emancipatory politics.

## 2.2. An overview of Food Regime Theory, Marx and Wageningen school

The debate on alternative food systems and food sovereignty revolves around three schools with each of them focusing on a particular aspect of the food system. The first school of thought is the food regime theory (FRT), which provides a political economical frame for understanding the arrangement of historical industrial and agricultural relations (Bernstein 2016, Wittman 2011). In their seminal essay on *'Agriculture and the state system: the rise and decline of national agricultures, from 1870 to the present'*, Friedman and McMichael (1989) explored the role of agriculture in the development of the capitalist world economy in the trajectory of the state system and provided a 'world-historical perspective' (1989: 93). Their work scrutinized the neo-liberal global food system through the lens of historical conjunctures in colonialism and its effects on industrialisation and proletarianization in core European countries. Friedman and McMichael erected a world history perspective, similar to the Wallerstein tradition – a hierarchal web describing the global development discourse-, identifying key sets of relationships established during colonialism and post-war period that support the growth into its contemporary global food regime (Campbell 2009, Tilzey 2020). The FRT follows what the nowadays Braudel-Wallerstein-Arrighi-school calls the 'logic of circulation', or 'the political relations of distribution' (Braudel 1984 in Teschke 2003: 140). Within the logic of circulation, ecological externalities (pollution, soil erosion, etc.) and persistent social structural inequalities (concentration of land ownership, unequal direct payments from the EU, access to markets, etc.) are resolved around the notion of improving the conditions of production and distribution by introducing new laws, reforms or new state governance mechanisms. This form of capitalism is criticized, as it "accepts the advanced division of labour within and between centres of commercial production, allowing for the accumulation of profits through inter-urban long-distance trade" (Teschke 2003: 141). In this production circuit, the responsibility and accountability for the emerging damaging effects on environment, health and labour is largely dealt within the capitalist-nexus, which recognizes economic opportunities in the production of ill-factors instead of abolishing them. Moreover, critics of the regime point out that this regime does not adequately explain the constructs of 'hidden' power relations within production (Teschke 2003), and the 'invisible labour and ecological relations in reproduction' (Moore 2015), both being crucial to maintain capitalist exploitative economies of scale. Proposed reforms to dissolve social injustice and ecological destruction are embedded in the 'logic of circulation', which suggests a continuity of capitalism as "a gradual, quantitative expansion of the market rather than as a qualitative, potentially reversible transformation of social relations" (Tilzey: 2018: 49).

In order to get a more critical view of capital and the state, I discuss here a second school of thought, the Marxist perspective, which facilitates the understanding of the exploitative nature of capital and iterative mechanisms of exploitation. From this perspective we can understand the radical character of food sovereignty struggles, and why they insist on acting on the destructive environmental and labour policies of the agro-industry through setting-up self-governance system to govern their own food systems (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011, Signori and Forno 2016). The core of this approach is Marx's analysis of 'primitive accumulation'. Primitive accumulation explains the capitalist mode of production that was established five hundred years ago and was founded on the expropriation and enclosures of common land, and on the resulting ongoing expulsion of populations. It had resulted in the ongoing expulsion of populations and impoverishing them, while on the other hand, capital was accumulated. Deprived of their means of production and reproduction, people were reduced to mere labour power and forced to accept the working conditions in the factories, or to beg, or to be a vagabond (Dalla Costa 2007). In the divorce of people from their means of production, production was also separated from reproduction. It is at this conjunction, where commodification of nature and labour commences and has become a centre for value struggles (De Angelis 2007).

The process of primitive accumulation has impaired the rights of self-production of people ever since. With trade liberalization thirty years ago under the World Trade Organisation, the rights of self-production were further curtailed with the enclosures of seeds, water, forests, air and markets preventing people from using these common resources for securing one's own subsistence. The exploitation of nature for financial gains is a competitive strategy employed by capital (Leff 2015), that forms what Federici and Caffentzis titled as the 'new enclosures' (1990). As a result, it has deepened the "commodification of subsistence" (Bernstein 2010: 4) and made the privatization and financialization of these natural commons possible (Castree 2008). Small-scale producers internalize these structural changes in their production and of life itself that renders into a reproduction squeeze for small-scale producers (Watts 1983).<sup>8</sup> Dalla Costa summarises the state of reproduction and nature under capital with these words (2007: p. 3): "Up to five centuries ago, expropriations and enclosures had "only" involved land; today, they invest in the fundamental sources of life, biodiversity and the knowledge that makes it possible to obtain abundance. The capture of these resources was motivated by the intention of not only turning them into the source of high profit gains, but also of using them to restrict the freedom and self-subsistence of populations". This explains recent counter-hegemonic struggles in the global South, which focus on land redistribution (Edelman 2001), where the ownership of

land is considered as the primary source for escaping the constraints of capitalist relations by having the ability to support their own social and ecological value systems (Tilzey 2018).

The success of enclosing land and depriving people from their livelihoods was only possible with capital's established close ties with the state (Brenner 2001). The state constructs laws and policies to guarantee economic growth and generates mechanisms, such as the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Henke et al. 2018). Under the CAP, policies are made to ensure the longevity of food security, a paradigm that was established in the post-war period to end famine with technology-driven and fossil-fuel-dependent inputs (Dalla Costa 2001). One of the core critiques of the food security paradigm is that policies are designed to grant responsibilities over food production to a few companies, and thus are able to determine the terms and conditions of the food system (Patel 2007).

By the mid-1990s, historical materialism combined the agrarian question with agrarian political economy to explain important transformative processes in accumulation, production and in politics (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010). Two political processes had occurred that changed the labour conditions. Firstly, with the enclosures of the natural commons and of the market, farmers lost their ability to produce outside of the market, instead farmers' production is subjugated to capital, locking them into a dependency with capital. Capital is determining the conditions in production, where farmers are forced to use capitalists' inputs for the agro-industrial market. The deepening of dependency in production to capital was possible because farmers had already been fully or semi-dependent on the capitalist market, as being petty commodity producers during the modernization period (Bernstein 2010, Tilzey 2018). The deepening of commodification of production that is reducing the autonomy in production for farmers (Van der Ploeg 2008), was made possible through a new "disciplinary trade" imposed by the international trade policies upon the farmers. The liberalization of trade on an international stage, capital was able to "acquire goods from a distance" (De Angelis 2007: 119). The re-organisation of farmers into an orchestrated class system is a predicament of the global agrarian regime (Akram-Lodhi 2007, Bernstein 2010, Tilzey 2018). The commodification of production, such as into cash crops, monocultural production with fossil-fuel inputs, technologization of stables and fields and on the other hand, massive slaughterhouses, huge vegetable and fruits plantations, TV-dinner factories, and so on – belong to structural changes that underscore a wider process in the rural economy and affects the wider political agrarian economy (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010). Significantly, in the transformation for re-structuring the global agrarian economy was that nature and labour were re-valorsied.

The third school of thought developed in Wageningen (Netherlands) problematises family farming/peasantries tradition in the Chayanovian-Marxist tradition (Edelman 2005). According to the Wageningen school, family farms perform an important function for capital. Although the market is perceived as an economic opportunity, the peasant economy does not critically examine its relations to the market or to the state. The concept family farm is considered as an independent entity to the state and the economy. Their production and contribution to the state economy but it follows their own measures of economy, namely that of a peasant economy. The merit of the peasant economy is to expand their autonomy from the global economy by taking responsibility of their own production and reproduction. The global market is used as an economic opportunity, while the income is used to re-invest into the farm to increase the self-reliance of the farm. (Van der Ploeg 2008). This interwovenness with the global market is criticised in the Marxist tradition. They point out the farmers' dependency to the global market, which in effect makes them 'petty food commodity producers' (Bernstein 2010, Tilzey 2020).

In the transformation from autonomous to entrepreneurial relations, the Wageningen school has however not criticised the state's role sufficiently to explain the state active role in supporting agro-industrial conglomeration and its accumulated profit during the neo-liberal era (Apeldoorn 2012). The opening up of the markets through so-called free trade policies of which agro-industries primarily benefitted from, whilst on the other hand, European farmers had been pushed into indebtedness in order to align their production to the new global market production conditions (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010). On the other end, European farmers, who were unable or did not want to go into debt, had lost their land. The dismantlement of autonomy in production and their new entrepreneurial arrangement under capital during trade liberalisation was meticulously described by Van der Ploeg in the example of farmers in Emilia-Romagna and in the Netherlands (2008) without explaining the state's role, which is responsible for the exertion of the new production standards (Jessop 2016). Indeed, production itself had become liberalised and had given capital the opportunity to extract the resources directly from the producers (Tilzey 2018). The gap of not scrutinising the state's role suggests a political inactivity, although it undermines their ability to self-govern their own farms. Their autonomous entrepreneurialism has altered in so far that decisions on the farm were made in response to the market (Wood 2002) rather than to the needs of the farms or nature. From the perspective of the Wageningen school, the market is not an opportunity for the farmer anymore but has become an enclosed space (Van der Ploeg 2008). The Wageningen school considers to a large extent family farm as an individual entity, and consequently, the re-gaining of autonomy is rather an individual process than a collective struggle. Thus, the re-structuring of production outside of capitalist relations into autonomous relations might not explain sufficiently their

autonomous relations to the state structure and bears the danger to be absorbed into the industrial agrarian economy (Tilzey 2020).

I have adopted both the Marxist and the Wageningen schools because they complement each other. The Wageningen school elucidates very clearly autonomous farming activities and its processes of autonomous farming, whereas the Marxist approach provides a critical perspective on employing an entrepreneurial approach, which incorporates the limits of nature and the human capacity within different labour processes to develop a craft. In assessing both schools, I reveal two types of entrepreneurial farming, namely one orientates its production to the market, while the other one aligns its production to nature, and thus making the market subordinate to nature. In both cases, autonomy is exerted with the different that in the case of the latter one, autonomy involves an emancipation process that diverts from the constraints imposed by the neo-liberal market and the state. By combining the Marxist and the Wageningen schools I was able to scrutinise the tension between the state and the self-governance of CA's production/market in a more comprehensive way. While radical Marxists advocate for the re-assembly of production and reproduction of a food system in use-value, the literature on food sovereignty from a Marxist perspective has not engaged in the actual labour processes of contemporary autonomous peasant farming. What are their farming activities comprised of that allows them to abrogate the dichotomy between production and reproduction? While Marxist literature remains more metaphysical in its explanation, I used the Wageningen school to analyse methods and techniques in farming practices. This facilitated an in-depth exploration of a peasant-based agriculture and the autonomous farming activities involved. As such, the next section examines the history of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and how it has shaped the European agrarian economy.

### **2.3. The history of the Common Agricultural Policy and its role in the global food system**

In the immediate aftermath of the WWII, Europe experienced major changes of landownership patterns that caused widespread famine amongst the peasantries. For instance, peasants in Emilia-Romagna escaped poverty and famine and moved into the urban peripheries of Genova and Milan to work in factories. To alleviate poverty and famine in the countryside, in 1962 the Commons Agricultural Policy (CAP) was introduced to ensure farmers would receive a stable income. In addition, farmers received subsidies for their machinery and other resources. For the first time family farms were financially supported by the state to mitigate famine amongst the peasantry and to abolish the consistent income inequalities between rural and urban dwellers

(Gray 2000). In this Fordist social contract the state protected the farmer by giving the farmer a guaranteed stable income and access to the market. However, in order to qualify their products under the guaranteed price support system, farmers had increasingly limited their practice of using natural processes in food production and implemented technological devices and chemical inputs (Gray 2000). The effect of modernized agriculture centred on family farms conflated the internal structure of division of labour. As such, intra-labour relations composed of various class relations like family-managed farms or hired permanent or seasonal labour were excluded (Bernstein 2010: 4). In the transition to a modernized agriculture, the cohesion of the social fabric in rural communities - which had previously provided external support in the form of knowledge and work sharing to maintain each other as autonomous farms - was gradually dismantled. The aim of the CAP was and still is, that farms are financially supported in the market economy, while their dependency to the market and to the state increases<sup>6</sup>. Critics argue that it is “a construct around economic vulnerability of small farmers to unfettered market forces” (Sheingate in Potter and Tilzey 2007: 6).

The industrialization of farming was not necessarily regarded by farmers as a subjugation to the capitalist system. Rather, the provision of technology-driven material alleviated the hard work on the farm (Bernstein 2014), even though it meant that these adjustments into modernizing agriculture facilitated a fissure in production and in the internal division of labour tasks. Farming activities that would have enhanced the autonomy of a farm had been abolished. Reproductive tasks (such as seed-saving, care for soil structure, gene mutations for diversifying races in plants and animals, etc.) were increasingly provided by the market, while methods involving sub-tasks (such as recycling and reusing of resources) that would have reduced the monetary reliance on the markets, were abandoned.

This transition further embedded farmers’ production in the growing complexes of agricultural commodity chains/systems (Murdoch 2000, Buttel 2001). The over-reliance on the market in the procurement of reproductive services ensured production was dependent on the market. Farmers were caught in the increasing inability to respond to the so-called ecological and social externalities. The limitations of this ‘economic’ arrangement between family farms and the agro-industry is apparent in its inability to address the ill-effects it has caused, such as, erosion of soil, death of insects, loss of biodiversity, dependency on limited seed varieties in a sterile

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<sup>6</sup> The CAP was agreed on after the Treaty of Rome was signed by Belgium, France, Italy, West Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1957. The Treaty of Rome has established the European Economic Community (ECC), which is now the European Union. The Treaty of Rome was signed to create an economic market without trade barriers and reduced customs service.



environment, hunger and obesity and so on. All of these examples demonstrate that this arrangement cannot deliver sustainability, improved health outcomes or food security. The commodification of farming activities created a market dependence (Tilzey 2018), that enforced the compliance with production standards and rules (de Molina 2013).

The formed intrinsic production-market relation generated conditions that are comparable with a wage-relation (Teschke 2003). As a result of orientating their production to the market, farmers had given up their autonomy over their farming activities altogether. At the same time, it had given capital guaranteed longevity as “these relationships coalesced to form a relatively stable pattern of accumulation over a period of time” (Campbell and Dizon 2009 in Tilzey 2019: 3). One of the effects of not owning the responsibility in production any longer, was that farmers found themselves in a situation where it had become difficult to escape from market dependency and subsequently, to acquire skills and methods that are apt for producing food that is less harmful for the environment and people, and secondly, to earn a living outside of the industrial system. The commodification in food production during the modernisation period with the introduction of the CAP was the predecessor for setting in motion the privatisation and financialisation of food in the neo-liberal era (Castree 2008, Clapp 2014).

The division of farm labour and ecology was systemised under the two pillars of the CAP's regulatory framework. The first pillar is devoted to supporting markets and farmer income, and the second pillar to supporting territories and rural areas (Henke et al. 2018). The disciplinary transformation was accompanied with a strict commodified technocratic production, reproduction and marketing of farm products with farmers becoming managers (Guthman 2004, Marsden and Franklin 2013), which managed the access to the European and global market (Levidow et al. 2014). Under these altered conditions a bifurcation amongst entrepreneurial farmers emerged. On the one hand, a strong political and economic ramification to the agro-industrial market dependence had crystallised deepening the capitalist relations for entrepreneurial farmers. The re-arrangement of the commodity and the wage labour relation had increased the *competitive behaviour* amongst farmers' and producers' commodities leading to a sharp decrease in prices and subsequently an income loss for farmers and producers (De Molina 2013). The increased competition amongst European farmers and from non-EU-food imports was possible through the increased exposure to a fluctuated price volatility dwindling European farmers' income by an average of 30% (Pacheco 2018).

The social contract between the state and the farmer had been criticized by corporations and the emerging retail industry of the commodity chain on the premise that the stable price-

mechanism is responsible for distorting the prices of agricultural products on the world market and for deterring global competition (McMichael 2009, Tilzey 2007). The dissolution of the social contract was to encourage 'competitive productivism' with farmers to engage in productive farming, that is developing better management capacities whereby less 'efficient' farmers were deprived (Gray and Lawrence 2001). But the restructuring of the agrarian economy led to a deterioration of the livelihoods of farmers. The removal of the trade barriers was used by agro-industries to undercut the price of food commodities. Food prices collapsed for products like milk, grain and meat, resulting into lower incomes for farmers (Patel 2009). The WTO, as a supranational body, represents corporations and implant global regulatory structures for securing profit accumulation, as well as procuring insulation from the need to secure political legitimacy attendant on policy-making at the state level (Potter and Tilzey 2007). Although corporations argued that financial subsidies distort the global market price, the European Commission resisted the pressure from the WTO to cancel completely the subsidies for farmers. Instead, in the mid 1990s, they restructured the CAP into a two-tier system divided into a direct payment scheme and a rural development scheme with middle- and large-scale farmers benefitting from the first scheme, whilst in the second scheme, farmers are paid for conserving the landscape and/or producing organic food (Featherstone 2008). The schemes were implemented to facilitate the re-organisation of production towards a "global agrarian economy" with the European Commission and the nation-states remaining the regulator for making this transition to a competitive neoliberalised agriculture possible amongst national governments and trading blocs across the globe (Castree 2008). However, the unequal distribution of the CAP budget illustrates that the European Commission caused a deepening of structural inequality amongst farmers causing an intra class conflict amongst farmers (Tilzey 2017). Most of the financial assistance goes into the direct payments-scheme that is coupled to the amount of land owned. The amount of direct payment was 44.3 billion Euro in the fiscal year 2020, and in the context of the total CAP-budget, the expenditure was 93.5% of the total CAP-budget (European Parliament). In conclusion, the CAP plays an active role in shaping the agrarian economy and provides the directive for regional government to design policies that ensures the implementation of them locally.

#### **2.4. The commodification of production**

As the commodification of food is considered the root cause of the growing food crisis (Vivero-Pol 2017), this section discusses the appropriation and commodification of production. It differs to the mechanism of primitive accumulation in so far as, capital exerts direct control over the use-value in production without having the need to uproot the farmers from their land *per se*

(De Angelis 2007). The fundamental question for capital is how to turn labour and nature into value. Central in the analysis of Marx's political economy is the composition of the commodity and the several stages in turning a product into a commodity. In use-value capital does not make any profit, therefore it needs investments for paying labour and machinery for extracting resources to kick off production and to make profit. These investments have always been the target for reducing expenses, and capital has pushed for minimizing labour and environmental standards in their production. In discussing the de-commodification of food, I focus on these two joined aspects, nature and labour, and revalorize them by giving them a new impetus in "determining the level of productivity" (Moore 2015: 52).

In the division between production and reproduction, capital takes no responsibility for reproducing or safeguarding the resources it needs for its own production (Mies 2000, Moore 2015, Tilzey 2018), as it is assumed that (social) reproduction "require no attention for replenishment" (Fraser 2017: 20), as well as that these social bonds or environmental matters will always emerge or be re-built to sustain the social or natural fabric on which economic production as well as society relies on. The division between reproduction and production in the dominant food system causes enormous amounts of environmental damage because of the 'fetishization' in, that is the excessive over-use of high sophisticated technology and inputs in our food system (Dalla Costa 2007, Gliessman 2015). This dependency on capital was intensified with the recent financialization of capitalism that has systematically consumed our capacity for providing affective and material labour. "Without financial remuneration", argues Fraser (2017), a "crisis of care" emerges (2017: 2021). The underlying motivation for putting production and reproduction together is through looking after the single units of production that is needed for producing food on an ecological sustainable basis. By engaging with the single units of food production and trying to understand how these units are put together in producing one product in order for the environmental matter to replenish itself, and thus an over-use of resources can be avoided. Therefore, producers of my case study are artisans, since they locate all the necessary units for the food product on the farm, such as reproduction of materials, storage for maturation or sale and a workshop. This set-up enables them to create a circular ecological food system, a process that is described in my case study.

Primitive accumulation is a strategy for de-regulating environmental laws and labour rights from state protection and re-regulating them under capital's matrix for ensuring its continuity of accumulation of capital (Castree 2008). In effect, within the de-regulation of production from the state and the re-regulation to capital, capital enforces a limitless production where soil structure is overused (Gliessman 2015), animals are turned into machines (Nibert 2013), migrant workers are exploited (Dines and Riga 2015) and entrepreneurial farmers are exploited

for their specialisation of the food product (Wood 2002). Because farmers are in a dependency relation with capital, they are caught in the cycle of increasing productivity, reducing production costs and homogenising their production to global market standard rules. Already Marx had noted that 'capitalism in production develops a technique and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker' (Marx in Foster 2013: 5).

The erosion of the soil in combination with human exploitation is conceptually devised in the metabolic rift. The metabolic rift was devised by Marx following primitive accumulation, which had occurred with the soil structure and with nature after people were expelled from the land. 'Labour and production mediated the metabolic interchange with nature' (Marx in Foster 2013: 3). The alienation of nature was made possible through the disruption of production with people.

The metabolic rift is grounded in the Cartesian binary locating the biophysical and accumulation crises in two different spheres (Moore 2011). The Cartesian binary can be traced back to Descartes (1595-1650), a scientist, who negated natural processes and where doubt and uncertainty were equated with disorder (Federici 2004, Desmarais 2007, Moore 2015). Descartes had not only advocated the triadic divorce between human, body and soul with nature, but reasoned convincingly providing a texture for capital to carry on with the violence that is accompanied with primitive accumulation. The advocated split from nature enables humans to establish a science-based knowledge analytically and theoretically. Ever since, the 'Cartesian binary', in which nature and humans are conceived dualistically as separate entities, has become the dominant framework (Foster 1999, Moore 2015). To the present, the Cartesian framework claims objectivity and superiority over *Métis*, that is "plain common sense that is arrived through practical experience and intimate understanding of the local environment" (Desmarais 2007: 44). Understood also as common knowledge amongst peasants (Shiva 1997), common knowledge was/is increasingly undermined with the objective for increasing the productivity. Through the regular application of chemical treatments to the soil and the adaptation of animals' productivity to the capitalist cycle, farmers eventually distance themselves from knowing the rhythm of nature and the ability to recognise a healthy soil structure since they have internalised these capitalist rhythms and practices as the 'new normal' (Van der Ploeg 2014). The adaptation to the capitalist market and the estrangement to nature was a process of over centuries that can be explained in capital's historic development (Moore 2011). In recent capitalist development of the 1990s, capital was able to tear down old social and economic concepts and overlap these dimensions and these traditional distinctions

between the economic, the political, the social, and the cultural become increasingly blurred (Hardt and Negri in Eden 2012: 41). These estranged developments are referred to as biopolitics under the neo-liberalisation of the market and production. Biopolitical production thus becomes integrated into the capitalist cycle, and the social body (in this case the community of farmers) is adapted to the conditions according to state regulations that becomes the new normal. The new normalization in the production and reproduction (knowledge, culture, values) are the new social relations attributed with the capitalist value system (Eden 2012).

The pervasiveness of capital in production and in the shaping of market conditions, poses new challenges for producers, who aim to correct the fallacies of the production costs under capital. Studies in new alternative food networks show that changing conditions in production alone does not bring forth a new food system if the distribution conditions on the markets are not changed (Allen et al. 2003, Goodman et. al. 2012, Guthman 2004, 2008). Recognising the gap in understanding the correlation of production and market conditions, studies were conducted on various models of direct producer-consumer alliances, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), (Brown and Miller 2008)<sup>7</sup>, or the consumer-led model GAS (Gruppo Acquisti Solidale – which translate as ‘consumer purchasing groups’) (Signori and Forno 2016). In this sense, my study contributes to a new understanding of how producers can establish a new value system in production. In my thesis I used questions like, what kind of techniques and methods are used to alter the capitalist relations in production? From where do they draw knowledge, skill sets and resources? Is it even possible to produce outside of the EU and regional set of regulations? These are the main questions I am asking to gain insights into CampiAperti’s novel producer-led food system model. Specifically, my analysis sheds light on the complexity of the capital-state-nexus in production, and the efforts producers are making to replace the exploitative relations in production that are aligned with an ecological and animal-friendly system (Chapter 6,7). My research is situated in Emilia-Romagna, Italy, where food production is a core industry and well embedded in the European food market. In this context, I investigate CampiAperti’s strategies to appropriate capitalist relations in production, and the value system of the production and distribution that replaces it. The contemporary regulations in food production systems turn many CA-producers into a (semi-)clandestine status, since their farming system is outside of agri-food techniques that establishes a standardized agriculture (Fonte 2008). The replacement of standardized production is bound to be a social

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<sup>7</sup> According to their website, CSA consists of a complexity of agrarian production arrangements. Originally it was a Swiss farmer, who wanted to share the risk of farmers’ income with consumers. Now, there are consumers setting up CSAs and hire a farmer. In other cases, the producer organises the whole food system and consumers become subscribers to their farms. The arrangements are structured to the environment consumers and farmers are in.

transformation, because a new fabric of social cohesive relations is established that was previously taken apart by market-oriented relations in production. In avoiding to being penalized by the state, their kind of food production system must be recognized by the state. Consequently, a thorough examination of the state-capital-nexus is required.

Based on Brenner's discussion on capital, Tilzey suggests using the dynamic term 'social-property-relations' as opposite to 'primitive accumulation', because "social-property-relations provides a more accurate account on a specific set of property relations within the means of production in the past and modern era of capitalism" (Tilzey 2019: 50). In this sense, social-property-relations suggest that the formation of market dependence is not static rather it enables capital to continuously re-innovate itself with each new production crisis, and therefore it provides a fertile ground to intervene in the state-capital-matrix. But it also shows that there is no clear boundary between an inside and outside of the capitalist production circuits. The markets have been restructured to absorb farm production, whilst on the other hand, it has given an impetus to specific peasants' survival strategies and strengthening the counter-hegemonic struggle (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010b).

## **2.5. The organic movement from the 1960s to the 2000s**

Since my thesis puts forward the argument that the PGS is a strategic instrument to advance the counter-hegemonic struggle in Bologna (and in Italy), I revisit here the previous organic movement to underline the importance of political affiliation in the counter-hegemonic struggle and their economic alignment to the state and the market.

The modernisation of agriculture in the 1960s provoked radical reactions from a minority of farmers and citizens. Those farmers rejected the usage of and dependence on petro-chemicals in production and invoked the first "organic movement" during the 1970s that revolved around their farming practice in organic production and developed production standards (Fonte 2017). The strong criticism against the commodification of agriculture was termed as the 'new rural sociology' (Buttel 2001). The new rural sociology was influenced by de-peasantization that narrated the enabled policies with the accompanied slow pace of decline of family farms (McMichael and Schneider 2011). The organic movement's three decades long struggle was committed to obtain 'cognitive justice' for their organically certified products from the state alongside owning the responsibility for carrying out the labelling of organic products (Coolsaet 2016).

In response to the fetishization of the market and the commodification of everything that regulates human behaviour, the counter-hegemony struggle to neo-liberalism was popularly framed in a Polanyian way (Guthamn 2007, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). The Polanyian way is the re-embeddedness of ecological values that was lost with the commodification process (Ghezzi and Mingione 2019) and was organised by the organic movement to push the state to introduce reforms in order to restore ethical and environmental value (Goodman and Du Puis 2004). The value-based labelling is, “one historical manifestation of social resistance to the violation of broadly shared values by systemic aspects of ‘free market capitalism’”, writes Barham in Guthman (2007: 350). In the early 2000s, the organic movement was granted to label their own products on their production standards. Organisations such as the Soil Association (UK), Demeter (Germany), ICEA (Istituto per la Certificazione Etica ed Ambientale) (Italy), are some of the organic groups and Association in Europe which enabled the movement to protect the ‘conditions of production’ (Fonte and Cucco 2017).

The organic movement adapted the Polanyian perspective, where the market economy “comprises all elements of industry, including labour, land and money” (Ghezzi and Mingione 2019: 97). The organic movement resisted the neo-liberalisation of their foodstuff and they were able to protect the land and other resources. The political recognition of the organic movement was an economic opportunity to spread the valorisation of organic agriculture amongst consumers, but the movement had not the resources to increase their market share (Fonte and Cucco 2017). This impasse was solved by collaborating with the retail industry. Politically speaking, it was grounded in the notion when participating at the global market it is a type of social agency through which system change can occur (Jessop 2016). Thus, the insertion into the global food economy was sought for, whereby market dependence was not a hurdle, rather it was considered as a form of acceptance of their production system.

Its adapted path of the Polanyian “double-movement” where regulations were embedded into institutions in order to protect the marketisation of land, other natural resources and labour from the neo-liberalisation of the food economy (Ghezzi and Mingione 2007). By embedding the market and the economy into society, the organic movement’s intention was to make organic food available to all income classes (Goodman et al. 2012). The introduced labelling system is an example of how the food system was reformed (ibid). The trend of labelling products is heralded as a push for rural development and has great potential for the alternative food networks that delivers high-value food (traditional, regional, specific, organic) in a ‘trust-based marketing arrangement’ (Marsden and Smith 2005). The insertion into the global market economy coincided with the conjuncture of the European Union’s decision to introduce their

own organic certification labelling system that is regulated by regional and local government's offices. The organic certification labelling system is somewhat of a compromise in protecting traditional European products under the rural protection programme from the market liberalisation efforts by capital (European Commission 2021).

Indeed, the organic movement had issued unintentionally a bifurcation in organic production with the retail industry's procurement of convenient organic foodstuff and organic farmer's markets and specific organic shops foodstuff offer higher organic quality foodstuff. Following the political categorisation of food movements made by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), the organic movement moved away from a radical political perspective and embraced the notion of an integrative place-based approach, that could be described as "relocating agriculture and its policies on the regional and local level for creating eco-economies" (Marsden 2010: p.240).

With trade liberalisation the organic foodstuff in the retail industry was subject to a new form of 'extractivism' by the agro-industries, objectifying singular trademarks by adding 'local', 'healthy' or 'organic' (Bakker 2004, Guthman 2004). This new 'extractivism' is embedded in the 'logic of circulation' and had re-enforced market dependency, and consequently had worsened the farmers' conditions in the wage-relation to the industrial food economy. The co-optation of the organic production and market had the effect that the farmer's income from these products was minimal in comparison to the profit agro-industries made from this new 'extractivism'. In the logic of circulation, the earned profit does not return into the local or regional communities but instead disappears in the circulation of global food economy somewhere (Teschke 2003).

In the year 2002 the European Union introduced a labelling system, that compelled my research group CampiAperti to set-up their own standards of organic production. In contrast to the previous organic movement, their labelling system was firstly implemented for specifically targeting market dependence in production; secondly, for drawing their autonomous boundary from the state, capital, and non-radical farmers; and thirdly, for using the labelling system as a political tool for strengthening the counter-hegemonic struggle in the wider rural economy. This 'transition' to reject capital's production and accumulation, and the politics underscoring this predicament, are conceptualised by the paradigm food sovereignty and their counter-hegemonic struggle for the commons (Desmarais 2007). In describing the transition to a different market forms together with a new set of ethics, associative economics had become a viable framework in which new enterprises had emerged.



## **2.6. Associative Economics**

Within the organic movement, experiments around food production involved innovative ideas of living together to share work and resources, and to practice self-governance. This is like commoning (De Angelis 2017). Associative economics has emerged as a progressive idea inspired by the philosopher Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and anthroposophical medicine. The de-commodification of land, labour, and capital is central to associative economics (Lamb 2010). It views society as a three-fold organism composed of political life, spiritual-cultural life and the economy, all of which are constrained by the hegemony of representative democracy. It focuses on relations engendering trust and love with the expectation of abundance, mutual interest and collaboration. The political economy of associative economics is to meet human needs, and to associate with each other through social bonds and intersubjective understanding (Stout 2010).

The logic of associative economics leads to collaborative working, social mutualism, and individual creativity. Progress is viewed as an increase in “association in equality”. Rather than adapting to the reductionist economic model of the capitalist economy, community engagement and interdependence encourages the prioritisation of self-actualisation and human happiness (Lamb 2010, Thayer 1981). Progress is not measured by competition or bargaining for hierarchal recognition, instead it is measured by the integration of each unique human in a growing social circle. This integration occurs through a collaborative process, which creates a continuous widening circle of association and cooperation. Homogeneity and the related structural adjustment required to adapt to a linear vertical production mode is avoided at all costs (Stout 2010). Harmonisation of work and humans is sought through a unifying process. The commitment to working collaboratively shifts the relation from “I” to “us”, and evolves toward building relations based on empathy, trust and mutual awareness. The effort is entangled with the notion of continuously reproducing social practices and of the social system itself (Giddens 1984).

In focusing on reproducing a self-governed social system, the commitment for achieving progress is not goal-orientated, it has no end objective like achieving “freedom” or “justice”. Instead, it focuses on the social and creative process of building social bonds, establishing mutuality and forming enduring collaborative relationships. A transition from individualism to association requires a new ethic and method for collaborative decision-making processes for continued advancement (Stout 2010). The collaborative political economy co-creates democracy and demands direct participation. This collides with the values of representative democracy where capital is embedded in the state, which constrains human creativity. The state

restricts or manages the free development of humans by facilitating unimpeded competition and coercion. It commodifies social relationships by turning them into transactions rather than authentic relationships (McSwite 2006). Direct participation is based on “self-governing the conduct” (Catlaw 2007) and is prepared to reject subordination or domination. Instead it embraces change and seeks to resolve differences through active communication (Follett 1995). The preparedness for resolving conflict is a key component in influencing the process for creating a new social system. Self-governing social systems can be observed in democratised workplaces. The democratisation of the workplace enables workers to participate in the decision-making process of the company, in the circuits of production and in the distribution of wealth (Krimerman & Lindenfeld 1992, Stout 2010). Perhaps the most noted example is the Mondragon worker’s cooperative in the Basque region, Spain (see Box 2.1.).

The uniqueness of Mondragon is their ability to transform the market rather than *eliminating* market exchange. If markets are established under the same rules that facilitate collaboration, markets can be, or are, a device for achieving progress (McSwite, 2007). The collaborative and social equity principles at the Mondragon’s worker’s cooperative are unique and addresses structural inequity within their company. Their primary concern is the protection of workers’ rights., The impact their production has upon the ecological system is a secondary concern. In contrast, SEKEM (see Box 2.2.) is an Egyptian social enterprise, which prioritises concerns about ecology and sustainable development. Unlike the worker’s cooperative Mondragon, collaboration and distribution of wealth is structured in a hierarchal order.

### **Box 2.1. MONDRAGON, federation of worker cooperatives**

In 1956 Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta convinced some factory workers to create their own company based on worker’s democracy. Because self-organised workers were exempted from banks and social services provided by the state, three years later a cooperative bank and an in-house welfare system was launched to alleviate the poverty-stricken region. In 1974 the first research and development centre were born to remain technically innovative and participate in the global market (Mondragon 2022).

Mondragon nowadays encompasses 95 cooperatives employs 80,000 people and has 14 R&D centres, which makes to probably one of the largest working cooperatives in the world. This system was established to offer an alternative to capitalism and communism. Ten principles guide the growing worker’s cooperative: 1. Open membership; 2. Democratic organisation; 3. Sovereignty of Labour; 4. Instrumental and subordinated nature of capital; 5. Participatory management; 6. Wage solidarity; 7. Inter-cooperation; 8. Social Transformation; 9. Universality through external solidarity; 10. Cooperative and professional education (Stout 2010)

## **Box 2.2. SEKEM, sustainable development foundation**

In 1977, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish founded SEKEM in the desert land applying biodynamic principles. The mission is the development of the individual, society and environment through a holistic concept which integrates economic, societal and cultural life. Above all, SEKEM aspires to be an impulse for continuous development in all parts of life and contributes to the development of the wider world. With the integration of the local community, they became a leading company selling organic products worldwide. Its principles are: Sustained Commitment to the benefits of biodynamic agriculture; 2. Commitment to the highest product quality and its continuous development; 3 Provision of required capital and optimal use; 4. Assurance of continuous measures in organisational development; 5. Dedication towards customer's real needs; 6. A marketing strategy sensitive to human values, truthfulness, sensibility, and in alignment with SEKEM's long-standing visions and values, (. The promotion of the principles of associative economics (SEKEM 2022).

These two examples illustrate the difficulty in combining worker's values with ecological values. I will use CampiAperti as an example to demonstrate how it is possible to reconcile the dichotomy of workers' rights and ecology.

## **2.7. Historical Materialism and the food sovereignty movement**

Marx described the mechanism of primitive accumulation as a one-time event (see previous section), but Caffentzis and Federici have challenged it, by comparing the expulsion of the land in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s with the European enclosures movement, that followed in Africa with the imposition of the Structural Adjustments Policies by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for structuring their debt payments to the North. They framed this as the "new enclosures" (1990), which was elaborated further by De Angelis on re-visiting the debate on primitive accumulation. Building on Lenin's and Luxemburg's discussion, De Angelis concluded that the cycle of primitive accumulation is a strategy that is iteratively applied to undermine people's power and autonomy (2001). This important insight puts counter-hegemonic struggles on a historic timeline such as the peasant wars from the Middle Ages in Swabia, Franconia and Elsass during the reformation period led by Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in nowadays Germany (Engels 2004), or the peasant struggles in Emilia-Romagna, Italy, lead to the cooperative and trade union movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before fascism ended the revolt in 1920-1921 (Grandi 2011). The wave of considering peasants as the agent for social change ended with James Scott's book on the moral economy in the 1970s, as Edelman noted (2005). Only recently with the emergence of the 'food sovereignty' movement during the 1990s, the peasantry has been/was conceived again as an agent for social change, that pushes for 'agrarian transformation' (ibid). The agrarian transformation revolves around accumulation, production and politics and interrogating the balances of power within

the prevailing structure of domination, subordination and surplus appropriation (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010b). Indeed, La Via Campesina emerged when the ability of farmers was again undermined, that time with trade liberalisation to maintain control over land, territory, seeds and water (Desmarais and Nicholson 2016). Already experiencing more than two decades of Structural Adjustment Policies enforced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in 1993 the Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Terra (MST) called in farmers and small-scale producers movements from the Americas, Asia, Europe and Africa to Mons, Belgium (Dalla Costa 2007, Desmarais 2007) to organize a meeting against the proposed plans to liberalize agriculture on a world-scale with agricultural production moving to an almost exclusively market-driven global economy (Rosset 1995). In the Agreement on Agriculture under the WTO, national economies had to restructure their agricultural and trade policies (Desmarais 2007, McMichael 2005). Farmers responded to the current irrational and irresponsible logic of production in free trade and agricultural policy and defined the paradigm of 'food sovereignty'. The aim was to redirect control from the corporations back to the state, firstly, articulated in the Mons Declaration (1993) like this: "the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity...Food sovereignty is the precondition to genuine food security" (La Via Campesina 1996 in Patel 2009: 665).

Food Sovereignty is a paradigm rooted in the engagement of farmers' struggles where commons are re-invented, and mirror the 'necessity for an alternative', writes Dalla Costa (2007: 1), and argues in this context for: "...improving traditional methods in the direction of reducing human efforts through the appropriate environmentally friendly technologies that do not expel populations and the cost of which is affordable in the economy of the agricultures...the source, typology and conditions of its funding must be debated and agreed by the people involved, because their efforts can be less burdensome than debt'. What is at stake here is the control over resources and its determination on how to use and allocate them (Patel 2013). In contrast to food security where supranational organisations take control over the food system, food sovereignty was perceived as a counter paradigm that safeguarded every aspect of people's livelihoods, the reproduction of families and social relationships (LVC 1996, LVC 2012). Ultimately, the food security model is founded on a globalization model that "reduces human relationships to their economic value" (Schanbacher 2010), causing an antagonism between governments and supranational organisations and on the other hand, farmers, indigenous groups, pastoralists, and citizens (Patel 2009).

Over the course of fifteen years social movements incrementally realized that the state did not have the political, economic and legal capacities to restore food sovereignty (Agrawal 2014). On the contrary, the implementation of neoliberal policies enlarged the global market, putting pressure on the commodification of agriculture. In this context, the definition of food sovereignty was revised envisaging a strategy for radical change towards constitution, protection and diffusion of new spaces/systems of production, distribution and consumption of food for generating virtuous food systems: “Food sovereignty prioritizes the local market [...] and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, [...], food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition” (Nyéléni 2007).

The strength of La Via Campesina (LVC hereafter) is their capability to connect supranational WTO trade and economic policies with the effects played out in their communities, on the environment and on their livelihoods. Like everywhere else, “the imposition of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional trade agreements is destroying our livelihoods, our cultures and the natural environment” (Desmarais and Nicholson 2013). In Europe, the European farmers’ alliance of LVC calls specifically for an end to the direct payment scheme, and to support instead an agricultural policy that supports small-scale and artisan farmers (ECVC 2019).

In a Gramscian sense, the food sovereignty framework unifies all the different relational identities into a counter-hegemonic struggle against the practices of capitalism and confronts directly the bourgeois hegemony and their setting of limits to the class hegemony. This is played out in my research, in the daily struggles with policymakers and state managers where farmers attempt to produce beyond the market conditions alongside strengthening their desire for autonomy in an altogether altered food system (see Chapter 6,7). Farmers following the food sovereignty paradigm insist on redefining local property schemes and the eradication of the oppressive relations in production to “ensure that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food” (Nyéléni 2007). But how does the subversion of the capital-state-nexus in production and of the market take place? How does the movement address economic dependency to the market and strengthen their capability of reproduction, and how is the movement capable of producing their own means of production beyond the market? What is the meaning of autonomy in the food sovereignty framework, and how is it realised?

These questions refer specifically to the radicals or progressives, as Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) have pointed out in their analysis on the different political pathways of social transformation by new food movements. The approaches to social transformation are contingent to political affiliations (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011), the interpretations of which have a wider impetus in the interaction with capital and the state. While the 'reformist' approach struggles to make corporations accountable and to take responsibility for the destruction of the environment and the social fabric, the 'progressives' and the 'radicals' on the other hand are actively engaging with re-creating a food system with a new value system encapsulating social justice. The difference between the progressives and the radicals is that the latter want to see a change in entitlements to the means of reproduction for food through challenging the social-property relations, while the progressive have much in common with the food democracy discourse (Tilzey 2019) and comply with the standards and regulations already in place, suggesting in a Polanyian sense a re-embeddedness in the economy (Ghezzi and Mingione 2007).

Indeed, the multiple categorisations are akin to what Bernstein has noted that new food systems neglect a comprehensive analysis and critical view to the state and capital (2010). Capital is dependent on the state to manage society's class structure. As Poulantzas suggests, "the state appears here as a 'relationship of forces or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions (Poulantzas 2000: 128-129). But this function of the state is diminished with the advancement of capital and the world market into the national economies. World market integration enhances the power of capital and weakens the 'capacity of organised labour', and 'undermines the power of national states to regulate activities within the national framework' (Jessop 2016: 199). The problem in the food sovereignty discussion is that there is no consensus as to what food systems should be geared towards politically. Is the paradigm food sovereignty a vehicle for reviving the peasantry, or is food sovereignty a mixture of both, a peasantry and entrepreneurship, or solely consisting of entrepreneurs? So far studies on European alternative food markets or alternative production circuits do not unravel social inequities in rural areas (Bernstein 2014) suggesting the realisation of the trend toward an elimination of the peasantry (McMichael 2013). The lack of a critical class analysis makes it difficult to reverse the diverted reliance toward a "model of agricultural science that abstracts from local and ecological conditions" (Mc Michael and Schneider 2011: 120) that subordinates food production to a market mechanism that threatens to undermine knowledge of and about the soil of the land and of nature.

Calls for framing food sovereignty and uncoordinated food systems in political ecology (de Molina 2013) suggest an “in-depth critical analysis of place and its uneven dynamics of power relations at different spatial scales” (Moragues-Faus and Marsden 2017: 3) and points to the need for “engaging with social production and to investigate the co-constitution of nature, society and space” (Moragues Faus and Marsden 2017: 8). More scrutiny of the set of power relations could benefit the re-shaping of the local/regional food production and distribution system and explore strategies to avoid absorption, neutralisation or marginalisation for creating and maintaining a counter-hegemony to the system (Tilzey 2018).

In the effort of subverting the market dependency in production, new food movements, such as CampiAperti, seek to form new social relations with the state through employing strategies in emancipatory politics. As Tilzey has noted, there is a double dynamic occurring in the manifestation for food and livelihood sovereignty; one from below where farmers are securing ‘autonomy’ on the local level, and another engaging on the state level to expand the de-commodification process by engaging with the state (2019: 210). Indeed, employed emancipatory strategies are instilled to recapture enclosed spaces that are used to transform them to provide access to the public (Featherstone 2008). Emancipatory strategies shape the post-democratic process, that Swyngedouw conceptualizes as ‘political’ and ‘politics’ to distinguish the citizens involvement in being political from state politics (2011). In my thesis the ‘politicisation of food’ is illustrated on the emancipatory strategy for self-governing one’s own market. Central in CA’s struggle for food sovereignty is to reclaim a share of the neo-liberalised urban market sphere for their artisan foodstuff. The re-arrangement of public spaces into enclosures are accompanied with the process of the erosion of democratic rights and egalitarian values for the citizens and transfers power to business and corporations. Referred to as post-democracy (Crouch 2004), the deployment of emancipatory strategies opens up tensions with the state that are scrutinised firstly, in production where farmers want to establish a sustainable and economically viable production system, and secondly, when farmers seek market licenses to enter the urban market and the struggle to maintain them (Chapter 8). This is akin to what Scotts writes, that the new movements’ struggle is about “creating new social identities, to open up democratic spaces for autonomous social action in civil society, and to reinterpret norms and develop new institutions” (Scott in Hassaneï 2003: 80).

## **2.8. Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the commodification of food production and contextualised production in the Wageningen and Marxist school of thought and has underlined the role of the Common Agricultural Policy and the role of the state in the accumulation of capital. As an example of the

Polanyian double-movement, the organic movement during the modernisation period was taken as an example to differentiate the ubiquitous counter-hegemonic struggle centred on political autonomy from the state and the market. The embedded nature of market and the economy into society differs to the Wageningen school that uses the market as an opportunity to increase their self-reliance on the farm. Autonomy is understood here as a peasant condition, that is the farmer has self-governance over its own production outside of the state and market's regulation rather than production being coerced by the state to produce for the market in a normative framework. The consequence of state's coercion is that farmers find themselves enclosed on their farms. In order to free themselves from the enclosures in production, farmers develop strategies to return value to farming and to the ecology and have formed the food sovereignty movement to tackle the neo-liberal logic of food security. As we will see in the next chapter, the food sovereignty movement has politicised, and shifted, the commons as an ecological commons property regime (CPR) into new political territories. I will go deeper into the discussion of the commons to illustrate the conceptual framework for this thesis. In particular, I will propose a novel approach, that is to conceptualise autonomous farming, and specifically their related production and markets, within a commons framework. Production, in the case of CampiAperti is shaped by the concepts of agroecology and a peasant-based agriculture, whereby the production of foodstuff is adapted to the European context. The market on the other hand brings forward an understanding of the social wealth and of the solidarity economy. Self-governance of the commons is central here in the formation of the counter-hegemonic struggle and is further elaborated on the autopoietic mechanisms as a strategy to establish emancipatory relations.



## **Chapter 3**

### **The Conceptual Framework**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter builds upon the key themes to have emerged from the literature review and introduces a theoretically informed conceptual framework. The conceptual framework of my research illustrates why it is appropriate to address the thesis's main research aim 'to explore how sustainable food systems initiated by producers can be established'. To this end, the conceptual framework revolves around the practice of 'commons/commoning'. It draws upon the different theoretical implications of using the commons/commoning framework and extends the discussion with lenses of the peasant conditions, agroecology and emancipatory politics to provide a comprehensive understanding of the producers' strife towards autonomy in production and from the capitalist market. Although studies on gender inequality in tandem with environmental sustainability (Agarwal 2007) or a community that manages free software for maintaining open access (O'Mahony 2003) have integrated the commons frame to interconnect social inclusivity and access to resources, the interconnection and relationships formed between production and reproduction in conjunction with autonomy have yet to be addressed. However, there is evidence that these interconnections are starting to be more comprehensively explored and problematised (Leonardi 2013, Mudu and Marini 2018, Öztürk 2014). It is at this junction where this chapter makes a novel contribution by drawing together rural sociology, agroecology and emancipatory politics with the radical socio-economic analysis on the commons.

I commence this chapter by discussing of commons and commoning approaches from an Autonomist Marxist perspective. Key feature in the discussion of autonomy is the concept of 'labour autonomy' and how the alteration of the value system in the process of production occurs through commoning. Commoning starts in the moment of one's heightened awareness that refuses to accept the capitalist's structure that dominates human reproduction and seeks to establish alternative social relations to reproduce one's own reproduction (Federici 2019). The three spheres of social reproduction are birth, food and housing. My thesis focusses on one of these spheres – the regulation and production of food. I explore the motivation for self-governing the reproduction of food production and will illustrate what a food production system 'in use-value' can look like. Such a food production system is based on use value rather than on exchange value, that is fostering a collaborative process amongst farmers. The process

for re-locating production relations on the production sites of food (i.e. farms) is part of the process of de-commodifying food production. This thesis demonstrates how the CA-producers managed the de-commodification process of food from capital.

This is followed by defining the solidarity economy and social wealth that is generated with the monetary sale of foodstuff in use-value by providing a context to the role the consumers have at the self-governance markets. The notion of use-value forms an integral part in the discussion. Here, agroecology in combination with the peasant condition is discussed emphasising how the capitalist relations for producing foodstuff are altered combining ecological, animal and labour values whereby producers control all production stages of a foodstuff in use-value. The discussion enters into an explanation of structural coupling as a form of boundary commoning where new social relations are formed to re-enforce their autonomous farms. Autonomy is here further discussed as a vehicle to self-governing their two autopoietic mechanisms, the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS) and the collaborative-price mechanism (CPM). The erected boundary that defines their autonomy is an emancipatory strategy to protect their autonomy in production and to create a food market that enables them to control the flow of the money. The chapter concludes by discussing the frame of viewing farms as agroecosystems that would provide a fertile ground for integrating reproductive labour into the measurement of productivity and affect the conditions of setting the 'just price'.

### **3.2. Contextualising the commons approaches**

Literature around the commons presents two pathways explaining the tensions between capital, state and citizens (De Angelis 2017, Bollier and Helfrich 2012, Vivero-Pol 2017). The more popular approach to the commons is Ostrom's framing of the commons through ecological sustainability. Here the commons are considered non-natural (digital) or natural resource systems such as water, seeds, land, etc. and are referred to as common-pool-resource (CPR). The CPR is divided in a stock (system) and in a flow (unit), whose distinction revolves around the calculation and organisation of the replenishment and subtraction rate for guaranteeing long-term sustainability of the CPR. Overuse and abuse of the CPR can result in scarcity and diminish sustainability of the resource (Ostrom 1990). Ostrom's study prompted the rebuttal of the idea of the biologist Hardin that the commons were underutilised, presuming that government intervention or central authority should seize them, control them and privatise them (Brewers 2012). Ostrom's long study into the self-governance of the commons by communities revealed the efficiency in sustaining the commons over centuries when communities live in proximity to the resource (Brewers 2012). The exertion of governing the commons by groups outside of the

local community is where the commons risk implosion (Ostrom 1990). However, Ostrom's study on poly-governance structure does not contextualise why and by whom commons are created nor explain why commons cease to exist (Centemeri 2018) when, for example, there is no interference from the outside. Indeed, these discursive forms of poly-governance systems had been endorsed by the supranational institutions, like the World Bank and the United Nations, claiming stewardship over the 'global commons' (Federici 2019).

With the emergence of the anti-globalisation movement during the 1990s the discussion on the commons has found a new resonance in academia distanced from the mainstream CPR-approach to a more subversive critical thinking in anti-capitalist discourses (Centemeri 2018). The discussion on the commons revolves around alternatives to the privatization efforts of natural resources and urban open spaces (Bresnihan 2014, Brewers 2012). Referred to as the 'new enclosures' (Federici 1990, 2019), they had revealed the existence of communal properties (seeds, water, land) when it was already believed that they already had vanished and paradoxically showed new forms of social collaboration, such as the free software movement or new common agricultural projects (Bollier and Helfrich 2012, Mudu and Marini 2018).

In the discussion on food sovereignty, peasants across the globe had shed a light on the notion of the commons with paying an increased attention due to the privatisation of resources in food production. However, the term peasant has been interrogated with competing definitions arising from anthropology and the wider social sciences from as early as the 1960s (Bernstein 2014, Edelman 2013). Within the broad definition of the peasant, the term peasant is associated with subsistence farmers, even though they are entangled with the market and sell their surplus to the market (Bernstein 2010, Mies 2000, Tilzey 2020). This entanglement is further discussed in Chapter 6.2..

In the discussion on food sovereignty, the notion of the commons has gained increased attention with the privatisation efforts of the resources in food production. The re-newed popularity of the commons harbours the imaginary of access, use, community and values associated with governing resources (De Angelis 2017), while food sovereignty is concerned with social equity in resource distribution (Holt-Giménez and van Lammeren 2018). The former seeks structural changes coming from policy institutions (Schiavoni 2017) and uses an approach of the language of rights deploying the usage of entitlement and justice, but it lacks a definition of food as a commons (Vivero-Pol 2017a). In contrast, the claim to make food itself as a common good suggests moving food outside of the capitalist mode of production and exchange (Vivero-Pol

2017a) and grounding it in an aggregated, global supply scale (Holt-Giménez and van Lammeren 2018: 314-315). However, this approach does not explain how production is altered to change food commodities into a common good. I tentatively outline the notion of a common good from the commons perspective by conceptualizing the commons in production and on the market with the notion that by altering the relations in production it is possible to interrupt the capitalist strategy of primitive accumulation for making profit from foodstuff. Applying the notion of autonomy in production, production sites becomes sites of struggle where new forms of commoning in production occur to overcome alienation and disciplinary measures by capital (De Angelis 2017). In other words, the commons became a necessity for their survival where self-governance around a set of principles is conceptualized (Bollier 2014), and production and the market had become sites of struggles.

An academic discussion on the commons has faltered based on Autonomist Marxism. Influential in this debate is Hardt and Negri's analysis on the new formations of global trade arrangements in the direct aftermath of the establishment of the WTO, highlighting the new construct from a nation-state to a post-Fordist construct with the global market at its centre. The abrogation of the Fordist relations in production (Hardt and Negri 2000). The dissolution of fixed, linear employment structure led to innumerable and indeterminate relationships of distributed networks and is termed the hegemony of labour. The argument Hardt and Negri brought forward is that exploitation is no longer measured primarily in the expropriation of value measured by individual or collective labour time, but rather by the capture of value that is produced by cooperative labour (Hardt and Negri 2004: 131). At the same time, in the formation of the hegemony of immaterial labour, a myriad of labour processes, productive conditions and lived experiences are forming the constitution of 'becoming a common' (Hardt and Negri 2004: 114). The common (without the "s") refers to the "commonisation of production processes". Rather than viewing the commons as static (Ostrom 1990, Brewster 2012), Hardt and Negri point towards the significance of communication. Ideas, networks and concepts have gradually become the products of labour, whose centrality in economic production has converted the dominant relations of power and property (van de Sande 2017: 51). However, this seems rather unconvincing. One failing seems to be an underestimation of capital's dynamic in re-configuring itself. While seemingly cooperative, even in an era of production that requires a greater degree of communication and collective labour. Capital continues to divide workers through 'an unequal division of labour through the use of the wage (Federici 2012: 92).

Central in critical thinking is the conceptualization of value, or better the law of value epitomizing abstract social labour determined by the socially necessary labour time (SNLT) and

the appropriation of raw materials in nature for producing commodities (De Angelis 2017, Moore 2015). For capital, the extraction of labour and nature is necessary for commencing the commodification process and accumulating surplus value/profit. It is in the interest of capital to have low environmental and labour standards, since low or no standards means little material effort is needed to secure the reproduction of labour and nature. Indeed, one of the great contradictions of capital is that capital does not have the capacity to reproduce itself, and therefore preys on pristine nature or new products from farmers, for extraction and to secure their accumulation of profit (Fraser 2017, De Angelis 2017). The re-valorisation of work and nature is essential in the discussion of the commons and in the debate on transitioning a food system from an industrial totality to a local production in use-value (Vivero-Pol 2017). The struggle about commons and production in use-value is about recuperating 'lost' material and immaterial relations and re-valorise those relations on a value system built on ethical labour, animal standards and ecological sustainability.

### **3.3. Value system – Value practice**

A usual approach in conceptualising the commons is to illustrate the motivation and the process for integrating a value system with its processes and actions when (re)-generating non-capitalist relations in creating a commons. A value system can be described as a system of values as a totality that is given structure of signification and meanings without reflecting on processes and actions (De Angelis 2007: 29). Simply replacing one value system with another value system without reflection is not sufficient to create commons, as it can also create a capitalist commons. An example of this is the organic food production as a value system fostered by the European Union through the organic certification system. Although the European Union promotes the value system of ecological sustainability and has outlined the way food should be produced, it falls short on explaining the practice of the social interaction within the eco-system and between the worker/farmer and the eco-system, and the eco-system and the economy. It has compartmentalized the value system into singular blocks, such as bio or traceability, and by doing so, treats the multiple relations embedded in ecology, social, labour, economic issues separately from one another (Migliorini and Wezel 2012).

It can be argued that the EU organic controlling scheme is a capitalist' commons, gated by a regulation system administered by the state that controls the commodity production in and for the market (Federici 2019). This example shows that a value system can be imposed vertically upon an already predicated structure without having to alter substantially the value practice of the social relations embedded in the capitalist food production system.

Therefore, significant when creating a new set of value systems is what the anthropologist Graeber describes as giving meaning to actions and to consider that meaning is more strongly recognized within a larger system of action (2001: 68). To give meaning to their actions is to focus on valorising the practice, which would then “refer to the actions, processes and webs of relations that are both predicated on that value system and in turn (re)producing it”, writes De Angelis (2007: 24). Indeed, framing the commons is to give value to the practice and shed a light on the values that are significant for the communities, and at the same time, demonstrates the dichotomy to capital’s value system (Centemeri 2018). This occurs for example when new local food systems valorise their systems on their practice such as adding value by deploying an agroecological practice (Lamine and Dawson 2018) or practices of sustainability (Marsden and Franklin 2013). However, giving value to new food system is not to be confused with adding value to gain a higher monetary value in the exchange of a good, rather the value added is the practice to de-commodify food and to produce in use-value (Holt-Giménez and van Lammeren 2018).

In changing the value system in the mode of production of the food system, farmers need to follow a value system in their food production system that mirrors the aspects of the changes they want to see. Theorists on value struggle orientate production in use-value in a specific context giving individual values and meanings, as Centemeri (2018: 290) writes, “value practices can be defined as those practices through which people come to agree on what is valuable in a given situation and act accordingly so as to attain and maintain the condition deemed valuable”. This reflects how strategies are developed around a set of value systems in conjunction with emancipatory actions and are instrumental in subverting the dominant value system. These points highlight the need to revisit the discussion on production and on the correlation between nature and work in small-scale and in artisan production. More recently, critical research in Alternative Food Economies have started to acknowledge the need to re-valorise the relation between work and nature in production in tandem with developing the commons as a methodological and analytical approach (Gibson-Graham 2006, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013).

### **3.4. Common good and autonomy defined**

The scope of my research explores the relations of making a common good. By doing so, it looks at its value system and the composition of social relations and its farming practice bringing alive the common good. In de-commodifying food, the term commodity would be misleading, as it would hide the newly built structure and relations with what the product is from and probably

would lose its newly acquired radical form. Holt-Giménez and van Lammeren (2018) and Vivero-Pol (2017) term de-commodified foodstuff made in use-value as common goods in order to convey that food is made from non-capitalist-intensive products and is destined for local communities rather than destined for international trade. Elaborating on the composition of common goods in use-value, De Angelis writes that “the plurality has to claim ownership over use-value in different forms and given situations and contexts, not only uses or accesses that use-value, but also governs its production and reproduction, its sustainability and development...the plurality shapes a relationship to that good and to the environment within which it is produced, while the subjects of that plurality govern the relations with one another...It creates relational values, by measuring, assessing and giving particular sense to the models of social relations through which the common good(s) are reproduced and their use value is distributed among the commoners (2017: 30).

In creating common goods, autonomy and commoning are two interrelated concepts that need to be explored as both are the tenets for understanding the social relations in the de-commodification process. There are two types of autonomy that are used in my analysis. The first one is an autonomy that describes farming activities from a peasant condition, defined by the Wageningen school like this: “Autonomy aims at and materialises as the creation and development of a self-controlled and self-managed resource base, which in turn allows for those forms of co-production of man and living nature, that interacts with the market, allow for survival and for further prospects and feed back into and strengthen the resource base, improve the process of co-production, enlarge autonomy, and reduce dependency [on the market]” (Van der Ploeg writes 2008: 23). Through practicing autonomy, farmers generate new forms of social cooperation and collaboration and are able to alter the capitalist value system in production with their own value system (Hardt and Negri 2009).

The second form of autonomy is illustrated in commoning and is further explored in my analysis on the autopoietic mechanisms and on boundary commoning (see sections below). Using the verb ‘commoning’ rather than the noun is to think of the commons more constructively, as the people’s historian Peter Linebaugh suggests: “To speak of the commons as if it were a natural resource is misleading at best and dangerous at worst – the commons is an activity and, if anything, it expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relations to nature. It might be better to keep the word as a verb, an activity, rather than as a noun, a substantive” (2007: 279). Autonomy and commoning are inter-dependent concepts when creating or preserving commons.

### **3.5. Solidarity economy and social wealth**

Using the commons frame in re-valorising new food systems and alternative food economies, multiple research studies suggest that the creation of the commons is a process and experiment rather than already having a pre-text of what commons could probably be (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014, Huron 2015, Ruiz Cayuela 2021). In the studies of the commons, autonomy and the self-management of the material and immaterial resources underscores the dynamic and the character of the commons-based economy construction (Bresnihan 2016, De Angelis 2007,2017, Federici 2018, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, Sitrin 2006). The success of the transformation of production relations to a community-based economy is contingent on how well the organisation of movements and of economic and social production is structured (Hardt and Negri 2004: 82). The resistance to capital is organised in controlling production and the production of social wealth, that invokes ‘a process of subtraction from the relationship with capital by means of actualizing the potential autonomy of labour power’ (Hardt and Negri 2009: 152). This is reverberated by Federici, when she writes: “The pre-conditions of the commons are to resist the dependence on wage relation and the subordination to capitalist relations” (2010: 287) but adds that (social) reproduction is equally important in the construction for a commons-based economy. Federici points out at a key disjuncture in the study of the commons. Resistance is only a moment to a particular circumstance, it does not explain how control over material and immaterial resources is obtained and neither how ‘invisibilised’ spheres, such as labour and nature, are re-valorised in production and in the production of the social wealth.

The production in use-value is extended to the market spheres where a solidarity economy has gained grounds in producing and exchanging goods and services for the benefit of the community summoned under a common ecological and social ethos. The solidarity economy is a form of ‘community economy’ which is “[the] materialisation that participates in organising the practices and processes that surround it, while at the same time being organised and maintained by them” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013: 83). While Laville (2007) points to a heterogenous production of the solidarity economy, as “the pursuit of practice, rather than practice in conformity to a model” (in Kawano 2018). The pursuit of practice describes the transformative potential of the solidarity economy where a dynamic interaction of culture, politics, history, the ecosystem, and technology take place (Kawano 2018). This form of economy connects production with reproduction and the rural with the urban spaces where a variety of survival tactics, local solidarity initiatives and broader solidarity and cooperative structures invoke transformation and alternatives (Arampatzi 2017).



In the discussion of alternative economy, the solidarity economy cannot be considered as neither 'oppositional' nor 'alternative' to the dominant agri-food system, although it develops new strategies to erode capitalist relations in food production and makes efforts to configure a new food system in the local context (Allen et al. 2003). Critics to alternative or oppositional food initiatives point out to the new embodied features, such as 'local' or 'organic', in food production without overcoming the capitalist relations on the market. The commodification of organic foodstuff re-enforced new "neo-liberal subjectivities" in conventional organic farming (Guthman 2004), or produced new entrepreneurial behaviour specifically focusing on artisanal production, whose intention is to sell local, organic food for the middle-class creating a stratification amongst consumers' class system (Goodman et al. 2012) or mitigated competitive behaviour amongst the Fair Trade network (Constance et al. 2014). The blunting of the transformative potential of alternative food economies is related to the institutionalisation of the organic certification system and of the conventionalisation of organic, local food production by the agro- and retail industry (Fonte and Cucco 2017). In a review of alternative food economies, Constance et al. (2014) summarise the co-optation of organic food initiatives through 'weak' official certification scheme. The co-optation was facilitated by the previous organic movement in Italy, who campaigned for decades for the recognition of their organic foodstuff in form of a labelling system and have expanded into the retail industry (Fonte and Cucco 2017). The bifurcation of food production and consumption in conventionalisation and artisanal production and ethical food initiatives is often associated with marginality, dependency and deprivation (Constance et al. 2014, Van der Ploeg 2008). The critic on the capital-centred approach of the previous food organic movement, renders new forms of more constructivist and reflexive approaches. The push into marginalisation and deprivation necessitates to produce new forms for reproducing the food system anew (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, Goodman et al. 2012, Morgan et al. 2011). Making new food systems inspires a "politics of possibilities" (Gibson-Graham 2006) and moves marginalised food systems into new configurations of local and regional policies.

### **3.6. Consumer-producer-alliance and social wealth**

A significant component in the creation of the solidarity economy is the participation of consumers. In the dominant food system, the sustained dichotomy between consumers and producers is mediated by the market. Critics of new food initiatives argue that new social movements have shifted their attention away from the state, whilst the labour and class-based movement moved towards market- and consumption-based campaigns and strategies (Bonanno

et al. 2015: 265). The proliferation of alternative food initiatives, such as consumer boycotts, fair trade, and CSAs, suggest a shift of attention from production to consumption.

In my research, social values (trust, empowerment, conviviality) attributed to the consumer-producer-relationship are investigated and how the generated social wealth on the market contributes to the preservation of the production in commons. In the words of De Angelis: “Social wealth is reproduced, extended and comes to serve as the basis for a new cycle of common (re-) production, and through which social relations among commoners – including the rules of the governance system – are constituted and reproduced” (2017: 201).

The creation of social wealth cannot simply be used for economic purposes in order to sustain the life cycle of production and reproduction. Social wealth is a political tool, in a sense that is used to emancipate from capital (Centemeri 2018). Already Bourdieu warns us from ‘de-politicising the economic’ (2002) otherwise self-governance of production would very likely give away to the proliferation of neo-liberalism and to its procedures of wealth creation and distribution. He is cautious to oversimplify the creation of a new market system, that would be “building up production sites as commons and new wealth is circulated supporting sustainable modes of living and living with the earth (Gibson Graham 2013: 163-164). Without politicising the economic, the risk is that the creation of the social wealth is then reduced to consumerism determined by life-style choices and affordability. In my thesis, I assess the efforts undertaken by CA to create and sustain a direct relationship with the consumers, calling them ‘co-producers’ which signals to consumers to actively take part in shaping the food system in form of commoning.

The challenge for new food systems, such as CA, is to go beyond the recognition of consumers as consumers in the solidarity economy but view them instead as citizens, who participate in building up new food systems. Food citizenship requires consumers to be active citizens in building together with producers the new food systems. It is described by Wilkins as “the practice of engaging in food-related behaviours that support, rather than threaten, the development of a democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system” (in Renting et al. 2012: 294). The implication is that consumers are considered as active subjects, who undermine their market dependency of consumption, and co-create a production/consumption system embedded in “the cycle of reproduction as a process of social life” (Echeverría 2015: 33). In this context, I discuss the engagement and limits of these co-producers at CA and how their participation affects the production of the common good and the self-governance of CA-markets.

### 3.7. Agroecology and a peasant-based agriculture

A key element in exercising autonomy in use-value production is to control all the production stages in the production of a food product. By aiming to control all elements in food production, producers are able to generate relations that correspond with a value system they want to realise such as ecological sustainability, animal welfare and securing one's livelihood. These three components entail an agricultural practice that is fossil-free and preserve natural resources, respect the lives of animals and farmers are able to live off the land. The term sustainability encapsulates an agricultural production indefinitely (Gliessman 2015: 16). In guaranteeing sustainability along their "in-built supply chain" on the farm, farmers sway away from producing only one item of the food product and instead develop their autonomy by acquiring a craft. The social anthropologist Sennett has defined craftsmanship as having the *motivation* for "desiring to do a job well for its own sake" (in Cooper 2007, p. 435). This process requires the acquirement of set of skills, practice, knowledge and building up a social network that are crucial elements in re-organising a production site to take responsibility in production and reproduction at every stage along production. The set-up and the survival of a farm depends on making a living from the farm on the market. Therefore, it is necessary to problematise this dependency to the market in production, as Tilzey reminds us, that it could deter the notion of autonomy from capitalism as well as the materialisation of food sovereignty (2020).

The use of agroecological methods is a crucial component to realising food sovereignty. These methods bring environmental, economic and political benefits to small-scale farmers and their communities (Altieri 2009, de Molina 2013, Gliessman 2015, Levidow et al. 2014). Over the past century, agroecology has gained influence in Europe with scientific experiments on agricultural methods and systems creating methods that are more sustainable, more environmentally friendly, less dependent on external inputs, and less technologically intensive than those of industrial agriculture (Gliessman 2015: 18). The interest in agroecological studies has created the perspective that agroecology could be used to completely transform the food system.

In agroecology, the seed stands for the beginning of the life cycle and the central demand by the food sovereignty movement is to maintain the seed as an open source. With the patents of the seeds, commercial interests and corporations were able to engineer the genetic materials and were able to interrupt the evolutionary process of living organisms (Kloppenborg 2010). The privatization of seeds has created a dependency on the seeds, which, in effect, has affected the cultivation of foodstuff. Only certified seeds by the state are allowed to be used in food production. This form of enclosure costs farmers their self-reliance of producing food and causes a huge loss of food diversity. Alongside, farmers are alienated from nature and

consequently and have forgotten the traditional knowledge in producing food (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2020, Van der Ploeg 2019).

An important element in the food sovereignty movement is the collective learning process for generating agroecological knowledge (Anderson 2018 et al.). Popular education is used to develop political strategies for building a social movement around agroecology, while the epistemology in agroecology relies mainly on farmer-to-farmer networks, that is exchanging knowledge amongst their place-based communities on a whole range of issues (Altieri and Toledo 2011). The collective consciousness building is a path towards cognitive justice (Coolsaet 2016). Building knowledge is a co-learning and co-production process as farmers collectively address power imbalances of the market (Coolsaet 2016). This approach to knowledge production asks how to protect traditional agricultural knowledge (TAK) from misuse and appropriation (Shiva 1996). The strong aspect of TAK refers to a developed knowledge system in place-based communities in each socio-cultural particular context (Bonanno et al. 2015) that translates into 'recognizing and efficiently managing agricultural landscapes and agroecosystems' (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2020: 3). At a practical level, informal ways of self-governed knowledge production are shaped by the growing implementation of the participatory-guarantee-system amongst European farming communities (Coolsaet 2016). On a theoretical level the debate in protecting farmers' knowledge revolves around protecting the seeds with a new Charter similar to the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2020) or a more institutional open-source framework, such as the commons (Kloppenburger 2010, Reyes-Garcia et al. 2020).

In the commons' perspective, rather than organising the seeds as public goods managed by government institutions, seed is collectively owned and managed by self-organised communities for their collective benefit (Kloppenburger 2010, Quilligan 2012). Indeed, "the links between local knowledge, cultural diversity and traditional resource management systems are stronger than in the cultivation and protection of biological resources", writes Desmarais (2007: 52). By saving and exchanging the seed in the gift economy, farmers treated the seed as part of a commons. Through the free exchange of seeds farmers were able to collect a huge biodiversity of seeds. This biodiversity guaranteed their own food security. This customary arrangement was undermined by the modernisation of agriculture. As early as the 1960s seed corporations lobbied for a new regulatory system which would control seeds globally. This directly threatened the customary arrangement between farmers and their seeds. which came into effect with the Intellectual Property Rights under the WTO in 1994 (Kloppenburger 2010).

### **3.8. The peasant condition and boundary commoning**

Exploring boundary commoning within the peasant condition enables an examination of the creation of new social networks and the way in which the production of foodstuff is politicised. The discussion about the commons is a reaction to the enclosure of food resources where commoning is regarded as an alternative to capital (De Angelis 2007, Linebough and Rediker 2000). As production and the market are two interrelated spheres, I situate the discussion on the commons as a resource in production and as part of the market. Under neo-liberalism, market conditions determine the standards of production via mechanisms like homogenization. These mechanisms reduce autonomy in production (Van der Ploeg 2008). As such, altering the value system of production towards agroecological principles is a social process determined by a value practice. Farmers implementing agroecological principles typically use agricultural methods and practices that generate no or lower carbon emissions and stronger animal welfare standards than industrial farmers. This thesis scrutinises the practice of commoning as an attempt to replace capitalist methods and inputs. I examine the established social relations that exist in the practice of commoning and the social relations that foster autonomy that were identified by Van der Ploeg, such as co-production, co-dependency and co-operation (2008). I investigate this social dynamic through the lens of developing a craft, which requires a better understanding of the altered routines and the outcomes of farming.

By examining the autonomy of farming activities, it becomes apparent that the de-commodification of food is not an isolated process, it requires several social processes that involve a variety of actors. As self-governance in production leads to the use of inputs and agroecological methods which are not certified by the state, those involved in commoning create produce that is not recognised by the state for the capitalist market of food. As such, they exist outside of the capitalist commodity production, (Migliorini and Wezel 2017). Autonomous production sites are based on a new value system. Consequently, food production at these sites is inherently politicised and they become sites of struggle. Elements of commoning, such as autonomy, co-production, co-dependency and co-creation, mobilise labour and generate alternatives to capital. These alternatives emerge from the social processes used in commoning (Federici 2019). Production becomes a highly political activity even though production occurs on individual farms. As I will demonstrate, these individual farms are a form of commons because they are embedded in the self-governance CA-structure. These farms follow collectively established standards but retain their own boundary in the way production is realised on each individual farm. Applying De Angelis description on structural coupling characterised by specific relations between individual commons and broader relations with the general commoning network. (De Angelis 2017: 291). Structural coupling weaves together multiple

production sites into a strong commons network that enables the construction of a food system governed by their own value system.

Boundary commoning and structural coupling are two independent processes. Structural coupling occurs when external systems are incorporated into a system while maintaining one's own self-governance over the system. Whereas boundary commoning creates "structural coupling between and among different commons" (De Angelis 2017: 291). I have used structural coupling, and the concepts of co-production, co-dependency and co-creation to analyse the self-governance of production and of the markets. The following section discusses commoning and the autopoietic mechanism more closely.

### **3.9. The autopoietic mechanisms**

This section takes a closer look into the self-governance structure, as farmers organize in the hegemonic 'permission culture' to protect themselves from enclosures and dispossession and to articulate their boundaries (Kloppenburg 2010). In my thesis I will focus on two self-governance mechanisms, namely, the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS) and the collaborative price-mechanism (CPM). Both of these mechanisms can be described as part of an autopoietic process. This means that "not only the interactions among components of a system and its own rules are regenerated but also the components themselves" (De Angelis 2017: 236). This implies that new material and immaterial tools such as seeds, knowledge, governance structure, social relations, foodstuff, etc. are reproduced, enhancing material and immaterial autonomy of the commons' users. The structure of the autopoietic mechanism fosters a decentralisation of production into individual production sites, which however, should not be confused with peer-to-peer production where a mix of hierarchy, cooperation and autonomy between the state and the market exists (Bollier and Conaty 2015, Papadimitriopolous 2017).

In the absence of the state to establish regulatory bodies to administer access to the commons for the common good (Dietz et al. 2003), farmers and citizens are prone to experiment with the complexity in governing the commons, focusing on balancing open/free access to the commons in an effective allocated way, without risking the commons' implosion (Metha 2011). In my thesis I explore the PGS, which is an effective tool for small-scale farmers in order to access the market and has become a very popular mechanism in Latin America (IFOAM 2008). The definition of the PGS is defined by the International Federation of Organic Movements (IFOAM: 2008) as a: "locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and

knowledge exchange” (2008). Unlike food regime theory where capital’s interference in the food system is ‘agent-full’ in the formation of the contemporary food system (Tilzey 2018: 3), Ostrom has unwittingly studied the ‘borderline’ of the commons to capital, where the counter-hegemony to capital is formed and articulated.

The borderline of the commons is the boundary that defines the autonomy of the commons’ users as a self-governed body accompanied by their self-managed mechanisms that regulate their horizontal organizational structure and decision-making processes. These self-managed mechanisms regulating their ecological and labour ethos in production (Chapter 7), serve to define the access to their commons and to achieve a higher leverage of resilience to preserve the autonomy over production and the market. The common ethos summons individual producers into one food production system, while producers operate in a de-centralised manner from each other (see map 4.2.).

Since my case study CampiAperti is not seeking to reform capitalist relations, rather, they intend to establish emancipatory relations with the state in order to get recognition for their self-organizational model of pooling their place-based artisan production. The insistence of their autonomy as producers differs to life-boat or survival strategies in so far as one of their founding principles is that each producer intending to participate at CA needs to adapt to a peasant-based agriculture. That is not simply to produce organic food or use permaculture methods, instead to put the mind and the body into a form of agriculture where the human body is part of nature. To put it differently, it is to abrogate the metaphysical Cartesian binary on a practical level by taking responsibility for the reproduction of food in production that is concretely working within the limits of nature and working with nature. The introduced PGS regulates these norms and values akin to a peasant-based agriculture and is adapted to an array of farmers’ economic situations without compromising on this foundational principle. Their assessment of new farms includes observations of their energy production, water conservation, soil structure maintenance, animal welfare, and employments standards.

As previously noted, social interactions with nature are crucial elements for the existence of a peasant-based farm and surprisingly, not much research has been undertaken to study the malleability or the capability of responding spontaneously to the eco-system, and dynamics of agricultural activities (Van der Ploeg 2008). The strife for a de-commodified food system sits on the border to capitalist farming, and therefore there is a risk of replicating dependency on or being co-opted by the capitalist market. Therefore, my study in investigating the practice for autonomy takes into account the historical review of absolute self-reliance of individual farms,

which use every market opportunity to strengthen entrepreneurialism on their farms (Bernstein 2010).

In my discussion on the self-governance mechanisms (Chapter 7), I will show what the autopoietic mechanisms are composed of, how it is governed and how this governance is used to advance the efforts for materializing food sovereignty in the region of Emilia-Romagna. Referring to the evolutionary process of the PGS within CA, I will demonstrate the flexibility of this mechanism to internal and external processes and developments. Unlike the utilitarian approach by Ostrom, the usage of the autopoietic mechanisms in my thesis will further illustrate how these tools and mechanisms can be used for setting clear political boundaries against threats of appropriation from capital and by the state. The boundaries that define inclusion and exclusion of participation is also a form of resistance and an effective strategic tool for subverting state and capitalist relations by altering the food system structure.

### **3.10. Agroecology and Productivity**

In response to knowledge loss and market dependency, growing clusters of agroecological initiatives across Europe are challenging the high inputs used in agricultural system (Coolsaet 2016). In contrast to industrial farming, agroecology is acknowledged as knowledge intensive (Altieri and Nicholls 2012) and is built around a 'plurality of knowledge' (Coolsaet 2016: 165). The analysis of knowledge production is critical in agroecology and emphasises the self-governance of resources in food production (Gliessman 2015), and the existing structural and social inequalities of the food system (Patel 2011). Agroecological movements are challenging the agro-industrial system and articulating a farming practice with "an action-oriented, transdisciplinary and explicitly political interpretation" (Bellamy and Ioris 2017: 2). Political aims of agroecology involve re-designing the food production system for ecological sustainability, knowledge production, and re-claiming control over the means of food production (Gliessman 2015).

The re-design of a farm structure contributes to understanding the most complex component in agroecology, namely, the measurement of productivity (Bellamy and Ioris 2017). It interrogates the dependency relations in production and opens up a pathway to re-design a farm setting that controls all stages of production, and by doing so, challenges the structural inequalities embedded in the CAP and in regional/national legal frameworks. Methodologies chosen for underscoring high productivity in industrial agriculture in comparison with agroecological yields, suggest that agroecological productivity shows a higher resilience in climatic stress



situations (Altieri and Nicholls 2017). Non-completed studies indicate that farmers implement a variety of strategies to adapt to the changing climatic conditions to minimise the risk of losing their productivity (ibid). In general, the economic resilience is higher because of the genetic diversity of the crops (Gliessman 2015). Following the definition of agroecology from LVC, agroecology encompasses a myriad of agricultural methods adapted to a specific natural and man-made micro-climate (Nyéléni declaration 2015). Studies of agroecological systems have shown that methods, such as inter-cropping and polycultures, achieve higher yields than monocultures and are more efficient in obtaining a higher diversity of yields (Altieri and Nicholls 2017).

Although studies on organic productivity had made some promising results in achieving a higher output than conventional food production, in varied research on agroecology productivity it shows that pre-existing data was not always reliable and more studies in the efficiency of productivity needs to be done (Bellamy and Ioris 2017). The measuring of outputs using statistics is a methodology that runs the risk of undermining the holistic aspect of agroecology. In agroecological food production, the development of species in a certain habitat and the cultivation of a biodiversity based on an ecological rationale of traditional small-scale or peasant-based agriculture “representing long established examples of successful agricultural systems characterized by a tremendous diversity of domesticated crop and animal species maintained and enhanced by ingenuous soil, water, and biodiversity management regimes, nourished by complex traditional knowledge systems” is considered of high priority (Altieri and Nicholls 2017: 36).

Opening up agriculture to nature and to the natural rhythm and biodiversity, capitalist’s concepts of measuring the value of productivity in terms of quantity and of labour time is not conceivable and exploitation cannot be understood in these terms either. By viewing production as a common(s), the valorisation of production needs to be altered and so does the notion of labour and the natural exploitation of the common(s) (Hardt and Negri 2004: 150). Applying this notion of productivity to agroecology, Altieri and Toledo (2011), and Gliessman 2015) consider agroecosystem more plausible than agroecology. Agroecology refers to the practice, whilst agroecosystem considers the totality of a farm as an agroecosystem. “The agroecosystem provides a framework with which to analyse food production systems as wholes, including their complex sets of inputs and outputs and the interconnections of their component parts. Extended even further, agro-ecosystemic thinking incorporates social systems-as the structures within which humans as food consumers organise food distribution through markets and other means” (Gliessman 2015: 21). This definition provided by Gliessman calls for structuring the farm

system into different levels that understand the dynamics of the ecosystem that determines productivity, efficiency and development. The agroecosystem is manipulated by human interference into this system, and therefore the interaction into nutrient cycling, energy flows, population-regulating mechanism and its output is much higher than in natural ecosystems. In my thesis, I describe the production system of small and artisan farms that focus on the diversity of making one product, such as cheese- or wine, through the agroecological lens. Therefore, combining agroecosystems with a peasant-based agriculture underscores the importance of integrating all stages of a product on a farm, where farmers can influence the ecological conditions and animal welfare of their production.

In food sovereignty debates, recent research had been referring to agroecological food systems as transitions to a new food system altogether (Anderson et al. 2019, de Molina 2013, Moragues-Faus and Marsden 2017, Santo and Moragues-Faus 2019), but less has been explored about how autonomy, or self-determination, in production is achieved to enable the ecological and economic conditions to be altered. Underlying questions have guided my research were for instance: How did farmers initiate a change in production? How do they organize their production outside from or beyond to capital? What are the possibilities and impossibilities to gain self-determination in food production? Lastly, how is autonomy in production reconciled with being political? These questions explore what work needs to be done to alter the food system and understand the socio-economic obstacles and opportunities farmers have to deal with in adapting their production to a non-industrial food system. This further includes how resource struggles are related to a new value system and is congruent with changing conditions in production. As such my research scrutinizes the resistance of producers, which has identified their established networks of anti-capitalist relations in production and reproduction beyond their farms.

### **3.11. Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the conceptual framework of this thesis. It discussed the political premise of the commons and explained the relevance of this concept for my research. In this concept, agroecology as a value system was explained as a form to radicalize production and the market and clearly were positioned to capital as it focuses on the de-commodification process in production in use-value. Commoning was discussed as a central activity for establishing a production in use-value and its autonomous character was used to explain the peasant condition. Through deploying autonomous methods and strategies in production and at the market, I explained how food is turned into a common good. Through commoning, a solidarity

economy is formed with the common good at its centre creating the social wealth from which the producer and consumer benefits. After the sale of the common good, the cycle of reproducing the common good begins anew after the sale, completing the cycle of the commons production circuits.

Further, the conceptualization of the peasant-based agriculture and commoning is made in tandem with agroecology, the new value practice in agricultural farming. Here, the discussion centred on the recuperation of traditional agricultural knowledge (TAK), and secondly on the conceptualization of the agroecosystem for framing productivity in a different set of measures. The development and employment of TAK in agriculture underlines the significance of pursuing a craftsmanship for the purpose of controlling all the production stages of a food product. One of the main contributions for viewing farms as agroecosystems is to provide a frame for measuring productivity for farms working with the ecosystem and animals and respecting labour standards. Lastly, I discussed the autopoietic mechanism the PGS. The PGS is the boundary that defines their value practice and by doing so, acts as a regulator for accessing their market and defines their autonomy to the state. This has implications in protecting this value system in production in use-value from state and capital.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological aspects of the research, detailing the ways that data were collected and justifying why the approach has been selected in favour of others. In the previous chapters I outlined the congruencies between the predominant conceptualizations of food system self-governance in relation to establishing circular regional food systems. To this end, this chapter outlines the reasons for selecting the quantitative and qualitative research methods employed to generate and analyse data in this dissertation. The narrative then turns to addressing the case-study design in line with a discussion about the context of Emilia-Romagna in Italy as the case study site. Participant observation, discourse analysis and triangulation, and an explanation about the quantitative and qualitative nature of their methods are then discussed. This is followed by an explanation about the first phase of the data collection process and how this links to the commons and commoning framework and the research aims and objectives. A discussion about how the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed using indexing processes associated with ethnographic study is then given. A summary of the chapter is provided at the end before moving onto introducing my case study CampiAperti.

#### 4.2. Emancipation and critical realism

Critical realism (CR) emerged from the positivists/constructivists dichotomies (Denzin & Lincoln 2011) and uses interdisciplinary approaches of ontology and epistemology (Fletcher 2017). In social science, CR is based on empiricism, reality and actuality (Danermark 2019, Fletcher 2017).

Ontologically speaking, the structure of the capitalist system existed *before* the mechanism to emancipate farming activities from the disciplinary structure of the state (Jessop 2005). Critical realism provides an avenue to evaluate the progress made by the agent towards the realisation of their objectives<sup>8</sup> (Bhaskar 2012). The emancipatory potential of CR is grounded in my thesis in the political economy of Autonomist Marxism, particularly from the perspective of the

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<sup>8</sup> The objectives of CampiAperti can be found in Chapter 5.

commons which was outlined in Chapter 3. Emancipation is a key component of the practice of autonomy and it is embedded in a particular value system. Initiating emancipation from capital requires social, financial and human capital to alter the dominant structure, but these types of capital reproduce structural inequality and inequity within capital, which impedes emancipation. As such, it is inherently contradictory to initiate emancipation from within capital (Tweedie and Hazelton 2019). In my research, the structure of capital is not changed from within or outside of capital. Instead, the structure of capital is altered by the nexus between the capitalist and autonomous value systems (Chapter 3). At this nexus, the overlap between the two value systems, with capital being subordinated by the autonomous value system, is how the commons emerges.

Structure is the social reality experienced through events without conflating the events themselves (Andrew and Baker 2020). As such, structure is influenced by the nature of its causal powers (Bashkar 2012). Agency is thought of here as a two-fold relationship, with each responsible for activating and conditioning the other. From a CR perspective, agents 'possess causal powers and capacities for bringing about change ... through conscious and intentional activities' (Ekström 1992: 115). In my research, farmers at CA are 'agents' by activating alternative agricultural activities, which could be described as activating the causal powers 'embedded' in alternative structures that 'counteract' the current dominant structures (Modell 2017: 22). From this follows that emancipation is not used for erasing the existing dominant structure, instead it occupies with the "transformation of the broader in which one is embedded" (Andrew and Baker 2020: 5). Translated to my case study, my research departs from an emancipation process that occurs 'within capital' and uses 'structural properties' (Giddens in Jessop 2005). By giving a concrete structure, it enables a reflexive monitoring of events unfolded in the structure and constitutes a response by the agency. The emancipation process itself is therefore a struggle to escape from the oppressive structure, if subordination is understood as a relation of oppression (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

This process for emancipation from the capitalist structure is highly contingent on the formation of a new alternative construct (Andrew and Baker 2020). Thus, to make it possible to study the dynamic of emancipation, the methodological character of my field work focuses on the formation of social relations amongst producers and the self-governance of their alternative food system. The novelty of my research is that emancipation is not viewed within the contextual structure of capitalism, rather how effective are their developed mechanisms and strategies in order to emancipate from capital. To put it differently, CA formed a new

dependency structure in form of commoning, and thus constraints and opportunities are examined within their construct and not in relation to capital. This enables the 'structural capability' to be understood from an emancipatory frame thereby reflecting and evaluating the progress with its own interpretation.

### **4.3. Critical realism and ethnography**

Critical realism is about social organisation and has therefore a pragmatic approach and asks questions about creating new cognitive and cultural contexts leading to new transformations of orientations and relation. Its central question revolves around locating these processes of reification and how individuality is related to notions of society (structures, institutions, systems) and notions of culture (cultural structures, sub-cultures) and of what the learning process is constituted. The emphasis of cognitive sociology analyses is on the interpersonal processes that shape 'social subjects', which influences subsequent thinking and thought (Raphael 2017).

Although critical realism provides a philosophical frame for emancipation, it has, surprisingly, little to offer in the methodology about the way social research should be conducted (Sayer 2011). For my research I have chosen ethnography and participant observation, as similar to critical realism, ethnography is a combination of philosophy and praxis-orientated approaches and its applied methods explore social phenomena within an unstructured data set. Rather than attempting to decipher major social transformative developments, the strength of ethnography is that it focuses on the details of one case study and gives meaning to descriptions and explanations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In understanding opportunities and potentialities of local agriculture, research needs to be place-based in order to not be subsumed into generalised sustainable solutions that aggregates existing ecological problems (Marsden 2012). The ethnographic study of CA facilitates the depiction of a specific situation in a particular context where producers collectively create and make a social space through processes, such as creating physical spaces like market spaces or creating autopoietic commons that develop strategies to distance production from capital, and forge local and transnational networks (for example, Genuino Clandestino movement) that support their path of emancipation from capital (Watson and Till 2010).

The epistemology in ethnographic studies lies in interpretivism that recognises the role of subjectivity and that researching the social world is inherently different to the natural sciences. Hoggart et al. (2002) regard interpretivism as part of a wider mid twentieth century 'cultural

turn', whereby the researcher is concerned with the interpretation of the meaning of objects and subject and making sense of this in relation to the cultures and contexts in which they are situated. However, relying solely on explanations for reconstructing philosophically a social phenomenon does not provide the rationale. What Sayer points out, is to depart from value systems to explain the compositions of different social or non-capitalist relations (2011). Rather than generating disciplinary knowledge, critical realism reconstructs theoretical knowledge with an explanatory approach that critically scrutinises the transformative dynamics of social subjects, such as opportunities in the moment of crisis, who are pushing for the transcendence from actuality to reality, such as depicting how citizens anticipate and induce social change (Sayer 2011).

#### **4.4. Critical discourse analysis, ethnography and triangulation**

The validity of created knowledge in critical realism is underpinned theoretically in the practice of contextualising knowledge of the case study. The reflective argumentation is built up that critically contests and accepts and rejects proposals (Strydom 2011). I applied the argumentative discourse in my analysis on the notion of whether a self-governance price-mechanism replaces competitive behaviour. Competitive behaviour eviscerates the spheres of production and reproduction, and one potential possibility to escape competitive behaviour is by creating a new reality in which the terms and conditions are differently set. In applying the method participant observation at the market, my case study explores this self-governance reality and assesses critically whether it is sufficient to replace neo-liberal de-regulation in food systems with its own autopoietic systems (Chapter 3 and 7).

To complement my methods of participant observation, I have used critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is the methodology for analysing vocal, written, and sign language from a critical realist perspective. The epistemic and ontological discourse of discourse analysis is discursive, which can then be used in a variety of theoretical backgrounds, and as well as be applied to support critical realism (Wodak and Chilton 2005). My research uses quantitative, statistical data to generate basic results to help understand certain aspects of the case studies. These data have been collected from existing, secondary sources, such as from Eurostat, the European Commission, and from the Emilian-Romagna region website.

A CDA contributes to understanding the social interaction and function, and although the focus in discourse analysis is more linguistically orientated, in the age of visual and written

communication CDA is applied as a method for analysing communication, which in my research is used to analyse my case study's main communication tool, the email.

The study of online communication researches online interactive behaviour known as Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) (Herring 2004). At its core CMDA is the analysis of logs of verbal interaction (characters, words, utterances, messages).

The verification of my results from my interviews using CMDA and ethnography is invoked using methods of triangulation (Leeuwen 2004). Triangulation is a combination of constructivism, empiricism and realism, and combines quantitative with qualitative research methods (Olsen 2004). The triangulation method involves multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon. The risk of using multiple methods is, however, that too many unfocused questions are made. In my research, participant observation and CMDA is utilised to gather in-depth material before questions for the interviews, and after the literature review (ibid). The following table summarises the methods used in ethnography-oriented research.

**Table 4.1.: Methods, Aims and Objectives**

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Objective</b>
	Investigating obstacles and strategies for materializing food sovereignty in Emilia-Romagna, Italy	Investigating the process of decommodification in production by exploring the methods for recuperating knowledge, methods of reproduction	Contextualising CA-food system within the CAP. Investigating the autopoietic commons as strategies for self-governing the food system	Exploring and contextualising the contradiction and limits of market dependency at CA's solidarity economy
		<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Chapter 8</b>
<b>Semi-structured interviewing</b>		X	X	X
<b>Conversational Analysis</b>		X	X	X
<b>Ethnography / Participant Observation</b>			X	X
<b>Photography</b>		X	X	X
<b>Discourse Analysis</b>			X	



#### **4.5. Research design: An in-depth case study approach**

As has been outlined in earlier chapters, this research adopts an in-depth case study by researching CampiAperti in Emilia-Romagna, Italy, and their connection to the Genuino Clandestino movement in Italy. This case study was selected for its unique response to the disciplinary production rules in Emilia-Romagna congruent with European Union's government's systems of the agricultural policies in the mid-1990s. Moreover, my research mobilises a methodology that has largely been overlooked in the field of food sovereignty research. Surprisingly, within the growing literature on food sovereignty and social movements, European farmers (mainly in Austria, Romania, France, Italy, Spain) had been largely ignored in their efforts to intervene in the Common Agricultural Policy over the past twenty years. The underrated potential of European social movements from academia resonates with focusing on the policy level and denouncing the negligence on the neo-liberal effects in place-based agriculture (Marsden 2012, de Molina 2013). Other recent studies on food sovereignty in Europe have concentrated on studies around consumers' food initiatives (Signori and Forno 2016, Moragues-Faus 2017) driving the transformative potential of the food system, while farmers themselves do not appear as qualified active social subjects by not participating in altering conditions in agricultural production. There is a dichotomy in the literature of European food initiatives where those debates are located in political ecology (De Molina 2013, Moragues-Faus 2017, Tilzey 2018), while labour processes in food production are analysed in rural sociology (Buttel 2001, Murdoch 2000, Van der Ploeg 2008). In situating my study in Political Ecology, my ethnographic study aims to scrutinise the complex assemblages that envision another mode of production and other life worlds "based on ecological productivity and cultural creativity" (Leff 2015 :67). My ethnographic study assists in depicting a detailed picture of producers in their specific social context on their farms and in the market, where producers actively take responsibility for producing and selling their own foodstuff in order for them to govern their whole food system. Such an approach will be conducive to appreciating the role of context in shaping the actors' understanding about what needs are to be addressed and how they can best be met. This enables a better understanding of how formal structure, institutions and processes and the informal socio-cultural processes affect modes of production in the Marxian sense (Chapter 6 and 7).

The in-depth study of my case study has looked at a great variety of producers following specific crafts. Whilst specific differences emerge from the practices of producers, they form an induced commonality that collectively motivates an alteration of the socio-cultural conditions in production. While this particular research is contextualised within the stifling socio-political context, the emphasis of the research is how emancipatory relations in relation to capital can be

established, examining the invocation of a political shift coming from the positionality of the social subject. My ethnographic study illustrates in great detail the oppressive power relations exerted from EU and regional regulations that hinder local food production (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In order to contextualise the objective, I show emancipatory strategies developed by CA and the negotiation efforts with the state to accept the autonomous form in food production. In line with political ecology and with critical realism, my research assesses and validates CA's food system in two dimensions. The first one assesses the altered production relations espoused with reproduction, and the second one, assesses the conditions and the context of their markets and whether their strategies are emancipatory from capital. Crucial in the validation is to understand the extent of CA's self-critical stance to their own food system that hinges on the potential of self-transformation.

#### **4.6. Planning my research**

My case study is situated in Emilia-Romagna, a region to which I had moved prior to my research. Coming from the social movement and thus drawn to self-organised projects that push political and social boundaries, I heard from friends in the social movement about Genuino Clandestino in Bologna and visited their markets and a Genuino Clandestino national gathering in Rome. I was inspired by CA's self-organizational structure of their food economy. Their self-organisation seemed very complex and confusing from an outside position, and their markets were simply referred to as Genuino Clandestino markets. I wanted to understand what was the connection between CampiAperti and Genuino Clandestino. I really became interested in the project after I heard about the collaborative price mechanism. Most grassroots movement projects do not deal with the economic and political relations that shape the socio-economic trajectories, and only deal with one or two aspects of a project, such as ecology or economics. Therefore, learning about the collaborative price-mechanism made me curious about how it works and whether it works. These two autopoietic mechanisms had become the backbone of my research. Prior to the research, I gathered preliminary research on the Internet, read a book about GC and watched the film on GC movement, attended the national gathering of GC in Rome while continuing to visit the markets in Bologna. The scope of my preliminary research was underpinned by making contact with a producer due to my visits at the markets and to their organized social events.

The second phase of the research started in October 2017 and ended in June 2018 and was extended between January and June 2019. During this period I did most of my research following CA on their email exchanges, in particular carefully reading the discussion on altering

the rules on the PGS and market rules, which had become more inclusive. I went to their meetings where discussion followed up on their email exchanges. Furthermore, I selected three markets from the total of eight markets (see Table 4.1.), that had become my focal point for conducting more in-depth research and implementing fully my desired methodology.

#### **4.7. Access to the field and ethical approval process**

In the years before starting my fieldwork, I made close contact with one producer, who had become my gatekeeper for this project. I talked to her about the best ways to approach CA for making it my research subject. She advised me to make a short presentation (in Italian) about my proposed research to CA at the general assembly meeting (GAM), where she had reserved a slot for me to speak. The presentation was held on 23rd July 2017, at the farm 'Le Cascade' in Lizzano in Belvedere, Bologna. I explained to them my research, for whom it was intended, and the methods and the implementation of these methods. I told them that I wanted to attend their meetings and observe their governance of the meeting, subject to their consent. I also told them that I was hoping to conduct interviews on farms and to visit their farms, subject to their consent. For any questions or enquiries I informed them that I would always be available. I received their official approval for studying them on that day.

Before asking the participant's consent, I explained to them in greater detail my research and the reason for chosen them in my fieldwork. Before conducting an interview, as part of research ethics the research participant has to consent to be interviewed (Edwards 2010). The introduction of my research had given them the opportunity to ask more about my research. This was followed by explaining them the prepared consent form that detailed the procedure of the interview process, what happens with their data, and their rights as a participant. Once they had understood the formality of this process the informed consent form was signed.

The research was carried out within the frame of research ethics to ensure a successful implementation of the fieldwork. Qualitative social science is conducted in a professional, fair manner in an environment that maintains trust and accountability and participants understand what is asked of them.

About three months after I received consent from CA to research them, I received approval from the University's Ethical Commission. The process for receiving permission from the Ethics Commission was straightforward. I was asked where the interviews would be conducted and what activities I intended to perform. I specified that I was visiting the markets and the farms. My research design explained that I intended to use two primary methodologies, ethnography

and participant observation. I explained how I intended to apply these methodologies in the field. In 2018, my Second Progress Report Panel raised concerns about these methodologies. Due to a lack of consensus on the status of research material gathered online (de Walt and de Walt 2012), I had mistakenly assumed that online research was part of ethnography/participant observation as the internet is a major communication tool. I had relied on the virtual communication exchanges between CA-members. Consequently, the documents and emails that I had filed during my ten months of fieldwork were not approved to be used as primary fieldwork material. I was advised to extend my research for five months until July 2019. I was advised to file a second ethics certificate that would include critical discourse analysis for analysing CA's email exchanges. I received approval from the Ethics Commission to complete my research which focused mainly on the communication amongst producers. I asked several farmers, randomly chosen, how to join their email list. All of them told me that anyone can join their email list, but that I had to approach the coordinator of CA, who managed the email list. The email list is used for organising markets, meetings, campaigns, certification meetings, and for exchanging materials for production. It is a vital organising tool as CA-farmers are dispersed over wide geographical areas. I did not use singular email exchanges, instead I observed the communication flow in order to study their methods of organising.

#### **4.8. Clarifications on language typologies**

##### ***CA-farmers and producers***

In writing my thesis, I have encountered the difficulty to describe the variety of farming activities at CA's production sites. The majority at CA consists of those, whose production activities overlap with farming activities. A bread-maker cultivates its own grains, and this activity is usually described as farming, whilst the person of making the bread is a producer. CA refers to them, who cultivate primary resources and use them for transforming them into an end-product as *trasformatore*.

The translation of *trasformatore* into English is processed producer. However, using the term processed producer would distort the meaning of CA-cultivation and production activities. It would mix up the value system of processed producer subject to the industrial/capitalist food system where producers and farmers are separated from those who are processing the primary resources. To complex it further, the end products are not processed they are artisan products. It just shows the difficulty in describing new food production systems attached to a socio-ecological value system that differs to the capitalist food system.

### **Co-producers**

At CA co-producers are considered those who are buying their foodstuff and share their value for a sustainable agri-food system. Through the lens of the producer, their commitment to sustain their self-govern markets and to secure and expand their livelihoods as autonomous farmers, they rely on market exchange with the consumer. The exchange-value is abrogated and is replaced with solidarity relations and thus co-creating the accumulation of social wealth.

### **4.9. Sampling**

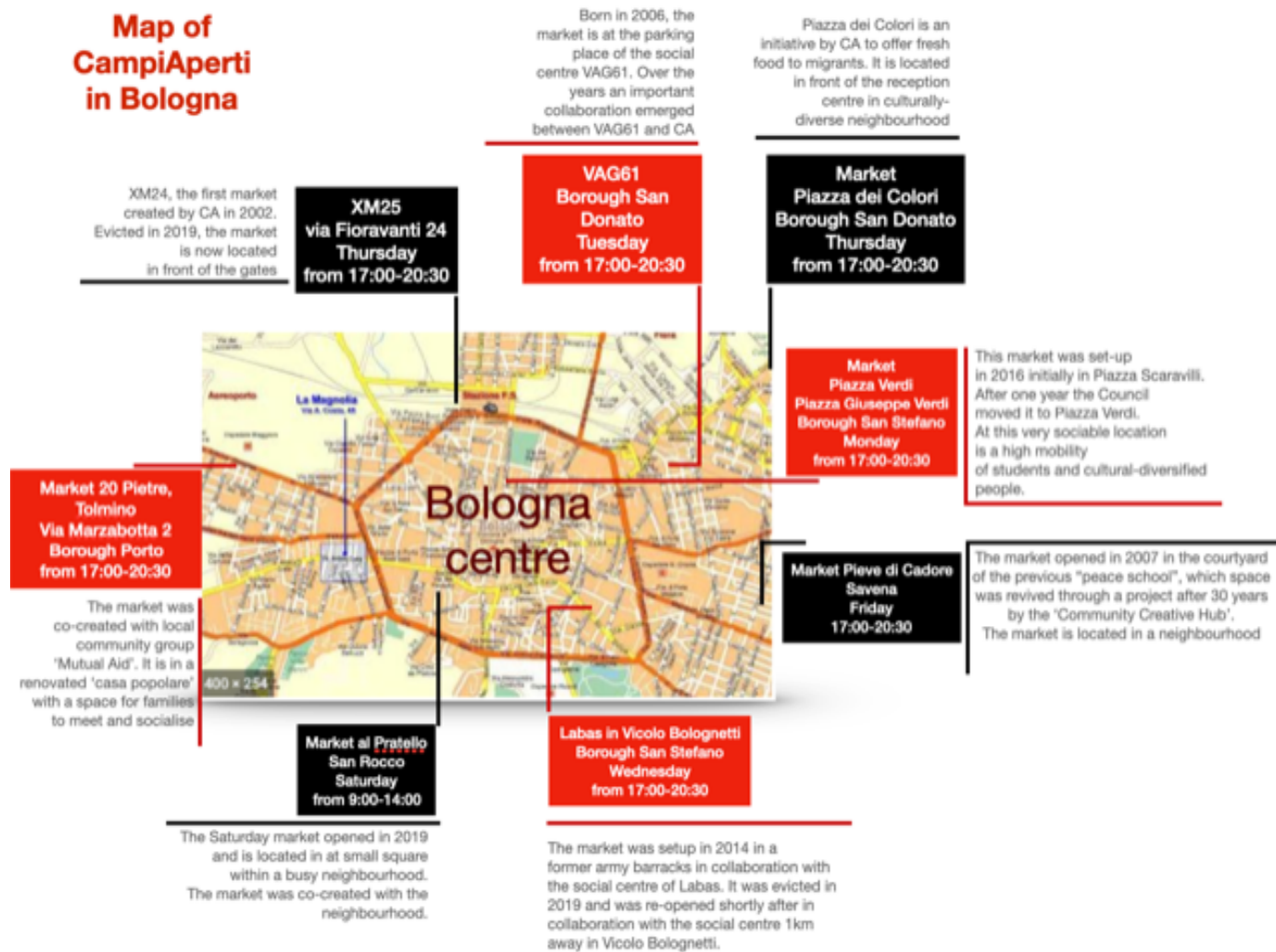
Selecting participants for my SSI occurred during the fieldwork itself, such as when I visited the markets and attended the meetings. During my fieldwork, eight urban markets regularly took place.

**Table 4.2.: Self-management markets of CA**

Days	Location	Adjacent City Centre	City Centre
Monday	Piazza Verdi; VentiPietre, Tolmino	Neighbourhood; Place 'Casa del Popolo'	
Tuesday	VAG61		Social Centre (rented)
Wednesday	Làbas		Social Centre in agreement with the Council of Bologna
Thursday	XM24; Piazza dei Colori	Neighbourhood	Social Centre (occupied)
Friday	Pieve di Cadore	Neighbourhood	
Saturday	Al Pratello		Neighbourhood

For my research I chose VAG61 on Tuesday, XM24 on Thursday, and Savena on Friday. Those three markets had a good social dynamic with customers, consisted of a good mix of new entrant farmers and those who had been producing for a long time, and producers attending at least two of these markets. Although the producers knew me from the general assembly meeting, nevertheless, organizing the interviews for farm visits was not straightforward. Producers were ready to talk on the markets, when waiting for customers or when it was a rainy and cold day, and less people were around. In spring, I was told that they were busy with working on the land and preparing the next season, and I should ask in a few weeks' time. It was very difficult making interviews in spring with vegetable farmers and cheese producers, it was easier with the bread, pasta and wine producers.

Map 4.1.:



Source: Author

All interview participants were able to respond to all three objectives of my research. However, in the process of interviewing, I realised that processed producers had much more insight in response to my second research question, which was to figure out the necessity to develop what I hypothesize to be an autopoeitic commons in relation to the self-governance of the labelling system. I sampled my interview partners on this attribute to enhance the validity of this question. I interviewed a total of thirteen processed producers in comparison to seven non-transformed producers. In order to ensure a representativeness of the broad range of producers, I selected from each craft at least one producer.

Table 4.3.: Number of Interviews

Participant	Interviews
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<b>Producers</b>	20
<b>Co-producers</b>	2
<b>Coordinator</b>	1

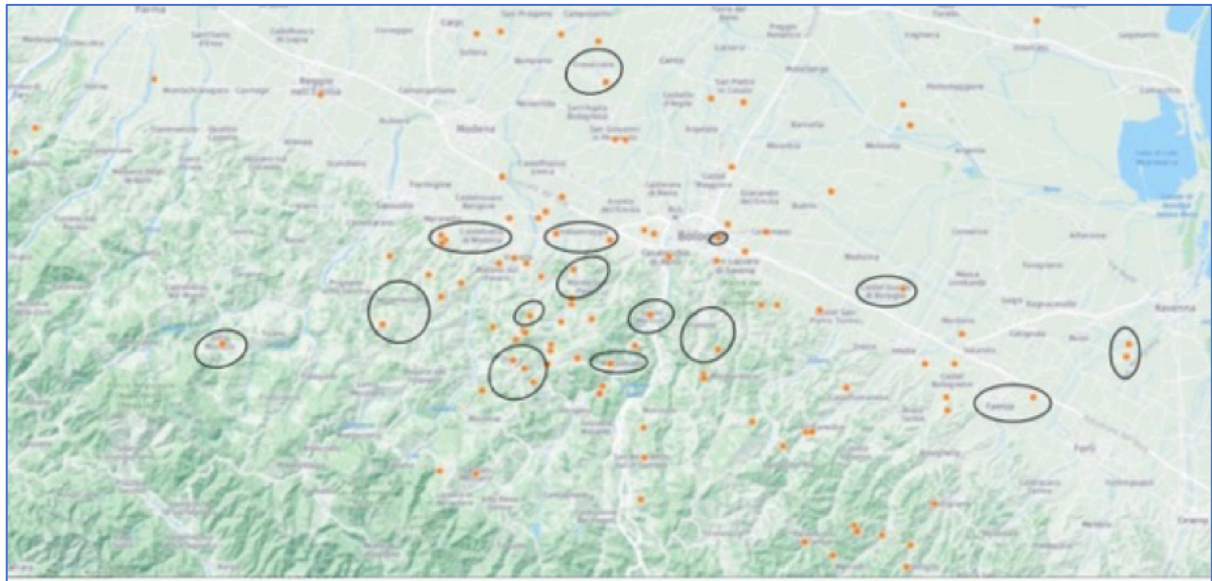
**Table 4.4.: Visits on the farms**

<b>Farming activities</b>	<b>Cheese</b>	<b>Wine</b>	<b>Beer</b>	<b>Pasta &amp; Bread</b>	<b>Herbal</b>	<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Fruits &amp; honey &amp; Jams</b>	<b>Egg</b>	<b>Cosmetics</b>
<b>Total Interviews</b>									
<b>20</b>	3	1	1	3	2	6	2	1	1

I conducted 20 intensive semi-structured interviews with producers. There were two different types of interview participants, and therefore two different sets of interview questions were developed. The secondary producer received questions that dealt with the conceptual framework of producing on the borderline of EU and regional legislations, and the significance of their established ‘Genuino Clandestino’ food system. The primary producers were specifically asked about their reasons for their involvement in CA since they were not clandestine. In both cases, I outlined key questions that covered specific topics relating to agroecological production, economic survival and the tense relationship with authorities, and their self-governance food system. A specific set of questions was put to the coordinator, to the president and to the founders of CA to grasp the subtleties of the historical background of CA, and their political motivations that provide a deeper meaning to the development of particular strategies in their food system. This approach enabled the conceptual foundation of the research to be applied during data collection and analysis.

Two interviews were done with co-producers, who had been participating in the development process of CA. Those two interviews took place at the market. Both of them had been involved in CA from the beginning. One consumer participates on the PGS-Committee (Chapter 6), whilst the other one goes occasionally to the meetings but had been visiting the CA-markets regularly from the beginning. The opportunity for the interview was at a moment, when I had a conversation with a producer, and a consumer joined the conversation. After the conversation, I asked the consumer for an interview. I only asked two co-producers, as my research primarily focused on the socio-economic barriers in disentangling the dependency to capital in production and the difficulties the farmers encounter to replace these dependency relations to capital in production. In addition, I aimed to illustrate how self-governance of production affected the access to the

#### Map 4.2.: CA-producers' location around Bologna



*Source: author's own elaboration:* The circled black rings are farms that were visited. The orange points illustrate all CA-producers in 2019.

urban areas, the opening of self-governed markets and the struggle with the Council of Bologna. In this respect, one interview was undertaken with the coordinator of CA.

In my research I primarily focused on the producers in order to get an in-depth understanding of their production methods and of their self-governance mechanisms and concentrate the discussion on labour in production. Although CA uses the term co-producer to describe the consumers, I did not interrogate this terminology further by asking consumers of their participation at CA apart from supporting the producers through purchasing their foodstuff. I confined this investigation through the lens of the producers and what significance customers play at their food system. This narrow lens was chosen to reflect critically on the relationship CA-producers have established with their consumers, and interrogates the limitations of their created food system.

#### 4.10. Justifying the use of qualitative methods

Qualitative methodologies are utilised in social theory to understand the changing reality induced by external socio-political or natural events with an in-depth intensive approach rather than a quantitative one. The research adopts mainly an exploratory approach centred around the size, history and location of their land ownership, and the resources used for carrying out their craft.



With a set of key questions and a series of prompts to help steer the subject matter of the discussion, it would have been otherwise difficult to obtain and extract a commonality since the case study is composed of a high diversity of different crafts with each research participant having their own specific complexity and unique story to tell.

Initially, interviews were semi-structured. The flexibility of the questions asked *ad hoc* enabled me to obtain an overview of the position of the individual producer within the socio-political contexts and the relation between individual production sites and CA. After initial interviews, observations at the market, at meetings, and internet research, I defined three research topics and developed a set of questions around these themes.

As such, key methods used for my research were participant observation, semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis. These three methods are typically used in ethnographic research (Hammersley 2006). Historically, ethnography was used to understand natural settings, and primarily relied on participant observation. This 'immersion into the natural setting' has shifted to a more flexible idea of "settings." Residing in the natural setting now includes the use of technology, studies can be of a shorter duration and immersion into a setting can take place, occasionally or arguably, from a distance (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In the case of my research group, CA has fixed locations, but they are also at different markets each day and only for four hours. As I wanted to observe the convergence of producers and producers, and producers and consumers, I chose these markets as "the natural setting," despite its mobility. As CA producers primarily organise their self-governing food system via the Internet, a substantial part of my research was conducted virtually. Whether or not virtual participation of a case constitutes an anthropological form is still contested by ethnographers. Some have argued that as the anthropological form is the essence of ethnography, if virtual participation is not anthropological, it is not ethnographic (de Walt and de Walt 2011). I contend that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century virtual interaction constitutes a large part of day-to-day life, particularly when studying the organising activities of dispersed individuals or groups. Failure to include virtual participation would result in a misleading perspective of the social processes occurring.

Although (C)DA is mainly used for studying patterns, form and characteristics of a language in different social contexts, discourse analysis is used in my research for analysing their texts and documents that were virtually circulated (Leuwwen 2005). The benefits of using (C)DA were complete absorption in the discussions of CA and exploration of the dynamics of the

organisation of CA itself in great depth. The combination of participant observation and discourse analysis enabled me to forge relationships with participants and collect background information concerning CA's individual producers' production, CA's history and contemporary political work.

#### **4.11. Participant observation and time in the field**

The methods outlined are the toolkits to address the key aims of my research, namely that of understanding how food systems may or may not be created outside of the capitalist relations. To this end, CA's strategies were explored by using participant observation and conversational analysis as methods to investigate their dynamics at the markets, at their meetings, and semi-structured interviews on their farms. Participant observation assisted with mapping the arrangements of the individual market stalls in the different seasons, and methodologically observing the social interaction amongst CA-producers and with their customers (De Walt and de Walt 2011). The observations of my fieldwork were recorded in my notebook.

The market was for me, the entry point into making connections with the producers and farmers. I visited the markets two to three times a week. Although I was concerned about my limited immersion initially, participant observation permits a flexibility of a variety of modes and intensities of involvement, that can be described as passive, intermediate and active (Tedlock 1991).

The second place of observing the group dynamic of CA's was their bi-monthly general assembly meetings, monthly market meetings, and extraordinary meetings. At these meetings all of the producers take part. Prior to the general meeting, a proposed agenda is circulated online where producers can add items on the agenda for discussion. Extraordinary meetings were called when an immediate threat to the existence of CA-producers occurred, such as withdrawal of market licence, or the discussion of an important item at the general assembly required extra time to reach a conclusion. Bi-monthly general meetings lasted eight hours, extraordinary meetings were between two and six hours. The monthly market meetings were held at the market with the producers from the market immediately after the market had closed for about two hours. Notes were recorded in my field book. Initially, I recorded the meetings, but because of the length of these meetings, transcription had taken about four or five days for one meeting. I switched to taking notes, which was also more efficient in translating immediately the discussion.

The third place of observation was the individual production sites of the CA producers. Each producer has established, or is in the process of establishing, a high complexity of modes of

governance that is specifically related to their craft. My visits to their farms were one-time events and lasted three to five hours. I was taken into their fields and into their workshops where producers explained and showed me how they were cultivating and producing. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed. In addition, I have taken photos and field notes of key points from the interviews.

With the employment of participant observation, I was able to get deep insights into each of the three different market places, the assemblies and production sites, and over time I understood the significance of the organisational interplay of these three places, that are crucial for the existence of CA. This aspect of methodology links back to the philosophical position of the research, as the key aspect in critical realist is to assess, criticise and validate (Fletcher 2017).

#### **4.12. Conversational Analysis in the field**

Conversational analysis is complementary to participant observation, as it is situated in a natural setting and observes the social interactive activity of the participants (de Walt and de Walt 2011). It studies the techniques for learning a new language, and particular attention is paid to the verbal and photographic recordings of visual and non-verbal communication. I am sensitised to this method by the fact that I conducted this research in my third language, and at meetings where vernacular language is often used to describe events and situations, or at farm visits where farmers explained in great detail their agroecological processes of their production, I meticulously transcribed each word. The sequential analysis of my recordings was designed so as not to miss the meaning of the social interaction that occurred at meetings or at farms (Hutchby 2019). After transcribing an interview, I often went back to the farmers at the market, and I asked for some clarification on a topic or on a process, until I understood it. I picked up on these clarifications and followed them up in subsequent interviews with other farmers, and asked the same question, in order to get a new perspective or a new insight on the same topic. Here, the use of iterative questioning is very useful, because it contains the usage of vocabulary of one topic (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

After a general meeting, I went to their markets for the next few days while they were setting-up the market to capture the charged market sphere of gossip and emotions on what had been said or not been said in the meeting. By listening into these conversations, I collected small details on the way the meeting was received and on the way the topics discussed affected the social dynamic of CA or how decisions might affect farmers personally. These 'talk-in interactions' circumvent the triviality of a topic and deal with the interactional settings that goes beyond the meaning of normal conversation (Hutchby 2019: 1).

The market space is key to the existence of CA as an Association. Producers not only sell their foodstuff to their customers; the market is the space where the social dynamic of producers as a collective body in form of CA takes place. My observations at the market were recorded in a journal. I have chronicled the market presence of producers over three seasons. Notes were taken on the social interaction amongst producers, amongst producers and customers, and amongst producers and the external social setting. Furthermore, I have put down key points from overheard conversations at market stalls in my field book which were taken for making notes on the number of participants and key points of their discussion and of their consensus-making decisions. At the markets and in semi-structured interviews these discussions were followed up with the producers. These field notes became a rich source of information and were regularly updated with observational note taking. All of my recorded materials, interviews and meetings, were transcribed into English, and analysed.

#### **4.13. Discourse analysis and ethnography in the field**

The combination of critical discourse analysis and ethnography is described as an integrationist model and is used to study social theory with a particular reference to understanding the globalised macro-structure and the local micro-structures (Leuwun 2004). The strength of this methodology is the unbiased position of the research's outcome and thus research itself remains flexible.

In contrast to dense empirical research, ethnographic studies discover new socio-political trends and developments "with a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about it" (Reeves et al. 2008).

Ethnography explores the actions that constitute social practices. However, the collected data are less useful without knowledge of place, time, concurrent political events, and the processes involved in certain actions (de Walt and de Walt 2011). By using discourse analysis, the body of these kinds of data is enriched. For my research I subscribed to CA's email list where I participated passively through reading their emails and following the threads of their discussions relevant to my research. The data obtained through participating in their email list and drawing on contemporary processes, such as making documents or agenda points for their meetings, enhanced the quality of participant interviews. I categorised their email exchanges into nine themes: bio-regionalism, campaigns, interaction amongst members, market, mutual aid, CampiAperti structure, events, general assembly, and the PGS. The email exchanges amongst producers are very active and is used to prepare for general meetings, to circulate

protocols from market assemblies, to share social and work information, to organise events, and so on. I subscribed to their email list between January 2019 and July 2019. I asked at the bi-monthly general meeting if I could participate in the email-list and they give me their consent. The president of CA has signed the consent form for me to join the email list. However, anybody who is interested in joining their email-list can join the list. These exchanges facilitated preparation for my interviews and were used to verify the content of interviews, and they also gave me a better understanding of CA's commitment to organising their complex self-governance structure (see structure of CA in section 4.10.). As a result, I have read about 1,000 emails and two documents related to production and market governance, which were used for my background research.

The Internet was further used in my research to extract background information on the producers before I did the interviews. I was able to specifically target interview participants to obtain a high diversity of producers from different crafts. The combination of ethnographic study and CMDA provides more specific and precise questions for production and reception of answers than an ethnographic study on its own (Leeuwen 2004). CMDA facilitates the identification of issues, while ethnography delivers the explanation and illustration of how issues are realised.

#### **4.14. Semi-structured interviews (SSI)**

Following from the previous methods, SSI was the last method that was used in my fieldwork. After having extracted enough content and knowledge at the markets and at meetings, but lacking the subjective knowledge, I “designed to ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced...when there is sufficient objective knowledge about an experience or phenomenon” (McIntosh and Morse 2015: 1). The advantage of SSI is its versatility and flexibility. The interviewer can adapt the rigidity of the interview structure to reflect its purpose and the relevance of the questions in relation to the interviewee. In addition, it enables the interviewer to respond immediately to arising topics that emerge during the interview and provides an opportunity for participants to express themselves (Kallio et al. 2016). Answers can be probed by the researcher for getting more information. The analysis of these SSIs consists of comparing responses as long as the same questions are asked. Returning to the method of retrodution in critical realism, the responses were analysed for their socio-economic conditions with the local authorities, the self-certification system, the calculation of the food price, the practice and inputs of their agricultural activities, the consumer's role, their engagement with the Council of Bologna and on their participation in their self-organised food

system. These topics were investigated to understand the depth of their autonomy and critically assess and contextualise the empirical evidence in the discussion of the self-governing the commons. A summary of my methods can be found on p.89, Table 4.5..

#### **4.15. Social ethics and positionality**

The usage of participant observation raises a number of ethical concerns in the way a community is approached and how the research is conducted (de Walt and de Walt 2011). When I started my research, I was still part of an Association that produced its own vegetables and was developing production of an antique grain strain. Through my involvement in food reproduction, I realised how difficult it is to set up a production base, even just a small one. This experience made me sensitive about the questions I asked, particularly those directed to producers, who were new to farming or to the production profession.

I was aware of the conflated relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in the logical construction between 'scientists and native' and the 'Self and Other' during the research project (Tedlock 1991). My prior engagement, including my exposure to the dominant mode of entrepreneurial farming, simply by living in the mountains in the middle of Parmesan's industrial production, enabled me to grasp different nuances of farming methods, distinguishing roughly between the notion of 'peasant' agriculture and 'entrepreneurial' farming as defined by Van der Ploeg (2008).

Even though I felt instantly familiar with Campi Aperti, I had my reservations about how to get involved with them. For over ten years, from 1998, I had been very active in shaping the UK anti-globalisation movement, and I knew how difficult it was to get into the circle as a researcher. One of the most discussed aspects of the movement was "not to become a research object", because the notion behind this was to participate in the movement and be an agent for social change. Based on my previous experiences, I had my apprehensions since I was not making my living from nature, and neither was I an activist of the Genuino Clandestino movement. However, these apprehensions were unfounded as I realised that they very much appreciated talking to people from outside of Campi Aperti about their project.

I participated at many CA events and meetings that were not related to my research, as I wanted to convey to them that I had a genuine interest in them. The benefit of the wider participation had given a great insight to the whole organisation of CA. For some of their political events, they

**Table 4.5.: Table of Methods**

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Participant Observation</b>	<b>Semi-Structured Interviews</b>	<b>Text Analysis</b>	<b>Conversational Analysis</b>
<p><b>Place</b></p> <p><b>Activity</b></p>	<p>Markets (2-3x a week for 13 months 2017/18/19)</p> <p>Mapping the markets; Mapping the producers; Mapping products and packaging; Observing group dynamics; Making contacts with producers;</p>	<p>Markets / Co-producers; 1 male / 1 female</p>	<p>Markets;</p> <p>Web available data on background information of CA's producers on CA's website;</p>	<p>Markets</p> <p>Conversations with producers and co-producers; Participating at conversation amongst producers and consumers</p>
<p><b>Place</b></p> <p><b>Activity</b></p>	<p>General Assembly Meetings (4x); Extraordinary and Emergency meetings (3x); Market assembly meetings (4x); National Gathering Genuino Clandestino (2x)</p> <p>Observing group social interactions; Observing consensus-making decisions</p>		<p>General Assembly Meetings (4x); Extraordinary and Emergency meetings (3x); Market assembly meetings (4x); National Gathering Genuino Clandestino (2x)</p> <p>Analysis on CA's email discussion; divided the discussion into six categories: general assembly, campaigns, participatory-guarantee-system, market, events, mutual aid</p>	<p>General Assembly Meetings (4x); Extraordinary and Emergency meetings (3x); Market assembly meetings (4x); National Gathering Genuino Clandestino (2x)</p> <p>Conversations with participants; Conversing with participants of the workshop, and of the gathering</p>
<p><b>Place</b></p> <p><b>Activity</b></p>	<p>20 Farm visits between 10/2017 – 07-2018</p> <p>Observing farm practices at the farm</p>	<p>Farms 13 male / 7 female</p> <p>Conducting in-depth interviews about their</p>	<p>Farms</p> <p>Obtaining information of the producer prior the interview;</p>	<p>Farms</p> <p>Talking about the observations made on the farm; prompted in detail of</p>

		activities, their struggle with the authorities, their decision to participate at CA, their financial resources	location, farm size, farm activity, what markets they attended	what the whole production process consists of.
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asked me for help in drafting documents on their campaign for food sovereignty in Emilia-Romagna, which I did in return for the generous help and time they had given me. In this sense, participant observation had worked well because a good relationship was established between myself and them (De Walt and de Walt 2011).

There were some critical times during my research where I felt I was polarized due to a specific internal conflict between the co-founders of CampiAperti and the 'newer' producers. During my fieldwork, a market was evicted, prompting an economic loss for those producers affected. The Council offered the social centre a new place where a new market opened without as yet having the market licence. This caused high tensions within CampAperti. When I interrogated affected producers about this situation, they distanced themselves from me. Afterwards I had to renew my efforts to regain trust of the producers.

Finally, a reflective, critical overview about the ethical issues within this research is provided. This is largely based on the fieldwork that took place in Italy, a linguistically 'different' space that required reflection to carry out effective research.

#### **4.16. Conclusion**

This chapter dealt with the methodological aspects to the research. The philosophical foundations of the research have been outlined and underpinned by abductive epistemology. The case study adopted an in-depth analysis to categorise the difference amongst the case study participants that had enabled detailed material on the functioning of a self-governed food system to be obtained.

The research utilised a wide range of methods and techniques. The qualitative approach to data collection used participatory observation, semi-structured interviews and conversational analysis due to the nature of the research questions and philosophy. This was supported by gathering data using CMDA. Triangulation and critical theory were used as an overriding methodological means to develop the research.

The chapter outlined the case study and identified the aspects for choosing this research and the way the research was conducted. A reflective discussion was held on the ethics and consensual agreement with participants of the research.

The following chapters narrate the results of the discussion beginning with the analysis of the contradiction of pursuing a 'peasant-based' agriculture in Emilia-Romagna. As the results will show, the reasons for this are that it has implications for the way a self-governed food system is positioned in relation to capital and to the state.

## Chapter 5

### Building Food Sovereignty – the Case Study of CampiAperti

#### 5.1. Aims and principles of CampiAperti

CampiAperti is an Association that consists of about 75 farms and is located in North-East Italy in Emilia-Romagna. The Association's ecological and labour ethos is defined by the struggle for self-determination in food sovereignty. They follow agroecological principles in agricultural production in tandem with having autonomy in production.

#### Box 5.1. The aims of CampiAperti:

- Materialising food sovereignty
- Having autonomy in production
- Taking responsibility of all the production and reproduction stages of a food product
- Pursuing an agroecological production
- Making a living from agricultural production
- Establishing trust with the consumers
- Sharing responsibility over the food system with the consumers
- De-centralise the corporate food system into small agro-ecological sites

The box illustrates the core aims of CA. The Charter of Principles in Box 5.2. on the other hand, outlines the practice of their aims.

#### 5.2. Genuino Clandestino campaign – the struggle for food sovereignty

Their aims and principles define their production standards, which revolve around implementing agroecological methods and gaining autonomy in production. These production standards are certified by their self-organised participatory-guarantee-system (PGS). Only products with the Genuino Clandestino label can be sold at their markets. CA's materialisation of food sovereignty results from interrogating the food commodification and political aspect of food production by asking how, by whom, with what and for whom food is produced (Bernstein 2010)

## Box: 5.2. Charter of Principles

### Charter of Principles

*The promoted markets by CampiAperti are subject to the following principles in order to achieve food sovereignty*

#### **1. The Solidarity Economy**

The solidarity economy is preferred to a market economy because it allows to establish forms of practical solidarity between consumers and producers, united by the pursuit of common objectives, such as health, the environment and the dignity of work.

#### **2. Short supply chain**

The short supply chain is acknowledged as a strategic choice to promote the local economy, preserving the local agriculture and local cultures, and stimulating the production of quality food. The direct sale of local food produce enhances and valorises the role of the territorial environment together with its territorial producers.

It permits to include this into the food price, as well as the control and knowledge between and consumers and producers.

#### **3. Organic Agriculture**

Organic / biodynamic farming is acknowledged as the only agricultural production technique that preserves the environment and health, especially of those who work the land and for those who buy the products of the earth.

#### **4. Participatory Guarantee**

CampiAperti choose the *Participatory Guarantee System* as a method that allows the involvement of all, producers and consumers, in selecting and controlling the members within the Charter of Principles of the Association.

The visit to new producers, who have applied to become part of the group and to sell on the markets of CA and control checks of already existing companies, are carried out by a group that is open to all members. But at least one producer of the same type has to be part of the visit.

During the visit the profound knowledge of technical production methods, personal skills, and in case of wage labour, labour conditions are checked. In addition, new members have to participate actively in the life of the Association, including the forms of the assemblies, and to accept the market rules.

#### **5. Environmental Sustainability**

The verification of environmental sustainability of the food products must be guaranteed by the analysis of the entire life cycle, from the usage of raw materials to the disposal of post-consumer material.

#### **6. Agricultural farming**

Agricultural farming is recognised as a modern form of production, as an alternative to industrialised production. The maximum valorisation of human labour is acknowledged and a dignified income for agricultural producers is guaranteed.

#### **7. Fair and transparent prices**

Fair and price transparency are sought as part of the solidarity in the relationship between consumers and producers.

#### **8. Networks for the solidarity economy**

The creation of new relationships between producers and consumers promotes the strengthening of the networks for a solidarity economy and stimulates the realisation of a true and honest Economical Solidarity Sector.

*(Translated into English by Author)*

From CA's analysis of the capital-intensive food production emerged a myriad of political, economic and social obstacles that lead to continuous tensions with the state. These socio-political barriers are enforced by the local/regional, EU-state institutions and had become the fertile ground for CA-producers to turn individual struggles into a common political strategy, symbolized in the Genuino Clandestino label.

**Figure 5.1: Genuino Clandestino-label**



Source: CampiAperti

The label sheds light on the farmer's struggle and on the economic contradiction of the so-called 'free market'. 'Clandestino' stands for farmers risking fines for selling their produce in self-governance markets. 'Genuino', on the other hand, stands for non-homogenous food, or artisan production. The label Genuino Clandestino highlights the challenges they experience when they tried to obtain state recognition of their produce and their status as farmers and producers. To date, the Italian authorities have implemented strict guidelines for large-scale production, that are sheer impossible for small-scale farmers to carry them out. Besides, farmers

exert pluri-activities on their farms that form a circular production cycle, which distinguishes their farm cycle from a vertical production system (Johnsen et al. 2010). Consequently, farmers sought out to affiliate with groups like CA, where farmers have joined their individual forces into a collective political force, that pursue a production system valorising the interrelation between nature and farming activity.

Since the introduction of the label by CA in 2010, this label has taken a life of its own. Farmers throughout Italy have been replicating the PGS and have moulded the mechanism to their particular socio-economic conditions. This political force is now known as the Genuino Clandestino movement.

**Map 5.1. Map of Genuino Clandestino Network, Italy**



*Source: author's own elaboration*

### **5.3. Food Sovereignty and CampiAperti**

At the global counter summit in the wake of the G8 in Genova in 2001, workshops and talks were organised by the anti-globalisation movement for farmers, peasants and consumers to discuss the impacts of economic globalization and possible resistance strategies for food production and distribution. Food sovereignty was a counter-paradigm to food security to underscore the objective of embedding food production in local community circuits and to foster a self-determination in consuming and producing food. New food movements across Italy have emerged since this event experimenting with new food production and consumption strategies, patterns and methods (Signori and Forno 2016). In this period a variety of new

economic strategies were developed and experimented to facilitate social interaction amongst consumers and producers.

Inspired by the global food sovereignty movement La Via Campesina, and the French cheesemaker Jose' Bové, who argued for self-determination in food production in Europe, the food sovereignty paradigm was perceived by the founders of Campi Aperti as a framework with enough political substance, which offered sufficient latitude to be adapted to the local context. The attraction of this paradigm was that it leans towards a peasant-based agriculture. For CA-producers a peasant-based agriculture signifies having the freedom to work and live with and in nature, and to take responsibility for the work and develop a craft with care. The adaptation to the notion of a peasant-based agriculture at CA is the condition for admitting new producers at CA, and is akin to what Van der Ploeg describes as the 'peasant condition' and is instrumental to working in an unalienated form with nature (2008). This notion resides in the frame of what is a peasant, namely, to establish a self-reliance on the farm that produces and reproduces the material for a fully-functioning autonomous farm.

Equally important for CA is to provide good labour conditions for seasonal or permanent workers on their farms. Unlike in the cheap food economy, where basic labour conditions, particularly in Southern Italy, are often ignored without the interference of the state, farmers in CA have to pay the minimum wage of €7/hour, plus social security, taking the hourly wage to about €11 an hour.

#### **5.4. The location and geographical context of Campi Aperti**

It is no coincidence that the experimentation for a new food economy and the social movement "Genuino Clandestino" takes place in Emilia-Romagna, where Campi Aperti is located. The labour movement in Emilia goes back to the formation of the cooperative movement 150 years ago, when peasants protected themselves from the existing social inequalities, such as low wages, seasonal contracts, and usuary (Mignemi 2013). The cooperative movement gained massive grounds and laid the groundwork for the social and political struggles of the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were instrumental in the formation of the trade unions. After the war, Emilia-Romagna was the only region with an appointed communist government, which followed the long tradition of autonomy, self-organisation and co-production. The regional government created guidelines for decentralizing the economy in accordance with artisans, farmers and manufacturers defined as the Emilian model (Putnam 1993). Small and medium enterprises dominated the local economy with 8,000 enterprises embedded in cooperative

networks and artisans' associations. Policymakers of the communist party were able to exercise hegemony in civil society, focused on rebuilding reproductive services (health, education) (Hancock 2005). In addition, civil society is very active in the cultural and social well-being of their communities and participate in voluntary organisations and shape the long tradition of associative governance between the state and society in which real authority is placed in the hands of autonomous groups (Amin 1999). The building of an active civil society has bred a fiercely regional culture that defends individual and group entitlements, rights and responsibilities, an inclusive and shared public arena, and consultative and democratic decision making. The Emilian way of life, as it is referred to, as having an appetite for social innovation and a preference for collective resolution of problems, and an advanced sense of citizenship (Amin 1999). The Emilian economy draws upon this intricate web of mutually enforcing formal and informal institutions, gathered around a particular way of life of entrepreneurialism, social cohesion and good governance (Amin 1999). In this historical context the formation of CA into an Association carries on with the long tradition of self-governance and political innovation in the artisan movement in food production. The choice for forming an Association was to serve its members and to not have to be necessarily bound to the market. CA follows primarily the objectives of their Association that are supplemented by the by-laws, such as a horizontal self-organizational structure that ensures equal participation of its members in the decision-making process.

The campaign for self-determination by CA is centred around genuine food production, a value that has been modelled and packaged under different quality standards and labelled as such for traceability, organic, organic+, etc., in Emilia-Romagna. Emilia-Romagna belongs to one of the largest food production zones of Italy and is one of the Italian regions with the most sophisticated food transformation. Fruits and vegetables, livestock, milk products, Parmesan cheese, Parma Ham, Barilla pasta, Modena Balsamico Vinegar and other local food products have been subject to industrial farming under the hype for Italian food (Eurostat 2012). Despite the high care in food transformations, the landscape has been eroded because of intensive farming practices. According to the statistics issued by the European Commission (2015), only 3.3 percent of the farmland in Emilia Romagna is under organic farming, whilst 75 percent of all farming is of high and medium intensity, leading to high soil erosion and high concentration of nitrates and phosphorus in freshwater and groundwater. According to Eurostat (2012), the number of landless and small-scale farmers with 0,5 and 1ha has increased substantially.

In my case study, production sites are loosely distributed in the rural territories of four provinces (Bologna, Modena, Parma, Romagna) as far as 80km from Bologna. CA-food economy consists of about 75 individual, de-centralized farms, which are located as far as 150 km away in



the mountains, hills and plain territories around Bologna, the capital of Emilia-Romagna in Northern Italy (see map 1).

### **5.5. The self-governance structure of CampiAperti**

One of the key components during the high time of the anti-globalisation movement between 1998 and 2008 was the experimentation with self-governance mechanisms (Böhm et al. 2011, Pickerill and Chatterton 2006, Sitrin 2010) and the creation of commons and communities (De Angelis 2007, 2017, Federici 2004). The resilience of a CA-commons system consists of its diversity of producers, de-centralisation of production sites, and horizontal-democratic governance, transparency, and decoupling capacity (De Angelis 2017).

Since the positionality of CA is situated in an emancipated position to capital, I will explain how the horizontal governance structure of CA works, otherwise the analysis of the autopoietic commons would not be necessarily clear. CA has developed a complex horizontal governance structure over time that is based on participatory democracy and horizontal decision-making structure.

The horizontal-decision structure rests on the Charter of Principles (see above) the market internal rules, guidelines for producing processed and herbal products, rules for new farmers, rules for reducing and managing waste and the Genuino Clandestino manifesto, and on the history of the Association. The CA-structure conveys a sense of belonging to a community for farmers who work autonomously on their farms.

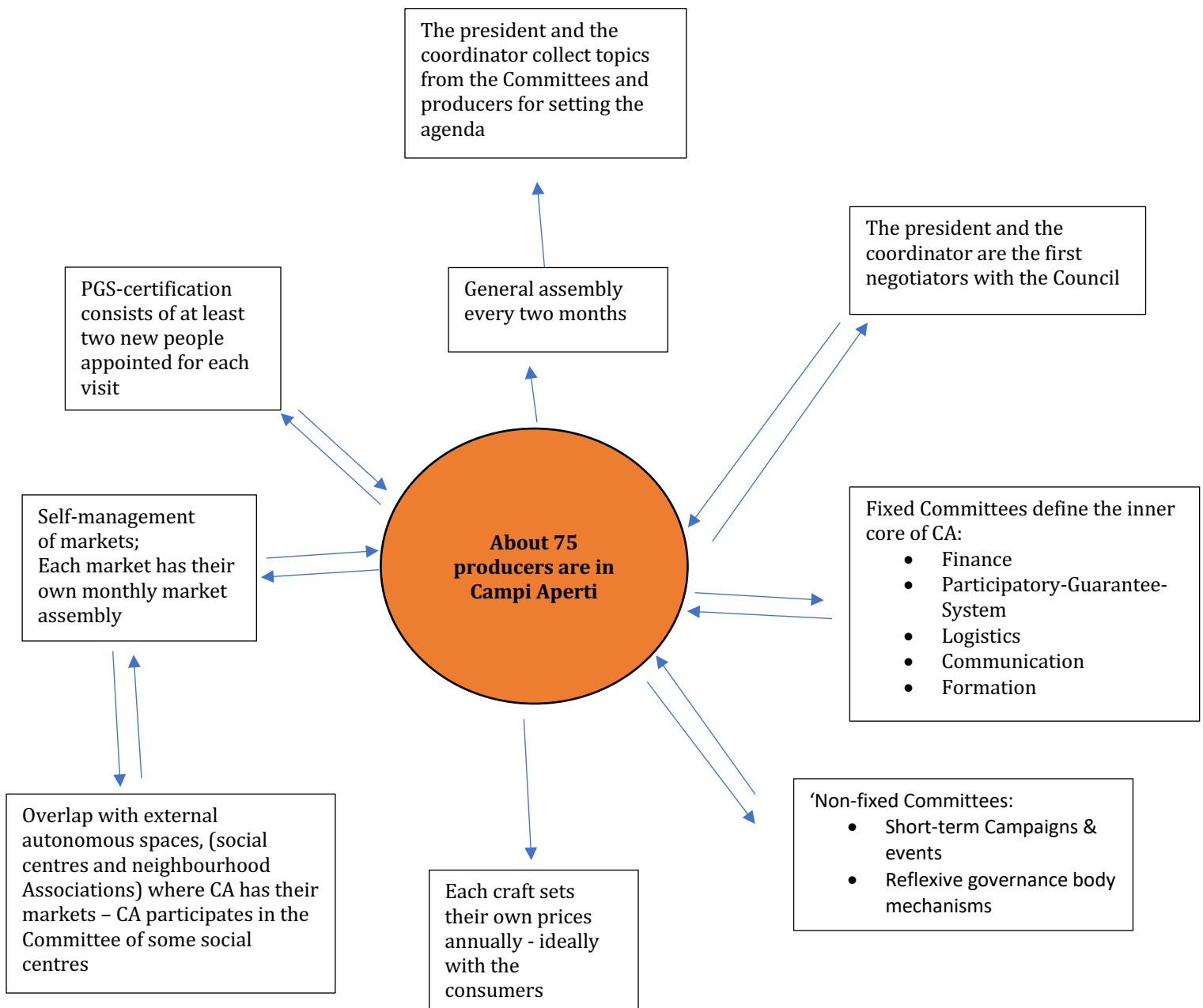
With the growing number of producers, CA developed a complex horizontal governance system that adapted (it is continuously under revision) to the new structural circumstances of CA. Going from eight to seventy producers, the coordination of the Association and its overall structure needed to be more sophisticated, so as to not compromise on the participatory democratic processes nor on the advancement of de-centralising agriculture horizontally. The president is elected every two years from the farmer's body of CA. The current coordinator coordinated previously the kitchen in the social centre in Parma between 2008-2011, where the Genuino Clandestino farmer's market was held. Once the Council of Parma had closed the social centre, a part-time paid position at CA opened and he got it because of his involvement with the social centre movement. Together with the president they are responsible for the administrative work and deal with the dynamic relations amongst the independently working Committees and producers. The president is responsible for improving the internal horizontal-decision-making structure of CA and works on proposals with other CA-farmers to enlarge CA.

The location of the bi-monthly assembly rotates from farm to farm. These assemblies are about eight hours long and consumers are encouraged to take part. All agenda points are discussed at first in the whole group and decisions are made on a consensual basis. If a consensus on an issue is not reached, the issue is then moved onto the tables where the whole meeting is broken up into smaller and randomly formed groups of about eight or nine people. After discussing at these tables for about three hours, the discussion returns to the whole group, where each table presents their discussion to the group. After this discussion, a consensus is made on how to move the issue forward. If a decision has not been reached, and the issue is of great importance and urgency, an extraordinary meeting continue on with the discussion only on this topic.

Since its inception, CA has evolved into a complex horizontal self-governance structure. This structure includes all the committees, councils and markets. I focused on the participatory-guarantee-mechanism, the collaborative price-mechanism, and the markets. This included their relations with the Bologna City Council, the neighborhoods and the social centres. I did not include the fixed committees, such as logistics, communication, formation and finance because these committees would have opened up new fields of research, which I could have not properly addressed in my thesis. Figure 5.2. illustrates the horizontal governance mechanism of CA in 2019.

The different committees, councils, producers and coordinators all comprise CA. The arrows indicate that from this totality sub-groups emerged, which are self-governed. Sub-groups with two ways arrows provide feedback to the whole CA-group, sub-groups with one-sided arrow are self-governed but have to coordinate within the market rules (see Appendix). By far the biggest committee in the horizontal governance structure of CA, with about 25 people, is the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS). With the PGS, the commonality amongst CA's producers is materialized in their commitment to self-governing the markets and to forming an alternative food system altogether. The PGS is at the centre of CA's complex horizontal structure. At least one farmer of each market has to be in this committee. There are several farmers and a consumer in this Committee, who scrutinize closely the EU laws on specific treatments and transformation processes and make comparisons with other countries, such as the US. Between 2018 and 2019, CA detailed the objectives and transformation processes for specific crafts in a nearly fifty-page document. The document is a reference for self-certifying new farmers and for existing farmers to remain in good standing. In addition to the fixed PGS-Committee, are the organized farm visits. At least two farmers visit, one of whom shares the craft of the applicant to be able to ask specific questions. Also, consumers can participate in the certification process.

**Figure 5.2.: The horizontal governance mechanism of CA in 2019**



Between 2018 and 2019, CA had revised the participatory-guarantee-system and the market internal system based on the experiences they had since they introduced the participatory-guarantee system in 2010. They further recognized a higher complexity for commencing small-scale production and adjusted the premise of a peasant-based agriculture for urban producers. In addition, micro-scale producers can share a market stall with other producers.

The other fixed Committees of logistics, finance and communication are run by a handful of farmers and consumers. The communication committee's tasks involve updating the website regularly, moderating the common email-list and responding to emails. Finance is responsible for maintaining the accounts for orders and annually delivers a budget overview of expenses and income. Logistics deals with the practical side of market access for farmers. It sorts out parking permits and parking locations, entrance permissions into the city for vehicles, etc.

In the short-term, committee tables work on specific topics for a certain time and are occasionally turned into long-term campaigns or activities, such as the mutual aid campaign that supported farmers financially when farms were hit badly by extreme weather events.

With the growing number of farmers at CA, CA has pursued a de-centralised market structure. Each market has its own monthly assembly, which discusses and decides on the concerns of the market. All farmers of the market have to participate in the assembly. Failure to participate in the assembly or at the market for over four months without a good reason, results in the farmer being expelled from CA. This clause is in their market rules document in order for farmers to take the self-governance of markets seriously as well as to avoid free-riders at the markets. Farmers have to ensure the longevity of their market and deal with the Committee of the social centre or neighbourhood Association, organize events, introduce new farmers into the market, and replace outgoing farmers amongst many other things. The coordinator, who is elected on an annual basis and is a farmer from the market, has to ensure that market rules of the Council are respected, communicate decisions back to the common email-list, and collect the monthly fee from the farmers. When an issue is too big for a market to solve on its own, the coordinator then raises the issue at the next general assembly to get wider support from the other participants at CA.

## Chapter 6

### The 'return' to production in use-value

#### 6.1. Introduction

Farming consists of three interrelated and mutually adapted processes: 1) The mobilisation of resources; 2) the conversion of resources into (end-) products; and 3) the marketing and the re-use of the products (Van der Ploeg 2008: 28). In this first chapter of the discussion, I concentrate on mobilising resources for setting-up and maintaining a farm and the diverse sociological processes involved in it.

The production and cultivation of food is an art. It requires knowledge and reflection of the past, present and future. It involves an embodied engagement with the soil and the animals. (Altieri and Toledo 2011, Gliessman 2015, Van der Ploeg 2009). What does the 'return' to a social and economic dimension of production in use-value with the acquisition of knowledge of a craft mean? This chapter develops the theoretical work on 'autonomy' and the commons/commoning that is contained in the rural sociology literature. It addresses individual attributes that lead to autonomy in production and elucidates the multi-faceted geographies of the farming activities. Striving for autonomy in production refers to developing new social relations beyond the farm based on co-production, co-dependency and co-operation. These social relations seek to substitute the external capitalist relations and are intimately bound with new ideas, commitment, and conviction for creating a new food system. The notion of self-governing production and a small-scale food system implies a desire to participate in transforming the food system, hinting at responsibilities taken by producers to protect, nurture and develop their craft, nature and culture.

Outlined in this chapter is 'autonomy', a term loaded with controversy. Tilzey, for example, notices the limits of autonomy when foodstuff is produced and reproduced for the market (Tilzey 2020). In CA, however, the producers refer to autonomy elaborated in the peasant condition, which describes their crafts-making practice and the ability to produce and sell their foodstuff in a self-determined way. In this chapter I present the results of the case study from CA.

I begin by clarifying CA's understanding of a peasant and what it means to embark on the path from abstract social labour to self-value one's own production. This process is mostly an

individual experience, with some initial formations of the practice of commoning enabling producers to start moving away from market dependency in production. This is first done through the stories told about connecting with the land. Concluding, I examine why production in use-value requires a new way to measure productivity, while considering the natural limits of nature, animals and human capacity.

## **6.2. Peasant explained in CA's context**

When people vernacularly refer to the peasant of the past, they are usually referring to small-scale farmers, sharecroppers, and *braccianti*, the seasonal worker (Bernstein 2010). Recent research on Emilia-Romagna indicates that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural land was owned by members of the upper class and small-scale farmers. Small-scale farmers also collectively managed communal land, like pastures and forests. Such land would now be considered as a common property regime (Ostrom 1990). Unlike the small-scale farmers, sharecroppers lived and worked on someone else's land and provided the owner with an agreed percentage of each harvest. The only worker that was not tethered to specific land, either through ownership or sharecropping, was the seasonal worker. They are the only model of agricultural worker that survived the transition from small-scale farmers and sharecroppers to entrepreneurial farming. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, there was a decreasing number of small-scale farmers and sharecroppers were also eliminated (Eurostat 2012).

Interestingly, at CA there was a diversity of views on whether they perceived themselves as peasants or entrepreneurial farmers, even though they had centred their campaign for self-determination on a peasant-based agriculture. Alberto, who declared himself as an anarchist, proudly said: "I am a peasant. I want to be autonomous in my work and I do not want to deal with the state's bureaucracy, and I want produce enough to make a living" (02.06.18). He rejected the state's bureaucracy in agricultural production, and he had no intention to register his farm with the authority. In contrast to Alberto, Petra considered the term peasant insulting. "I don't see myself as a peasant. Being a peasant means backwardness, and I do not see myself going backward. I consider myself as a farmer" (02.10.18). Both comments suggest being a peasant is an attitude to farming. Both farmers produce for the CA-markets, which indicates their production choices were orientated toward the market and shaped by the demands of the consumer (Goodman 2004). However, when I visited their farms my impression was that there is no clear distinction between subsistence and entrepreneurial farmers. On all the farms I visited, I was surprised to see that farmers cultivated food outside of their craft for their own household consumption. All the farms had chickens and vegetable plots, some of them also

produced grain and wine and others supplemented their household consumption with foraging. This suggests that the CA producers were motivated to reduce their market dependence in the reproduction of their household supply and to gain a greater degree of autonomy from the market (field notes), although their production was primarily orientated towards the market.

This distinction is important as it provides a new perspective on the discussion of the commons. The commons are seen as anti-capitalist entities (Bresnihan 2016, De Angelis 2007, Federici 2019), but the entrepreneurial behaviour by CA-farmers demonstrates their dependence on monetary exchange in order to earn a living. This is difficult to reconcile with the notion of developing strategies to extricate themselves from market dependency, and is a contradiction I return recurringly.

The motivation to achieve autonomy is pivotal in both discussions about peasantry and entrepreneurial farming. Yet, their distinctions around autonomy is discernible in the way how autonomy is realised (Bernstein 2010, Scott 1976). Significantly, the organisation of production and distribution in a collective form indicates towards building autonomy from the market, although farms are individually managed farms. Through commoning and structural coupling, individual farms establish a collaborative network to preserve their farms.

As production and market are two interrelated spheres which are ruled by the social-property-regime, the struggle around production cannot be isolated from the market. This directly challenges the second assumption of the radical Left which contends that food sovereignty can only be radically realised through an initial land struggle that eliminates the property-relations of private landownership. Only after this process could land become communal land that could be used to establish self-sufficient communities (Tilzey 2018, Federici 2012, Mies 2000). Pursuing agrarian reforms in land distribution struggles does not necessarily mean that farmers pursue subsistence farming, as Schiavoni showed in her study on materialising food sovereignty on the national level in Venezuela (2017). I argue that with the advent of neo-liberalisation during the 1990s, capital's insertion into production and reproduction provided farmers with opportunities to confront these new neo-liberal spaces in different areas. The recent major socio-economic development shifts in Emilia-Romagna that underpinned the acquisition of land by large farmers, agribusiness and the proliferation of small-sized farm closures did not threaten the livelihoods of CA-farmers. Being or becoming a farmer was predominantly a choice at CA. It was not an economic necessity for securing one's own livelihood. Unlike the experience of *compañeros* in Latin America during the debt crisis, this was a luxury choice, which differs

from subsistence farmers in the global South. The choice of becoming a farmer was tied to the aim of escaping the wage-relation of the day job. Alberto emphasised this point:

“Going to work every day for somebody else and not taking responsibility for your own job, was for me the biggest factor to quit. The feeling of being trapped at work and not having had much power over the decisions at work nurtured a sense of uselessness” (02.06.2018).

This was underlined by Erika:

“I studied philosophy and worked in the office. But now working here in the fields makes more sense to me than any work at an office” (20.03.18).

Most farmers at CA had been employed as factory workers, engineers, NGO-workers, teachers, university researchers, shop assistants, restaurateurs, or bankers. They quit these jobs so they could determine their own work (field notes). From their day jobs, farmers were able to save money to buy their land, some of them borrowed money from a bank. Farmers were reluctant to talk about their finances but they told me how they had obtained their land. Of the 23 farms I visited, 13 farmers had purchased their land, 8 had inherited their land or were using land provided by their parents, and 2 rented their land (field notes). This indicates that CA-farmers had opportunities to acquire land, which de-politicises their struggle for food sovereignty. For CA-farmers, this was a lifestyle-choice rather than a collective urban proletarian struggle.

The secondary motivation to become a farmer is to actively combat climate change. Indeed, for CA the choice to return to the land was more of a political choice rather than an economic one. Their notion of a return to the land was associated with the development of a craft. This enabled them to control all stages of production of a product. As such, they could provide consumers with an alternative to products that were produced predominantly in an ecologically unsustainable way. As the former NGO-worker Arturo said: “Rolling up my sleeves every day and working in the fields is the most political act you can do to fight agro-industries” (28.10.2017). The egg producer Arno, who joined the Green Party in the 1990s said: “Participating at CA is by far more political than doing party politics. Every day we are actively pushing the capitalist system back in our field” (15.06.2018). To illustrate this point, when I was speaking to him his phone was frequently ringing as he was dealing with an organisational aspect of CA with the Council. He was working part-time at the Council of Bologna and was vastly networked there, which he readily exploited for the benefit of CA. The acts of the new



farmers at CA re-orientated their livelihood to a new ethical horizon as termed by Hardt and Negri as 'identity to becoming' (2009: x).

At CA becoming a farmer was associated with striving for autonomy from the industrial market and the fossil fuel industry, which is a notion embedded in the Wageningen school (Van der Ploeg 2008). The notion that the peasant's autonomy is autonomous from capital but not from the market distinguishes the peasant from the entrepreneurial farmer. Rather than being an autonomous peasant, the entrepreneurial farmer is locked into the price system of the agro-industry and must use the land and animals as a source of infinite profit accumulation (Edelman 2005). One possible way to differentiate a peasant from an entrepreneurial farmer is how the sheep farmer and cheese-maker, Rocco, put it poignantly, while he showed me around his farm and laboratory:

"The farmers in the Parmesan production only produce the milk for the Parmesan. They don't make the Parmesan. I was asked by friends, why I don't produce only one type of milk. But this would mean that I would only milk the sheep, and the milk is then delivered to the distributor" (16.06.18).

His comment on specialising in cheese production summarises what CA-producers aimed to achieve, namely, avoiding the process of valorising one specific thing or resource for the purpose of commodification for the global food supply chain (Appadurai 1986). Marx noted that the division of labour and the alienation of individuals from each other's work creates the necessary conditions for producing commodities. Only the products of mutually independent acts of labour, performed in isolation, can confront each other as commodities (Marx 1976: 132). Although specialisation does not prevent the foodstuff from being capitalised, capitalist production was not feasible for this CA-producer as he was not authorised by the state to produce processed cheese. He could not afford the requirements of the paperwork, which prevented him from moving his products out of his area. As he explained to me: "I am only allowed to sell in two neighbouring provinces of my production site" (16.06.18).

The alienation in food production amongst producers and workers and the specialisation on a task or sub-task is what the international division of labour in the global food supply chain is built on (Buttel 2001). Farmers' activities are fragmented into multiple and minuscule tasks, performed by farmers who are estranged from each other, where the tasks of each estranged farmer are assembled into an unknown end-product away from the production site (Marx 1976). For example, cheese is a milk product, it is disassembled into minuscule tasks where the

practice of farming is carried out by estranged producers working next to each other across multiple locations across Europe or the globe. “This form of alienation is not acceptable, and we wanted to absolutely avoid it”, said Luisa, the co-founder and vegetable producer at CA (28.10.2017). “In the division of labour”, writes Marx, “objects of utility become commodities only because they are the products of the labour of private individuals who work independently of each other” (Marx 1976: 165).

The founders of CA recognised that the social division of labour created an “‘irreparable’ rift in the metabolism between nature and humans” (Schneider and McMichael 2010: 463-464). Indeed, the incremental disruption of the human-nature-climate-relationship has reached such high levels that it has led to the comprehensive loss of humanity’s interdependence with nature while also delivering a greater subordination of the food reproductive services to the capitalist system (Mies 2000, Dalla Costa 2001, Federici 2019). This lost interdependence with nature has caused humanity’s sense of responsibility and accountability towards animals, nature and the climate to disappear (Haraway 2013). The dis-alienation from nature is what farmers in a peasant-based agriculture attempt to nurture by establishing ecological relations and to find a balance between the social interaction of nature and animals. The co-founder of CA, Luisa, explained:

“We've started CampiAperti because the whole food system had become atomised. We did not want to be a number within the system and working in alienation from the food we produce. What is the point of being a farmer, when you do not have control over your production?” (26.10.2017).

Luisa’s comment points toward an agriculture that gives farming activities a social and ecological meaning, “an agriculture based on an alternative value system to the capitalist system” (De Angelis 2017).

Translating an alternative value system into farming embodies a struggle for market independence in production that is akin to what Van der Ploeg described as re-peasantisation’ processes that depart from a marginalised position of dependency (2008: 7). However, a re-peasantisation process that does not evaluate farming activities in an alternative social and ecological dependent context would not achieve the desired change of a food system. For individual farmers to succeed in practicing an alternative farming system that is based on agroecology, animal welfare and labour standards, co-founders of CA pursued a creation of a food system that absorbs individual production sites provided that they share the same value

practice. CA went beyond the social practice of a farmer's community that conflated the terms "independence" and "cooperation" (Emery 2014). The sharing of the same value practice resists the dominant agro-industrial market-oriented production and is materialised in commoning which involves practising solidarity, establishing mutual bonds, working in cooperation and negotiating the boundaries of their common value practice (Federici 2019). An interdependence between CA-markets and the individual production sites was established, bound together by the motivation to practice self-governance in production and in the distribution of foodstuff. This is a form of commoning, that goes beyond establishing a physical space. Instead commoning is spread into individual production sites bound together by their commonly established ethical code (Chapter 7).

### **6.3. The transition period from abstract social labour to autonomous labour**

This section outlines the process of establishing a farm based on an alternative value system in food production. CA-producers approached the dysfunctional food production system by taking responsibility for all the stages of production. Interestingly, one of the two main struggles experienced by CA-producers occurred in production, where the social-property-relations of inputs and methods were evaluated on their ecological and social value system and practice, rather than the notion of acquiring land. This directly confronts the agrarian question that suggests that challenging landownership patterns is required *before* the set-up of farms (Tilzey 2018). Moreover, it questions whether becoming or being a producer is a choice that is grounded in an individual effort instead of land acquisition is the result of a successful counter-hegemonic struggle for survival. Land struggles are not a priority in CA's campaign for self-determination, instead this struggle is 'privatised'. It raises concerns about whether their food system's premise and their constituted autonomy, equality, reciprocity, collective decision-making, and power, is actually based on 'radical food sovereignty' (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Besides, the omission of land struggles could undermine the social agency of the post-structural "as a new social movement" and the ability to conduct a deep transformation of the dominant food system. It would shift the attention away from the state and concentrate on the market and global corporations (Horlings and Marsden 2011). Labour and class movements would become secondary to understanding market and consumption behaviour (Goodman 2004, Goodman et al. 2012).

By-passing land struggles further contradicts with the notion of the commons, as the commons emerges as a result of enclosures of the resources/means of food production (De Angelis 2017). However, concentrating the struggle food sovereignty over land diminishes the multi-fold

challenges that a re-peasantisation of the food system requires. Levien et al. reminds us, that the struggle over owning resources for food production is more a struggle of reproducing themselves (2018). This recognises a whole new dimension on the peasantry, namely, that the transition to becoming a peasant is bound to be difficult because of the resulted fragmentation of society shown in in the rural-urban division as well as in the rural-rural division composed of petty food producers, precarious wage labour forms of informal non-agricultural self-employment rendered into a heterogenous class of labour (Bernstein 2012, Levien et al. 2018).

Therefore, by oversimplifying the term peasantry it overshadows the intra-class composition of the peasants with their individual social, cultural and political backgrounds. Indeed, at CA there is not given much attention to class differentiation whether producers are coming from the urban proletariat or from middle-class commodity producers. To them the importance is new producers are working in harmony with nature and to participate in the horizontal self-governance of their food system (field notes). This might oversimplify the access into food production, and individualises the burden for setting up the farm enormously.

This de-coupling process from capital is what Hardt and Negri describes as “the self-valorisation that eventually goes beyond capital” (2009), at which point Van der Ploeg declares, “the labour process [becomes] a very important arena of social struggle for the peasantry” (2008: 26). CA-producers engage in various types of commoning activities to overcome isolated working processes found in entrepreneurial farming. Through farmer’s agency, farmers seek co-operation with others farms for creating a solidarity economy, or exchange occurrences in their farming activities or bond with specific artisan networks for knowledge exchange (field notes). Through the active participation of farmers in such diverse networks, farmers develop a co-dependency (Van der Ploeg 2008), that enables farmers to re-configure their different types of reproduction to better determine the interrelated and fluid processes on their farms and build a self-provisioning farm (field notes). Regardless of the size of production, each farmer relies and builds a network where s/he continuously moulds new relationships, which are essential for the existence of one farm in order to gain eventually a closed reproductive circuit of their farming activities. In commoning, farmers support the process of setting up autonomous farms, but not be understood as in subsistence farming, which aims to be insulated from the capitalist markets (White 2018) rather than autonomy is coupled with the creation of self-governing a food economy.

CA-producers collaborate with whom they share the same or similar social or ecological value practice. Within the CA-circuit, it is discernible that many of CA-farms are situated within their proximity (see map 4.2.): Valsamoggia (Bologna West), Montombraro (Zocca/Modena), and

Monte Sole (Bologna South). Producing within this cluster, it allows farmers to pool machinery, labour or other material and immaterial resources and “couple between these different commons systems” (De Angelis 2017: 291). In commoning, this can be described as structural coupling, as farms are coupling with each other by their common value practice. Structural coupling is about merging one commons system with another, where the two systems are immersed without losing their own self-governance of the farm (De Angelis 2017). It goes beyond co-dependency, co-operation and co-production, since in commoning, farmers seek to establish a new value system that challenges the existing production rules found in atomised entrepreneurial farming.

An example of structural coupling can be found between the sheep farmer Lilly and the beer producer:” For my sheep I use the barley shells from the beer producer. I do not pay anything for it, because he has no other use for it and would otherwise throw it on the compost” (24.02.2019).

Here, structural coupling was facilitated by the circumstance that both farms live only a few hundred metres from each other, and this had extended her autonomy by not having to rely on fodder for her sheep from the external market. In this way autonomy from the market is strengthened by using natural materials produced as a waste product at the beer production site and used as an input on the sheep farm. While in this example, structural coupling occurs without monetary exchange, in a different example, a sheep farmer buys organic barley from a neighbouring farm (certified by CA’s PGS- system, Chapter 7). This is also a form of structural coupling as the sheep farmer and the barley producer know each other, talk about the barley and the exchange of barley for money occurs iteratively (Rocco 16.06.2018). It suggests that commoning can be mediated by monetary exchange that initiates a process of re-enforcing autonomy in food production amongst individual farms. Of the two examples shown above, structural coupling is a popular method for strengthening one’s own responsibility in production. The farmer has the ability to reduce the market reliance on external inputs to a minimum “by firstly reproducing the necessary inputs themselves, and if it is not possible to search for the product on the market from a buyer that corresponds to the alternative value system of CA” (Ivano 18.12.17).

Drawing on my research, I have discovered that farmers and producers were in different stages of setting up their farms. I termed therefore the ‘return to the countryside’ from the city as “the transition period”, since the majority of CA-producers come from the urban proletariat and thus have to set-up their farms from the beginning. I categorised this period into “Beginning”, “Middle”, and “End” (see Table below).

These categories describe their individual departure into farming. It is not uncommon for new farmers at the beginning of the transition period to divide the work on their farm with working outside of the farm. This income is used to pay the expenses for buying equipment, animals, or land. On farms where a household is involved, the household might be split, with one member working full-time on the farm and the other working in a day-job outside of the farm. This division of the household is often undertaken for many years.

**Table 6.1.: Producers in different production phases**

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>End</b>
<b>External Income (outside of the farm)</b>	Reliance on external sources for income	Reliance on external sources for income; not always	Established income from their farming activities
<b>Income from their craft</b>	Building up a client stock in and beyond CA	Building up a client stock in and beyond CA	Completed
<b>Production site</b>	Expanding production base (land, machinery, animal stock, resource stock, etc.)	Expanding production base (land, machinery, animal stock, resource stock, etc.)	Completed
<b>Skills</b>	Acquiring skills	Already refined	Already refined
<b>Equivalence reached between production capacity and income generation</b>	No	No	Yes

The different stages are contingent on a variety of aspects, such as income, material and immaterial resource capacity, skills, and above all what type of craft the farmer intends to pursue. A cheese-farmer requires a different set of resources than his colleagues producing herbal products or bakery products. Aurora, the herbal producer summed it up like this: “Producers with animals have such a great responsibility and need to continuously think about the well-being of their animals” (23.02.2018). The complexity of a craft can be divided further into two categories, namely, transformed/processed and non-transformed producers. The former is turning the raw materials into a foodstuff like wine, beer, bakery products, while the latter sells the foodstuff in its raw form such as fruits, vegetables, eggs. As such, processed

producers are also building a 'short-supply-chain' on their farms that encompasses all the production stages of their products (see market rules).

#### **6.4. The reproduction and reconstruction of production**

A main component in materialising food sovereignty is the adaptation of an agroecological practice and building the necessary social relations to support it. The practice of agroecology in new food systems and linking it to agrarian reform and food sovereignty can invoke systemic change (Bellamy and Ioris 2017, Levidow et al. 2014). The strength of agroecology is that it encompasses a polyculture of agricultural methods and techniques built for generations in indigenous and 'peasant' societies. It weaves together different agricultural techniques in microscopic climatic environments. Because of this, it is open for experimentation and thus strengthens its resilience to food security in subsistence societies (Altieri 2010).

The adaptation of agroecology in CA-farms is done through implementing a mix of organic agriculture, permaculture and biodynamic methods (field notes). A main barrier is the unearthing of lost knowledge in a socio-economic context where knowledge in farming has been incrementally erased during the modernisation period. As Paula Gunn has written: "The loss of memory is the root of oppression...as we forget at what cost we tread the ground we walk upon and whose histories are inscribed in the stones, fields, and buildings, that surrounds us" (in Federici 2019: 81). The alienation from the soil and nature was described by Giorgio, the vegetable farmer, when he talked about his near-by friends, who are all modern farmers (10.06.2018):

"One of the farmers came over to me and was worried that the fruits were not ripening. He asked me what I use, and I told him, that I pollinate my plants with bees. His friends could not believe that this was possible".

When taking responsibility for food production, knowledge accumulation and sharing is a crucial process that can be described as the production of cognitive commons (Coalseat 2016). In the cognitive commons a constant knowledge exchange and transfer amongst farmers and producers occur and is co-produced, which is typical for a peasant-based agriculture (Altieri 2010, Fonte 2008, Van der Ploeg 2019). In a peasant-based agriculture, knowledge is nurtured and experimented with new agricultural strategies leading to new social innovation, such as new seed varieties, (Albiero and Morelli 202) and can induce a new agri-culture altogether

(Altieri 2010). To put it differently, social innovation is embodied in new foodstuff and is organized by self-organised networks and social subjects, what Hardt and Negri call the 'constitutive power of worker' (2000) and is translated in the hegemonic struggle of the farmers' movement. A new agri-culture enhances the proliferation of a de-centralised food production in use-value that consists of generating conditions and enables CA-producers to produce as much as possible outside from the industrial market, and by doing so, undermining the very foundation of capital.

Drawing on my fieldwork, two types of local knowledge can be recognised, *tacit* and *lay* knowledge (Fonte 2008). "Lay knowledge", writes Fonte, "is conveyed in informal communal settings through its social forms and habit. It strengthens social cohesion amongst informal social networks, manifesting in social relations and trust" (2008: 210). When CA-farmers meet at their self-governed markets, they raise difficulties in their cultivation with other farmers and through this exchange seek possible solutions to their problems. The information exchange is important for farmers in particular, who have not yet gained enough experience. A fairly new vegetable farmer, Leonardo (02.02.2019), said: "When I have a pest problem, I share it with Luisa or Zac, who have decades' long experience of farming vegetables. They know their stuff and can deal with any problem". In a different scenario, Danilo needed material for collecting rainwater, and asked other farmers at the market. He said (27.02.2018): "Our markets provide an opportunity to ask other farmers for information. We all have contacts with other networks and people who can help us out". The market is an external place from their farms for farmers to exchange their work experiences and also seek solutions for their problems. Knowledge sharing is a collaborative process and is "a cornerstone of any strategy aimed at increasing options for rural people and especially resource-poor farmers" (Altieri and Toledo in Bellamy et al. 2017: 587).

The sharing of knowledge does not only occur at CA-markets, this collaborative effort also takes place when producers sought advice at their specific crafts network. For example, the wine producer took the challenge of understanding very meticulously the interaction of the soil structure with his grape cultivation. His objective was to use very little sulphur, usually applied to prevent the vine leaves from developing diseases. His experimenting with improving the soil structure involves a specific permaculture method to enhance the nitrogen holding capacity of the soil structure and to do so, he has planted a ground cover consisting of red clover and peas (28.10.2017). Linking the farm to a network where the same or similar farm practices are shared is a popular way to exchange, find and build information.



A couple of herbalists at CA belong to a national network of herbalists, where they collectively build up information on the properties of the plants and how to use them. This network is planning to publicise their knowledge in order for their customers to gain a better understanding of local plants. The intention of sharing this knowledge with their customers is to counter the trend of using 'exotic' plants for medical purposes. Aurora, the herbalist said: "If we had no plants surviving in Europe, we would already be extinct hundreds of years ago. For each Chinese or Indian plant there is an equivalent plant in Europe" (25.02.2018). Through commoning, the common objective of protecting knowledge through the sharing of it manifests a deeper level of ecological sustainability and the farmer's motivation for "aligning themselves with the dynamics of multispecies resurgence" (Tsing 2017). Unlike in the knowledge transfer from capital to farmer social-property-relations are embedded, whereby with cognitive commoning, farmers create deep bonds with one another and are mutually co-dependent with the effect that these fresh impulses abrogate the artificial construct of alienation by capital amongst producers.

Tacit knowledge is more practical than theoretical knowledge. It is applied to 'understand how things work' (Fonte 2008: 2010). Its technical form of knowledge is transmitted through technicians or specialists in informal educational settings. The informal and non-standardised acquisition of tacit knowledge needs to be recognised as equally important in the process of knowledge generation and considered in the innovation process (Sumane et al. 2018). Drawing from my interviews, the learning of skills for transforming raw materials into an end-product, like cheese, was learnt from 'local experts' or from a technician. Anita, the young cheese farmer, learned this tradition from an elderly cheese-maker. "I went to her for many months to understand the technique of transforming milk into cheese. From her I learned the first skills and techniques for making cheese" (19.07.2018). An herbal producer, who had completed her studies in herbalism at the university, went afterwards to an experienced herbal producer to learn about the various methods of extracting properties of a plant and its proper applications "because at university you only learn about the properties of the plants but not how to use them" explained Gemma (12.06.2018). These acquired knowledge and skills are then rendered in their own workshops and with experimentation of their raw materials, new products emerge. In CA, there are at least four herbalists, each of them using a great diversity of practices to transform their herbs. This does not suggest that their products differentiate in their quality, rather it indicates a propagation of the way a product can be produced and consumed. Rocco, the cheese farmer postulated enthusiastically:

“If you have got 100 different sheep farmers making cheese, you will get hundreds of different varieties of cheese. The cheese is never the same because I learned cheese making this way, and another cheese-maker learned it in this way. Look at this cheese, (pointing to the Gorgonzola-type cheese), this is a cheese that I have created with my sheep milk. It is usually done with cow milk, but I adapted it to my milk. It is called “Gorgognano”, the place where I produce it” (16.06.2018).

Originally from Sardinia, Rocco blends the Sardegnian tradition with the Emilian culture, producing about fifteen types of cheese. Salvatore’s comment indicates that knowledge cannot be owned by one person or a corporation, because of the great variety knowledge has to offer. Central here is having access to knowledge in order to refine and modify it and generate new knowledge. This is what I am going to discuss in the following chapter with developing a craft.

### **6.5. The development of a craft coupled with agroecology**

In this section I propose to look at agroecology from the perspective of CA farmers setting up a farm to practice his/her craft. The acquisition of a skill and the focus on one craft is contradictory to studies in agroecology. Most studies in agroecology are done in Latin America emphasising the benefits of mixed farms, which offer greater defence and reduce vulnerability to pests, diseases and droughts. The benefit of using an inter-cropping system mixed with animals is to enhance food security for household/community consumption (Altieri 2009, Gliessman 2015). From the evidence in my fieldwork, diversity in food production at this scale did not exist on any of the farms I visited. Farmers cultivate food for household consumption producing a variety of foodstuff, and it complements their work as a craftsman, making their cultivation of the craft the primary source for income (field notes). Considering how the social anthropologist Sennett described craftsmanship: “[The] enduring basic human instinct is the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (in Cooper 2007, p. 435), which spells out the premise to self-determine one’s own production.

In producing well, the craftsperson needs time to experiment and self-learn, which involves making mistakes, then trying something new (Van der Ploeg 2009). The vegetable producer, Giorgio, explained:

“Self-learning means I make one mistake, or even two or three until I learn how to do it. When I bought my first greenhouse, I put the poles into soil and with the first storm they were bent. With a hammer I straightened out the poles and put them into the soil. It was

the first time that I ever had done it. I never had a greenhouse before. Then the snow came, and my greenhouse collapsed. I started again. I checked out the conditions of the soil and put in the poles differently. The next winter came and the poles were slightly bent. I adjusted again and again until I found the right angle for my poles to sustain the snow and storms” (10.06.2018).

What Giorgio illustrates is the inter-mixing of acquiring a skill with what the eco-system reveals is necessary for him to do. Nature is guiding him in what to learn, and the ecosystem is his laboratory. This is mirrored by Gabriele, the cheese-maker, who said laughingly of his experience with his bull. “A bull needs to be exchanged every three years, otherwise he gets too jealous of his offspring” (28.06.2018). He has learnt this by carefully observing the social interaction of the bull with the cows. “The bull is getting very irrational and causes a lot of tensions amongst the cows, which was not very good for the well-being of the cows”. The observation of animals and nature never finishes and is more pronounced at moments when elements in production are altered, for example, when a tree is grafted. For grafting a tree, the producer needs to know the production of the tree. Erika explained “When a tree is grafted, a branch from a rich fruit tree is cut off and grafted onto the stem of the tree, which produces less fruits or a fruit of poorer quality. If this ‘small operation’ was applied successfully, then within one or two years the productivity and the quality of that tree should improve” (20.03.2018).

A craft is developed from observations of the social interaction between the different elements of the eco-system. These experiences are moulded and re-moulded (Van der Ploeg 2008: 26) making an iterative cycle of a slow and gradual self-learning process that involves observing and reflecting, thinking and modifying, before applying again and observing again, and waiting to see what emerges. Giorgio, the vegetable producer explained it to me like this: “When something is not working, I think about the whole of farming as a practice and try to think about where things have gone wrong. When I adjust the part that I think has gone wrong, I give it time to see how things are changing. If nothing changes, or it has worsened, then I think of a different solution, and try it out” (10.06.18). With self-learning, confidence also grows over the years in self-governing a food product successfully. Gabriele, the cheese-maker told me:

”At the beginning when you are making cheese you are motivated to absorb the art of making cheese, but don’t have the knowledge yet. I’ve learnt the art of making cheese by working with a technician. Over time I have improved. The products are getting better and I have become more confident. Each variety of cheese requires the right environment to store them in order to mature them in their own specific way. One time it will turn out good, another time it turns out less good. You don’t feel prepared to be

professional. You only need the experience, which I now have from making cheese for twenty years” (28.06.2018).

Deriving from the interviews, the cycle of self-learning and acquiring a skill hints toward qualifying for ‘forming a narrative identity’ (Smith 2007: 196).

An important aspect in forming one’s own identity in becoming a specialised farmer, Italian farmers often use the word ‘curare’ when speaking of their craft. What they mean by this is to look after their practice and resources with great care and seek to improve the conditions of their farms. It embodies the development of the skills and abilities of their craft, that “involves maintaining and continuing to ‘repair’ our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. Care points to a wide scope of attention ‘to ensure an activity is done “well”, in contrast to “measuring simply the output” (Bresnihan 2016: 8). Caring for the animals or for the soil renders an interconnectedness and inter-dependency with the ecological system, that involves generating conditions for the soil and animals to reproduce themselves. Giorgio, a vegetable producer for over thirty years explained (10.06.2018):

“The soil needs to run through your fingers. Creating a good soil is also about having a tractor where every bump and stone is felt beneath your seat. When you are comfortable on the tractor, the tractor doesn’t bounce, doesn’t slip, and the result is that the soil is worked horribly. I’ve tried a modern one. After three years I sold it. I did not feel the soil beneath the tractor. Why would I need a tractor with a cushion and music, when I do not feel the soil beneath it? Modern tractors are designed to be comfortable, but I need a tractor that I can work with and get a good soil”.

His comment raises a dis-alienation toward the soil, a trend that he sees on his neighbouring farms. “They do not even know the tools anymore. I look at their soil, and it’s full of blocks, and I ask these farmers ‘how can you make things grow?’”. The beer producer pitches in despairingly: “nowadays nobody cares about the soil anymore, although the soil structure is so important in agriculture” (30.10.2019).

For the olive oil and grain producer the aspect of care was the key for abandoning his university research position and going into farming. He told me:

“My family has abandoned the olive orchards because it is labour-intensive work, and my dad did not go into farming. I saw the abandoned olive trees slowly decaying and I thought it was a waste and decided to set-up a farm. It has taken me three years to recuperate 25ha of land. All manually because I had no money” (Remo 14.05.2019).

Similarly, livestock farmers expressed a high amount of care for their animals. As Anita walked me through her pastures, she described the variety of trees, bushes and plants that grow wild here. The cows can choose for themselves what they want to eat. The cheese farmer said:

“I do not consider myself a breeder. I consider myself a steward of the animals. In the sense that I look out for ways to improve their living, you can always improve. You will never arrive at 100%. I’ll give them food to eat, and in return, they give me milk. Like this, I can live. There is an exchange between the animals and the humans” (19.07.2018).

Anita spoke in great length about her passion and commitment for animals, and this enthusiasm is written into the fabric of her farm. Notably, at her farm were horses, sheep, pigs, chicken, dogs and a donkey, each of them being nurtured by having the space to roam around freely shedding a light on the ethical concerns and how care has become embedded in the agricultural landscape (Nibert 2013).

In developing a craft, my findings illustrate a great potential for recognising the social interaction of socio-ecological interdependence and that this harmony between the soil, animals and humans is constantly and meticulously fine-tuned. The novelty here at CA-farms is that each farm takes on the responsibility for the reproduction of their foodstuff. It complicates the discussion around the commons in conjunction with ‘sharing production and reproduction’ (Mies 2000, Federici 2019) in particular with consumers (see Chapter 8), when the farmer is acting in his/her own subjectivity and expands his/her own autonomy of their farm through the social interaction beyond their farm by its own account. My findings reveal that commoning in the form of re-organising reproduction in relations with networks, individuals, or associations contributes to alter capitalist relations in production and thus strengthens autonomy on farms. Commoning in form of structural coupling will be discussed in Chapter 8 more closely.

## **6.6. The limits of production**

The examples discussed here emphasise the importance to producers of valuing and cultivating their food sustainably and recognise how their valued practice of agroecology affects their level of productivity. This section deals more closely with the question of care by addressing the ‘forgotten’ element - reproduction - in production (Moore 2015) and how animal welfare, soil structure and human capacity outweigh a production that is orientated toward maximising the output of natural and human resources. Unlimited growth of production for capital is associated with unlimited exploitation of humans and nature. However, a differentiation of productivity

needs to be made amongst the different elements, such as land, animal or human or of all these resources, as Van der Ploeg has pointed out, “since all these types of productivity are not necessarily aligned with each other” (2014: 1001).

When I asked the livestock farmer whether he has considered upgrading his farm from thirty to fifty cows, Gabriele (28.06.2018) looked at me with an exasperated look and said:

” This is an impossible task to fulfil. I would never be able to have enough pasture, nor enough space in the stable for the cows to move around, nor have enough land for cultivating barley, nor enough time to transform the milk into cheese. The maximum I can do is to have two cows extra”

Interestingly, he underscores that a higher productivity would disturb his equivalence between his capacity of human labour and the production of the cows. In a different example, the limit of the wine producer, as he told me, is to have six hectares of wine. We sat at the table of his market stall, discussing the calculation in making an income (12.05.2019). In the debate on food security, the focus is on human labour and of *economies of scale*, when clearly other factors, such as the capacity of land, animals and humans play a significant role in increasing food productivity (Bernstein 2010).

In one of my interviews on productivity, farmers talked about the preparation of the soil. A popular method for increasing the yield of grain for example, as Alberto explained, is the *falsa semina* (false seeding):

“This method involves turning the soil in August after the grain harvest in July allowed the weed to come out. Before the actual seeding in October, the weeds are taken out. In the actual cultivation of the grain much less will be produced and it is much easier to harvest” (02.06.2018).

On the example of the *falsa semina*, time was allocated to prepare the soil well in advance of the actual seeding instead of using weedkillers, suggesting a social innovation between social interaction and the soil to increase productivity through a better understanding of nature.

In agroecosystems, the human, animal and land are exploited within their limits and capacities since natural conditions are respected (Gliessman 2015). Here, the modes of production in a sustainable and ecologically closed cycle are designed neither to produce unlimitedly nor to

conform to the logic of continuously upgrading technology to maximise output. Marx wrote that the weaving together of individual menial tasks focuses on reassembling the pieces together into a whole rather than working on one menial task with the motivation to always want to reduce the exertion of the task to a minimum or to give the task to somebody else (Marx 1976: 132). Within the logic of controlling all the production stages, producers integrate the time spent on their reproduction system for an autonomously functioning farm, such as the well-being of the animals, the care of the soil and improving their conditions for regenerating an even better result. By doing so, animal welfare consists of respecting the rhythm and needs of the animals. Animals in CA-food economy are not treated as machines where races of their breeds are selected on the grounds for producing the highest amount of milk. The law of value, as described by Marx, accelerated with the elimination of labour in production processes through science and technology (Moore 2015). The cheese farmer Anita, explained her attitudes to her cows:

” The main factor is that they should live as long as possible. The life expectancy of my cows is double those in the factories. If you depart from the idea of exploiting them for the purpose of extracting as much as possible in the short-term, you never become a cheese farmer” (19.07.2018).

All animals at CA are only used for about seven months a year, the other five months are spent preparing for and recovering after birth and giving the maternal milk to the calf or lamb. Gabriele, the cow cheese producer explained:” The resting period is very important for recovery after birth, because they produce much better milk” (28.06.2018). Respecting the rhythm of the animals accommodates them in their natural behaviour. This interplay with the animals is what Haraway describes as “the play of companion species learning to pay attention” (2013), which is the art of engaging with nature, and within it recognizing the human part in the wider ecological web (ibid). It describes the constant and necessary interplay that takes time to develop a place-based agriculture and a food system around it, whereby maximisation of productivity becomes secondary. The social interaction with nature unleashes a motivation for transforming the whole food system (Hassanein 2003, Bellamy and Ioris. 2017), beginning on CA-micro-farms.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

This chapter builds on the existing different conceptualisations of the peasantry and explores the conditions of autonomous production through entrepreneurial farming rather than subsistence farming. It illustrates the peasant condition of CA farmers in the socio-economic conditions of the Emilia-Romagna region through narrating their stories, their political

orientation and ecological value system. The narrative provides the context for farmers wanting to return to the land and how the peasant condition is revived in the process of setting-up micro-food production systems on their farms. My findings contribute to a better understanding of Italian farmers altering the food system by building social relations for implementing an agroecological practice and pursuing entrepreneurial farming. I interviewed a variety of producers (grain, cheese, wine, vegetable, etc.) in order to explore new understandings of agroecosystems in micro-settings and to demonstrate how methods and strategies are developed in commoning that enable farmers to self-control their farming activities and separate themselves from a dysfunctional supply chain system. CA's advantage was their great variety of farming activities, which enabled them to develop a diverse range of methods for coalescing parts of their production units with other CA-farms. The overlap of their production units was a form of commoning that developed into a form of mutual dependency, which occurred outside of the capitalist circuit. Commoning embodied in structural coupling enhanced the livelihood opportunities of farmers and enabled the identification of new ways to use the now redundant machinery and inputs that exploited the soil as a factory (Cousins et al. 2018). In effect, the structural coupling with other farms manifested the self-management of farms and initiated a path of emancipation from capital that was premised on the re-valorisation of nature and labour (Andrew and Bakker 2020). In commonising their production sites through structural coupling, farmers were able to subvert capital's strategy of capital accumulation on a long-term basis because their livelihoods were rooted to the land. Commoning and emancipation are two related concepts which re-enforce each other. It was their social activities in commoning that strengthened and increased their emancipation from capital, which also strengthened their ability to continue their commoning activities. The more CA-farmers engaged in structural coupling of their production units and activities the more they were emancipated from capital.

On this account, applying commoning around the acquirement of knowledge and equipment for small-scale farms proved to be very useful in substituting capital-intensive products. Central here is the specialisation of a craft and the accounting for the diversification of the production of food as oppose to cementing a homogenisation of products under the global food supply chain where specialisation occurs in the atomisation of labour processes (McMichael 2005). With the specialisation and atomisation of labour, knowledge of farming was incrementally forgotten, breaking the link between nature and animal (Van der Ploeg 2014). The processes of self-learning are in reality an extensive exchange with a variety of stakeholders and is the premise for pursuing an agroecological practice in their chosen craftsmanship that combines the social



processes with natural and animal interactions. This type of farming blurs the working and living spheres where new forms of rootedness emerge (Haraway 2013).

Rooted in commoning, farmers and producers resist replicating the knowledge structure of the homogenisation of food production of the capitalist food market, and instead use 'forgotten' knowledge to experiment with producing their own unique food. In this sense, food production at CA-production sites become a hub of new knowledge production for a diversity of food products, as the choice of my various interviews of non-vegetable and vegetable farmers suggests. The intention for visiting a range of production sites was to broaden the significance of agricultural practice in these settings and show labour processes of processed producers. Processed production requires much more attention in understanding the production of their agoecosystems, because of the multiple scale of production units interacting with each other to produce a specialised product. The complexity of finding an equivalence between social interaction with nature and animals is the merit for measuring output.

As I have demonstrated, productivity cannot be measured in isolation from the different factors like labour, land and animals. In capitalist production, the focus is on increasing the exchange-value to maximise profit, any or all of these factors, and the social interactions between these factors, are minimised and the farmer is removed from these processes. Instead, capitalists use highly sophisticated technology to manage the interactive flow of soil/animal products' extraction and productivity (Robbins 2015). By changing the measures used to calculate productivity in agroecological settings, farmers can incorporate the reproductive work in farming as a fixed set of labour, animal and soil activities. This alters how they plan and manage a farm. As my fieldwork has shown, a possible way to increase agroecological productivity is for CA to continue the absorption of small-scale farms into their food system, which would continue the de-centralisation of the food system.

## Chapter 7

### The Autopoietic Mechanisms – Production and Market as Commons

#### 7.1. Introduction

Following from the previous discussion, this chapter highlights the dichotomies between ecological, animal and labour values collide in the peasant condition and the capitalist's production system managed by the state's regulation for practicing farming. In food production, the conversion of resources into (end)-products is the second stage of farming of the cycle of food production (Van der Ploeg 2008). To this end, CA's production system is engulfed in a value struggle centred around sustaining and striving for autonomy in the peasant condition. I will show causes of conflict with the state's authority and how the state encloses autonomous food production, highlighting that the struggle for altering the (re-)production relations of a product turns each farm into a site of struggle (Hardt and Negri 2009, De Angelis 2017).

One of the most challenging factors for CA in realising their solidarity economy was and still is, to create and sustain a diverse market where participation is centred around organising long term and circular practices and processes (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). This chapter is focused on the analysis of the two autopoietic mechanisms, namely the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS) and the collaborative price-mechanism (CPM), and it aims to shed light on how these mechanisms are instrumental in establishing an interconnectivity between production and markets, safeguarding CA's commonly established alternative value system.

The chapter begins by outlining the need for a participatory-guarantee-system (PGS) by contextualising it within the exclusionary regulations of the local authorities in the specific social context of the Emilia Romagna region, in Italy. This is followed by an explanation of the structure of the PGS and the ways in which new entrant farmers are supported by it. Then, I interrogate how the social and ecological values underpinning the PGS enforce and reconcile the notion of the commons. Further, I scrutinise the collaborative price-mechanism (CPM) and how it works, how CA's producers negotiate and set a "just price" and what underpins such negotiations (both within producers, and between producers and consumers). I conclude with a discussion of both self-management/self-governance systems and show how complementary and instrumental they are in the building of a place-based agriculture.

## 7.2. The state's certification system

As I have outlined Chapter 2, the de-commodification of an artisan's production occurs in a trajectory that deals with the logic of the neo-liberalisation of food as a commodity. This struggle in production is epitomised in its local form the complex state apparatus of the European Union which, in the transformation to globalisation, emerged as a trading bloc mediating between the global market and the internal European market (Bonefeld 2010). The local food producer is enmeshed in the globalised food structure: "[globalisation] involves a proliferation of spatial scales, their relative dissociation in complex tangled hierarchies...., and an increasingly convoluted mix of scale strategies, as economic and political forces seek the most favourable conditions for insertion into a changing international order (Jessop 2017: 142).

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, in the process of neo-liberalisation of the market, the European Commission reformed the subsidiary system of the Common Agricultural Policy into a two-tier system: the direct-payment scheme and the rural development scheme. This went against the WTO rules because subsidies for farmers distort food prices at the global market (Edelman 2005, Potter and Tilzey 2007). Should farmers at CA receive funding from the CAP-system for setting up their farms? Could we still talk about CA-markets as commons and their foodstuff as common goods? Amongst CA's producers there is no consensus about receiving financial assistance from the CAP-system or not. A vegetable producer explains her reasons against it:

"it destroys the system. It would be better if the whole system would be cancelled. It is a deviated system, as the money is given to those who do not work with the land, such as agro-industries. The logic is the bigger you are, the more money you get. They destroy small-scale agriculture with this system. Foodstuff needs to be as cheap as possible, and so the ingredients for making the product needs to be cheap. It does not matter [for the CAP] how to produce the product, it can be in Tunisia or Morocco, as long as this product is produced" (Erika 20.03.2018).

Another vegetable producer added:

"it deters the notion of working with and managing the land efficiently. If money is handed to you, you are much more careless with your resources, as you know, you will always get the money. If you don't get the money you have to manage your land and the resources more efficiently" (Remo 14.05.2019).

The problem, as both producers have pointed out, is the insurmountable contradiction of inefficiency in managing the land and subsidies, and is akin to what Tilzey and Potter write: “A structural consequence of these changes is the expansion of production, and corporate food interests that can consolidate their influence over the production process, putting downward pressure on price margins and shifting the economic rents away from the farm and the local level” (2005: 593).

Other farmers at CA have used the second pillar of ‘rural development’ for buying materials in the setting up their farms. This pillar funds family farms for their local production in an environmentally-friendly practice. Under pillar 2, they qualify for producing or conserving the raw materials of organic food, such as land, milk, organic vegetables and grain. In addition, these rural programmes by the European Commission support the conversion to organic farming. In reality, the qualification under this scheme is very complicated, as a wine producer explained:

“the money that was allocated to me went out of the window for paying tax to the state and tax advisors. I had sleepless nights over how to fill out the forms correctly, and after all, what was left of the money was not much. I will never apply to any of these schemes ever again” (Arturo 27.11. 2017).

A vegetable producer, who used the European subsidies to set up their farms explains how the subsidies are tied into dependency structure of the industrial agrarian market:

“We receive European subsidies. But when these subsidies finish, I hope we are in a situation, to decide not to do it anymore, because the paperwork is extenuating. As far as paying for human resources, which covers the costs of the subsidies, the organic certification is completely biased. And it also locks you into the neo-liberal system. You have to buy their plants. You have to buy their seeds and the fertilizers. You can’t self-produce your seeds. As far as vegetable farming goes, everything has to be traceable” (Petra 13.01.2019).

Petra’s comment indicates to an economic vulnerability within the CA-market system, which CA has not resolved yet. Her farm is still in the early phase of being fully operational, and even if she would go every day to a CA-market, she is not able to make a living off the farm, because she does not produce enough foodstuff. This implies that CA-producers are financially on its own when setting up their farms. The lack of financial solidarity, which a commons is defined by, puts farmers into a position which they have to turn to the state’s funding system for purchasing the necessary materials for building up their production. This shortcoming further contradicts

to the notion that CA aims to be free from any capitalist relations. The subsidies received by the state promote a form of sustainability and circular farming system, that is tied in with the distribution system of the agro-industry with farmers have to comply to the state's management procedures (Migliorini and Wezel 2017). Farmers struggle to avert a dis-embeddedness of the circular production system that would steer away from local production and distribution systems and destroy the much-desired goal of self-determination in production. This over-reliance to the state system puts CA-producers in a contradictory position. Some CA-producers accept the tight control over the dynamic interplay between production and distribution as specified in the state certification system even though they do not agree with it. As a vegetable producer explained:

“The [state] organic certification system is very detailed and does not allow any fluctuations in the productivity of the crop. In case a vegetable produces too much harvest, or its harvest is destroyed because of weather conditions, the farmer is not allowed to plant a new crop because this activity was not conveyed to the institution on time” (Erika 20.03.2018).

The vegetable producer is caught within the state production system limiting self-determination in production. In order to get around this, farmers target specific conditions one-by-one and subvert them in their production as much as possible. It gets even more complicated when animals are involved in production and their extracted raw materials are transformed into an end-product. Here, CA-food production system aligns to the government's health and regulation performed by the local health office ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale / local health and sanitary office). The problematic for farmers transforming raw materials into end-products is that the state system only recognises production after farms have been set-up (see Chapter 6.3.). Farmers face heavy fines, if caught. Despite of this constraint farmers often cannot register or register only part of their production because expenses for re-structuring farm houses to ASL regulations are too expensive, and thus makes them clandestine (Field notes). The bread producer (Marzia 28.05.2018) explained:

“Many farmers like me bought old farmhouses, which can have too small windows or a ceiling not reaching the required three metres benchmark by 20 cm. Old farm structures do not comply with contemporary building regulations and therefore the structural authorisation of the workshop by ASL not because of sanitary regulations, but because of the existing structural norms and regulations that are devised for newly built food production sites” (02.06.2018).

Because the administration is very complex, farmers find themselves in the obscure situation that they are 'semi-legal'. The registration of a farm is divided between the structure of the farm and the farming activity, as the beer producer explains:

"I was not able to register my workshop because the windows were too small. But at the same office under a different state manager, I registered my farming activity without any problems...I started producing beer without having the licence for my workshop. And still, I don't have it. Even though they come and check where and how I am producing. They have never figured it out that my windows are too small and that my workshop is not registered" (Ivano 18.12.17).

The beer producer points to a contradiction within the ASL authority, namely, farmers can apply and receive the authorisation for producing without having the authorisation for using his workshop for production. This indicates that producers like CA can navigate around the system as the new rules and regulations in production by the neo-liberal agrarian food system are far from being organised in a neat hierarchal order; its multi-scalar structure is organised in a 'coexisting and interpenetrating in a tangled and confused manner" (Jessop in Bonefeld 2010: 47). Paradoxically, the global food system is multi-layered structured and each of these layers consists of multiple regulatory bodies creating a messy situation for administrators and farmers making it very difficult for them to distinguish whether policies are devised from the European Union superstructure or as national policy or on a regional level. (Bonefeld 2010). This opens up to a political opportunity for farmers like at CA to intervene in this messy structure and to start taking control over the food system.

### **7.3. The formation of the participatory-guarantee-system**

Paradoxically, the messy organisation of norms and regulations created by managers of the state gave (semi)-legal farmers at CA the opportunity to interfere with the state system. These farmers combined their experiences with the state and their different ecological value system and established the PGS to define the boundaries of CA's ecological ethos. These boundaries were based on a value practice embodying self-determination and signified their autonomy

from the state's regulation system (Centemeri 2018). This value practice was embedded in commoning and took shape in the formation of the PGS where "new bonds and forms of collective struggle" were formed (Arampatzi 2019: 2156). This system enabled the survival of the producer, "who otherwise would not be able to produce and live from being a farmer" (Giorgio 10.06.2018). Social relations of dependency, mutualism and trust emerged as the producers sought to overcome the enclosed relations in production and to access the markets located in the city (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014). Rather than a protest strategy (Chatterton et al. 2013), the autopoietic mechanism of PGS is a strategy to provide market access for small, organic farms for legal, semi-legal and illegal farms. CA is similar to a federation of worker cooperative insofar as their model allows for individual autonomous production sites to be held accountable under their self-legislated conditions regarding labour and distribution of wealth (Stout 2020). However, unlike a worker's cooperative, CA did not pool the income made from all the farms (Sitrin 2012) but is organised through the collaborative price-mechanism. The co-creation of social bonds amongst farmers aided the self-organisation of autonomous work spaces (the farms), which led to the development of co-dependency amongst farms. Through commoning, the developed co-dependency amongst CA-farms enabled farmers to emancipate themselves from the shackles of the capitalist production system (Teschke 2022). This enabled farmers to experience "freedom for experimenting with the soil and animals" (Anita 19.07.2019, Remo 14.05.2019).

The need for self-certifying their own products stems from the experiences made in the early years of existence of CA (between 2002 and 2008). Certification was done without labelling the products, which open access eventually had led to abuse. Decisions on admitting new farmers were taken by what we could call, 'face value'; "you recognise someone by the face whether you can trust" (Ivano 30.10.2019 Interview two). The open access to the markets began to show signs of 'free-riders', who risked jeopardising the established trusted relationship with customers. Several situations were recalled where farmers had arrived at the markets with products that were not certified; or farmers finished their supply of food and re-filled the gap with foodstuff from the wholesale market, or they came with products from aunts and grandmothers (Ivano 18.12.2017, Luisa 26.10.2017, Aurora 25.02.2018). Moreover, hygienic standards of transformed products were not adequate "as already used lids showed dirt at the edges" (Luisa 26.10.2017).

A mechanism to monitor the farmers needed to be established to avoid the risk of market implosion by free-riders. The monitoring of common standards might impede individual autonomy in food production but for turning the market in a commons "subjective values [have

to be] positively defined with the collective values of the community”, argues Papadimitropoulos (2017: 576). Indeed, the introduction of certifying production for accessing the markets was for some farmers a contradiction and thought of it as a new form of enclosure. “They compared the PGS with the imposition of a controlling system similar to the state system” (Luisa 26.10.17). The clearly defined boundaries of the PGS in conjunction with the market rules (see Appendix) set specific procedures for producers on how to use the market in order for everybody to benefit. The necessity of drawing a boundary for the market is similar to what Ostrom refers to as natural boundaries of the commons: “As long as the boundaries of the resource and/or specification of individuals who can use the resource remain uncertain, no one knows what is being managed and for whom” (1990: 91). However, in order to remain a flexible boundary, the conditions for participation at their markets is to participate actively in the organizational structure of CA (field notes).

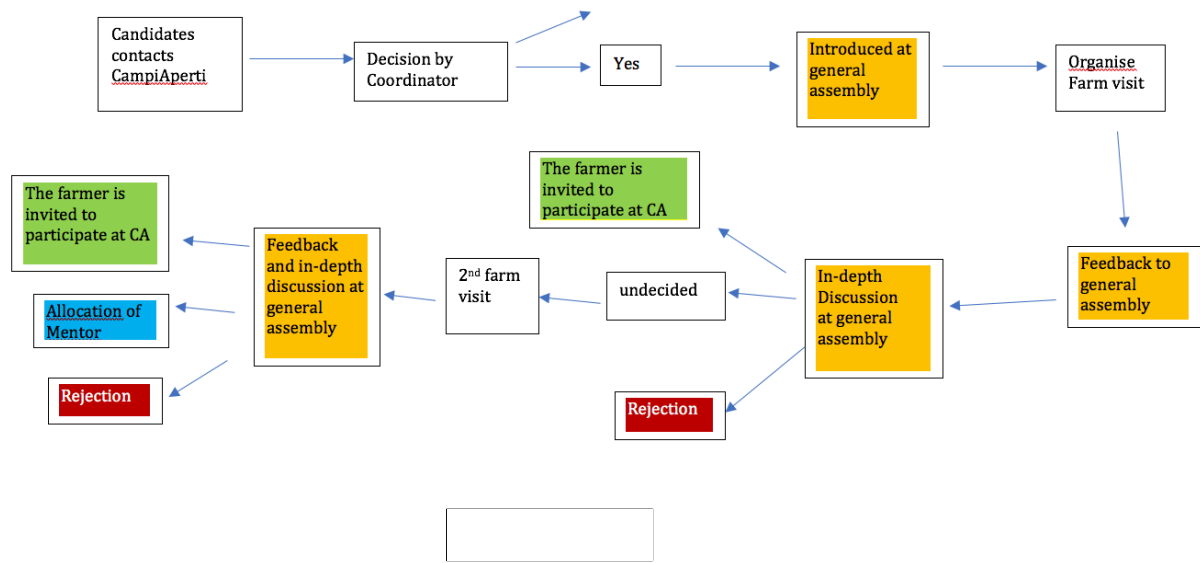
#### **7.4. The mechanism of the participatory-guarantee-system**

In this section I explain the participatory-guarantee-system (PGS) that regulated the boundary of CA-markets. The PGS was at the heart of CA and producers paid significant attention to this system. The system was modelled on the MST in Brazil, who experienced similar obstacles when they tried to access the markets. The PGS was a dynamic system that was vital for agroecological farms to sustain their farms and earn a living (Migliorini and Wezel 2017). During my fieldwork PGS was re-evaluated and revised after ten years of existence. Over a period of twelve years CA expanded from three markets to eight markets and from about twenty farms to seventy-eight farms (field notes). As Luisa said, “new economic situations for farmers had emerged that needed to be considered” (Luisa 26.10.2017).

For a producer to be certified by CA, they had to complete the requirements of the PGS. Firstly, the CA coordinator provided new applicants with a set of standard questions to ensure their ecology values were similar to CA’s values. If the potential CA-farmer was closely aligned with CA’s ecological value system, the application was presented to the general assembly, who organised an initial in-person visit. To complete the assessment of the farm, a minimum of two in-person visits was required. At least one of these visits had to be conducted by someone with expertise in the farmer’s or producer’s craft. This allowed CA to thoroughly interrogate the production processes used by the candidate. Each certification process was different, as the craft and the individual socio-economic contexts varied. After the initial visit, those who



**Figure 7.1.: The mechanism of the participatory-guarantee-system**



conducted the inspection provided a detailed report to the next general assembly. The general assembly discussed the sustainable or agroecological production methods, the reproduction of materials, the transforming processes and the location where the product was transformed (see below). If the general assembly failed to decide whether the farmer met their criteria, another visit to the farm was arranged. At this visit, CA representatives interrogated the concerns raised by the general assembly and reported their findings to the next general assembly. The general assembly thoroughly discussed, how the applicant’s ecological ethos and political orientation aligned with CA’s. In case the assembly accepted at this round of discussion the candidate, the farmer is allocated a market stall. If a farmer is rejected, but has potential to eventual fulfil all the requirements, the farmer is allocated a mentor aiding the farmer to reach the basic requirement for participating at CA (field notes). These discussions took months, which indicates that the boundary to access the CA-food economy was strictly monitored by its self-legislated value system. Each individual farm is scrutinised on the specific craft’s activities of the applicant, which were then verified against agroecological methods and a peasant-based agriculture. As such, each case was carefully evaluated on the ecological ethos and practice in tandem with their political motivation to actively participate in steering their food system into a radical direction on an enduring basis.

CA’s extended admission process reflected an understanding that the reproduction systems of this particular production were crucial and required scrutinizing whether the inputs of the reproduction system were exogenous from the market or were intended to be substituted.

When CA discussed the methods used in reproducing labour, animal and social activities, it was essential for them to understand the applicant's willingness to engage in commoning with other farmers if they were accepted into CA's food economy. CA's food economy aimed to dissolve capital's *power over* reproduction and instead sought to constitute a force of social relations that exerted *power to* create commoning (De Angelis 2017). Whilst CA's admission process was thorough, it did not strictly follow their self-legislated value system and market rules. With each applicant, CA took the opportunity to reflect on their self-imposed regime and whether their established system and rules were still appropriate for the changing socio-economic context and the demands of consumers. CA's food economy was kept alive because they could engage in constant self-reflection on their principles and self-legislation to ensure they were continuing to pursue their vision, which was to de-centralise the global food economy by absorbing as many producers as possible.

### **7.5. The agroecological and labour ethos of CA**

The PGS marks a boundary from the conventional state-certified farmers that is 'expressed in a standardized goal-orientated mode of evaluation' (Centemeri 2018: 295) and evaluates its context of the practice. The PGS standard set by the IFOAM (International Federation of Agricultural Movements) sets clear organic standards such as enhancing the health of soil, plants and animals, however, it does not include "specifically agroecological methods, such as managing the health of the plants by enhancing soil biological activity (inter-cropping), waste reduction, or reduce inputs from the markets and principles for animal production systems" (Migliorini and Wezel 2017: 63), even though the PGS should valorise the traceability of agroecological practice at each processing stage. Traceability is more of an interest for secondary producers, precisely to set them apart from the state's regulation system. Gemma, the herbalist, described the certification process by the state and by CA:

"during my certification visit I showed to the persons of CA the whole forest and mountain ranges. We walked for six hours and I explained to them what I was using, for what I was taking it for, and so on. I showed them my laboratory and my storage room. [In contrast], the woman from ASL came in December with city shoes and couldn't get out of the car because of the snow. But then I asked her 'what it is you wanted to see in December?'" (Gemma, 12.06.2018).

Interestingly at CA "traceability is not a marketing strategy" (Erika 20.03.2018) but rather reclaimed as a common standard procedure from the standard organic labelling system. While

organic products do not need to list the origins of their ingredients, at CA, it is a necessity to show transparency to consumers as well as to their counterparts at CA (see Table 4.5.).

“How do consumers know whether a product is organically produced, if you do not know where, with what and by whom it is produced? Nowadays it becomes even more confusing with the new labels “organic, organic” [twice] or “bio/traceability” proposing an even more distorted organic agriculture in its practice. “Shouldn’t bio be already traceable? Therefore, [in our certification scheme] we also visit external production sites, such as mills or juice-making sites, and put questions on their ecological values and social attitudes” (Erika 20.03.2018, Arno 15.06.2018).

At these certification visits a combination of questions scrutinise methods for pest control, soil care, methods for optimising energy efficiency and water sources, animal welfare and labour standards for employees. The situation can be complicated. For example, the wine producer is still in the experimental phase of making 100% organic wine, as Arturo conceded to CA (28.10.17).

“I explained the difficulty to CA and showed them my experimentations with the soil in order to eventually produce wine without Sulphur. But this does not happen immediately. It is a process that involves monitoring and assessing the soil structure of the vineyard continuously. At the moment I am using very little Sulphur in comparison what conventional wine producer use for making wine”.



Picture 7.3.

An inter-cropping of organic vines, red clover and peas.  
Zocca, Emilia-Romagna.

Photo: Author

Although Arturo has not managed yet to completely wean himself off from external inputs, he has signaled his motivation to ‘working with the land’ (see section 7.7.) and received approval to participate at their markets.

Experimenting with different methods for pest control is very atypical for modern farmers nowadays. Modern farmers use an organic chemical for

pest control bought in the shop or call a technician (Lorena 07.03.2019). While self-controlled labour process is in industrial farming abandoned, agroecological farmers invest a lot of manual work and time to understand the art of making good soil, whereby farming could be referred to “as a socially constructed process” (Van der Ploeg 2008: 28-29). The intensive manual work for a good soil structure reduces the usage of external petroleum-based inputs and motivates to manage labour and natural energy efficiently. By working with the land in a natural way, “farmers get to know their land and the different soil structures of their farms. For example, I plant non-perennial vegetables at a location where I know this soil structure fits to the plant” (Giorgio 10.06.2018).

Migliorini and Wezel have scrutinized organic and agroecological production and found that the practices are similar but can be distinguished in their methods of practice, such as in harnessing energy and animal welfare (2017). There are many ways to harness natural energy. Vegetable producers “reduce or prolong the growing season by setting up greenhouses” (Erika 20.03.2018), while some ‘secondary producers’ use solar energy for transforming products (field notes). Livestock farmers on the other hand, reduce energy by simply respecting the animal rhythms and their co-existence with the natural environments. All animals are outside on the pastures (field notes) and thus farmers spend less time and energy in the fields for cutting the grass, bundle it to hay, drive the hay bales and distribute it amongst the cows.



Picture 7.4.

Anita pumps water from the river into a tank and pours the water from the water into the bathtub. Farmers without having direct access to a river or a stream, capture and/or recycle their household water or use water from their pond. At the farm visits, farmers are asked about the origins of their external inputs to the farms.

Picture: Author

Beside paying attention to ecological values, equally important in radicalising production is to consider the labour standards. During the certification, employees at the farm are questioned about the working conditions. “We explain to them that we have a workers’ council at CA, which can be used for making complaints. These complaints will then be examined by the Council” (Ivano 30.10.2019). He carried on explaining that the reason for setting-up a worker’s council is “to have a body that is akin to a trade union, where workers can turn to when they need it”.

The Workers’ Council was set-up to give workers an opportunity to raise problems they had with the farm owner. When I asked how previous complaints from workers had been resolved by the Workers’ Council, I was told that the it had yet to be used (field notes). I was advised that if a farm owner violated the contract of a farm worker, and the farm owner failed to alter the labour conditions on their farm, the farm would be expelled from CA (field notes). Interestingly, CA did not rely on generating social bonds with the farm workers to prevent or address violations of their labour rights, instead it provided an institutional space where farm workers could safely turn to raise their concerns. This specific social arrangement indicated that they viewed their food economy as a commons, recognised workers’ material needs for protected labour rights and a shared need that had become a social matter (Zechner 2021). To put it differently, the worker was part of the commoning in social reproduction, as its basic needs for reproducing its own livelihood is institutionalized in CA’s food system. In this context, CA acknowledged the input made by the worker, alongside the animals and the soil, as a way of building their food economy of ‘shared material and life conditions’ (Zechner 2021: 35).

In the table below I show a summary of the main distinctions between the PGS and the state organic certification system based on my findings.

**Table 7.1.: A comparison between participated-guarantee-system and state certification**

	Participated-guarantee-system	State certification
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Cooperation, Sustainability &amp; income</b>	<b>Competitive Sustainability</b>
<b>Organisation</b>	Self-organised	State-organised
<b>Availability of foodstuff at the time of the certification process</b>	Start-up phase and already established farms	Already established farm systems

<b>Management</b>	No bureaucracy; Commitment to participating in horizontal decision-making	Complex bureaucracy; Multiple agencies; No participation in making decision
<b>Market</b>	For start-ups, small and local farmers	Aligned to the state market rules; no start-ups
<b>Food production process</b>	Flexibility to natural cycles, diversity species and genetic resources	A variety of organic products fall into this category Monocultures (milk or grain farmers) and a variety in homogenized foodstuff in taste, size
<b>Food output</b>	Limits to nature;	Output production is orientated to market price
<b>Reproduction</b>	circular production systems	External costs
<b>Use of external products/ inputs</b>	Solidarity economy for ingredients, state-certified organic products (Fair Trade)	State-certified organic products
<b>Control of off-farm-inputs</b>	Control of Off-farm production sites (mills, for example)	No control
<b>Expenses of label</b>	No costs	Expenses for quality check, chemical break down on percentage of inputs, and label

## 7.6. Participatory democracy

The self-organisation of CA's food system raises questions about how the food system can be collectively governed. A food system is inherently a multifaceted one that consists of numerous interwoven and inter-dependent sets of relations (see CA's complex horizontal organisational structure in Chapter 5). The self-organisation of markets and production instigates social processes for the appropriation of productive labour "as the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created (Federici 2019). The PGS was the mechanism that pooled all the individual production systems into CA's self-governed market economy, synergies between commoners were developed by collectively co-creating the management of their food system (Esteves 2017). Simultaneously they were co-creating a co-democracy for a

new collaborative political economy of food (Gibson-Graham 2008, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). Indeed, farmers were not admitted into the CA-network unless they were committed to actively participate in the co-created horizontal structure. This notion of 'doing it ourselves', represents a defiant stance towards corporations (Pickerill and Chatteron 2006) and proceeding with the creation of their own food system.

For farmers without prior active political experience, this form of organisation might be a novelty.

"I was explained by them during the certification process that CA is self-governed and that each participant must participate at the meetings. At first, I thought I could skip some of them. But I never did, because I really like this way of organising" (Claudia 05.06.2018).

Meetings at CA's general assembly are never less than eight hours long and can be messy and sometimes seem disorganised (field notes). In commoning, "organisation [of the commons space] is negotiated with other people in other situations", write Bresnihan and Byrne (2014: 11-12). I noticed at their general assembly that some farmers are less confident in speaking up and are probably also confused as to how horizontal decision-making works and how decisions are materialized in the aftermath of the general assembly. In order to alleviate the entry-phase into CA for new farmers, a one-year mentoring process for facilitating the insertion into the structure was introduced during my fieldwork (Luisa's email 26.06.2019).

Arno, the former president of CA, articulates this aim like this: "Each farmer has to participate at our assemblies and at the market meetings, since we self-organise our market and production. Farmers at CA are made aware that they are steering the food system into a new direction" (15.06.2018). Without dedication to the political practice of CA, producers are not accepted at their markets. In 'willingly becoming communal subjects' (Gibson-Graham 2006: 16), new farmers recognise their interdependence of participating at the CA-community, where the space in CA offers an opportunity for farmers to create their own markets. It sets in motion a non-hierarchical process and an increase of power sharing that is automatically understood as autonomous from capital. It constitutes the self-certified governance mechanism with commoning taking place in a subjective and collective agency, and "reciprocally contribute to each other's constitution and reproduction" (Esteves 2017: 362). Each participant has the opportunity to contribute to and influence the group discussion, where the structure around

horizontal-decision-making is broken into small discussion groups when no outcome is achieved.

### **7.7. 'Working with the land'**

The most important principle for CA to materialise food sovereignty is to establish a connection to the land. From conversations with the farmers, it has emerged that farmers or producers intending to join the CA-circuits need to be motivated "to work with the land" (Arno 15.06.2018).

Reflecting on this over one certification report, a few CA-producers had visited a producer growing sprouts from beans. It was reported back to the assembly that the producer buys the beans and germinates them in a box. The germination process needed light and water, and so she created the germination box under an artificial light system. In the discussion of the report, the question was raised at what stage of the process is she to move away from the dependency of buying the beans and of using artificial light. Even though producers at CA buy additional ingredients that they cannot produce themselves from the wider Solidarity Economy, such as sugar or chocolate, buying the beans from the external market for commencing a sprouting production was a kind of market dependency they could not justify. Some of them were against the argument made on market dependence and pointed out that it is a growing food trend amongst consumers and there is no producer yet at CA that produces it. But this was contested with her lack of motivation of wanting to cultivate her own beans in the near future and her not using solar panels for the germination process. After all, CA did not recognize in the producer's production methods her commitment for materializing a sustainable food production as she relied heavily on external products for the reproduction of her production (GAM 26.11.2017). Producers deciding against her participation could not see the producer's 'connection with the land' that is "not only designated to those working with the land rather the whole mindset to life and working with the land needs to be changed" (Arno 15.06.2018). Aurora emphasised this by saying: "Producers have to adapt to a livelihood that mirrors the ecological and sustainable production of what they are cultivating. Without a personal transformation, a peasant-based agriculture does not work" (25.02.18). When producers request to participate at CA-markets, their admission depends on whether their farm structure is centred around the optimisation of the 'metabolic functioning of their farming system' that enables them to 'reduce their inputs from the market to a minimum' (Migliorini and Wezel 2017: 63).



Interestingly, however, CA defines their boundary on reducing market dependence to the agro-industry, but so far vegetable producers rely to a large part on seeds from the agro-industrial market. Reflecting on their lack of organising a committee on 'saving the seed' within their organisational structure, I asked farmers in my interviews whether all of their seeds are bought. Indeed, a small seed exchange amongst some farmers occur, as Zac explained: "Me and another farmer collect seeds from zucchinis, pumpkins and tomatoes, which we are exchange each year. My farm is on a 300m altitude and his farm is in the lowlands. We exchange the seeds to strengthen the quality of the seeds" (12.12.2017). When I asked why not all seeds are saved, I was told that it takes too much time to save seeds (Zac 12.12.2017).

Unlike the vegetable producers, the grain and legumes producers saved one third of their harvest for the following year. This was partially because it was easier to save the seeds from legumes and grains than it was to save the seeds from vegetables. One of the grain farmers produces chick peas and was very passionate about it. During our conversation he showed me the variety of chick peas he had collected from the last harvest. He told me that with each harvest new varieties of chick peas emerged, coming in different forms, shapes and colours. He would combine these with the saved third of chick peas from the previous year and return them to the soil for the next harvest.

In contrast to legumes and grain farmers, saving the seeds of a vegetable requires to have additional material and human resources. One vegetable farmer relies on her husband doing this task, who is in retirement. "I would not be able to save the seeds from my plants for the next cycle, if I were on my own", says Lorena (07.03.2019). "I have invested a lot of time in choosing my seeds, and once I have found them, I kept on reproducing it". One of her distinct trademarks is the 'tomato passato', for which she has selected the specific tomato variety. Over the years she was able to multiply the amount of seeds and now plants 3,000 tomato plants from her own seeds each year.

On farms where producers rely exclusively on buying from the Demeter-Bank<sup>9</sup>, they are still in the process of setting up their farms. They spend their times in building their greenhouses, or

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<sup>9</sup> The Demeter brand emerged with the growing industrialisation of agriculture about 100 years ago. Farmers using chemical fertilisers noticed changes in the soil structure and approached the Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner to provide an inspiration to agriculture based on his philosophical work. Steiner described soil as the digestive organ of a plant, which indicated that the soil should be nourished by the plant itself. Known as anthroposophy, biodynamic agriculture was born and Demeter as a trademark was established. The Demeter seed bank was established to breed biodynamic seeds without any artificial hybridity or genetic modification.

plant trees, or sort out their water harvesting. “We might consider to save seeds once we are settled with the farm. But at the moment we are so busy with getting materials for enlarging our far, that we cannot think also of saving the seeds” (Erika 20.03.2018)

Surprisingly, after twenty years of existence and their successful establishment of a complex governance system, they have not been able to set up a self-organised seed bank nor have they set-up a committee for setting-up a seed bank. Responses to my question range from “the work involved in creating a seed bank goes beyond my capacity (Claudia 05.06.2018) to “setting-up a self-governance seed bank, and it takes and people, which we don’t have” (Luisa 16.10.2018).

It is even more surprising that in Emilia-Romagna only one small organic seed bank exists but “produces from poor quality” (Giorgio 10.06.2018). During the time of my fieldwork, this seedbank has closed down. Some of CA’s -vegetable producers were engaged with the Italian network known as, ‘semi rurali’ (rural seeds). It is an association that consisted of a number of Italian farmers’ and seed organisations that were centred around a craft. It is a very loose network and did not organise a seedbank for seed exchange (Luisa 18.10.2019). It is very different to the Bingenheimer seedbank, one of few Demeter-seedbanks in Germany. The Bingenheimer seedbank was set-up by enthusiastic hobby gardeners. Since 1978 they have produced over 500 different biodynamic vegetable seeds for hobby and professional agricultural producers (Bingenheimer Saatgut 2022). This is a very different situation to CA or even for the whole Italian organic movement. CA realised that it was not possible for them to meet this need themselves. As such, they have lobbied the regional authorities to ease restrictions on seed-savings and exchange amongst producers in Emilia-Romagna and to provide material resources to aid the establishment of a seedbank (field notes).

On these accounts, it shows that CA’s seed-savings is arbitrarily exerted on or amongst farms, and still struggles to anchor their food system in the ‘origins of life’ (Shiva and Mies 2014). Noticeably, it indicates the stark dichotomy between intending to pursue food sovereignty principles and to actually realise it. The realisation of food sovereignty, that is using seeds that represent the local culture and biodiversity is much more complicated than thought of and the risk is of jeopardising the assurance of cultivating a diverse agroecosystem outside of the agro-industrial market as well as (Desmareis 2007, Gliessman 2015, Kloppenburg 2010). Their inability to overcome individual land and seed ownership limits their autonomy in governing their own food systems. It could be argued that they are not commons. The issue of

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not having seed ownership contradicts their ethos of creating a food system on food sovereignty, as it would imply to undertake deep structural changes in the way their food is produced (De Angelis 2007). Recognising that capital is embedded in the self-governance food system, their foodstuff is after all not as genuine as they thought it would be. Without saving the seeds, CA's evolvement for gaining a natural food diversity is halted (Gliessman 2015). So far, their reliance on the industrial system is embedded in capital. In other words, CA is coupled with capital, making the commons a mergence between capital and social entrepreneurship.

However, this can be altered, if they decided to resist capital from setting their boundary. The built-in mechanism of food system autonomy could mobilise resources (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014) for turning the seed into a commons. The mobilisation of resources (land, labour, materials) would inevitably expand into coalescing with other communities. The creation of the seed as a commons diverts the capitalist relation into a community where care, solidarity and conviviality could emerge (De Angelis 2017).

### **7.8. The monitoring of the PGS-boundary**

The self-governance mechanism is a dynamic process and is built around building relations to form a multi-layered governance system on a variegated scale (Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015) that requires a form of social engagement for building continuity based on mutual trust and mutual aid (Arampatzi 2017, Bresnihan and Byrne 2014). In fact, "mutual aid has traditionally emerged in oppressed communities", writes Ruiz Cayuela (2021: 1554). Here, mutual trust and mutual aid are regulated by the PGS, as outlined earlier, and fall into the argument made by Ostrom, who considers the implementation of monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms of boundaries necessary to prevent the possibility of free-riders. She argues that free-riders benefit from the collective social wealth without assuming their responsibility, if collective action is not taken (1990). Free-riders occur in any system, capitalist or public, and as well as at CA. Free-riders at CA use and benefit from the resources at CA by accessing their self-governed market and bending the production and market rules to their advantage. Thus, they break or reduce the 'relational' trust amongst producers, that is transmitted with the Genuino Clandestino label. Trust is established in a social capacity in the long-term amongst producers on the market. At the markets, producers talk to each other, converse about their production and in this way discover common attitudes and differences to discuss (field notes). Although this trust should have been granted, in one example, a shared mistrust was developed against one producer from these conversations,

” as the producer was not very clear about the origins of the ingredients of his street food. Suspicions against him grew amongst the other producers that he was violating market rules, which went against the founding principle of CA, namely, ‘working with the land’.

After a new assessment from the PGS Committee, he was suspended from CA” (Aurora 25.02.2018). The PGS-committee deals with suspicions and these are then pursued. If there is a violation against the market rule, the producer has to leave (see appendix Market rules).

As in this example, CA-producers defended their mutual bonds established through commoning, as they know that behind the mutual bond resides an inter-dependence amongst producers. The following of rules suggests an institutional form of dealing with issues (Ostrom 1990). However, in the commons, rules are negotiated for meeting different needs or other contexts (Bresnihan 2016). Those rules need to be recognized by each actor to maintain trust and create a strong social fabric. If it fails “it would undermine the efforts made to create trust with the consumers and, subsequently diminish the values that underscores the PGS” (Petra 02.08.2018). More so, it would affect the established trust relations with the consumer, which is a critical relationship for producers (see Chapter 8).

Critiques around monitoring and sanctioning of malpractice could indicate that this process of monitoring risks remains fixated on the interpretations of their drawn boundaries and could become insular (Estevo 2014). When monitoring the commons is a continuous process of self-reflection and assessment of their political stance. As stated earlier, rules of the commons are negotiable (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014) and as such, it follows that boundaries of the commons are permeable (De Angelis 2017). In the discussion that follows, I outline several critiques and observations that illustrate the demarcation of monitoring as a social process and as an economic necessity.

In the preceding section I outlined the boundary around CA-markets as a necessity to protect their ecological and labour value system in production. The boundary marks the entry to their markets, and it raises questions as to how far they extend the *defending* of their value system in farming, and more precisely with the notion of working with the land. As Arno said: “Some new entrant farmers from the urban area questioned the hurdle of accessing our market and asked for a re-interpretation of working with the land” (15.06.2018). Arno’s comment on ‘the re-interpretation of working with the land’ hints at a push for setting in motion critical self-reflection on the conditions encapsulated in the boundary.

“We did discuss new suggestions of interpretations, and our consensus was to maintain the founding principle of working with the land for political reasons. The street food or soap producer have to be physically connected to the land, even if it is symbolic, that is producers wanting to participate have to at least have a small plot at a farm from somebody they know or from a CA’s farm, and grow some herbs, or vegetables” (Arno 15.06.2018).

Within Arno’s statement was a sense of ‘lost meaning’, as for him working with the land is a political statement. The fear of losing their political quality involves re-articulating their strategies to include farming realities that are assessed on new socio-economic conditions, for example, producers settled in urban areas and who have difficulties in accessing land. These producers rely nearly exclusively on ingredients produced elsewhere. The urban producers challenge the ‘asymmetrical positions’ (Nightingale 2010) in ways the property regime of land within CA is arranged and accepted. They challenge the power structure within CA and enforce an addressing of the unequal social relations toward existing social structures such as land inequity. This “changed economic landscape of becoming a farmer” (Luisa 16.10.2018) considers the ‘changeable existential circumstances’ (Esteves 2017: 367) and suggests that the connection with the land is a negotiable boundary that provides limits and opportunities (Bresnihan 2016).

Although new strategy implemented by CA on the grounds that: “our food system would lose its political materiality to deal with the new challenges by capital and the state” (Luisa 16.10.2018), it offers an integrative support system provided to farmers, who have applied to CA but have failed to comply with the ecological standards. CA offers them a ‘mentor’ for one- or two-years support, until they have realised the standard required for entering CA (Luisa 26.06.2019). This new strategy suggests a capacity of re-innovating and re-creating the identity of a self-governance system (Lebel et al. 2006). De Angelis argues that the autopoietic systems regenerate their own components (2017), the ability of such components in autopoietic commons to regenerate themselves requires a substantial amount of human interaction as the example of the monitoring process of the PGS boundary demonstrates.

### **7.9. The purpose and mechanism of the collaborative price-setting**

As production and markets are two interrelated dimensions (Guthman 2007), there is a necessity to reconsider the conditions of their self-governance market for stimulating a de-

centralised agricultural food production. In this section, I will demonstrate that the mechanism of the collaborative price-mechanism (CPM) is firstly protecting the established social-ecological in production, secondly sustaining their livelihoods as farmers, and thirdly to offer their foodstuff at an affordable price to their customers. Managing their own markets and challenging the down-spiralling prices of their foodstuff in agro-industrial system avoids what Tilzey describes as, “the conformity of producing within the narrow frame of social-property-relation for maximising profit by externalising environmental and labour costs” (2018: 30).

The methods that are used to assess financialised estimates or to assign monetary metrics to resources in the state/market system are inadequate for assessing food production for a commons’ market (Pazaitis et al. 2022). The value system of the commons encapsulates basic life-support systems for nature and communities, it recognises the culture, heritage and ecosystems that produce food. For example, at Reyerhof in South-West Germany these are elementary aspects when they calculate a price for the Demeter-movement (Reyerhof 15.12.22). Except for the Demeter-farms that are worker cooperatives, the wealth produced from their products is not distributed in a collectively agreed ratio amongst its workers (Gibson-Graham 2008). How can value be understood in an individualised production system that organises around nature and produces food for the local community, but also allows producers to make a living from it? CA offered a new model for setting a ‘just price.’ The price is set collectively amongst producers and ideally, also with consumers. It subordinated the market to nature and to the livelihood of the farmers (see Chapter 8.2.). Referring to CampiAperti’s Charter of Principles (Chapter 5), it says in the first paragraph:

“The solidarity economy is preferred to a market economy because it allows to establish forms of practical solidarity between consumers and producers, united by the pursuit of common objectives, such as *health, the environment and the dignity of work*” (Author’s emphasis).

This definition valorises health, the environment and work. Although it did not draw on academic literature, it was based on their common initiative to self-govern food production and their economy.

The challenge for CA-producers is to embed the ecological and labour value system in their self-governed collaborative price-mechanism without reinvigorating the structural inequalities caught in the neo-liberal market. This solidarity economy is merited with being free from middle-men and their fuelling of lowering the prices amongst producers thereby unleashing competitive behaviour. By setting the price together, each of the farmers has an opportunity to

sell their food for the same price. Zac, the vegetable farmer puts it like this: “It would make no sense to offer the same products for different prices. Otherwise, the consumer goes to the stall with the lowest price and the other farmers do not sell anything” (12.12.2017).

Zac is one of the early participants at CA, who had experiences with the wholesale markets. The system based on the malpractice of middle-men had already earned protests from peasants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Edelman 2005) making the marketplace a continually confrontational place (Wood 2002). At the wholesale market individual farmers are pitted against each other with middle-men driving down the prices for generating the cheapest price for the good. Local farmers compete with ‘dealers’, who buy products from Egypt or elsewhere. A vegetable producer recalled a situation with the middle-men: “Why don’t you take our watermelons, they are local. And the middle-men replied, ‘because the Egyptian water melons are cheaper (Giorgio 15.03.2019).

The description from Giorgio hints towards a non-valorisation of foodstuff, labour and the environment, and at the same time, portrays the powerlessness of producers who are caught in this system. With self-governing the market farmers can control their own prices, as the grain producer said, “my products are valorised” (Gabriele 28.06.2018), “the money that I make at the CA-markets goes directly into my pocket minus the monthly six per cent fee for participating at the market (Lorena 07.03.2019).

Nevertheless, CA is competing with the cheap food offered at supermarkets. Especially grain producers feel the destruction of the grain production by the neo-liberal market. “The agro-industry receives financial assistance from the CAP-system” (Erika 20.03.2018) and are able to flood the markets with their cheap foodstuff (Bernstein 2014, Vivero-Pol 2017). A 500gr package of Barilla pasta costs 0,70 cent, which outcompetes them. “Prices for grains have fallen so much that it is not worthwhile anymore to produce pasta” (Claudia 05.06.2018). Her concern about the falling prices of grain is mirrored in the flour price, which on the cheapest end of the price margin is about €0,60 cents per kilo offered at supermarkets, and on the other end, is the organic non-wheat pasta at the cost between €2,00 and €2,70,-, which is a price range comparable with the producers of CA (field notes). “The prices at the supermarkets are an orientation for setting our own prices”, says Zac (12.12.2017). At the same time, it makes it very difficult to make the product affordable for consumers and directly compete with the supermarkets.

“But after all, people have to buy our food. If we do not make our products affordable to the consumers, there won’t be any consumers to buy our products. That’s why we are asking consumers to come to our meetings when we are setting the price so that we can find a balance between an affordability for the consumer and the ability of farmers to make a living” (co-producer 1, 12.12.2017).

The invitation to consumers to participate in the price negotiation is a form of commoning, where producers and clients re-organise together the relations of their co-existence, “[which] implies a new definition of social property and the distribution of the social wealth” (Echeverria 2015: 25). While CA recognises the role of the consumer in the solidarity economy for setting the ‘just price’, (Edelman 2005), a reciprocity between producers and consumers is difficult to establish. “In reality clients do not come” (Petra 02.10.2018), instead “prices are negotiated at the market stall” (Gemma 12.06.2018)

The process of setting the prices amongst producers is not always smooth, especially “when some farmers experienced a bad harvest. The price-setting becomes then a hagggle” (Petra 02.10.2018). Giorgio, the vegetable producer described it like this:

“One says, the price for the garlic is 7 Euro. But then somebody says that I can’t sell them for €7. The price is too low because some of my garlic has gone rotten. Can we agree on €7,50? But if the people think that €7 Euro is the right price, the person suggesting €7,50 has to bite its tongue. All prices for the fruits and vegetables are set like that” (Giorgio, 10.06.2018).

In this example, the farmer is sanctioned for his free-riding (Sauvetre 2018) because prices are not increased to accommodate the farmer that experienced a pest problem. Although pests are real economic risks for farmers, the farmer can be seen as a free-rider, as he has not taken any steps to avert his pests “by taking advantage of the collective benefits without assuming individual costs” (Sauvetre 2018: 84). “Pests can be managed and remedies for pest control are readily exchanged amongst producers on the CA-market” (Valentino 10.04.2019). This intervention indicates that CA protects their boundaries from other producers to lower their rigours in production standards, “which would effectively have an adverse effect on the PGS” (Marzia 28.05.2018).

Finally, the collaborative price-mechanism attracts new producers to their markets. The benefit of organising the price-system collaboratively by farmers is that it is orientated towards small-



scale or family-run farms. In self-organising, it collides against state's representative democracy, the imposed unimpeded competition and coercion, which interferes with the free development of humans (Stout 2010). This attitude is mirrored in the proliferation of CA's markets in Bologna within the past fifteen years. Rather than only signalling that the collaborative price-mechanism offers an opportunity for economic survival for producers, it also aims to de-commodify the social contract upheld by representative democracy and pushes for re-evaluating the authentic relationship with producers and consumers (McSwite 2006). Apart from single consumers negotiating the price on the stall, in general an authentic relationship with the consumer has so far not been formed at CA. I will discuss the social contract more in Chapter 8.3. This impairs the aim by CA to build the market as a commons. Commoning is about the (re)production of subjectivity and can be used as a strategic site for building and sustaining power (De Angelis 2017, Zechner 2021). To put it differently, consumers caught in the social contract prevent the generation from collective interest and from social bonds, and in a way re-enforce the production of neo-liberal subjectivities, in form of individual entrepreneurial ship, within capitalist's value of measure.

### **7.10. The measure of exchange-value**

In this section I will go beyond the 'just price' setting and elaborate on components that had been externalised in capital's measurement of the valorisation of exchange between producers and consumers. Giving value to health, the environment and work CA's food production cannot be calculated in the same fashion as commodified foodstuff for the agri-food system, that is per kilo or per litre and neither in how many hours are spent on producing a product. As Petra, the vegetable producer explained:

“a 'just price' is difficult to obtain when the calculation for the price is based on one hour of farming activity. There are no such things as sustainable prices...A green bean takes a lot of time to pick, it does not weigh much, you have to hoe constantly, and the green beans like water. Picking a kilo of green beans is different than to harvest a kilo of cabbage. The cabbage costs €2,20 a kilo” and the green beans €5,-- for one kilo” (Petra, 02.10.2018).

Although CA-producers sway away from the kilo measurement as well as from the hourly calculation of farm work – a typical ratio in industrial agriculture - as this comment suggests, self-exploitation of the farmer still exists. Referring to Chayanov, Van der Ploeg reminds us, “it is a neutral term referring simply to the net product of peasant labour” (in White 2018: 1123). It

enables us to ask how the reproduction of food is organised, what Bernstein describes to avoid the 'simple reproduction squeeze' referring to the 'vicious cycle of low productivity, low quality and low prices' where peasants absorb all the financial risks (Bernstein 1977, Purcell et al. 2018).

As Luisa, the vegetable producer, described her planning of production in orientation to the desires of the consumers: "I only plant runner beans because my customer wants them. A lot of manual labour goes into cultivating them without making a profit" (26.10.2018), raising questions on how the 'just price' is calculated. The tension of the negotiated 'just price' is narrated between affordability and sustaining farmers' livelihoods, that consists of covering the expenses for making the product, such as energy, pots, fodder, bills for the veterinarian, machinery, investments and wages of agricultural workers (Lorena 07.03.2018, Rocco 16.06.2018, Gabriele 28.06.2018) and for investing into next year's production (Giorgio 10.06.2018, Claudia 25.03.19, Remo 14.05.2019).

Indeed, when breaking down farmer's work into hourly units with the corresponding pay, it would depict the agricultural work as self-exploitation, as the vegetable farmer explains: "if I calculate my hourly wage, it is below the minimum wage. It makes no sense to calculate my farming activities in this way" (Petra 02.10.2018). CA-producers tend to look at their work as what Chayanov portrays as a "household dynamic" in subsistence farming, however, go beyond what Chayanov describes as where one's own labour is squeezed out and experiences drudgery (in Edelman 2005: 333). Although CA-producers are not subsistence farmers, nevertheless, CA-producers seek a stable subsistence as it would be in subsistence farming but plan their output in a mix of their craftsmanship abilities and consumer-orientated production "rather than a higher-risk maximum return (Scott 1976 pp.15-19).

As established previously, the CA-production limit is defined by their human, animal, and soil capacities and is regulated by the natural cap on productivity. Therefore, from my research has emerged, that in created agroecosystems, the calculated monthly income mirrors the value of the production and reproduction system from a *relational basis between their material and immaterial resources and their human capacity*. There is much more emphasis on the reproductive work (Van der Ploeg 2020) that takes into account the interconnection between production and reproduction on micro-farms (Bernstein 2014). In this line, the farmer has to work out how much income s/he needs a month to survive and what does it take to produce it.

“But it is not sufficient to say, I produce this x-amount of cheese. I have to calculate the land I need for the cows, for letting them graze and to produce hay and fodder in the winter months, and how much time I can spend on working the land. Because I need to milk them, make the cheese and sell the cheese” (Gabriele 28.06.2018).

Being in charge of all the production stages with very minimal external reliance, time is allocated to the reproduction, production and distribution of the foodstuff. One popular way to secure the farmer's income is to master their craft very well. The established cheese-farmers at CA offer a variety of cheese from very cheap, such as Ricotta or salt cheese about €4,--/kg to smoked cheese €16,--/kg or Gorgonzola €25,---/kg (field notes). Vegetable producers employ a different strategy and devise an agricultural plan tabling the fruits and vegetables into 'hard work' (runner beans) and 'easy work' (cabbage) or 'distinct' (asparagus) and 'common' (tomatoes) categories. “I only plant fruits that are bigger than a cherry. The time for picking a kilo of cherries or a kilo of apples differs, and so does the price (Valentino 10.04.2019). Unlike in subsistence farming where the surplus of household consumption goes to the market (Mies 2000, Scott 1977). At CA the calculation assimilates to an entrepreneurial farmer because the farmer specialises in a craft that is typical to an artisan farmer.

Another important element that was briefly mentioned earlier in the price calculation but requires more consideration, as it hinges on agroecological farming, is the planning of reproduction and long-term investments (Migliorini and Wezel 2017). On CA-farms, the artificial construct of alienation to nature is repealed with the farmer's consideration of animals' and land's natural productivity and reciprocity. With the elimination of petroleum-based external inputs, the vegetable and the grain producer limit their production to the seasons and give the vegetables and the fruits the time to grow at their own pace. At the farms with the animals, the farmers work in rhythm with the cows, sheep or goats, and calculate the reproductive period of about four months. “I look after my cows during this period, and they look after me during the rest of the year”, says Gabriele (28.06.2018).

Although they do not make any income from the animals during this period, the reproductive tasks are compounded with long-term investments and benefits the survival of the farm and of the animals. “Treating the animals as animals, they live twice as long as cows standing in the stable” (Gabriele 28.06.2018). Because farmers are very rooted in their craft, they want to expand their knowledge and expertise. A lot of time is spent on investing in reproducing their materials for expanding their production for example 'by breeding their own stock' (Anita 19.07.2018). Breeding stocks are carefully raised over the years instead of animals being bought

from the market; or at the beginning of their production sites different cow or chicken races are tested before breeding them; seeds (mostly grain and legumes, less vegetables and trees) are carefully selected, saved and genetically crossed for next year's planting achieving a good quality of grain, seed or animal variety through test and trial, and contributes to regenerate a self-governance for giving a higher value in farming system (Esteves 2017). It facilitates the process of achieving market independency from the social-property-relations and regain control over the labour processes (Van der Ploeg 2008), and is what Giorgio describes as 're-investment of the farm' (10.06.2018).

### **7.11. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the production as a site of struggle where two different value systems converge. On the one hand there is the state enforcing rules and regulations in production adapted to capitalist-intensive production, whilst on the other hand, the state has been confronted with a value system merited on agroecological practice. I illustrated that the process of materialising their value system is a practice of agroecological farming unleashing new methods of self-governance.

Through commoning, producers self-certify their production systems according to their own agreed standards and sell their products at a collaboratively agreed price. These two autopoietic mechanisms, the participatory-guarantee-system and the collaborative price mechanism, present an alternative strategy to capitalist-intensive production and distribution. The perseverance of these two mechanisms is only possible through the committed participation of members to CA assemblies and governance and is based on the need to share responsibilities as well as to discuss solutions together for solving problems outside of the social-property-relations nexus.

A place of contest is the created boundaries of the PGS that defines the access to the market, where some contradictions emerge, specifically to encounter the exclusion of participating at the market. Unlike in institutional commons where access to the CPR is exercised by measuring their sustainability rate (Brewers 2012), the boundary for accessing the CA-markets are permeable allowing a negotiation of responding to new circumstances, such as recognising the need for urban producers without land. It shows that the commons are created by those who are participating in it, even though it means that foundational merits, such as 'working with the land' can be altered in order to accept new economic circumstances. This strength of being self-

critical avoids the risk of implosion or stagnation and opens new opportunities for new and young farmers with little resources and shows new signs of solidarity amongst producers.

The final part of the discussion revolved around the collaborative price mechanism, which is complementary to the PGS, as it extends the autonomy of production on the market. The self-organised price-mechanism is to replace middle-men malpractices and to avoid competition amongst the farmers to prevent exploitative labour and ecological practices or closing down farms altogether.

This mechanism aims to establish a just price for the producers and consumers in order for farmers to sustain their livelihood and at the same time, to make the food affordable for consumers consisting of families, students and workers. However, finding the right balance for the just price consists of swaying away from a price per unit instead of making an income comprising the whole food production system of the farm, considering the farm as a micro peasant economy (Edelman 2005).

The next chapter deals with the market as a site of struggle, opportunities and limitations. It discusses the generation and circuits of social wealth and the relationship between producers and consumers. The access to the market is a struggle in itself and thus arguing the public space is a site of antagonism with the Council of Bologna. The discussion reverts to structural coupling on the involvement of different agencies for creating the market. Moreover, it discusses the self-governance of the markets as a necessity for maintaining autonomy in production and investigates how commoning amongst the producers are played out by the producers.

## Chapter 8

### The market – struggles, opportunities and limitations

#### 8.1. Introduction

After discussing the different value systems and practices around the peasant condition and the state, this chapter explores the self-governance of the market as a commons. In the previous chapters I coupled the peasant condition with the conceptualisation of the commons to show that commoning is a tool that is used to develop labour autonomy in the practice of farming. I illustrated the interrelation of labour autonomy in production and how production and market are interrelated spaces. The sale of foodstuff is the last stage of the cyclical farming process (Van der Ploeg 2008), which is now discussed in the context of their self-governed market.

The common thread of the thesis is the emancipation process from the state and the market, as a value practice for gaining critical strength (Centemeri 2018). The differences between surplus value, social wealth, commodities and common good needs to be better understood. The discussion outlines how the self-governance model is still dependent on a market, albeit not the capitalist market. Furthermore, it emphasises the pivotal role of the ‘right to access the urban area’ (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014).

The following chapter explores the embodied practices of coalescing with the urban social movement through structural coupling and the strategies used to manifest autonomy in production and on the market. As the formation of the commons invokes an emancipation process from capital, I further analyse the methods used to preserve CA’s market rules and whether the embodiment of their new value system withstands the competitive behaviour amongst producers and with the capitalist market. I consider how these strategies were developed to establish a market as a commons where the foodstuff is heralded as a common good (De Angelis 2017). By considering the attributes of trust, empowerment and conviviality that are made meaningful by the alliance of producers and consumers and placed within the ‘imaginary’ for a market as a commons.

I explore how ‘competitive behaviour’ and the newly formed social relations constitute the common good, rather than the dependency relations to the market. ‘Boundary commoning’ in the urban context provided an opportunity to investigate the governance and autonomy required to overcome obstacles’ and the limitations of the practice and politics (Bresnihan and

Byrne 2014, Ruiz Cayuela 2021), and the opportunities and limitations for embodied action to deepen the 'shared knowledge' about how food was grown (Gliessman 2015).

I start by elaborating on the social wealth and the role that the established direct relationships with the consumers played in the creation of the social wealth. This involved the intermingling of the self with other producers and consumers and was emphasised in accounts of embodied market encounters. This is followed by investigating the multiple social subjects involved in the formation of the market discussed through the lens of structural coupling. As part of protecting their autonomy in production, CA self-governed their markets at which producers had to adhere to market rules that were established to navigate the sale of foodstuff, bureaucracy of the market and the social interaction amongst producers in relation to their sale. After this discussion, I describe their struggles for accessing and maintaining a market with the Council of Bologna whereby I argue that market spaces have become sites of struggle. This discussion qualifies to a certain extent the exuberance around 'market dependence' for social embeddedness (Hinrichs 2000). Despite the collaborative price-mechanism used to eradicate competition, I critically reflect on the diversification of production and what constitutes 'competitive behaviour in the market as commons'. I conclude with a discussion on the economic limits of CA-markets that includes revisiting the emerging entrepreneurial activities outside of CA-markets.

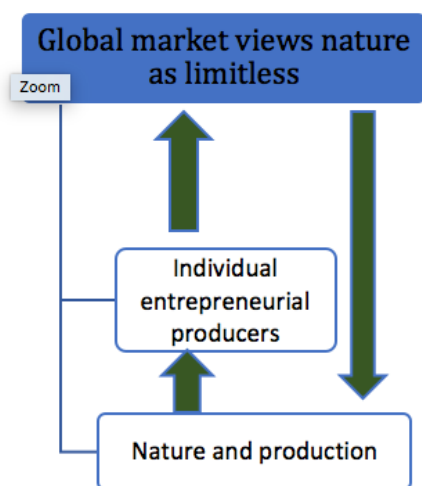
## **8.2. Social wealth**

As I am examining the CA-food system as a commons, it may seem contradictory to claim that CA-farmers required a market in order to survive. However, the final cycle of farming is the sale, or non-sale, of the product and the market provides a location for that to occur (Van der Ploeg 2008). Conceptualising the commons typically assumes that the resource system is de-commodified and the monetary exchange for buying food has been usurped by mutual aid and solidarity exchanges relations (Chatterton et al. 2013). This idealised form of exchange implies that food production is a monetary-free system, with labour, services and resources embedded in a self-governed system that is free of monetary value. To date, such a sophisticated and integrated market exchange has yet to come to fruition. However, different types of market forms exist that exchange free labour, services, and resources independently from each other (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013).

The creation of an enduring market as a commons relies upon market exchange. This contradicts the idea that a commons is external to the capitalist market and challenges the

notion that commons are an alternative to capital. The radical assumption is that monetary exchange inevitably leads to a capitalist food system (Tilzey 2020). As discussed below, the urban social movement finds it highly problematic to monetarise food exchange in a commons. I approached this dilemma by exploring how the features and purpose of the monetary exchange could be changed to facilitate the creation of a market that was effectively a commons. This originated from the idea that a commons is produced by the users of the commons, who develop their own rules, patterns and features “through practices of appropriation and investment” (Blomley 2008: 320). This position asserts that farmers have a right to survive as a farmer, to decide where their produce can be sold, to whom and for what purpose. This understanding of the ‘right to sell’ “challenges capitalist relations by prioritising use-value over exchange-value, and by grounding the right in use rather than in private property” (Fournier 2013: 443). As claimed by CA, it is the right of those who inhabit Bologna and surrounding rural areas to use the space of the city, to use, produce and sell in it. From this perspective, CA re-appropriates spaces from capital, which were initially taken from the community in the first place. The re-appropriation of spaces for generating a commons shows that commoning extends beyond resource allocation and preservation, as Ostrom suggested in her work (1990). A market can become a commons through collective use and self-governance. The self-imposed rules demarcate the boundaries which either include or exclude farmers.

**Figure 8.1. Market-oriented production**



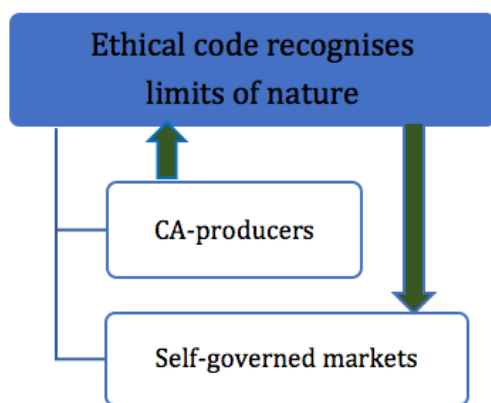
The significance of re-appropriating spaces for the market hinges on the collective aim by CA-producers to re-appropriate the market rules from capital in order to liberate food production from its constrictive rules. As previously argued, the implementation of global market rules involved the subjugation of production to the market (Chapter 6). Only producers orientating their production to standard market rules were given an economic opportunity in the global market (see Figure 8.1.).

However, the attempt by capital to enclose the market places the livelihoods of farmers in a precarious position and was met with resistance from local communities (Roman-Alcalá 2013). The subjugation and dependency on the global market has been contested by critical farmers



and the global social movement for food sovereignty. These groups have interrogated the loss of autonomy in production, the loss of access to the market and ultimately the loss of their livelihoods. The protection of their livelihoods was central to generating new forms of antagonism and solidarity (Hardt and Negri 2009). Mobilising around protecting nature, production and the market from global capital required a long-term strategy that was based on common values, group identity, shared understandings, and repertoires of tactics (De Angelis 2007, Linebough and Rediker 2000).

**Figure 8.2.: The ethical code in production ruling CA-markets**



The aim of CA and the entire food sovereignty movement is to secure self-governance over the natural commons to produce and sell food. Farmers meet to discuss, experiment, and develop strategies to secure their own survival. If the commons is political and acts as a vanguard to capital (De Angelis 2007), farmers should apply a new ethical code at their individual production sites, as the PGS did for CA (see Chapter 7). The introduced ethical code places a 'natural' limit on their production (Chapter

6) and the market is secondary to nature. This inversion of the position of market and production changes the way food is produced (see Figure 8.2.).

In commoning, a dynamic and generative process is invigorated. As previously mentioned in Chapter 7, the PGS created self-governed markets in order to earn an income. This contradicts the notion of establishing a monetary-free society where participants provide their goods and services for free and no monetary exchange occurs. A monetary-free society might exist in a certain place and time, like at a protest camp or at a social centre (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014, Chatterton et al. 2013), but this was not the experience of farmers, most of whom had families and had to deal with the daily chores of their family lives and their work as farmers (field notes). Indeed, the imaginary society with no monetary exchange is contested by those who are trapped in unpaid housework and other positions of social inequality that are embodied in persistent low-income and poverty, which mainly affects women (Federici 2004, 2020). They refuse to be the vanguard of society to alter the socio-economic structure towards a monetary-free society when most of society demonstrably does not intend to move away from their paid jobs to join the monetary-free society.

The transformation of the capitalist food system into a food commons with a monetary free exchange is far more complex than simply replacing monetary exchange with features of commoning like solidarity or mutual aid. In the previous chapters I discussed the farming practices of cheese producers, beer and vegetable producers etc.. I wanted to understand how our basic food is produced and how commoning in farming and production, was enacted. Central to my discussion was the aim to be autonomous in production and in reproduction, which is a prerequisite to abolishing monetary exchange. So far, the commonisation of our basic needs and the self-governance of our resources has only occurred in pockets of our society (Centemeri 2018, Morales-Bernados 2019). How can these practices of expanding the autonomy over resources, seeds, energy, market and land be extended? As long as these resources are not self-governed and commoning over these resources does not exist, monetary exchange will remain part of the commons system. This does not mean that food commons do not exist, it simply highlights where the struggle around resources has yet to take place to liberate food production and distribution from the capitalist system completely.

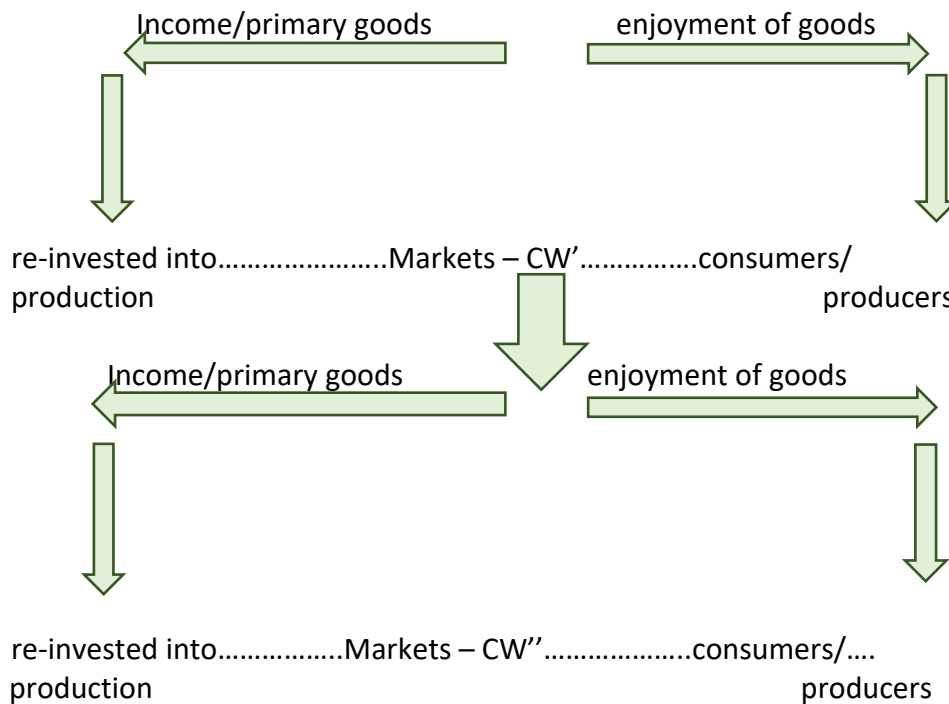
Critics of monetary exchange point out that once goods are on the market, they are effectively transformed into commodities (Tilzey 2018). This inevitably creates conditions where people can only access these commodities if they have enough money to buy them. It creates and recreates a structural social inequality between those who can and cannot afford local, organic food. Goodman et al. observed this phenomenon in his study on the Londoner's farmers' markets (2012). From the commons perspective there is an ambivalent relationship to market exchange and governing the market as a commons. On the one hand, CA producers are dependent on the market exchange. As one cheese farmers said: "If I do not sell my cheese, I cannot buy the barley for my sheep. Without the barley, they go hungry and I cannot make cheese. Without cheese I lose my livelihood" (Rocco 16.06.2018). This comment reflects the ambivalence CA-producers experienced between autonomy and market exchange. Whilst they were attempting to alter their production so they could increase their autonomy, they did not aim to produce commodities within the cycle of unlimited accumulation of commodities to maximise profit, nor were they interested in dispossessing other people of their resources to reproduce their production cycle. This ambivalence occurs outside of the dominant market relations (Fournier 2013). Complete autonomy over food production and distribution has yet to be realised, as such, groups like CA had to find a way to navigate the world as it is. CA appropriated market exchange from the capitalist system and aimed to commonise market exchange by setting the prices for their foodstuff collectively and self-organising their markets. Producers of each specific market had a monthly meeting where the needs, problems and activities for the following meeting were discussed. The coordinator of each market sent the

minutes to the CA's email account (field notes). In this process of creating a market as a commons, CA-producers co-created their conditions for maintaining the market they depended on to secure their livelihood. This dialectical relation between capitalism and the commons can only be understood, as Fournier writes: "if we see the commons not only as a finite pool of resources but also as a social process of production and organisation" (2013: 434). In this sense, to create a food commons without market exchange, commoning in production needs to occur and overlap with the reproduction of energy, seeds, land and market.

By self-regulating the commons as a market, CA-producers attempted to interrupt the cycle of dependency on market-oriented production. Instead, they initiated an emancipation process from capital's market by co-organising their own markets with local neighbourhoods, social and community centres. In the emancipation process, new alternatives and a diversity of exchanges were formed. For instance, producers interacted with and responded to their consumers by "listening to their needs and likes and think of ways to introduce these products into production" (Marzia 28.05.2018), or "alter the taste of a product and see whether this improves the quality of the product" (Gabriele (28.06.2018). In a different example, producers exchanged their goods for consumption and production (field notes) and "in this way we create short supply chain" (Luisa 16.10.2018). Once these exchanges occurred regularly, a long-time support system for each other's livelihoods emerged. The previous capitalist relations were transformed into direct social relations, and were continuously reinvigorated with each exchange. Through commoning, CA appropriated capital by mediating this exchange and were able to recover from capital's malpractice (Zibechi 2012). In this sense, the exchange of goods for money within CA's food economy cannot be compared to the exchange-value in capital's commodity cycle. The exchange-value in capital's circuit is premised on limitless extraction of labour and nature in order to minimise the costs of production to increase surplus value and maximise profit. CA farmers' production was limited by the dialectical relation between the limits of nature and human capacity (see Chapter 6 and 7). This is the core for generating social wealth. Social wealth cannot be understood in a material form, such as monetary value, rather it should be considered as the actualisation of production by those who are producing and consuming it (De Angelis 2017, Bollier and Helfrich 2012). The social wealth generated at CA-markets can be visualised in a cycle illustrated below:

**Figure 8.3.: Social wealth as created by CA**





The cycle of generating social wealth at CA-markets reflects a self-producing commons. The income earned in each cycle is used to initiate another cycle. This is akin to what Centemeri writes about the actualisation of commoning, that “[commoning is] orientated to the objective of maintaining and reproducing situated life processes” (2018: 296). This is further elaborated by Echeverría, who considers production as a system of social reproduction in its own totality (2015: 25). By controlling the money flow from the markets, farmers can extend the autonomy of the peasant condition (Van der Ploeg 2008, Scott 1976). As Marzia said: “the money that I am earning at the market goes back to re-invest on my farm and be able to develop my craft” (28.05.2018).

In the next section, I discuss the consumer’s role in the circuits of social wealth and focus on the dis-alienation amongst producers and consumers from the producer’s perspective.

### 8.3. Common good and the producer-consumer-relationship

The reciprocal relationships amongst producers and consumers are based on the common good. Building on the definition of the common good that encapsulates the myriad of social relations involved (Chapter 3), the ‘two-fold character of the common good is situated in use-value’ (De

Angelis 217: 30-31). At CA this was underscored by their practice of referring to their consumers as co-producers (Gemma 12.06.2018). This expressed the reciprocal responsibility of producing and consuming food. Indeed, the exchange between CA-producers and their customers was dubbed by Petra as 'the social-binding-contract' (13.01.2018). However, describing CA's relationship with their consumers as a social-binding-contract implies that the sole responsibility for creating a new food system resided with the producer. Indeed, most consumers at CA used the markets to do their weekly shopping or to socialise at the markets (field notes). The creation of a market requires significant time and effort, such as scouting out a new place, connecting with the local association or neighbourhood, dealing with the local authorities for market and parking licenses, coordinating the farmers and organising advertisements for the new markets (field notes). Most consumers are oblivious to the obstacles to accessing the urban area but they like the idea of 'support us by buying our food' (Gemma 12.06.2018). CA described their consumers as co-producers, which reflects their stated aim to increase the active participation of consumers in their network. CA-producers knew that their customers must be involved in building alternative short supply chains with local agriculture (Albiero and Moralli 2021). However, this language suggests that solidarity with a local food system was still based on the role and attributes of producers and consumers. Max had been going to CA-markets since their inception and described the relationship between consumers and producer like this: "CA's struggle is concrete, because it is about food rooted in the territory. It speaks to me and I assume to many people here this is the same. What they are doing is very important" (12.12.17).

Echeverría describes the creation of a new food system as social interaction in use-value between producers and their customers that merges into "a system of relations of co-existence" (2015). This co-existence is manifested by a steady collaboration between producers and consumers with each of them having set roles and responsibilities. However, their producer-consumer relationship indicates that most consumers at CA were not prepared to transition from the purely economic relationship with the producer to being actively involved in the shaping of the food system. They did not appear to want to move 'from consumer to critical citizens' (Welsh et al. 1998, Bellamy and Ioris 2017). The term 'critical citizen' refers to the rights and responsibilities consumers have towards local, healthy and cheap food and the role they play in participating in a self-managing food system (Fairbairn 2000, Renting et al. 2012). Based on the fieldwork I completed at CA-meetings, attendees were primarily producers. This suggests that consumers were either not interested in being more involved or that the CA-producers failed to make it clear to consumers that there were opportunities for them to participate in the organisational structure of the market and with committees within the CA-

organisational body.

“Our meetings are open to customers to participate in the formation of CA but apart from a few consumers taking up a more active role in self-governing the food system, still the main role consumers hold is as their customer. Only a few dedicated consumers have joined committees and taken on responsibilities for example the finance or is active in the PGS or event Committee” (Ivano, 18.12.17).

This lack of interest was apparent at the market and general meetings. I only noticed a small number of consumers who had taken responsibility for one of their committees. There were two active consumers at the meeting. One of them was committed to completing accounts and making an annual budget plan (GAM 18/02/2018), and the other one kept CA informed of the government’s changing regulations that affected production (GAM 26/11/2017 and GAM 24/03/2018). There was no indication of meetings at their markets, at the gates or at their stalls. I did not see any poster announcing a meeting. Indeed, I was only aware of their meetings because I subscribed to their mailing-list. It appears that CA-producers were waiting for the consumers to approach them rather than proactively recruiting them.

At the market I asked producers whether consumers had approached them about the Genuino Clandestino symbol, or whether consumers were curious to know about their life as a producer, they said: “Some of them ask us about our lives as a producer. But many of our customers do not fully understand the political aspect of what we are doing. They don’t know how the food system works and how difficult it is to produce the food they buy. Many of them are more interested in buying the food. It’s more about cultural heritage and taste” (Valentino and Antonio 05/03/2018).

Rather than promoting the common valorisation of sustainability, development, solidarity or mutual aid (De Angelis 2017) this relationship re-enforced the material relation between producers and consumers and undermined the potential of defining CA’s foodstuff as common goods. Although Echeverría argues that the direct relationship between producers and consumer interrupts the commodity cycle (2015), it does not necessarily shift consumers towards understanding the structural political dynamics of the complex food system. Consumers notice it by the price difference between supermarkets and their markets. As Luisa, a vegetable producer, said: “consumers refer to the noticeable price difference of runner beans. They ask why our runner beans cost so much more in comparison to the one in the supermarket. We explain to them that the labour conditions at these big farms are very inhuman, and besides, big

companies receive a lot of subsidies”.

This highlights a contradiction within the CA-structure and the consequences of CA's participatory-guarantee-system that was responsible for commercialising their food system. While the PGS conveyed transparency and trust to the consumers (see following sections), the producers remained responsible for dealing with local authorities to set up their farms and to organise access to their urban areas. Although the PGS demarcated the political boundary between CA and other farmers' markets and became a political strategy to subvert the political relations of the Council, in relation to the consumer it was a social contract rather than a shared political project. By referring to the relationship with the consumer as a social contract, CA-producers reduced their agroecological production to a business ethic to ensure they implemented procedural fairness (Donaldson 1994).

The problem here is that a social contract suggests a form of ownership over their created food system and the producer retained the responsibility for their food system. By doing so, the transition from a consumer relationship to a critical citizen through the mediation of commoning, for co-creating the food system together was either delayed or prevented altogether. After all, the economic transactions at their markets could not transform their foodstuff from a commodity into a common good, even though CA attempted to alter this relation by selling directly to consumers and self-governing their markets. Studies on direct-to-consumer selling highlights “the melding of personal and pecuniary relations in a distinctive market context” (Hinrichs 2000: 299). This was echoed by Erika, the fruit and vegetable producer: “I could sell my foodstuff at the global market, but then I would be removed from my customer” (20.03.2018). This idea was reenforced by Aurora, the herbal producer, who became agitated when asked to imagine selling her product over the Internet: “The idea of selling my stuff online is simply absurd. I would not be able to get to know my customers nor get a sense of how my products are responding to my customers” (25.02.2018). Despite their aversion to replicating an alienated relationship to their customers, the design of the markets did not automatically dissolve the ‘marketised and alienated relationship between consumers and producers, even though the direct exchange with consumers offers consumers the opportunity to materialize “the right for families to have access to local, healthy food” (Fairbairn 2012). Nevertheless, it challenges the idea of an equally shared co-existence in production and reproduction and suggests that social reproduction is mediated by the mutual market dependence of producers and their consumers. This mutual market dependency challenges the notion of a de-commodified food system in use-value, although the produced social wealth returned to the farms and benefited the consumers, generating reciprocal circuits of social

wealth based on trust, revalorization of the foodstuff and the support of the political associations of foodstuff (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, De Angelis 2017). In the following section I describe the aspects of trust, empowerment and conviviality and how it affected the CA producers' direct relationships with the consumers.

## **8.4. Trust, Empowerment and Conviviality**

As I have demonstrated, the producer-consumer-relationship at CA was primarily steered by the producer. CA producers were responsible for attracting consumers and establishing a relationship based on trust and alleviating the alienated relationship with a convivial atmosphere. Trust and conviviality were two aspects that generated empowerment for the producers.

### **8.4.1. Trust and Empowerment**

CA's market rules required each producer to display on a placard or flyer the methods of production that they used. This had to be displayed at their stall (see Picture 7.4.), with each stall becoming "the social interface with the customers" (Danilo 27.02.2017).

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Trust was also signified by their Genuino Clandestino symbol. Each product had to have this symbol that indicated to customers that this product was scrutinised and adhered to its ethical code (see picture 7.5.). The PGS was a tool to generate trust (as discussed in Chapter 6) and was the most



Picture 8.1. Presentation of a farm

important factor in creating a reliable relationship with their customers. Petra, the vegetable producer, described this relationship,

"...as a motivator for producers to produce good quality foodstuff and unleashes a commitment by producers to preserve and deepen the relationship with their



customers, otherwise ‘producers would lose their face in front of the other producers and customers’ (Petra 02.10.2018).



Picture 8.2.  
Ingredients are listed  
on this label, certified  
with the GC-label.

Source: Author

Petra’s quote reminds us that their relationship was a social contract and it was the responsibility of the producer to manage this social contract. However, signs in the producer-consumer relationship indicated that this one-way relationship was diluted with “customers appreciating the authentic taste of food” (Rocco 16.06.2018). This was underscored by a long-standing customer:

“the food is fresh here. The pear taste of a pear, the cheese tastes of good cheese, that they find products here that cannot be found elsewhere” (co-producers 2, 08.06.2018).

Fresh seasonal food from the production was peppered with foraged for which added a whole new array to the meaning of biodiverse food. In another scenario, secondary farmers sold a mix of their raw and transformed foodstuff, which changed from season to season (field notes). Taste is an underestimated aspect of food, although it embodies connection to past, personal memories and revives pleasurable correlations between food and eating (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2008).

In the solidarity economy, the significant component is the symmetry what occurs between producers and consumers in use-value and remains in use-value during the exchange (Echeverria 2015). In the de-commodified food system, products are made for serving a purpose for the user (Marx 1977). Echeverria reflects on it further: “Because the product has a concrete use-value, the producer is never neutral in producing the product and determines by whom and for what it will be consumed (2015: p. 29). For example, the cheese-maker produces cheese for those who are eating cheese and develops a variety for consumers that pleases different tastes. “When I had developed new cheese products, I had put them on offer to consumers to try them out and get their feedback” (Gabriele 28.06.0218). This hints that the creation of a product is not done in isolation from the consumer, the consumer has an impact in the narrative of producing and reproducing in artisan production.

The direct relationship between the producers and consumers enabled consumers to provide producers with feedback about their foodstuff, “they give us feedback on taste, texture or affect” (Marzia 28.05.2018, Anita 19.07.2018). By doing so, consumers were no longer simply passive

receivers, but were engaging with the product and deciding how it should be consumed (Echeverría 2015). Producers listened to their consumers feedback and used this information to improve the quality of their foodstuff. Trust shifted from a producer-led initiative, and moulded into a reciprocal relationship with the customer. Signori and Forno ascribes this to the “changing attitudes of general behaviour” (2016: 480). The reciprocal relationship matured into an established trusted relationship over time, as the cheese-maker Gabriele explained:



Picture 8.3. Extracting oil from plants in a small, artisan fashion. Source: Author

“At the beginning when I offered my products, I was not very sure whether customers shared the similar tastebud. Also, when you are still inexperienced, mistakes happen and make you feel embarrassed. Now, when mistakes happen and they do, I can tell from experience what went wrong” (28.06.2018).

Early contact with their customers was beneficial for production as producers could incorporate the consumers’ wishes or reflect on comments made by customers about their products. Within an established trusted relationship, empowerment is the vehicle for “initiating transitions to cause wider transitions”, (Smith and Raven 2012: 1026). CA’s self-governance market functioned to

“shield, nurture or empower” knowledge (Smith and Raven 2012: 1027).



Picture 8.4. A cheese production workshop where each day milk of about 200 sheep is processed. Source: Author

With the examples above, I have shown that trust and empowerment were two crucial aspects of re-producing genuine goods. Those two aspects were illuminated through the direct relations that existed between producers and customers, which indicated that the foodstuff was more than an object in the moment of the exchange amongst producers and

consumers. Instead, it suggests that the foodstuff could be considered a common good as both

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the consumers and the producers were shaping and valuing the quality of the product (Echeverría 2015) in terms of texture, taste, and affect.

Picture 8.5. Cheese storage room in an old stone house. This cheese is produced by four cows. Source: Author

Finally, empowerment was also a vehicle for increasing productivity because the direct contact producers had with the customers provided producers with recognition for their work. Gemma referred to her customers as co-producers, “they

respect our hard work on the farms” (12.06.2018).

This attitude diverges from the binary view of the peasant as either subsistence farmers or entrepreneurial farmers and suggests that the self-governance markets co-created by CA-producers are a commons based on entrepreneurial activities. Unlike entrepreneurial farmers that are subjected to global market rules, CA-producers were constrained by how and in what they could invest.

#### **8.4.2. Conviviality**

The final aspect of re-establishing a producer-consumer-relationship was conviviality. By observing the interaction between producers and consumers at the market, it was apparent that the market spaces were a significant point of social interaction for forming relationships and practicing sociality, inclusion and solidarity. The circular arrangement of the market stalls conspicuously facilitated a conviviality between consumers and producers. As Marsden et al. (2000, p.425) suggested, “a key characteristic of short supply chains is their capacity to re-socialise or re-spatialise food, thereby allowing the consumer to make value-judgements about the relative desirability of foods on the basis of their own knowledge, experience, or perceived imagery”.

Each market had their stalls arranged in a circle as much as was physically possible. In the middle of the circle CA-producers put out the beer tables and benches they had brought with them. By providing a space for customers to share meals and drinks, the market became a space for social interaction and a space pronouncing ‘a profound sociality of being with a community’

Picture 8.6. Al Pratello market Source: Author

Picture 8.4. CampiAperti market Source: Author

(Neal et al. 2018), which is particularly ascribed to an urban practice (Neal et al. 2019). The urban practice was also brought alive by CA through the organisation of social events, such as music concerts, talks and films (field notes). This form of conviviality is what Neal et al. (2019) described as 'connective interdependency' and creates a symmetry with 'being in common'.

As Claudia recalled (05.06.2018) her experience at the social centre:

"The first social centre I entered was Labàs. This was a very positive experience. The kids, the old people, the people with Rasta, the dogs, the families. I saw a mingling of people that somewhere else does not exist. I see the kids running around, the families are sitting down and eating. But what I have seen at the XM, and what I have learnt from Campi Aperti, I have stripped away all my prejudices".

Her comment was underscored by another producer: "after we finish selling and packing-up our stuff, in the summer months we remain at the centre and mingle with the people" (Marzia 28.05.2018). Echoing Illich, Esteva reminded us that "the radical character of conviviality is to foster a transformative potential through social interaction and to diminish structural inequalities, which are associated with compensating the failure of state institutions" (Esteva 2014: i151).

### **8.5. The formation of CA's self-governed markets**

In this section I outline the social interactions of different social subjects, who were involved to varying degrees with the set-up of the self-governed markets. The need to sell foodstuff for survival is hampered by the experience of widespread enclosures of the public spheres and

markets (Swyngedouw 2011). The small farmers are in direct opposition to what Luisa postulated: “We have a right to access the urban area and sell our foodstuff!” (Luisa 26.10.2017). Having access to the city was intertwined with the realisation that food sovereignty required access to the local markets and to be able to compete with the foodstuff flooded by the agro-industries to outcompete them (LVC 2018).

Luisa’s comment points to the growing transformation of public spaces into ‘confrontational markets spaces’ (Edelman 2005), where the reclamation of market spaces ‘interrupts the spatial order of governance’ (Swyngedouw 2011), and at the same time, politicises the hierarchies of capital that cut through the social body of the community (Federici 2004).

In this enclosed urban space, CA-founders had approached the social centre XM24 in 2002 to ask them whether they could set up a couple of market stalls to sell vegetables and create a direct-sale market. The direct-sale market differs from other farmer’s market in Bologna as their foodstuff comes 100% from their production in contrast with the non-certified natural markets or open market stalls with foodstuff bought from the wholesale market (Luisa 26.10.2017). Back in 2002, CA did not have a licence to sell at the market and therefore the space at the social centre suited them. Social centres are self-governed and work on a horizontal consensus decision-making basis (Mudo 2004), and therefore share the idea of autonomous spaces “drawing together resistance, creation and solidarity across multiple times and spaces” (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 731). There was no immediate consensus amongst the social centre members to give CA access to their space. The dispute was about the ‘existence of monetary relations at our markets’ (Ivano 18.12.2017), which obviously was a clash of identities in the way anti-capitalist activities are articulated (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006).

Despite these differences, a structural coupling eventually took place between CA and the social centre. The structural coupling between two commons systems ‘allows the boundaries of one system [to] be included in the operational domain of the other’ (Luhman in De Angelis 2017: 292) with the social centre making its space available for constructing another commons system with their own identity. By accessing the social space at the social centre, the founders of CA could turn the market place into a political space, where generating social wealth became ‘a political activity’ itself (Swyngedouw 2011). The social centre space provided a fertile ground for experimenting with ‘new imaginaries’ around horizontal self-governance methods from a place-based basis (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014, Escobar 2001). In this way, they were able to continue with the emancipatory process from the agro-industry, although “at the beginning we had no idea what we were doing, and how we were going to do it. We had no plan, and we had

no idea how to confront problems and find structured solutions” (Luisa 26.10.2017). The pace of CA’s formation involved gradually naturalising new experiences with other farmers as a self-governed social body. With the growing participation of (non-/ and semi-) clandestine producers, the desire became to ‘leave the weak position of marginalisation” (Arampatzi 2017) and to structure the loose network of farmers into a legal body of an Association. Arno (15.06.2018) explained: “With the formation of an Association we have the constituent right to apply for market licences. *And* we decide who can participate at our market.” The market licence does not repeal the status of clandestinity of the farmer. Ivano explains:

“some clandestine farmers are confused about the bureaucratic system and think that with the body of an association they are not clandestine anymore. But they still are. We do not have the legal power to redeem that status. Once an authority came at our markets and asked one clandestine farmer for his papers. We all held our breath and watched. But he did not get a fine and since then they have left us alone” (18.12.17).

Although (semi-) clandestine farmers can be singled out by the authority. If a CA farmer incurs a fine, they would be supported by CA, since “it could have been easily anybody else of CA” (Gemma 12.06.2018). This form of solidarity narrates new ways of relating to others (Featherstone 2008) that is based on “shared needs and experiences” (Arampatzi 2017: 2162).

The practice of structural coupling is not limited to solidarity practice or sharing knowledge. The structural coupling of two commons systems “shape the environment of each other in such a way that both depend on the other for continuing their autopoiesis” (De Angelis 2017: 292). Unlike at XM24, the committee of the social centre Labàs asked CA to setup a marketplace at their centre. On market day, Labàs prepared pizza for an economic price to fund their voluntary social activities partially with the income generated at market day (field notes). These two self-managed activities complemented each other and attracted high numbers of visitors to the market.

In this table, I have summarised the characteristics of a market that could be considered as a commons.

**Table 8.1.: The characteristics of CA-markets as a Commons**

The CA-markets as a Commons				
Access to the market	Use of the market	Use Benefit	Responsibility	Ownership of marketplace
Negotiated by Campi Aperti's users with the Council and Social Centre, Associations	Negotiated by CA's users (producers, consumers)	a) earn an income; b) knowledge exchange; c) internal good exchange; d) communication on organisational matter; e) consumers buy local, organic food for the 'just price'	Assumed by CA's users and the social centres (when on social centre premises)	Public space: occupied/rented by social centre, Association, neighbourhood

Source: Author

### 8.6. The self-management of the market

In this section I explain the self-management of the market as a commons by bringing together different attributes of what makes a market as a commons. The market by CA is co-created with other producers, which is the only common physical space producers share. Creating a *market in common* is to take "ownership" over a necessity, which is here the market, as most producers do not qualify for the industrial market, or do not want to participate in it because of market disciplinary measures (field notes). Each market has their own coordinator, who is a producer from this particular market and is elected each year anew. The coordinator takes responsibility for the coordination of the market and oversees whether participants of the market follow the rules. Although markets are self-managed, they still have to follow the rules by the Council of Bologna. Enzo, the paid coordinator postulated like this:

"We have our market rules, how we are self-regulating the market, and on top of it, we have to follow the market rules from the Council, such as to stick firmly to the opening-times or each stall can only have three metres of selling space" (22.02.2019).

Every month each market holds their own assembly at which the participants in the market have to attend. If a producer participates at three markets, the producer has to take part at each of the three assemblies (field notes). In continuously co-creating the market, producers have to be committed long-term to practicing participatory democracy and be willing to experiment with the practice of self-governance (field notes), which are the pre-conditions to take 'collective responsibility for the space' (Bresnihan and Byrne 2014). A failure to show commitment to attending the assemblies, means the producer has to leave CA. This market rule was partially decided to avoid free-riders at CA, but also because decisions made by *consensus as a result of the horizontal decision-making process* ensure respecting and accommodating all ideas, interests and concerns. "This form of organization has a superior quality outcome for participants", writes Moragues-Faus (2017: 469), because it underpins the valorisation of equality and direct participation with the aspiration of building new social relations based on these values.

The participation of all participants in self-governing the market fosters a 'dis-alienation' amongst CA-producers. Producers are located in de-centralised small villages in the lowlands, hills and mountains in four provinces around Bologna (see map 4.2.) where each of them produces under the CA-ethos for the market. The best time for strolling through the market to observe and listen to the social interactions amongst producers was the hour before opening the market. In the hustle of bringing the goods into the market, setting up the gazebos, the tables and benches, producers get to know each other, forge relationships by exchanging their stories and experiences. Once everything is set-up and there was still time left before the market opens, producers visit each other at their stalls or form groups and talk about the decisions of past assemblies or share their concerns of what has occurred at their production sites, or just talk about what is going on politically in Bologna (field notes).

The regular encounters co-create a food system around an ethos of solidarity and trusted connections amongst producers, that is akin to what Federici writes: "In commoning, self-governance and solidarity are primary mechanisms by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created' (2008: 6). In establishing collective trusted relations, producers exchange their stories, experiences and activities of and in their fields. Through these vivid exchanges, producers learn new aspects about other life stories and deepen or dissolve the trust amongst each other.

The market coordinator has to ensure that responsibilities for the markets are taken care of and market rules are respected, such as paying the bills to the Council, dealing with the continuation



of the market licence, ensuring that farmers do not exceed the 3m market stall allocation or the agreed opening times (Gemma 12.06.2018). “Nevertheless, a lot of self-monitoring occurs at the market that could potentially lead from initial gossip talk into big frustration problems”, says Domenico the coordinator of CA. For this reason, he goes every day to the markets and sees if any problems have surfaced. “If I am not there and fix a problem immediately, who knows how big it gets. It is better I am there and feel into the vibes” (22.02.2019). What CA would do without him remains to be seen, in case he would leave CA.

But then CA-producers are very innovative in solving acute problems. Apart from the individual responsibility to participate regularly at the market, the market assembly collectively deals with maintaining a record of farmers’ presence at the market and “takes care of replacement issues when a producer leaves” (Arturo 06.05.2018). “At one of our markets a baker had left quite suddenly, because she had got twins, and a replacement baker was not immediately found”, recalled Aurora (10.03.2018). CA-market stalls are organised to ‘guarantee of a constant supply of great food variety’ (Marzia 28.05.2018) is threatened by the slow decision-making process at CA (Claudia 05.06.2018). Although, as Arturo said:

“We find multiple solutions to solve ‘somehow’ a problem immediately. It is in the interest of the market not to keep the baker’s place empty for a long time because it would interrupt the diversity of our foodstuff. One interim solution is that the market without the baker would ask bakers from other CA-markets to cover the gap, until a new baker would be found. But this is not with a guarantee” (Arturo 06.05.2018).

This comment shows that producers take on the full responsibility of the market by spreading the gap of not having fresh bakery stuff amongst producers since the baker from other markets can cover the baker’s place only for a certain time, because of its limited resources (Chapter 5). Instead of communicating consumers their problem ‘the loss of the baker’ to their customers and explain the disruption of their constant food supply, commoning is here reduced to engage producers in extra bread activities re-enforcing the one-sided relationship.

## **8.7. The struggle for markets**

The strategised emancipation process is accompanied with having to constantly negotiate with the Council of Bologna. The Council of Bologna is changing the conditions of negotiations and has introduced a reduction of the duration of the market licences from five to two years during the course of my fieldwork (field notes). As a result of these changes, all farmers’ markets

(organic or non-organic) in Bologna have to compete with each other for the bi-annual market licences. As Arno said exasperatedly: “The Council hands out a licence for supermarkets ‘each day’, while farmers like us, are struggling to obtain licences” (15.06.2018). The Council regulates the competition between farmer’s markets with the competitive procedures and creates inevitably a form of enclosure enforcing farmers to sit on the edge of losing their livelihoods. The Council has started the attack farmers and ‘dealers’, and in the case of CA, during a meeting organised by CA, where I provided the statistics on gender, small-scale farmers and waste in food production in Emilia-Romagna, one Councillor said:” What does CA want? We already had granted them a lot of concessions” (field notes 20.02.2019). The attack by the Council on the farmers’ markets is in response to the notion that their autonomy is problematic for the state and creates a tension which is akin to what Tilzey noticed in a situation when signs of farmers’ autonomy dominate over the state system, “the state cannot manage anymore the class struggle” (2018: 37).

It also indicates that capitalism is actively shaping the local community structures by binding the state into its structure. Behind the state’s recent introduced competition for market licences amongst producer groups is the intention for advancing the gentrification of Bologna. During the time of my fieldwork, two social centres, Labàs and XM24, where CA’s markets are located, had been appropriated for the purpose of using the ‘empty buildings’ for capitalisation (field notes 10.11.2017 and 23.05.2019). The social centre movement in Bologna is vital for the existence and proliferation of CA-markets in Bologna. Four out of their eight markets are situated in social centres. The appropriation of these social centres does not go without a fight (email discussion by Zac, Arno, co-producer 2, Lorena, Danilo, Aurora 21.05.2019-28.06.2019; field notes). Their structural coupling of the past seventeen years had overcome the initial doubts by the social centre toward CA. In the struggle to maintain the building under their self-governance, they jointly launched a campaign against the proposed demolition of the building (field note 21.05.20).

While the struggle for maintaining markets is constant, CA already scouted for a new market location. The location was introduced at one of the general assembly meeting and put up for discussion (GAM 28.02.2018).

“The market will be at a small public space, called San Rocco, in a neighbourhood within the city walls of Bologna. The market will be on a Saturday morning because people do their shopping at that time. We are thinking of setting up the market stalls shortly”, explained Ivano at a meeting.

Another producer raised his concern: "What is with the market licence? Do we have one yet?"

Ivano replied: "No, we don't. The idea is to go there with our stalls and start selling and start negotiating with the Council for the market licence".

The other producer interfered and said: "But what if we will get a fine?"

Ivano replied: "Why would they give us a fine. We go there with our cheese, wine, beer and vegetables. The worst what can happen is that they tell us to leave".

This tactic of occupying San Rocco before negotiating with the Council had been done with Piazza Verdi, a location in front of the university campus. Ivano, the beer producer explained: "We occupied there for one year. We started negotiating with the Council immediately and in the meantime, we built up support with students and established a new client base" (Zac 10.03. 2018). The occupation tactics that Ivano describes makes 'space political'. "Space", writes Žizek: "becomes an integral element of the interruption of the 'natural' order of domination through the constitution of a place of encounter by those that have no part in that order" (in Swyngedouw 2011: 376).

Their refusal to succumb to the Council and instead invoke a counter-hegemonic struggle by carrying out occupations with their market stalls until they find an agreement with the Council, where also their terms and conditions of the markets are met, is an example of how negotiation between commoners and the state can look like. As Pickerill and Chatterton argue, "if autonomy is a set of power relations,..., then there are no clear boundaries between autonomous and non-autonomous processes and space. Rather there is a constant negotiation between competing tendencies towards autonomy and non-autonomy (2006: 9). For preserving autonomy, CA is constantly in communication with the Council because they want to understand the ongoing dynamic within the Council, and to learn immediately about any rule changes (field notes). Paying constant attention to what is going on with the Council, is to not only disdain possible absorption into the system, but their pre-figurative politics are to re-build democratic relations with the state characterising the significance of autonomous rural-urban food systems.

## **8.8. Competition**

Through commoning, CA aims to share the marketplace with other producers where all the producers have an equal economic opportunity to earn an income. In cooperatives, the income

of the factories is presumably distributed amongst workers equally (Sitrin 2012), and under the capitalist's system value production is measured in competitive prices compromising on ecology and labour standards and reducing the standard of production. In contrast to CA's income, however, it is individually made on the basis of what the producer has sold under the CPM. Value of exchange is measured by the value given to the time spent for respecting the ecological and animals' ethos in production and the material and immaterial inputs used in production (Chapter 6). This value system is regulated by the autopoietic mechanism, the PGS, regulating the conditions for accessing the markets and "should also maintain production output in a balance" (Petra 02.10.2018). She explained further,

"if you have a surplus, you can't bring the whole prices of CA down, because then the whole PGS mechanism is destroyed. The PGS detects, for example, when a farmer produces too much of a common foodstuff, and the farmer pushes down the prices to attract more customers, the PGS controls the production of the producer, and whether it is not producing outside of the ecological ethos".

In addition, CA has structured their market in proportion to fruits and vegetables and specific crafts. The market rule is that each market is represented by one craft only, or better, one type of foodstuff apart from fresh fruits and vegetables "the proportion is by 60 percent fruits and vegetable and 40 percent other types of craft" (Aurora, 10.03.2018). In fact, it is not the craft that is categorised, it is the foodstuff. For example, at each market all three different cheese-makers could be present cow, sheep and goat cheese.

Although only one type of craft is allocated a place for each market apart from the vegetable and fruit producers, drawing on my field notes producers at CA have found alternative ways to subvert the rules of competition. It is evident that the diversification of the foodstuff grows with the development of their farming activities and technical possibilities on the farm. Many producers offer a diversity of foodstuff, for example, a vegetable farmer produces more common vegetables at the early stages of farming, then expands to a strawberry field and moves then on to produce table wine or grain (field notes). The diversification of their foodstuff explains the smaller number of stalls than in comparison to what is on offer, see Table 8.2..

This suggests that CA-producers show a form of individual entrepreneurialism coupled with the ambition for making a livelihood from farming. Their ability to work with the land has made

them proficient in their capacity as autonomous entrepreneurial farmers. While it can be argued that there are free-riders using the commons system of CA (Chapter 7), on the other hand, it can also be argued that the self-governance of food production system sets farmers free to experiment with new techniques and food items, as they have the mental and physical space to experiment outside of the state regulation system, and broadening out their economic and productive performances (Gibson-Graham 2008).

One decisive regulation in setting the prices for their goods is that “only products from their own production can be sold at their market” (Antonio 14.06.2018). “This clause repeals the Bologna City Council’s regulation of *mercati vendita diretta* (direct sale farmers markets) from 2009, which allows producers to enlarge their food sale with a 49 percent amounts of products from the wholesale market” (Petra 02.10.2018).

The purpose of this regulation is to avert the farmer’s risk to only rely on an income of their own production. But this regulation bears complacency, as Petra, the vegetable producer, explained: “There is no transparency. 49 percent that is almost half of what is on your stand. How do you control what comes from the external market?” (Petra 02.10.2018). The criticism of the permeable Council’s regulation hints to undermine local agricultural products. The experience of the vegetable producer Giorgio is very telling:

“Before I went to CA, I paid for a market stall at these farmer’s markets. It was in April. I came with my boxes of zucchini and salads, and next to me were all these stalls with nice and shiny-looking paprika, aubergines and so on. I asked them where you got them from. They told me from the wholesale market. That was it for me. I packed up and left” (10.06.2018).

The notion of only selling foodstuff that is produced on one’s farm increases the responsibility in food production. It is in the self-interest of the farmer to generate a system that produces enough in order to secure a living. However, at this congruence the economic vulnerability of the farmer to the self-governance food system by CA is shown, illustrating the individualisation of farms, raising concerns that commoning itself reveals shortcomings dealing with the state structure.

Table 8.2. Food Diversity at CA-markets

Food diversity at Market		Vegetable & Fungi & Conserve	Fruits fresh & dry	Pulses	Honey	Pasta & Flour	Cheese & Milk Product	Eggs	Olive oil & Vinegar	Bakery	Beer & Wine	Herbal products & Soap	Flowers	Street food
Location of market	Total Market stalls													
Piazza Verdi, Monday	16	10	5	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	-----
Venti Pietre, Tomino, Monday	13	7	6	1	1		2	1	1	2	1	1	-----	-----
VAG61, Tuesday	32	16	9	1	2	2	2	-----	1	1	1	3	1	1
Làbas in Vicolo Bolognetti, Wednesday	10	4	2	2	1	3	1	-----	3	-----	2	-----	-----	2
XM24, Thursday	33	12	8	2	2	4	3	-----	2	-----	5	3	1	4
Pieve di Cadore, Savena, Friday	27	12	6	3	1	4	4	1	2	2	3	4	-----	-----
Al Pratello, San Rocco Saturday	21	10	3	1	1	2	2	----	2	2	1	3	-----	-----

(Data taken from CA-website. Author: February/March 2019)

## 8.9. Limits of CA-markets and entrepreneurialism

As I have argued previously, farmers at CA are a hybrid of subsistence and entrepreneurial farmers in that, they are involved in entrepreneurial farming activities as well as in household production with the former having the priority in production. Here I discuss the limits of CA-markets departing from the recognition, from my field work, that the income produced at CA-markets is not sufficiently questioning the economic sustainability of their market as a commons. Although CA-markets only occupy 0,1% of their market share (field notes), the Council of Bologna is actively interfering with the existence of self-governed markets and continuously threatening them to close down or make them move losing their established relationships with their customers. The latter highlights the vulnerability of their relationship with their customers. It hints that customers remain in the position as customers rather than as 'activists' and support them wherever their next market location would be.

Therefore, producers manifest their economic stability by diversifying their economic opportunities in case one opportunity dries up. These multiple activities in branching out into entrepreneurialism became vividly evident when the Labàs market had closed down after the social centre, who had led the negotiation with the Council, lost the occupied space to a bank (field notes). Producers were taken back by the immediate economic loss of the well-managed and well visited market. "I have made about €400,-- an evening at Labàs, this is nothing in comparison to other markets", said Alberto (02.06.2018). Especially newer farmers, who were still building up their economic network were hardest hit by the unanticipated loss and thus were not prepared.

As discussed in the previous section, the social relationship between consumers and producers activates a form of entrepreneurialism that is dedicated to developing their own skills and abilities of their craft for diversifying their foodstuff and raise the quality of their products. With the closure of the markets, or better, as they know that markets are very vulnerable in their existence, farmers seek other economic opportunities to sell their products. Interestingly, producers use other markets or facilities outside of CA-markets to expand their individual economic opportunities (field notes). A popular alternative to CA-markets is the usage of the GAS network.

In addition, farmers engage with entrepreneurial activities centred around on-farm activities. Examples range from producers raising calves or sheep for meat-production outside of CA, or offering their animals for working with disabled people, running school projects on their farms, offering plant knowledge courses – all of them indicating toward an innovative approach to

survival that is found in entrepreneurialism in a sense that they are not relying on one market (Scott 1976, Van der Ploeg 2008). Indeed, farmers at CA seek out a variety of outlets to sell their foodstuff beyond the self-organised markets, as long as they do not compromise on CA-values. Shops, restaurants in local villages in proximity to their production base are popular outlets, and benefit from the value-added products based on agroecological products. But selling in the proximity of production is also to “connect with their community” (Arturo 06.05.2018). This is how Giorgio, the vegetable producer describes multiple economic opportunities:

“I have created a purchasing network that gives me flexibility in delivering the quantity of foodstuff I want to sell. There was one organic cooperative that wanted 100 percent of what I have. I would never give one network all of my foodstuff. It is economically by far too risky” (Giorgio, 10.06.2018).

If a farmer waters down the standard, or decides to participate irregularly at CA-markets, the farmers will be expelled (market rules Appendix). The self-monitoring of the PGS comes into effect and protects the implosion of the market altogether (Petra 13.01.2018).

However, the extension of economic opportunities outside of CA is ontologically speaking problematic. The food system by CA is not sufficient for farmers to make a livelihood, which stands in contrast to their first Principle of their Charter. To put differently, material autonomy is not guaranteed by their markets, indicating the limits of CA in the urban sphere. The limits of CA's material autonomy are also drawn by the Council, which has no long-term interest in local, small-scale farming realities, who experiment with new sustainable methods in agriculture. The Council's failure to grant them vacant spaces that would provide long-term solutions is of what Syngedouw describes as “policing the city” (2009). This means that their autonomous markets remain volatile in their urban presence and are always under a constant risk of closure.

Surprisingly, none of the farmers have joined the CSA-network, which might offer economic advantages as consumers pay the farmer in advance for their consumption and ensure a long-term commitment to the purchase of the goods. The idea of the CSA-model is to share the risks typically associated with a farmer's work, weather fluctuations, etc. Leonardo (02.02.2019) skirted with the notion of following the CSA-model:

“We have started with letting consumers help us with the farm at the beginning. When the consumers are here you have to explain to them where things are, what you are doing, what needed to be done. We've spent too much time in explaining to them and checking on their



work, that at the end it was all too time-consuming. We decided on going against it. It did not fit into our farm structure. For us having a market stall works at best”.

A vegetable farmer tried to bring her clients on her farm in a similar way: “I offered my clients to come at my farm and pick their own vegetables for a reduced price. But they do not want to. My farm is too far away” (Luisa 16.10.2018). Her farm is about 20km outside of Bologna and as Ivano added: “The CSA is for producers living in proximity to the city rather than in the hills or mountains an hour or 2 hours car drive away” (18.12.17). He referred to the CSA in Bologna, that is located at the gates of urban Bologna.

### **8.10. Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated that production and markets are two interrelated spheres, and the formation and existence of CA-markets relies on CA engaging in communing practices with the consumers and social centre. Although, I showed that structural coupling between two different organisations is possible despite two different notions of anti-capitalist behaviour, it does not make the market a commons yet, since consumers mediate their ecological ethos through the market. The role of an active consumer in the food system is not very conclusive, as studies of CSAs suggests. Their studies focus on sharing the risk in vegetable production, whereby studies on CSA’s producing grain, pulses, meat or dairy do not exist, suggesting that consumers find it difficult to participate in these forms of production. Although CA calls their customers co-producers, the role of their consumers is still primarily mediated by the market for obtaining grain products, cheese, wine, olive oil, and herbal products focusing a relationship between producers and customers on dis-alienated aspects, such as trust, empowerment and conviviality. The main responsibility for managing the market is by the producer raising questions about the active involvement of their customers in wanting to dissolve their market dependence.

The structural coupling with the social centre XM24 gave CA the opportunity to create a market in a capitalism-free space, who used the space for ‘imagining a new food system’ and experimented around self-governance and social innovation. The functioning of the market resides in the commitment of farmers to practicing participatory democracy, to self-managing the market and to understand that without taking the responsibility for continuously co-creating the market, this will dissolve. Instrumental to the self-governance of the markets are two autopoietic mechanisms: the participatory-guarantee-system and the collaborative price mechanism. They are both crucial for the existence of CA-food system and therefore need

constant monitoring to remain successful (Ostrom 1990, Brewers 2012). Despite the self-monitoring of their ethos, a proliferation of food supply emerged stemming from the diversification in agricultural production. Agricultural producers can expand their activities naturally in opposition to entrepreneurial farmers embedded in the state system. It opens economic opportunities for the farmers and give them the opportunities to develop their own specific trademark.

These findings extend existing understanding of 'entrepreneurialism' and 'competitive behaviour' within production and distribution in use-value. They explicitly contribute to an expansive understanding of agroecological farming activities in the setting of the global North. Further, CA-markets have multiplied market opportunities for their farmers despite the constant struggles with the Council of Bologna for maintaining their spaces. The limits of entrepreneurial activities in the urban areas and the constant threat by the authorities to close them down prompt CA-producers to intersect with the rural economy in the vicinity of their production site, having a beneficial effect on the local rural economy.

A great contradiction at CA is their over-reliance on the vegetable seed varieties provisioned by capital/mainstream agro-industry, impairing progress towards the realisation of food sovereignty. This recognised contradiction by CA illustrates that they do not lack ambition in wanting to dissolve the market dependency, but human and financial resources are at the moment not sufficient to advance the path of full materialisation of food sovereignty.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

#### 9.1. Introduction

Notions of alternative food systems have gained popularity within academic analyses and food sovereignty debates, yet developing a craft production in use-value and the self-governance of a market, has so far been widely overlooked. This research has highlighted the motivations, potentials and limitations of self-governed producers to stimulate a broader discussion on co-creating a diversification and proliferation of self-governed food systems in rural regions and link them with local urban areas. The findings bring into view the diversity of crafts in food production and the multiplication of a vast social and economic network supporting the self-governed food system of CampiAperti (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). This extends existing understandings of CA's alternative food system by exposing their complexity and reciprocities of the self-organisation their production and reproduction and aligning CA's food system in a triangular position where their boundaries rub with state and capital (Iles and Montenegro 2015). Theorising the multi-dimensionality of CA's practice in developing a craft recognizes the prevalence of commoning but identifies how emancipatory relations are built with the state for cultivating a new relational political construct. In this concluding chapter, I explore the implications of these findings for the theorisation and practice of 'craft-building', 'production in use-value', and 'social wealth' by exploring four interrelated themes 1) food sovereignty and productivity; 2) commons/commoning and the state; 3) consumers and food systems; 4) markets and de-centralisation of food production.

Before laying out the various opportunities for future research that build upon the main findings, I will firstly provide a summary of my findings.

#### 9.2. Main Findings

The findings of this research are centred around the question of whether CA can be considered a part of a counter-hegemonic struggle, and whether the CA-food system can be conceptualised as a "commons", producing and consuming use-values in common. In the first chapter the definition of the peasantry was critically reviewed and interrogated the status quo of a peasant in relation to and within the class system. Two hypotheses were revised. Firstly, how can the peasant objective to gain autonomy in farming be attained? Secondly, how does this autonomy reconcile with the notion of entrepreneurial farming in the solidarity economy? I have argued that autonomy is the aim of a peasant-based agriculture. I found that CA-producers'

commitment to ecological sustainability was demonstrated through self-governing production and distribution of their foodstuff as a common good whereby new social and ecological relations were formed outside of the capitalist market.

Through commoning, producers retained control of production in use-value by forming an external support system that sustained and expanded their autonomy in use-value. Their autonomy in production was achieved via their entrepreneurial activities, which enabled them to combine and alter ecology and labour standards and continue with their self-determination in production. The long-term commitment of realising autonomy in production focused my research on the labour struggle; that through commoning, a transformation was initiated from “dis-alienated” capitalist relations into social or non-capitalist relations. By developing a craft, producers were capable of exerting autonomy on all the stages of production in use-value, providing the producers the leverage to insert their agroecological knowledge into production. The self-determination in production was extended to control the money flow of their products, which became common goods in their self-governed markets.

In community economies a pivotal aspect is the ability and willingness to withdraw money from the system that is controlled by banks and governments. This facilitates returning an economy to democratic control and common ownership over the money flow (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). The advantage of self-governing the money flow at CA markets was that producers were provided with a sense belonging to a community (Federici 2019) that they actively contributed to by generating a new ethical code for the production and in the distribution of foodstuff. Following Ostrom’s notion of the commons, the market became a resource as each farmer individually took their own share from the social wealth (1990). Each farmer made their own decisions about their own investments, which could have undermined the notion of commoning or commonisation. However, the idea of commoning or the commonisation of food production and distribution meant that the decisions about how to use the commonly produced wealth was decided collectively. CA was founded on the idea that each farm was an autonomous entity that could survive by using the collaborative price-setting mechanism. CA developed a new market model that may be seen as an entrepreneurial commons.

The boundary created by the state’s regulations that categorised farmers into non/semi-/clandestine producers was central to my discussion. This illustrated the contradiction that access to CA-markets should be without boundaries in order to avoid the risk of, at worst, replicating the neo-liberal structure. I re-assessed the risk of a new enclosure through the commons perspective and scrutinised the two dominant autopoietic mechanisms more closely

on competitive behaviour and implosion. By self-governing their markets, CA was able to shift the measure of productivity away from unlimited growth based on unlimited natural and human extraction, to an output measured on human, soil and animal capacity, incorporating a value practice based on ecology and human equivalence. Rather than risking a limited food diversity and a small number of producers, this restraint did not curb competition amongst producers as competition was no longer measured in units corresponding to Marxian socially necessary labour time, instead it augmented the motivation for innovation and increased the amount of genuine and diverse foodstuff. The spread of their farming activities in coalescing all production stages at their farm was mirrored in the calculation of the 'just-price'. The novelty was that producers aimed to set the price constructively with customers to distribute the responsibility for creating a new food system.

The commoning effort to collectively set the price remained ambiguous, as the negotiation of the price with the customer remained rather discursive. CA-consumers did not strategically participate in the annual, self-organised price-setting-mechanism. Instead the negotiation occurred directly with the CA-producer at the stall. This undermined the idea that consumers were active participants in shaping a new food system as CA-consumers did not share the producers concerns about their economic needs, or the obstacles they experienced either as producers or as consumers (Renting et al. 2012). As such, CA-producers could not know whether their set prices were apt for their consumers' livelihoods. As I have highlighted, commoning is about activating solidarity and mutual aid. In this sense, consumers supported CA-producers by buying their products, but it is unclear how CA-producers supported livelihoods of CA-consumers when they experienced economic distress. One way to address this deficit would be for CA-consumers to set-up their own committee, in which they could discuss their own concerns and collaborate on possible ways to engage in active participation within CA to establish a commoning relation with the producers. Consequently, a truly commons-based economy could emerge where the social bonds amongst producers and consumers were deepened with consumers becoming food citizens.

My research revealed that the proliferation of CA's foodstuff and their markets strengthened their quest for full autonomy in production. Paradoxically, their aim to realise food sovereignty by becoming a seed sovereign on their farms was a much more complex task. Although some informal exchanges occurred amongst farmers and some individual seed-savings happened, CA was unable to establish their own seed bank. It was beyond the scope of this research to investigate the practice of seed-savings at CA. This would have required contextualising the practice in the complex framework of European policies and regional seed-saving laws. In

farming, saving, breeding and exchanging seeds is a separated activity, and a parochial focus on vegetable seeds would have failed to capture the perspectives of grain farmers, herbalists, fruit growers and breeders at CA. The political economy of seeds, as Shiva (1991), Castree (2004) Kloppenburg (2010) point out, consists of a tight web of control that was created by pharmaceutical and seed companies that have made it impossible for farmers to be autonomous from these corporations. The complexity of setting up a seed bank requires an enormous bureaucratic effort that exceeds the capacity of CA-farmers. This weakness of CA-farmers was mirrored in their dependency on the market and undermined the feasibility of their struggle to achieve absolute food sovereignty. The role of saving seeds could be assumed by citizens who wanted to participate in building a new food system, similar to the Demeter seed bank in Germany, Bingenheimer Saatgut, as I have shown in Chapter 7.7.

Finally, I discussed the 'imaginary of a market as a commons'. I illustrated a different form of structural coupling that existed between CA and the urban social centre movement. This allowed CA to gain access, occasionally via radical tactics, to the enclosed or diminishing public sphere in urban Bologna. Although CA is a microscopic reality in Bologna, the Council of Bologna continuously attacks CA to limit its existence in the urban area. The assistance of the urban social centre movement enabled CA to resist the Council's confrontations. To underscore the local counter-hegemonic struggle, CA's efforts to gain and retain access to the city were embodied in the constant negotiations they had with the Council as an attempt to prevent the 'capitalisation of democratic social relations' (Swyngedouw 2011).

Their efforts to gain access to the urban area underlined their need to survive as farmers. The setup of their self-governed market allowed them to control the produced social wealth, identified as the material and immaterial composition created from the materials chosen and for whom the common good was made (Echeverría 2015). The notion of social wealth produced in, and for, the solidarity economy is that it is distributed amongst the consumers and producers and the cycle of the social wealth remains and flows within the local communities (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). Although CA-producers were dependent on the market to sell their foodstuff, consumers were also dependent on buying their foodstuff. This raised concerns as to whether the market was a commons, as consumers' and producers' dependencies were managed monetarily rather than by substituting money with labour.

My research into tentatively viewing the market as a commons came into immediate difficulties. There was an array of fissures, such as between consumers-producers, or the urban and rural spheres, and material and immaterial commons which are normally subsumed in the state-capital-structure. CA attempted to overcome these divisions through commoning, whereby the

market as a commons became an exemplar of their social interaction for self-governing. This is novel in the discussion about the commons. Within the framework of critical political ecologists, commons are viewed as an ecology itself (Moore 2015, Perreault et al. 2015), which effectively detaches communities from the commons (Bresnihan 2016). The isolation of the commons from communities failed to illustrate the social interaction between commons and communities. Even if this interaction exists, as Illich has noticed, it is difficult to capture a description of the highly complex social, natural interactions that occur within the commons (1983). This established impasse is overcome in the discussion on social reproduction. In her analysis on subsistence economies Mies extended the notion of social reproduction in households to view 'the naturalisation with nature not a human activity with nature but rather an activity of nature' (1998: 45). The term 'commoning' implies more than simply a social interaction with the commons (Linebough and Rediker 2000, Bresnihan 2016), it allows an exploration of the technocratic structure and institutional regimes of rights and ownership and scrutinises the structure of commoning within (Bresnihan 2016).

Surprisingly the initiative of creating a market as a commons resided primarily with CA-producers rather than with the consumer. Farmers appeared to have a much greater interest in self-governing production to develop their craftsmanship than consumers were interested in actively participating in establishing a 'commoning structure' to receive healthy, local food. Unlike the numerous consumers' initiatives embodied in the CSA or GAS structure (Renting et al. 2012, Signori and Forno 2016), where consumers actively participated in the creation of a new food structure that breaks down the producer-consumer-relationship in production and in distribution, CA-consumers remained mainly external to the organising structure of the CA-food economy. At the initiative of GAS, for example, consumers were committed to accessing local, organic food and consumers selected their producers based on the agricultural methods they used. Indeed, GAS emerged in the early 2000s in a context where the paradigm of food sovereignty was developing to economically support small-scale farmers during the increasing neo-liberalisation of agriculture. Many of the CA-producers use the GAS-network. Each week producers directly delivered foodstuff to the agreed pick-up point, or consumers collected the foodstuff directly from CA farms. As such, it was more surprising that few consumers participated in the producer-led initiative, Genuino Clandestino, campaign. Although CA invited consumers to participate in their organising structure, the relationship with their consumers remained locked in their social contract embodied in the PGS (Chapter 8.3.). This form of commoning occurred through the continuous efforts by CA-producers to self-govern their own markets, which exacerbated their over-reliance on monetary exchange. This form of commoning provides an opportunity to explore the role of monetary exchange. Building on the analysis by

Echeverria on production-consumption in use-value, it is the transformation of an object for use when the producer knows who the product is for, and the consumer uses the product with knowledge of the products transformation or production process, its environment and culture (2015). One key aspect here was the physical contact between producers and consumers, that provided the freedom of social interactions amongst them that secured both their livelihoods, that is to earn a living and to consume outside of the global market conditions. In this sense, social reproduction was continuously reproduced, albeit through a monetary cycle and the market was the physical form where this iterative interaction took place.

Social reproduction is embodied in the co-production of the market and the initiation of the cycle of agricultural production anew (Renting et al. 2012). Through the physical contact with the CA-producers, consumers shared their experiences and needs for the foodstuff with the producers, which influenced the production activities in a more informal way than the negotiations and agreements about production patterns (Brunori 2011). In this context, the term co-consumer referred to the civic engagement through the conscious choice of products only (Renting et al. 2012: 301) As such, describing consumers as co-producers at CA would have exaggerated their role because they did not actively participate by working at the farms. A more accurate term for their activity might be the ethical consumer.

The relation amongst producers and consumers at CA characterised an imbalance that was the result of individualising their struggle to alter the dominant food system. CA-producers survival as farmers was dependent on their markets. However, this was not a coordinated struggle shared by producers and consumers that would commonise the food system. This shortcoming was embedded in the rural-urban-divide and was exploited by the Council of Bologna to make it more difficult for CA-producers to access the urban area. Consumers were not necessarily aware of the socio-economic interrelation between production and market rules controlled by the state. Whilst CA-producers attempted to raise awareness of this by displaying visualisations of their form of production at their market stalls. CA-consumers appeared to have minimal understanding of the struggle for a 'civic agriculture' that conceptualised local and multifunctional agriculture (Lyson 2005). In general, CA-consumers were very detached from CA-producers' daily struggles in the rural area, even though commoning ideally would breakdown the artificial rural-urban barriers and coalesce a co-production amongst producers and consumers alike. Without subtle changes in the behaviour of consumers and in the absence of a collective envisioning of what a new food system should look like, the attempts by CA-producers to revolutionise the food system will remain only partially fulfilled.



The role of monetary exchange in commoning is contested but it was indispensable for CA-producers. The income earned at the CA-markets flowed directly back into the farms where the next cycle of production started anew. Farmers did more than reinvigorate the new cycle of farming; they also invested money into diversifying their farming activities in addition to buying equipment to maintain and develop their specific craft. By self-governing their own markets, CA-producers abolished their dependency on the intermediaries to escape the 'reproduction squeeze', that demanded producing products of low quality, of low productivity and at low prices (Levien et al. 2018). Despite the efforts of CA-producers to avoid self-exploitation at their farms, their income did not necessarily reflect their labour input into the farms, especially in the early years of becoming a farmer. However, unlike the reproduction squeeze CA-producers produced in autonomy from the global market standardisation norms, this provided them with the freedom to produce, to control and to monitor all stages of a production cycle of a product. This required the development of a substantial set of skills. This was the prime motivator for becoming autonomous farmers. By being autonomous in their labour processes they had freedom of choice in production. Through trial and error, the continuous self-monitoring of their interaction with the soil, the water, the air, the animals and plants, the production of foodstuff became a living circle. The farmer formed a dependency to nature as they became aware that their actions, whether good or bad, had a direct impact on their productivity. As such, farmers used the money made at their markets to enhance their autonomy. This type of farming may not be that different to entrepreneurial farmers, as Chayanov has described in his studies on the peasant economy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Edelman 2005, White 2018). Back then the market economy did not influence production through its rules on homogenisation standards as much as they do now. It was only with the growing enclosure process of the market since the 1970s that production and the market have become increasingly two intertwined spheres.

My case study was unique because prior to the formation of CA, the producers had recognised through their experiences as farmers, that there was an increasing conflation between production and the market, and this led to increasing alienation to nature in the contemporary period of farming. The paradigm food sovereignty was adopted by farmers worldwide precisely so they could control the resources over food production and to access the market. The enclosure of resources in food production and of the market shows that the enclosure process involves much more than privatising resources. The enclosure process also creates a separation of the productive and reproductive, which is also understood as the fissure from the social and natural spheres (Federici 2004, Bresnihan 2016). CA's struggle to access the urban area in Bologna and their concerted effort to group individualised farms under their participatory-

guarantee-system were created to defend the livelihoods of farmers against the constant threat of closure of their markets by the Council of Bologna. The centre of this struggle was the maintenance and intensification of the artificial rural-urban-division, which was mediated by the Council of Bologna, and its fight for open access to the urban area.

This continuous tension had extensive implications for the existence of CA-producers, who were in a constant precarious economic situation despite their efforts to self-govern their markets. CA attracted large numbers of farmers through their re-articulated social producer-producer-relations that was based on their desire to abolish competitive price behaviour. Farmers were also attracted to CA as they needed assistance to gain equal access to urban spaces, which was required for them to earn a living. However, CA's efforts to make farming an attractive activity and to proliferate their markets in the urban area were undermined by the hostile conditions created by the Council. In effect, the Council prevented farmers from making a living. Consequently, farmers could not make long term plans about their farms because they did not know whether the markets would continue to exist beyond two years. They were caught in the 'fragmentation of class labour' which subsumes marginal peasant commodity producers, rural workers and all shades in between (Bernstein 2010). CA producers were forced to move 'across rural and urban spheres and between precarious wage labour, petty commodity production, and forms of informal non-agricultural self-employment to survive' (Levien et al. 2018). The moving between the capitalist and autonomous worlds underpinned their struggle to reproduce themselves as autonomous farmers. By recognising past peasant struggles, the problematisation of the transition from a heterogenous class system (Bernstein 2010) illustrates that the antagonism towards capital is always about survival and autonomy (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

The discussion about the commons that is centred on claiming ownership over resources and the market is divided between those who view the commons as a natural system that can be governed by state and the market (Brewers 2012, Vivero-Pol 2017), and those that view commoning as a way to transcend the separation of social and natural spheres. In contrast to the commons, commoning has a much greater emphasis on history, culture and tradition. This enables an approach that uses the lens of class formation and politics to provide a more politically nuanced view of the notion of antagonism for autonomy (Linebough and Rediker 2000).

### **9.3. Key findings and implications**

There are three key findings that have emerged from this research. Each has implications for understanding various aspects of commons/commoning in conjunction with political ecology theory and rural sociology.

#### **9.3.1. Craftsmanship and food sovereignty**

In exploring the developing practice of becoming a producer in Italy, the findings demonstrate the centrality of commitment in developing their craft within everyday production activity. The development of a craft occurs in a social context of a constant cycle of reproduction (Van der Ploeg 2013), and thus this study expands the current understandings of establishing local production sites, by demonstrating the variety of agricultural productivity within both daily practice and awareness of the patterning of agricultural activities within a new value practice. As well as elucidating the intrinsic relation between the soil and animals, I argue that looking at the process of co-creating a farm exposes a raft of diverse activities related to expanding the self-reliance of the farm through commoning, such as networking, structural coupling, and knowledge exchange creating new social and mutual bonds (Arampatzi 2017). Ordinary negotiations around their labour process are complexly interwoven with their everyday agricultural dimensions and concerns around the struggle in becoming a farmer. The importance of showing the process of establishing a farm explains the tenacity of farmers intending to produce independently from capitalist inputs and methods.

Developing a craft hinges on the embodiment of dis-alienation to nature and humans summoned under the effort to collectively respond to mass industrialisation (Thurnell Read 2014). I argue that conceptualising food production as an artisan craft is useful for theorising the daily, repetitive tasks in use-value (Vivero-Pol 2017) of producing, forming, exchanging and self-provisioning food that has received so far little attention in the food sovereignty debate. In elaborating the development of acquiring a craft, the study addresses the gap of understanding between resources and market dependency in academic and popular approaches embedded in abstract discursive narratives. By considering the social-property-relations within the resources in production, disentangling the diverse farm practices recruited in specific crafts resonates with notions of quality and authenticity (Campbell 2004). Producers' narratives of acquiring and using knowledge and skills are sensed and displayed through the tangible processes (conditions of the soil, working in rhythm with nature) and outcomes (the taste and appreciation of their product) (Thurnell Read 2014). The empirical findings address the complexity and interconnection between skills and experiences embodied in the craft's identity

that allows for a more nuanced understanding of how individuals relate to their labour processes and the challenges and rewards of work. Significantly, the concept of a craft has, therefore, been evident here as a means of addressing the embodiment of skills and competencies alongside emotions such as passion, commitment and satisfaction. I argue that attending to craftsmanship and commitment also means paying attention to the practice of commoning where producers co-create a support network to enhance their farm, on which their farm is co-dependent for its existence.

Drawing attention to the primary resources in food production (land, vegetable seeds) shows a prevalence in food production, which at first attenuates the notion of materialising food sovereignty. CA has the option to discard their aim of controlling the various production stages and move away from implementing agroecological principles, and thus produce commodities dedicated to the consumer's desires. Or it can continue on the path contextualised in the recent historical developments of the peasantry in Emilia-Romagna that shows where the peasant was embedded in the stratified layers of the peasantry. While the former completely discards the notion of ecology, labour and commoning altogether, the latter is also problematic for enhancing and sustaining their autonomous production. This dilemma is continuous and questions the power relations between CA and the outside, and their limited ability to become long-term in present at one space in the urban area, which impacts the sustainability of production.

### **9.3.2. Use-value and resistance**

By problematising production and productivity in use-value production, the meaning of an entrepreneurial farmer has changed. My findings did not distinctly identify an alternative practice or moments of entrepreneurial farming. Instead, my findings point to the prevalence of ecological production methods that were used whilst pursuing the notion of working with the land and developing autonomy in farming for the purpose of coalescing production with reproduction. Narrating the 'return' to working with the land, the findings presented provide textured accounts that discloses some ambiguity in their realisation of food sovereignty. I argued that the notion around the calculation of productivity needs to be revisited in order to reflect the changed meaning of entrepreneurial farming in use-value production.

The altered measurement of productivity is determined by the limit of the natural metabolism of the farm, which also benefits from structural coupling with other farms and other production sites. As writers have noted on calculating productivity (Bernstein 2010) narrating the 'just-price index' is elusive, and perhaps ambiguous, as all the farming activities involved in

reproducing the foodstuff flows into the measurement of setting the price. In calculating the reproductive activities into the measurement of the 'just-price index' the radical commons perspective recognises that nature is not a mere resource (Federici 2019, Mies 2000, Shiva 1996), which should be managed to meet the markets standard of commodification. The 'just-price index' should reflect the intrinsic relations between human and nature that rejects the perspective that it is necessary to break nature and labour into smaller and smaller pieces to obtain the maximum output. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that seeing a farm as a micro-economic system (Van der Ploeg 2008) demands a shift of perspective from a reductionist economic viewpoint and a willingness to explore the diversity provided by nature and the multiplication of labour activities and skills required to self-manage a micro-economy. Recognising farms as micro-economies, farmers transition from the notion of a wage-labour-relation and lift the obscured (un-)paid reproductive labour performed by farmers (Sato and Soto Alarcón 2019). The empirical findings are elaborated on an index, that incorporates the multiple labour processes and natural limits, whereby the concern of self-exploitation outweighed the notion of 'owning' the responsibility over the labour process and having the freedom to govern production in the way the farmer sees fit.

The price-index I established categorises CA producers' foodstuff based on their input of labour activity in relation to the product, and their choice of what to produce to either distinguish themselves from other producers and in relation to what the consumer likes. However, this ratio does not capture their additional effort of the time they spent developing their expertise in improving skills, such as in the practice of making cheese or their endurance in expanding their farm production to eventually offer a wide-range of quality products. This was a particular concern for farmers entering the farming profession, who were struggling with finding resources for setting up their farms and were simultaneously acquiring the skills for making quality products. If these efforts were integrated into the price-index, it would very likely increase the price-index. A way to circumvent this is to re-conceptualise their farming activity. Rather than measuring their output in relation to how much time was spent, instead the entire notion of considering food in relation to productivity should be abandoned. After all, CA-producers choice of acquiring skills of a farming activity was related to developing a craft. In doing so, they wanted to be in control of all the product stages in order to be able to influence production with their knowledge and monitor the impact of the change they made to the soils, plants and animals at each stage of the production process. This form of producing was embedded in their way of life, or put differently, their livelihood was embodied in their choice of craft, which was similar to subsistence farming. The price of their product would then be the sum of how much of their livelihood was intertwined with developing their products. Following

from this, a possible price-index could capture where each product was broken down into the efforts made at each stage of production.

Rather than turning into a form of individualism, the quest for a farm's self-reliance led to an active engagement in expanding the farm structure and the self-organisation of markets with other like-minded farmers connected to the land, which created a whole new social dynamic. In my analysis, the adoption of the commons framework aided the understanding of the day-to-day resistance to capital farmers performed on their farms and how this resistance was organised in a more or less structured complex horizontal structure within CA. As I identified during my visits to CA meetings, their novelty, was not that they organised the resistance alongside their farming, their methods and value practice adapted to farming *was* the resistance. This transformative process formed the resistance (Hardt and Negri 2004) and required a horizontal form of organisation (Sitrin 2012). Rather than concentrating the decision-making process in the general assembly meeting, CA de-centralised the decision-making powers into a number of committees, which relied on each farmers' participation in establishing their own food system that mirrored the value practices of their farms and their economy. This spatial de-centralisation erased conventional ideas of steered, planned expansion and instead allowed a fluid, organic development of co-creating place-based autonomous farms and committees (Moragues-Faus 2017).

My findings identified an evolutionary process of the PGS that demonstrated that a reflexive process took the place of the drawn boundaries of the already established autopoietic mechanism. The reflective thinking processes enabled a proliferation in the numbers of their farms resting on the notion of interpreting the regulations of the PGS in the socio-political context of micro-farms. This avoided the risk of an institutionalised policy, such as regulating access to the market through the PGS-system, that could undermine equal access to the market manifested in a post-political configuration (Swyngedouw 2011). Empirical evidence of the implementation of the PGS and CPM indicated that the two key autopoietic mechanisms went beyond setting ecological sustainability and economic stability in production. This refutes the critic of autopoietic mechanisms as being an imaginary (Swyngedouw 2011). These mechanisms were indeed political, shifting the focus of land struggles to production and to the market with the PGS boundary marking their limitations in the negotiations with the state to protect their autonomy in production. This contrasts with the Polanyian double-movement that sought to infiltrate the state structure and the global economy (Mingione 2018). Despite CA building 'relational sovereignty' at the local, community level (Iles and Montenegro 2015),

tensions with the Council remained unresolved and impeded the transition toward a diversified agricultural production and consumption in Emilia-Romagna.

The 'just-price narrative' and the participatory-guarantee-system highlight the complexity of the interwoven tapestry of reproduction and production in use-value and shows how an alternative food system could function. This new food system is continuously undermined by the Council of Bologna, which iteratively imposed new disciplinary measures to make the perseverance of CA-markets extremely difficult. The Council continuously threatens CA with the closure of their markets. Instead of engaging with the varieties of food systems model, producers and consumers are engaged in Bologna, the Council pays lip-service to professional high-end local organic food suppliers providing them a high-end chic exposition centre in Bologna.

In Bologna, four different local food systems exist - CampiAperti, CSA, GAS, and Camilla.<sup>10</sup> These four groups formed the "Network for food sovereignty" in May 2021 and successfully lobbied for regional laws that recognise the solidarity economy movement and introduced specific institutional tools and spaces for policy interaction. Despite the concessions made by the regional government, the Council of Bologna and the regional government continues to fail to provide spaces for local self-governed markets and did not guarantee access to these locations on a long-term basis. Furthermore, the Council had yet to discard the bi-annual market licenses allocation in the form of a lottery game amongst different farmers' markets. At the conclusion of my field work, the Council had not recognised the precariousness of farmers, which undermined long-term investments on their farms and kept farmers in the 'fragmentation of class system'.

There are three policy areas that the local and regional governments could adopt that would address some of the barriers CA-producers experienced. Firstly, the local Council should allow CA to secure licenses and spaces for parking at their markets in a similar way that the Council provides spaces for supermarkets. This would signal to producers and consumers that the Council supported local, healthy food production and distribution. Furthermore, it would indicate that the Council was open to an active engagement to overcome the urban-rural divide. Secondly, at the regional level, Emilia-Romagna could amend regulations regarding municipal hygiene standards so that the minimum requirements for food processing laboratories would be realistic for the needs and constraints of small-scale and family farms. A change to this regulation would lift many small-scale farms out of their legal impasse and it would

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<sup>10</sup> Camilla is a consumer-led shop at the heart of Bologna. It emerged in 2020 coalescing the foodstuff produced by GAS- and CampiAperti-producers.

simultaneously enhance the proliferation of small-scale farms. These amended regulations for small-scale producers could also eliminate the region's fee for transforming a house into a workshop. Thirdly, to assist the advancement of food sovereignty in Emilia-Romagna, the regional government should ease restrictions on holding a self-organised seed bank and support the free and commercial exchange of seeds amongst farmers. The region of Emilia-Romagna should protect the biodiversity of food, the local heritage and culture. As such, public funds should be allocated to specific seed-saving projects to guarantee scientific and technical support to self-govern farms and provide funds for seedbanks. These policy recommendations should be accompanied by concrete actions from the state to provide a legal space for de-centralising the local food economy.

### **9.3.3. Common good and social wealth**

By uncovering how producers implemented farming activities in relation to nature, the findings outlined in this study contribute to exploring the reproductive and social relations that constitute the common good and its correlation with producing social wealth (De Angelis 2017, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). The notion of producing common goods encompasses specific values of social and ecological quality and ingenuity as well as thoughtfulness and reflective thinking, which is significant in continuously co-creating the social relation between producers and consumers. Furthermore, these findings contribute to the debate on what a self-governance food system could look like, from the autonomous production to the distribution of the common good, where the exchange between producers and consumers remains in use-value, whereby social wealth is produced from which producers and consumers benefit. I argue that attending to what producers say about forming direct relations with the consumers is essential for the provision of self-governance markets, although the formation of new markets might become more efficient, if consumers were engaging actively in the self-governance structure of CA.

By examining the multi-dimensional relations of a common good, the findings presented here provide further cause to investigate the frame of the commons to understand the efforts made by farmers and consumers to reconcile reproduction, production and distribution. "The common goods are use-value for a plurality" (De Angelis 2017: 29), but the meaning of a common good, or food as a common good, is laden with a non-capitalist value system and my findings contribute to the debate on viewing the de-commodification of food as political.

Viewing the common good from a commons perspective supports the notion of autonomy in self-governing the social wealth and prepares fertile ground to sharpen the political component



by self-organising production, reproduction and distribution of food. So far, giving the state and capital too much leverage over organising the food system has drained the ecological foundation of the earth and the social wealth of the communities (Allen 2010). Therefore, my findings illustrate the composition of the common good and the flow of social wealth. However, much more research needs to be done to gain a better understanding of the distribution and use of the social wealth.

My research focused on the struggle for autonomous production and on the tension between the Council of Bologna and CA. However, I did not engage in a detailed analysis of the consumers as that was beyond the scope of this project. It would be interesting to document the consumers' perspectives and the reasons they did their food shopping at CA-markets, the ratio between their shopping at CA and at supermarkets, the reasons they supplemented their shopping from other sources, the historical and social backgrounds of the consumers, their awareness of the political economy of food in the local rural and urban areas, and whether they viewed their consumer behaviour as political. I have acknowledged that these aspects are important but they deserve an in-depth investigation to deepen our understanding of the concept of social wealth and food citizenship. In addition, such research would contribute to the growing literature on the solidarity economy and specifically on the distribution of social wealth in use-value. The transition of de-commodification or better commonisation of production and distribution needs to clearly distinguish itself from capital's use, this includes a better understanding and more precise vocabulary for concepts such as use-value, exchange-value, the market and the common good.

So far, within the commons/commoning debate, the political perspectives of the research is often unclear. For example, terms like autonomy and independency, commons and public goods, are often used interchangeably. This affects the discussion about monetary exchange, unpaid work, and what strategies could be used to commonise production and distribution.

My research found that the common good is constituted with ordinary, often mundane, farming activities rooted in a practice of thoughtfulness and care, and with enjoyment of the food. The exchange of money for food constitutes a materialisation of social reproduction. It was crucial that consumers and producers' relations formed an entity that was endowed with a dis-alienation. The 'autonomised' process of exchange in use-value provided a new ground for revalorising value in terms of labour and consumption, which ultimately encapsulated the value of the common good.

As I argued before, each production site is a commons at CA, because when the producer enters the CA-markets with their foodstuff, the individual foodstuff produced at each site contributed to the common production of the social wealth of CA. However, the notion of the social wealth was impaired by their dependency on seeds and land. Nevertheless, signs of commoning appeared in the social wealth of CA with the collaborative -price-mechanism that allowed each producer to be provided with the same economic opportunities to sell their foodstuff. Labour used in the production of foodstuff was pooled to protect one's own labour and the foodstuff from being extracted by capital (De Angelis 2017). Unlike for capital to accumulate profit, the direct production/consumption alliance accelerated the production of social wealth. As identified in my research, the more that users entered production and the market to actively engage in the dissolution of market dependency, the more the social wealth increased. This was reflected in the proliferation of CA-markets over the past decade.

I identified trust, empowerment and conviviality as central for the co-creation of social wealth. Trust and conviviality are aspects of reciprocity and co-enjoyment and form the basis for a mutual bond between consumers and producer. Establishing trust with the consumers is a formidable process for the producer and significantly influences the labour process, farming activities and the making of the product. Although CA had a high proportion of reliable clients, the organisation of the food system was primarily divided into producers and consumers despite efforts by CA to for consumers to be more actively involved with the organisation of the food system. For example, CA-consumers were not engaged with trying to set-up a seed bank, which suggested that they still viewed farming activities as the sole responsibility of the farmer. Furthermore, it was unclear how much CA-consumers knew about modern farming in the capitalist context. Perhaps if they were more aware of the conditions CA-producers were facing, they would be motivated to support farmers in organising their reproduction. This diminished CA's capacity to create social wealth. More research on the producer-consumer alliance needs to be done in order to understand the reasons for this sociological deficit.

#### **9.4. Limitations of the research**

As with any research, there are inevitable issues surrounding the validity, representativeness and reliability of results. In understanding the research limitations, the methodological foundations on which the research was designed and developed needs to be critically assessed. In Chapter four, I outlined the aims, objectives and questions together with the research design, framework and methods.

The main components are:

- 1) Critical realism
- 2) Ethnography and Participant Observation
- 2) Critical Discourse Analysis and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis
- 4) One case study

These four components ensured that my research remained exploratory, focusing on details to answer the overall aim of the research. The benefit of the ethnographic study is that the collected data was critically assessed in relation to the research questions and whether the commons is a useful concept for analysing the transition to new socially and ecologically just food systems. Nevertheless, the selection and interpretation of the coded data is the sole responsibility of the researcher, thus raising concerns about research positionality. These concerns are a common criticism and have been elaborated extensively in ethnography and in participant observation (Tedlock 1991).

Building on the experience of my fieldwork, my choice of selecting the method of participant observation proved fruitful in the setting of my case study. However, in the course of the fieldwork, I realised that to get a more in-depth understanding of my ethnographic study I needed to extend my research onto the Internet to reach a more profound understanding of my case study's governance structure. The combination of participant observation and critical discourse analysis provided a deeper level of immersion into my case study from which rich knowledge about the horizontal organisation and social interaction amongst producers emerged.

While this combination of methods was effective for this type of research, in order to obtain a better understanding of social interaction amongst producers, between producers and consumers and between producers, consumers and the Council, a series of focus groups would have enriched the preliminary research by identifying in more detail the barriers and opportunities for accelerating the de-centralisation of alternative production systems and the transition towards food sovereignty. More time would have been needed to conduct this type of fieldwork in conjunction with a greater critical discussion on analysing the social relations amongst different social subjects.

The choice of my case study resides in its uniqueness and in the participants' high political awareness of coalescing farming practice construed as not only resistance to capital but also in the assertion that the Genuino Clandestino movement has become an alternative food system to

capital, that supports local, artisan production sites and their desire to be autonomous from capital. The application of the PGS in conjunction with the CPM is very complex and requires a lot of dedication to self-govern it. Probably for this reason, the PGS is not widely used in alternative food system across Europe and therefore this framework and research design in a different socio-political context within Europe would probably deliver a different set of results. Finally, in the course of studying CampiAperti, it was very difficult to follow the evolvement of CA. I could not give justice in my findings to their vast-developing structure as my research focused on the two solid blocks, production and the market. It made me realise the significance and magnitude of self-governance for co-creating a food system as a commons. It would be worthwhile to build on this research and look into the multi-layered organised horizontal governance structure in conjunction with the development of de-centralising the food system.

It was beyond the scope this research to examine CA's broader organisational development from a regional or national social movement perspective. However, boundary commoning was included as it demarcated the commons from state and market. It is important to acknowledge that there were more social processes occurring in the context that CA operated within. A horizontal self-organised network of food, knowledge and resources exchange emerged and had spilt into other parts of the community economy. This instigated a mushrooming of small-scale autonomous farms. The label 'Genuino Clandestino' had become a symbol of prefigurative power for the many shades of the new peasantry across Italy, whereby the goal for the future and the present collapsed in the immediate context of everyday life (van de Sande 2017). The movement 'Genuino Clandestino' provided a perspective of hundreds of farming realities in specific contexts and problematised the congruences between their goals and realities within the Italian and European political context. My research omitted the discussion on prefigurative power in relation to self-governance of their production and distribution, even though its conceptualisation would have shed further light on the impact of constituting autonomy in farming and de-centralising the food economy. From the national Genuino Clandestino meetings I attended, it appears that this network developed their own specific format with each specific particularity (Hardt and Negri 2009). This bottom-up approach was commonised through their rootedness in farming, which enabled them to grow into a horizontal Genuino Clandestino national movement and allowed them to build a strong network amongst farmers across Italy. In their cooperative effort that was internal to labour and external to capital, they intrinsically undermined the attempts of capital to appropriate the wealth produced by labour (Ruivenkamp and Hilton 2017), and simultaneously re-appropriated the wealth from capital and returned it to the commons. Despite the sometimes-violent repression of the state, the proliferation of this network and solidarity amongst farmers was growing stronger because of their firm foundation

in their autonomous farming activity. Although their network was national, farmers' demands for altering food policies remained regional, they were iteratively comparing the interpretation of European policies, monitoring campaign processes and addressing different farming realities in other Italian regions. Their demands on changing regional policies was a dual process that stemmed from their daily experience in autonomous farming, where the contestation with the local state sector occurred., At the same time, their desire to proliferate farming activities in their region was based on their need to enhance their reproductive and productive spheres.

## **9.5. Future research agendas**

The thesis has identified two broad interrelated partial themes that deserve further exploration.

### **9.5.1. Historical materialism, nature and the commons**

The conceptualisation of the commons in relation to autonomy requires a much broader critical analysis to deepen our understanding of the socio-natural metabolic processes provided by Marx in conjunction with the whole human-nature intersection to confront ecological instability produced by the food system in the present. Investigating the modes of production in relation to stimulating a 'socio-metabolic transition' enables researchers to carry out inquiries into the historical-empirical complex (Foster 2013). Much of this work recognises the limitations of transcending capital into becoming sustainable and effective in order to provide ecological stability. Therefore, research into alternative food systems should not only be confined to aspects of labour and consumption but should open up to more closely investigate closer the state's relations to 'autonomous producers and open up the possibility of viewing food sovereignty and food security as two complementary paradigms (LVC 2018) given the increased challenges coming from climate change and rising oil prices.

### **9.5.2. De-centralising agriculture**

One of the key principles of food sovereignty is the push for de-centralising agricultural production, which is associated with a "people-led, social equity and bottom-up participatory methods and processes (Desmarais 2007: 68). My research contributes to the growing literature on the mobilisation of resources and of building de-centralised food systems. From the little evidence I have gathered from CA, benefits of a de-centralised agriculture are real, such as providing greater ecological and economic stability in rural areas, ensuring a diverse food

supply and local food security or the mobilisation of local human ecological and economic resources. Research should be conducted in this field from a human-ecological perspective rather than from a capitalist perspective in order to give social subjects in communities a voice for their suggestions based on their social and farming activities with agroecological methods and skills in food systems. A de-centralisation of agriculture implies a greater requirement for different models of horizontal organisation, as research in commons systems suggests (De Angelis 2013) and already identifies the processes and social interactions that could propel an investigation into horizontal organisation spanning much larger territories than just small microscopic realities such as CA. Moreover, the role of the state at a local and regional level should be more considered as a social subject in shaping the territories, and such relations between citizens and the state should be researched on a local/regional level for a much better understanding of the economic and political relations between these social subjects.

### **9.5.3. A food sovereignty definition for Europe**

Much of the literature regarding the paradigm food sovereignty is shaped by the experiences in the global South and are used widely in the studies on European social food movements. This bears the risk that European social food movements are inferior in their struggles, and less radical than their counterparts in the global South (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck 2011, Tilzey 2018). The European socio-economic conditions are different as much as the political structure and therefore, the formation of struggles emerges in a different context, which I have done here by looking at the enclosures of production and the market as in contrast to land and seed struggles. For making food sovereignty a more European social movement, farmers and researchers need to articulate a stronger political base that is rooted in the daily experiences of European farmers.

## **9.6. Final remarks**

This research has been a very enriching journey on an intellectual and personal level, and an exploration of what it means to conduct in-depth research. Vital to my research were the good relationships I established with my research group. Indeed, ongoing constructive communication with participants throughout the planning, data collection and analysis of my research was important in order to remain focused. At times fieldwork was very demanding because of the dynamics of CA as it generates social innovation, with the objective of influencing the political landscape of Bologna. Prior to my research, I knew of their political engagement in Bologna, but through my research, I realised that I underestimated their involvement and high

awareness of the political nature of their food system. My research only provided a glimpse of their multiple engaging political activities in an otherwise more engaging wider social movement nationally so it would make perfect sense to strive for further research in the way the Genuino Clandestino network in Italy operate with wider social movements. This means that the Genuino Clandestino-food system can be better understood to enhance our understanding of production, reproduction and trading in different local socio-economic contexts.

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## List of Interview

\*Names of participants were changed

Remo	14/05/2019
Valentino	#int 2 10/04/2019 #int 1 05/03/2018
Lorena	07/03/2019
Lilly	24/02/2019
Leonardo	02/02/2019
Anita	#int 2 15.05.2019 #int 1 19/07/2018
Gabriele	28/06/2018
Domenico, coordinator	22/06/2018
Rocco	16/06/2018
Arno	#int 1 23/03/2019 #int 2 15/06/2018
Antonio	# int 2 14/06/2018 # int 1 05/03/2018
Gemma	12/06/2018
Giorgio	10/06/2018
Co-producer 2	08/06/2018
Claudia	05/06/2018
Alberto	02/06/2018
Marzia	28/05/2018
Erika	20/03/2018
Danilo	27/02/2018
Aurora	25/02/2018 10/11/2017
Petra	13/01/2018
Co-producer 1,	12/12/2017
Zac	12/12/2017
Arturo	#int 3 12/05/2019 #int 2 06/05/2018 #int 1 28/10/2017
Ivano	#int 2 30/10/2019 #int 1 18/12/2017
Luisa	#int 3 30/10/2019 #int 2 16/10/2018; #int 1 26/10/2017;

## General Assembly Meeting (GAM)

ARCI-community centre, Bologna	01/06/2019
ARCI-community centre, Bologna	19/05/2019
Strategic meeting for meeting the Council	29/01/2019
ARCI Community Centre, Bologna	24/03/2018
ARCI Community Centre, Bologna	18/02/2018
ARCI Community Centre, Bologna	26/11/2017

## Market meetings

VAG61	10/05/2018
Savena	08/04/2018
Labàs	06/03/2018

## National meetings

Genunino Clandestino Meeting, Abruzzo	26/04/2019-28/04/2019
Genunino Clandestino Meeting, Florence	28/04/2018-01/05/2018

## 2) Lists of emails, fieldnotes, documents and conference

### Email on changing the admission to CA

Rules for new participants Luisa	26.06.2019
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### Emails communicating the “minutes of each market to the group”

XM meeting	07/06/2019
Al Pratello meeting	15/05/2019
VAG meeting	15/05/2019
Vicolo Bologna meeting	15/05/2019
Meeting of Savena market	12/04/2019
Minutes of strategic meeting “Food Policy”	08/02/2019
Minutes of general assembly January	08/02/2019
Minutes of finance	07/02/2019
strategic meeting for meeting the Council	29/01/2019

## 3) Fieldnotes

XM-25 meeting	21/05/2019
Meeting with the Council of Bologna	20/02/2019
XM24-eviction	23/05/2019
Organised event with farmers from Latin America	20/05/2018

## 4) Documents

CampiAperti (2014) *Carta dei Principi*. Available at: <http://www.campiaperti.org/chi-siamo/carta-dei-principi>. (Accessed 20.09.16).

CampiAperti (2019) *Regolamenti dei Mercati*. Available at: <https://www.campiaperti.org/chi-siamo/regolamento-dei-mercati/> (Accessed 10.03.2019).

Flyer CampiAperti. (2013) *CampiAperti: Riflessioni su 10 Anni della nostra storia e' possibile un'altra economia?*.

## **5) Conference**

ECVC (23.05.2018) *The future of the CAP: small-scale farmers speak out from European Parliament*, Brussels. Available at: <https://www.eurovia.org/the-future-of-the-cap-small-scale-farmers-speak-out-from-the-european-parliament/>.

## Market Rules

### *Markets promoted by CampiAperti - Association for Food Sovereignty*

#### 1. **Acceptance of the Rules**

All producers who participate in the markets approve the Charter of Principles and they have to respect the current Regulation and accept the forms of social control of their produces, also through specific analyses.

#### 2. **Producers**

Small agricultural producers and local processed food producers who produce using organic and biodynamic methods can be admitted to the markets (Reg. EEC 2091/90 and successive changes). Each producer exhibits on the sale stall its presentation form and of Participatory Guarantee, and is personally responsible for compliance with tax regulations, administration and health standards.

Processed food producers can be admitted to the markets in the measure of 30% maximum of the total number of stalls, provided they have started a rural settlement project, and provided that they only use self-produced organic ingredients or procured within the CampiAperti circuit, or found in the Circuit of the Networks for the Solidarity Economy. The collective purchase (promoted in the mailing lists) of products that are not available are encouraged. Each stall must explain the origin of products that are used for processed food.

Those who only play an intermediary role of agricultural products are excluded from the market, except as established in Art.3.

#### 3. **Products**

Organic agricultural goods and organic or biodynamic foodstuff, certified by control bodies or guaranteed through *Participatory Guarantee by CampiAperti* can be sold on the markets. Each producer can only sell their products. If there are products not available or scarcely available on the market, it is possible to sell small amounts of goods produced by local and networked affiliated firms. This necessitates the consent of the management assembly. The networked affiliated firms must be indicated on the sales box or listed on display to the public.

The sale of products that cannot be found among the producers of CampiAperti, can be extended to different subjects other than producers coming from other regions, like oil and citrus fruit, or environmentally friendly non-food products, such as detergents, personal hygiene products, cosmetics and others. The number of non-food products stalls cannot exceed the 10% of the total stalls on the market.

#### 4. **Prices**

The sales prices per kilo or per litre must be clearly displayed on the stalls and must be established in the discussion among producers, which is then valid for at least one season.

#### 5. **Admission to the markets**

Producers who intend to participate in the markets should contact the Association, fill in the presentation form and wait for a visit to their firm. At the assembly it will be decided, if the firm can join the Association.



Firms, that after an absence of more than four months, and intend to resume their presence at the market, must re-present themselves in the assembly for readmission.

**6. Assembly management of the markets**

The assembly of market management is composed of producers of the market and interested consumers that monitor in directed form the deployment of this regulation, or through one of his delegates, by carrying out control inspections on the premises of the firms. Apart from specific exceptions, the market management assembly meets every month. The assembly decides on logistical and organizational questions, the admission of new food produce and producers, the rules of management of each specific market, the control on the firms, and any other necessity. The assembly decisions' are adopted with the method of consensus or, if an agreement cannot be reached, through a majority vote.

**7. Finance**

All producers are required to financially contribute to the management of the markets (promotional and informational activities, management costs and municipal taxes) in the manner decided by the General Assembly. From 2013, a contribution of 5% of the income is asked from each market.

The markets can receive funding by private subjects and public institutions, subject to the consent of the management agreement.

**8. Work ethic**

CampiAperti refuses to work in isolation. It supports the involvement of employees (employees, seasonal or occasional workers) in the management of the company. CA also believes in the clarity of the employment relationship between the employer and employee. The latter are an active part of the company, and for this, at the first visit of the company, the employee must be present along with the owner to communicate their role. In the event, that an employee had problems with the owner, the employee can address this issue to the working group (composed by employees of member companies and co-producers), which will examine the issue before presenting it at the assembly meeting. The assembly will then assess and decide whether to suspend the producer of CampiAperti depending on what the working group reports.

**9. Raw materials of processed food**

The first of the processed materials must come preferably from its own production. If the producer is unable to produce part of the ingredients, s/he producer is allowed the use of products found in the catalogue of the CampiAperti circuit or in the Fair Trade market. The local processed food producers are encouraged to search for collaboration with producers from CampiAperti.

CampiAperti permits the use of raw materials produced by firms that are not part of the Association, and with which the local processed food producer has a close collaborative relationship. In this case, the company has to be present at the time of the visit.

The detailed list of ingredients and their origin must be exposed on theirs stalls. This list must be published on the website. On the website it should be specified the temporary authorisation of this specific product.

**Appendix A: Rules and norms for the transformation of food produce**

- 1) The artisan preparation by the producers is permitted and is allowed on the market. The food produce is exclusively vegetable-based.
- 2) The raw material has to be 100% of biological origin. In case of tropical products (sugar, coffee, chocolate, cocoa, etc.), they have to be purchased preferably from the Fair Trade market.
- 3) The raw materials must come primarily from market producers (CampiAperti) or from other local producers in the area.
- 4) The products conserved in oil, made in old traditions are not allowed to be sold.
- 5) The conserved vegetables (sauces, juices, jams, compotes, etc) must be pasteurised in a water bath (temperature 90-100 Celsius for 15-20 minutes) followed by rapid cooling.
- 6) In case the fruit or vegetable does not contain sufficient acid (e.g. pumpkins, chestnuts), the content of all products can be acidified with lemon, citric acid, etc. with a pH below 4.5.
- 7) Colourings and artificial preservatives are not permitted.
- 8) The used containers should be kept clean, and the caps must be checked for its perfect maintenance.
- 9) The winemakers shall not go beyond the permitted usage of sulphur dioxide dictated by the organic standards (red wines 60mg / white wine 80 mg / AIAB source).  
Winemakers are encouraged to experiment with winemaking processes without sulphur dioxide.
- 10) The cooked food (rice, pasta, sweets, cakes, etc.) should be prepared on the day or the day before, refrigerated and transported in appropriate closed containers.
- 11) The label of processed food produce must indicate at least the following items: company, or name and surname of the local processed food producer, the date of production, and ingredients.
- 12) In the event that the processed food is done in the name of *Genuino Clandestino*, it is obligatory to put this label on the product.

Translated from Italian to English by Author





















