

ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS (AFNs) IN CALABRIA

A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF INTERACTION DYNAMICS



SIMONA D'AMICO

**Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Calabria.
A sociological exploration of interaction dynamics.**

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Thesis committee

Promotors

Prof. Dr J.S.C. Wiskerke
Professor of Rural Sociology
Wageningen University

Prof. G. Gulisano
Professor of Economics and Rural Appraisal
Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria, Italy

Co-promotors

Dr B. Bock
Associate Professor, Rural Sociology Group
Wageningen University

Dr S. Pascucci
Assistant Professor, Management Studies Group
Wageningen University

Other members

Prof. Dr C. N. van der Weele, Wageningen University
Prof. G. Brunori, University of Pisa, Italy
Prof. Dr M. Fonte, University of Naples Federico II, Italy
Prof. Dr M. Kneafsey, Coventry University, United Kingdom

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Simona D'Amico

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Simona D'Amico

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Topic of research and motivations

Since the second half of the 1990s, the conceptualisation of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) has been used in the scientific literature to refer to systems of food provisioning where producers and consumers are in direct or close relationship, and where consumers may even cooperate with producers in implementing tasks related to farming and food distribution. A broad variety of initiatives fall under the concept of AFNs including Farmers' Markets (FMs), buying groups, box schemes, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farm shops, territorial food chains and retailing co-operatives of consumers, producers, and workers (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman, & Warner, 2003; Brunori, Cerruti, Medeot, & Rossi, 2008; Feenstra, 2002; Hinrichs, 2000; Tregear, 2011; Whatmore, Stassart, & Renting, 2003). The variety of disciplines and journals engaging with the topic of AFNs is equally broad (Goodman, 2004; Venn et al., 2006).

This research comes at a time when the literature on AFNs “has reached something of an impasse” (Tregear, 2011, p. 2). Different and sometime opposing conceptual definitions contend in the attempt to define the features of AFNs and their socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and other sorts of impacts on the territories and communities where they operate.

In an attempt to overcome this impasse, two new lines of research have been developed in recent years:

1. Explorative studies on the dynamics of AFNs, especially focussing on the interactions between AFNs' actors during their daily activities in AFNs. These everyday interactions shape the features of AFNs (Brunori, Rossi, & Guidi, 2012; Kirwan, 2006; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011; Pole & Gray, 2013). Exploring these dynamics is seen as a key to unveiling AFNs' features and their implications for AFNs' identities and roles, paying attention to how they actually emerge in processes of negotiating views while dynamics take place (Ammirato, Della Gala, & Volpentesta, 2013; DuPuis & Gillon, 2009; Papaoikonomou, Valverde, & Ryan, 2012; Volpentesta, Ammirato, & Della Gala, 2012).
2. Giving equal attention to all the actors involved in AFNs. Compared to most of the AFN studies carried out so far, this implies the need to give more attention to consumers as they have been largely overlooked thus far (Goodman, 2002; Tregear, 2011). To address this, the notion of Civic Food Networks (CFNs) has been recently introduced in the domain of AFNs. It invites explorations of those AFNs where consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations play leading roles, alongside other actors, in carrying out activities of food provisioning and raising awareness on matters of civic relevance connected with food provisioning (Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). The studies on CFNs have also moved the attention of studies in the domain of AFNs from contexts where industrialised agrifood

systems are predominant, to contexts where traditional aspects are still important in their agrifood systems (Balázs, 2012; Lamine, Darolt, & Brandenburg, 2012; Zagata, 2012).

The research presented in this thesis is motivated by the desire to contribute to the literature on AFNs, following the above-mentioned paths. To this end, a theoretical and methodological framework has been operationalised to study the identities and roles of AFNs by exploring the daily dynamics of AFNs in terms of its organisation and implementation of its activities. Furthermore, the research focusses on cases of AFNs where consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations play a leading role in carrying out activities connected to both food provisioning and raising awareness about civic issues. Lastly, this research studies AFNs in contexts whose agrifood systems are not completely industrialised and that have not been unexplored by the literature on AFNs thus far.

Besides the desire to advance our understanding of AFNs, another more personal motivation has guided this research. I come from a small town in Italy and have lived in small towns and large cities in several areas of Italy. Italy has been considered as one of the countries where traditional aspects are still predominant in its agrifood system (Parrott, Wilson, & Murdoch, 2002). With respect to AFNs in Italy, the literature has highlighted two main circumstances: 1) systems of food provisioning such as farmers' markets and farm shops, which are seen as examples of AFNs, have never disappeared in Italy (Rossi, Brunori, & Guidi, 2008; Vecchio, 2010); 2) there is a renewed interest in these systems of food provisioning as well as a rapid growth in new or revived systems of food provisioning that can be considered as examples of AFNs (Rossi et al., 2008; Vecchio, 2010).

While living in Italy, I have participated in several 'alternative' systems of food provisioning and have personally experienced these two circumstances. I started wondering what was behind the renewed interest in these systems of food provisioning, and if and how the new or revived systems of food provisioning are different from the already (and still) existing systems of food provisioning. I decided to follow my curiosity, which motivated me to undertake research to disclose the identities and roles of AFNs through exploring their dynamics in contexts where agrifood systems still show some traditional aspects, and where systems of food provisioning that are now conceptualised as forms of AFNs have long existed.

1.2 Research approach and discipline of study

In 2011 Treager identified the following deficits in studies on AFNs: a rigid use of concepts, a conflation of AFNs' features with expected outcomes, insufficient attention granted to the dynamics taking place while AFNs' actors interact for the purpose of product exchange (Tregear, 2011). Some of them have been successfully addressed by dynamics-centred and explorative studies on AFNs.

These studies look into interaction dynamics taking place during AFNs' activities among which product exchange. They unveil AFNs' features and their implications for AFNs' identities and roles by analysing the negotiation of meanings in interactions. Hence, they do not rely on pre-defined conceptual categories and hypotheses but instead consider AFNs' features, identities and roles as continuously (re) shaped in interactions during AFNs' activities (Ammirato et al., 2013; DuPuis & Gillon, 2009; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Volpentesta et al., 2012).

In doing so, these studies introduce a reflexive, rather than normative, way of thinking about AFNs (Mount, 2012). Within reflexive thinking, nothing is taken as definitive and there is a constant challenge to understand what makes things work and what does not; why certain features and

implications stabilise while others collapse; and why features and implications that stabilise in one context do not work in another context. Raising, and replying to, this sort of questions is important as it increases our insight into the reality of AFNs.

Still, also these explorative and dynamics-centred approaches are in need of further development. Existing studies have been focussing on processes of negotiation occurring during AFNs' activities (Ammirato et al., 2013; DuPuis & Gillon, 2009; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Volpentesta et al., 2012). This contributes to our understanding of what attracts attention and mobilises activities. Besides, it is important to grasp the relative importance of different AFNs activities for AFNs identities and roles. This research proposes Interaction Ritual (IR) theory (Collins, 2004a) as the theoretical and methodological framework for the study of AFNs since it gives us the tools to address these issues and to further develop the existing explorative and dynamics-centred approaches.

IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has been developed in the domain of sociology. It maintains that the dynamics, (i.e. situations of interactions), on which social phenomena are built are the ideal analytical starting point from which to understand them. Understanding social phenomena from their constituting dynamics implies disclosing the features of these phenomena while exploring the functioning of their dynamics as they actually take place. In particular, it is important to unveil: the foci of attention emerging in the studied dynamics, what is under attention, what mobilises the dynamics and acquires specific meanings within them; the intensity of dynamics, their capacity to unfold and to repeat as well as to engage of people (Collins, 2004a). Hence, dynamics are crucial for IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and need to be studied in an explorative way by revealing how they actually function in terms of foci of attention and intensity generation.

The whole research presented in this thesis is a conceptual and methodological effort to adapt, operationalise, and apply IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to the study of AFNs. First, this research identifies the organisation and implementation of AFNs' activities as the main dynamics within AFNs. Second, this research defines a methodological approach to ascertain intensity of AFNs' activities, (i.e. feelings of attachment), together with their foci of attention and the significance of these foci, (i.e. common understanding). Finally, the results in terms of ascertained intensity and foci of attention are analysed to infer insights on the features of the studied AFNs with the implications for their identities and roles.

The result is an explorative, dynamics-centred and sociological approach to the study of AFNs that relies on the features emerging from the dynamics of organisation and implementation of AFNs' activities to make inferences on their identities and roles. The approach developed and applied in this research goes beyond those studies exploring the negotiation of meanings in interactions during AFNs' activities by looking also into the intensity of the activities. It looks into the negotiation of meanings by disclosing the foci of attention emerging in AFNs' activities and their significance. In addition, this study looks into the capacity of those activities to engage people and to take place repeatedly, hence, ascertaining the intensity of the activities. These aspects, which have not been investigated yet, shed light on the relative importance of activities in influencing with their purposes the overall identities and roles of AFNs.

1.3 The context and the case study

Context of study

Calabria is the context where this research is conducted. It is a region in Southern Italy whose agrifood system is in between tradition and industrialisation. Tradition is prevailing in the way farming is practised, with the predominance of small family farms, most of them producing

traditional products for direct selling and self-consumption (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica [ISTAT], 2007, 2010a). The traditional form of the Calabrian agrifood system is also highlighted in the way the food industry is organised, with many small-craft firms (Coppola et al., 2007; Coppola, Capasso, & Ferrara, 2005). Finally, tradition is also alive in the channels chosen for the distribution of products, which include medium/small-sized, specialised shops also selling traditional, local products, directly supplied by local farmers as well as peddling (Osservatorio Nazionale del Commercio, 2013a,b). Moreover, forms of food provisioning that are nowadays studied as examples of AFNs have never disappeared in Calabria and are being now rediscovered and revived.

Recently, institutions, civil society organisations including consumer-based civil society organisations, and practitioners of the agrifood sector have proposed and implemented some initiatives in order to reevaluate the traditional features of the Calabrian agrifood system (Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria [INEA], 2013).

A branch of those initiatives is aimed at making traditional forms of food provisioning economically more effective and viable. Among those initiatives are guidelines for the creation of new forms of direct selling for traditional and regional products, as well as for renewing the existing ones. Those guidelines were included in the regional Rural Development Program (RDP) 2007-2013¹ and were received and implemented by means of several regional laws supporting the set-up of these new or revived forms of direct selling². Other initiatives act on introducing new technologies to make the production of traditional products at risk of extinction economically viable whilst still preserving their traditional features and cultural values. This initiative also works on raising sensitivity about the importance of consuming these kinds of products (<http://www.slowfood.it>). Some other initiatives promote the formation of ‘quality, agrifood districts’, these being geographical and administrative areas where local, traditional and high quality agricultural farms and food transformation firms network with each other and work towards building up local economies based on the production and promotion of high quality products with strong cultural roots³. Furthermore, there are associations including small traditional farmers and migrant workers in the agricultural sectors who work together to find commercial channels where the traditional and sometimes organic products they produce receive a fair price. Moreover, they work on actions to raise awareness among politicians and civil society on issues of socio-economic exploitations that afflict, among others, the Calabrian agrifood system (<http://www.sosrosarno.org>). Finally, another initiative concerns farm cooperatives and associations working on land seized from the Mafia. These promote traditional farming as a tool to create job opportunities for young and disadvantaged people as well as to raise awareness on topics such as legality (<http://liberaterra.it>).

All in all, the initiatives mentioned above pay attention both to revaluing traditional forms of food provisioning and to civic concerns such as countervailing some of the factors that are behind the socio-economic backwardness of this region and which are both connected with and beyond the organisation of its agrifood system. Some of these initiatives can be defined as forms of AFNs. This research identifies four types of AFNs existing in Calabria, namely farmers’ markets, farm shops,

¹ *Programma di Sviluppo Rurale (PSR) 2007-2013 2010* (Decisione della Commissione Europea) n C(2010)1164.

² *Norme per il sostegno dei gruppi acquisto solidale (gas) e per la promozione dei prodotti alimentari da filiera corta e di qualità 2011* (Legge Regionale) n. 23 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 13 del 22 luglio 2011 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

Norme per orientare e sostenere il consumo dei prodotti agricoli regionali 2008 (Legge Regionale) n. 29 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 16 del 18 Agosto 2008 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

³ *Istituzione dei distretti rurali ed agroalimentari di qualità. Istituzione del distretto agroalimentare di qualità di Sibari 2004* (Legge Regionale) n. 21 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 19 del 19 Ottobre 2004 Supplemento Straordinario n. 2 (Italy).

Modifiche e integrazioni alla legge regionale 13 ottobre 2004, n. 21 «Istituzione dei distretti rurali ed agro- alimentari di qualità. Istituzione del distretto agro-alimentare di qualità di Sibari» 2009 (Legge Regionale) n. 6 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 6 del 7 Aprile 2009 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

and two types of buying groups - GAS (Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale or Solidarity Purchasing Group) and GODO (Gruppo Organizzato di Domanda e Offerta or Organised Group of Supply and Demand).

The value of choosing Calabria as the context for this study on AFNs is twofold. First, Calabria has not yet been featured in the international literature on AFNs. Hence, studying AFNs in Calabria would contribute to expanding our knowledge on this topic by bringing insights from a context where AFNs have not yet been explored. Second, given the predominantly traditional aspects of the Calabrian agrifood system and the commitment of some of its AFN initiatives to both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance, studying AFNs in Calabria represents an opportunity to further explore a recent tendency in the studies of AFNs. This tendency implies studying AFNs operating in contexts with traditional agrifood systems and that are engaged with both activities of food provisioning and actions to raise awareness on issues of civic relevance (Balázs, 2012; Lamine et al., 2012; Renting et al., 2012; Zagata, 2012). All in all, exploring AFNs in Calabria represents an opportunity to further investigating AFNs' identities and roles.

Case study

This thesis predominantly focusses on one specific case (i.e. GAS M), which was selected based on the reasoning of purposive-theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013). In other words, among all the identified initiatives of AFNs in Calabria, GAS M was the one that was deemed the most informative for both the theoretical and the empirical interests of this research. GAS M is a GAS which has been operating in Calabria since 2004. Its origins are in a group of Calabrian initiatives working on the promotion of fair trade practices and principles in Calabria. Some of the people within the fair trade initiatives started thinking about ways to contribute to the Calabrian economy too. Those people were civil society activists and critical consumers; none of them was a producer. They thought about using the principles of fair trade to select Calabrian producers and to create a market in the region not only for fair trade producers from all around the world, but also for local producers. Moved by this idea, those people set up GAS M, which seeks to find ways to support socio-economic development in Calabria on the basis of principles such as fairness, solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, trust, social and environmental justice, responsibility and participation. GAS M follows these principles while implementing activities related to both food provisioning and raising civic awareness. It seeks to spread those principles in order to inform broader socio-cultural, political and economic systems, life styles and ways of running businesses starting from the regional level where GAS M operates.

Theoretically, GAS M is relevant because it is the only example of Calabrian AFNs where the approach elaborated on the basis of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) can be applied. Namely, activities and their instances of organisation and implementation, can be identified and sources of information are available from which their intensity, foci of attention, and the significance of these foci can be ascertained.

Empirically, GAS M is relevant because it offers the possibility to explore a case of an AFN guided by consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations and committed to implementing activities connected with both food provisioning and raising civic awareness. In other words, GAS M represents a case of an AFN which falls within the category of AFNs that has recently attracted the attention of a branch of the literature of AFNs. GASs have been mentioned as possible informative cases with respect to this branch of AFNs studies (Renting et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the attention of the existing studies on GASs was predominantly on food provisioning activities alone (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori, Rossi, & Malandrin, 2011; Fonte, 2013). This research will

give equal attention to activities connected with both food provisioning and raising civic awareness in order to infer from them the identity of GAS M.

1.4 Research objective, research questions and thesis outline

The **general objective** of this research is to reveal the identities and roles of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) based on the features that emerge from the daily dynamic of organising and implementing activities. To this end, the research focusses on the case of one particular AFN, namely GAS M, which is led by consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations. Moreover, GAS M is a case of an AFN that works on both food provisioning and civic awareness initiatives, and is located in Calabria, a context where traditional forms of food provisioning are still predominant. This research is guided by the following research questions:

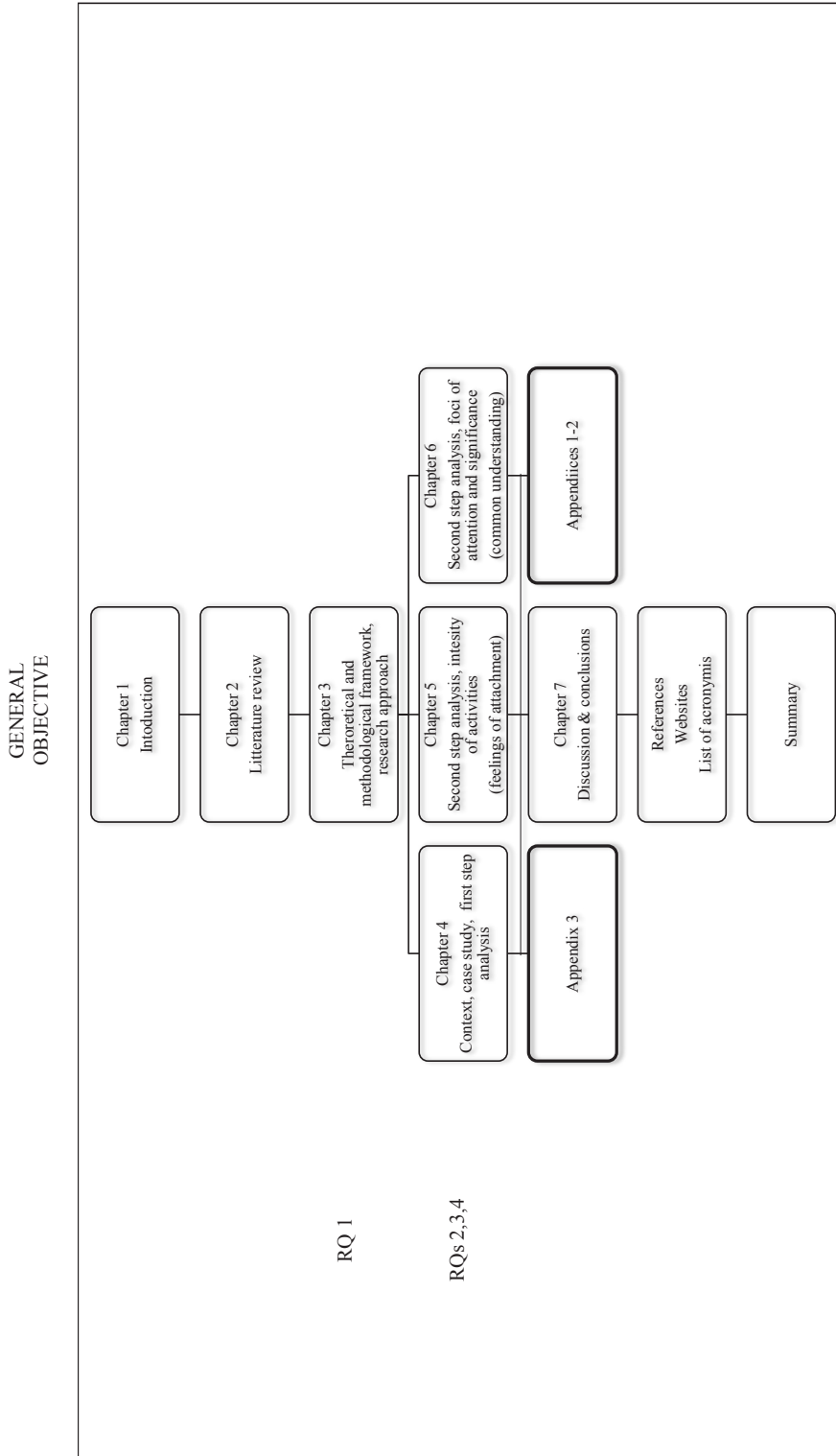
1. How can an existing theoretical and methodological framework, that grounds the study of social phenomena in the analysis of their internal dynamics, be adapted to frame an analysis of AFNs?
2. How can the theoretical and methodological framework be operationalised and applied to conduct an analysis of GAS M starting by exploring the functioning of its activities?
3. What is the relative importance of the different GAS M activities for the construction of its identity?
4. How is the identity of GAS M produced and negotiated in conversations occurring while GAS M activities take place?

By replying to these questions, and by studying an AFN in the afore-mentioned context and conditions, the research wishes to contribute to furthering our knowledge of AFNs. In particular, the research seeks to produce new insights into the identities and roles of AFNs.

The research is presented in this thesis over the course of seven chapters. This first chapter is followed by **chapter 2**, which comprises the literature review. It traces two paths of development in the literature on AFNs. On the one side, it highlights the tendency to move the focus of attention towards initiatives of AFNs led by consumers, civil society organisations and institutions as well as producers, in contexts where agrifood systems show some traditional traits. On the other side, it delineates the tendency to adopt dynamics-centred and explorative approaches to AFNs. Those two tendencies are instrumental in defining the guidelines of the strategy this research proposes to progress the literature on AFNs. The role of **chapter 3** is twofold. First, it presents the theoretical and methodological framework chosen for this research, introducing the conceptual and methodological guidelines for IR theory-based studies. Second, it introduces the theoretical and methodological approach derived from these guidelines and instrumental for the analysis of AFNs by examining the functioning of the dynamics of their activities. Chapter 3 responds to the first research question. **Chapter 4** describes the context and the case study and presents the first step of the operationalisation and application of the IR theory-based approach in the analysis of the selected case as a first level of operationalisation of the approach to ascertain the intensity, (i.e. feelings of attachment) and foci of attention, (i.e. common understanding), generating in GAS M activities. As such, chapter 4 provides a first answer to the second research question, which is also addressed in **chapters 5** and **6**. They describe the second level of operationalisation of the approach to ascertain activities' intensity and foci of attention with their significance, respectively. Furthermore, they discuss the results of ascertaining intensity, foci of attention and their significance in GAS M activities. In so doing, chapter 5 responds to the third research question by providing an overview of the relative importance of GAS M activities in influencing its identity;

chapter 6 responds to the fourth research question by presenting what attracts attention in conversations while GAS M activities take place and what is its significance. Finally, **chapter 7** comprises the conclusions of the thesis, which summarise the contributions of the research both in relation to the existing literature on AFNs and in relation to IR theory (Collins, 2004a). Moreover, the conclusions identify impulses for further dynamics-centred research in the domain of AFNs. The thesis also comprises **three appendices**. Two of them details some aspects of the two steps of operationalisation and application of the IR theory-based approach. One of them reports some detailed statistics and documentation on the contexts of study (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Thesis outline



Chapter 2

Theoretical, methodological, and empirical gaps in the studies on Alternative Food Networks (AFNs): some guidelines for further research

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts from Tregear's (2011) critical review of the studies on AFNs published from the mid-1990s onwards. She identifies four aspects of the studies on AFNs as problematic: insufficient clarity and consistency in the use of concepts; conflation of some aspects of AFNs with expected outcomes and actors' behaviours; insufficient attention to the dynamics taking place while AFNs' actors interact for the purpose of product exchange; insufficient attention to the consumers side of the AFNs (Tregear, 2011).

This chapter will review studies on AFNs that were published before Tregear's (2011) critical review in order to show how the problems that have just been mentioned originally emerged. Moreover, the studies published after Tregear's critical review will be reviewed in order to find out which analytical strategies they have explored, if and how these strategies have solved (some of) the problems identified by Tregear, and if and how these strategies can be further advanced to improve the understanding of AFNs.

Section 2.2 traces the evolution from studies focussing on the producer's side of AFNs to studies that explore AFN initiatives where other actors play a crucial role, not least the consumers. The aim of section 2.2 is to identify where there is a need for more knowledge and insight to give attention to consumers and other involved actors besides producers. Section 2.3 will review studies in relation to the approaches they have used to research AFNs. The aim of this section is to identify the most advanced approaches; in other words the approaches that are proven to address most of the problems which were identified by Tregear (2011) alongside a general lack of attention to the consumer's side. Section 2.4 will conclude the review by outlining the strategy proposed by this study in order to further our understanding of AFNs.

2.2 From Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) to Civic Food Networks (CFNs): changing actors, contexts, and action frames

Since the second half of the 1990s, scholars have been using the term Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) to refer to initiatives such as Farmers' Markets (FMs), buying groups, box schemes, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farm shops, territorial food chains, retailing co-operatives of consumers, producers, and workers (Allen et al., 2003; Brunori et al., 2008; Feenstra, 2002; Hinrichs, 2000; Tregear, 2011; Whatmore et al., 2003).

Despite the huge variety within these initiatives, scholars have identified some shared features in AFNs. They are intended to be systems of food provisioning where producers and consumers play active roles in the management; producers and consumers are in direct relationship, and consumers may even cooperate with producers in implementing tasks related to farming and food supplying. At least in principle, AFNs seek to embody an alternative to the global and industrial food system. First of all, in AFNs, food products and their production are rooted in specific territories, production traditions, and food cultures. Unlike the anonymity of products in big distribution chains, products in AFNs reach consumers along with all the information needed to reconnect the products to their producers and places of origin, with their production techniques, the food traditions behind them, and with their organoleptic features. Secondly, AFNs strive to foster socio-economic inclusion of people who are marginalised by the corporate food system. For instance they seek to offer economic opportunities to medium-small and traditional farmers as well as occasions for consumers, regardless of their socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, to have a say in food provisioning and to gain access to healthy, culturally sound, quality products at fair prices. Finally, AFNs aim at being more environmental friendly than industrial systems of food provisioning by backing traditional, natural and ecological production as well as by reducing the number of miles that products travel (Allen, 1999; Allen et al., 2003; Feenstra, 1997, 2002; Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003; Renting et al., 2012; Tregear, 2011).

US scholars often refer to concepts such as community food systems (Feenstra, 2002), community food security (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Allen, 1999) or food sovereignty and justice (Alkon & Mares, 2012) to make sense of the role of AFNs as promoters of alternative systems of food provisioning, US scholars stress the oppositional status of AFNs and their attempts to contest the industrial and global food system. Those scholars present AFNs as being related to other anti-globalist social movements in the US, acting as a means to take back control from the global food system and create local, community-based systems of food provisioning that are socially, economically and environmentally just (Allen et al. 2003; Goodman, 2003; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996; Macias, 2008; Slocum, 2006). European scholars interpret AFNs in relation to the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) reform that, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, brought increasing attention to the development of European rural areas. The development of AFNs in Europe has also been understood as a means for farmers to address the downward pressure on farm family incomes by creating products with high value added. Furthermore, those scholars refer to a series of food scares breaking out in Europe during the 1990s, and to the consequent attention to food quality. European scholars see AFNs as being instrumental in implementing European institutions' policies to foster endogenous rural development and food quality (Goodman, 2003; Marsden & Smith, 2005; Van Der Ploeg & Renting, 2000; Whatmore et al., 2003).

Early European studies on AFNs concentrate on Northern Europe; they are interested in the organisational solutions adopted by AFNs, in if and how they might overlap with the mainstream channels, and in how they can or cannot contribute to enhancing endogenous development and food quality (Ilbery & Maye, 2005, 2006; Ilbery, Maye, Kneafsey, Jenkins, & Walkley, 2004; Marsden, Banks, & Bristow, 2000; Renting et al., 2003). The notion of Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) has been introduced to capture that AFNs can shorten the food chain and that this is what distinguishes them from the industrial food chains (Marsden et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003). Producers in AFNs socialise and spatialise food since they embed their products in personalised relationships through which those products circulate and they connect their products with a specific territory (Marsden et al., 2000).

Even if this is not always done directly, producers get in touch with consumers, (e.g. via internet, through labels, or face-to-face interactions), and communicate the peculiarities of the products in terms of place and production techniques, quality, and cultural and social values. In doing so, those

producers attract consumers by offering a special quality of products rather than a cheap price; consumers obtain high quality products which also have symbolic values connected to the cultural meaning attached to them; finally, the territories are revaluated for their traditions and resources. Within this view, AFNs might generate added value for the producers and the territories involved in the food provisioning systems as well as satisfy consumers searching for high quality and peculiar products (Marsden et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003).

All in all, the early European studies on AFNs focus on the producer's side of AFNs (Ilbery & Maye, 2005, 2006; Marsden et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003). Some scholars criticised this producer-centred perspective, maintaining that consumers constitute an essential part of the AFNs and of their attempt to implement a viable alternative to the industrial food system. They argue for the need to include consumers into AFN researches (Goodman, 2002; Goodman, 2004; Goodman & DuPuis, 2002; Lockie, 2002; Tregear, 2011). The conceptualisation of Civic Food Network (CFN) is the most recently proposed conceptual tool to capture the role of consumers, who are becoming increasingly crucial in the governance of alternative systems of food provisioning, together with other actors such as civil society organisations, policy makers, and political institutions (Renting et al., 2012).

In the light of this conceptualisation, AFNs are interpreted as contexts where the above mentioned actors express their influence on the governance of food provisioning systems within two main action frames. On the one hand, they actively engage in shaping the organisation of food provisioning in ways that they can closely interact, reciprocally influence, and even take up the role of producers. On the other hand, they become engaged in raising awareness among civil society and policy makers on the dysfunctional nature of the industrial, mainstream agrifood system and on possible actions to create sustainable alternatives (Renting et al., 2012).

A special issue of the *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* in 2012 (Vol. 19, No. 3) presents various initiatives, that so far had been studied as cases of AFNs, as examples of CFNs. They include buying groups, CSAs, retailing cooperatives and many other initiatives that are considered as examples of CFNs in so far as they involve consumers with leading roles and interact with local organisations, institutions, communities and groups to raise awareness about the opportunity to create local systems of food provisioning that are connected to specific food traditions, and are economically viable, socially just and environmentally friendly (Renting et al., 2012). Many of the presented CFNs are located in Southern and Eastern Europe as well as in Southern America (Balázs, 2012; Lamine et al., 2012; Zagata, 2012), in those countries where the industrialisation of the food system is less widespread than in the Northern European and American countries (Parrott et al., 2002) which have been the main focus of studies on AFNs until now.

Currently rapidly spreading CFNs in Italy are GASs (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale), or Solidarity Purchasing Groups (Brunori et al., 2012). They have been studied and presented in the literature on AFNs as systems of food provisioning in which individual consumers, consumers organisations, and other civil society organisations drive the organisation of both food provisioning activities and activities with civic relevance (Brunori et al. 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Cembalo, Migliore, & Schifani, 2013; Fonte, 2013). Although GASs have been mentioned as interesting cases of CFNs (Renting et al., 2012), they have been not explored as such. Until now, studies have been detailing GASs' activity of food provisioning without exploring their civic activities (Brunori et al. 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Fonte, 2013).

The coming section will introduce GASs and explain why studying GASs increases our understanding of CFNs and, in turn, of AFNs.

2.2.1 Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (GASs): an introduction

GASs are an Italian phenomenon; the first GAS appeared in 1994 in the North of Italy (Colombo, 2013; Innocenti, 2007; Saroldi, 2008;), and to date, there are almost a thousand GASs all over Italy which are registered for a national network called *Rete G.A.S.* (*Rete G.A.S.*, n.d.). *Rete G.A.S.* uses a website, a mailing list system, and periodic meetings to share information and reflections on topics of interest for the GASs (<http://www.retegas.org/>).

The GASs policy document defined by *Rete G.A.S.* states that “A GAS is established when a group of people decides to meet in order to reflect on their consumption and to buy everyday products guided by the principles of justice and solidarity” (*Rete G.A.S.*, 1999, p. 4). Hence there are three elements which characterise GASs: a group of people, the act of purchasing, and the idea of following principles of solidarity while purchasing. The latter is the key feature to understanding the aim of GASs. The just quoted GASs policy document also says that GASs want:

to provide for the purchase of goods and services whilst attempting to realise a more human vision of the economy, that is, an economy closer to the real needs of people and the environment, expressing an ethos of critical consumption that unites people instead of dividing them (*Rete G.A.S.* as cited in Fonte, 2013, p. 233).

In other words, GASs are formed in the attempt to create viable alternatives to the global economy and consumption by enhancing cooperation and shared experiences among the people working towards this.

Scholars and grass-root researchers identify two types of GASs, both of them promoted by consumers. One type of GASs starts in the form of independent groups, either formal or informal. This is for instance the case when colleagues, neighbours, friends or acquaintances (e.g. parents of children in the same school) decide to collectively organise their purchasing of products and services. The second type of GASs develops out of other initiatives. In this latter case, GASs are often linked to fair trade shops and organisations, social movements, religious associations, scouts or political parties and other civil organisations focussing on topics such as the environment, public resource management, social integration, territorial development, culture preservation (Colombo, 2013; Innocenti, 2007; Fonte, 2013; Saroldi, 2008).

The complexity of GASs' origins demonstrates the diversity of motivations of the members to participate in GASs. Scholars highlight that GASs' members are eager to obtain fresh, high quality and local products at fair prices. Others want to support small farmers and local development, or want to contribute to the rediscovery of food traditions, protection of the environment and the development of sustainable socio-economic systems. Furthermore, GAS members stress the socialising aspect as an important reason to belong to a GAS (Brunetti, Giaretta, & Rossato, 2007; Carbone, Gaito, & Senni, 2007; Cembalo et al., 2013; Piani & Santarossa, 2011; Sivini, 2007; Sortino, Santarossa, & Chang, 2011).

GASs members carry out several types of activity. First of all, they organise the delivery of products. GASs members define criteria according to which they select their producers; then, for each product, they identify someone among them who will be responsible for coordinating the order and delivery of products (Fonte, 2013; Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Rossi & Brunori, 2010). GASs members also hold meetings and reflect on subjects that matter to them. Meetings can be concerned with purely organisational issues, or may regard their principles and visions, as well

as include discussions of lifestyles, or other topics of political, social, economic, environmental, and general civic relevance (Brunori et al., 2012; Cembalo et al. 2013; Fonte, 2013; Innocenti, 2007; Sivini, 2007). They also organise a great variety of initiatives, (e.g. events, projects, demonstrations, seminars, movie screenings, and other artistic performances), linked to their different interests. For instance, initiatives may be concerned with the social, political, economic and environmental impact of the mainstream food system or of the broader socio-economic and political systems (Fonte, 2013; Innocenti, 2007; Saroldi, 2008). Other activities are purely recreational and aimed at promoting sociality, reciprocity and practices of alternative lifestyles (e.g. social meals, the exchange of knowledge and services) (Cembalo et al., 2013).

The complexity and diversity of origins, motivations, and activities in GASs can be explained within the framework of Civic Food Network (CFN) (Renting et al., 2012). In line with other examples of CFNs, GASs may be read as initiatives guided by consumers who are grouped in formal or informal associations and, sometimes, in pre-existing civil society organisations. In them, producers collaborate with consumers and civil society organisations. GASs operate to fulfil the two main action frames identified for CFNs, which is to say that they run food provisioning in a way in which producers and consumers are increasingly interconnected and that they act in ways which encourage civic engagement. GASs members organise food provisioning by agreeing on the principles of its organisation and by managing it. They are civically engaged by promoting activities to raise awareness, within civil society and institutions, of the principles and visions of civic relevance upon which they build their GASs.

So far, the studies exploring GASs have focussed on the food provisioning activity (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Fonte, 2013; Rossi and Brunori, 2010). These studies approach GASs through transition theory, actor network theory (Brunori et al., 2012, Brunori et al., 2011; Rossi and Brunori, 2010), and social practices theory (Fonte, 2013), using story telling, interviews and documents analysis to look into the motivations and practices of GAS actors to understand to what extent and how certain motivations and interests result in new practices of food provisioning. In other words, these studies are interested in understanding the transformational role of GASs as systems of food provisioning. Their main question is if GAS members, both producers and consumers, are actually able to develop new practices of food provisioning and to realise their goals (Fonte, 2013; Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Rossi and Brunori, 2010). Some of these studies looked into hampering and facilitating factors, and discussed whether, to what extent, and under which circumstances these new practices of food provisioning may be extended beyond the borders of GASs (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Rossi & Brunori, 2010).

So far, there are no studies on those civic activities which GASs implement beyond food provisioning. Therefore, studying if and how motivations and interests translate into activities of civic engagement, as well as investigating how these activities take place over time and space, is a way to further our understanding of GASs. More in particular, it is interesting to explore if and how civic and food provisioning activities combine in the everyday dynamics of GASs, to disclose the relative importance of those activities and how they mould the identity of GASs.

This is exactly what this studies intends to do. It will study a GAS, (looking at its both food provisioning and civic activities), and will do so in the context of Calabria in the South of Italy, that is a region with a relatively traditional agrifood system (Parrott et al., 2002) compared to those areas where most of the AFN research so far has taken place. Moreover it is a region that also studies on CFNs that have been looking at contexts with traditional agrifood systems (Balázs, 2012; Lamine et al., 2012; Zagata, 2012) have not explored yet. Exploring GASs in such an area is especially interesting since it will provide insights into so far unexplored cases of CFNs operating in so far unexplored geographical and agricultural contexts.

In doing so this study will increase our understanding of AFNs for at least two reasons. First of all, a further conceptualisation of CFNs will also advance our insight into the broader domain of AFNs. Secondly, exploring cases of CFNs, such as GASs, responds to the call for more attention for the role of consumers in AFNs, such as explained above (Tregear, 2011).

2.3 Alternative Food Networks (AFNs): from deductive and actor-centred to explorative and dynamics-centred approaches

2.3.1 Deductive and actor-centred approaches to the study of AFNs

Several of the AFN studies published until Tregear's (2011) critical review used deductive and actor-centred approaches. They developed hypotheses concerning the features and possible implications of AFNs and introduced conceptual perspectives from which those hypotheses could be refined. Most of them referred to actors' opinions on AFNs and their motivations for being AFN members to verify or deny the initial hypotheses. Such studies concluded their analysis with reflections on the implications of AFNs in social and civic (R. Little, Maye, & Ilbery, 2010; Macias, 2008; Murtagh, 2010; Sage, 2003) and economic terms (Kneafsey, Ilbery, & Jenkins, 2001; R. Little et al., 2010; Macias, 2008; Murdoch, Marsden, & Banks, 2000; Renting et al., 2003;), as well as in regard to health and environment (Marsden & Smith, 2005; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Sage, 2003; Seyfang, 2006; Whatmore et al., 2003), with particular attention given to the territory and community in which the studied AFNs operate.

The following review will analyse the features and implications considered, the conceptual perspectives used, and the overall results of the mentioned studies. A review of the critique of these studies will also be included in order to identify the problematic features of these studies.

When it comes to the social and civic features and implications of AFNs, the most commonly used conceptual perspectives are: *embeddedness*, as introduced by Granovetter (1985), and *regard*, as explained by Offer (1997). The main point of departure of both approaches is that the relations among actors in AFNs go beyond mere economic reasoning. Both consumers and producers in AFNs are involved in, and enjoy, interactions because of the reciprocal respect, trust and sharing of values they experience while interacting (Kirwan, 2004, 2006; Sage, 2003). Others point out that AFNs produce not only personalised, and trust-based relationships among producers and consumers (Feagan, 2007; R. Little et al., 2010; Macias, 2008; Murtagh, 2010; Seyfang, 2006). As an example, R. Little et al. (2010) use the conceptual perspective of *diverse economy* (Gibson-Graham, 2005) to interpret buying groups as systems of food provisioning where ethical and ideological reasoning prevail over utilitarian ones (R. Little et al., 2010). Another example is the conceptual category of *social integration* (Macias, 2008) that is used to verify to what extent AFNs manage to involve participants with different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, and to stimulate their active participation in projects of shared interests (Macias, 2008). Finally, the conceptual perspective of *social movements* (Murtagh, 2010) has been used to capture the level of civic values shared among AFNs participants and their commitment to the mission of transforming the food system (Murtagh, 2010).

Studies on the economic features and implications of AFNs reflect on the economic viability and fairness of those initiatives with respect to the involved actors, producers and consumers, and the territory (Feagan, 2007; Kneafsey et al., 2001; R. Little et al., 2010; Macias, 2008; Marsden & Smith, 2005; Murdoch et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003; Winter, 2003). Renting et al. (2003) adopt the conceptual perspective of the *price squeeze* (Van der Ploeg et al., 2000), which refers to a condition in which the economic margins of farmers decrease because of the high costs of

agricultural inputs and the low earnings from selling products. According to these scholars, AFNs are able to surpass this price squeeze by offering farmers higher economic margins. This is possible because farmers in AFNs practice traditional forms of agriculture with low costs for inputs; at the same time, they receive higher prices in AFNs compared to other distribution channels since they are perceived to produce special products with an extra value, beyond the (physical, qualitative, organoleptic and nutritional) value that is recognised and paid for in most of the other food chains (Renting et al., 2003)⁴. Kneafsey et al. (2001) evoke the conceptual perspective of *culture economy* (Ray, 1998) to explain that the value of a territory with its traditions and landscape is attached to products circulating in AFNs. In this way, territories maybe valorised, with their non-commodity aspects acquiring an economic value (Kneafsey et al., 2001). The fairness and economic viability of AFNs with respect to consumers is explained from conceptual perspectives such as *food equity* (Macias, 2008), which discusses the extent to which AFNs are systems of food provisioning that enable consumers to access good food which is healthy, suitable to their culture, and fairly priced. Some forms of AFNs are considered particularly suitable for extending and guaranteeing consumers' access to food with specific features such as those that have just been mentioned (Macias, 2008).

With respect to the issue of quality in AFNs, scholars introduce conceptual perspectives such as *quality turn* (Murdoch et al., 2000; Murdoch & Miele, 1999; Renting et al., 2003) and *economy of qualities* (Whatmore et al., 2003) to indicate that AFNs are systems in which both producers and consumer give a lot of attention to quality. In doing so these actors consider a broad range of features concerning the physical and symbolic aspects of products and production processes. Taste and cultural values of products, and their link with the place and tradition of production are important (Murdoch et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003). Social features of products and production processes are also relevant when valuing the quality of products in AFNs; importance is given to the fairness, inclusiveness and personalisation of social interactions built around food provisioning (Kirwan, 2004, 2006; Sage, 2003; Winter, 2003). People in AFNs also pay attention to organic, natural, bio-dynamic, and similar productions processes as well as products that are good for human health, animal wellbeing, and the environment (Murdoch et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003; Sage, 2003).

The concern about the environmental impact of AFNs, which, as just seen, often goes hand in hand with the question of quality, is also the object of independent reflections (Macias, 2008; Marsden & Smith, 2005; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Seyfang, 2006). Conceptual perspectives such as *ecological citizenship* (Seyfang, 2006), *ecological entrepreneurship* (Marsden & Smith, 2005), *ecological engagement* (Morris & Kirwan, 2011), and *natural human capital* (Macias, 2008) have been used to highlight that AFNs are contexts where food provision is implemented while paying attention to reducing its impact on the environment (Marsden & Smith, 2005; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Seyfang, 2006). AFNs are also initiatives which enable people to come into contact with nature and learn through experiencing it how to respect it (Macias, 2008).

In sum, the studies reviewed until now have been very useful in tracing the general features and implications of AFNs in terms of rising sociality and civic commitment, guaranteeing economic opportunities, fairness and viability for the involved actors and territories, and enhancing food quality and environmental protection. Although their contribution to the body of knowledge of AFNs is recognised, there is also critique for what regards the conceptualisation used to study AFNs

⁴ That producers can get a better price for their products in AFNs compared to other food chains is also explained by the absence of intermediaries, which allows farmers to retain higher margins of the final price of products. It is also explained by consumers' willingness to support local farmers and the local economy, and by the trust-based relationship which is typical of AFNs and reduces transaction costs (Kirwan, 2004; Marsden & Smith, 2005; Winter, 2003).

as well as the evaluation of the positive implications of AFNs (Allen et al., 2003; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Goodman, 2004; Hinrichs, 2000; Hinrichs & Allen, 2008). Some examples of this critique are reported below.

The notion of *reflexive localism* (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005) has been introduced to stimulate reflections on the idea of AFNs being intrinsically good since they are local systems of food provisioning. The reasoning for reflexive localism is that local systems of food provisioning, such as AFNs, are the outputs of processes occurring within political, social, economic, territorial contexts. The results of those processes may be variable and not always good; hence local systems of food provisioning must be critically scrutinised in order to ascertain their functioning and, possible, dysfunction and to intervene with the latter (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005).

Other scholars stress the risk that what is presented as the economic advantage of farmers in AFNs, which is to say the fact that they can get higher prices by selling very specialised products, will turn into a disadvantage (Goodman, 2004). This can happen if labelling schemes and corporate businesses undertake, respectively, the certification and the production of the sort of products exchanged in AFNs. If this happens then two interrelated threats may emerge in terms of the economic disadvantages for AFN farmers when producing and selling peculiar products. First, AFN farmers may be forced to join very expensive labelling systems which increase their productions costs. Second, AFN farmers may end up competing with big businesses that are able to produce and sell for lower costs and prices than AFN farmers. As a result, AFN farmers may be pushed to reduce the prices. All in all, increased production costs and reduced prices would bring AFN farmers into the *price squeeze* that AFNs have been claimed to have overcome (Goodman, 2004).

Further studies look critically at the ways in which farmers behave in AFNs and at their motivation for being in AFNs. The concept of *flexible localism* (Morris & Buller, 2003) is introduced to indicate a situation where being local is used by AFN farmers as a tool to increase their economic opportunities by branding a product as being attached to a specific territory. In such a situation, AFN farmers use flexible ideas of local. The range of inputs provisioning and outputs delivering may change according to individual farmers' economic convenience and may exceed the territories the farmers claim to be connected with. The result is that not all the benefits that may derive from developing a local system of food provisioning stay in the territory where the system is supposed to be located⁵. In other words, being local becomes a means to adapt to economic exigencies rather than an aim *per se* to have a positive impact on a area (Morris & Buller, 2003).

Other scholars focus their critique on the social and civic implications AFNs carry with them for the involved actors and the territories where they operate. First, concerns arise as to the ability of AFNs to favour social inclusion. Conceptualisations, such as *class-diet* (Goodman, 2004), are introduced to reflect the fact that consumers with low incomes cannot afford to buy food in AFNs (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Goodman, 2004). Other scholars introduce the concept of *selective patronage* (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008), to indicate that AFNs are set up by groups of people with specific interests and values. According to those interests and values, they decide whom to target, include or not (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008). Others criticise the assumption that AFNs are primarily driven by shared values, reciprocal respect, personalisation, and collective engagement, and surpass individual and utilitarian needs while building a sustainable food systems. Hinrichs (2000) uses the conceptual perspectives of *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (Block, 1990) as a warning that although AFNs allow for personalised social relations, those relations are not always and primarily based on the pure joy of interacting and sharing values and trust. Rather, those interactions have a huge

⁵ For instance, job and economic opportunities can be offered to other areas if the supply of inputs and processing is taking place outside the borders of the territory.

component of economic interest in commodity exchange (Hinrichs, 2000). Allen et al. (2003) reflect on the way in which AFNs pursue their goal of creating sustainable food systems. The conceptualisations of *alternative* and *oppositional* are used to stress that it is too simplistic to consider the strategies that different AFNs use to create sustainable food systems as being identical. More radical ideas on creating a new paradigm for food provisioning are accompanied by more moderate plans to reform food provisioning within the existing paradigm. Understanding those differences is important in order to understand the implications of AFNs in terms of alternative they may actually generate (Allen et al., 2003).

Most of the critique concerns the overly positive findings of ‘traditional’ AFN studies, in terms of AFN features and implications. The way the critical studies have been conducted resembles the approach of the studies they contest. In essence, the critical studies follow a deductive approach, according to which they introduce conceptual perspectives and related hypotheses on AFNs, their features, and their implications. Actors’ opinions on AFNs and their motivations to join these initiatives, as well as insights from existing studies on AFNs, are used as evidences in order to support the hypotheses put forward. Generally speaking the studies reviewed in this section and their critics differ in results. Whereas the first use conceptualisations and produce findings that highlight the positive features and implications of AFNs, the critical studies use conceptual perspectives, and present findings that highlight possible negative features and implications of AFNs.

As Tregear (2011) says, AFN literature has two problematic features, these being conceptual inconsistency and the conflation of AFNs’ characteristics with expected outcomes (Tregear, 2011). Conceptual inconsistency is connected to the fact that conceptual perspectives are applied in a rigid way. These perspectives are seen as unambiguous, with an unquestionable meaning, rather than as the starting point for further explanations. The conflation of AFNs’ characteristics with expected outcomes refers to the fact that those studies expect certain features of AFNs to result in specific food features, human behaviours, and impacts even before having empiric insights into these relations. Studies permeated by conceptual inconsistency and conflation of features and results narrow our understanding of AFNs by closing the doors to interpretations that may go beyond the unquestionable meanings and relations those studies uphold (Tregear, 2011).

A dichotomous picture of AFNs emerges from all the studies on AFNs that have been reviewed in this section. Accordingly, AFNs either do or do not show certain hypothesised features, and are either able or not able to convey certain expected results. Other studies contend that the reality of AFNs is much more nuanced. AFNs vary over space and time; many different initiatives of AFNs may be co-present at the same time, and those initiatives may change over time. Moreover, each AFN is a sum of spaces and dynamics with their own features and implications, so that variety is also contained within the features and implications of the same AFN in a given moment (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; Holloway et al., 2007; Tregear, 2011).

This variety is not portrayed by the black and white picture which has been painted by the deductive and actor-centred studies reviewed until now. Recently, studies have been emerging that overcome the deductive and actor-centred approach. Some of them introduce explorative approaches, while others introduce explorative and dynamics-centred approaches. These studies will be reviewed in the next two subsections, respectively. The aim is to see if and how, and to which extent they manage to overcome the weaknesses of earlier studies. The studies reviewed in the following two subsections will be used as starting points to develop an approach that can contribute further to advancing our knowledge on AFNs.

2.3.2 Explorative approaches to the study of AFNs

Some studies on AFNs, most of them published after Tregear's (2011) critical review of AFNs studies, introduce explorative approaches. These explorative studies seek to understand AFNs' features and implications from their past and present organisation and functioning as well as from interviews about people's participation in AFNs. They reflect on AFNs as laboratories of sociality, community building around civic commitment, and social inclusion (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Cox et al., 2008; Galt, 2013; Gibb & Wittman, 2013; Obach & Tobin, 2014; Slocum, 2006) and look into the interpretation of locality, quality, environmental engagement, and other aspects characterising AFNs (J. Little, Ilbery, & Watts, 2009; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Smithers, Lamarche, & Joseph, 2008).

Explorative studies reflect on the above mentioned aspects both within a given spatial-temporal frame and over time and space (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Lutz & Schachinger, 2013; Rossi & Brunori, 2010). Both kinds of explorative studies will be reviewed. In the first part of this subsection, studies looking at AFNs, their features, and implications in a single spatial-temporal frame are reviewed, focussing in particular on the following: first, the issue of sociality and community building around civic commitment; second, the issue of inclusiveness; third, the interpretation and implementation of principles of buying local and quality products, supporting economic fairness and environmental protection. The second part of this subsection will review studies exploring the features and implications of AFNs as emerging, over time and space, while AFNs undergo processes of scaling-up.

Many of the studies into sociality and community building have researched Communities Supported Agriculture (CSAs) (Cox et al., 2008; Galt, 2013; Obach & Tobin, 2014). Obach and Tobin (2014) interview members and non-members of regional CSAs in the US about their involvement in CSAs and other forms of AFNs, in other activities of civic relevance as well as in different sorts of volunteering. The scholars find out that people involved in CSAs are more civically committed than people who do not participate in any sort of AFNs. At the same time, there are differences among CSAs' members; those who are also engaged with other civic and volunteer activities are more civically aware and also more socially involved in the CSAs compared to the CSAs' members who participate only in the CSAs (Obach & Tobin, 2014). From these results, it is possible to infer that a classification of CSAs as either stimulating or not stimulating sociality and community building on civic issues is misleading. The picture is much more nuanced; different levels and forms of stimulating sociality and community building may emerge within the same CSA in relation to different people and to how they participate in CSAs and other initiatives.

Cox et al. (2008) reach similar conclusions while investigating the roles, the participation and the motivation among members of a CSA in Scotland. The authors reveal that CSA's members may interpret the features and implications of the CSA differently depending on their roles and activities within the CSA. Producers, who also started up and run the initiative, seem to focus on the role of the CSA as a provider of good food, while other members point out that the CSA offers them the opportunity for socialising and collective engagement. The latter interpretation of the CSA is particularly true for members who are involved in some socialising activities organised by the CSA such as shared meals and farming experiences. Moreover, the two views of the CSA just mentioned, namely as product deliverer or as sociality and community creator, may influence each other through interactions while these people participate in the CSA over time (Cox et al., 2008).

Galt (2013) adds to the two studies which have just been mentioned by complementing qualitative data on producers' motivations and practices in CSAs with quantitative information on their earnings, profits, rents and working hours. This quantitative data showed a situation where

producers work for more hours than they are paid for and receive low incomes. The qualitative data offer an interpretation of this situation given by the CSAs' producers. Some of them explain it as a consequence, and therefore an indicator, of a process of sociality and community building taking place in CSAs and bringing them to feel personally connected with the shareholders of the CSAs and morally obliged to fulfil their needs, even if this implies working extra time and for low economic results. The author warns that that which is seen by some producers in a positive way, as an expression of sociality and community building, can turn into a reason for the breakdown of CSAs. This happens since there may be producers who perceive the situation of long working hours and scarce economic results as a condition of exploitation which tires them and may lead them to leave the CSAs and indeed cause the CSA to collapse. Hence, while community building and sociality can be achieved in CSAs, they may not necessarily be a permanent condition, and moreover, may not necessarily be coherent with the economic aspects of CSAs as food provisioning systems (Galt, 2013).

Another aspect of AFNs attracting scholarly attention is AFNs' inclusiveness. There are studies that investigate inclusiveness by complementing actors' explanations of their involvement in AFNs with the study of documents on the history of the investigated cases and of the contexts where they operate (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Gibb & Wittman, 2013; Slocum, 2006). Moreover, these studies infer from observing and analysing real events taking place in the studied cases during the empirical work (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Slocum, 2006).

These studies demonstrate that AFNs are not a-priori inclusive or exclusive. Several cases of AFNs pay attention to issues of socio-economic and racial inclusiveness but their organisational structure, the actions they plan and the way they implement them may be more or less successful in tackling those issues (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Gibb & Wittman, 2013; Slocum, 2006). On one hand, scholars stress that both the (predominantly or completely white middle class) composition of the AFNs' management and the initiatives promoted by the management to involve other ethnic and demographic groups in AFNs activities, (e.g. scholarships to attend meetings and training, discount cards to gain access to AFNs' systems of food provisioning), are interpreted by the targeted people as reinforcing, rather than overcoming, discrimination because they are conceived of as resulting from a charitable approach (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Slocum, 2006). On the other hand, scholars point to the market-oriented approach of AFNs as a strategy that prevents low-income consumers from having access to good food, while contributing to the economic viability of farmers excluded from other economic channels. Consumers cannot always afford to buy AFNs products and economic supports for low-income consumers to buy in AFNs are not always contemplated (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Slocum, 2006). All in all, the discussed works reveal that interpretations of AFNs as uniquely inclusive or exclusive are misleading. AFNs are contexts for many different organisational structures, activities, events and actions that may result and be perceived as being more or less inclusive as well as potentially being inclusive for some groups while excluding others.

Besides sociality, community building and inclusiveness, explorative studies on AFNs also highlight the complexity of AFNs with respect to the many different ways in which similar principles of buying local and quality products, supporting economic fairness and environmental protection are put into practice by different actors in the same or in different AFNs. Below, some explorative works are reviewed that use actors' explanations about their everyday practices in AFNs as well as the analysis of documents on AFNs' history and organisation to reflect on the different ways in which the mentioned principles are enforced (J. Little et al., 2009; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Smithers et al., 2008).

Smithers et al. (2008) interview consumers, farmers and managers at Farmers' Markets (FMs) about how they see each other and their own participation at the FMs; they ask how these people

participate and how they expect other people would participate. Scholars find that issues of locality, quality and authenticity are important according to most of the people interviewed, but they are differently enforced. Some consumers may mention locality, quality and support to local farmers as central reasons for their choices to shop in FMs while also stating that they do not ask for information about these issues at the stalls, or that they ask for information but do not actually base their purchase decisions on them. Farmers and managers care for locality and authenticity but in practice the idea of locality and direct selling is interpreted with some flexibility in order to cope with the need to guarantee a product's availability (Smithers et al., 2008).

Other studies, focussing on the consumers' side of AFNs, confirm that the practicalities of the participation in AFNs impact on how principles are enforced (J. Little et al., 2009; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011). Those studies question consumers on their practices of purchasing in AFNs. These studies highlight that even if consumers start from similar principles of supporting locality, quality, socio-economic fairness and environmental protection, they may end up following different consumption paths, (e.g. different frequency with which they participate in ordering products; different amount and variety of products purchased in AFNs), because of differences in availability of time, money and shopping spaces, as well as differences in food processing skills (J. Little et al., 2009; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011).

Morris and Kirwan (2011) focus on the producers' side of AFNs and on how many shapes their ecological engagement can take on. The authors interview producers in AFNs on their business practices, such as production and marketing techniques. From the analysis of the contents of the interviews and of some promotional materials, scholars infer that following ecological practices may also precede the participation in, or the setting up of, an AFN. Moreover scholars find out that ecological practices in AFNs go beyond being organic and may range from very strict ecological practices, aimed at on farm ecology preservation, to softer ecological practices where the attention to ecology is instrumental in increasing product quality and used as a market strategy. In the latter case, ecology may be equated with following local food traditions (Morris & Kirwan, 2011).

In sum, even if they start from similar principles of buying local and quality products, supporting economic fairness and environmental protection, actors in AFNs undertake many different practices in terms of how they organise their food provisioning. The variety of practices depends on how those people interpret the same principles, on their different sensitivity towards them, and on some practicalities that influence behaviours besides principles. Hence, the variety of practices does not necessarily mean violating the general principles of AFNs; rather it is a sign of the complexity of putting them into practices.

A further, and last, point relating to the complexity of AFNs emerges from explorative studies that investigate AFNs in the processes of scaling-up. The explorative studies reviewed until now have showed the complexity of AFNs in fixed temporal and spatial frames. The explorative studies that will now be reviewed show the different dynamics through which AFNs try to expand their frame of action by, for instance, involving more people or by enhancing their durability (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Lutz & Schachinger, 2013; Milestad, Westberg, Gerber, & Björklund, 2010; Nost, 2014; Rossi & Brunori, 2010; Wittman, Beckie, & Hergesheimer, 2012).

Some of the explorative studies on AFNs' processes of scaling-up are based on the analysis of documents and interviews with actors about the implications of their involvement in AFNs in terms of their food provisioning practices. Those works reflect on how similar or different AFNs' practices of food provisioning are compared to the mainstream ones and offer insights into the possible strengths and constraints for AFNs when establishing and becoming more widespread as systems of food provisioning. Particularly, those scholars identify social, cultural, legislative,

logistic, technological and economic limits to the scaling-up of AFNs. For instance, being a consumer in AFNs requires food-processing skills that are not common among people used to processed supermarkets products. Producers have to learn how to deal with environmental friendly and healthy production techniques that are not necessarily followed in mainstream food provisioning systems. Furthermore, they must guarantee a huge variety of products rather than being monoculture producers, which is what mainstream agrifood systems ask instead. Finally, they may be required to follow traditional forms of production that are not always in line with law, (especially safety standards), or economically viable in mainstream legislative frames, (e.g. labour intensive production techniques in context where labour is more expensive than technology). Hence scholars read AFNs' scaling-up as a process where, on the one hand, practices of AFNs may become increasingly common and change the mainstream, and on the other hand, AFNs may be required to partially conform their practices to the mainstream ones and will be partially appropriated by the mainstream system (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Lutz & Schachinger, 2013; Rossi & Brunori, 2010).

Milestad et al. (2010) reveal the capacity of AFNs to resist the dynamic of conforming to the mainstream system. These scholars carried out not only interviews with producers and consumers in AFNs on how they perceive their interactions but also observations of the interactions concluding that AFNs are learning contexts in which learning can be more or less successful. The more actors are able to spread and acquire knowledge on how to deal with the systems of food provisioning set up in AFNs, the more resilient these systems will be (Milestad et al., 2010). Nost (2014) has also tackled the issue of AFNs' ability to face processes of scaling-up and of the results in terms of their conformity to, or diversity from, mainstream systems of food provisioning. Starting from participating in crucial moments of processes of scaling up in three cases of CSAs and from interviews with farmers on the interpretation of their decisions during these moments, Nost (2014) highlights a series of changes these farmers had to implement, to different extent and forms, in order to cope with the challenges posed by the scaling up. Changes mostly concerned the decision to cooperate with other farmers to guarantee the variety of products and the availability for larger numbers of consumers, while reducing the locality of products as well as the opportunities for collective work and direct encounters between producers and consumers. The necessity of guaranteeing the variety of products and their availability for larger numbers of consumers also impacted on the way the respect of seasonality was perceived (Nost, 2014).

The main message deriving from the studies on the scaling-up of AFNs is that despite starting from similar ideas of food provisioning, AFNs may end up implementing food provisioning in many different ways which conform more or less to mainstream food provisioning because of processes of adjustment and re-adjustment that they go through while expanding their action over space and time. The result is a picture of AFNs as nuanced realities with different degrees of conformity or diversity from the mainstream systems of food provisioning.

All in all, the explorative studies restore the complexity of AFNs, both within a fixed spatial-temporal frame and over different spatial-temporal frames, highlighting the diversity among and within AFNs. Explorative works bring the literature on AFNs a step forward because they allow the overcoming of the hypothetical and dichotomous understanding of AFNs which is typical of the deductive and actor-centred studies reviewed in the previous subsection. Compared to deductive studies, explorative works open up to what happens on the ground of AFNs. They begin by harvesting – from documents analysis, observations, interviews and story telling - insights on the history, organisation and practices of AFNs and end by describing AFNs as contexts for hybrid activities, roles, events and scaling up processes that express, in different ways, similar principles of enhancing sociality, community building, inclusiveness, attention to food locality and quality, economic fairness and environmental protection.

The explorative works on AFNs address what Tregear (2011) has identified as two of the problems that hamper the informative power of many AFN studies, namely the insufficient clarity and consistency in the use of concepts and the conflation of some aspects of AFNs with expected outcomes (Tregear, 2011).

Another group of explorative studies which will be presented in the next subsection has gone a step further. Compared to the explorative studies reviewed until now, these studies shift the focus of attention away from how the complexity of AFNs is apparent in fixed moments and contexts to how this complexity is defined and redefined over time and space. They are dynamics-centred and show how the complexity of AFNs comes about, if and how it is maintained, and how it evolves. They describe the process through which features and implications of AFNs are defined and redefined.

2.3.3 Explorative and dynamics-centred approaches to the study of AFNs

So far there are only a few studies that discuss and operationalise explorative and dynamics-centred approaches to AFNs. Most of them are published after Tregear's (2011) critical review. These studies conceive of AFNs as outputs of negotiation processes that occur while dynamics in AFNs, (i.e. carrying out AFNs' activities and associate interactions between participants), take place. Ideas, visions, principles, goals, organisational arrangements, other features and everything else that contributes to characterising AFNs are continuously defined and re-defined during these negotiation processes. Nothing in AFNs is either static or the result of individual decisions. Negotiation processes are the analytical starting point for the explorative and dynamics-centred studies (Ammirato et al., 2013; DuPuis and Gillon, 2009; Papaioikonomou et al., 2012; Volpentesta et al., 2012).

Some studies propose knowledge and learning-based theoretical frameworks (Ammirato et al., 2013; Volpentesta et al., 2012). They present negotiation processes in AFNs as processes of learning that take place in the form of face-to-face interactions between and within producers and consumers. Face-to-face interactions accompany AFNs' dynamics and contain moments of information sharing and knowledge creation (Ammirato et al., 2013; Volpentesta et al., 2012). Face-to-face interactions may range from networking, which is an information exchange for mutual benefit, to collaboration, where information sharing is instrumental to creating engagement in projects of common interest (Ammirato et al., 2013). Scholars maintain that disclosing processes of learning in AFNs and the different forms of interactions through which they take place may bring those processes of negotiation to the fore where knowledge and understanding is generated, and which may help to explain AFNs' heterogeneous organisation (Ammirato et al., 2013; Volpentesta et al., 2012).

DuPuis and Gillon (2009) conceptualise negotiation processes in AFNs from the perspective of collaboration in science. The scholars interpret negotiation processes as social interactions which create *epistemic objects* (Rheinberger, 1997), these being items with both a material aspect and a symbolic one. The material aspect is attached to the items regardless of the interactions, while the symbolic one is created during interactions and negotiations. The authors apply this approach in order to unveil the meaning attributed to organic products by different actors in different initiatives of food provisioning; in doing so they also disclose how symbolic meanings are negotiated in interactions and which organisational arrangements support those meanings. The scholars use the example of organic products to show how the approach they propose can be used to find out how and which sort of symbolic meanings and organisational arrangements derive from the negotiation of opinions about many different aspects of AFNs during interactions between AFNs participants (DuPuis & Gillon, 2009).

Papaoikonomou et al. (2012) also develop and apply theoretical and methodological frameworks for explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs. They look at the participation in a Responsible Consumption Cooperative, interpreting participation as a collective process of learning through which people's initial motivations to join the Cooperative are moulded into new shared meanings after they have joined the Cooperative for some time. The authors notice that motivations of utility, political ideology, and opportunity to interact evolve into interpreting the participation in the cooperative as an act of militancy, a learning experience, a way for people to express themselves and to gain control over food provisioning. The authors schematise the participation in a Responsible Consumption Cooperative, with the associated process of motivations redefinition, in a model derived from Birchall and Simmons' (2004) framework of what motivates individuals in cooperatives and mutual businesses. The model consists of a feedback circle where the decision to join is the starting point together with the initial motives. The second step is the experience of participation. The third and last step is the construction of shared meanings attached to participation as resulting from interactions with other participants. This last stage feeds back into the initial stage of decision to participate (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012).

In sum, explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs contribute to “opening up the “black box” of [...] network cohesion” (DuPuis & Gillon, 2009, p. 44). Compared to deductive and actors-centred, and explorative studies, explorative and dynamics-centred studies shift the focus of attention away from single actor towards collectivities as well as away from fixed features and implications that are inferred in specific moments and spaces, towards processes through which features and implications evolve over moments and spaces. In so doing, explorative and dynamics-centred studies further our understanding of AFNs since they explain the processes through which features and implications of AFNs emerge.

Explorative and dynamics-centred studies address three of the four problems identified by Tregear (2011) as hampering the informative power of the literature on AFNs. In line with the other explorative studies reviewed in the previous subsection, explorative and dynamics-centred studies face the problems of conceptual inconsistency and of the conflation of AFNs' features with expected outcomes. In addition, they address the problem of insufficient attention granted to the dynamics taking place while AFNs' actors interact for the purpose of product exchange. The interactions investigated by the explorative and dynamics-centred studies occur while AFNs' activities take place, which also include the activity of exchanging products.

In summary, explorative and dynamics-centred approaches address most of the problems which according to Tregear's (2011) critical review were said to be affecting the literature on AFNs. Studying AFNs' features and implications as emerging from their dynamics introduces a reflexive, rather than normative, way of thinking about AFNs (Mount, 2012). Within reflexive thinking, nothing is taken as definitive and there is a constant challenge to understand what makes things work and what does not; why certain features and implications stabilise while others collapse; and why features and implications that stabilise in one context do not work in another context. Replying to this sort of questions has a strong empirical relevance since it supports reflecting and addressing possible opportunities and challenges for AFNs. Several scholars consider looking at AFNs as dynamic social constructions, as outputs of the negotiations of their actors' opinions, motivations, interests and everyday practices a particularly suitable way of furthering our insight into the reality of AFNs (Murdoch & Miele, 1999; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006; Tovey, 1997; Watts, Ilbery, & Maye, 2005).

Still, also the explorative and dynamics approaches are in need of further development. Studies reviewed until now have been focussing on the negotiation processes which occur during AFN

activities. Activities and the interactions through which they are carried out have been recognised as central dynamics of AFNs and ones that are crucial to study in order gain insights into AFNs' identities and roles (Brunori et al., 2012; Holloway et al., 2007; Kirwan, 2006; McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011). Studying negotiations that occur while activities and their internal interactions are carried out alongside the resulting meanings contributes to understanding what attracts attention and mobilises AFNs' activities. Besides, it is important to better understand the relative importance of AFNs' activities in terms of the definition of AFN's identities and roles.

2.4 Advancing AFN studies: the focus and contribution of this study

This study aims to advance the scientific understanding of AFNs in two ways:

First it investigates GASs since they are forms of AFNs where consumers and other civil society organisations lead as well as producers. Hence, exploring GASs will allow bringing consumers back in while also paying attention to other actors. Moreover, GASs work on both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance. This study proposes to give equal attention to both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance. This in turn will contribute towards expanding empirical knowledge on CFNs, the most recently introduced reconceptualisation AFNs. Furthermore, empirical knowledge on AFNs will be expanded since exploring GASs will allow studying cases of AFNs in contexts that have been rarely considered until now, namely contexts where traditional aspects are still important in their agrifood systems. GASs operate in Italy which is one such context (Parrott et al., 2002). In particular, this study proposes to investigate a case of GAS, hereafter called GAS M, in a geographical region of Italy, Calabria, where traditional aspects in the agrifood systems are particularly dominant and that has not been considered yet in the literature on AFNs.

Second this study seeks to advance existing explorative and dynamics-centred approaches to AFNs. To do so this study applies a theoretical and methodological framework, Interaction Ritual (IR) theory (Collins, 2004a), that allows expanding the current explorative and dynamics-centred approaches because it allows combining the disclosure of processes of negotiation and meanings creation with unveiling the intensity of AFNs' dynamics where the negotiation takes place. Within this frame, AFNs' activities are the main dynamics in AFNs. Examining processes of negotiation and meanings creation will be instrumental in understanding what attracts the attention in AFNs activities and mobilises them. Shedding light on the intensity of AFNs activities in terms of their capacity to take place and repeat as well as to involve people will then be instrumental to ascertaining the relative importance of these activities in influencing, with their purposes and foci, AFNs' identities and roles.

Chapter 3

A theoretical and methodological approach for Interaction Ritual (IR) theory based studies on AFNs

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the theoretical and methodological approach chosen for the present research. The research is inspired by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and uses this theory as conceptual framework guiding also its methodological design. The chapter is structured as follows.

Section 3.2 presents the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and more particularly how social reality can be studied according to IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and with which analytical tool. Secondly, it explains how the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and its analytical tool have been adapted to the study of AFNs.

Section 3.3 introduces the methodological guidelines proposed by Collins (1983, 2004a) for IR theory-based studies. Section 3.3 presents the methodological approach derived from these guidelines and proposed to study AFNs in general terms. It introduces the field and strategy of enquiry, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

Section 3.4 summarises the ontological and methodological guidelines mentioned above and the theoretical and methodological approach deriving from them. Moreover, it refers to those chapters where the theoretical and methodological approach and its operationalisation are explained in more detail. To the best of our knowledge, this work represents the first application of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to the study of AFNs. The adaptation and operationalisation of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) is the conceptual output of this work; moreover it can be more easily understood after the case study is presented. Therefore it is discussed more in detail in the chapters 4, 5 and 6 when the case study is introduced and the other empirical results of this work are presented too.

3.2 Theoretical approach and analytical tool for exploring AFNs from an IR theory perspective

3.2.1 The ontology of IR theory and the model to explain situations of interactions dynamics

In this section the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) is explained together with the theoretical model proposed by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) as an analytical tool to explain the basic dynamic through which social reality takes shape. The scope is to highlight those elements of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) that are essential for understanding its application in the study of AFNs.

In the following quotation, Collins (2004a) offers a glimpse of the ontology and scope of IR theory (Collins, 2004a). The quotation synthesises what part of social reality can be studied and what IR

theory (Collins, 2004a) aims to do:

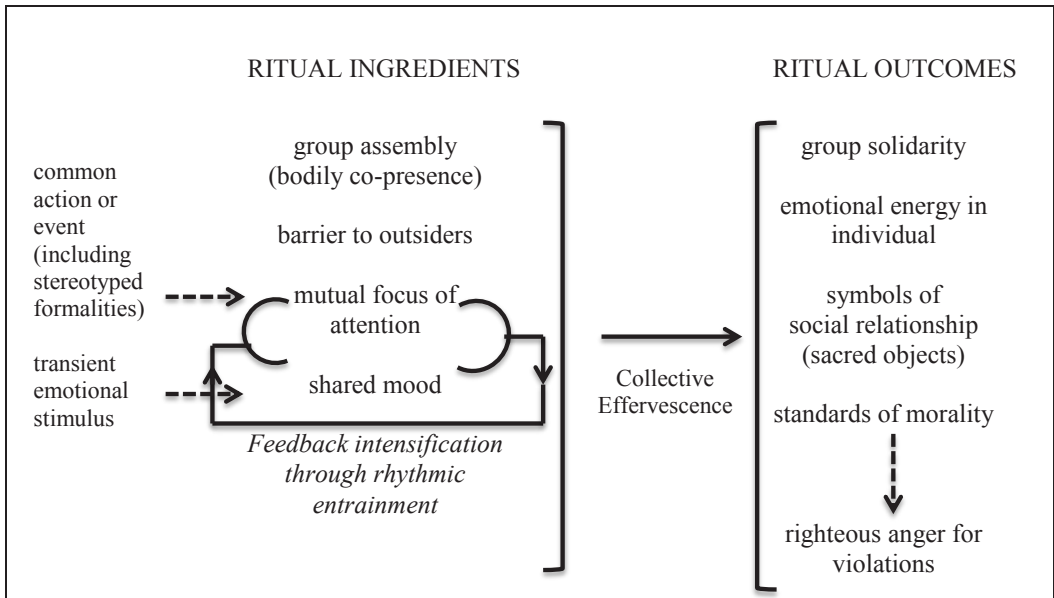
[...] the centre of micro-sociological explanation is not the individual but the situation. [...] A theory of interaction ritual (IR) and interaction ritual chains is above all a theory of situations. It is a theory of momentary encounters [...]. My analytical strategy [...] is to start with the dynamics of situations [...]. Situations have laws or processes of their own; and that is what IR theory is about (pp. 3-5).

In the above quotation, the word 'situation' is used to indicate a dynamic where one or more interactions take place. Interactions are called 'interaction rituals' in order to stress that interactions follow certain laws, or function following certain laws. The relevance of disclosing the functioning of situations of interactions lies in the main assumption of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), which maintains that social reality is constituted in situations of interactions, and that social life may hence be understood through investigating the functioning of those situations (Collins, 2004a).

According to Collins (2004a), “to see the common realities of everyday life sociologically requires a gestalt shift, [...] (to) discipline ourselves to think everything through the sociology of the situation” (p. 5). In other words, “the agency of social life” (Collins, 2004a, p. 3) is to be found in situations of interactions. Hence, everything in society, from the micro to the macro, is constituted in situations of interactions that take place across time and space; social reality can only be understood dynamically by unveiling the spatial-temporal functioning of situations of interactions and the features they generate. Following Collins (2004a), individuals, their behaviours, and their minds are shaped by the situations of interactions in which individuals participate. Power relations, socio-economic classes and culture which are often considered as given macro-structures, are in his view built up through the repetition of situations of interactions over time (Collins, 2004a).

Collins (2004a) describes the functioning of situations in a mechanism that he refers to as the theoretical model of Interaction Ritual (IR) (Collins, 2004a). Figure 3.1 presents the model as defined by Collins (2004a), its components and their possible combinations and results.

Figure 3.1 The model of IR



(Collins, 2004a, p. 48)

The theoretical model of Interaction Ritual (IR) (Figure 3.1) describes each IR, or situation where interactions take place, as a three-step process involving preparatory, central and outcomes phases. The preparatory phase takes place when actions (i.e. *common action or event*) are carried out by people who are moved by any sort and level of personal interest in, or emotional zeal for, the actions (i.e. *transient emotional stimulus*). These actions do not necessarily imply face-to-face encounters but introduces a line of interest which may stimulate people to take further actions that produce the central phase of the model of IR (Figure 3.1) with its face-to-face encounters (Collins, 2004a).

Collins (2004a) also refers to the actions in the preparatory phase as *stereotyped formalities*; they do not have a meaning or value of their own but are instrumental in the implementation of something else. The dotted arrows connecting this preparatory phase to the central phase of the model denote that the preparatory phase is not essential for the unfolding of every situation of interaction; some situations of interactions may begin directly from the central phase (Collins, 2004a).

The central phase contains four key components (i.e. *ritual ingredients*). First of all, two or more people assemble and act on something, (i.e. *group assembly*); there are clear delimitations to distinguish who assembles, (i.e. *barrier to outsiders*), such as rules to discipline the access to the assembly, or physical barriers detaching the place of assembly from the rest. When people assemble they become aware of each other's presence and actions. Moreover, they share their feelings toward the situation in which they are assembling and acting. Individual awareness of each other's action, presence and feelings is essential for the creation of collective awareness (i.e. *mutual focus of attention*) and collective feelings (i.e. *shared mood*). In other words, implementing individual tasks and sharing individual feelings within a defined group and context is crucial in order to move from the individual level to the collective level (Collins, 2004a).

In turn, the generated collective awareness and collective feelings influence each other and cause the situation to progress. Particularly, as the group becomes more clearly focused on the situation and its activities, it also experiences more intensely the shared feelings about the situation. High levels of shared feelings give a sensation of fulfilment, which motivate people to stay and allows the situation to continue. In other words, high levels of collective awareness and feelings determine the passage of the last phase of the model of IR (Figure 3.1), which consists of four outcomes (Collins, 2004a).

The first outcome, (i.e. *symbols of social relationship*), represents the evolution of collective awareness into common understanding. Common understanding is here meant to indicate something that has been emerging as focus of attention while the situation is taking place and that has been acquiring meanings as well as stimulating opinions that are peculiar of the situation where the something attracts attention. It is a sort of emblem in which groups involved in the situation feel represented and that can be figured in visual icons, gestures, words, and any tangible and intangible item that appears to acquire attention and meanings in the situation. The second outcome, (i.e. *group solidarity*), can be explained as collective feelings of attachment to the situation and to the involved group, wish to be part of the situation, to repeat the same or a similar situation. It represents the evolution to higher levels of collective feelings toward the situation. The third outcome, (i.e. *emotional energy*), is the expression of the feelings of attachments at individual level. The fourth outcome, (i.e. *standards of morality*), results in an individual feeling of rightness in being and staying part of the situation, accepting and respecting the created emblems and attached meanings, and in defending the situation and its results from possible violations (Collins, 2004a).

In short, the mechanism reproduced in Figure 3.1 depicts a dynamic where situations in which interactions take place start from the same conditions whereby people implement some actions, assemble and interact within defined borders but may end up developing different forms of collective awareness of the situations and different levels of collective feelings toward the situations. At one extreme there are situations of interactions that are not able to generate collective awareness and collective feelings. Those are cases when people remain individual participants and disconnected from each other such as is often the case in airports, stations, shopping centres. At the other extreme there are situations of interactions which generate high forms and levels of collective awareness and shared feelings, to the extent that the assembled people develop a common understanding and collective feelings of attachment to the situations (e.g. a meeting of friends or relatives) (Collins, 2004a).

Common understanding and feelings of attachment become the starting conditions for new situations of interactions. Feelings of attachment motivate the involved groups to assemble again and again, and to re-start the same, or a similar, situation of interactions. Common understanding eases the process of reassembling too because it helps to find a common ground for regenerating collective awareness of the situation and meeting again. Both common understanding and feelings of attachment to the situation are collective goods in the sense that they emerge when all (or most) of the participants in a situation actively contribute to its generation, and share and experience it together. In those circumstances situations are most likely to become fulfilled and to be repeated. The chance is low when only few of the participants are actively involved in the situations and their fulfilment (Collins, 2004a).

To conclude this section, the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) can be summarised as follows. The identity of social reality is constituted in situations of interactions which create different forms and levels of what has been here indicated as common understanding and feelings of attachment. Disclosing to which extent they are generated in situations of interactions is instrumental for making sense of these situations and the social reality which is built in these interactions. That may

be done by unravelling the functioning of these situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a).

AFNs can be read as one of the expressions of social reality. When studied through the lens of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), AFNs can be investigated using their internal dynamics as an analytical starting point. AFNs' dynamics can be interpreted as figurations of situations of interactions and can be studied in relation to their capacity to produce forms of common understanding and levels of feelings of attachment. Understanding which forms of common understanding and levels of feelings of attachment are produced and how grants insight into the features of AFNs, their identities and roles, without departing from any a-priori conceptual categories. IR theory (Collins, 2004a) therefore allows for an explorative and dynamics-centred approach to AFNs.

IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has not yet been applied in the study of AFNs. The next section will explain how the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and the model of IR (Figure 3.1) have been adapted to the reality of AFNs.

3.2.2 The adaptation of IR theory's ontology and analytical tool to the study of AFNs

Adapting the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and the analytical tool it proposes to the study of AFNs first of all requires the identification of the dynamics in AFNs. Secondly, it requires adjusting the model of IR (Figure 3.1) so that it can be used as an analytical tool to describe the functioning of AFNs' dynamics.

From the literature on AFNs it is known that the daily dynamics of AFNs consist of activities, such as the provisioning of food products, civic engagement and social activities (Cox et al, 2008; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Renting et al., 2012; Smithers et al., 2008; Tregear, 2011). For this purpose AFN members carry out various tasks, assemble in defined spaces, and interact with each other in person (Griffin & Frongillo, 2003; Smithers et al., 2008; Spilková, Fendrychová, & Syrovátková, 2013). During the organisation of AFNs' activities, tasks and interactions may also be carried out in a virtual form, especially in those initiatives of AFNs that make use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology)-based tools such as email, blogs and website communication (Brunori et al., 2012; Nost, 2014).

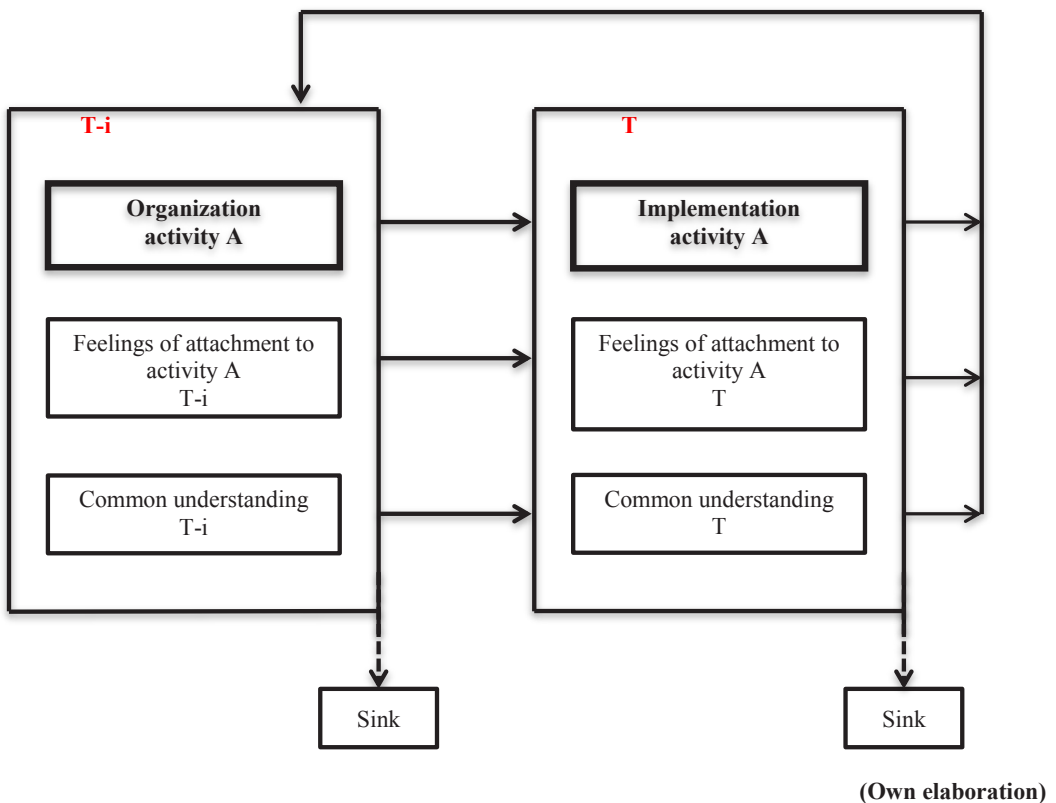
In this study, AFNs' activities are interpreted as the dynamics constituting AFNs that can be read as situations of interactions in the form schematised by Collins (2004a) in the model of IR (Figure 3.1). More in particular, the organisation of AFNs' activities is understood as the preconditional phase of situations of interactions. During the organisation people prepare the implementation of these activities and they act to produce inputs for a new round of activities. The implementation of activities is then interpreted as the central phase of situations of interactions, resulting from the previous organisational stage. Implementation implies further interactions and collective actions. When this results in the organisation and implementation of yet another activity, this confirms that the prior activity has generated sufficient stimulus to encourage a new round. In other words, in this adaptation of the model of IR (Figure 3.1), the output phase (where the outputs of the preconditional and central phase and the inputs for new situations of interactions take shape) coincides with the re-starting of an activity organisation phase.

The result of this reasoning is schematised in Figure 3.2. It is a two-stage model depicting each AFN activity first as a moment of organisation (T-i) (i.e. *Organisation activity A*) and secondly as a moment of implementation (T) (i.e. *Implementation activity A*), which can repeat over time. The progressive generation of common understanding and feelings of attachment is what moves situations of interactions from one phase to the next according to IR theory (Collins, 2004a). It is assumed that the progressive generation of common understanding and feelings of attachment fuels

the dynamic of AFN by driving their activities from organisation (*T-i, Organization activity A*) to implementation (*T, Implementation activity A*), and to new rounds of organization and implementation.

The organisation of AFNs' activities generates initial forms of common understanding (i.e. *Common understanding activity A, T-i*) and levels of feelings of attachment (i.e. *Feelings of attachment to activity A*). If they are strong enough, they stimulate the implementation of activities where new forms of common understanding (i.e. *Common understanding activity A, T*) and new levels of feelings of attachment (i.e. *Feelings of attachment to activity A, T*) are created. And if they are sufficiently strong, they ensure that the activity is organised again. Otherwise activities can stop unfolding (i.e. *sink*) at any moment; either their organisation or their implementation can cease, as represented by the dotted arrows at the end of each step of the model (Figure 3.2)⁶.

Figure 3.2 Model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities



⁶ In the model of IR (Figure 3.1) some components are indicated as individual. They reflect the reaction of individuals during their involvement in situations and because of their participation in other situations of interactions. In the previous section they were presented as: *transient emotional stimulus*, *standards of morality*, and *emotional energy*. This study seeks to accomplish, as much as possible, the analytical shift from the individual to the situations, as proposed by IR theory (Collins, 2004a). The study therefore focuses on the components that are presented as expressions of situations' features that can be inferred from characteristics of the situations *per se*. All these components are expressed in the definitions of common understanding and feelings of attachment which are reported in the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities. Further, all the causal connections reported in the model of IR (Figure 3.1) are eliminated from the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities because this study uses an explorative approach which does not seek to verify causal relations.

In short, Figure 3.2 represents the empirical model through which the model of IR (Figure 3.1) is applied to the study of AFNs. It is the analytical tool proposed to disclose how and to which extent each AFN activity contributes to shaping AFNs' features, identities and roles through the generation of common understanding and feelings of attachment. The emerging forms of common understanding will be used to ascertain the main foci of attention of the activities, their meanings, and to reflect on what the implications are for AFNs' identities and roles. Insights on the identities and roles of AFNs will be derived from what attracts people's attention while engaging in the organisation and implementation of activities and what meanings they attribute to it. The different levels of feelings of attachment generated in the different activities will be used as a proxy of the relative intensity of each activity, in terms of its capacity to fulfil and repeat and to engage people in its organisation, implementation and repetition. The intensity of activities, in turns, give back the relevance of each activity in influencing AFNs' identities and roles with its foci of interest. In other words, activities, and corresponding foci, will be ranked according to the levels of feelings of attachment the activities generate which is assumed to reflect their overall influence on the identities and roles of the studied AFNs.

3.3 Methodological approach for IR theory-based studies on AFNs

3.3.1 Methodological guidelines for implementing IR theory-based studies on social reality

The ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), as presented in the previous section, has some methodological consequences. In other words, it influences the relationship between the researcher and the social reality to be studied, as well as the methodological strategy the researcher adopts to study social reality. Collins makes a case for *microtranslation* (Collins, 1983) of sociological studies on social reality, and proposes three methodological guidelines.

1) First of all, a case study strategy of enquiry is preferred over other existing strategies. IR theory-based studies should start by identifying specific cases within a phenomenon of interest and sample situations of interactions unfolding within the chosen cases over time and space. The latter can be done for theory-testing or explorative-descriptive purposes. In newly studied cases, sampling for explorative-descriptive purposes is more appropriate following Collins (1983). Sampling aimed at testing hypothesis deriving from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) on some relationships among variables, might be appropriate in later stages of analysis once the situations of interactions and their dynamics and features have been unveiled (Collins, 1983).

2) Secondly, the sampled situations of interactions need to be studied in the contexts where they take place and by using approaches that are as unobtrusive as possible. The aim is to study the sampled situations of interactions while they take place in real life. All in all, methods need to be introduced that allow the gathering of naturally occurring data. Conversations occurring while situations of interactions take place are examples of such sources of naturally occurring data (Collins, 1983).

3) Thirdly, sampled situations of interactions are compared to ascertain differences and similarities in terms of the features they generate and that characterise them. For theory-testing studies, it is recommended to test hypotheses on what may influence the different results in term of features generated in different situations and on if and how different features in the same situation may influence each other. In both cases (i.e. comparing situations and testing hypothesis), methods and tools of data analysis need to be introduced that ascertain the features of situations in standardised ways and that are consistent over situations and over time. Comparative analyses are proposed as more appropriate in newly studied cases (Collins, 1983).

The methodological guidelines proposed by Collins (1983) have been used to develop the methodological approach for the present study, which is presented in the following subsections that introduce the field of enquiry and the strategy of enquiry. The last two subsections will give an overview of the chosen methods of data collection and data analysis.

3.3.2 Qualitative field of enquiry

This research is theory informed. It resonates with those scholars who claim that theories are important to define the paradigm within which phenomena are explored: what is within the limits of legitimate enquiring, what can be known, what is looked at, which questions are asked, and how they are responded to (Creswell, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2005). Until now, this chapter has shown how IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has informed the theoretical approach and the analytical tool proposed for this research. From this subsection onwards, the chapter will explain how IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has informed the methodological approach proposed in this research. The discussion begins by outlining how the above-presented methodological guidelines (Collins, 1983) informed the decision to select a qualitative field of enquiry for this research.

Although the qualitative field of enquiry can encompass both descriptive-explorative and explanatory studies aimed at theories testing (Silverman, 2011), it is generally recognised as being particularly suitable for descriptive-explorative studies, in particular those that investigate new phenomena, concepts, or applications of concepts (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2005). The qualitative field of enquiry is naturalistic and interpretive, which means that qualitative strategies of enquiry are particularly apt to describe new phenomena in their natural settings (Silverman, 2005, 2011).

A qualitative field of enquiry is also suitable for IR theory-based studies since some of the methodological guidelines defined by Collins (1983) to implement IR theory-based analyses resonate with naturalistic and descriptive-explorative approaches. In particular, that guideline according to which the investigation of newly studied phenomena should start from describing the situations of interactions constituting the phenomena in the contexts where they take place and in the way they actually take place (Collins, 1983).

Until now, there have been no studies on AFNs informed by IR theory (Collins, 2004a). There are studies using IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to understand religious rituals (Heider & Warner, 2010) and movements (Barone, 2007), outbreak of nationalism (Collins, 2012b, 2004b), violence and conflicts (Collins, 2012a; Weenink, 2014), gender relations (Johnson, 2009) and dynamics in auctions (Herrero, 2010), but IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has never been used as theoretical and methodological frame for the investigation of AFNs. Hence, and following Collins' (1983) methodological guidelines, the research presented in this thesis follows an explorative-descriptive approach. It will identify existing situations of interactions, or activities, within specific case studies of AFNs, and describe and compare the identified activities in terms of the common understanding and feelings of attachment they generate as they take place in the natural settings where dynamics of organisation and implementation occur. The qualitative field of enquiry is chosen to frame this research in because it is suitable for explorative-descriptive investigations of ANFs and of their dynamics of activities organisation and implementation in the contexts where they take place, as suggested by IR theory's methodological guidelines for the study of newly investigated phenomena (Collins, 1983).

3.3.3 Case study: strategy of enquiry to sample AFNs and their activities

A case study is one of the possible strategies of enquiry used to implement research within the qualitative field of enquiry (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Punch, 2005). There were two more reasons for choosing the strategy of a case study.

First of all, a case study is especially suitable as a strategy of enquiry for studies that investigate contemporary processes or activities (Creswell, 2003) through in-depth and descriptive approaches that look at the processes and activities in the actual contexts where they occur (Yin, 2009). The case study is moreover used when the research has the aim to refine theory (de Vaus, 2001). Both is the case in the present research, which seeks to gain insight into the dynamics of AFN activities while they are taking place, and it seeks to test the application of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to AFNs.

A second, but equally important reason is that it is in line with the methodological guideline derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) which recommends beginning research based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) by identifying cases where forms of situations of interactions take place and by then sampling the identified situations that will be studied cross-sectionally and longitudinally (Collins, 1983). Following this guideline this research will select cases of AFNs, sample their situations of interactions, namely their activities, and study the sampled activities comparatively and over time. All in all, the strategy of enquiry adopted in the research presented in this thesis can be interpreted as an embedded case study where several components are analysed within each single unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). Several activities will therefore be studied within each of the cases of AFN chosen as units of analysis.

The case study strategy of enquiry is intrinsically multi-methodical. The use of several methods of data collection in the same unit of analysis to infer information on the same object of analysis is a form of triangulation (Patton, 2002), and is used as a way to enhance the construct validity of the case study (Yin, 2009). This is also done in the present study which combines the methods of documentation and observation.

3.3.4 Documentation as an unobtrusive method of data collection

Documentation is a method of data collection that consists of gathering documents and eliciting information from them which is relevant for the phenomena under study. Documents are a variegated set of media which store information. Documents include personal documents such as diaries, letters, email correspondence, notes, biographies and autobiographies; documents of organisations or other collective entities such as agendas, reports, records, statistics, budgets, announcements and proposals; public institution documents such as institutional memorandums and reports, government pronouncements and proceedings, statistics, records; and many other documents in the form of essays, stories, research reports, monuments, historical documents, and newspaper, magazine and journal articles. Information stored in documents may be in written form, both quantitative and qualitative, or in visual or audio form. Information contained in documents may concern individuals, groups, situations, or organisations (Jupp, 2006; Punch, 2005; Yin, 2009).

Documents, particularly those emerging from naturally occurring situations which are not influenced by research purposes, have been used in the qualitative field of enquiry as material with which to trace what actually happens in the naturally occurring situations where they emerge, and how these situations are interpreted within the specific context and circumstances where they take place (Creswell, 2003, Hodder, 1994). In the qualitative field of enquiry, naturally occurring documents have been considered as agents influencing social reality, or indeed as its very building

blocks. Understanding social reality from within, from what actually happens, implies investigating documents in relation to why, how, and by whom they have been produced and used as well as in relation to what they mean in the studied circumstances (Hodder, 1994; Prior, 2004). Production, use and interpretation of documents all contribute to the construction of social reality. Hence, collecting and studying documents can contribute to understanding social reality from how it actually comes about (Silverman, 2005, 2011).

The way documentation has been used in qualitative research agrees with some of the methodological guidelines of IR theory (Collins, 2004a). Particularly relevant is the suggestion to use unobtrusive and naturally occurring data as sources of information. Unobtrusive and naturally occurring data sources are proposed as a means to obtaining insights into the studied phenomena based on what actually happens, while their internal situations of interactions take place (Collins, 1983).

Documents which are produced while such situations take place and for the purpose of these situations can provide the unobtrusive, naturally occurring data that Collins (1983) proposes. This research therefore chooses documentation as one of its method for gathering data. In particular, documents will be gathered and studied which are produced while the identified and studied AFNs' situations of interactions take place. Activities organised and implemented in AFNs are considered as expressions of situations of interactions. Thus, documents that are produced during the organisation and implementation of AFNs' activities and that are instrumental for these activities to take place are chosen as sources of information for this research. They will be studied to infer information from which the features of AFNs' activities, namely their levels of feelings of attachment and their forms of common understanding, can be ascertained as being generated while activities, which the documents refer to, take place⁷.

In other words the documents used in this study will be primary and unwittingly (Finnegan, 2006). They are documents which: are produced by people involved in the studied situations and for the purposes of the situations; they do not contain any sort of reinterpretation of the study material found in the situations; they are not solicited by the researcher for research purposes (Finnegan, 2006).

On the one hand, documentation is chosen as a method of gathering data as it resonates with some of Collin's (2003) methodological guidelines. On the other hand, documentation is a common method of data collection in case studies since it can provide precise, both qualitative and quantitative, information. Moreover, it is used to expand and stabilise the access to information on the studied case since data gathered from documentation may cover a broad variety of circumstances and time frames and can be stored and repeatedly accessed in its original form. Documentation, in the case study strategy of enquiry, is also used in combination with other methods of data collection (Yin, 2009). In this case study research, documentation is combined with observation, which will be presented in the subsection below.

3.3.5 Observation as a complementary, unobtrusive method of data collection

Observation is a method of data collection that, when used in the qualitative field of enquiry, "is fundamentally naturalistic in essence" (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994, p. 378) since it consists of

⁷ Further details on the process of documents selection, on the specific types of documents used in this research, and on how data emerging from documentation have been analysed will be given in chapters 4, 5, 6. An introduction to the methods used for data analysis is already given in section 3.3.6 of this chapter.

following events and people as they happen and behave in their natural settings, recording information about those events and their people in more or less systematic ways, and inferring insights on the phenomena object of study (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994). While engaged in observation, the researcher is exposed to, or involved in, dynamics (e.g. interactions, activities, events, routines, rituals), and gets in touch with people who too may have information to offer (K. M. DeWalt & B. R. DeWalt, 2011; S. L. Schensul, J. J. Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The researcher who uses observation as a method of data collection relies on his or her receptivity towards what happens and who is involved in those natural settings. Unlike other methods of data collection, actors' reinterpretations are not central in observation (Foster, 2006; Friedrichs & Luedtke, 1975). Observation is generally used in combination with other methods of data collection: at the beginning of the analysis it is used to define research enquiries that will be further investigated through other methods, while in the conclusion of the analysis it is used to double check and complement insights obtained until then (Foster, 2006).

This research adopts observation in the latter stage of the study to refine and complement the insights obtained through documentation. Some guidelines will be defined on which situations to observe and on what to trace during the observations in order to guarantee consistency between the data collected through observations and those collected by documentations. This will more in particular be done by focussing observation on the same AFNs' activities which were investigated through documentation analysis, and by making notes during observations that can be compared with the information gathered through documentation analysis. Data collected through observation derives from the direct experience of the researcher in the studied activities, while data collected through documents are elaboration of the person writing the documents. The direct contact of the researcher with the studied activities introduces another perspective into the analysis that is even closer to where the action is than documentation. This perspective may contribute towards unveiling new aspects or reviewing previous insights on the studied activities emerging from documentation.

Observation is also chosen since it resonates with the methodological guidelines from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) about using unobtrusive and naturally occurring sources of information (Collins, 1983). In other words, observation is chosen because allows information to be gathered on the studied AFNs' activities, and on their features, (i.e. forms common understanding and levels feelings of attachment), by observing and even by becoming part of the studied activities while they actually take place. Because of its adaptability to what happens in the field of observation, unstructured observation is particularly suitable to catch what actually takes place in the observed reality (K. M. DeWalt & B. R. DeWalt, 2011; Foster, 2006; Punch, 2005). Hence, observation in this study will be implemented in an almost unstructured way with the aim of better fulfilling the indication of using unobtrusive methods of data collection and naturally occurring data. The guidelines set to guaranty consistency between observation and documentation will be flexible, and will leave open the opportunity to redefine the focus of observation and the elements to be noted down according to what happens on the field⁸.

Now, attention will be paid to the last methodological decision which was made in order to define the methodological approach of this research. The next subsection will describe the approach to data analysis.

⁸ Further details on how the observation has been implemented, which kind of data has been gathered and how data have been analysed will be given in chapters 4, 5, and 6. An introduction to the methods used for data analysis is already given in section 3.3.6 of this chapter.

Box 3.1 Sociological perspectives behind the IR theory and IR theory-based research on AFNs

Collins (2004a) developed IR theory (Collins, 2004a) around a central idea of social reality which is constituted in situations of interactions. Collins' theory built on Durkheim and Goffman's works. It starts from Durkheim's ideas about the important role that sacred objects created in religious rituals play for maintaining social cohesion, for producing social membership, moral beliefs, and ideas that are the foundation of social reality. According to Collins, a similar process takes place through everyday interactions, similar to how Goffman described the process of the construction of the self in everyday interactions (Collins, 2004a).

Collins (2004a) maintains that IR theory (Collins, 2004a) interprets the macro reasoning of Durkheim about religion and the foundation of society within a micro-sociological view, one which is influenced by ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, sociology of emotion, and social constructionism. However, by focussing on the unfolding of the interaction itself, and not the individual's role in it, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) overcomes the individualism which is typical of the before mentioned sociological perspectives (Collins, 2004a).

Ethnomethodology, sociology of emotion, symbolic interactionism, and social constructionism are all perspectives that approach the study of social reality with their own specificities in terms of what can be known about social reality (ontology) and how it can be known (epistemology-methodology). Nonetheless, they share some general ideas. In particular, all of these perspectives support the idea that people construct social reality while interacting with each other in specific contexts. Therefore, according to these approaches, social reality can be understood if unveils individuals' interpretations of their everyday actions and interactions (LeCompte & J. J. Schensul, 1999). This view on what can be known about social reality and how it can be known is in line with the general principles of constructivism. Actually, approaches such as ethnomethodology, sociology of emotion, symbolic interactionism, and social constructionism all contributed to shaping the constructivist paradigm when it was gaining importance within the qualitative field of enquiry at the end of the 1970s (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Collins' (2004a) theory fits the constructivist paradigm and the qualitative field of enquiry it is part of because of its conceptual background. On the other hand, it advances this paradigm as IR theory (Collins, 2004a) puts interactions at the centre of attention when seeking to understand social reality, rather than the individual. Individuals and their interpretations are no longer crucial; instead, interactions among those individuals and their dynamics need to be studied in order to understand social reality (Collins, 2004a).

3.3.6 Methods for data analysis

The methodological guidelines of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) suggest to analyse situations of interactions on which social phenomena build up by describing and comparing their features (Collins, 1983). Above common understanding and feelings of attachment have been presented as the two main features generated in situations of interactions. The next and final methodological decision concerns the methods of data analysis to ascertain common understanding and feelings of attachment in the situations of interactions studied in this research. This implies: first, to specify the definitions of common understanding and feelings of attachment starting from conceptual inputs derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a). Next, their definitions need to be grounded in the reality of AFNs so that common understanding and feelings of attachment can be traced in AFNs' activities. Finally, the definitions have to be operationalised; tools are introduced to identify and measure forms and levels of common understanding and feelings of attachment. The whole process of data analysis takes place in two steps.

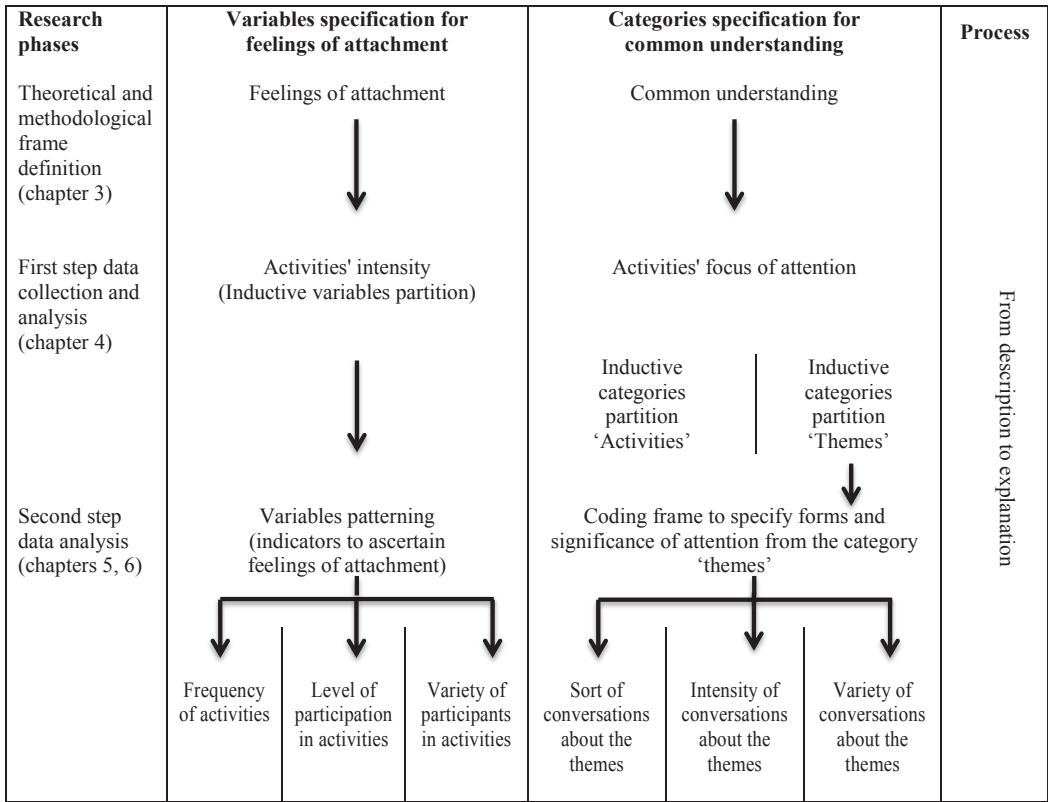
The first step of data analysis is guided by a very general interpretation of common understanding and feelings of attachment. Feelings of attachment is understood as the intensity of each situation of interaction; or in the AFNs context, the ability of each activity to fulfil, to mobilise people and re-mobilise in case the activity is repeated. Common understanding is interpreted as the focus of each situation of interaction; or in the case of AFNs, the interests around which the activity arises and develops, and which acquires significance in the activity and motivates people to join it. During the first step of data analysis variables and categories are defined (Miles & Huberman, 1994), that describe feelings of attachment and common understanding in the studied AFNs' activities. Quantitative variables will be induced from the factual contents of the gathered information and

from the quantitative data derived from them. They will be used to specify feelings of attachment in the form of any possible measure of the intensity of the studied AFNs' activities. Qualitative categories will be induced from the latent contents of the gathered information and from the qualitative data derived from them. They will be used to specify common understanding in the form of all the possible foci of attention emerging in the studied AFNs' activities.

The second step of data analysis aims at further specifying common understanding and feelings of attachment as well as ascertaining their forms and levels. First, more detailed instructions for the operationalisation of their ascertaining are derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a). Second, and inspired by these instructions, techniques of analysis such as variables patterning, categories clustering, counting, and comparing (Miles & Huberman, 1994) are used to select, redefine and combine the variables and categories that are inductively introduced in the first step of data analysis. This results in indicators that include the most meaningful and consistent variables to ascertain the intensity of the studied AFNs' activities, as well as in a coding frame including and expanding categories instrumental to the disclosure of the significance of what emerges as attracting attention in the same activities and which forms of attention it mobilises. Both indicators and the coding frame allow us to move from the description of the features of the studied AFNs' activities to a theoretical explanation of those features and of the implications for the overall identities and roles of the studied AFNs.

Figure 3.3 summarises the whole process of data analysis. It begins with the introduction of the two guiding definitions of feelings of attachment and common understanding as derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a). The process continues with their progressive specification and operationalisation first into variables and categories, and then indicators and coding frame. Figure 3.3 presents the process as a dynamic one that moves from the description of the studied AFNs' activities in terms of generating feelings of attachment and common understanding to the theoretical explanation of the implications for the identities and roles of AFNs. The figure also specifies the different phases of this research in terms of when different moments of the data analysis process take place.

Figure 3.3 The methods and steps of data analysis⁹



3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced the theoretical and methodological approach proposed for this research on AFNs. IR theory (Collins, 2004a) has been presented as providing the ontological and methodological guidelines which inspire its theoretical and methodological approach. The resulting theoretical and methodological approach of this research can be summarised as it follows.

Starting from the ontology of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), this research proposes to study the dynamics of the organisation and implementation of AFNs' activities as an entry point for better understanding the identities and roles of AFNs. AFNs' activities are interpreted as figurations of what IR theory (Collins, 2004a) calls situations of interactions, defining these as dynamics that constitute social phenomena and are key to understanding social reality (Collins, 2004a).

This research also adapts the analytical tool proposed by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to disclose the functioning of situations of interactions and their features. In particular, it looks into the dynamics of AFNs' activities which is considered to take place in a two-step process – the organisation and implementation of activities. While activities take place common understanding and feelings of attachment are generated which drive the development of AFNs' activities. Common understanding

⁹ Figure 3.3 introduces some concepts, variables, categories and codes that belong to the first and second steps of data analysis and that will be explained in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

indicates the focus of attention of activities, and what attracts participants to the activities and acquires significance in these activities. Feelings of attachment indicate the intensity of each activity in terms of its ability to fulfil, to attract people and to engage them in the (re)organisation and (re)implementation of activities.

The methodological implications of studying AFNs through IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and following its methodological guidelines (Collins, 1983) are synthesised in the following methodological decisions. First of all, a qualitative field of enquiry is chosen as it allows for a naturalistic, explorative-descriptive approach to AFNs. Secondly, a case study strategy is followed. Thirdly, documentation and observation are prompted as methods of data collection that are suitable because they provide naturally occurring data on the features of the studied AFNs' activities, through an unobtrusive approach. Finally, data analysis is structured as a process of progressive specification and operationalisation of feelings of attachment and common understanding.

All in all, the theoretical and methodological approach this research proposes to use in order to study AFNs allows the research to maintain and proceed the explorative and dynamics-centred approaches that some of the existing studies have used to explore AFNs. Recalling chapter 2, explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs are the most advanced studies in this domain; nonetheless, there is room to develop them. Most of them disclose AFNs' features and their implications for the identities and roles of AFNs by looking at negotiation processes where meanings are generated while AFNs' activities take place. The theoretical and methodological approach proposed in this study maintains a dynamics and explorative approach. Moreover, it expands upon the existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies because it goes beyond the exploration of negotiations and creation of meanings. Negotiation processes and meanings creation is instrumental in ascertaining common understanding emerging in the studied AFNs' activities. While, ascertaining feelings of attachment generated in the same AFNs activities will rely on disclosing some aspects of AFNs' activities, (namely their capacity to fulfil, engage people in the organisation, and implementation), that have not been explored yet by the existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs. All in all, combining information deriving from disclosing meanings generated while AFNs' activities take place with the information derived from the latter mentioned unexplored aspects of AFNs' activities would contribute to furthering the understanding of AFNs' identities and roles compared to what existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies have highlighted so far.

The implementation of the theoretical and methodological approach is discussed more in details in chapter 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 4

Food and agriculture in Calabria: an introduction to the case study

4.1 Introduction

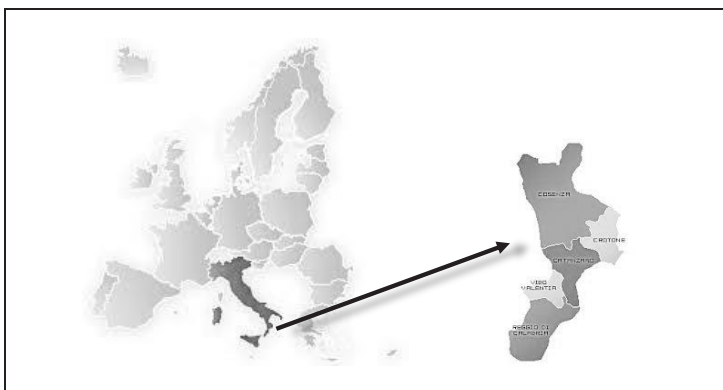
This chapter will present the study context and the case study as well as the first step of data collection and analysis. In particular, the chapter aims to explain how the selected context, case and methodology contribute to fulfilling the following interests: studying AFNs in contexts with rather traditional agrifood systems; studying AFNs that involve producers as well as consumers and other civil society actors and which implement both food provisioning and civic activities; developing a methodology that unveils AFNs internal dynamics.

The chapter is divided into the following sections. Section 4.2 presents Calabria, a region in southern Italy, as the context of the study. First, Calabria is described by mean of statistics and studies. Second, the chapter presents an overview of all AFNs in Calabria traced by means of a desk and field research. Section 4.3 presents the process of case study selection, and explains the selection of one specific case. Finally, section 4.4 explains the first step of data collection and analysis through documentation and observation. Section 4.5 concludes the chapter.

4.2 Study Context

Calabria is a region in Southern Italy (Figure 4.1). The description of this region will focus on those aspects which justify the choice of Calabria as study context. In particular, it will focus on the socio-economic context of Calabria and its agrifood system including the main AFNs in this region.

Figure 4.1 Europe, Italy, Calabria



4.2.1 Calabria: between tradition and modernity¹⁰

The Calabrian agrifood system

Existing studies on the Calabrian agricultural sector depict it as a very traditional system, even having some degrees of subsistence farming (Anania, 1982; “Le agriculture”, 2001). Elaborations from the data on the Italian agriculture sector (ISTAT, 2010a, 2007) confirm that Calabrian agriculture is predominantly traditional. First of all, farms are parcelled with less than 4 ha of farmed land on average, which is half of the national average for farmed land (ISTAT, 2010a). Secondly, the predominant form of management is represented by individual farms, these making up 95% of all Calabrian farms. This percentage is also higher than the national average. Moreover, family labour, including the farmers-owners, covers 62% of all working hours. Extra-family labourers are predominantly temporary workers (ISTAT, 2007). Thirdly, traditional aspects of the Calabrian agricultural sector also emerge in terms of the destination of what is produced. In almost 94% of all Calabrian farms, products are consumed by the farmer-owners and their families. Among those farms practising self-consumption, almost 46% of farms self-consume everything they produce. Furthermore, of those Calabrian farms that sell their products, 64% of the produce is sold directly to consumers. Data on self-consumption and direct selling are higher for Calabrian farms than for farms in the rest of Italy (ISTAT, 2010a).

As far as the Calabrian food transformation industry is concerned, in 2010, each active firm employed less than 3 workers on average. As a matter of fact, in the same year, individual firms represented 65% of the total food transformation industry in Calabria. Moreover, 60% of Calabrian food industry firms fell into the category of small-craft firms (INEA, 2013). In terms of value added, those firms produced 1.12% of the regional value added at basic prices for 2010. This value is even lower than the value added produced by the agricultural sector that amounts to the 3.83% of the regional added value for 2010 (ISTAT, 2010b). Behind the generation of such low value added is what Coppola et al. (2005) calls ‘filiere monche’ (i.e. incomplete chains). With this expression, scholars wish to indicate two main dynamics concerning the Calabrian agrifood system. The first dynamic is connected with the inability of the Calabrian food system to integrate its different steps, which makes it difficult for the regional food transformation industry to gain access to products to be processed. The second dynamic refers to the low ability of Calabrian food transformation firms to internalise transformation processes; most of them undertakes only primary transformation and outsource further transformation to external firms. In turn, those firms sell low value products and generate as little value added (Coppola et al., 2005).

All in all, the food transformation industry in Calabria, has not undergone a process of full modernisation and industrialisation yet, which represents another indication of the predominantly traditional form of the Calabrian agrifood system. Lastly, further traditional traits emerge when considering the Calabrian food distribution system. Existing studies describe a variegated system where traditional and small-scale forms of selling, such as direct selling on or outside the farm, (both in shops and on the roadside), are combined with modern large-scale distribution centres, such as supermarkets (Baldari & Gulisano, 2001). Other studies highlight that the diffusion and stabilisation of modernised and large-scale food distribution is impeded by administrative, infrastructural, and managerial problems (Coppola et al., 2007).

Statistics on the Calabrian agrifood system confirm the description of the food distribution system as being not completely industrialised. The data reported above shows the importance of direct selling for most Calabrian farms (ISTAT, 2010a). Furthermore, specialised shops for certain food

¹⁰ More detailed tables with statistics on the agrifood and socio-economic contexts in Calabria are reported in Appendix 3.

products are more popular forms of food distribution compared to big-distribution unspecialised shops. The number of distribution units for specialised shops amounts to 5,028, while there are 3,614 distribution units for unspecialised shops (Osservatorio Nazionale del Commercio, 2013a,b). Distribution units in the category of specialised food shops may be medium or small; sometimes they sell products from local farmers and farmers may also run them as shops on or outside their farms; sometimes, those shops sell products bought through the same channels as large distributors. In 2013 in Calabria, sales through medium-small sized distribution amounted to 917 million Euros for food products compared to 611 million Euros of sales recorded by large distribution. Finally, peddling is the third most common distribution channel, with 1,311 units of distribution¹¹ (Osservatorio Nazionale del Commercio, 2013a,b). Peddlers often sell local products, the distribution points sometimes being run by subsistence farmers, but they can also sell products coming from large distribution channels.

The Calabrian socio-economic system

The Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) estimates an indicator of sustainable development for each of the Italian regions. Some data about economic and social aspects are included in this indicator such as the (long- and short-term) unemployment rate, the poverty rate, the incidence of population per age group; the level of education; access to services; participation in public life, particularly the turn-over in electoral ballots; the presence of civil society organisations run on volunteer basis; and the level of criminality. This data describe and position the region of Calabria in relation to Italian socio-economic development overall (<http://sitis.istat.it/sitis/html/>).

Almost 6% of the Calabrian labour force has been unemployed for 12 months or more, and 11% of the Calabrian labour force has been unemployed for less than 12 months. In the rest of Italy those percentages are lower; long-term and short-term unemployment amount to 3% and to almost 8% of the Italian labour force, respectively (ISTAT, 2009). When it comes to the poverty rate, 25% of Calabrian families, (out of all the families residing in Calabria), show levels of consumption that are below the poverty line, and 28% of all the Calabrian population live in poor families, while in the rest of Italy poor families amount to 11% of all Italian families and around 14% of Italian people live in poor families (ISTAT, 2008).

The Calabrian population appears to be younger than the rest of the Italian population, and has a higher potentially active labour force than the rest of the Italian population. The incidence of people that are not of a working age (i.e. less than 14 years old and more than 65 years old) within the active population is lower than in the rest of Italy, with indices of 49 and 52 respectively. Moreover, the turn-over between people entering the young (i.e. less than 14 years old) and working age groups (i.e. in between 15 and 19 years old) and those entering the elderly (i.e. more than 65 years old) and retirement age (i.e. between 60 and 64 years old) groups is higher than in the rest of Italy, with indices of 77 and 69 respectively in the case of the turn-over between young and elderly people, and of 103 and 80, respectively, in the case of turn-over between people of a working age and people of a retirement age (ISTAT, 2009).

Other data on the social aspects concerns levels of education, access to services, social engagement, and criminality connected to the presence of criminal organisations. It is reported below and all points towards a backward social situation in Calabria compared to the rest of Italy. First of all, the overall level of education in Calabria is lower than in the rest of Italy when the rate of people between 25 and 64 years old who leave school at the age of 13 year old per 100 people of the same

¹¹ The figure for peddling is underestimated since there are several cases of unofficial peddlers that are not captured in official statistics but are very commonly seen on the streets in Calabria.

age-group is considered; 49 and 46 people per 100 are the rates for Calabria and Italy respectively. Secondly, the rate of Calabrian families with difficult access to services such as middle schools, first aid medical assistance, chemists, supermarkets and other food shops is higher than in the rest of Italy when all these services are taken into consideration (ISTAT, 2009). Thirdly, the engagement of Calabrian society is considered both in terms of turnout at the national political elections and of number of voluntary organisations. In Calabria, there was a turnout of 71% for the last elections of Lower House and Senate, while the overall Italian average was 80% at the same elections (ISTAT, 2008). The number of voluntary organisations is lower in Calabria than in the rest of Italy for all the associations considered (ISTAT, 2001). Finally, the level of criminality is considered using the number of formally reported crimes such as extortion, murders, intentional damage, theft, smuggling and prostitution per 1,000 people. Calabria has a higher level of criminality compared to the rest of Italy for crimes such as extortion that are connected with the presence of criminal organisations, namely Mafia¹² (ISTAT, 2007).

Besides, some studies on social capital in Italy (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994; Rizzi, 2004; Sabatini, 2008) provide interesting insights into the socio-economic situation. Calabria, together with the other Southern regions, shows the lowest level of social capital, as measured in the mentioned studies (Putnam et al., 1994; Rizzi, 2004; Sabatini, 2008). Calabrian people show some of the highest levels of family ties, which are used to pursue family interests, as well as some of the lowest levels of likelihood to create strong social networks, beyond family boundaries, in which people work together for public interests (Rizzi, 2004; Sabatini, 2008). According to these studies, the potential for socio-economic development are reduced in Calabria and other Southern Italian Regions by the low level of social capital (Putnam et al., 1994; Rizzi, 2004; Sabatini, 2008).

Agrifood initiatives as a link between agrifood and socio-economic systems: revaluing tradition in agrifood system and overcoming socio-economic backwardness.

Policy makers and public institutions, civil society organisations and practitioners of the agricultural sector have promoted some initiatives in Calabria. Those initiatives share the aim of revaluing traditional forms of food provisioning and countervailing some of the factors that are behind the socio-economic backwardness of this region discussed above. Among those initiatives are those that promote the use of farm lands seized from Mafia organisations for the creation of jobs for young and disadvantaged people, the constitution of organisations struggling against forms of socio-economic exploitation that are common in the Calabrian agricultural sector, projects to promote the provisioning of traditional products, and projects to promote sustainable local economies in rural areas starting from food provisioning. The listed initiatives are presented below.

In 1996, the Italian Parliament passed a law¹³ to use properties seized from Mafia's organisations for projects with the aim of socio-economic development. The law has been promoted by a network of more than a hundred associations all around Italy (<http://www.libera.it/>). The rationale behind their request was the following: by seizing Mafia properties and redistributing them to civil society organisation for the socio-economic development of territories and their communities, both the economic and social power of the Mafia will be impeded. The economic power will be reduced because of the appropriation of Mafia properties. Its social power is reduced by demonstrating that civil society can create its path of development without the protection of the Mafia if it is able to form ties and work together towards common goals. As a consequence of this law, there are 150

¹² Mafia is the name of a form of criminal organisation whose roots are in the South of Italy, namely Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Sicilia. Nowadays the Mafia has connections all around the world through its financial, smuggling and other kind of businesses.

¹³ *Disposizioni in materia di gestione e destinazione di beni sequestrati o confiscati 1996* (Legge) n. 109 Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 58 del 9 Marzo 1996 Supplemento Ordinario n. 44 (Italy).

farms seized from the ‘Ndrangheta¹⁴ in Calabria; 56 of them have already been allocated for specific projects. Nowadays there are four cooperative societies or non-profit organisations that are running those farms (INEA, 2013) and employ young and disadvantaged people with the aim of promoting their socio-economic integration. Those cooperatives and non-profit organisations also pay attention to the territories in which they work. They primarily produce organic, natural, and environmental friendly products of high quality and use traditional production techniques. They also interact with other organisations and institutions to raise awareness of themes of civic relevance, from the importance of fighting the Mafia to other more general issues of legality and social responsibility (<http://liberaterra.it/>).

The initiative against socio-economic exploitation in the agrifood sector concerns the organisation of migrant workers and small traditional farmers who work mainly on the production of oranges. The organisation was set up in 2010 after an outbreak of protests during which migrants were temporally employed for the harvest of oranges, but then rebelled because of the poor working and living conditions. Some Calabrian small farmers and some of the migrant workers founded an organisation to find viable solutions against socio-economic exploitation. The reasoning behind this was the following: if small farmers get better prices for their products, they can also pay better salaries and ensure better socio-economic conditions for their workers, not least migrant workers. The organisation is currently working on two main points. First, it is seeking to revalue agricultural production on the participating farms by promoting organic, high quality products with strong cultural value to be sold through alternative and more remunerative channels compared to the mainstream distribution system. Second, it is implementing several civic campaigns, at both the regional and the national level, to raise awareness among civil society and politicians on the socio-economic, environmental, and cultural dysfunctioning of the mainstream food system (<http://www.sosrosarno.org/>).

Two more initiatives have to do with promoting the provisioning of traditional products and sustainable local economies in rural areas starting from food provisioning. The Slow Food movement, which promotes the rediscovery of food culture and traditions both in Italy and abroad, has identified some ‘presidia’ in Calabria. ‘Presidia’ are initiatives aimed at revaluing products which have a very high cultural and quality value, and are at risk of extinction. Each ‘presidia’ corresponds to a specific product; in Calabria, there are currently six presidia. On the one hand, technological innovations are introduced to make the production of the products involved in the presidia economically viable whilst still preserving their traditional features and cultural values. On the other hand, social promotion is done in order to spread interest in and consumption of those products (<http://www.fondazioneSlowFood.it/presidi-italia>). The other, last-mentioned initiative exists in the form of the so-called ‘quality, agrifood districts’. Those districts are geographical and administrative areas where local, traditional and high quality agricultural farms and food transformation firms network with each other and work towards building up local economies based on the production and promotion of high quality products with strong cultural roots. The initiative of the ‘quality, agrifood districts’ has been promoted by civil society organisations and, more recently, recognised by law¹⁵. There are currently three recognised districts in Calabria, involving a total of 77 municipalities (INEA, 2013).

¹⁴ ‘Ndrangheta is the name given to the Mafia in Calabria (Arlacchi, 1980; Arrighi & Piselli, 1985; Ciconte, 1996; Mannino, 1997).

¹⁵ *Istituzione dei distretti rurali ed agroalimentari di qualità. Istituzione del distretto agroalimentare di qualità di Sibari 2004* (Legge Regionale) n. 21 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 19 del 19 Ottobre 2004 Supplemento Straordinario n. 2 (Italy). *Modifiche e integrazioni alla legge regionale 13 ottobre 2004, n. 21 «Istituzione dei distretti rurali ed agro- alimentari di qualità. Istituzione del distretto agro-alimentare di qualità di Sibari» 2009* (Legge Regionale) n. 6 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 6 del 7 Aprile 2009 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

The overall purpose of this and of the previous two subsections about the agrifood and socio-economic systems is to show that Calabria is a suitable context for this study. This research seeks to advance the current empirical knowledge on AFNs and, as mentioned in chapter 2, this can be achieved by investigating AFNs which:

- Operate in contexts where traditional aspects are still relevant in the local agrifood systems, preferably if these contexts have not been considered yet in the literature on AFNs;
- Organise systems of food provisioning which are alternative to the industrial ones, hand in hand with promoting actions of civic relevance;
- Involve other actors (e.g. consumers, civil society organisations, political institutions and policy makers) who play a crucial role in managing them alongside food producers.

Calabria is a suitable context for this research, first of all because its agrifood system is still predominantly traditional. Second, in Calabria, initiatives committed to the promotion of traditional, natural, small-scale agriculture and associated food provisioning emerge as contexts of socio-economic experimentation that can countervail some aspects of the social backwardness of this region. Moreover, they involve civil society organisations, policy makers and other practitioners alongside producers. In other words, Calabrian initiatives to promote agriculture and food provisioning which are alternative to the industrial one also show some levels of commitment towards matters of civic relevance, and involve other actors besides food producers. Third, some of these initiatives overlap with the forms of AFNs identified in Calabria, and that will be presented in the following subsection; last but not least, Calabria has not yet been investigated in the international scientific literature on AFNs.

4.2.2 Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Calabria

This subsection completes the introduction on Calabria as the context of study by giving an overview of the forms of AFNs existing in this region. This overview of Calabrian AFNs is meant as a first step to identify those cases that can be selected as case studies for this research. This research has used an inductive strategy as a means to identify the possible existing cases of AFNs in Calabria. AFNs are referred to as *filiera corte* in the Italian literature (Marino & Cicatiello, 2012; Rossi et al., 2008; Sivini, 2007), in the common language, and in the juridical language¹⁶ in Italy. In order to inductively identify the existing cases of AFNs in Calabria, this study considers all those initiatives that are established in the Calabrian territory and which:

- Define themselves as ‘filiera corte’ in more or less formal presentations (e.g. website, media, seminars, and other similar occasions);

¹⁶ Examples of laws about ‘filiera corte’ are:

Approvazione dei criteri per l’assegnazione di aiuti agli enti locali per lo sviluppo di aree mercatali destinate alle vendite dirette dei prodotti agricoli (l.r. 12/2008, art. 11) 2008 (Decreto della Giunta Regione Piemonte) n. 97-10416 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Piemonte n. 2 del 15 Gennaio 2009 (Italy).

Approvazione del piano di iniziative in favore della filiera corta (l.r. 12/2008, art. 11) 2008 (Decreto Giunta Regione Piemonte) n. 18-102551 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Piemonte n. 53 del 31 Dicembre 2008 (Italy).

Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (legge finanziaria 2008) 2007 (Legge) n. 244 Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 300 del 28 Dicembre 2007 Supplemento Ordinario n. 285 (Italy).

Interventi regionali per la promozione dei mercati riservati alla vendita diretta da parte degli imprenditori agricoli 2008 (Legge Regionale) n. 28 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Lazio n. 48 del 27 Dicembre 2008 Supplemento Ordinario n. 166 (Italy).

Norme per orientare e sostenere il consumo dei prodotti agricoli regionali 2008 (Legge Regionale) n. 7 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Veneto n. 62 del 29 Luglio 2008 (Italy).

Norme sulle organizzazioni di produttori agricoli, sugli accordi regionali per l’integrazione delle filiere e sulle filiere corte 2008 (Legge Regionale) n. 29 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Lazio n. 48 del 27 Dicembre 2008 Supplemento Ordinario n. 166 (Italy).

Progetto regionale Filiera Corta Rete regionale per la valorizzazione dei prodotti agricoli toscani 2007 (Deliberazione Giunta Regione Toscana) n. 335 (Italy).

- Belong to the forms of initiatives studied in the Italian and international literature as ‘filiera corte’ or AFNs;
- Belong to the forms of initiatives mentioned as ‘filiera corte’ by Calabrian legislation.

The first stage of mapping AFNs in Calabria involved a period of desk research. ‘Filiera corte’ and ‘Calabria’ were used as key-words for an initial search on the internet. Other key-words were entered which were derived from the first results of the internet search. Those words, which were always searched for in combination with the word ‘Calabria’, are: ‘mercati contadini’ (i.e. farmers’ markets), ‘GAS’, ‘Legge filiera corte’ (i.e. ‘filiera corte’ law). After this first stage of research, some forms of Calabrian AFNs were identified. Moreover, information was found about a workshop¹⁷ where all the practitioners of Calabrian AFNs were invited to discuss a law¹⁸ for the promotion of GASs in Calabria. In October 2011, I attended this workshop in order to interact with some of the representatives of Calabrian AFNs and to gather more information on their presence in the territory. I stayed in touch with four of the people participating in the workshop, shared the information I had previously gathered from the internet on the presence of AFNs in Calabria with them, and asked for integration or correction.

The data on the presence of AFNs in Calabria was further integrated, in June 2012, during a reconnaissance field visit. Another update was done during a period of fieldwork in December 2012. Finally, a last update was done in August 2014, by means of desk research. The same key words as those used at the beginning of the research were used for an internet search to see whether new information would emerge¹⁹. The following four forms of AFNs were identified through the whole course of the research:

1. Farmers’ Market (FM);
2. Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (GAS) (or Solidarity Purchasing Group);
3. Gruppo Organizzati di Domanda e Offerta (GODO) (or Organized Group of Supply and Demand);
4. Farm shop.

The territorial distribution of the above-mentioned forms of AFNs is reported in Table 4.1, with a more elaborate description following below.

Table 4.1 Forms and territorial distribution of AFNs in Calabria

Provinces	Farmers’ market	GAS	GODO	Farm shop	Total per province
Catanzaro	15	4	-	71	90
Cosenza	13	5	-	165	183
Crotone	7	1	-	46	54
Reggio Calabria	12	8	1	122	143
Vibo Valentia	3	-	-	37	40
Total per form	50	18	1	441	510

(Own elaboration)

¹⁷ ‘Seminario promosso in collaborazione con i GAS della Calabria sulla legge regionale 18 luglio 2011 n. 23 “Norme per il sostegno dei Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (GAS) e per la promozione dei prodotti alimentari da filiera corta e di qualità”. Sabato 22 e domenica 23 ottobre.

¹⁸ *Norme per il sostegno dei gruppi acquisto solidale (gas) e per la promozione dei prodotti alimentari da filiera corta e di qualità 2011* (Legge Regionale) n. 23 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 13 del 22 luglio 2011 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

¹⁹ The complete list of websites consulted during the desk research is reported in Appendix 3.

Farmers' market

Food markets in the form of both outdoor and indoor places where people can buy food, either regularly or occasionally, have always existed in Calabria. Such food markets contain, both local, traditional products sold directly by producers, and products sourced from the same channels as those used by large distributors and sold in the markets by intermediaries (Baldari & Gulisano, 2001). The food markets considered in the category *Farmers' markets* are those that are presented as 'filiera corte' by Calabrian policy makers, professionals of the agricultural sector, and civil society. Just like ordinary market, they can be organised both indoors and outdoors, on regular a basis or on special occasions (e.g. religious or public festivities). They differ from other markets through the sort of products and the category of sellers that are allowed to access to the markets. In particular:

- Farmers' markets seek to promote direct contact between producers and consumers, and therefore no intermediaries are allowed to sell products. Only producers or farm employees (on behalf of the farm) can sell the products they produce on the farms;
- Farmers' markets seek to promote the consumption of locally produced products, hence only producers from the same province or region where the market is located can sell their products at the markets;
- Farmers' markets seek to promote the consumption of high quality products, which implies that producers who want to sell products in a farmers' market must comply with certain standards. Some farmers' markets ask their producers to conform to standards set by law, such as organic certifications, certifications of origins. Other farmers' markets define, more or less formally, their own standards. In such cases, the attention focusses on ensuring the presence of traditional, natural and high quality products as well as expecting producers to respect certain ethical standards of conduct in running their farms (e.g. environmental, animal welfare, human health and rights protection as well as other legality standards).

There are 50 markets that comply with the three features just listed and that are included in the category of farmers' market. They are present all over the five Calabrian provinces and they show at least four different initiators²⁰:

- Three of them are GAS-based initiatives, in the sense that a GAS is behind the organisation of the market. Those markets are generally held on the same occasions as food boxes are exchanged to give those who have ordered the boxes the chance to buy more products, as well as allowing those who have not reserved a box to buy products. In those markets the GAS generally sets the standards for the access of products and producers; those standards concern both physical and symbolic features (e.g. quality, organoleptic features, provenance, respect of principles of fairness and legality in managing the farm; alignment with views on matters of civic relevance promoted by the GAS).
- Three other farmers' markets are promoted by organisations of producers or of producers and consumers. In these cases, the market is organised either on special occasions or regularly, as a means for consumers and producers to buy and sell products with certain characteristics. Most of these are local, traditional and natural products whose quality is checked by the organisers; formal certifications are seldom, if ever, required.

²⁰ Some of the organisations promoting or collaborating to the promotion of some of the Calabrian Farmers' Markets cooperate with one of the initiatives presented in the subsections on the agrifood and socio-economic systems as promoters of traditional agriculture and socio-economic development in Calabria.

- Two other farmers' markets were supported by local institutions. Either the regional government or some municipalities have offered buildings and facilities where local farmers can sell their products. The aim for the promoting institutions was to boost local, small-scale and traditional farmers by offering them an opportunity for selling. The institutions defined standards for access in these cases; these stipulate mainly that products must be local, natural, and traditional, and sourced from small-scale farming. Certified products such as organic, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) are also valued.

- Finally, the majority of the existing farmers' markets, 42 out of 50, are the outputs of national projects aimed at promoting the consumption of certain types of products. One of the 42 markets is centred on educating people to consume organic products. In this case, organic certification was a central criteria for access to the market. The other 41 are part of a project backing the consumption of foods made in Italy. This project has branches over all the regions in Italy and in each region, the markets are meant to be occasions for selling regional, traditional products. Certifications of geographic origins are very important, but even more important is that the farmers adhere to the standards set by the organisation promoting the markets by means of an official membership.

From the data collected on farmers' markets in Calabria, the first farmers' markets date back to 2004-2005. The first to appear were those promoted by GASs and producers' organisations.

Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (Solidarity Purchasing Group) (GAS)

A total of 18 GASs are present in four out of the five Calabrian provinces. Eleven of them are registered in the GAS's national network, (i.e. Rete G.A.S.), by August 2014 (Rete G.A.S., n.d.); the remaining seven define themselves as GASs because they are inspired by the principles and organisation promoted in the GAS's policy document that was drawn up by Rete G.A.S. (Rete G.A.S., 1999). Those initiatives have also presented themselves as forms of 'filiera corte' and are considered by a regional law²¹ as such; Moreover GASs have been considered as examples of AFNs and 'filiera corte' in the international and Italian scientific and popular literature respectively (Brunori et al. 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Colombo, 2013; Fonte, 2013; Innocenti, 2007; Saroldi, 2008). For the mentioned reasons GASs identified in Calabria have been included as cases of Calabrian AFNs.

Having gained an overview, of the current situation of GASs in Calabria, the following features and principles emerge:

- They exist in groups of people who decide to collectively organise their purchases of food and non-food products. Those groups agree on the principles with which producers and products must comply, and start searching for suitable producers; the groups search first at provincial level, then regional, and even national level, when suitable local producers are not available. The principles the groups set can concern both physical and symbolic aspects of products and of their producers. As far as physical aspects are concerned, the groups look for traditional and high quality products with good organoleptic features and which are produced according to techniques that are environmentally and animal friendly as well as safe for human health. With respect to the symbolic aspects, Calabrian GASs choose producers that respect fairness and legality standards in running their businesses and share the commitment of the GASs to issues of socio-economic, cultural, political environmental and general civic relevance. Both for the physical and symbolic aspects,

²¹ *Norme per il sostegno dei gruppi acquisto solidale (gas) e per la promozione dei prodotti alimentari da filiera corta e di qualità 2011* (Legge Regionale) n. 23 Bollettino Ufficiale Regione Calabria n. 13 del 22 luglio 2011 Supplemento Straordinario n. 1 (Italy).

GASs tend to prefer a participatory certifications process whereby members of GASs check to see whether the producers comply to the standards.

- GASs in Calabria have strong territorial roots. They are always promoted by groups of people living and working in the same area within the region. Nonetheless, GASs tend to network with other GASs that are active both regionally and nationally and they engage with civic issues that may go beyond the regional borders. Calabrian GASs promote initiatives to counteract the socio-economic, cultural, environmental dysfunctioning of the mainstream food system at every level, from local to global. They also intervene on topics of political, social, economic, cultural, environmental interest beyond food provisioning, both at a national and at a local level.

- The relationships between producers and consumers in Calabrian GASs are very tied and their roles often overlap. A group of committed consumers organise the booking and delivering of products, mostly on the basis of periodic exchanges of food boxes. Most of the producers limit themselves to producing and delivering the products; nonetheless, some producers are also active in organising the exchange, and may join in with some of the civic activities promoted by the GASs. Producers often run a market in parallel to the exchange of the boxes. Most of the organisation is coordinated via internet (e.g emails, website, blog, facebook), but meetings are also important.

Despite these general features, Calabrian GASs show at least two different origins, in both cases consumers and consumers-based organizations are the engine for most of the GASs²²:

- Six out of the 18 GASs identified in Calabria originate from pre-existing organisations. Among those organisations are scouts groups, fair trade groups, and organisations for socio-cultural promotion acting to raise awareness of socio-economic, political, cultural, environmental and general civic issues. GASs were started up by these organisations as a way to follow up and expand their initial purposes.

- The remaining 12 GASs were initiated by either single individuals or by a group of people who were not connected before starting up the GAS. Different interests, sometimes overlapping, motivated these people. There are those who use the GAS as a means to rediscover particular products and ways of farming which are very traditional and instrumental to protect bio and cultural diversity. Other people are motivated by an interest in buying high quality and traditional products they cannot easily find in towns. Others pay special attention to the economic advantages of buying in groups. Finally, other people, namely producers, are motivated by interest in selling peculiar products at fair conditions that they cannot find in other selling channels.

From the data collected on Calabrian GASs, the first GAS appeared in 2004. People belonging to a fair trade group promoted this first GAS in Calabria.

Gruppo Organizzato di Domanda e Offerta (Organized Group of Supply and Demand) (GODO)

GODOs are promoted all around Italy by *Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica* (Italian Association for Organic Agriculture) (AIAB). They are presented as initiatives meant to promote 'filiera corta' (i.e. short food chain) of organic products. Local groups of the AIAB work on finding local producers of organic products as well as seeking consumers willing to buy those products. They also set up and manage box schemes through which local and organic products are periodically delivered. Those groups are paid from the budget of the association so that although

²² Some of the organisations promoting or collaborating to the promotion of some of the Calabrian GAS cooperate with one of the initiatives presented in the subsections on the agrifood and socio-economic systems as promoters of traditional agriculture and socio-economic development in Calabria.

they work as intermediaries, they do not charge extra costs for the products. Moreover, those groups circulate detailed information about the producers so that consumers can have full knowledge about products and producers despite the fact that producers and consumers do not necessarily meet one another. A further activity carried out by the local AIAB groups is supporting producers who want to convert to organic production and to promote campaigns on the importance of producing and consuming organic products. Organic certifications and membership to AIAB are essential conditions for those producers who want to enter the GODO system. Membership of the AIAB is also required for consumers.

From both the desk and the field research, it emerges that the features discussed until now also hold for the Calabrian GODO. There is just one GODO in Calabria. It was started up in 2010 by the AIAB group in Reggio Calabria. The consumers who have joined the group are all from Reggio Calabria province, but the producers also come from other provinces in Calabria.

Farm shop

In the description of the Calabrian agrifood system it has been shown that most of the farmers in Calabria use direct selling in shops on or outside their farms as distribution channel to commercialise their products. Farmers run their shops and sell traditional, mostly natural products which rarely have certification. Those cases of farm shops that are considered as forms of Calabrian AFNs share with the other existing cases of farm shops the function of being channels for the direct selling of products. Moreover, some of the cases of farm shops which are considered to be Calabrian AFNs overlap with the existing cases of farm shops.

Nonetheless, the cases of farm shop within the category of Calabrian AFNs stand out from the rest because since the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, they have become part of initiatives that network several farms and work on specifying and promoting the principles guiding those farms and initiatives. Those initiatives present themselves as forms of promotion of ‘filiere corte’. Within those initiatives, farm shops have at least a dual purpose; they are used both as a commercial strategy to ensure the economic viability of small-medium, traditional farmers, and as a strategy to effectively convey and enforce the moving principles of those initiatives and associated farms.

Seven initiatives are responsible for promoting and coordinating the running of the 441 cases counted as Calabrian AFNs in the category of farm shops²³. Their principles and missions may overlap, but each initiative has its own specific focus:

- Two initiatives are working on raising attention and finding solutions to tackle different forms of exploitation occurring in the mainstream agrifood and global economic system. Both of these initiatives focus on ensuring fairer socio-economic conditions for small-medium sized, traditional farmers. One of them is also committed to the cause of fighting the exploitation of migrant workers in the Calabrian agri-food sector. Both those initiatives were set up by a combination of producers and civil society representatives.

- Three other initiatives are committed to promoting high quality production. They mainly promote organic production, but also support other forms of agriculture that are respectful of the environment and human and animal health. One of those three initiatives is also engaged with promoting principles of legality which range from fighting against the Mafia and its infiltration in

²³ Two of those initiatives have been mentioned in the above subsections on the agrifood and socio-economic contexts of Calabria as initiatives to promote traditional agriculture and boost socio-economic development in Calabria.

the socio-economic context to ensuring respect of labour rights. Civil society organisations and producers are behind those initiatives.

- Two more initiatives are focussed on promoting regional and traditional products and production forms. They work for the rediscovery of these products and production techniques that are very traditional and also at risk of extinction because of the lack of attention they receive in the mainstream channels, or because they fail to comply with some safety standards. One of those initiatives is particularly keen on working with farmers to develop technologies that allow them to maintain the traditional form of production whilst improving its viability according to the socio-economic and legislative requirements. This latter initiative is promoted by a civil society organisation, while the other initiative is promoted by a national trade union of small farmers.

The cases of farm shop identified as Calabrian AFNs are not equally distributed all over the seven mentioned initiatives; one of those initiatives work with the majority of the cases, for a total of 371 farm shops. Of the total cases, 17 are outside-farm shops, (sometimes owned and run by groups of farmers), while the rest are on-farm shops. Moreover, farmers running the farm shops may have extra direct selling channels such as online shops or participation in other forms of AFNs such as farmers' market, GAS, and GODO. They may also practice those extra forms of direct selling independently from the initiatives their farm shops belong to.

All in all, the cases of Calabrian AFNs included in the category of farm shop share the following features:

- they involve regional, small-medium scale farmers producing traditional products;
- they are required to follow specific principles of conduct that concern the physical features of the products, the production techniques, and the ethical standards followed in the management of the business. Those principles may be ensured by mean of formal certifications from external certification bodies (e.g. organic certification, certification of products' origins, certifications on working conditions) as well as by means of certification standards set and inspected by the initiatives that work on promoting and coordinating the farm shops.

Summing up Calabrian AFNs

In summary, four forms of AFNs have been identified in Calabria for a total of 510 cases. Those cases were selected as examples of Calabrian AFNs since they are considered as such by policy makers, scientists, practitioners of the agricultural sector, and by civil society. Despite each of them having its own specificities, the following general features can be highlighted. AFNs in Calabria:

- Introduce new forms of food provisioning (e.g. GODO, GASs) as well as re-launch already existing forms of food provisioning on a new basis (e.g. farmers' market, farm shop). In both new and re-launched forms of food provisioning, producers and consumers are in direct contact with sometimes overlapping tasks. When direct contact is not in place, (e.g. GODO, online shops), products reach consumers with extensive information about the producers, provenance, production techniques, cultural value and ecological and social impact. Provincial and regional producers are preferred, but Italian producers are also chosen as a second best when local producers are not available.

- Introduce different, sometime overlapping, ideas about the features of producers and products. Some of the features concern the quality of products, their organoleptic features and production processes with attention to the impact on humans, animals and the environment. Some other

features concern the cultural value of the product and production techniques, which imply giving attention to traditional farmers and products. Finally, some features are connected with the symbolic aspects of products and their producers such as the respect of principles of legality and fairness in the management of the business as well as being aligned with some views held by the initiatives of AFNs, connected with matters of social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and general civic relevance. In any of those cases, Calabrian AFNs may either adopt formal certifications ensured by external certification bodies, or develop their own certification and participatory forms of control.

- May touch upon matters that are not strictly related to food provisioning. Some initiatives of AFNs within all four forms of identified Calabrian AFNs combine their attention to making specific forms of food provisioning work with the promotion of values and initiatives of civic relevance for the broader social, political, cultural and environmental contexts where those initiatives operate.
- May involve and be led by other actors besides food producers, namely consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations, policy makers and political institutions.

As mentioned in chapter 2 and recalled previously in this chapter, one of the interests of this research lies in advancing knowledge on AFNs by giving insights into AFNs that carry out both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance and that involve other actors besides producers, not least consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations. The literature on AFNs has indicated GASs as cases of AFNs that fulfil exactly these features (Renting et al., 2012). Choosing one or more Calabrian GASs as case studies can therefore contribute to fulfilling the interest of this research. Nonetheless, from the review of Calabrian AFNs it emerges that other cases of Calabrian AFN, besides GASs, display these features too. Hence, the selection of case studies for this research began from all Calabrian AFNs' initiatives which are led by consumers and consumers-led civil society organisations as well as other actors, and that promote actions of civic relevance alongside the organisation of food provisioning. The next section will present the process of selecting the case studies within the identified initiatives of Calabrian AFNs.

4.3 GAS M as a case study

This section will present the reasoning which was followed in order to select case studies within the identified initiatives of Calabrian AFNs. In particular, this research followed the reasoning of purposive-theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013)²⁴ for the case studies selection, whereby those units are selected that are more informative for both the theoretical and the empirical purposes of the research. In other words, when following a theoretical and purposive sampling method, the selected cases are not judged for their statistical representativeness in terms of whether they are representative of a broader population they were designed to represent. Instead, they are considered for their analytical representativeness in terms of how useful they are in informing us about certain empirical and theoretical issues explored in the research (de Vaus, 2001; Silverman, 2013). Several studies recommend adopting purposive-theoretical sampling when a research, which is qualitative in its approach and pursues empiric interests, is also theoretically informed (de Vaus, 2001; Punch, 2005; Yin, 2009), which is the case of this research.

Its empirical interest has already been recalled throughout this chapter and exists in gaining insights into the identities and roles of AFNs when they operate in contexts where traditional aspects are still predominant in their agrifood systems, when they act both on food provisioning and activities of

²⁴ Purposive sampling implies choosing units of analysis that illustrate features and processes that are of interest for the empiric purposes of research. When those purposes are theoretically defined, or influenced, theoretical sampling can be used as synonym for purposive sampling (Silverman, 2013).

civic relevance, and when consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations play a leading role together with producers and other actors. The theoretical interest of this research exists in verifying if and how exploring AFNs' internal dynamics can contribute to expanding existing knowledge on AFNs as well as to refining IR theory (Collins, 2004a), which is used as basis for the theoretical and methodological approach of the present study.

Starting from the mentioned empirical and theoretical interests and guided by the method of purposive-theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013), some features have been identified which Calabrian AFNs should have in order to be selected as case studies for this research. These features are listed below:

- 1) They are located in a context where traditional aspects still play an important role within its agrifood systems;
- 2) They are cases of AFNs where the activity of food provisioning is combined with activities of civic relevance and where actors such as consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations guide the initiative alongside other actors, not least producers;
- 3) Dynamics can be identified in the form of what IR theory (Collins, 2004a) calls 'situations of interactions' (Collins, 2004a) and that were interpreted as AFNs' activities in chapter 3 of this book, and in particular as the process of organisation and implementation of AFNs' activities and their repetition over time and space;
- 4) Sources of naturally occurring data are available that provide information on the identified dynamics, cross-sectionally and over time. Particularly, quantitative and qualitative data are available to ascertain feelings of attachment and common understanding generated in the studied dynamics. Starting from IR theory (Collins, 2004a), they have been identified in chapter 3 as being central to inferring the features of the dynamics studied in AFNs and their implications for AFNs identities.

A first map of Calabrian AFNs was completed in December 2011. This map already reported most of the AFNs listed in the final map (Table 4.1) and showed that there were some cases of Calabrian AFNs which complied with at least the first two of the above-mentioned criteria. From these cases, the process of case selection begins. It is described in the remainder of this subsection and summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Process of case study selection

	Steps of cases selection		
	September-December 2011	December 2011-June 2012 (pre-enquiry)	June 2012 (post-enquiry) onwards
Number of identified initiatives promoting AFNs	29	19	1
Showed features			
<i>Initiatives located in a context where traditional food provisioning is relevant.</i>	X	X	X
<i>Initiatives acting on food provisioning and civic activities and involving consumers and consumers-based organisations besides food producers.</i>	X	X	X
<i>Initiatives showing figurations of situations of interactions (i.e. activities and their organisation and implementation).</i>		X	X
<i>Initiatives showing sources of naturally occurring data to ascertain common understanding and feelings of attachment.</i>		?	X
Selection procedures	Desk and field research on AFNs/‘filiera corte’ in Calabria.	Studying documents on AFNs for: - Possible situations of interactions; - Possible sources of naturally occurring data; - Possible data returning common understanding and feelings of attachment.	Asking informed people about AFNs’: - History (milestones, key people, key places, key issues); - Present (key people, activities and their functioning, organisational tools, main issues).

The 29 initiatives which complied with the first two of the selection criteria, were screened through documentation available on the internet to verify their compliance with the remaining selection criteria. 15 initiatives organising GAS, three initiatives promoting farm shop, and one initiative organising GODO fulfilled also the third and, potentially, the fourth of the above listed selection criteria. With respect to the fourth criteria, there were some doubts as to the opportunity that those initiatives would offer to gather the necessary naturally occurring, qualitative and quantitative, data on their dynamics of organising and implementing activities. Three initiatives of GASs, one initiative of a GODO, and one initiative promoting farm shops replied positively to my request of having a meeting to enquiry data availability.

At the time of the enquiring, in June 2012, I had already done some work on the operationalisation of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) in the case of AFNs. Helped also by the insights I had obtained on the features and functioning of Calabrian AFNs while scanning documents for the selection of the units of analysis, I had a draft of:

- possible situations of interactions, (i.e. activities organisation and implementation), actually taking place in AFNs,
- possible sources of naturally occurring data that those AFNs may provide,
- possible aspects in which I could find elements reflecting feelings of attachment and common understanding and that I could use to ascertain them.

During the meetings with the representatives of the different initiatives I tried to verify the information derived from documentation about possible situations of interactions actually taking place and the presence of suitable sources of naturally occurring data. Starting from this goal, I drew the following discussion points as a guide for unstructured talks:

- introducing my research,
- asking for a history of the initiative, (i.e. milestones, key people, key places, key issues),
- asking for a presentation of the present state of the initiative (i.e. key people, activities and their functioning, organisational tools, main issues).

Investigating the present state of the initiative, namely their current activities and functioning, was crucial in order to verify the information on the situations of interactions which might possibly exist and in order to have an initial overview of those situations for each initiative. Investigating the organisational tools being used was crucial in order to identify the possible sources of naturally occurring data, gain a first idea about whether they could provide both qualitative and quantitative information on those situations of interactions, and whether they could provide information that was consistent over time and over situations and instrumental to ascertain common understanding and feelings of attachment. A contact summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was produced for each visited initiative, in which the results in relation to the history and the present of the initiatives were reported. Following the suggestions of some scholars, the contact summary sheets were meant to document the initial steps of the field research and enhance the reliability of the process of unit selection (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009)²⁵.

Only one GAS, hereafter called GAS M, proved to fulfil all the four criteria listed above. In particular, GAS M stood out as being the only case fulfilling the fourth criteria regarding the availability of certain types of data sources and corresponding data. GAS M was the only case able to provide consistent, temporally extended and detailed sources of naturally occurring data instrumental to ascertain common understanding and feelings of attachment (both in quantitative and qualitative terms). GAS M was therefore considered as an example of what is known as instrumental case, which scholars define as a unit of analysis that is particularly insightful for the empirical and theoretical interests behind a study (Stake, 1994).

Instrumental cases are presented as tools to enhance the external validity of case study based research since they guarantee the analytical representativeness of the study's results; they guarantee that results can be generalised to other studies generated by similar empirical and theoretical interests (Silverman, 2013). The fact that GAS M is a form of instrumental case enhances the external validity of this research since it guarantees that the results of this case can inform other IR theory-based studies on AFNs that operate in contexts where traditional aspects are predominant in their agrifood systems, that are guided by civic interests besides the interest in organising food provisioning, and that involve actors such as consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations, besides other.

In the coming two subsections, GAS M will be presented with a special focus on the four selection criteria.

²⁵ A database is available with the contact summary sheets and the preparatory documents I drafted to guide the field visit. Contact summary sheets and preparatory documents are not available for one of the enquiries I did with one GAS since it ended almost immediately, being very poor in terms of data sources.

4.3.1 GAS M: A Calabrian consumers-led AFN involved in both food provisioning and civic activities²⁶

GAS M acts in both urban and rural areas of one of the Calabrian towns. Its consumers, and the location where most GAS M activities are implemented, are in the town, while its producers of fresh and processed food products are all small, traditional farmers located in the rural surroundings of the town²⁷.

The roots of GAS M in Calabria are also reflected in its goals, since GAS M seeks to find ways to support socio-economic development in this region. It stemmed from a group of Calabrian initiatives working on the promotion of fair trade. Some of the people within the fair trade initiatives started thinking about ways to contribute to the Calabrian economy. Those people were civil society activists and critical consumers; none of them were producers. They decided to use the principles of fair trade to select Calabrian producers and to create a market in that region for them, as well as for fair trade producers from all around the world. Motivated by this idea, these people established GAS M in 2004.

In the first years of its existence, the founding members of GAS M worked on defining principles according to which local producers would be selected as well as on looking for suitable producers and interested consumers. Those people began with a box scheme for the weekly distribution of local and fresh food products. One of the GAS M founding members would coordinate the system by contacting consumers and producers on a weekly basis and telling them about the available products and bookings. The same person would coordinate the delivery on the agreed days and in the agreed places. In those years, the box delivery and collection was held in fair trade shops and in the headquarters of organisations for social promotion operating in the same town as GAS M. They hosted GAS M's activity of box delivery and collection (henceforth 'box exchange') because of the connections, or even overlap, between GAS M founding members and the promoters of the hosting initiatives.

2006 is one of the important milestones in GAS M history since it was the year when GAS M coordinated all the initiatives interacting with it until that moment to become a formal network. Besides producers, consumers, and GAS M's founding members, many other initiatives had interacted, more or less regularly, with GAS M and shared some of its principles and its vision. They all become part of the network, among them being some fair trade organisations, producers of artisan, non-food products and services, several organisations working on social promotion through art, and several organisations with a civic stand working on promoting social awareness of many different themes of civic relevance such as politics, society, culture, economy, environment. The location of most of these organisations was a squatted area with several buildings. In 2008, one of these organisations started hosting - in one of the building in the squatted area - GAS M to carry out its activities.

2009 and 2010 are two other milestone years in the history of GAS M for two reasons. GAS M formally connected with the Italian network of GAS (i.e. Rete G.A.S.)²⁸; moreover it defined,

²⁶ All the information reported about GAS M in this section 4.3.1 and in the following section 4.3.2 are sourced from: the official website, (that is not indicated here for reason of privacy), the contact summary sheet drafted after the first meeting with representatives of GAS M (available to be consulted), documentation collected throughout the study of GAS M.

²⁷ Producers from other Calabrian towns can be involved as well as producers from the rest of Italy. The latter are used as second choices, when products are not available within the borders of the town where GAS M is located. In any case, the orders for those producers are not as frequent as the orders for the producers working within the borders of the town where GAS M works.

²⁸ Recalling from chapter 2 of this book, GASs in Italy are connected through an online platform and through periodic meetings. The platform and the meetings are both used to share information and to define shared visions according to which shared or individual activities are implemented (<http://www.retegas.org>).

together with the initiatives that were part of the network constituted in 2006, a charter of principles that all the initiatives had to sign and respect. The charter was aimed at promoting the principles of fairness and solidarity as the basis for the organisation of the network, and to spread them so that they could inform broader socio-cultural, political and economic systems, starting from the regional level. By subscribing to the charter, the members of the network committed themselves to conforming their lifestyles and the conducting of their business and organisations to principles such as reciprocity and cooperation, trust, social and environmental justice, responsibility and participation in developing the activities of the network, in general, of its individual members as well as in valorising the territory where they act and its resources and in spreading the principles inspiring the charter in the broader socio-economic, cultural and political context where they live and operate.

As part and promoter of the network, GAS M and its members must contribute to implementing the goals and principles of the charter. Favouring the exchange of products which are environmentally friendly, respectful of socio-cultural traditions and preferably produced by local and small farms, on the basis of fair economic conditions both for producers and consumers, is just one way GAS M has been putting the charter into practice. In a document in which GAS M presents its activities to local institutions, the following activities are mentioned: book presentations, seminars, activities with children, and other activities to raise awareness of themes such as critical consumption, food sovereignty, nutrition and health, sustainable development; supporting and building up completely regional and sustainable food chains; initiatives of solidarity in support of individuals, populations and territories in need; lobbying of both local and national institutions on socio-economic issues, and the management of public and common goods.

In summary, GAS M fulfils the first criterion proposed for the selection of the unit of analysis. It is a Calabrian based initiative, and hence an AFN operating in a context where traditional aspects are still important in the agrifood system. GAS M also fulfils the second criterion to select a unit of analysis for this study, because it is founded and run by consumers and consumer-led civil society organisations. Moreover, it is an initiative with a strong civic commitment. It shows in the guiding principles as well as in the activities GAS M promotes beyond the organisation of food provisioning and that include actions to influence, with the principles it supports, the broader social, economic, cultural and political systems where GAS M operates.

4.3.2 GAS M's tools and functioning: figurations of situations of interactions and sources of naturally occurring data

Over the years, GAS M has used several Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools. There is a GAS M website, a Facebook page, a Google Doc account, an email account, a system of mailing lists, and finally a forum. In this subsection, those tools and their use in GAS M daily dynamics of activities organisation and implementation will be described. The goal is to show their suitability as sources of naturally occurring, qualitative and quantitative, longitudinal and cross-sectional data on the GAS M dynamics, necessary to fulfil the third and fourth selection criteria. In addition, the description is important in order to gain a general understanding of GAS M's functioning and of its network, which is useful for the easy comprehension of the coming empirical chapters.

The website has been used since the beginning as a showcase for GAS M. GAS M organisers upload the following onto the website: information about the GAS such as its history; both textual and figurative descriptions of the GAS's activities; the documents, such as the charter, that are relevant in order to understand the driving principles of the GAS; a description of the network of initiatives connected to GAS M; banners and flash news on issues, facts and initiatives related to

politics, society, economy, environment and other topics of civic relevance which are of interest to GAS M.

Similar contents are circulated via GAS M's Facebook page. However, the Facebook page has been introduced more recently, in 2010, and only in the past year (i.e. 2013-2014) contents have been uploaded with any regularity. Moreover, the Facebook page is an interactive platform which allows people to react to the uploaded contents. On Facebook, GAS M organisers might upload advertisements about the initiatives they organise, or might share documents on facts, issues and initiatives of civic relevance, and people who have access to the page as GAS M's 'friends' can react to the posted information. Furthermore, those people can then share contents from the GAS M Facebook page with their own initiatives and contacts.

The GAS M email account is accessed and managed by the GAS M organisers and has several functions. First, it is the formal email address of GAS M; it is given as the contact address, and is generally contacted by potentially new producers and consumers who want to get in touch with GAS M. Secondly, it is used by the GAS M organisers for official communications. Informing media, institutions, members of the GAS network, and subscribers of its mailing lists about the GAS initiatives are among the official communications. Other examples of official communications are contacting consumers to open a call for orders as well as contacting producers to ask for information and communicate with them about the order and its delivery. A final example of official communication is the exchange of emails with other initiatives to develop and coordinate shared activities, or simply to stay in touch. A third function of the GAS M email account is to receive all the bookings of products and registrations to participate in GAS M initiatives.

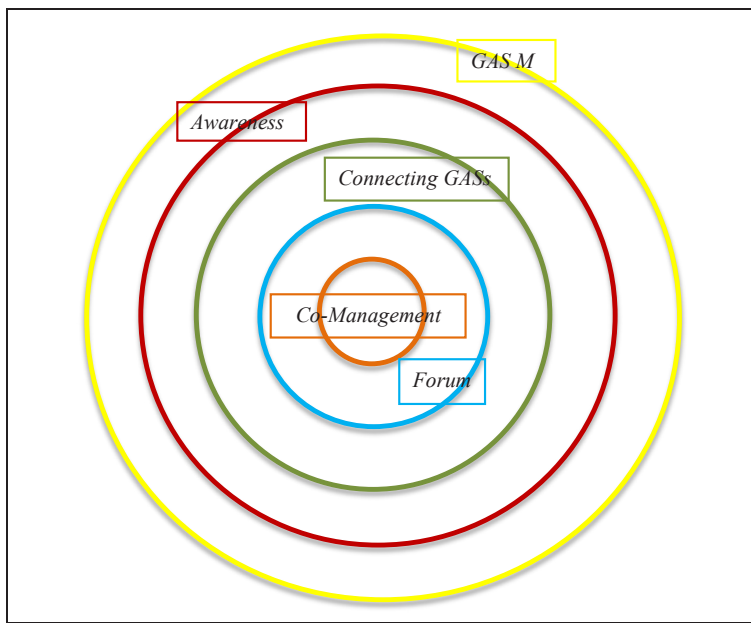
The latter mentioned function of the GAS M account has recently been transferred to a Google Doc account. Indeed, the purpose of this account is to keep track of all the records concerning GAS M activities. Besides the bookings of products and the list of participants in some of the GAS M activities, information is stored about some of the producers GAS M has been cooperating with. There are yearly GAS budgets with revenues from, and expenditures for, the implementation of GAS M activities, documentation on the flow of bookings, and on producers' and consumers' associations with GAS M over time. In the Google Doc account there are also traces of the several price and booking systems used to manage the box scheme, as well as of several documents used to plan the organisation of GAS M activities. The Google Doc account is accessed and updated by GAS M organisers only.

Finally there are the mailing lists system and the forum, which are presented together since their functioning is connected. There are four mailing lists which GAS M organisers administrate. *Awareness* is the mailing list used to coordinate the fair trade network from which GAS M originated. GAS M has taken over the administration of this list, which is aimed at sharing critical information on politics, society, culture, economy, environment, and other issues, events, topics and facts of civic relevance. It is also the list through which the initiatives that are part of the GAS M network, or somehow connected to GAS M and its network, inform each other about their activities. There are 280 people registered on the *Awareness* list. *List GAS M* is another mailing list with 426 subscribers; it was started as a mailing list at the moment when GAS M was established. It was, and it is still, aimed at circulating information on the activities of GAS M. Nowadays, this list is primarily used to open calls for booking of products and to announce their delivery with the organisational details; the list is also about announcing and giving details about other GAS M activities such as meetings, visits to producers, social occasions, and so on; moreover, it is also used for reporting on activities that have taken place. Until October 2011, organisational issues concerning GAS M activities were also discussed on the *List GAS M*; however, from that date onwards another list, *Co-management*, was started up for this purpose. Very few people compared

to the total subscribers of *List GAS M* used to engage in organisational conversations; consequently GAS M's organisers decided to open a list where only those who wanted to actively participate in the organisation would subscribe. 19 people are registered in this list and the main email exchanges in *Co-management* are about organising and reporting about activities and discussing new and old producers, as well as GAS M principles and visions and all the possible issues emerging in the daily life of GAS M. When discussions become very long, they are moved to the *Forum*, as this is thought to be more suitable for going into depth on the discussed topic. In the *Forum*, 62 people are registered²⁹. Finally, there is list *Connecting GASs*, which is aimed at connecting GAS M with other GASs existing in the nearby towns. This list is used to coordinate shared orders and other kinds of activities, as well as to inform each other about activities and practices and exchange information about producers. 185 people are registered in this list³⁰.

Each person can register to as many lists as they wish. Hence, the total number of people involved in GAS M cannot be derived by adding up the members of each list. Nonetheless, Figure 4.2 shows a plausible picture of how GAS M looks in terms of the mailing lists system and its subscribers. Each circle represents a mailing list, and its diameter depends on the number of the subscribers to the mailing list; the higher this number, the larger the diameter.

Figure 4.2 Structure of GAS M per mailing lists and their subscribers



(Own elaboration)

In summary, the structure of GAS M, as emerging from its mailing lists system, shows a core of a few people who are engaged with GAS M as a whole; they take care of the organisation as well as of addressing the issues of principles and vision, and moreover, these people also join all the other

²⁹ The number of people subscribing to the Forum is higher than the number of people registered in Co-management list, despite the connection between this list and the Forum, because some people from other GASs, namely some of those registered in the Connecting GASs list also register in the Forum without subscribing to Co-management list.

³⁰ The names of the lists are invented. The numbers of people registered are reported for the end of February 2013, when the data collection was concluded. Although those numbers have been changing over the period of study and they still are doing so, with new subscriptions or cancellations, the overall rank of the lists in relation to subscriptions nonetheless stays unchanged.

existing mailing list and engage with their foci and purposes. Beyond this, two broader groups of people are interested in narrower topics. One is interested in joining the different GAS M activities, particularly food provisioning related activities, once they have been organised, while civic interests and willingness to engage with the discussions and initiatives of civic relevance motivate the other. In the middle between the two broad groups and the small Co-management group there are those people who coordinate the integration among different GASs. People in the three latter mentioned groups may also subscribe to other mailing list. Hence the distinction of these groups is not rigid.

Box 4.1 Consumers and producers in GAS M

GAS M has introduced a fee to be paid by consumers and producers every six months. Money raised with the fee is used to cover the costs of organising and implementing the weekly box scheme and other GAS M activities.

Four groups can be distinguished in GAS M as regards the association fee and the mailing lists system: there is a first group of consumers paying the fee; a second group including all the potential consumers who are registered in GAS M mailing lists who may book products but do not pay the fee; the third group includes all the producers paying the fee; finally, the fourth group includes all the producers who do not pay the fee but who are involved in the food provisioning system run by GAS M.

During the period of study, from September 2011 to February 2013, an average of 43 consumers, (39, 57, 34 respectively per semester), paid the consumers' fee, while an average of 4 producers, (10, 3, 1 respectively per semester), paid the producers fee. Nonetheless, the numbers of consumers and producers fluctuate highly from order to order. Sometimes they can be more than the ones paying, sometimes less. It is not easy to trace the actual number of consumers who do not pay the fee, because these are not only the people registered in the mailing lists, but also other people who are in touch with GAS M through other means, (e.g. personal contacts), and who are solicited about the booking of products. Instead, the total number of producers involved in GAS M, at least during the period of study is available; they amount to 33. They are not all involved with the same intensity and frequency. The number includes those who have been involved in the orders at least once, also those mentioned in documents as GAS M producers even if they were never involved in the orders during the period of study.

All the described ICT tools are crucial for the unfolding of GAS M in everyday life; in particular, they are instrumental in GAS M activities taking place. GAS M's ICT tools are often means by which the stimulus for the organisation of GAS M activities is circulated and their organisation proceeds until it is announced the activities will be implemented. Furthermore, details on the implementation of these activities can be circulated and discussed using GAS M's ICT tools once the activities have taken place. This can be the case when the booking of products is discussed and organised, when the call for an order is made and, later on, when products are delivered at the agreed times and spaces. This is also the case with meetings and any other initiatives which are discussed, organised and announced by means of ICT tools, then implemented and, finally, reported about using GAS M's ICT tools.

As said elsewhere in this chapter, and detailed in chapter 3 of this book, the described dynamics of organising and implementing activities is considered as a figuration of the dynamics of what IR theory (Collins, 2004a) calls situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a). Hence, GAS M fulfils the third criterion proposed for the selection of case studies in this research. Namely, GAS M shows actual regular occasions when figurations of situations of interactions take place.

Moreover, GAS M fulfils the fourth criterion. It provides sources of naturally occurring data through which the dynamics of its activities, or figurations of situations of interactions, can be studied. The sources are its ICT tools. Emails, posts and comments on Facebook, posts on the forum, and other items circulating via GAS M's ICT tools are all documents produced in, and instrumental to, organising and implementing activities in GAS M. Hence, they can be considered as sources of naturally occurring data on the situations of interactions that take place in GAS M.

Furthermore, all those documents are archived over time and per activity, which makes it possible to explore figurations of situations of interactions in GAS M both longitudinally and cross-sectionally. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative information can be gathered from the mentioned sources of naturally occurring data. Qualitative information is generated from reflecting on the latent contents reported in the documents, while quantitative information can be gathered from their factual contents, (e.g. number of bookings, number of people attending a meeting). This data can be used to elaborate upon and ascertain which common understanding and feelings of attachment are generated in the situations of interactions which occur in GAS M³¹. Further information can be gathered on the implementation stage of GAS M activities, or figurations of situations of interactions, by attending and observing the implementation of activities.

In summary, this subsection has provided further information on GAS M, namely on its functioning. In so doing, the subsection has highlighted how GAS M fulfils the third and the fourth criteria set for the selection of the case study. The coming subsections explain how the first step of data collection and analysis was implemented in order to obtain, from all of the data sources available for GAS M, the data that would match both the empirical and the theoretical interests of this research.

4.4 A first step in data collection and analysis

This research follows the outlines of Foster (1996) and others (Bailey, 2007; J. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & L. K. Lofland, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994) who argue that qualitative research should interlink data collection and analysis. According to these scholars, the whole process of data collection and analysis can be schematised in two broad steps. The first step implies a preliminary analysis that allows the researcher to become familiar with the data as it gradually emerges during the collection process. It consists of organising data through the definition of relevant themes and features. One main output of this phase is to provide a first exploration and description of the studied case. Besides, it gives indications for the collection of additional data or a re-adjustment of the collection process as well as information that can be explained within overarching theories (Bailey, 2007; Foster, 1996; J. Lofland et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This section, hence, presents the results of this early stage of research, in which document research and some observations grant insight in what is going on in GAS M and which data are available for further research. Moreover, the available information is organised so that it is instrumental for a second step of data analysis that focusses on ascertaining feelings of attachment and common understanding in order to elaborate on the identity of GAS M theoretically. The two core ideas (i.e. feelings of attachment and common understanding) guide the research since its early stage. They are the red line of the whole process of data collection and analysis that progressively clarifies them and enhances their explanatory power.

Scholars recommend that researchers properly document the whole process of data collection and analysis and are clear about the guiding criteria in order to assure the reliability and validity of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). The next two subsections will therefore describe the reasoning behind the first step of data collection and analysis as implemented in this research through documentation and observation. They describe the selection of data sources and the definition of analytical schemes with the variables and categories according to which the data has been organised and analysed.

³¹ More specific information on the type of qualitative and quantitative data collected by document research follows below in this chapter as well as in chapter 5 and 6.

4.4.1 Documentation

The first step of data collection and analysis for documentation took place from July 2012 to October 2013. Documentation of the organisation and implementation of activities provided ‘natural’ data on the situations of interactions occurring in GAS M. ‘Natural’ here indicates that the documents were not produced for the purpose of research but as a part of the activities organisation and implementation. Selecting just those document sources that give information on the activities taking place in GAS M served as the first selection criterion when choosing among all the available sources of documents. The sources of documents previously identified are the following: website, Facebook page, mailing lists archive, forum, GAS M email and Google Doc account. All these listed sources, except for the GAS M website, were initially selected since they contain documents that are produced while GAS M activities take place or report about these activities. In particular, emails, forum and Facebook posts are important means through which activities are organised; they, hence, serve as containers of natural data on the organisational stage of GAS M activities. They also report on activities that have already taken place, therefore they are also producing natural sources of information on the implementation stage of GAS M activities. Documents stored on the Google Doc account are sources of natural data on the implementation stage of GAS M activities too because they contain records of it.

I asked the member of GAS M with whom I was in touch, to grant me access to the documents stored in mailing list archives, forum, Facebook page, GAS M email and Google Doc account. To gain access to the past and current posts on Facebook and to the forum, it was sufficient to register to these. The mailing list system is based on an open source format, so that everyone can access the contents of the emails stored in it without the need of authorisation. The access to other information, namely the names and numbers of people registered in the mailing lists system, required a password. The same held for the GAS M email and Google Doc account. GAS M organisers, namely those registered in the Co-management mailing list, accorded my access to restricted access tools and related information³².

After a first scan of the document I selected which document sources to use in the further research. A first decision was to exclude Facebook as the Facebook page contains very different information compared to other sources and does not report on all activities taking place in GAS M. Secondly, to fulfil the need for completeness and consistency, documents stored in all the considered GAS M ICT tools were analysed only from September 2011 onwards as only then all currently existing tools were in place. Third, I collected documentation on activities until February 2013 in order to allow for sufficient time for data analysis³³. Fourth, there are some gaps in the analysed emails due to the deletion of emails from GAS M archives that could not be recovered. Those gaps and the complete set of used document sources are presented in Table 4.3.

³² GAS M is not a formal association and the group registered in the Co-management list cannot be considered a formal representatives of all participants in GAS M sharing information on GAS M ICT tools. A formal consent from each of the more than 400 people registered in the different GAS M mailing lists was difficult to obtain and also unnecessary because the data to be used would not be re-connected to any of them. Nonetheless, I considered it ethical to present my work and its implications in terms of use of personal information to the people registered in the GAS M mailing lists. I sent an email to all mailing lists to inform people about what I was going to do and to ask them if they have any objections. I received only a few reactions, all of them supporting my work and its implications. I decided to go ahead with my work, especially on the basis of the fact that the data I would present could not be traced back to identifiable people. I sent other emails at the different stages of the analysis to report on the sort of information I had gathered and to explain how I was going to use it. In those emails I asked people to express their opinions and possible objections to the use of data.

³³ The decision about when to terminate the collection of documents has been taken in the course of the work. Necessity of representativeness of the chosen sample has been considered along with time constraints due to the research submission deadline.

Table 4.3 Type of document source, period of documents collection, gaps in the available documents

Type of source	Period of documents collection	Gaps
<i>Mailing lists</i>	September 2011-February 2013	List GAS M and Connecting GASs list: from October to December 2011.
<i>Forum</i>	September 2011-February 2013	Unnoticed.
<i>Email account</i>	September 2011-February 2013	- Inbox messages: from September to December 2011 - Sent messages: from September 2011 to 20 th January 2012 - Deleted messages: from September 2011 to 24 th February 2012.
<i>Google doc account</i>	September 2011-February 2013	Unnoticed.

The decision about excluding some ICT tools as sources of documents may reduce the representativeness of the selected documents, but it is in line with the purposive and theoretical sampling process (Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2009) adopted by this research. The selected sources and documents give information about GAS M activities. They are also the most suitable sources of data for longitudinal and cross-sectional investigations of these activities.

The time boundaries that have limited the duration of documents collection is another decision that may reduce the statistical representativeness of the selected documents without hampering their analytical representativeness, which is what really matters when reasoning in terms of purposive and theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2009). Three full GAS M seasons are covered by the collected documents. GAS M divides its yearly activities into a winter season, from the beginning of September to the end of February, and a summer season, from the beginning of March to the end of August. I have selected documents dating back to two winter seasons and one summer season. Thus, the chosen set of documents allows for a longitudinal study of GAS M activities both within and between seasons, and gives the opportunity to compare two repetitions of the same season, which is useful in order to refine inferred tendencies of activities taking place within that season. Combining both longitudinal and cross-sectional reiteration of documents collection and analysis increases the reliability of the study according to Miles and Huberman (1994) and Yin (2009).

The representativeness of the selected documents is one of the criteria Scott (1990) introduces to judge the quality of documents used in research. Besides the representativeness, three more criteria need to be checked. One criterion concerns the authenticity of a document, its originality which may be invalidated by falsification. Another criterion concerns the credibility of documents, their accuracy which can be impeded by errors and distortions arising, for instance, when documents have been produced a long time ago or if a original document has gone through several reinterpretations. Finally, a third criterion concerns the interpretation of the documents' contents, the quality of which may be assured when documents are analysed in both their factual and latent contents (Scott, 1990). The remaining of this section discusses to which extent and how the documents sources and the documents used in this research fulfil these criteria.

The types of sources of documents chosen in this research are themselves a guarantee for the authenticity and credibility of the analysed documents. Emails, forum posts and documents attached to them contain traces of who has produced them and when, since the names and dates are indicated by the ICT tools used. The credibility of emails, forum posts and documents attached to them is boosted by the fact that they are accessed and studied in the exact same form as they were produced and, later on, circulated in the forum, mailing lists and GAS M email account. This guarantees that they have not gone through reinterpretations and represent what those who produced them meant to say. Moreover, they are produced as soon as the event they refer to takes place, being people's

immediate reactions to events concerning the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities. The almost contemporaneous nature of documents' production with the event they refer to is another guarantee of the credibility of the used documents.

Some concerns may arise as to the credibility of the documents from the Google Doc account. Their authenticity is guaranteed by the fact that the system indicates who has produced the file, and when, as well as all the updates the documents undergo; on the other hand, the credibility may be reduced by the fact that they can undergo several modifications. Those modifications are made each time the situation the documents refer to changes, (e.g. update of booking, update of participants to a situation). Taken alone, those documents cannot be trusted as being faithful to what actually happens in the activity they refer to because they may not have been updated since the last occurring change. Nonetheless, the information they contain can be triangulated with information reported in other documents on the same activity. The triangulation with other documents supports the credibility of the Google Doc archived documents.

Besides all that has been said until now, the overall credibility of the selected documents improves from July 2012 until the end of the document collection phase, when the documents were collected and analysed contemporaneously to the activities they referred to. It was therefore possible to ask the organisers of GAS M for amendments and confirmations where there was incongruity within the documents and gaps that risked generating sources of misinformation.

All in all, the type of documentation used in this research and the period of document collection warrants a good quality sample of selected documents with respect to their representativeness, authenticity, and credibility. Furthermore, those documents comply with some criteria listed by Miles and Huberman (1994) as indications of data's ability to capture the reality under investigation, as the chosen documents are sources of primary data collected and studied first-hand; they are produced in natural settings and for other purposes than research, which limits researcher effects on their contents. Moreover, the selected documents and their sources offer opportunities for triangulation. In particular, they allow the following: combining several sources of data covering the same GAS M activities; checking for the consistency of what people say about the same activities overtime; and comparing the perspectives of many different people that contribute to the documents concerning the same activities. Data triangulation, in the three just mentioned forms, enhances the accuracy of the information deriving from the selected documents (Patton, 2002). Moreover, getting feedback from informants on the correctness of the derived information boosts their accuracy (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After selecting the documents and defining the time frame for documents collection, I did a first screening of the documents referring to the first three months of the research period. An interim case summary³⁴ (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was produced to give an overview of which sort of data the documents produce. A plan was made on how to approach the first step of data collection and analysis, as well as on how to organise the emerging data. The plan included the following points:

- The collection, organisation and analysis of documents serves to disclose the features of GAS M activities over time and to compare the different activities;
- Common understanding and feelings of attachment guide the exploration of GAS M activities. Their interpretation is based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) nonetheless it is kept open to inputs emerging from the collected data. Common understanding is interpreted as the focus of each activity that is what participants concentrate their attention on while organising and

³⁴ The interim case summary is available for consultation.

implementing activities. Feelings of attachment is understood as the intensity of each activity reflected in its ability to mobilise people and in its capacity to fulfil and repeat;

- All the data should be analysed and organised according to if and how they demonstrate feelings of attachment and common understanding.

With this in mind, the first step of collection and analysis of documents proceeded as follows.

Documents were archived in a database categorising activities and, within each activity, years, months and weeks. Moreover, each document's name indicates the day of its release. An inductive approach was used to allow the introduction of new activities every time they emerged. Some activities are broken down into sub-activities, for instance those generically referred to by GAS M as product booking can be divided into many different products. In those cases, sub-folders have been created to archive the documents corresponding to each specific activity³⁵.

With respect to feelings of attachment, documents were analysed, activity by activity and sub-activity by sub-activity, with attention given to their factual contents. From those contents, information on the intensity of each activity was translated into variables. For each of the identified activity and sub-activity, a matrix was constructed containing data for each variable of intensity over time. Examples of the variables reported in the matrices are: number of people involved in the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities; number and variety of mailing lists used for the organisation of the activity; number and variety of groups involved in the organisation and implementation of the activities, (e.g. producers, consumers); in the cases of product bookings, the number of bookings, their monetary value, and the variety and amount of booked products was considered. Consistency of variables over time and activities was guaranteed as the basis for future comparisons; nonetheless, variables typical of one or a few activities were also included in the matrices, in order to avoid the exclusion of possibly relevant information³⁶.

In ascertaining common understanding, the analysis of the collected documents moved from their factual to their latent contents. An accounting scheme (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was developed to point out general topics that recur in the documents and that can be considered as indications of the focus of attention during the described activities. 'Activities' was the first category to be used. The category 'activities' was filled with specific codes corresponding to the different activities discussed in the archived documents. A matrix was constructed in which the name of each document was registered in relation to the activity it referred to and indicating the date when it was released. During the analysis, some themes emerged as cutting across different activities, from which a new category has been introduced. This was the category 'themes', with different codes for different themes discussed in the documents. Another matrix listed the names of the documents and the date of release in relation to themes the documents discuss³⁷.

All in all, the first analysis of documents entailed to analyse the same sources for two different purposes. On the one hand, the factual content of documents has been analysed producing quantitative data; on the other hand, the latent content of the same documents has been analysed producing qualitative data. As discussed above, analysing both the factual and latent content of documents improves the quality of the interpretation of documents (Scott, 1990). Moreover, qualitative and quantitative data have been used to explore the features of the same dynamics,

³⁵ The complete database with row documents, matrices reporting data selected from the documents, and analytical and methodological documents explaining the decisions made in terms of data analysis are available to be consulted.

³⁶ A complete list of variables per activity and sub-activity is reported in Appendix 1 together with the explanation of each variable.

³⁷ Those categories and the full list of corresponding codes are available in Appendix 1. Methodological and analytical files discussing the reasoning behind their construction are available for consultation.

namely the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities. This represents a form of triangulation of information that allows for the cross-checking the information obtained (Patton, 2002).

Table 4.4 summarises this first step of documents selection, collection, analysis and organisation.

Table 4.4 Phases of the first step of document collection and analysis

Phases of the first step of document collection and analysis				
	<i>Document sources: first selection (July 2012)</i>	<i>Document sources: second selection (August 2012)</i>	<i>Documents screening (Until October 2012)</i>	<i>First analysis and organisation (Until October 2013)</i>
Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtaining documents that are produced while activities take place and that are instrumental for these activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtaining documents with consistent information across all GAS M activities and over the whole period of research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which sort of data the documents produce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document collection and analysis focus on the exploration of GAS M activities over time. - Features of activities derive from ascertaining feelings of attachment and common understanding. - Data should be analysed and organised in order to provide information on feelings of attachment and common understanding.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected document sources are: Facebook page, mailing lists archive, forum, GAS M email account, Google Doc account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected document sources are: mailing lists archive, forum, GAS M email account, Google Doc account. - Selected document are: all the documents stored in the listed sources from September 2011 to February 2013. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interim case summary. - Plan for document organisation, analysis, and data storing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data base with documents stored per activity and sub-activity and per year, month, week, day. - Matrices per activity and sub-activity with variables to ascertain feelings of attachment over time. - Two accounting schemes to ascertain possible common understanding over all the activities and the research period.

The selection and analysis of documents were informed by both the theoretical and empirical interests of this research. The method chosen also accord with the recommendations how to avoid overly rigid analytical interpretations in the early stages of analysis so as to avoid excluding potentially relevant information or limiting their informative power (Bailey, 2007; J. Lofland et al, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Indeed, the theoretical and empirical interests were used to set general guidelines for the plan of document collection and analysis but the categories and variables

according to which data was inferred from the documents and organised are the outcomes of an inductive process. They were defined as emerging from the documents with the aim of being as detailed and faithful to what actually happens in the studied reality as possible. According to some scholars, the combination of theoretical guidelines with inductively derived variables and categories, operationalising those guidelines, has a positive impact on the clarity of the variables and categories used (Bailey, 2007; J. Lofland et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Moreover, in line with what has been suggested by several scholars as a means to support the reliability of the research (J. Lofland et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009), the whole first step of document collection and analysis is documented. Several analytical and methodological files were produced and stored in a database to keep track of the analytical and methodological decisions.

4.4.2 Observation

Observation was used in this research as a method of data collection in order to check and refine the understanding resulting from documentation. Observation consisted of collecting field notes and analysing them to infer information that complemented the information derived from the analysis of documents. Moreover, the factual observation was preceded by two months of preparatory work during which the observation strategy was defined (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Phases of the first step of data collection and analysis in observation

Phases of the first step of data collection and analysis in observation		
	<i>Observation strategy definition (October-November 2012)</i>	<i>Observation implementation (December 2012-January 2013)</i>
Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complement information emerging from documents. - Concentrate on contents of conversations during implementation of GAS M activities. - Remain as close as possible to what happens during the implementation of GAS M activities whilst exerting the least possible influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at the latent contents of verbatim reported conversations in field notes to reveal potential foci of attention as indications of common understanding.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defined strategy of observation: Semi-structured in the foci of attention selection, instances of implementation and their conversations are chosen as foci. The number and variety of instances of implementation to be observed will be defined on the spot, semi-structured field note scheme is defined. Consistent with documents' contents and open to new contents and inputs, role as participant-observer is chosen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretical notes are produced on the focus of attention emerging from the notes. - Methodological notes are produced to update the observation strategy if needed.

After analysing documentations of GAS M activities for one year, it was clear that the documents provided a full picture of the organisation of GAS M activities. Nonetheless, the documents could not fully describe the features of the implementation of GAS M activities. The documents produced quantitative data regarding the intensity of the implementation from which feelings of attachment could be ascertained. However, documents failed to deliver qualitative data on the foci of attention of these activities from which common understanding could be ascertained. It was then decided to observe the implementation of GAS M activities in order to understand and record which topics

participants discussed while implementing GAS M activities. This offered again an opportunity for triangulation of data sources, which is recognised as enhancing the construct validity of studies (Berg, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009).

Observing conversations during the implementation of GAS M activities was theoretically and purposively motivated. On one hand, it is a means to fulfil the interest of this research in disclosing the features of GAS M activities both with respect to the generated feelings of attachment and with respect to their foci of attention, or common understanding. On the other hand, it is in line with the theoretical and methodological guidelines derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) for this study which require information on activities' features to be sourced from naturally occurring data, produced while activities take place.

Purposive and theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013) has also guided the decision when to observe. The guiding idea was to observe as many instances of implementation as possible, for as long as possible, and for as wide a variety of GAS M activities as possible – again in line with IR theory (Collins, 2004a) which recommends to study dynamics of interest both longitudinally and comparatively (Collins, 1983). After analysing documents covering one year of activities, a general idea of the variety of GAS M activities had been gained. It had become clear that the GAS M winter season, (especially from December onward), is the most active period in terms of number and variety of activities. It was, hence, decided to concentrate observation in the winter season³⁸.

In particular it was decided to start the observation in December 2012³⁹ when documents concerning more than one year of GAS M activities had been collected and analysed and the aspects to be refined through observation had been identified. The conclusion of the period of observation was set for the end of January 2013 because of the time limits of the present research. As a result it was impossible to fully follow the principle of theoretical saturation (K. M. DeWalt & B. R. DeWalt, 2011; Foster, 1996, 2006), which would have implied continuing observation until at least one instance of implementation per activity had been observed. Nonetheless, all the instances of implementation taking place during the period of observation were observed. I followed GAS M email conversations and stayed in touch with one of the GAS M organisers in order to be informed about what was going on and which activities were to be implemented. In this way I had the opportunity to observe last minute implementations, and implementation connected to activities that had not yet emerged from the documents analysis, or that had been implemented for the first time during the observation period.

Table 4.6 summarises all the observation sessions carried out per activity, for a total of 17 sessions. These sessions cover instances of implementation corresponding to seven different activities. At the time of the observations the final classification of GAS M activities was not yet clear; nonetheless, when the second step of data analysis was completed together with the definitive classification of GAS M activities, it turned out that the observations covered five out of seven types of activities identified and studied in this research⁴⁰.

³⁸ Winter season is particularly active both in terms of civic activities and of activities connected with food provisioning. Summer season is the period when less activities are implemented, both civic and material, because several participants in GAS M are not in town since they spend their summer holidays elsewhere. Even the activity of weekly exchange of products is interrupted in summer time, even though the summer months are the busiest months in agricultural production and harvesting.

³⁹ Preparation for observation started already in October 2012.

⁴⁰ They will be presented in detail in chapter 5 for two reasons. First, the final list of the types of GAS M activities is the output of the second step of data analysis, which is the object of discussion in chapters 5 and 6. Second, their presentation is more appropriate in chapter 5 since it is instrumental to the presentation of the empirical results reported in that chapter.

Table 4.6 Observation sessions per activity. December 2012 - January 2013

Activities	December 2012	January 2013
Weekly exchanges of products.	22 Dec_OBS 0001 29 Dec_OBS 0002	05 Jan_OBS 0003 12 Jan_OBS 0004 26 Jan_OBS 0002
Exchange of products within initiatives of solidarity in support of farmers.	22 Dec_OBS 0001 29 Dec_OBS 0002	05 Jan_OBS 0003 26 Jan_OBS 0005
Day of work to renovate the GAS M location.		09 Jan_OBS 0002
Day long market and advertisement of GAS M.		26 Jan_OBS 0002
Initiative of solidarity for people hit by earthquake.		19_20_Jan_OBS 0001
GAS M meetings.	29 Dec_OBS 0001	09 Jan_OBS 0002 26 Jan_OBS 0003
Social meals among members of GAS M.	29 Dec_OBS 0001	26 Jan_OBS 0003

All in all, and despite the selectivity imposed by time constraints, the representativeness of the observation sessions is adequate for the theoretical and empirical purposes it was meant to address, for the following reasons:

- Firstly, all the instances of implementation taking place during the period of observation were observed. Moreover, within each instance of implementation, equal attention was given to all the conversations taking place. No pre-selection was made and this offered the opportunity to consider the opinions of very different people - those who join GAS M activities very sporadically, and those who did not interact via ICT tools even though they attended GAS M activities regularly - whose opinions could not be traced by means of documentation⁴¹. In other words, the three factors that were identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) as impeding the representativeness of a research and of its findings have been addressed with the decision to observe every instance of implementation and every conversation within each instance of implementation taking place during the period of observation. In particular, this decision allowed to avoid: researcher's discontinued presence at the site; the over-reliance on opinions of easily accessible people or on a small variety of people; and the reliance on sensational or a-priori selected events (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

- Secondly, observation concerned instances of implementation for more than half of the total types of activities identified later on by this research. Moreover, the implementation of four out of seven activities was observed more than one time which allows for comparison over time within the same activity. Guarantying a certain variety of observed instances and repeating observations over time are the two strategies scholars suggest in order to improve the reliability of the results of observation (P. A. Adler and P. Adler, 1994; Foster, 1996).

⁴¹ For instance people who are less engaged in GAS M may join activities while avoiding being involved in the organisational phase that takes place via ICT tools. There are also categories of people who may be excluded from the virtual phase of GAS M activities because their socio-cultural or economic conditions do not allow them the use of ICT tools.

To complete the presentation about the first phase of data collection and analysis through observation I turn now to the way field notes were taken and analysed and to my role as observer. Note-taking and analysis as well as the researcher's role have been approached in a semi-structured way, in line with the way in which the foci of observation and period of observation were defined. Some guidelines are defined which derive from theoretical and empirical interests of this research. At the same time, there is openness towards adapting the strategy for observation according to what happens in the field so as to capture everything, including elements that have not been thought about in advance, and that once emerging, result to be relevant.

As the contents of what was discussed during the implementation of GAS M activities was not covered in the documents, the primary aim of field notes was to report on those conversations taking place during the implementation of activities. The following rules for field notes taking were defined in order to ensure that the notes would be consistent with the information derived from the documents:

- Description of the activity that was observed during implementation;
- Description of the location;
- Start and end time of the implementation;
- Verbatim of conversations while indicating when and for how long the conversation took place, the people involved, their position in GAS M, their function in the observed activity, with notes on intonations and gestures;
- Periodic summing-up of what is going on during implementation indicating the time and the people present, their position in GAS M, and their function in the observed instance of implementation.

Field notes were collected in hand-written form in a notebook. Most of the time I was able to make extensive notes; when this was not possible I wrote down some points to be elaborated as soon as possible. At the end of each observation session, field notes were transcribed into an electronic format. Furthermore, methodological and theoretical notes were taken. Methodological notes were used to explain some relevant methodological decisions which were taken during the observation and that would guide the next observation session. Meanwhile, theoretical notes were derived from a first level analysis of the latent contents reported in the notes. This analysis aimed to disclose common understanding in the implementation of GAS M activities. To this end, and in line with what had already been done for the documents, the contents of the verbatim of conversations reported in the notes were analysed to find out which topics returned in conversations and, therefore, attracted attention⁴². Using an inductive approach, new categories and codes could be added to those identified from the analysis of documents, if new foci of attention emerged.

During observations, I chose to take on the role of participant-observer, as described by Gold (1958). Basically, I not only declared my identity as a researcher, but also acted in several roles that were necessary in order to implement the activities I was observing. The decision to uncover my identity was motivated primarily by ethical concerns. I used it as a way to inform people who were not yet aware that I intended to use their conversations as research material⁴³. The reason for my

⁴² The full set of notes per observation is available to be consulted together with the methodological and theoretical notes. Hand written notes are also available.

⁴³ Besides that, I contacted the Co-management list to ask subscribers' opinions about the opportunity to implement observation. Once the subscribers of this list agreed on my presence as observer, I sent an email to all the other GAS M lists to inform all the people who may have been interested. I received no reactions from them. Moreover, I sent other emails at the different stages of the analysis to show the sort of information I had gathered and explain how I was going to use it. In those emails I asked people to express their opinions and possible objections on the use of data. As for the case of documentation, it was not possible to reach all the people I could have traced in my notes to ask them for formal permission. There were too many of them, and moreover, several of the people I met during the observation were random participants and it was not easy to reach them again after the observation and

becoming a participant was twofold. Firstly, it eased my access to the field. Several times, members of the GAS M management group expressed their appreciation for my decision to support the implementation of GAS M activities⁴⁴. The second reason was that my presence in routine situations reduce the possibility to produce ‘unnatural’ research induced situations and dynamics. I was responsible for packing the boxes with products or for their distribution, for taking notes and writing reports on meetings, as well as for organising special events to advertise GAS M and show solidarity to people hit by a calamity⁴⁵. Taking on these roles worked as a tool to hide my note-taking; it was easy to disguise the note-taking for research purposes as note-taking to report on a meeting; note-taking for research purposes was also disguised as writing down information which was useful for distributing boxes. It was more difficult to hide notes taken in other moments; in those more rare cases, I used the strategy of leaving the field for a few minutes in order to write down my notes, and then returned⁴⁶.

According to some scholars, using a semi-structured approach to observation combined with the role of participant-observer is particularly suitable for studies that use observation to reach where the action is as much as possible and get data directly from what happens there (Foster, 2006) which was one of the purpose of using observation in this study. At the other hand, the semi-structured manner of note taking during participant observation may also impede the validity and reliability of the observation, because of the lack of clearly defined variables, to be observed, as well as the risk of reduced objectivity (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994). Some precautions were taken to address those threats. Noting down ad verbatim and producing methodological and analytical notes are both strategies to boost the validity of observation (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994; K. M. DeWalt & B. R. DeWalt, 2011; Foster, 2006;). Moreover, repeating the same sort of observation over time and on different occasions is a way of improving reliability (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994).

As a result, the data produced through observation comply with some criteria Miles and Huberman (1994) list as indications of data's ability to capture the reality of the situation under investigation. First, the field notes contain primary data collected and studied first hand. Second, these data report on conversations which occurred in natural settings. Third, observation notes are analysed in combination with data derived from other sources, (i.e. documents), representing a form of data triangulation. Fourth, taking note about several instances of activities implementation and considering all occurring conversations allows checking for the consistency of what people say about the same activities overtime and for comparing the perspectives of many different people. Fifth, validity is also promoted by the fact that observation took place at a time when the researcher and the people observed trusted one another and were familiar with each other, which reduces the effect of the researcher's presence. Finally, the number and variety of the observations are representative with respect to the theoretical and empirical interests of the research.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the context and the case study, as well as the first phase of data collection and analysis. Its aim was to explain the logic behind the context of study and case study

analysis were completed. However, considering that the type of data used and the way of reporting them did not connect the information with a specific individual, a formal consent was not considered to be necessary.

⁴⁴ They commented that I was the only researcher who gets her “hands dirty” and who gives them something rather than just taking material.

⁴⁵ This latter activity implied the unpopular task of manual dish washing after a meal for more than 100 people.

⁴⁶ As a result, my presence in GAS M became, to some extent, natural. People from the management group invited me to join events such as family meals that were not related to GAS M activities but rather to their private life, during which it was still possible to gather conversations about GAS M. Nonetheless, my presence as researcher emerged each time when someone who would see me for the first time, wondered who I was.

selection as well as the implementation of the first step of data collection and analysis through documentation and observation.

Empirical and theoretical interests motivated the selection of the context and case of study: extending empirical knowledge on the identities and roles of AFNs that operate in contexts with a traditional agrifood system, organising food provisioning as well as civic activities, and involving producers, consumers and civil society organisations. Its theoretical ambition is to verify if and how the exploration of AFNs' internal dynamics making use of IR theory (Collins 2004a) contributes to understand AFNs' s identities and roles.

Calabria is presented as a suitable context of study because of its rather traditional agrifood system and the presence of AFNs that conform with the conditions presented above. Among all the identified Calabrian AFNs, GAS M is selected as the most suitable case study. It is an AFN initiated by consumers and civil society organisations organising food provision and civic activities. Moreover, it shows the conditions to be studied under the IR theory (Collins, 2004a) based approach defined by this research.

The first phase of data collection and analysis led to the selection of the following main research methodologies: documentation and participant observation. As explained above both allow for the collection of natural data about the dynamics of GAS M activities organisation and implementation. In both documentation and observation, the collection, analysis and organisation of data focussed on the revealing feelings of attachment and of common understanding emerging in GAS M activities.

The process of defining variables and categories together with the organisation of data into these categories and variables provides the basis for the second step of data analysis. Scholars describe the second step of data analysis in qualitative research as a process that explains what had been described during the first step of data collection and analysis. All the information gathered and analysed during the first step is then explained within overarching conceptual categories (Foster, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this research, techniques of analysis such as descriptive statistics and spatio-temporal comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994) will be used in the second step of data analysis to select, combine, and redefine variables and categories introduced in the first step of data analysis. The aim is to derive more comprehensive and more explanatory variables and categories that allows us to move from describing what happens in terms of feelings of attachment and common understanding generation to explaining how it happens and what the implications are for the identity of GAS M.

As synthesised by Figure 3.3 in chapter 3, chapters 5 and 6 report on the second step of data analysis, with the associated process of redefining variables and categories.

Chapter 5

Understanding the identity of GAS M: an analysis of its activities' intensity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter represents the first step towards disclosing those aspects that characterise GAS M identity. In particular, GAS M identity is uncovered by investigating the intensity of its everyday activities. The chapter is founded on the basis of a reasoning whereby “All of society consists of chains of [...] encounters. [...]. Not all encounters produce the same degree of [...] intensity; [...]. Hence some [...] come off, other do not [...]” (Collins, 1983, pp. 190-191). Chains of encounters are another way of referring to what in chapter 3 has been presented as situations of interactions. The dynamic of producing different degrees of intensity is another way to express the idea that situations of interactions are characterised, among other features, by different levels of feelings of attachment to the situations, which is to say that they are able to attract people and engage them as well as to fulfil and repeat to different degrees. The higher the feelings of attachment, the higher the opportunity for a situation to unfold effectively. Put another way, the higher the feelings of attachment, the higher the intensity of the situation.

In chapter 3 GAS M activities have been equated to situations of interaction; in particular, organisation and implementation have been interpreted as two dynamics inherent in each activity and which generate some degrees of feelings of attachment, in turn allowing the activities to unfold and repeat. Following the reasoning of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), this chapter identifies situations of interactions internal to GAS M, which is to say its activities, and analyses them according to the level of feelings of attachment (or intensity) they generate while being organised and implemented; this is then seen as a way to assess how intensely each activity influences GAS M identity. This chapter focusses especially on answering the following research question:

What is the relative importance of the different GAS M activities for the construction of its identity?

The intensity of each situation of interaction can be unveiled by looking at three main aspects: 1) how often the situation takes place; 2) how balanced the involvement of participants is in a situation and 3) how tied participants are. Balanced participation and strong ties among participants come along with high frequency and capacity of the situation to unwind and repeat over time. In turn, this indicates a high intensity of the situation (Collins, 2004a). This chapter introduces three indicators to establish the three aforementioned aspects in GAS M activities.

Section 5.2 explains the process of defining indicators and variables to ascertain an activity's intensity, or its levels of feelings of attachment. Section 5.3 will begin by introducing and describing those activities of GAS M upon which the analysis of intensity will be conducted. The results of this analysis will be presented and discussed in the subsections of section 5.3. Finally,

section 5.4 will sum up the main conclusions on the identity of GAS M as emerging from the relative intensity of its activities.

5.2 Defining indicators for the intensity of GAS M activities

The definition of indicators for the intensity of GAS M's activities is part of the second step of data analysis. This second step of data analysis in qualitative research occurs when the collection of data is in its latter stages, or already completed, and with the aim of offering an explanation of what had been described during the first step of analysis; all the findings are connected and explained within an overarching theory, model, or propositions (Foster, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In line with this, the second step of data analysis took place from November 2013 to January 2014, when the data collection and first level analysis was complete. It begins from the variables of intensity which were inductively induced and determined, during the first step of data collection and analysis, from the data gathered through documentation on GAS M activities that took place from September 2011 to February 2013. The second step of analysis consisted of selecting the most informative variables, elaborating and patterning them into indicators of intensity. Selection, elaboration, and patterning were guided by IR theory (Collins, 2004a), informing the view as to what characterises the intensity of situations of interactions. Selection, elaboration and patterning were instrumental in moving the analysis from the description of what happens in terms of the intensity of GAS M's activities to the explanation of what this implies for GAS M's identity.

The selection of variables was based upon methodological guidelines on conducting comparative analyses of situations of interactions over time and cross-section with respect to their features (Collins, 1983). The necessity of having variables of intensity that are consistent over both time and situations caused those variables to be selected that appeared constant, (over all of GAS M's activities and throughout the period of time under investigation), by the end of the first step of analysis. A matrix has been designed to sum up all the variables of intensity constantly available over time and activities. The rows of the matrix indicate the temporal frame subdivided into days, weeks, months, and GAS M's semesters, (i.e. beginning of September - end of February / beginning of March - end of August). The columns report the variables for each identified activity, as well as for each sub-activity when present. The selection process resulted in a total of 35 variables of intensity⁴⁷ per activity and possible sub-activity; these are reported, with their corresponding values, in the matrix⁴⁸.

The patterning of variables is recommended as a strategy to reduce huge data sets and bring them to a higher level of explanation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was the purpose behind patterning the variables of intensity in GAS M's activities into synthesising and explanatory indicators.

The overall level of intensity of a situation (i.e. *ritual intensity*) is revealed by how frequently the situation successfully unfolds and repeats. Moreover, there are some aspects that characterise the overall level of a situation's intensity. How centralised the participation (i.e. *central/peripheral*) is in the situation is one of these aspects. This refers to how balanced the involvement of participants

⁴⁷ 39 variables were considered for one activity alone. The four extra variables were meant to indicate some aspects that could still have been relevant for its intensity but were not present in other activities. They were excluded only after further conceptual reasoning had been done in order to define the indicators of intensity. At that point, the four extra variables resulted in being less meaningful and were excluded, together with some other variables, as explained later on in this chapter.

⁴⁸ The number and variety of activities will be introduced in section 5.3. The complete list of selected variables and explanation thereof is available in Appendix 2, while the matrix with all the variables and data is available to be consulted. A methodological and analytical file that explains the reasoning behind the second step of data analysis accompanies it. They are both part of the database where all the row data and the analytical and methodological files of this research are stored to enhance the reliability of the research (Lofland et al., 2006; Yin, 2009).

is in a situation. In some situations, people are more equally involved, while in other situations a few people lead the process of an unfolding situation while the majority participates passively. A second aspect concerns the variety of people involved in the situations (i.e. *social diversity*). There may be situations where broad groups of people who do not have very close ties to each other are involved; in other situations, small groups of people who are very close to each other participate. According to IR theory (Collins, 2004a) situations with balanced participation and strong ties among participants generate high intensity. In other words, balanced participation and strong ties among participants come along with high capacity of the situations to unwind and repeat over time (Collins, 2004a)⁴⁹.

Three indicators of the intensity of GAS M's activities therein have been derived from the reasoning based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) in terms of what characterises the intensity of situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a). For each indicator, some of the 35 identified variables of intensity are chosen. A total of 14 variables are seen as being instrumental in ascertaining the three indicators. The first indicator is defined as *frequency of activity*. It describes how often GAS M activities take place effectively and how often they fail to do so. Six variables are used to determine this indicator. The second indicator is defined as the *variety of participation in each activity*. It describes how strongly participants are tied to each other. Five variables ascertain the indicator of variety of participation. *Level of participation in each activity* is the third indicator. It describes to what extent the sharing of tasks that are instrumental to the activity's unfolding is balanced among the participants. Three variables are selected to establish the level of participation. Table 5.1 summarises the conceptual reasoning and corresponding indicators to ascertain the intensity of GAS M activities. The table also reports the number of variables selected for each indicator.

Considering the explorative-descriptive nature of this study, no relationships have been hypothesised between variables and corresponding indicators. IR theory (Collins, 2004a) hypothesises that situations with balanced participation and with strong bonds between participants imply high intensity, or have a high capacity to take place and repeat over time (Collins, 2004a). This hypothesis has been reinterpreted as follows: high frequency of activities, balanced participation and strong ties between participants denote high intensity of GAS M activities.

Table 5.1 Conceptualisations of situations' intensity and indicators of the intensity of GAS M's activities

Conceptualisation of situations' intensity	Meaning	Indicators of intensity of GAS M's activities	Meaning	Number of variables
<i>Ritual intensity</i>	How successful situations are in taking place and repeating.	<i>Frequency of activity</i>	How often activities take place. How often they fail to do so.	6
<i>Social diversity</i>	How strongly tied participants are in situations.	<i>Variety of participation in each activity</i>	How strongly tied the participants are in activities.	5
<i>Central / peripheral participation</i>	How balanced the participation is in situations.	<i>Level of participation in each activity</i>	How balanced the sharing is of tasks among participants in activities.	3

⁴⁹ IR theory (Collins, 2004a) also introduces the aspect of *social density* which refers to the duration of situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a). Data on the duration of GAS M activities showed to be of not easy elaboration within an explorative approach. Therefore the aspect of social density could not be operationalised and explored in this research. Moreover, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) presents all the mentioned aspects from the perspective of the individuals involved in the situations (Collins, 2004a). While this research is explaining and operationalising them at the level of the situation because the situation is its analytical focus.

In sum, the second step of data analysis implemented several methodological and analytical strategies to generate coherent and valid findings: these strategies include conceptual coherence, patterning variables and counting (Bailey, 2007; J. Lofland et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The selection, elaboration, and patterning was crucial in order to synthesise and elaborate on all the information on the intensity of GAS M's activities available from the first step of data analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to calculate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, averages, and ratios from which variables were derived. Computing the intensity of GAS M's activities represents a form of counting and is a further step toward synthesising, and enhancing the explanation power of, the information gathered. It was necessary as part of a cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of GAS M's activities, from which the relative intensity of each activity and its impact on the overall identity of GAS M was inferred.

Further details on this comparative analysis will be reported in the coming sections, where the results on the intensity of GAS M activities are reported and discussed for each indicator and its corresponding variables. Moreover, details will be given on what these variables of intensity are and how they are computed⁵⁰.

5.3 Ascertaining the intensity of GAS M activities

During the first step of data analysis, activities were inductively identified; a new activity was identified each time a new activity appeared in the documents studied. The task of the second step of data analysis was to bring the identification of the activities to higher levels of synthesis and explanation, while avoiding the loss of empirical details in the light of conceptual generalisations. The task has been implemented by means of two rounds of clustering of identified activities.

The first round of clustering concentrated on grouping activities, which were identified during the first step of data analysis, into eight different types: *meetings*, *social meals*, *producers' visits*, *other initiatives*, and *weekly, monthly, collective, and special orders*⁵¹. Definitions of each type of activities are reported in Table 5.2. Seven out of the eight identified types, and associated definitions, are mentioned in the documents gathered and studied during the first step of data collection and analysis. For seven out of the eight identified types, activities are clustered within a type and labelled with the corresponding definition if they were referred to using the definition in one or more documents. Only the type, and corresponding definition, 'other initiatives' is a category which was newly invented for the purposes of this study. Similarities showing up among different activities as gleaned from the information available in the studied documents have been used as starting point to define the category 'other initiatives' and to cluster activities in it. Identification and definition of types of activities have been conducted in way that would guarantee that the identified types, and associated definitions, are representative of the understanding people in GAS M have of the activities GAS M organises and implements.

⁵⁰ Moreover, the complete data set including indicators, corresponding variables and their measurement, is available for consultation. It is part of a data base in which all the row data and methodological and analytical files are stored, following guidelines which scholars suggest increase the study's reliability (J. Lofland et al., 2006; Yin, 2009).

⁵¹ The first implication of the first round of clustering of activities implied to not specify types of activities into their sub-activities. In the first step of data analysis some activities as meetings, collective and special orders have been distinguished in sub-activities according to the specific kind of meeting and order of products that was organised and implemented. In the second step of data analysis information on each sub-activity have been synthesised into information about the broader type of activity the sub-activities are part of. The second implication of the first round of activities clustering exists in excluding 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposals'. They have been considered as separated activities in the first step of data analysis on feelings of attachment. From this first level of analysis it emerged that both 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposal' stay at a level of random proposal of products. They do not systematise into two definite activities of products provisioning. The proposals of these products often do not follow into organisation, calls for orders, booking, and distribution. When they do, the organisation, calls for orders, booking, and distribution are part of other activities of products distribution, namely weekly orders (see Appendix 1).

A second round of clustering of activities was implemented in the final stage of the second step of data analysis. Building on Renting et al.'s (2012) distinction between food provision and civic engagement of CFNs, as introduced in chapter 2, the eight types of activities in GAS M were clustered into two groups according to similarities and differences in the focus of their action. *Material activities* is the first group. It consists of weekly, monthly, collective and special orders. The common feature of these activities is that they imply economic transactions around the exchange of products, and focus on proposing, discussing and implementing organisational solutions for the exchange of products. The second group is *civic activities*. This includes meetings, social meals, producers' visits, and other initiatives. Their common feature is that they do not imply any economic transaction around the exchange of products, even though they sometimes discuss organisational issues related to products exchange. The focus of civic activities lies to a large extent on the organisation and implementation of events for socialising, as well as of opportunities to raise awareness within and beyond GAS M's participants about several topics related primarily to critical consumption, political, social, cultural, environmental, and other issues of civic relevance (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 GAS M activities: groups, types, definition, numbers

Groups	Types of activities	Description	Number of activities per type
Material	<i>Weekly orders</i>	Organise and implement weekly exchanges of mostly fresh and local food products.	One same activity repeated over time on a weekly basis.
	<i>Monthly orders</i>	Organise and implement monthly exchanges of transformed and local food products.	One same activity repeated over time on a monthly basis.
	<i>Collective orders</i>	Organise and implement periodic exchanges of both processed food products and non-food products arriving primarily from the rest of Italy, sometimes from the region where the GAS M acts.	Organisation and implementation of exchanges of 19 different products, some of them repeatedly over time.
	<i>Special orders</i>	Organise and implement periodic exchanges of food and non-food products arriving from all around Italy, sometimes from the region where GAS M acts, to support solidarity and other civic and cultural initiatives.	Organisation and implementation of products exchanges to support 9 different initiatives, some of them repeatedly over time.
Civic	<i>Meetings</i>	Organise and implement discussions on GAS M, and its network, activities, priorities, visions and issues both around and beyond the provision of products.	3 different types of meetings organised and implemented repeatedly over time.
	<i>Social meals</i>	Organise and implement socialising amongst GAS M members during collective meals, sometimes also creating opportunities of reflection on civic themes.	1 same activity repeated over time.
	<i>Producers' visits</i>	Organise and implement visits to producers as a means of assessing the work of GAS M producers, and aiming to promote socialising among GAS M members, both producers and consumers.	1 same activity repeated over time.
	<i>Other initiatives</i>	Organise and implement (or co-implement only) initiatives to raise awareness on GAS M and its vision, as well as on civic issues in general.	39 initiatives organised, implemented, or joined, some of them repeatedly over time.

The second round of clustering of GAS M activities into two groups was for use during the presentation of results on the intensity of GAS M activities, with the aim of raising the explanatory power of those results in relation to the empirical interest of this study, which consist of disclosing how civic and food provision aspects combine in cases of AFNs, such as GAS M, and what the implications for the identity of those AFNs are.

Indicators and corresponding variables of intensity were ascertained from information gathered through documentation, for each activity for the whole period of study from September 2011 to February 2013. Variables and indicators of intensity per type of activity were calculated by averaging the results of variables and indicators of intensity that were determined for each activity clustered within a type. The average results of intensity are available for 6 out of the 8 identified types of activities. The full set of variables and indicators of intensity could not be established from

the available information for *other initiatives*⁵². While in the case of *monthly orders*, the variables and indicators of intensity could be determined only for a limited period of time because the type of products exchanged through *monthly orders*, and consequently the whole activity of *monthly orders*, have been progressively integrated into other forms of product exchange, and their corresponding types of activities.

The methodological guidelines of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) suggest studying situations of interactions comparatively and over time in order to gain insights into their features and on the implications for the phenomena they contribute to building up (Collins, 1983). Following the mentioned methodological guidelines, the following sub-sections will present and discuss the average results for variables and indicators of intensity over time and comparatively among six out of the eight identified types of activities. *Monthly orders* and *other initiatives* are excluded because, as has just been mentioned, the available information does not provide the kind of data needed for cross-section and longitudinal studies on the intensity of the mentioned types of activities. Two other types, namely social meals and producers' visits, are excluded, but only from the analysis of level and variety of participation in the implementation stage. The data available on the level and variety of participation in the implementation of the latter activities show several gaps. The missing observations outnumber the available ones; this hampers the validity of the available data, and the activities are therefore excluded from a small part of the analysis.

Each sub-section discusses average results for one of the three identified indicators of intensity, with its related variables. *Frequency of activity* comes first in order to give a general overview of how often each type of activity takes place or fails to do so. In the second subsection, data on the *variety of participation* provides an overview on how tied the participants are to one another in each type of activity. In the third sub-section, the *level of participation* unveils how balanced the task sharing is among participants in each type of activity. Finally, general conclusions are derived on the overall intensity of each type of activity and on the implications for GAS M identity.

5.3.1 Frequency of activities

Frequency of activities seeks to convey, for each GAS M activity, how often their inner dynamics of organisation and implementation take place, and the rate with which those activities complete whole cycles, from organisation to implementation. The proposed measures of frequency are listed in Table 5.3.

⁵² *Other initiatives* will be considered again in chapter 6, which is about disclosing the generation of common understanding. The information available provides the sort of data needed to implement the analysis of common understanding generation also in the case of *other initiatives*.

Table 5.3 Measures for frequency of activities

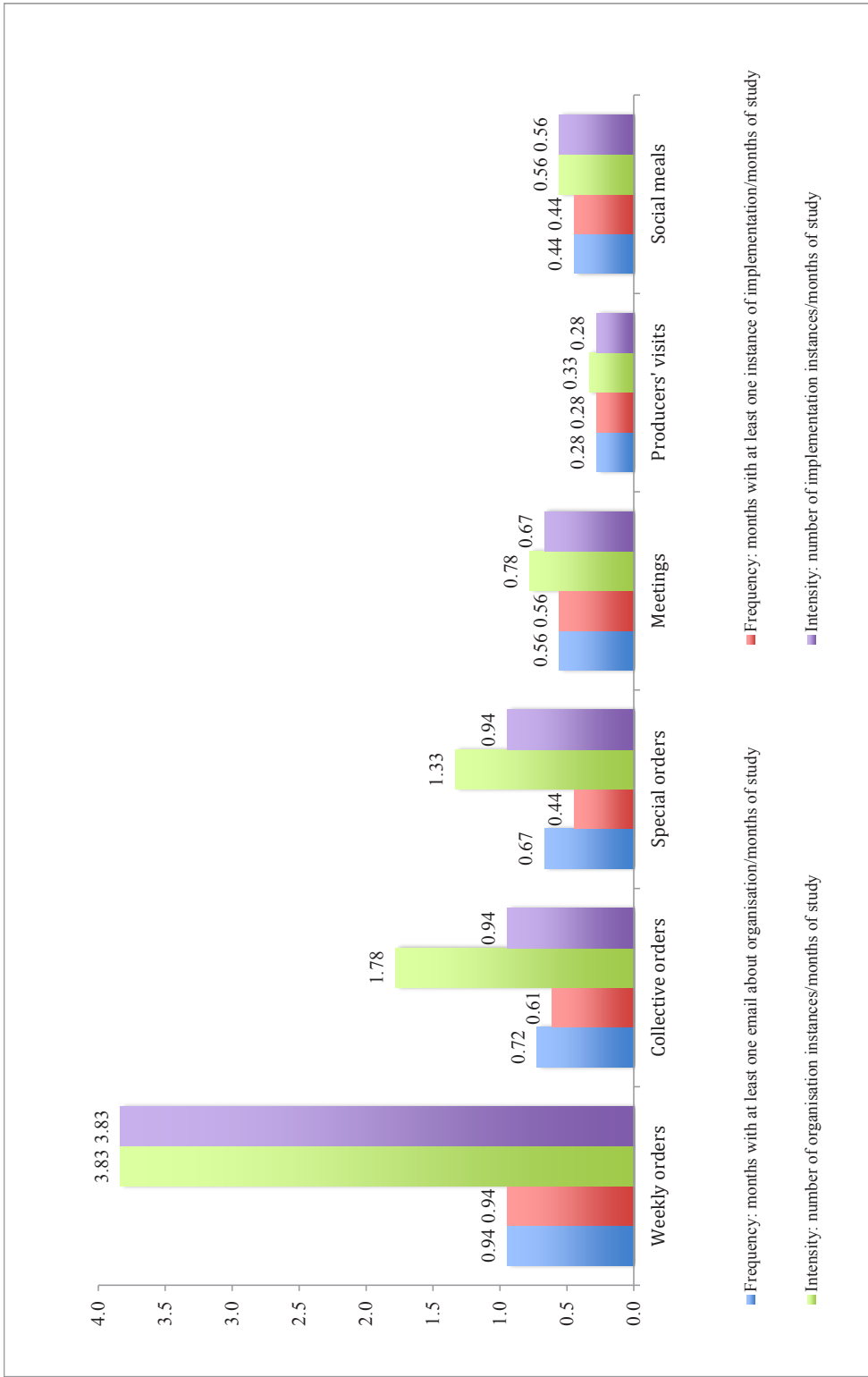
Measures	Explanation	Corresponding figures
1) Frequency of organisation	The ratio between the number of months in which at least one email is exchanged for organisation and total months of study.	Figure 5.1
2) Frequency of implementation	The ratio between the number of months with at least one instance of implementation and total months of study.	Figure 5.1
3) Intensity of organisation	The ratio between the number of cases when at least one email is exchanged for a new instance of organisation and the months of study.	Figure 5.1
4) Intensity of implementation	The ratio between the number of instances of implementation that take place and the months of study.	Figure 5.1
5) Rate of fulfilment	The ratio between the number of different instances of implementation fulfilled and the number of times when at least one email is exchanged for a new instance of organisation.	Figure 5.2
6) Rate of cancellation	The ratio between the number of different instances of implementation which are cancelled and the number of times when at least one email is exchanged for a new instance of organisation.	Figure 5.2

Measures 1, 2, 3, 4 (Table 5.3) seek to assess how often the main dynamics of GAS M activities take place and on average how many instances of organisation and implementation are present. Measures 5 and 6 (Table 5.3) look at what fails to take place. They indicate the rate of instances of implementation which are neither scheduled nor announced after being organised and the rate of instances of implementation that were cancelled after being announced. By detailing the frequency of both those GAS M activities that take place and those that fails to do so, a complete picture of the frequency of GAS M activities can be provided.

Figure 5.1 shows how instances of organisation and implementation are distributed over time and for each activity. It highlights how often they occur on a monthly base (measures 1 and 2), and the average number of instances of organisation and implementation per month (measures 3 and 4). By analysing the descriptive statistics behind Figure 5.1, the following dynamics emerge:

- I. Material activities are organised more often than civic activities. Weekly orders are the most frequently organised activities;
- II. The number of instances of organisation and implementation per month is higher in material than in civic activities;
- III. Instances of organisation in weekly orders and civic activities are as frequent as instances of implementation in the same activities;
- IV. Instances of organisation in collective and special orders are more frequent than instances of implementation in the same activities.

Figure 5.1 Frequency and intensity of organisation and implementation instances per month of study, per activity



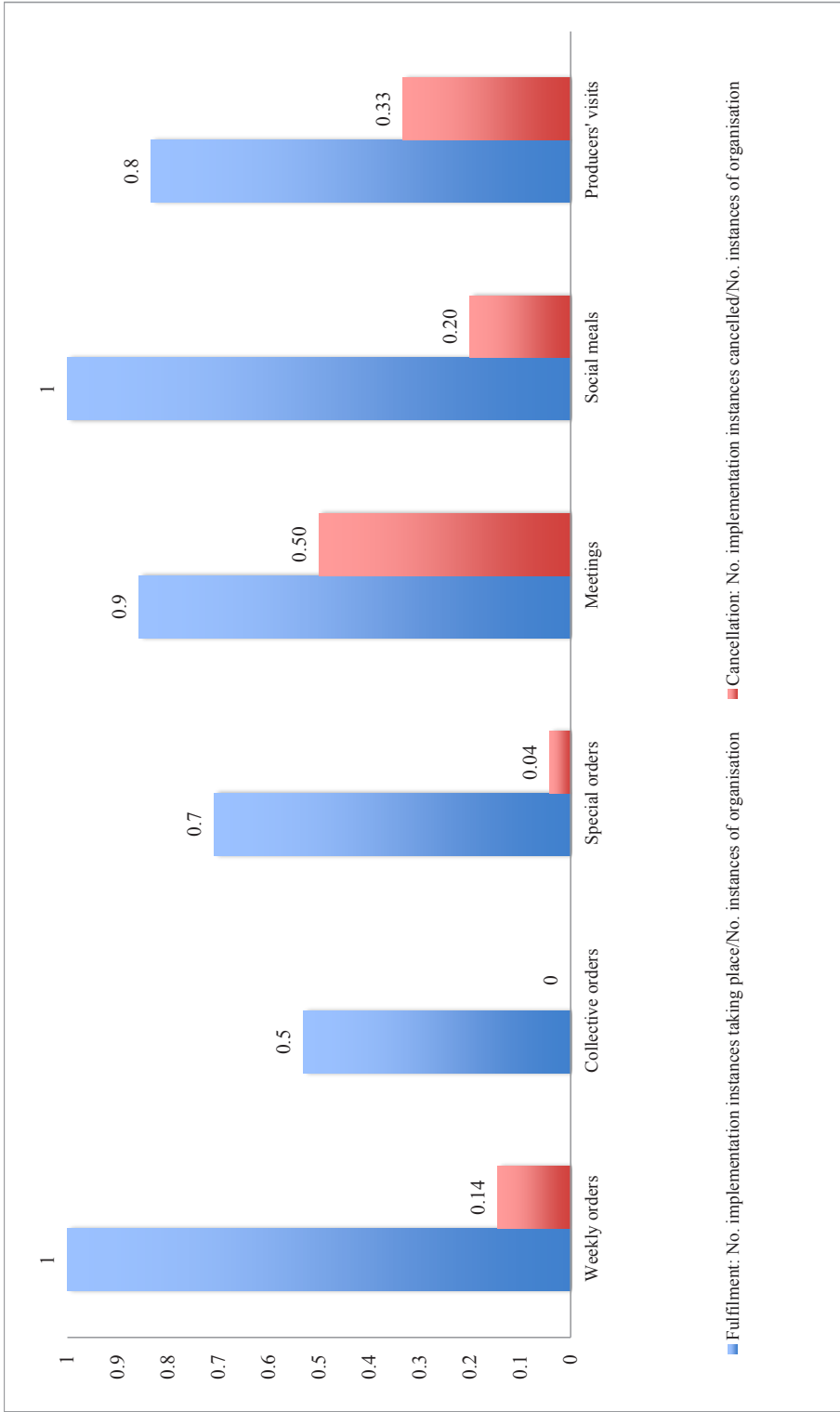
The main insight from the statistics reported in Figure 5.1 reveals discontinuity in the unfolding and repetition of organisation and implementation instances of GAS M activities over time. First, in general terms, neither organisation nor implementation instances take place every month. Second, civic activities are less frequent than material activities in terms of instances both of organisation and of implementation. Even if instances of the implementation of civic activities are in some cases more or equally frequent than instances of the implementation of some material activities, the number of instances of both organisation and implementation per month is always lower in civic activities compared to material activities. Third, there is a gap between the frequency of instances of organisation and of implementation in the cases of collective and special orders. Instances of organisation tend to be more frequent than instances of implementation in the latter mentioned activities. All in all, in terms of activities' intensity, none of the activities shows the capacity to exploit all the possible occasions to take place and repeat, with civic activities being the least likely to do so.

Figure 5.2 highlights some of the dynamics that are behind the discontinuity of GAS M activities in taking place and repeating. Figure 5.2 reports, per activity, the data about the rate of fulfilment and the rate of cancellation, which indicate the capability of activities to complete their cycle from organisation to implementation. The rate of fulfilment (measure 5) measures the ratio between the number of instances of implementation taking place and the number of times when at least one email is exchanged about a new instance of organisation. The rate of cancellation (measure 6) measures the ratio between the number of instances of implementation cancelled after being scheduled and announced and the number of times when at least one email is exchanged about a new instance of organisation. When there is a cancellation, it means that an activity has gone through all the organisational steps until the moment when the implementation was announced, but that the implementation stage was not able to take place. When there is no fulfilment, this implies that the unfolding of the activity has ceased during its initial organisational stages without even defining a date for its implementation.

If we look at the statistics reported in Figure 5.2 more thoroughly, the following dynamics of fulfilment and cancellation emerge:

- I. Weekly orders have among the highest rate of fulfilment and the lowest rates of cancellation;
- II. Other material activities, such as collective and special orders, show the lowest rates both with respect to fulfilment and with respect to cancellation;
- III. Civic activities have among the highest rates both of fulfilment and of cancellation.

Figure 5.2 Rates of fulfilment and cancellation in GAS M activities



As seen in Figure 5.2, the discontinuity in the frequency of weekly orders is mostly due to cancellation. There are very few cases of this, and from the complete set of data available on the frequency of GAS M's activities, it emerges that those cases of cancellation are connected to seasonality, since they occur mainly in the central summer month⁵³. Cancellation is also the main cause of discontinuity in the case of civic activities, even if more incisively than in the case of weekly orders (Box 5.1). The prevalence of cancellation implies that when an instance of implementation does not take place in weekly orders and civic activities, the related instance of organisation has proceeded through all the stages until scheduling a date for the implementation. Unlike weekly orders and civic activities, most of the discontinuity in collective and special orders is due to their low rates of fulfilment. In other words, when an instance of implementation does not take place in collective and special orders it is mostly due to the fact that the related instance of organisation has not been able to overcome even the initial stages, and has been interrupted even before a date for implementation could be defined (Box 5.2).

Box 5.1 Delving into the dynamics of meetings: what is behind their high rate of cancellation?

GAS M organises and implements three sorts of meetings, namely:

- 1) Meetings of the management group where just a few people participate who are involved in the management of GAS M as a whole; in those meetings they discuss vision and principles of GAS M, activities planning and implementation, daily issues.
- 2) Meetings involving all GAS M members from producers to people taking part in GAS M activities; the topics discussed in those meetings is very similar to those discussed in the meetings with the management of GAS M.
- 3) Meetings that involve GAS M and its members together with the members of the network promoted by GAS M, namely other GASs, enterprises, and organisations for social, political, and cultural promotion (see chapter 4); these meetings are about visions and principles of the network, planning projects and activities at a network level, and dealing with daily issues of the network.

Whatever the sort of meeting, the proposal always originates from the members of the management group. The proposal is sent to different mailing lists, according to the meeting that is proposed, and always contains the date and time of the meeting, together with its agenda. When few positive reactions follow the proposal, an email is sent by the person proposing the meeting to cancel it. Nonetheless, it is common to read emails which follow up the cancellation of a meeting, in which either the same person who proposed the meeting or someone else from the GAS M management group refers to an "informal meeting" at which some or all of the points of the cancelled meeting's agenda have been discussed and at which decisions have been taken on them.

Generally, what is referred to as an "informal meeting" exists in a conversation that some or all members of the management group have had via email, phone, while implementing other GAS M activities, or during moments they spend together beyond the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities. For instance, during the fieldwork as participant-observer after the exchange of weekly products, I was invited to have lunch with some of the management group. After lunch, at one of their homes, other members of the management group arrived and started discussing issues concerning the implementation of an activity that was supposed to be discussed at a meeting that didn't take place. On the same evening, an email was circulated through some of the GAS M mailing lists reporting on the decisions made on those issues (See 05 Jan_OBS 0003).

In summary, the high rate of cancellation of meetings is attenuated by the fact that some of the planned discussion points at these meetings are debated in informal settings.

⁵³ The full set of data also shows cases of weekly orders, instances of which were cancelled in a period other than the central summer month. This was a very special period when GAS M lacked a location in which to implement products exchange for several weeks.

In terms of overall intensity, or activities' likelihood of taking place, the data on the rate of fulfilment and cancellation show that weekly orders and civic activities have a higher likelihood of taking place compared to collective and special orders. In the former cases when implementation stages that have been organised do not take place, most of the related instances of organisation have fulfilled all their stages of unfolding until the agreement of a date for the implementation. In the case of collective and special orders, when a previously organised stage of implementation does not take place, most of the related organisation stops even before the agreement of a date.

Box 5.2 Delving into the dynamics of collective and special orders: what is behind their low rates of fulfilment and cancellation?

Collective and special orders are periodic orders of fresh, but mostly, processed food products as well as non-food products from all around Italy. Collective orders fulfil the exigencies to purchase products that cannot be available every week, as well as those products that can be stored and do not need to be purchased weekly. Special orders are meant to support specific causes through the buying of products. Hence they are made when causes emerge to be supported.

Once collective and special orders are made, if people book products, and their orders are sent to producers, products have to be collected or at least paid for. Cancellations can happen only when the producer is not able to fulfil the order, but those are very rare cases. Thus, the low rate of cancellation in collective and special orders is a consequence of the way in which they are organised; nonetheless it cannot be taken as an indication of their capacity to always complete their life cycle, from the proposal of an order to the collection of the product.

In several cases, collective and special orders stop at the early stage of their cycle of organisation; in other words, they cannot go beyond the proposal of organising a new round of product exchange. This is particularly true when the proposal is of individual interest. Collective order of ecological items for the house is an example. Someone who is particularly interested in these products proposed to buy them because they were completing the construction of his ecological house, but the proposal did not find sufficient support. Another example of a failed proposal concerns a special order of products. It was a suggestion made by some farmers in economic hardship to support themselves; their proposals did not advance into further stages.

In order to be fulfilled, collective and special orders need to be backed by at least one group of people within GAS M. The support may come because of a shared need for the proposed products or because the product is part of projects which have a shared interest. The special order of oranges is an example; it is part of a campaign against the exploitation of migrant workers in the orange sector which some of the managers of GAS M have been supporting for some years. Another example is the collective order of organic pasta. The proposal to begin with periodic orders of pasta was discussed and decided upon during a GAS M meeting, when it obtained the supported of the group of GAS M members involved in the meeting.

In summary, very few types of orders within the category of collective and special orders were repeated over time. Those that do are the orders that catch the interest of a whole group or organisers rather than an individual, from the early stages of the process. The high frequency of organisation (Figure 5.1) is due to the fact that several orders are proposed, even though not all of them necessarily go further; the high frequency of implementation (Figure 5.1) is due to the exceptional performances of those few cases that are supported and progress.

Summing up the insights from Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, weekly orders emerge as the most frequent activity of GAS M. It is the only routine activity for which instances of organisation and implementation are planned to occur on a weekly basis. The interruption of the weekly flow of organisation and implementation is rare and follows a routine too, since it is connected to a specific season of the year, namely the summer. Collective and special orders are the second most frequent activities, with the second highest frequency of instances of organisation and the second highest number of instances of organisation and implementation per month. There is some degree of discontinuity in the occurrence and repetition of collective and special orders too. The form of discontinuity they show is the most intense among the other activities of GAS M since, when organised implementation does not take place, most of the related instances of organisation only went through the earliest stages of organisation, and mainly stop in the first stage of proposing to organise a new instance of implementation. Finally, civic activities are the least frequent of GAS

M's activities since instances of organisation and implementation are less frequent in the overall period of study, and per month, compared to the other GAS M activities. Moreover, they also show some degree of discontinuity. Nonetheless, their form of discontinuity is less intense than in the case of collective and special orders, since when organised implementation does not take place, most of the related organisation took place for all the stages of organisation, until the decision on a date for the implementation.

5.3.2 Variety of participation

People participating in the inner dynamics of both the organisation and implementation of GAS M's activities belong to different groups and also subscribe to and address different mailing lists while participating in GAS M activities. Each group and mailing list has a different number of subscribers, entails different frequencies of interaction among their subscribers, and therefore different degrees of bonding between them. The indicator of variety of participation ascertains the degree of bonding of each GAS M activity based on the degree of bonding of people participating in activities that is derived from the groups they belong to and from the mailing lists they subscribe to.

Information is available to infer which mailing lists the participants of GAS M activities subscribe to and address, and which groups they belong to. First, the names of those participants are known because they are recorded in the emails they write for the organisation of activities, or because they are listed in the records of who has participated in the activities. Second, it is known which lists participants in instances of organisation and implementation subscribe to. Third, the lists that people write to when organizing can be detected from the addressees quoted in the email. Fourth, there are records available of those people who have paid a GAS M membership fee, and these are the basis of the division of participants in GAS M activities into different groups. Lists and groups have already been presented in chapter 4 of this book. To ease the understanding of the result reported below, the definitions of mailing lists and groups are recalled in Table 5.4; moreover some details that are relevant in determining their degree of bonding are recalled while discussing the results on the variety of participation.

Table 5.4 Definitions of GAS M mailing lists and groups

Names mailing lists and groups	Definitions
Awareness	Sharing critical information on politics, society, culture, economy, environment, and other issues, events, topics and facts of civic relevance. 280 subscribers (February 2013). 682 emails exchanged (September 2011-February 2013).
List GAS M	Circulating information on GAS M activities. Opening calls for booking of products and announcing their delivery; announcing other GAS M activities and reporting on them once implemented. 426 subscribers (February 2013). 273 emails exchanged (September 2011-February 2013).
Co-management	Discussing GAS M principles and visions, as well as all the daily issues concerning GAS M. Prioritising among projects, initiatives and activities according to GAS M principles and visions. Organising and reporting on projects, initiatives, activities. 19 subscribers (February 2013). 676 emails exchanged (September 2011-February 2013).
Forum	Discussing GAS M principles and visions, as well as all the daily issues concerning GAS M when discussions in Co-management become long-winded. 62 subscribers (February 2013).
Official email GAS M	Official contact detail of GAS M. Used for official communications about the GAS M and its activities, within and beyond GAS M lists.
Connecting GASs	Connecting GAS M with other GASs existing in nearby towns. Coordinating shared orders and other kinds of activities, as well as informing each other about own activities and practices and exchanging information about producers. 185 subscribers (February 2013). 59 emails exchanged (September 2011-February 2013).
Group consumers associated	People paying GAS M consumers' association fee. Average of 43 people (September 2011-February 2013).
Group consumers non-associated	People not paying GAS M consumers' association fee while being registered in at least one of GAS M lists and, time-to-time, participating the activities of products exchange. Number of people not available.
Group producers associated	People paying GAS M producers' association fee. Average 4 people (September 2011-February 2013).
Group producers non-associated	People not paying GAS M producers' association fee while being involved as producers in GAS M activities of products exchange. 33 people (September 2011-February 2013).

Table 5.5 reports the measures proposed to determine the indicator of variety of participation in GAS M activities. The measures are meant to provide an overview of the level of bonding for each GAS M activity. To this end they indicate the degrees of bonding in both organisation (measures 1, 2, 3) and implementation (measures 4 and 5)⁵⁴, which are the two stages of GAS M's activities. Mailing lists and groups are involved in GAS M activities both because of participants belonging to them and because of participants addressing them. Therefore, some measures are meant to detect the degrees of bonding in each activity on the basis of which lists and groups attract the highest number of subscribers on average (measures 1, 2, 4 and 5); another measure detects the level of bonding of an activity based on which lists are addressed by the highest number of writers on average (measure 3). In other words, some measures infer the degree of bonding in a GAS M activity from the level of bonding between the organisers of the activity, (i.e. those who write emails about the activity), and those who participate in the implementation of the activity; another measure infers the degree of bonding in an activity from the extent to which people addressed by email communications about the activity are bonded.

⁵⁴ Measures of the average number of people addressing each list are not reported for implementation since the emails exchange is not part of this stage; therefore there are no lists to be addressed.

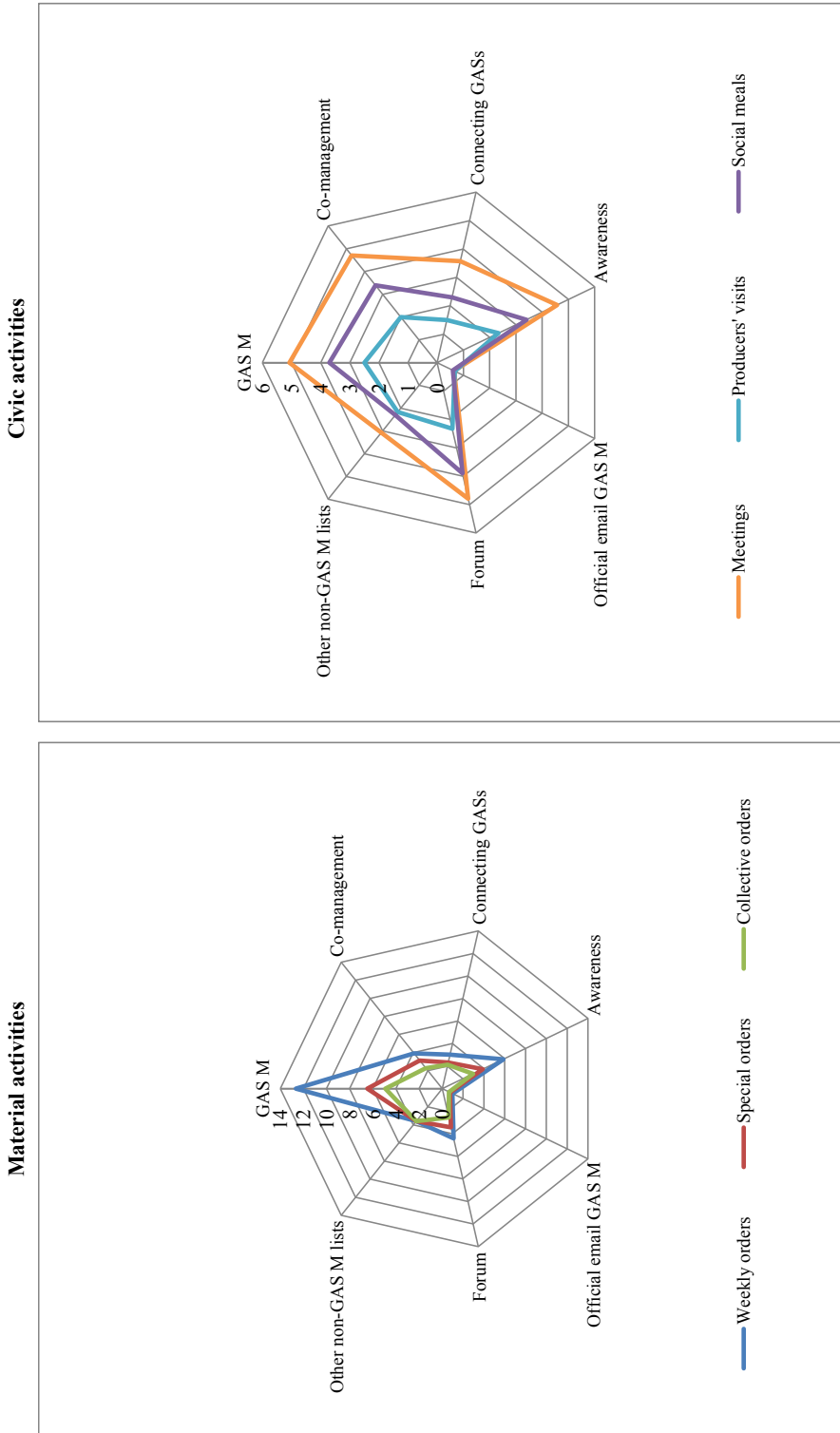
Table 5.5 Measures of variety of participation

Measures	Explanations	Corresponding figures
1) Average subscribers per list. Organisation.	Ratio between the number of writers of organisational emails per list they subscribe to and the number of distinct instances of organisation taking place overall per each activity.	Figure 5.3
2) Average subscribers per group. Organisation.	Ratio between the number of writers of organisational emails per group and the number of distinct instances of organisation taking place overall per each activity.	Figure 5.4
3) Average writers addressing lists. Organisation.	Ratio between the number of writers of organisational emails per list they address and the number of distinct instances of organisation taking place overall per each activity.	Figure 5.5
4) Average subscribers per list. Implementation.	Ratio between the number of people per list they subscribe to who participate in instances of implementation and the number of distinct instances of implementation taking place overall per each activity.	Figure 5.6
5) Average subscribers per group. Implementation.	Ratio between the number of people per group who participate in instances of implementation and the number of distinct instances of implementation taking place overall per each activity.	Figure 5.7

The analysis of variety of participation in GAS M’s activities begins with disclosing the degrees of bonding in instances of organisation by looking at how tied the lists and groups are that are most heavily subscribed to by the writers of organisational emails for the different activities. Figure 5.3 reports data about the average number of subscribers per list and per instance of organisation in each of the GAS M activities. On analysing the statistics behind Figure 5.3, the following dynamics emerge:

- I. Both in material and in civic activities, writers of organisational emails subscribe to all the lists;
- II. In the case of material activities, most of the writers of organisational emails subscribe to the list GAS M, which stands out compared to the other lists in terms of the number of subscribers;
- III. Among the writers of organisational emails for civic activities, the difference in terms of average of subscribers among lists are narrow. The Co-management list is among the four lists most subscribed to.

Figure 5.3 Average number of participants in organisation instances of GAS M activities per list they subscribe to



Number of writers of organisational emails per list they subscribe to per activity/number of distinct organisation instances per activity

The first insight derived from Figure 5.3 is that participants in instances of organisation of material activities are weakly tied. They mostly subscribe to the list GAS M. This is the broadest among all the mailing lists, with a total of 426 subscribers; the list GAS M is also one of the lists with the lowest number of emails circulating in it, with only 273 emails sent over this list during the period of study. Due to the combination of a large number of total subscribers and a low number of email interactions between the list's subscribers, most of the people subscribing to the list GAS M do not know each other and have few opportunities to get to know one another. Thus, the ties among subscribers of the list GAS M list weak and since they form the majority of participants in the organisation of GAS M's material activities, the ties among them are weak too (Box 5.3).

The second insight derived from Figure 5.3 is that ties among those who participate in the organisation of civic activities are strong. Almost everyone who participated in the organisation of civic activities subscribes to all, or most of, the mailing lists at once. People who subscribe to all or most of GAS M's lists together constitute a group that is interested in getting involved in all aspects of GAS M and regularly interact; often, they are subscribers of the Co-management list. This tendency is confirmed in the case of those participating in the organisation of civic activities since the Co-management list is one of the four lists with the highest average of subscriptions. The Co-management list is the smallest of all the GAS M lists in terms of total subscribers, which amount to 19 people; nonetheless it is a list with one of the highest numbers of emails exchanged, with 676 emails having been sent during the study period. The ties among subscribers to Co-management are strong because so few people are registered in the list and they interact so frequently that they know each other, and have several opportunities to reinforce their connections. The rather even distribution of subscribers across the lists combined with the high number of subscribers in the Co-management list are indicators that those who participate in the organisation of civic activities are a small group of people who know each other, and who are likely to interact regularly, which enables them to form strong ties.

Box 5.3 Collective and special orders: two examples of random participation⁵⁵

Products proposed as collective and special orders come mainly from all around Italy, meaning that their organisation requires a considerable logistic effort. To compensate for this effort, the highest possible number of people is invited to book products. Calls for orders circulate mainly within all of GAS M' administered mailing lists as well as beyond them, for instance in the mailing lists of other GASs and organisations. Therefore, the number of participants in those activities may be high, but is also unstable over time. The collective order of Podolica meat and the special order called to support farmers hit by an earthquake are two examples of the unstable participation of people in those activities.

The first call for orders of Podolica meat addresses the GAS M administered lists and the lists of three other GASs. Moreover, one of those GASs also extended the call to another organization. 48 people reserved meat, most of them belonging to lists other than the GAS M administered lists. Within three months, and at the third call, the number of bookings reduced so much that the reservation deadline had to be extended to raise the chance that other people would reserve meat. There was a total of 18 reservations in this case. This was a huge drop compared to the first order, most of the people who dropped out belonging to non-GAS M lists. Moreover, after the third order, another last call was launched but not fulfilled.

The special order to support farmers hit by an earthquake shows a similar dynamic. Two orders were organised and delivered within three months. Both the first and second call for orders of products to support farmers hit by the earthquake reached GAS M administered mailing lists and the mailing lists of other GASs and organisations all around the region where GAS M operates. These were part of a national campaign to support the farmers. More than 100 people reacted to the first call, while only ten people reacted to the second call. As for the case of Podolica meat, the drop in the number of people making reservations was particularly strong among those who did not belong to any of the GAS M administered mailing lists. Moreover, the order of products to support farmers hit by the earthquake was not suggested again after the second call.

In summary, the two presented cases of collective and special orders show how huge and varied the group of people making up these orders can be, as well as how unstable they are as a group. Most of the participants in collective and special orders are people who participate in those activities that suit their interests, and that raise a lot of public awareness. The length and the random participation of those people do not allow the creation of strong bonds among those people, and consequently, they do not guarantee a stable group of participants in collective and special orders.

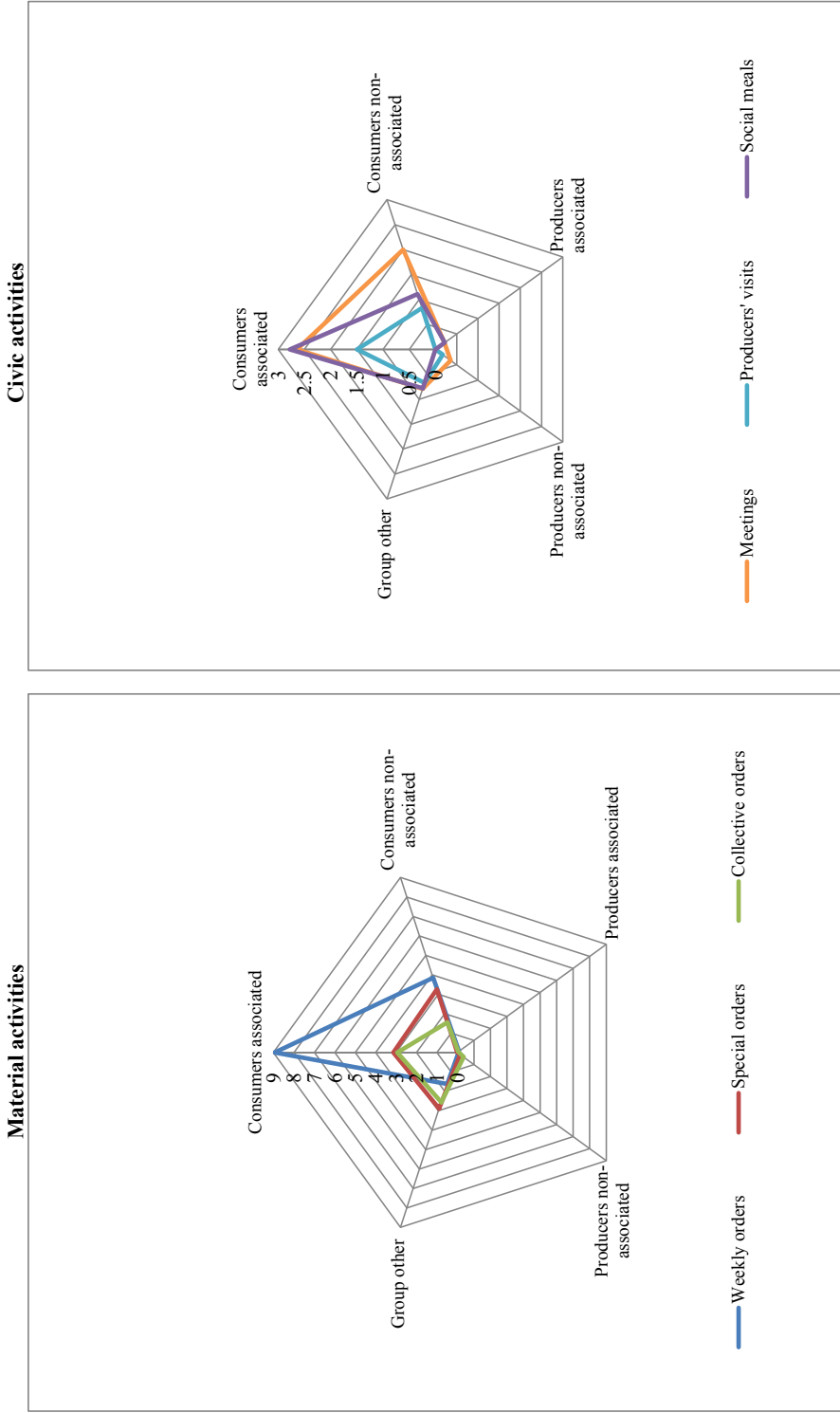
⁵⁵ Podolica meat is meat that comes from a breed of cows that is bred in some regions in Central and Southern Italy. This is a very peculiar specie whose bred is encouraged because of its cultural and nutritional value.

The analysis of the variety of participation in GAS M's activities is followed by the examination of the level of ties among those participating in the organisation of GAS M's activities when the groups they belong to are considered. Figure 5.4 summarises the average number of people belonging to the different GAS M groups who write organisational emails per organisational instance in both material and civic activities. The main dynamics emerging from the analysis of the statistics behind Figure 5.4 can be summarised as follow:

- I. Both in material and in civic activities, most of the writers of organisational emails belong to the groups of consumers associated, consumers non-associated, and to the group other, describing those people who neither associate with GAS M nor subscribe to any of its lists;
- II. Among material activities, weekly orders have the lowest average number of writers of organisational emails belonging to the group other and the highest average number of writers belonging to the groups consumers associated and consumers non-associated.

Figure 5.4 specifies the picture emerging from Figure 5.3 with respect to the strength of ties among the participants in the organisation of GAS M activities. Figure 5.4 in particular shows that ties among participants in the organisation of material activities, which are overall weak according to Figure 5.3, have different degrees of weakness in the different material activities. Ties among participants in the organisation of weekly orders are stronger than ties among participants in the organisation of collective and special orders (Box 5.3 and Box 5.4). Most of the participants in the organisation of weekly orders belong to the group of people who pay the consumers' association fee. An average of 43 people paid the consumers' association fee over the whole period of study; moreover, the fact that these people pay the fee is an indicator of their regular participation in GAS M's activities as well as of the fact that they have the opportunity to meet and interact repeatedly while activities take place. Their small number and their regular encounters indicate some degrees of reciprocal acquaintance, and therefore some degrees of ties, which are higher than in the group of those who are neither associated nor subscribers to GAS M's lists. This group participates in the organisation of weekly orders too but less than the group of people who pay the consumers' association fee do. The group of those who are neither associated nor subscribers to GAS M's lists is a group of very weakly tied participants, since they are highly random participants joining only those activities which are in line with their interests, and often just once. They hence have few or no chances to interact each other, get to know each other, or bond. The strong ties of the majority of participants in the organisation of weekly orders compensate for the weak ties of the minority of them. Contrarily, participants in the organisation of collective and special orders are almost evenly distributed between the group of associated consumers and the group of those who are neither associated to nor subscribing to any lists. Hence, unlike the case of weekly orders, the share of participants in the organisation of special and collective orders with stronger ties cannot counterbalance the weakening effect of the share of participants with almost absent ties. Consequently, participants in the organisation of the weekly order are more tied than participants in the organisation of other material activities.

Figure 5.4 Average number of participants in organisation instances of GAS M activities per group they belong to



Number of writers of organisational emails per group per activity/number of distinct organization instances per activity

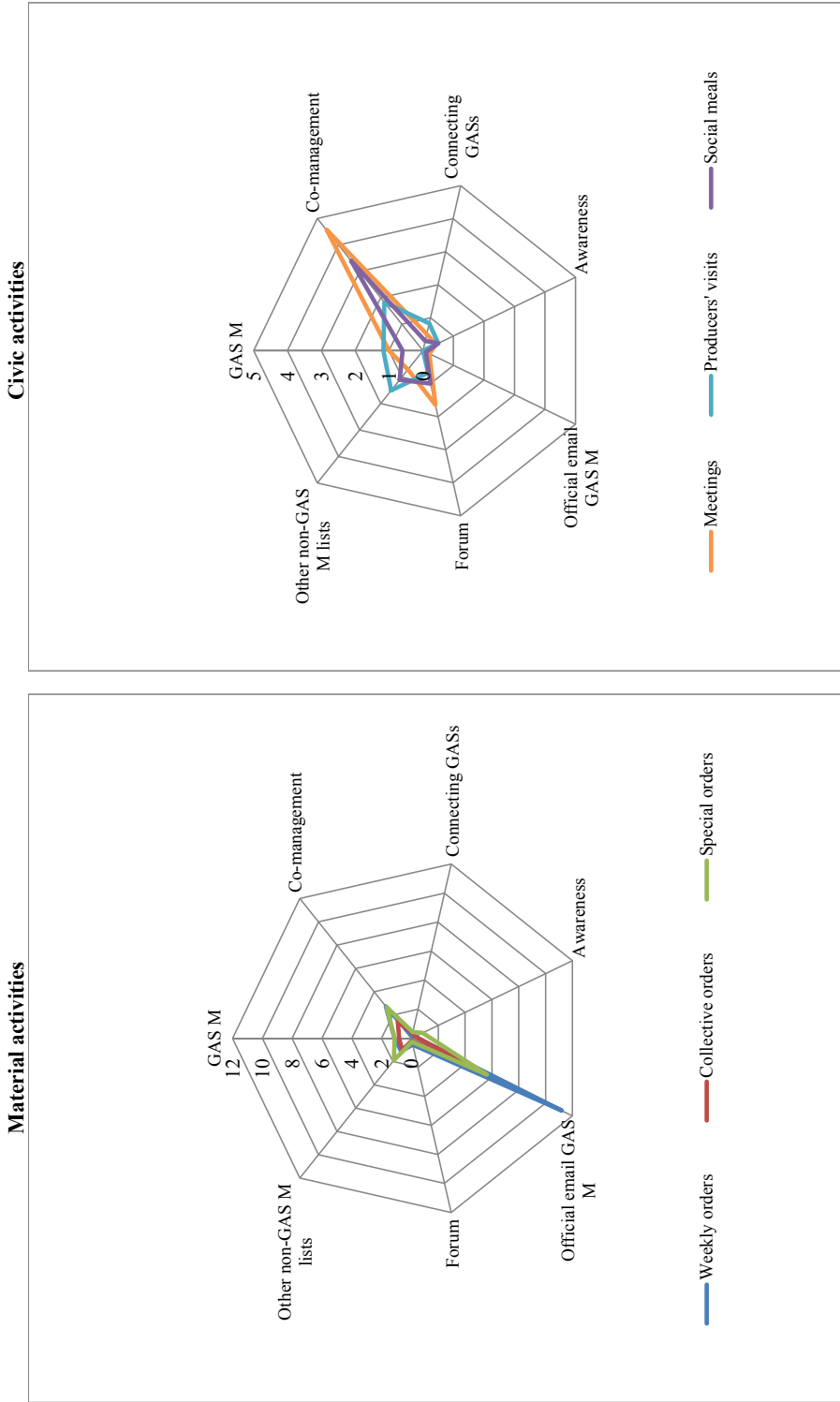
Until now, the strength of ties between those involved in the organisation of GAS M activities has been investigated by looking at the strength of ties among the participants who have contributed as writers of organisational emails on the subject of organising activities. The extent to which people are tied who receive these organisational emails needs to be established in order to complete the investigation on how tied the participants are in the organisation of GAS M activities. The measure of the average number of writers addressing each GAS M list per instance of organisation in each activity is used to determine which are the main lists solicited with organisational emails. The level of ties within the most solicited lists is used as the indicator of the level of ties among the recipients of the organisational emails.

Figure 5.5 provides an overview, per activity, of the average number of writers who send organisational emails to each list, per instance of organisation. The following findings stand out:

- I. Those writing organisational emails about both material and civic activities address almost all of the lists of GAS M;
- II. Those writing about the organisation of material activities mostly address the official email account of GAS M;
- III. Those writing about the organisation of civic activities mostly address Co-management list.

The main insight which can be derived from the dynamics of Figure 5.5 is that recipients of email conversations on the organisation of material activities are weakly tied, while in civic activities, recipients of the same kind of conversations are strongly tied. Actually, in the case of material activities it is indeed difficult to imagine how the recipients could build ties to one another. Emails about material activities mostly flow to the official email account of GAS M, which is managed by just one person at a time, namely whoever is responsible for the current activity. Hence there is even not a group whose strength of tie may be inferred. On the other hand, organisational emails about civic activities mostly address the Co-management list. As explained above, subscribers to this list are very few in number and are in almost daily email contact, so they have strong ties. Consequently, the recipients of organisational emails for civic activities, who mostly belong to this list, are tied too.

Figure 5.5 Average number of participants in organisation instances of GAS M activities per list they address



Number of writers of organisational emails per list they address per activity/Number of distinct instances of organisation per activity

The last step of this analysis on the variety of participation in GAS M activities is carried out with the aim of understanding how tied the participants are in the implementation of civic and material activities. To this end, results are presented, examined and discussed about the average number of subscribers, per list, group and instance of implementation.

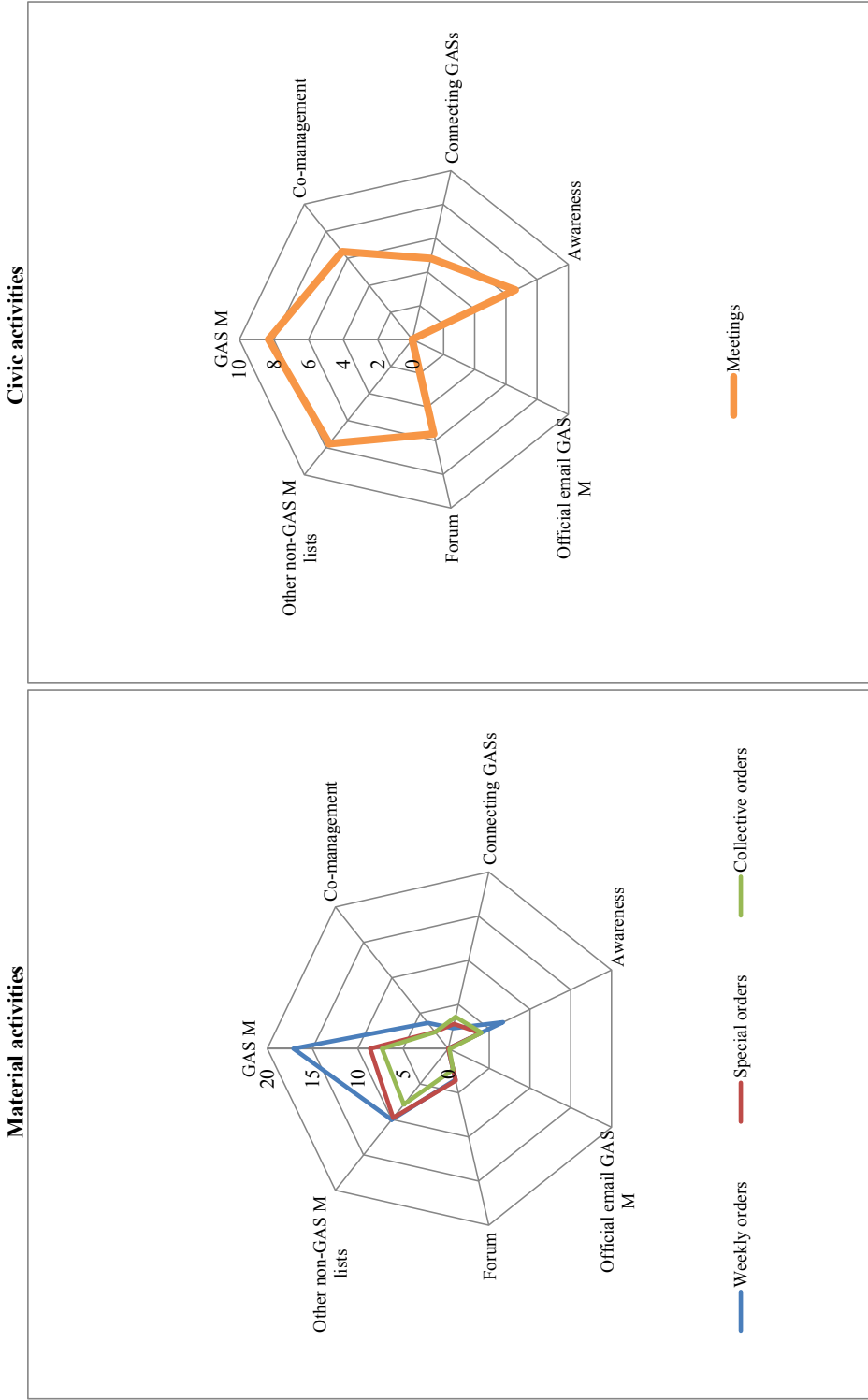
Figure 5.6 summarises the data on the average number of participants in the implementation of GAS M's activities per list they subscribe to. The following findings stand out:

- I. The subscriptions of participants in instances of implementation of both material and civic activities are spread over all of the GAS M lists;
- II. The subscriptions of participants in instances of implementation of material activities are concentrated around the list GAS M and other lists beyond those managed by GAS M. The latter are the lists with the highest average number of subscribers among those participating in the implementation of both collective and special orders. The list GAS M is the most subscribed to by those participating in the implementation of weekly orders;
- III. Among those participating in the implementation of civic activities, the average numbers of subscribers per list are very similar from one list to the other. The Co-management list is among the four most subscribed to lists⁵⁶.

Some of the key points highlighted in Figure 5.6 mirror the insights from Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4. Participants in the implementation of material activities are weakly tied, while participants in the implementation of civic activities have strong ties. Moreover, participants in the implementation of weekly orders are more tied than participants in the implementation of other material activities. As above explained, subscribers to the list GAS M show weak ties, as do the majority of participants in the implementation of weekly orders who subscribe to this list. Subscribers to lists other than those administered by GAS M are even more weakly tied. The latter lists are part of a category introduced to group all those participants in GAS M activities who do not subscribe to any of the mailing lists administered by GAS M. They are random participants in GAS M activities, participating only in those activities that suit their interests and in some cases only once. Thus they have few or no opportunities to interact with each other; often they just interact with the coordinator of the GAS M activity in which they are interested. Consequently, bonds between them are almost absent, as are the ties between the many people who participate in the implementation of collective and special orders who belong to this category. In contrast, participants in the implementation of civic activities show strong ties since most of them are people who subscribe to all or most of the GAS M lists. As above explained, they form a small group who interact regularly while contributing to the unfolding of all or most of GAS M's activities. These people know each other and, not least, subscribe to the Co-management list that, as already mentioned, is the list with the most strongly tied subscribers in the whole GAS M.

⁵⁶ The dynamics described for civic activities derive from the analysis of statistics concerning the activity denominated as meetings. The reason for excluding social meals and producers' visits lies in the fact that the data available for those activities show several gaps. The missing observations on the implementation of social meals and producers' visits are more in number than the available observations. This reduces the validity of the data available for those activities that are therefore excluded from this last part of the analysis on the variety of participation.

Figure 5.6 Average number of participants in implementation instances of GAS M activities per list they subscribe to



Number of participants in implementation instances per list they subscribe to per activity/number of distinct implementation instances per activity

The last step in the process of ascertaining the variety of participation in GAS M's activities is to find out how strong the ties are between participants in the implementation of material and civic activities considering the groups they belong to. Figure 5.7 shows the average number of participants in the implementation of GAS Ms's activities per group. The analysis of these statistics returns the following dynamics:

- I. Participants in the implementation of civic activities⁵⁷ mostly belong to the group of associated consumers and to the group of non-associated producers;
- II. Participants in the implementation of weekly orders mostly belong to the group of associated consumers, while most of the participants in the implementation of collective and special orders belong to the group of participants who are neither associated with GAS M nor subscribe to GAS M lists;
- III. In weekly orders, the group of non-associated producers is the second biggest group in terms of the average number of participants in the implementation of weekly orders belonging to it.

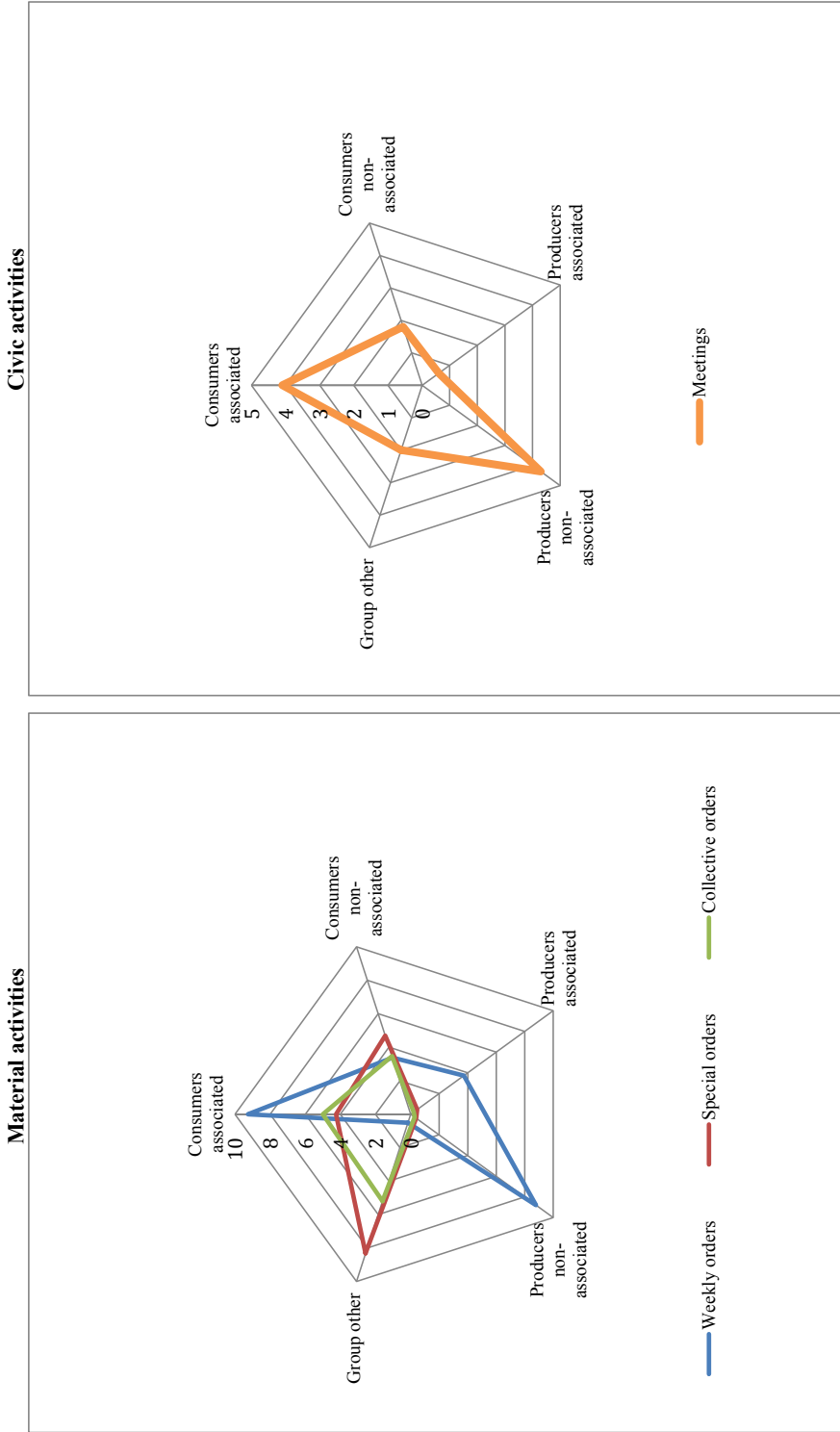
The insights emerging from the statistics in Figure 5.7 confirm, and further specify, some of the tendencies shown by the other discussed figures in terms of variety of participation in GAS M activities.

On the one hand, they confirm that those participating in the implementation of GAS M activities tend to be clustered within the same groups as those participating in the organisation of the same activities (Figure 5.4). In particular, for material activities, the group of consumers' associated to GAS M continues to be pre-eminent in weekly orders, since most of the participants in the implementation of weekly orders belong to this group. At the same time, the group of people who are neither associated to GAS M nor subscribe to its lists is still predominant in collective and special orders. Actually, its predominance is even higher when compared to the instances of organisation. In those cases, the group was among the most subscribed to, while in the cases of implementation, it represents the group to which most participants belong in the implementation of collective and special orders. As explained elsewhere, the group of consumers associated to GAS M is more tied than the group of people who are neither associated to GAS M nor subscribe to its lists. Hence, and coherently with what was said for the organisation of material activities when talking about the average number of subscriptions per group (Figure 5.4), participants in the implementation of weekly orders are more strongly tied than participants in the implementation of other material activities (Box 5.3 and Box 5.4).

On the other hand, Figure 5.7 expands the insights on the variety of participation in GAS M activities by showing the relevance of the group of non-associated producers, which has not emerged yet. This group attracts one of the highest numbers of subscribers among participants in the implementation of weekly orders and civic activities. Despite the fact that they do not pay the association fee, many of the producers in this group have been participating in GAS M's activities for a long time. They have been present at several occasions which provided them with the opportunity to meet and build up reciprocal acquaintance and ties. Moreover, they are a small group, 33 people belonging to this group over the whole period of study. Since most of the participants in the implementation of weekly orders and civic activities belong to this group and to the group of associated consumers, which is among the most bonded groups too, their level of ties can also be considered strong.

⁵⁷ See footnote 56.

Figure 5.7 Average number of participants in implementation instances of GAS M activities per group they belong to



Number of participants in implementation instances per group they belong to per activity/number of distinct implementation instances per activity

Box 5.4 Are weekly orders as tied as civic activities?

The figures in section 5.3.2 show that in several cases, the rank of the most subscribed lists and groups in weekly orders overlap with some, or all, of the same sort of ranks in civic activities. Does the overlap between the rank of the most subscribed lists and groups in weekly orders and civic activities imply that weekly orders are as strongly tied as civic activities, rather than as tied as other material activities?

Two main dynamics can be sketched within the unfolding of weekly orders. One dynamic exists in sending a weekly email calling for bookings, in replying to this call, in collecting the individual orders and forwarding an overall order to the producers, and then receiving and delivering the booked products. A second dynamic exists in discussing and acting on matters that are instrumental for the implementation of the weekly orders, without being part of the weekly procedure. For instance, there may be conversations concerning new products, features of certain products, organisational solutions and trends of the weekly bookings, to mention just a few.

Two different groups of people are involved in these two dynamics. The weekly procedure of calling for orders, ordering, and delivering products are generally coordinated just by one of GAS M members who send the call for the order over the list GAS M. A minority of subscribers to this list are people who regularly participate in GAS M activities and interact during those occasions, but who do not involve themselves in the organisation of the activities. The majority of the subscribers to the list who are mobilised by the weekly procedure of weekly orders are random participants, rarely interacting with each other. Hence, people involved in the weekly order procedure do not constitute a tied group; they mostly overlap with the equally untied group of participants in other material activities.

Conversely, the dynamic of discussing and acting on aspects that are related to the weekly procedure without being part of them involves a bonded group of people. Less than 20 people who contribute to the organisation of every GAS M activity and discuss every aspect of GAS M - they are the subscribers of Co-management list. These people know one another, and some of them have known each other since the GAS M constitution was formed, or even before this, and interact almost daily - they are thus a strongly tied group.

In summary, not all people involved in weekly orders are as tied as people participating in other civic activities. There is a small group of people who are involved only in some of the dynamics of organising weekly orders; this group coincides with and is equally tied as is the group of people involved in the organisation of civic activities.

The indicator of variety of participation in GAS M's activities derives from the reasoning around the concept of social diversity (Collins, 2004a). According to this reasoning, there are situations that are strongly tied since the people participating them are also strongly tied; this means that they are of a limited number, know each other, meet and can reinforce their ties during these situations. On the other hand, situations are weakly tied when their participants are a broad group of strangers who are involved in random and rare occasions of meeting. Those situations that show strong ties among the people involved are the most successful. When people are strongly tied, their commitment to the situations in which they are involved is high, and provides some of the basis upon which situations unfold and are maintained. In other words, strongly tied situations are highly intense situations (Collins, 2004a).

Adapted to the case of GAS M's activities, this implies that activities in which participants are strongly tied are intense activities which are likely to be successfully completed and repeated over time; hence they are very important activities within GAS M. Civic activities show the strongest ties among their participants, both in terms of organisation, (among the writers and receivers of organisational emails), and in terms of implementation, (among participants in the implementation). Civic activities are therefore the most intense, and thus constitute an important activity within GAS M with respect to the variety of participation. Material activities come second, with a distinction between weekly orders and other material activities. Weekly orders are the second most intense and important activity since their participants, particularly those writing organisational emails and those participating in implementation, are the second most tied group of participants. These are second compared to civic activities, but still come above other material activities, these being the least

intense and least important of GAS M's activities in relation to the indicator of variety of participation.

5.3.3 Level of participation

Three main tasks are instrumental for GAS M activities to take place and for their inner dynamics of organisation and implementation. First, participants can initiate the exchange of emails on organisational issues; they put forward a proposal to begin with the organisation of an instance of implementation within an activity, and launch some organisational inputs. Second, participants can contribute towards carrying on the process of email exchange on organisational issues until they are settled and everything is ready for the implementation stage. Third, participants can attend the implementation that follows up the organisation. The three measures to determine the level of participation in GAS M activities are explained in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Measures for level of participation in GAS M activities

Measures	Explanations	Corresponding figures
1) Rate of shared initiation among participants in instances of implementation.	Ratio between average number of participants per instance of implementation and average number of initiators of organisational email conversations per instance of organisation.	Figure 5.8
2) Rate of shared initiation among participants in instances of organisation.	Ratio between the average number of writers in organisational email conversations and the average number of initiators of organisational email conversations per instance of organisation.	Figure 5.8
3) Rate of shared organisation among participants in instances of implementation.	Ratio between the average number of participants per instance of implementation and the average number of writers in organisational email conversations per instance of organisation.	Figure 5.8

The measures are aimed at identifying how balanced the participation in GAS M activities is, that is to say the level of task sharing among the participants in the different activities. The reasoning behind the measures is that the highest level of balanced participation is reached when all participants are involved in all three above described tasks. Measures 1 and 3 therefore compare the number of people attending the implementation of activities with, respectively, those initiating the organisation and those continuing it. Measure 2 compares the number of participants continuing organisation with the number of people initiating it. The comparisons are made in the form of ratios between the average numbers of participants implementing the different tasks over all instances of organisation and implementation traced for each activity. When those ratios are all equal to one it means that the highest possible level of balanced participation is reached since all the participants in GAS M's activities are contributing to all the possible tasks.

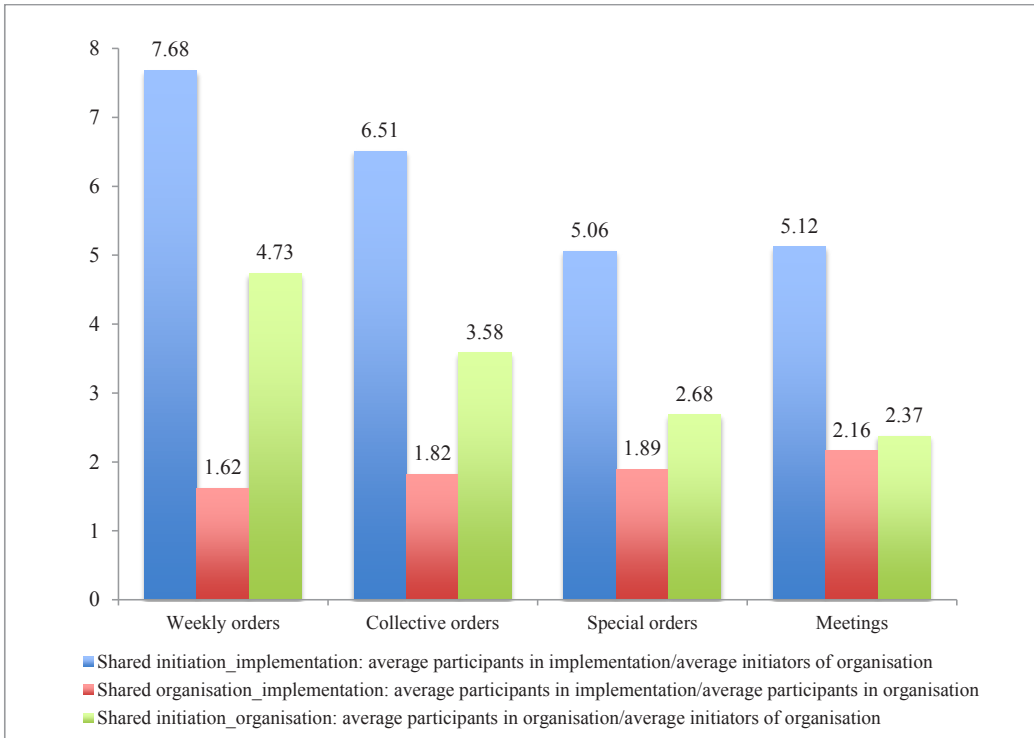
Figure 5.8 reports, for each activity⁵⁸ of GAS M, the results of the ratios on the levels of participation in all stages of GAS M activities. The most important findings are:

- I. The values of the ratios are greater than one for all activities;
- II. Meetings and special orders show the lowest ratios in the case of the rate of shared initiation within participants in both organisation and implementation. They also show the highest ratios in terms of the rate of shared organisation among participants in the implementation stages;

⁵⁸ See foot note number 56.

- III. Weekly and collective orders show the highest ratios in the case of the rate of shared initiation within participants in both organisation and implementation. Meanwhile, they show the lowest ratios in the rate of shared organisation within participants during implementation stages.

Figure 5.8 Rates of shared participation in GAS M activities



Two insights can be derived from the dynamics portrayed in Figure 5.8. The first is that the highest possible level of balanced participation is not reached in any of the activities of GAS M. In none of the GAS M activities do all participants get involved in all the three tasks which are necessary for an activity to develop. Moreover, most people's participation is in the implementation of GAS M activities, which is the task requiring the lowest level of involvement since it is about joining in with something that someone else has already organised, and being the final user of someone else's effort. Furthermore, among the fewer participants contributing to the task of organising GAS M activities, a small share contributes to the initiation stages of organising activities. Most of the participants in the organisation stages contribute by reacting to and following up the proposal of initiating a new round of organisation coming from the small share of participants who initiate it. Hence, the task of initiating new rounds of organisation, and their possible implementation, mobilises the fewest participants compared to the tasks of following up someone else's initiative and participating in its implementation.

The second insight which can be derived from Figure 5.8 is that the level of balanced participation in GAS M activities is higher for meetings and special orders than for weekly and collective orders. For special orders and meetings the share of participants who both attend the implementation of

GAS M activities and initiate their organisation is higher than for weekly and collective orders⁵⁹. Moreover, the share of participants who contribute to the organisation and have also initiated instances of organisation is larger for special orders and meetings than for weekly and collective orders. Hence, for special orders and meetings, larger shares of participants cover more than one task than they do for collective and weekly orders. Moreover, those participating in special orders and meetings are involved more in tasks such as initiating and following up organisation, which require higher levels of engagement than does attending the activities' implementation stages, than are the participants in weekly and collective orders. All this results in the more balanced and active involvement of participants in special orders and meetings than in weekly and collective orders (Box 5.5).

Box 5.5 What makes special orders different from other material activities in terms of the level of participation?⁶⁰

The dynamics of material activities generally involve one single person leading the organisation; this person proposes which products to order, verifies their availability, opens the order process, and coordinates the delivery. The majority of participants in material activities are therefore passive participants who react to and join the result of someone else's organisational effort.

Unlike other material activities, the dynamics of special orders often go beyond the coordination of the order and delivery of products. Several special orders are part of broader projects whose implementation requires some side activities besides the order and collection of products. For instance, seminars and other educational events are organised to convey the meaning of the whole project, as well as some tasks concerning the production and distribution of products which may be implemented in the form of socialising activities, such as collective days of work. Carrying out the implementation of special orders is therefore not a solo task. At least one group of people, namely those who are involved with the management of the GAS M, have an active role in organising special orders.

The quotations below are part of the email conversations about the organisation of a special order of flour. They are two sections of two emails and are included in order to give an insight into the task sharing involved in special orders:

Dear members of GAS M,

[...] Yesterday afternoon, together with some friends who have been sharing the project [name of the project] since its beginning, we [the producers involved in the project] transformed a big share of our wheat into flour. Thanks to [names of people] we have discovered a stone mill [...]. [Names of people] went to the mill with 35 kilos of wheat to be milled. [...]. The most emotional part of the day was when [names of people], in a few minutes, made fresh and delicious tagliatelle out of the freshly milled flour.

Hello,

we [some producers and other members of GAS M involved in the project] have almost finished delivering the orders. [...]. I don't ever want to forget the satisfied faces of those people I met after they had used the flour, as well as the support of all those people who helped [carrying on the project] without any self-interest [...].

Those quotations show that in some special orders, participants share the tasks of leading or contributing towards the unfolding of the activity. In so doing, they raise the level of sharing compared to what happens in other material activities where ordering and collecting products is the main task of the majority of participants, while the leading and organisation is the responsibility of one single person.

To conclude the sub-section on the level of participation in GAS M activities, the notion of central/peripheral participation (Collins, 2004a), from which the indicator is derived, will now be recalled. Central participation refers to the active contribution in carrying out situations, while

⁵⁹ However, the number of people who both attend implementation stages and contribute to organisation is lower for special orders and meetings than it is for weekly and collective orders. Given that the number of participants in implementation stays constant, what determines these dynamics is that in weekly and collective orders there is a larger gap between participants in following up organisation and participants initiating organisation compared to meetings and special orders. This indicates a lower level of sharing of the initiation of organisation within those participating in the organisation of weekly and collective orders compared to those participating in the organisation of special orders and meetings. In turn, the larger gap between participants in following up organisation and those initiating organisation is another indicator of the higher balance in sharing tasks for meetings and special orders than in weekly and collective orders.

⁶⁰ Tagliatelle is the name for a type of pasta.

peripheral participation means that participants join in passively with situations that are carried out by someone else. Situations range from those carried out by a few people to those where the task is shared in a balanced way among all the participants. The latter situations are more intense than the former. In other words, when the tasks involved in carrying out a situation are shared among participants in a balanced way, these situations have a higher likelihood of unfolding and being repeated because most of the participants feel responsible (Collins, 2004a). Following this, the activities in GAS M that show higher levels of balanced distribution of tasks among participants are more intense and important than those with lower levels of balance. Therefore, special orders and civic activities, which emerged as being the most balanced in terms of task distribution, are also the most intense and important activities with respect to the level of participation. Weekly and collective orders follow behind these.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter focusses on the reasoning according to which social phenomena can be studied in terms of the repetition of situations of interaction. Each situation has its own specific likelihood to take place and repeat overtime; in other words, situations have different degrees of intensity and, therefore, of importance in shaping social phenomena (Collins, 2004a). Hence, it is important to identify the situations of interactions and their intensity as a means to identify to which extent each of them can influence GAS M's identity.

Six activities were studied as examples of situations of interaction within GAS M; three of them involve the exchange of products and were defined as material activities; the remaining three do not involve transactions or products exchange, but are rather primarily about socialising and dealing with civic issues, and have been called civic activities. Three indicators were used to ascertain the intensity and importance of those activities over time and in relation to one another. The frequency of these activities is the indicator establishing how often an activity takes place; the variety of participation in an activity unveils the extent to which participants in an activity are tied, and therefore how tied the activity is; the level of participation in an activity indicates the level of balanced sharing between participants of those tasks which are instrumental in the unfolding of an activity. All in all, those indicators measure the intensity and importance of GAS M activities in terms of the performance of those activities for each indicator. The higher the intensity for each indicator, the higher the importance of an activity in influencing GAS M's identity with its features. Among the six identified activities, no single activity showed a constant dynamic, in terms of level of intensity, over all of the indicators. Nonetheless, some regularity emerged with respect to civic and material activities.

Civic activities have the most tied interactions among participants and are also, along with the material activity of special orders, the activities with the highest level of balanced tasks sharing among their participants. However, civic activities show the least intense frequency. They are sporadic activities with an irregular schedule, even if they show high levels of accomplishment once the process of organisation begins. In sum, civic activities can be distinguished from the other activities for two of the three indicators, namely the variety and level of participation. First, they mobilise the most strongly tied group of people in implementing those tasks that are essential for the activities, even if this is on fewer occasions than other activities. Second, they are among the activities that are more able to mobilise people for the accomplishment of more than one task, instrumental for the activities to take place, at once, and in those tasks requiring the highest levels of engagement.

Material activities distinguish themselves in being the most frequent activities; nonetheless, each of them show some peculiarities with respect both to the indicator of frequency and to the other

indicators of intensity, forming a group of activities which is not as compact as the group of civic activities. Weekly and special orders perform better than other material activities with respect to some of the indicators of intensity, which are different in the case of weekly and special orders. Weekly orders emerge as the most frequent activities overall; moreover, they involve a group of people who, despite being less strongly tied than participants in civic activities, are more tied than the participants in the other material activities. Special orders distinguish themselves from the other material activities through their higher level of balanced tasks sharing. For the other two indicators of frequency and variety of participation, special orders perform in line with the other material activity of collective orders. All in all, collective orders show the lowest levels of intensity attained by any of the material activities over all the indicators. Alongside special orders, they show the second best performance in terms of frequency of unfolding and repeating over time as well as they show the lowest degree of tiedness among participants. Finally, along with weekly orders, they have the least balanced task sharing among participants in the organisation and implementation of activities.

The overall performance of material and civic activities can be interpreted through the categories of *focussed crowds* and *individualised encounters* introduced by IR theory (Collins, 2004a). Focussed crowds refer to those situations where people are in each other's presence even though they do not usually know each other and do not necessarily get to know each other while participating in the same situation. Moreover, those people are brought into that situation because someone who is external to the group participating in the situation has initiated the occasion; in other words, the situation has a defined focus chosen by someone else, but provides them with a reason and opportunity to participate in the situation⁶¹. Individualised encounters are situations where people who know each other are in each other's presence. Those people have common interests that, from time to time, mobilise them to repeat the encounter. These are self-reproducing situations because the initiative to meet again comes from within the group, from a person, or persons, within the group who arouse the willingness to be in those encounters where they can experience their common interests⁶². Within the frame of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), individualised encounters are more intense than focussed crowds because the driver for them to take place and be repeated is internal to the group (Collins, 2004a).

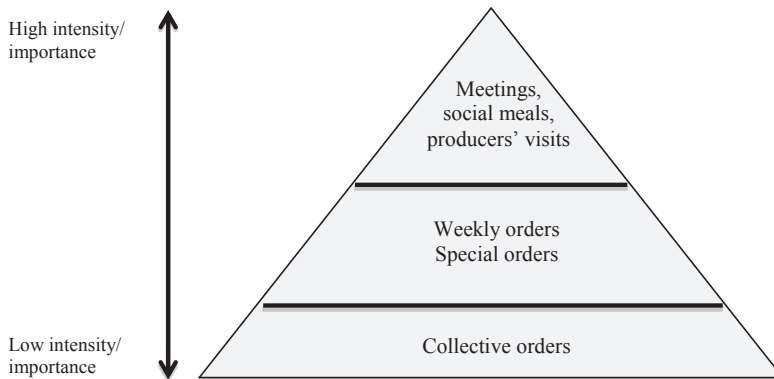
On the one hand, material activities resemble focussed crowds because, as shown above, they involve people from the broadest GAS M lists and groups, and also beyond GAS M lists. The majority of participants do not know each other and scarcely interact with each other during the activities because of their random participation in these activities. Moreover, the majority of participants in material activities are actively involved neither in the initiation nor in the continuation of material activities. Their attention and interest in joining in with material activities is renewed through calls to order and collect products, by other people who are part of the groups charged with the management of GAS M as a whole (i.e. the subscribers of Co-management list). On the other hand, civic activities have the features of individualised encounters since they mainly involve a small group of people, (i.e. the subscribers of Co-management list), who manage GAS M. They know each other and are responsible for initiating and continuing to organise and implement civic activities. Periodically, those people, who are also the initiators and organisers of material activities, create opportunities to meet by proposing to visit producers, to have meals together, or to discuss GAS M and relevant civic issues.

⁶¹ Concerts, sport and other cultural events are examples of focussed crowds. They are moments when people with a common interest gather together and share some feelings towards the situation that brings them together. Nonetheless, none of them has actively created the situation; they are passive spectators of what someone else has promoted and they do not know each other. However, they are interested in being in the situation and repeating the experience, if the opportunity is given again, because the focus of the situation attracts them (Collins, 2004a).

⁶² Meetings between friends and colleagues are presented as individualised encounters (Collins, 2004a).

In line with what IR theory (Collins, 2004a) argues about the intensity of focussed crowds and individualised encounters (Collins, 2004a), it can be maintained that civic activities are more intense than material activities, since the former are more able to mobilised a tied group of people around common interests and to actively engage them in creating occasions where they can experience those interests together. Among material activities, weekly and special orders are more capable than collective orders, respectively, in tying the group of involved people and in engaging them in promoting the carrying out and repetition of activities. Figure 5.9 shows GAS M's activities in relation to their importance in influencing GAS M identity, as derived from their intensity. Civic activities are at the top in terms of intensity, and therefore influencing GAS M identity with their purposes, followed by weekly and special orders, with collective orders at the bottom of the ranking.

Figure 5.9 Ranking of GAS M activities in terms of intensity/importance: frequency, level, and variety of participation



(Own elaboration)

These conclusions about the intensity and importance of GAS M activities open up two main questions. One question concerns why those activities, namely civic activities, that are more intense overall are also the ones that take place least often. The other question concerns why the small group of people who manage GAS M and are primarily interested in civic activities are also behind the initiation and organisation of material activities.

There are two possible answers to address the first question. One, civic activities are mostly about creating occasions for socialising, raising awareness about civic issues, and discussing organisational matters related to GAS M as well as its principles and mission. All of this can also be done without formally organising and implementing a civic activity. Socialising, reflecting on the organisation, principles and mission of GAS M, and talking about civic matters can also be done whilst sending organisational emails about material activities as well as while implementing material activities, or at any other moment when members of GAS M get in touch. Throughout the chapter there are examples of how civic activities may take place informally (Box 5.1). The data on the frequency of civic activities report only the formal instances of organisation and implementation in civic activities, so, the overall frequency of civic activities may be low because it is underestimated. The second answer to the question has a theoretical foundation. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) maintains that high levels of ties among participants in situations of interactions and highly balanced participation in situations of

interactions come along with a high likelihood that those situations take place and repeat (Collins, 2004a). This study, which has a descriptive-explorative approach, has re-interpreted IR theory's (Collins, 2004a) reasoning in an explorative fashion according to which strong ties among participants, highly balanced participation, and high frequency in taking place are all indicators of the high intensity of situations of interactions. The data reported in this study shows the opposite. Strong ties and highly balanced participation may co-occur with a low frequency of situations of interactions. The theoretical explanation behind this result may be that after a certain degree of closeness and commitment is reached between participants in situations of interactions, those situations do not need to formally repeat. Repeating is a way to confirm and establish a situation; it is possible that when situations are able to mobilise highly tied and committed groups of participants, then they are established and do not need to be repeated in order to be confirmed or, at least, they need repetitions and confirmations less often than when groups of participants are not very tied and committed. So, after a certain level of ties and commitment is reached among participants in a situation, it is possible that the frequency at which it takes place and repeats stabilises.

The second question opened by the conclusions on the intensity of GAS M's activities, concerning why people who are mostly interested in civic activities also organise material activities will be answered in the coming chapter.

IR theory (Collins, 2004a) assumes that besides the accomplishment of practical tasks, whether with economic, social, or civic implications, a process of generating foci of attention and attaching them with a special significance takes place in situations of interactions. Foci of attention, the forms of attention they mobilise, and their significance should be disclosed, alongside to the capacity of situations to take place, repeat, and mobilise people, to understand situations of interactions and their implications for the social reality they constitute (Collins, 2004a).

Following IR theory (Collins, 2004a), further insights can be obtained on both material and civic GAS M activities, as well as on their implications for GAS M identity, by unveiling their foci of attention, (besides the implementation of tasks that are instrumental for the actual taking place of the activity), the forms of attention they mobilise, and their significance. Recalling chapters 3 and 4, common understanding is intended as what focusses the attention of participants in GAS M activities. It is a second component which is generated, alongside feelings of attachment, in GAS M activities and that is instrumental to unveil the features of these activities and their implications for GAS M identity. Hence, the next chapter will disclose common understanding in GAS M activities by disclosing what people discuss when they engage in initiating, organising, and implementing GAS M activities. The contribution of this further investigation into GAS M activities is twofold. First, the coming chapter will be a further step towards understanding the identity of GAS M by moving the analysis of both material and civic activities away from their intensity and towards their foci of attention as well as the significance of these foci. Second, it will support a better understanding of the results of chapter 5 by clarifying the open issues of why people who are primarily interested in civic activities also engage with the carrying out of material activities.

Chapter 6

Expanding on the identity of GAS M: the forms of attention, what attracts attention, and its significance in GAS M activities

6.1 Introduction

“Social action has a very large unconscious component [...] because by focussing our attention upon a collective object of action [...] our attention is defocussed from the social process in which we are entrained while doing so” (Collins, 2004a, p. 97). This quotation is the starting point of this chapter. Following IR theory (Collins, 2004a), situations of interactions are what constitute social action (Collins, 2004a). The unconscious component concerns what in chapter 3 has been defined as common understanding. It has been explained as the thing that attracts attention and becomes significant in motivating participants to take part in an activity in a way that goes beyond the practical purpose of an activity. According to IR theory (Collins, 2004a), learning about what generates attention, and the significance of that focus of attention is essential for understanding the features of these situations. In turn, this is then useful for understanding the identity of social phenomena that are constituted in these situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a).

As said elsewhere in this thesis, GAS M activities are considered as examples of situations of interactions from which features emerge that reflect the identity of GAS M. Chapter 5 focussed on the capacity of GAS M activities to fulfil and to engage people as means to unveil the feelings of attachment generating in these activities. This chapter looks into the common understanding built in GAS M activities. It starts by exploring which themes are discussed in conversations while GAS M activities take place. The themes and the conversations discussing them are considered as sources of information about common understanding since they occur repeatedly during the organisation and implementation of activities and, hence possibly attract the attention of the participants. By investigating the contents of conversations and the themes it is possible to find out what attracts attention in GAS M activities and its significance. At the same time it is possible to shed light on the forms of attention generated in GAS M activities. This again, grants insight into the identity of GAS M. The research question this chapter seeks to answer, is the following:

How is the identity of GAS M produced and negotiated in conversations occurring while GAS M activities take place?

IR theory (Collins, 2004a) proposes some guidelines to examine the generation of what in this thesis has been explained as common understanding. The first guideline invites the researcher to investigate which sort of attention is generated in situations of interactions. The second guideline proposes the reconstruction of the intensity and features of the occasions where attention generates. The third guideline suggests to uncover the variety of occasions where the same focus, that attracts attention once, is central again (Collins, 2004a).

This chapter introduces a coding frame that adapts the guidelines of IR theory (Collins, 2004a). The coding frame is used to guide both the qualitative and the quantitative content analysis of emails and face-to-face conversations during GAS M activities. Quantitative content analysis will inform about the forms of attention regarding the themes discussed in conversations; qualitative content analysis will report on the topics discussed and their significance. Taken together these analyses give insight into GAS M's identity.

The chapter is structured as follow. Section 6.2 will explain how the guidelines based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) are operationalised. Section 6.3 will report on the results of both the quantitative and the qualitative content analysis of conversations during GAS M activities. Section 6.4 will provide some conclusions on the implications for GAS M's identity.

6.2 Strategy to uncover the forms of attention, what attracts attention and its significance in GAS M conversations

In this section, the coding frame to uncover what forms of attention generate around themes discussed in conversations during GAS M activities, what attracts attention in these conversations and its significance is presented. The definition and application of this coding frame is part of what in other chapters of this thesis has been referred to as the second step of data analysis.

The second step of data analysis in qualitative research aims at explaining what has been described during the first step of analysis, based on an overarching theory or model (Foster, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The second step of data analysis took place from November 2013 to January 2014 when data collection and the first step of the analysis had been completed, and aims at interpreting the results of this first step through IR theory (Collins, 2004a).

The second step of data analysis starts by using the accounting scheme named 'themes' that was defined during the first step of data analysis. This scheme inductively identifies the themes discussed in conversations during GAS M activities that took place from September 2011 to February 2013. In this second step these themes, and the related conversations, are the starting point for examining the forms of attention generated around the themes discussed in conversations, what attracted attention and its significance.

Conceptual reasoning and guidelines, and the resulting coding frame

Following IR theory (Collins, 2004a), what attracts attention in a situation, is likely to acquire a special significance, a meaning that is peculiar for that particular situation⁶³. A two-stage analysis helps to verify if that which attracts attention also acquires a special significance. It starts with investigating three main elements to discover the emerging forms of attention. Then one has to reflect on if and which meaning is attached to this form of attention (Collins, 2004a).

The three elements to be investigated are the following:

1. First, which **sort of attention** is generated. This implies investigating if that which is attracting attention is treated with respect, as a part of ordinary life, with disrespect, or with indifference; if it is defended or attacked; if it is attached to special, personal or shared positive or negative values or to special rules on who can have access to it and how.

⁶³ Anything, from tangible elements such as people and other non-human beings, or visual icons, or gestures to intangible elements such as ideas, words or topics, has the potential to attract attention and acquire special significance in a situation of interaction (Collins, 2004a).

2. Second, the **features and intensity of occasions** where attention is generated must be examined. The following elements need to be ascertained: number of people involved, their roles in the occasion and the ways in which they relate to each other, and the frequency of the occasions.
3. Third, the **variety of occasions** where attention towards the same thing is generated must be elucidated. This requires tracing all the occasions during which the same ‘something’ attracts attention, after the one during which it initially arouse attention (Collins, 2004a)⁶⁴.

This research uses the three listed elements and the overall IR theory (Collins, 2004a) as guidelines for disclosing the forms of attention generated around themes discussed in conversations during GAS M activities, what attracts attention in these conversations and its significance. Four sets of questions and associated codes are derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and through considering the information available on GAS M from the gathered data⁶⁵. They are explained below and are synthesised in Table 6.1.

1. A first question regards which themes are discussed in the conversations under investigation. The corresponding codes list the possible themes of conversation. These are the seven themes⁶⁶ identified in the first step of data analysis as recurring in email conversations, from September 2011 to February 2013, as well as in face-to-face conversations, from December 2012 to January 2013. Hence, this first set of codes is defined from what inductively emerges from conversations during GAS M activities. The first question and codes identify the possible sources of what attracts attention; then the generated forms of attention will be ascertained and their significance.

2. A second group of questions looks into the sorts of conversations around the different themes to find out whether the conversations around the themes reflect agreement, disagreement, was hold in smooth tones, and produced common sense or common values; in addition it is investigated which GAS M mailing lists and groups are involved in the conversations. The corresponding codes reflect the questions. There are codes labelled agreement, disagreement, smooth tone, common sense, and common value, as well as codes named after the GAS M mailing lists and groups. These codes are deductively inferred from an adaptation of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines to disclose the sort of attention generated on occasions where attention on something may possibly emerge (Collins, 2004a).

3. A third group of questions looks into the intensity of the conversations by checking the frequency of conversations about each theme. The corresponding codes trace the frequency distribution per each theme’s code. These codes are deductively derived from the IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines to disclose the features and intensity of the occasions where attention on something may emerge (Collins, 2004a).

4. Finally, a fourth group of questions studies the variety of occasions when conversations on different themes take place. They aim to find out during which GAS M activities, and at which, (i.e. organisation or implementation), moments during those activities the conversations take place, or if conversations on these themes occur outside of GAS M activities. The corresponding codes are aimed at tracing all the possible occasions of conversations about the different themes, and

⁶⁴ The strategy also suggests investigating how individuals treat and relate to the thing to which they are paying attention when they are on their own (Collins, 2004a). Investigating this aspect would imply moving the investigation from the situations and the groups of people participating in those situations to a single actor’s rationalisations. However, given that the overall aim of this work is to overcome the dependency on actors’ rationalisations, this last guideline will not be followed in this research.

⁶⁵ Given the available information on GAS M, it has not been possible to ascertain all the aspects suggested by Collins (2004a). With respect to the second guideline, the number of people involved in the occasions where attention is generated, their roles and the ways in which they relate to each other could not be coded. The same holds true for the occasion where attention was first generated.

⁶⁶ Themes are first listed in Table 6.1 and later on explained in Table 6.3, where the topics connected with each of the themes are reported.

therefore list all the possible GAS M activities, all the possible moments within each activity, (i.e. organisation or implementation), and the generic category of occasions of conversations outside of GAS M activities. These codes are deductively derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines to examine the variety of occasions where attention on something may emerge (Collins, 2004a).

All in all, the coding frame results from the adaptation of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines to examine the forms of attention generated around themes discussed in conversations during GAS M activities, what attracts attention in these conversations and its significance. In line with what scholars indicate as being important when devising a coding frame (Bauer, 2000), this coding frame includes some questions and corresponding codes which combine theoretical guidelines, namely IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines, with the available empirical material. Moreover, the coding frame defined in this research includes both inductively and deductively derived codes. This adheres to what scholars suggest as a strategy to mediate between the need to ground the analytical codes in the material of study and the need to ensure that the codes can also provide theoretically informed results (Berg, 2001).

Operationalising the coding frame

This study uses the coding frame to guide both quantitative and qualitative content analysis of conversations during GAS M activities. Quantitative content analysis of these conversations is done to disclose the emerging forms of attention. Forms of attention are disclosed by looking at the factual contents of conversations and by ascertaining the frequency distribution of the codes listed in the coding frame per theme discussed in conversations. Qualitative content analysis looks at the latent contents of those conversations to find out what, within the discussed themes, actually solicits attention and its significance. This study is in line with those scholars who suggest blending quantitative and qualitative content analysis. They recommend using quantitative content analysis to take account of the magnitude of what emerges from the analysis, while qualitative content analysis is done to produce data on the nature and the meaning of what emerges from the analysis (Bauer, 2000; Berg, 2001; Smith, 1975).

Purposive and theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2013) is used to select the physical units of analysis for the content analysis. Emails and related documents⁶⁷ circulated through the GAS M mailing lists and email account are expressions of conversations taking place while GAS M activities are organised. Conversations taking place while GAS M activities are implemented can be found in field notes reporting those conversations ad verbatim. Emails and linked documents are available from September 2011 to February 2013, while field notes were collected from December 2012 until January 2013. Both emails with the linked documents and field notes, from December 2012 to January 2013, have been selected as physical units of analysis. The sub-selection of emails from the whole available sample is justified as follows. Since the both empirical and theoretical aim is to find out which forms of attention are generated, what attracts attention, and what is its significance in GAS M activities it is important to analyse conversations taking place during both the organisation and the implementation of these activities, since they represent their two main moments. The selected period (i.e. December 2012-January 2013) is the only frame within which data is available on conversations covering both organisation and implementation. Therefore, documents, (i.e. emails with linked documents and field notes), reporting of conversations in the mentioned frame are chosen as physical units of analysis. Moreover, the representativeness of the selected emails and related documents is supported by the fact that the very same themes of conversations return time

⁶⁷ Related documents refer to any document attached to emails or linked in the email text, (e.g. reports, flyers, website pages, video, images).

and again in the chosen units of analysis as well as in all the available emails and related documents, (i.e. September 2011 - February 2013)⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ A matrix reporting the whole sample of emails and linked documents, (i.e. September 2011 - February 2013), registered per theme is available to be consulted in the database of this research.

Table 6.1 Conceptual guidelines, empirical questions and codes to disclose what attracts attention, which form of attention, and its significance in GAS M activities

Steps	IR theory guidelines	Questions	Codes
First	Identify possible sources of what attracts attention.	What are the main themes discussed in GAS M conversations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure, purposes, and results intra activities - Products and producers - Roles - Actors, events, opinions and lifestyle - Planning and priorities inter activities - Place - Network
Second	Disclose which sort of attention may be generated.	<p>Are conversations around themes generating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agreement, - disagreement, - smooth tone, - common sense, - common values? <p>Are there boundaries to participation in conversations about the different themes? Which lists and groups are involved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group consumers associated - Group consumers non-associated - Group producers associated - Group producers non-associated - Group other - List GAS M - Co-management list - Connecting GASs list - Awareness list - Official email GAS M - Forum - Other non-GAS M lists
Third	Ascertain the features and intensity of the occasions where attention may emerge.	How frequent are conversations about the different themes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of quotations per theme
Fourth	Ascertain the variety of occasions where the which that attracts attention is again central beyond the occasion where it first appeared.	<p>During which GAS M activities do conversations on the different themes occur?</p> <p>Are they email conversations during the organisation of GAS M activities or face-to-face conversations during the implementation of GAS M activities?</p> <p>Do conversations on the themes occur in occasions outside of GAS M activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conversations during weekly orders - Conversations during collective orders - Conversations during special orders - Conversations during meetings - Conversations during social meals - Conversations during producers' visits - Conversation during other initiatives - Email conversations - Face-to-face conversations - Conversations outside of GAS M activities

Table 6.2 reports the number of coded physical units of analysis per type, (i.e. emails and linked documents, or field notes), and per activity during which the conversations they are an expression of were held.

Table 6.2 Number of coded units of analysis, per type and per activity⁶⁹

Activities	Emails & linked documents	Field notes
Collective orders	20	0
Meetings	28	2
Other initiatives	178	3
Producers' visits	8	0
Social meals	12	1
Special orders	78	2
Weekly orders	98	4

The coded emails with their linked documents and the coded field notes are an example of cluster sampling (Bauer, 2000). In other words, each email, linked document and field note is analysed in relation to their components. Field notes, emails and linked documents have been analysed with ATLAS.ti using the coding frame presented above. In particular, the codes tracing themes are inferred from sections within emails and linked documents, as well as within field notes. The remaining codes are inferred from single words, expressions or other elements within the sections of field notes, emails and linked documents that are coded with the themes' codes. Table 6.3 reports the components that reflect each of the codes in the coding frame.

The descriptive design (Bauer, 2000) is used for the purposes of quantitative content analysis and consists of reporting the frequency distribution of the co-occurrence of the themes' codes with the other codes of the coding frame. For the purposes of the qualitative content analysis, sections of the different analysed units of analysis are reported and commented upon, these referring to different themes, conversations, and points in time during the period of analysis.

⁶⁹ The total number of physical units of analysis uploaded on ATLAS.ti is higher than the total number of coded units of analysis for the following reasons: 1) In some units of analysis there may be references to several activities. They have been uploaded for all the activities they refer to, but only one of them has been coded. Codes indicating the different activities have been attached to the different sections of the unit of analysis where the activities are recalled. 2) Some units contain repetitions of documents that have been coded just once (e.g. several emails reporting the same attached document; emails containing both the initial email and the email replying to this, while the starting email and reply are also uploaded separately). 3) Some units make reference only to other units which are then coded taking care to specify the different activities the units refers to, (e.g. observation of one activity which is included in a dedicated section of the observation of another activity since they took place together). 4) Some units are unreadable. Moreover the total frequency of quotations per activity can be higher than the total number of coded units per activity since in some units the code referring to the same activity can recur more than once when more than one conversations in the unit refer to the activity and in a non-continuous way, in the sense that there are conversations about other activities in between, (e.g. observations where the verbatim of different conversations are noted).

Table 6.3 Codes and components of the units of analysis which reflect them

Steps	Codes	Components
<p>First: possible sources of what attracts attention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure, purposes, and results intra activities - Products and producers - Roles - Actors, events, opinions, and lifestyle - Planning and priorities inter activities - Place - Network - Agreement - Disagreement - Smooth tone - Common sense - Common value - Group consumers associated - Group consumers non-associated - Group producers associated - Group producers non-associated - Group other - List GAS M - Co-management list - Connecting GASs list - Awareness list - Official email GAS M - Forum - Other non-GAS M lists 	<p>Sections of emails and linked documents as well as of field notes where the following topics associated to the different themes are traced:</p> <p>How to structure planned activities. Main moments, messages to be conveyed, purposes to be reached, expected results.</p> <p>Producers' features, producers' behaviors, practices, ideas and issues related to these. Decisions about introducing new producers and products and excluding old ones.</p> <p>Who does what in GAS M. Task assignment and practices.</p> <p>Sharing opinions and debating about something of interest for GAS M. (e.g. initiatives, topics, people, ways of living).</p> <p>Prioritising among activities and projects while prioritising among principles to be followed and missions to be accomplished.</p> <p>Locations for GAS M activities.</p> <p>GAS M connection with other, both regional and national, realities.</p> <p>Single words or expressions conveying agreement on the discussed theme.</p> <p>Single words or expressions conveying disagreement on the discussed theme.</p> <p>When there are no components conveying any feeling on the discussed theme.</p> <p>Single words or expressions conveying the existence of special jargon used to talk about a theme which is understandable for the people using it.</p> <p>Single words or expressions conveying either a positive or a negative judgment shared among the people discussing a theme and attached to the theme.</p>
<p>Second: sort of conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of quotations per theme - Conversations during weekly orders - Conversations during collective orders - Conversations during special orders - Conversations during meetings - Conversations during social meals - Conversations during producers' visits - Conversation during other initiatives - Email conversations - Face-to-face conversations - Conversations outside of GAS M activities 	<p>Names of people involved in face-to-face conversations reported in the verbatim of those conversations.</p> <p>Addresses indicated in the spaces for sender and addressees of the email.</p> <p>Frequency distribution of each code indicating a different theme. The codes are attached to sections of emails and linked documents, as well as to field notes as explained above.</p> <p>Single words or other elements of the documents, (e.g. headers in emails and field notes or explicit reference made by the speakers), where a reference to the different activities is made.</p> <p>Elements of the documents from which the email structure is inferred, (e.g. email's headers).</p> <p>Section of the documents from which the structure of verbatim of face-to-face conversations is inferred (e.g. observations' headers).</p> <p>Expressions or sentences from which it emerges that the theme under discussion has been discussed outside of GAS M activities.</p>
<p>Third: intensity of conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of quotations per theme - Conversations during weekly orders - Conversations during collective orders - Conversations during special orders - Conversations during meetings - Conversations during social meals - Conversations during producers' visits - Conversation during other initiatives - Email conversations - Face-to-face conversations - Conversations outside of GAS M activities 	<p>Names of people involved in face-to-face conversations reported in the verbatim of those conversations.</p> <p>Addresses indicated in the spaces for sender and addressees of the email.</p> <p>Frequency distribution of each code indicating a different theme. The codes are attached to sections of emails and linked documents, as well as to field notes as explained above.</p> <p>Single words or other elements of the documents, (e.g. headers in emails and field notes or explicit reference made by the speakers), where a reference to the different activities is made.</p> <p>Elements of the documents from which the email structure is inferred, (e.g. email's headers).</p> <p>Section of the documents from which the structure of verbatim of face-to-face conversations is inferred (e.g. observations' headers).</p> <p>Expressions or sentences from which it emerges that the theme under discussion has been discussed outside of GAS M activities.</p>
<p>Fourth: variety of occasions of conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of quotations per theme - Conversations during weekly orders - Conversations during collective orders - Conversations during special orders - Conversations during meetings - Conversations during social meals - Conversations during producers' visits - Conversation during other initiatives - Email conversations - Face-to-face conversations - Conversations outside of GAS M activities 	<p>Names of people involved in face-to-face conversations reported in the verbatim of those conversations.</p> <p>Addresses indicated in the spaces for sender and addressees of the email.</p> <p>Frequency distribution of each code indicating a different theme. The codes are attached to sections of emails and linked documents, as well as to field notes as explained above.</p> <p>Single words or other elements of the documents, (e.g. headers in emails and field notes or explicit reference made by the speakers), where a reference to the different activities is made.</p> <p>Elements of the documents from which the email structure is inferred, (e.g. email's headers).</p> <p>Section of the documents from which the structure of verbatim of face-to-face conversations is inferred (e.g. observations' headers).</p> <p>Expressions or sentences from which it emerges that the theme under discussion has been discussed outside of GAS M activities.</p>

6.3 Unveiling the forms of attention, what attracts attention and its significance in GAS M conversations

This section is about ascertaining the forms of attention generated around themes discussed in conversations during GAS M activities, what attracts attention and its significance. In particular, subsection 6.3.1 reports on the results of a quantitative content analysis for seven different themes with a focus on the forms of attention the different themes generate. Subsection 6.3.2 discusses the results of the qualitative content analysis for three of the seven discussed themes with the aim of unveiling what more in particular attracts attention and its significance.

6.3.1 Forms of attention generated in GAS M conversations about recurring themes

Table 6.4 reports data that is instrumental in outlining the forms of attention which may be generated by each theme discussed in GAS M conversations. It is a table of codes' co-occurrence whose columns list the codes of the coding frame that refer to the seven themes discussed in GAS M conversations, while the rows list the codes of the coding frame in terms of the sort and intensity of conversations the themes generate, as well as the variety of occasions where conversations on the themes recur. The numbers in the cells of the table report the frequency with which codes referring to the different themes recur together with the other codes of the coding frame. In particular, the numbers reported from the top to the bottom of the table present the following information for each theme:

1. The sort of conversations it generates in terms of: how many times the theme generates agreement, common sense, common value, disagreement or smooth conversations; how many times the theme is talked about in the different GAS M mailing lists and the total number of mailing lists that discussed the theme; how many times the theme is discussed within the different GAS M groups and total number of groups that discussed it.
2. The intensity of the conversations by indicating the frequency distribution of the code referring to the theme.
3. The variety of conversations about the theme by indicating how many times the theme recurs in: email conversations during the organisation of GAS M activities, face-to-face conversations during the implementation of the same activities, conversations during the different GAS M activities, and conversations during occasions that go beyond GAS M activities ⁷⁰.

The data reported in Table 6.4 show that all the seven themes identified as recurring in GAS M conversations generate some forms of attention. Nonetheless, there are three themes that can be distinguished from the others since they show outstanding results for the highest number of aspects considered to ascertain the forms of attention each theme generates in conversations about it. They

⁷⁰ The row table of codes co-occurrence is reported in Appendix 2. The table is more extended than the table reported in this chapter, following guidelines suggested by scholars to boost the transparency and reliability of the content analysis (Bauer, 2000). The following are the modifications made: the rows named 'total number of lists', 'total number of groups', and 'total number of activities' are introduced as new. They are not codes, but rather labels that summarise the results of other data on the different lists, groups, and activities in, and during, which themes are talked about. Some cells do not report numbers. In the case of the number of times a theme is discussed per list and group, numbers are reported just for the list and group with the highest frequency of co-occurrence; for the codes referring to the different activities the numbers are reported just for the activities with the highest and lowest frequency of co-occurrence. Finally, the table in this chapter does not show the total frequency distribution of each code, unlike the table in appendix 2. The reason for the mentioned differences is that Table 6.4 is more readable than table in appendix 2, without eliminating information that is meaningful for the analysis.

Expanding on the identity of GAS M: focus of attention

are the themes ‘structure, purposes, and results intra activities’, ‘products and producers’, and ‘place’.

The theme ‘structure, purposes, and results intra activities’ stands out for:

- a. the neutral tone used to talk about it since the frequency of the code agreement is the same as the frequency of the code disagreement;
- b. being one of the themes with the highest number of groups involved in conversations about it;
- c. being the most discussed theme with the highest frequency code;
- d. the least balanced distribution of conversations between email and face-to-face conversations, which corresponds respectively to conversations held during the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities;
- e. being one of the themes discussed during the highest variety of GAS M activities;
- f. the highest frequency of conversations happening on occasions beyond GAS M activities.

‘Products and producers’ is the theme that stands out for:

- a. being, among the three themes, (i.e. *roles, network*), where agreement is more frequent than disagreement, the one with the highest level of shared understanding. Among the mentioned themes, it is the only one where common value is more frequent than common sense and this indicates that it is more common in this theme than in the other two that people discussing the theme bestow shared values to what they are discussing;
- b. being the only theme mostly involving producers in conversations with a single participant in GAS M that, in turn, organises GAS M activities and uses the official GAS M email account;
- c. being one of the themes discussed in the highest variety of groups;
- d. being among the only two themes that are more frequently discussed in conversations during material activities such as weekly orders;
- e. being one of the themes discussed in the highest variety of GAS M activities;
- f. the lowest frequency of conversations happening on occasions beyond GAS M activities.

The theme ‘Place’ stands out because of:

- a. the highest level of disagreement since it is, among the three themes (i.e. *actors, events, opinions and lifestyle* and *planning and priorities inter activities*) where disagreement is more frequent than agreement, the theme showing the highest gap between the frequency distribution of the codes disagreement and agreement. Moreover, compared to the other two themes with which it shares the higher frequency of disagreement than agreement, the theme ‘place’ is the only case where the frequency distribution of the code common value is lower than the frequency distribution of the code common sense. This implies that it is less common in this theme than in the other two that people bestow shared values to what they are discussing;
- b. being one of the themes discussed in the lowest number of different mailings lists;
- c. being one of the themes discussed in the highest number of different groups;
- d. the highest balanced distribution of conversations between email and face-to-face conversations, which correspond respectively to conversations held during the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities;
- e. being among the only two themes more frequently discussed in conversations during material activities such as weekly orders;
- f. being one of the themes discussed in the lowest number of different activities.

All in all, the three listed themes show most of the possible forms of attention that can be detected when considering the sort, intensity and variety of conversations where themes are discussed.

1. With respect to the **sort of conversations**, the three themes range from generating among the highest level of agreement to the highest level of disagreement, passing through the most neutral tone. The three themes are also discussed respectively in the highest, middle, and lowest number of different groups and lists. With respect to the breadth and type of groups of people involved in the conversations about the three themes, two of them align with the majority of the themes discussed in GAS M conversations. Nonetheless, one of the three discussed themes shows the peculiarity of being the only theme that primarily attracts producers in conversations.
2. With respect to the **intensity of conversations**, the three listed themes range from highest to middle frequency of conversations about them.
3. Finally, in terms of **variety of conversations**, the three themes show respectively the highest, middle, and lowest balance between the conversations occurring during the organisation of GAS M activities, (i.e. email), and the conversations occurring during their implementation, (i.e. face-to-face). They also show respectively the highest, middle and lowest frequency of conversations occurring beyond the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities. Moreover, two of the three themes are discussed in the highest possible number of different activities while the third is among the themes discussed in the lowest number of different activities. Furthermore, two of the three themes are mostly discussed in material activities, while one theme aligns with the other themes recurring in GAS M conversations and is mostly discussed during civic activities.

According to Collins (2004a), anything attracting any form of attention in a situation can result in being meaningful when examining whether it is attached with a special significance and what this significance is (Collins, 2004a). The three themes listed above showed many of the possible forms of attention that may be generated in GAS M conversations; following Collins (2004a), they are therefore all valuable sources of information when looking for what attracts attention in GAS M conversations and what its significance is. Therefore, the conversations about these three themes have been further analysed through qualitative content analysis, the results of which are discussed and presented in the following subsections.

Table 6.4 Codes co-occurrence per theme' s code: sort, intensity and variety of conversations per theme

Frequency co- occurrence of codes	First: codes possible sources of what attracts attention						
	Structure, purposes, and results intra activities	Products and producers	Roles	Actors, events, opinions, and lifestyle	Planning and priorities inter activities	Place	Network
Agreement	71	35	46	17	15	6	10
Common sense	69	32	32	35	11	12	11
Common value	78	37	26	60	17	4	6
Disagreement	71	28	36	23	18	17	7
Smooth tone	204	132	60	96	23	31	11
List GAS M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Co- management list	169	-	63	-	31	16	20
Connecting GASS list	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Awareness list	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Official email GAS M	-	102	-	-	-	-	-
Forum	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other non- GAS M lists	-	-	-	51	-	-	-
Total number of lists	6	6	6	7	7	4	4
Group consumers associated	31	-	27	-	14	12	5
Group consumers non-associated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group producers associated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group producers non-associated	-	49	-	-	-	-	-
Group other	-	-	-	20	-	-	-
Total number of groups	4	4	4	4	4	4	3

Third: code intensity of conversations	No. of quotations	351	193	144	137	56	54	31
Fourth: codes variety of conversations	Email	296	131	92	102	35	30	20
	Face-face	59	63	53	36	23	22	8
	Meetings	-	-	-	-	22	-	-
	Other initiatives	170	-	67	93	-	-	16
	Producers' visits	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
	Social meals	-	-	-	0	0	0	-
	Special orders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Weekly orders	-	88	-	-	-	17	-
	Collective orders	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
	Total number of activities	7	7	6	4	4	4	4
Conversations outside of GAS M activities	52	7	27	31	8	11	11	11

6.3.2 What attracts attention and its significance in GAS M conversations about recurring themes

The three coming subsections report and discuss the results of qualitative content analysis of conversations about three themes, namely ‘structure, purposes, and results intra activities’, ‘place’, and ‘products and producers’. Each section covers what attracts attention in the conversations and its significance⁷¹.

6.3.2.1 Conversations on the theme ‘structure, purposes, and results intra activity’

Conversations about *structure, purposes, and results intra activity* include all discussions that regard the structure and implementation of GAS M activities as well as their results. During these conversations GAS M participants to organise an activity discuss the logistics of the activity and its main parts, and also what the activity aims at. Some of these conversations are invitations to join the activity or requests for further news about the implementation of the activity. Finally, these conversations include comments on how activities have been organised and implemented as well as their reports.

A document was circulated through the Co-management mailing list which summarised the activities carried out by GAS M as follows:

The main activity of this buying group is facilitating the purchase of agrifood products from local, small producers and starting from values of critical and responsible consumption. [...] Besides the activity of product exchange, volunteers in the group have been carrying out events that disseminated information and rose awareness about critical and responsible consumption practices.

(Document P724:6)

From the quotations above, it appears that GAS M activities pursue two main and interrelated purposes. On the one hand, there is the economic purpose of facilitating the selling and buying of local products from small producers chosen according to the principles of critical and responsible consumption. On the other hand, GAS M activities have the non-economic purpose of informing and raising awareness on the principles of critical and responsible consumption. The two purposes are interrelated because they are both based on the values of critical and responsible consumption. From now on they will be referred to as material and civic purposes similar as I distinguished between civic and material activities in chapter 5.

The three quotations below show how participants in GAS M interpret the market activity. A market accompanies the weekly occasion of exchanging boxes of fresh products. The same producers who provide products for the boxes sell the same or extra products at the market. Consumers, both those who ordered boxes and those who did not, can buy the products sold at the market. During the period of study, participants in GAS M were reflecting on the opportunity of maintaining the market activity and on how to structure it:

⁷¹ Until now, this chapter has been using five groups and seven mailing lists to ascertain who participated in the conversations. This classification has been introduced in chapter 5. There, it became apparent that each participant in GAS M subscribes to one or more of the seven mailing lists and belongs to one of the five groups, which have then be clustered in two categories. On the one hand, there are participants in GAS M who manage GAS M. On the other hand, there are participants who implement activities but are not part of GAS M management. From now on, the two clusters will be used to indicate who is involved in the discussed conversation as this makes it easier to explain the qualitative content analysis. The two categories have not been used for the quantitative content analysis of GAS M conversations because in several of the studied units of analysis one or more mailing lists are addressed and mailing lists cannot be classified in the two mentioned categories.

(Producer non-management group) *A market must begin at 7.00 am. We need better organisation otherwise people keep going to the general market [...]*

(Face-to-face conversation P715:5)

(Consumer in management group) [...] *The market is held [...] to interlink all the initiatives (connected to GAS M). Next to the market there should be other cultural and social activities, (e.g. music, theatre). The market should rotate between different central places in town. Moreover, it should have a theme, (e.g. solidarity for farmers hit by earthquake), so that you can start from a simple concept and explain what the GAS is about. The [...] market [...] should have an info point.*

(Meeting intervention P706:47)

(Consumer in management group) *Economy and solidarity are two words. We cannot go to the market and just think about the economic issues. We have to raise critical consumers. Profits are something ephemeral. If (the market) is not supported by the social aspects, it will expire as soon as its economic benefits will expire.*

(Meeting intervention P 708:18)

In the first quotation a producer, who is not a member of the management group, is talking about the opportunity of maintaining the weekly market and how to make it more effective in terms of selling. He proposes to use the same opening times as other local markets in the town and to improve the organisation so as to be competitive with them in terms of attracting consumers. This producer discusses the material purpose of GAS M activities. In the second two quotations, two consumers who are members of the management group are supporting the idea of adding an informative purpose to the market. These activities are meant to inform consumers about the work GAS M is doing to promote a solidarity-based economy through critical consumption. Moreover, it is suggested that the market should be an occasion to socialise; an occasion where all initiatives connected to GAS M can be in contact and share what they do, their guiding values and purposes. These consumers raise the issue of the civic purposes of GAS M activities.

The distinction between the material and civic purposes of GAS M activities also emerges when participants in GAS M discuss the organisation of market and recreational events they have implemented. The quotations reported below refer to two discussions. The first two quotations are about the date for the activity of market and recreational events, while the second two are about their settings.

People involved in the management of GAS M agreed on scheduling the activity every last Saturday of the month. One producer who is not part of the management group suggests an alternative. Her proposal is distributed via email over the Co-management list by one of the consumers who is part of the group managing GAS M:

[...] (Name of the producer) *suggests to choose [...] every second week of the month for economic and opportunity reasons. As far as the economic reasons are concerned, people reach the fourth week of the month and are financially exhausted in terms of their families' bills; concerning the opportunity reason, (the second Saturday of next month) is the Saturday before carnival. [...]*

(Email conversation P518:1)

The argument of the producer, who is not member of the management group, for shifting the date for the market and recreational events is based on economic reasoning. Choosing the second Saturday of the month would raise selling opportunities. Hence, the producer underlines the material purposes that can be better achieved by enhancing selling opportunities. This proposal incurs the reaction of one of the consumers who is part of the group managing GAS M and who shares his opinion in an email circulating over the Co-management list:

[...] *I disagree with both the method and the matter. Concerning the matter.... Fourth week? The real issue is that people struggle to economically cover even the second week of the month. If we really want to follow this reasoning, the fourth week is the best solution, since wages are paid by public employers in between the 25th and the 27th of every month [...]* (Moreover) *I disagree with following festivities. We don't have to sell ... we have to let people know about us (GAS M) and in the mess people don't understand anything. We must do a calm and far-sighted work. [...]*

(Email conversation P522:1)

The person reacting to the producer affirms a vision according to which the activity under discussion serves civic purposes. It is a tool to spread the ideas and principles of GAS M. Hence, he does not agree with changing the date of the activity just for the sake of raising selling opportunities, and also because the dates that might increase sellings are less suitable for the purposes of raising awareness about GAS M and its civic mission. The idea to leave the schedule of the discussed activity unchanged found the support of other people belonging to the group that manages GAS M. The date therefore did not change, meaning that their view on the activity as being a means to spread GAS M civic values prevailed in this case.

The two lines of reasoning about the material and civic purposes of GAS M activities also recur in the quotations below. They are part of conversations in which participants in GAS M are reflecting on the setting of the market which is held together with other recreational activities. The quotations below are examples:

(Consumer in management group, 1) *We don't have to sell anything.*

(Consumer in management group, 2) *But we have to raise awareness, to distribute flyers, to attract people.*

(Consumer in management group, 1) *You are right. We have to be in the square centre with the stalls shaped like a horse iron [...]*

(Face-to-face conversation P709:3)

(Producer non-management group) *I have been here since 8.00 am. I have helped and you (one of GAS M organisers) put me behind a tree. Now I have found a new place and you are asking me to move behind the tree again.*

(Face-to-face conversation P709:76)

On the one hand, the producer who is not involved in the management of GAS M is looking for a place in the market where his stall is visible to consumers. He is bringing forward the idea that the market has a material purpose which is reached by enhancing selling opportunities. On the other hand, there are consumers involved in the management group who wish to organise the stalls in a way that better suits the purpose of spreading information about GAS M.

All in all, the quotations discussed show that while discussing the structuring of GAS M activities, participants in GAS M follow different purposes. On the one hand, there is the material purpose of enhancing economic opportunities deriving from products exchange. On the other hand, there is the civic purpose of informing people and raising their awareness about the principles of a solidarity economy and critical consumption, that offer opportunities for socialising, sharing and learning from each other too. The quotations also show that these two purposes are not always compatible. Organisational solutions, (e.g. date, stall logistics), that promote civic purposes are not always the best solution to satisfy the material purposes, and vice versa.

The quotations below confirm this. Moreover, they specify what the civic purposes are about. Both quotations are reflections on the results of one year of GAS M activities. The first of the two

quotations, is by a consumer from the GAS M management group, while the second quotation is an extract from a report of one of GAS M meetings that was circulated over the GAS M mailing lists:

(Consumer in management group) *I would distinguish between a social budget and an economic budget. The social budget is positive. We have organised successful initiatives. For instance the initiative organised by (name of a participant in GAS M) brought more than 50 people to (name of a place). We have built strong social ties with each other. I am a friend of (names of two GAS M producers) and I will keep buying products from them regardless of whether GAS M will continue or not. There are people who are not joining GAS M anymore because they have started growing their own food and, by the way, this is another success (for GAS M). The economic budget is negative.*

(Meeting intervention P706:21)

[...] all producers attending this meeting agreed that the earnings from product selling through the GAS (box scheme) and through the market (associated to it) do not allow them to obtain a sufficient and adequate income. Moreover, a stagnation of selling over the course of the year is pointed out [...]

(Meeting report P480:2)

In the quotations above, both the consumer involved in the management group and the extract from a meeting report maintain that GAS M activities are not aligned in terms of results. The material results of the activities are not fitting the expectations in terms of selling and income generation. The civic results of the activities satisfy the ambition of spreading GAS M principles. The consumer of the management group refers to a successful initiative. This initiative was aimed at presenting a project for the start-up of a wheat chain which is totally run by producers and consumers of GAS M and which reintroduces a traditional variety of wheat. The consumer is also satisfied with the promotion of personal relations between producers and consumers. Finally, he refers to the success in promoting alternative lifestyles in terms of food provisioning, such as growing your own food. The consumer is recalling all the civic purposes that have been emerging in the rest of this subsection, namely sharing and promoting the principles of a solidarity economy and critical consumption as well as social bonding and the promotion of alternative lifestyles.

The three quotations below show how tension emerged while discussing the structuring of GAS M activities in relation to which civic purposes should be addressed. Here two members of the management group are debating about the content of a flyer advertising GAS M and its activities.

The first quotation shows one of the first ideas proposed for the flyer, suggested in an email circulated through the Co-management list by one of the consumers who participates in the group managing GAS M. In this email the meaning that the flyer should convey is explained. Later on, the flyer⁷² is circulated over the Co-management list as reported below.

[...] Guiding idea: explaining to the city, to those who have never heard about critical consumption and solidarity economy, the acronym GAS (which is fully explicated in the title). [...] the aim is to try to talk to everyone and to avoid being self-referential.

⁷² The flyer's contents have been translated from Italian into English to make them understandable. Logos and other sensitive information such as people's names and place's names have been covered for reasons of privacy.



(Emails conversations P538:1; P548:1)

The idea about the aim of the flyer and the resulting flyer mirror the idea of using the activity as a way to present GAS M as an initiative to promote solidarity economy by means of spreading critical consumption, as expressed in the logos, pictures and the agenda of the day. It does this by organising an organic and ethical market, as well as by organising events to raise awareness about issues connected with the dysfunctioning of the mainstream food system, such as the exploitation of migrant workers in the orange sector, and by explaining the importance of recycling.

A section and new points in the agenda were added to the final version of the flyer. They both refer to an initiative planned for the evening of the same day when the GAS M activity advertised in the flyer was scheduled. The initiative was organised by some organisations with which some of the members of the group that manages GAS M cooperate. These are organisations promoting initiatives to raise awareness about several socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and political issues not necessarily related to solidarity economy, critical consumption, and food provisioning. The initiative advertised in the flyer was about a theatre performance denouncing misconduct and inefficiencies in the public management of wastes. The initiative was organised to collect money for the renovation of an abandoned public building that these organisations have squatted with the aim of turning it into a community theatre.

Some of those who participate in the management of GAS M dream about having a space for GAS M to implement its activities within the squatted building. Moreover, they support the civic commitment of the above mentioned organisations and participate in those organisations. Hence, one of them sent an email over the Co-management mailing list in which he proposed his idea about

the flyer that was later updated accordingly. The quotation below reports an extract of the emails proposing the new idea and the resulting flyer.⁷³

We can insert a section such as (link to the logo advertising the theatre performance initiative) about (name of the actor) performing at (name of the place) that evening as well as mentioning it in the program [...]



(Emails conversations P524:1; P559:1)

The new idea and the updated version of the flyer convey a vision of the civic side of GAS M activities that goes beyond the promotion of solidarity economy and critical consumption. This vision includes the broader civic commitment of the initiatives that were behind the organisation of the theatre performance. Not all members of the GAS management group agree, however, with the idea of the civic purposes of GAS M activities expanding into broader civic commitment than promoting systems of food provisioning based on the principles of solidarity economy and critical consumption. Despite the fact that the second version of the flyer, which included the theatre performance, was chosen as the definitive one, it was explicitly criticised by one of the consumers who participates in the group that manages GAS M:

Music, theatre, workshops, market, culture, debates, social commitment, etc. are welcome, but (Name of the theatre performance) [...] cannot steal the show [...] As it is now, there is (its logo) on the flyer and (name of an organisation working with migrant workers) is even not quoted even though (name of a producer member of the organisation working with migrant workers), [...], is really doing a lot to organise the event (promoted by GAS M and advertised in the flyer). (Name of two organisations working with migrant workers) are two realities that are engaged in the battle against migrants exploitation brought forward also

⁷³ The flyer's contents have been translated from Italian into English to make them understandable. Logos and other sensitive information such as people's names and place's names have been covered for reasons of privacy.

by (name of the GAS M network)[...]. *Removing them from the flyer to make room for (name of the theatre performance) seems incoherent to me [...]*

(Email conversation P552:3)

This extract of text is part of a broader email exchange via the Co-management list. The writer of the email quoted above informs other people that he is considering leaving GAS M for a while. The latter quotation and the overall discussion about the flyer therefore show that defining the priorities of the civic purposes attached to GAS M activities is a reason for tensions among people engaged in managing GAS M. The tension may also bring people whose opinions are not in line with the prevailing ones to leave GAS M. Moreover, the tension between the different views about the civic purposes of GAS M activities adds to the tension about how to balance GAS M activities' material and civic purposes, the thread which emerged above, involving participants in the management group on the one side, and participants who are not involved in the management group on the other side.

To conclude this section on the conversations about the theme 'structure, purposes, and results intra activities', mediating different views about GAS M is what is attracting attention in conversations on this theme. The different views are brought forward, and then accepted, mediated, or rejected when discussing practical issues around the organisation and implementation of activities. Different proposals on the schedule, setting, organisation and implementation of activities and other practicalities highlight the different views about GAS M.

The meaning of the views about GAS M is considered as the significance of what attracts attention in conversations on the theme 'structure, purposes, and results intra activities'. The significance of what attracts attention emerges from the motivations people refer to when explaining their preferences for certain arrangements, rather than others. In particular, three different views about GAS M emerge when these motivations are examined.

Firstly, producers who do not participate in GAS M management are mostly guided by the view of GAS M as an occasion for selling their products and generating economic opportunities. This view emerges since they favour organisation and implementation arrangements such as market timing and setting that guaranty satisfactory results in terms of selling and income generation.

Secondly, there is a branch of people engaged in managing GAS M who support the view of GAS M as an initiative to promote solidarity economy through spreading principles and practices of critical consumptions. This view emerges in the way in which they present and structure GAS M activities to reflect on food provisioning, the dysfunction of the industrial system and the ways to countervail it, as well as to create occasions for socialising with people with similar values regarding food provisioning, and to spread awareness of alternative lifestyles in terms of food provisioning. Moreover, this view emerges when this branch of the management group present and structure GAS M activities to reflect, educate, and spread principles practices of critical consumption, such as recycling, of other than just food products.

Thirdly, there is a branch of people engaged in managing GAS M that support the view of GAS M as a project to support solidarity economy where spreading principles and practices of critical consumption goes hand in hand with spreading critical thinking and commitment to broader issues of civic relevance beyond food provisioning. This view emerges when they structure activities in GAS M in combination with initiatives promoting civic goals such as influencing political decisions on resources management or creating spaces for social inclusion through cultural activities.

The analysis carried out in this subsection also shows that sometimes these views are conflicting, as fulfilling one implies not being able to reach the other. In particular, there is a tendency to satisfy the view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy while the view on GAS M as an occasion for economic opportunities through food provisioning is sacrificed. Moreover, sometimes the view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy by spreading critical consumption and critical thinking and commitment with civic issues beyond food provisioning may rival with, and prevail on, the view of GAS M as project to promote solidarity economy by promoting critical consumption only. This last tension creates the circumstances for some people who are more supportive of the latter view to leave GAS M.

6.3.2.2 Conversations on the theme ‘place’

The theme ‘place’ encompasses conversations about places to hold GAS M activities. Sometimes, conversations are about features, position, availability, and suitability of places to be used as temporary locations for temporary activities. At other times, conversations focus on features, position, availability, and suitability of places as permanent locations for GAS M and the implementation of activities such as the box exchange, meetings and other activities that take place with some regularity.

The quotation below is taken from a conversation occurring during the exchange of boxes when some members of the management group were talking about the GAS M agenda. One of them, a consumer, mentioned the issue of finding a stable place for GAS M as one of the priorities for the agenda. In particular, he is encouraging the renovation of a building identified as a suitable stable location for GAS M:

(Consumer in management group) *We have to renovate the (name of the place identified as possible stable location)! We have 300 euros and we can buy some books and set up a library so that people can also reserve books while booking their boxes of products [...]. But we can only do this (setting up the library) in the (name of the place identified as possible stable location).*

(Face-to-face conversation P713:9)

According to this consumer, an appropriate stable location for GAS M should serve a double function. On the one hand, it is a space to practice critical consumption and related activities, such as the boxes exchange. On the other hand, it is a context for educational and informative activities, such as exchanging books.

The building is located in an area where several other buildings owned by the regional government are located. The whole area has been squatted by some organisations which are committed to carrying out economic, political, social, cultural, environmental and other civic battles that go beyond food provisioning. These organisations pursue their aims primarily by means of activities of socio-economic integration of disadvantaged people, artistic performances, parades, strikes and other sorts of civic mobilisation.

Some people in the management group of GAS M who support the idea of setting up a permanent location for GAS M in this area are also involved in some of these organisations; moreover they have been participating, since the early stages, in the squatting action. On several occasions, people from the management group supporting the proposal of having a space for GAS M in the squatted area stress the value and the reasoning behind it. An example is reported in the below quotation, which is extracted from an intervention during a GAS M meeting:

(Producer in management group) *According to me a stable location for GAS M should be a community place. The (name of the squatted area) is such a place. I like it! You can breathe good air. I am attached to it.*

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Moreover, [...], we have to attract the right people; those who embrace the whole GAS M project. The (name of the squatted area) is appropriate for this too.

(Meeting Intervention P708:15)

The quotation above is from one of the producers of GAS M; she is also a member of the management group. She mentions the following points in support of choosing the building in the squatted area as a location for GAS M. She refers to her attachment to the area and its history of political, cultural, social, environmental and other civic battles. She also refers to the opportunity to connect with the 'right people'. It is the organisations that are active in the area, which are according to her, the people who can understand and support the GAS M project. Within this reasoning, a permanent location for GAS M is suitable when it can also stimulate and support the branch of GAS M that has to do with activities of broad civic commitment and with the creation of critical minds even beyond the issues connected to food provisioning.

However, other people within the GAS M management group disagree and give reasons why not to choose the squatted area as a location for GAS M, such as summarised in the quotation below. The quotation is part of a conversation which takes place after cleaning the contested location which, despite the critique, has been chosen as the permanent location for GAS M:

(Consumer in management group) *Maybe (the squatted area) has a special meaning to (names of two consumers in management group supporting the choice of this place as GAS M location) but [...] this is not a good place for GAS M and this is also the reason why GAS M is not expanding. This place is closing GAS M in rather than opening it up to the neighbourhood. [...]. (It is closing), for instance, to the bourgeoisie people, [...], who may think of the (name of the squatted area) as a dodgy place. It is too politicised. It should be more open to normal people [...]. Too much politics [...]. In its essence, GAS M is an initiative where groups of people collectively buy products [...]. We have to restart from this. Once we are able to do that we can think about politics [...].*

(Face-to-face conversation P718:1)

The quotation above expresses the opinion of one consumer involved in the management group. The social, cultural, political, environmental and general civic meaning of the squatted area is considered as a disincentive to visit and participate in GAS M activities for people who do not fully share the values the area is attached with because of the work done by the organisations based there, although they might be interested in some of GAS M's activities such as the box exchange. According to this person a suitable location for GAS M should, first of all, support the task of spreading critical consumption – at first also at the expense of the broader social, cultural, political, environmental and civic activities.

The extracts of conversations reported until now have predominantly reflected the views of those belonging to the group that manages GAS M. Conversations in which people beyond this group express views about the issue of finding an appropriate place for GAS M are rare, since it is an issue associated with organisational matters which those people do not get involved with. Nonetheless, there is an extract of one conversation in which a consumer from the management group refers to what other people in GAS M, both producers and consumers, think about what is a suitable place for GAS M:

(Consumer in management group) *[...] people in GAS M don't really care about the place [...] they just come to (deliver) and pick up the (products) and they prefer (a place that) is central, and therefore easy to reach and to find parking lots.*

(Face-to-face conversation P718:1)

According to this quotation, people in GAS M who are not involved in management prefer places that are logistically effective: easy to reach, and suitable for delivering and picking up products. In this view, GAS M is a context for product exchange and a place that can make this process effective in terms of logistic is seen as suitable.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that mediating different views about GAS M is what is attracting attention in conversations on the theme 'place'. Those different views are raised and then either accepted, mediated, or rejected while discussing the issue of what would be a suitable, permanent location for GAS M. Proposals of different places and the reasoning and motivations supporting these proposals highlight different views about GAS M.

The meaning of these views about GAS M is considered as the significance of what attracts attention in conversations on the theme 'place', reflected in the motivations of people for preferring certain arrangements over others. In particular, three different views about GAS M and its mission emerge from that.

First, producers and consumers who are not involved in the management of GAS M are guided primarily by the view of GAS M as an occasion for the exchange of products. This idea emerges from what consumers in the management group report about the preferences of people who are not involved in the management group for places that guarantee logistic efficiency during the exchange of products. Second, there is a branch of people engaged in managing GAS M who support the view of GAS M as an initiative to promote solidarity economy by creating occasions to practice critical consumption. This idea emerges from their support for those places that allow for box exchange and create opportunities for critical consumption for the most variegated group of consumers possible. Third, there is a branch of people engaged in managing GAS M who support a view on GAS M as a project that promotes solidarity economy by stimulating critical thinking and civic activism besides creating occasions to spread and practice critical consumption. This view emerges from those people's preference for places that provide a fertile ground for activities of social, cultural, political, environmental and general civic relevance beyond food provisioning.

From the analysis carried out in this subsection, it also emerges that the views of the producers and consumers who are not involved in the management of GAS M are under-represented in the conversations on the theme 'place' since they rarely take part in these conversations. Besides there is tension within the management group between those who see GAS M as a project of solidarity economy to be fulfilled by promoting critical consumption and those who highlight stimulating and expressing critical thinking beyond issues concerning food provisioning. The latter view has prevailed when the location for GAS M activities was finally chosen. This location may limit the possibility of spreading critical consumption as broadly as the other branch of the management group would like to.

6.3.2.3 Conversations on the theme 'products and producers'

The theme 'products and producers' includes conversations where both products and producers are described; products are proposed to be bought and new producers are suggested to join GAS M. There are also conversations where the availability of certain products with specific characteristics is investigated, together with the possibility of buying them. Furthermore, there are conversations in which features and issues related to products and producers are enquired about and discussed, for instance in moments of buying and selling or of collective reflections on whether they comply with the set standards or expectations and whether they should be maintained or excluded from the GAS M system.

The analysis for the theme ‘products and producers’ begins from an extract of a report on a meeting held by people in GAS M. During the meeting, three main issues came to the fore for what regards ‘products and producers’; these are captured in the following quotation from the report:

[...] the co-presence of similar products and in low quantity, which often means that GAS M consumers cannot satisfy their shopping needs and must use other channels of food provisioning. [...] People point out an overall lack of responsibility sharing. Better-defined criteria for producers’ participation should be introduced, since they are scarcely participating in activities other than the products exchange [...]. Concerning the prices of products, producers should clearly and blatantly explain their formation, and they should offer a fair price [...].

(Meeting Report P480:4-14)

According to the quotation above, when reflecting about products and producers, people in GAS M focus on the availability of products, in terms of variety and quantity, on the prices of those products, which should be clear and fair, and on the level and form of producers’ involvement in GAS M with respect to responsibility taking and participating in GAS M activities. The three mentioned issues return in other conversations on ‘products and producers’ and will be reported and discussed in this subsection to show how the issues evolve through the course of these conversations.

The first three reported quotations are about the issue of products availability. In particular, the first reports an extract of an intervention during a meeting by a GAS M consumer who is not involved in the group that manages GAS M:

(Consumer non-management group) In my opinion, all GAS M producers are good producers. They all have excellent products. [...] Maybe we can cover the gaps (of products left open by food provisioning channels) [...]. For instance (name of a chain of local food shops) doesn’t have milk; GAS M can think of including it. [...] We need to care for the safety and the appearance (of products).

(Meeting intervention P706: 26-45)

The focus of the intervention suggested by this consumer is on expanding the available typologies of products and ensuring the quality, safety and external aspects of products. This is part of a broader intervention where this consumer argued for expanding the variety of available products and guaranteeing their safety, quality and appearance since this would result in making GAS M more appealing compared to other food provisioning channels. In this consumer’s view, the reasoning about products and producers is about increasing opportunities for satisfying consumers’ needs and for promoting producers’ opportunities to sell by improving the quality and variety of products.

Below, two more quotations are presented that regard the issue of product availability. They are respectively extracts from email conversations to book products and from face-to-face conversations during an instance of products exchange:

(Consumer non-management group) I have just filled the sheet (to book products). I look forward to having the confirmation of my booking and I hope that this time I can, finally, collect exactly what I have ordered. Last week I had to buy fruit and vegetables in the middle of the week since (what I got from the box) was over. I swear, this is annoying! Sincerely (Name)

(Email conversation P428:1)

(Consumer non-management group) *Are they (turnips) missing? How come?*

(Producer non-management group) (Name of the person responsible for communicating the booking to producers) *just asked me for four turnips and I haven't harvested more.*

(Consumers in management group) [...] *Anyway, you are only missing one turnip [...]*

(Face-to-face conversation P715:14)

In this quotation, consumers who are not involved in the management of GAS M bring the issue of products availability forward in the form of complaints about the lack of products that they had booked. In the same quotation, a consumer who is involved in the management of GAS M tries to argue for the irrelevance of missing products. The different reactions towards the issue of missing products implies that people who participate primarily in the GAS M activity of products exchange attach more importance on this issue compared to those engaged in the management of GAS M.

In the following five quotations, the issue of products' prices returns. The first two quotations come from conversations held during products exchanges. They show in which terms the issue of prices is framed by consumers and producers who are not involved in the management group:

(Consumer non-management group) *Where does the oil come from?*

(Producer non-management group) (Name of the place) [...]

(Consumer non-management group) *How much is it?*

(Producer non-management group) *5 euros per litre.*

(Consumer non-management group) *Too much [...] there are people selling oil from (name of a place), which is a good oil, for 3 euros [...]. This is just to inform you, so that you can act accordingly.*

(Face-to-face conversation P709:36)

(Consumer non-management group) *Are those sausages sweet?*

(Producer non-management group) *No! They are a bit spicy.*

(Consumer non-management group) *Where do you come from?*

(Producer non-management group) (Name of the place)

(Consumer non-management group) *Hu, hu! You make good sausages over there. How much are they?*

(The producer gives the price; the consumer buys sausages and goes)

(Face-to-face conversation P709:38)

These extracts show that producers and consumers who are not part of the management group of GAS M talk about products' organoleptic features, their provenance and price. Hence, within these conversations, products are considered for their physical aspects and the adequacy of the price is judged in terms of its economic value considering other physical aspects of the products.

Additional conversations in which the issue of the price of products is the subject of discussion are reported below. The setting is the same as for the conversations reported above, (i.e. moments of products exchanges), but different people are involved. In the conversations below, the issue of products' prices and other features is discussed by producers and consumers who are part of the group managing GAS M.

In the first quotation, one consumer and member of the management group is explaining the reason for the high prices of some products to some other people who had booked them and came to pick them up:

(Consumers in management group) *The lentils are a little more expensive compared to other legumes because they (producers) have already improved the production, which is now very sophisticated. They still have to improve the production of beans and chickpeas.*

(Face-to-face conversation P715:7)

In the second conversation, a producer who is also a member of the group managing GAS M explains his opinions about the price of the bread he produces:

(Producer in management group) *Solidarity goes beyond a good price. You have to come up with the best price given the available resources. I don't think that we can talk about solidarity when we offer a good price but the wheat (for the flour) comes from Northern Italy. With the organic wheat available here, this is the price (I can offer).*

(Consumer in management group) *But the result is that only one loaf of bread has been ordered [...] we have to find a solution!*

(Face-to-face conversation P716:1)

In the third and last conversation, three consumers involved in the management group are arguing with each other on the most appropriate way to define the price-share each producer involved in a solidarity campaign should get from what is earned from the products sold for the campaign:

(Consumer in management group, 1) *Why are we giving a part of the price to (name of a farm)? Who are they? I have never seen them!*

(Consumer in management group, 2) *It is (name). Even if nobody noticed him, he participated [...]*

(Consumers in management group, 3) *Leave him alone (referring to the first speaker)! (Name of the farm) are not communist enough and he (first speaker) doesn't like them.*

(Face-to-face conversation P715:21)

In the last three extracts of conversations, the prices of products are discussed in relation to the value of the projects that are developed alongside to the provisioning of those products. In the first of the last three extracts of conversations, the production of legumes goes hand in hand with a project of cultural, environmental and economic value. It is about the rediscovery of traditional productions, at risk of extinction, and the introduction of sophisticated technologies to make the production economically viable while respecting the standards of tradition. In the second of the three extracts of conversations, the value of the project accompanying the provisioning of bread is both cultural and environmental, since the bread is produced from a variety of wheat that is organic and very traditional, typical of the place where the bread is produced. Finally, in the third of the three last reported quotes, the project developed alongside to products provisioning has a social value; it is about selling oranges to support farmers and farms that work to defeat the exploitation of migrant workers in the orange sector.

Hence, when members of the management group talk about prices, the reasoning goes beyond judging the economic value of the prices and their adequacy in relation to products' physical features. The guiding logic is that of a fair price, which implies that a price is appropriate in as far as it can support projects in which the provisioning of products goes hand in hand with respecting principles such as preserving cultural traditions, the environment, and respecting laws and people rights. Moreover, the projects which are to be supported must be in line with GAS M's civic values.

The last two quotations are particularly meaningful in this respect. The second quotation shows the importance attached to civic values, to the extent that producing bread in line with cultural traditions and with attention for the environment is maintained even if the resulting price is higher than what consumers in GAS M are ready to pay. The third quotation brings different opinions on the adequacy of price to the fore without reaching agreement about the opportunity of supporting certain projects because of their goals and guiding principles. In the mentioned quotation, even the political views of the producer become important when deciding whether or not to offer him a share of the profits from products sold to support a project against migrant worker exploitation in the orange sector. Although the producer has contributed to the project, a consumer in the management

group is questioning his entitlement to receive a share of what the project raised because he is not sufficiently aligned with certain political views.

The extracts from conversations below turn the attention towards the issue of producers' involvement in GAS M. In the first, a consumer of the management group reflects about producers' participation in GAS M as part of his intervention in a meeting:

(Consumers in management group) *Producers should be more active. They privately call consumers in order to sell extra products but they don't do anything to contribute to the implementation of the box exchange (in GAS M).*

(Meeting intervention P706:22)

In the second, and following, quotation, one consumer in the management group is updating another consumer belonging to the same group about some producers refusing to help with the handing over of boxes. Those producers were supplying products for the boxes exchange as well as selling extra products on their market stalls. They have been asked to stay a bit longer to hand over some boxes to some latecomers, who had already paid for them. This was the producer's reply to the request for support:

(Consumers in management group) (The producers replied) *we stay at the market while we have products and while there are consumers to sell them to, then we go.*

(Face-to-face conversation P710:2)

Finally, in the third reported quote about producers' participation in GAS M, some consumers of the management group were commenting at the end of a boxes exchange on one of the producers who had not showed up and therefore had not provided the booked products:

(Consumers in management group, 1) *Where is (name of the producer)?*

(Consumers in management group, 2) *He has not showed up! On Wednesday he said he would be available today, but he has not come!*

[...]

(Consumers in management group, 3) [...] *Hu, hu! Those producers are not responsible yet!*

(Face-to-face conversation P713:8)

The consumers of the GAS M management group speaking in the above quotations are criticising the fact that producers are primarily committed to their own economic interests and not engaged with GAS M, even just in terms of supporting the implementation of the boxes exchange GAS M organises. They are also judging producers' lack of punctuality in participating in the boxes exchange. All three quotations show that the issue of producers' involvement in GAS M is of primary importance to those who are part of the management of GAS M as a whole.

Moreover, the same people value it if GAS M producers engage in other matters and activities beyond GAS M. The quotations below are examples of how people in the management group appreciate it when producers participate in practices that are aligned with GAS M's civic vision and demonstrate their adherence to such values when managing their farms. The first quotation is an extract from an email sent by one consumer involved in the management of GAS M to promote an order of legumes and biscuits. These are all traditional Calabrian products, and some of them are part of a national project meant to rediscover traditional products and prevent their extinction. The second quotation reflects the view of one consumer involved in the management group about the criteria he uses when choosing producers and their products. In the quotation, he is referring to two producers of oranges who have been active in promoting the rights of migrant workers in the orange sector.

*Typical products are: Il bocconotto, poverello white beans, and the lentils (that are one of the Slow Food presidia [...]). The producers of legumes are all small farmers. In the case of bocconotto we have chosen the artisanal (name of a bar), [...], which makes bocconotti in its laboratory and has decided to avoid the channels of the food industry [...]*⁷⁴.

(Email conversation P891:2)

(Consumers in management group) [...] *I don't visit the market just to buy nice oranges. (Names of two producers) 's oranges are super but I buy them mostly because I like (names of two producers) 's faces*⁷⁵. *Several GASs in Northern Italy choose their oranges depending on whether they are juicy enough. A GAS cannot just decide on the basis of this (having products with good organoleptic features). I know this implies coming up against small numbers [...].*

(Face-to-face conversation P709:80)

From the latter quotations it appears that members of the management group attach importance to the fact that producers oppose the industrial food system and consciously choose alternative styles of production and farm management. Moreover, they value that producers are involved in projects of civic relevance, such as projects against the exploitation of migrant workers. In summary, the favourite producers of the management group are small, work to rediscover traditional products, engage in artisanal production, avoid mainstream channels to sell their products, and are engaged in projects of civic relevance such as the protection of human rights. These aspects are valued even more than the organoleptic aspects of products despite the fact that a lack of attention to the organoleptic aspects may be a disincentive for consumers to buy these products.

All in all, the last two quotations regard the issue of producers being involved in and taking responsibility for GAS M by how they conduct their business and engage in initiatives outside GAS M.

To conclude, this section demonstrates that what attracts attention in conversations about the theme 'products and producers', reflects the mediation of different views within GAS M on what GAS M is or should be about. Those different views are introduced, accepted, arbitrated, or rejected while discussing practical issues around the availability and price of products and producers' responsibilities and engagement. Different opinions on the amount and variety of products available in GAS M and on the adequacy of their prices, as well as on the involvement of producers in GAS M, how they run their activities and what they commit to besides their participation in GAS M all emerge as being salient and illustrate the different views which are held about GAS M.

The meaning of the views about GAS M is interpreted as the significance of what attracts attention in conversations on the theme 'products and producers'. It is inferred from the contents of the motivations people state in support of their preferences for certain arrangements over others. More specifically, three different views about GAS M and its mission emerge from the reasons people give in support of their preferences.

Firstly, GAS M producers and consumers who are not involved in GAS M management consider GAS M predominantly as an occasion for products exchange, as one of the many existing forms of food provisioning that provide products with specific physical features, prices, quantity, and variety. This view emerges from their concerns with guaranteeing enough variety and availability of products with features that make GAS M more appealing than other systems of food provisioning.

⁷⁴ Bocconotto is a biscuit; the rest are a specific variety of legumes.

⁷⁵ With faces meaning their souls, their values which are expressed in their work.

It is also reflected in the attention given to the adequacy of products' prices in relation to their physical features.

Secondly, a branch of the producers and consumers engaged in GAS M management support the view of GAS M as an initiative that promotes solidarity economy by boosting critical consumption by consuming products from producers who promote socio-economic fairness and environmental and cultural preservation. This view of GAS M becomes apparent in the focus on issues of fair prices that reflect the civic value of the production in the conservations of these people. Finally, such a view of GAS M is also promoted through people in the management group who judge producers on the basis of their involvement in civic initiatives in GAS M and beyond, and their support for GAS M's civic values.

Thirdly, another branch of the GAS M management group supports the view of GAS M as an initiative to promote not only solidarity economy and critical consumption but also critical thinking on issues beyond food provisioning. They communicate this view when expressing their preference for producers who have similar political views as those they support.

The analysis conducted in this subsection reveals also some tensions between the different views. Focussing on the civic aspects of products and producers sometimes reduces the importance of promoting GAS M as an effective system of food provisioning, especially in terms of offering products with specific physical features. This happens when people in the management group underestimate the importance of having enough products. It also emerges when they belittle the importance of having the best organoleptic features for their products or more affordable prices from producers when they are engaged in those civic initiatives and values the management group supports. Moreover, there are tensions between the different views about which aspects of products and producers are actually consistent with the goals and principles of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy. Part of the management group focusses on the ability of producers to align with principles of critical production such as rediscovering food traditions, protecting the environment and biodiversity and respecting legality and people's rights. For others alignment with political values they share is equally or even more important.

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter has completed the analysis of GAS M's identity. Guided by the theoretical and methodological frame of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), it has provided insights into the identity of GAS M by focussing on disclosing what captures attention and acquires significance while GAS M's activities are carried out. In other words, this chapter has focussed on disclosing the common understanding of GAS M activities. In doing so it has identified what are the foci of attention in these activities, which forms of attention they mobilise, their significance, and their implications for the overall identity of GAS M.

The first step of data analysis has identified seven themes as recurring in conversations during GAS M activities. This chapter considered these themes and associated conversations as sources of information on what attracts attention while GAS M activities are carried out as well as on which forms of attention are mobilised and what the significance of what attracts attention is. The chapter, hence, reports of the second step of data analysis, that is the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of GAS M conversations.

Quantitative content analysis revealed which forms of attention each theme generates. Three themes are particularly representative for the forms of attention generated. These three themes and associated conversations were further investigated by means of qualitative content analysis. The

qualitative content analysis showed what attracts attention and its significance. It is in particular, the mediation of different views on GAS M which attracts attention in conversations on the different themes. The different views are brought forward and then accepted, arbitrated, or rejected while discussing different arrangements of GAS M activities. People's argument in favour or opposition to certain arrangements exposes the significance of their views on GAS M and highlights the significance of what attracts attention in GAS M.

Three main views are under discussion. First, the group of producers and consumers who are not involved in the management of GAS M share a view on GAS M as a system of food provisioning. As such, it is expected to create occasions for producers to obtain economic benefits from selling products with specific physical features and for consumers to obtain some sort of satisfaction in buying the same sort of products. The group of producers and consumers who engages with the management of GAS M shares a view about GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy. The whole group agrees that solidarity economy can be promoted by creating occasions for practicing, and reflecting on, critical consumption but a branch of this group also supports the idea that promoting solidarity economy includes the promotion of critical thinking on economic, social, cultural, political, environmental and other civic matters beyond food provisioning.

The main implication in terms of GAS M's identity is that there is not one definitive GAS M identity. Instead, its identity is undergoing a process of continuous negotiation. There are, however, indications that the views of the management group prevail and override the views of those who are not part of this group. Furthermore, the view on GAS M as project to promote solidarity economy by means of spreading critical thinking may prevail at times and sideline the view on GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy by promoting critical consumption. As resulted from chapter 5, the management group is the most active group in the organisation and implementation of GAS M activities; it is the group that actually gets things done. The group ends up imposing its ways of doing things in a way that mirrors its views of GAS M⁷⁶.

The tendency that has just been mentioned recalls what in IR theory (Collins, 2004a) terms can be described as the emerging of *energy stars* (Collins, 2004a) in a *status ritual* (Collins, 2004a). A status ritual describes those situations where all involved people are equally contributing to it. Everyone can contribute to carrying on the situation. Everyone gives their ideas about the situation; the ideas will be mediated by other ideas and will contribute to shaping what is under attention in the situation, its focus, and the significance of what is under attention. Energy stars are people involved in a situation who acquire a central position; they are people who are more motivated and committed than others and therefore become more influential in the situation to the extent that they may, for instance, impose their way of carrying on the situation as well as their own views defining the focus of attention and its significance (Collins, 2004a).

GAS M, together with its internal dynamics of organising and implementing activities, is an example of a status ritual since it shows a flat structure of groups and mailing lists where everyone is allowed to contribute to defining the functioning and principles behind each activity, and influencing the GAS M project in general. Nonetheless, some energy stars come forward. They are part of the group managing the whole project of GAS M. On some occasions, those people have

⁷⁶ For instance, some people in the management group had the final word about the permanent location for GAS M and chose a place attached with political, cultural, social, and other sort of civic meanings. Another example is the decision about the flyer used to advertise one of GAS M's initiatives; in the end, this also included an advertisement for an initiative promoted by other organisations and with a political purpose. A further example is the decision about the schedule for some of GAS M activities, which is chosen according to what is more suited to spreading GAS M civic values rather than what may be instrumental to enhance selling opportunities.

succeeded in imposing their views on GAS M, by imposing their own ways of doing things, since they are the most active in carrying out GAS M activities.

Besides clarifying the different views on GAS M and their implications for its identity, this chapter also contributes to clarifying some of the issues left open in chapter 5. One of them concerns the question as to why the management group, which is primarily interested in organising and implementing activities with the aim to raise civic awareness and to create socialising occasions, (i.e. civic activities), is also involved in food provisioning, (i.e. material activities). The second issue concerns the low frequency of activities with civic relevance and a socialising function.

The active participation of the management group in both material and civic activities can be explained by the fact that the group uses both activities to promote its views about GAS M. Collins (2004a) explains such a phenomenon as the dynamic of maximising *solidarity payoffs*. People take part in situations because they want to maximise their solidarity payoffs. These are feelings of fulfilment for being part of and contributing to something people feel connected to because it is a context where they can share and find support for their interests and views. Solidarity payoffs do not have anything to do with economic or other material payoffs. Nonetheless, their maximisation may imply participation in situations with economic purposes for at least two reasons: first, to obtain the material or economic resources that are needed to maintain participation in situations that contribute to providing solidarity payoffs; second, because situations with economic purposes can also contribute to generating solidarity payoffs when they generate alignment in terms of interests and views (Collins, 2004a).

Explained from an IR theory (Collins, 2004a) perspective, the management group of GAS M tends to participate in civic activities because they primarily contribute to maximise solidarity payoffs; these activities offer the greatest chance to share their views on GAS M and to implement them. The participation in material activities is used as a further, even if not primary, occasion where the group's views of GAS M can be brought forward.

As far as the low frequency of civic activities is concerned, this may be due to the fact that these activities do not always need to take place in order to reach their purposes of raising awareness and creating occasions to socialise (see chapter 5). The analysis of conversations occurring during GAS M activities shows that the purposes of these activities can be reached even by talking during the organisation and implementation of both civic and material activities. Moreover, talking while organising and implementing any of GAS M activities is a socialising occasion *per se*; moreover it is an occasion to discuss and gain awareness on several of the civic principles civic activities are meant to raise awareness on.

Chapter 7

Discussion and conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of this research which aimed to reveal the identities and roles of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) based on the features that emerge from the daily dynamic of organising and implementing activities. To this end, the research focussed on the case of one particular AFN, namely GAS M, which is led by consumers and consumer-based civil society organisations. Moreover, GAS M is a case of an AFN that works on both food provisioning and civic awareness initiatives, and is located in Calabria, a context where traditional forms of food provisioning are still predominant. In order to carry out this research, a novel theoretical and methodological framework based on the work of Collins (2004a) was developed and applied.

This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How can an existing theoretical and methodological framework, that grounds the study of social phenomena in the analysis of their internal dynamics, be adapted to frame an analysis of AFNs?
2. How can the theoretical and methodological framework be operationalised and applied to conduct an analysis of GAS M starting by exploring the functioning of its activities?
3. What is the relative importance of the different GAS M activities for the construction of its identity?
4. How is the identity of GAS M produced and negotiated in conversations occurring while GAS M activities take place?

By asking these questions, and by studying an AFN in the afore-mentioned context and conditions, the research wishes to contribute to furthering the literature on AFNs. In particular, the research seeks to uncover new or refined knowledge on the identities and roles of AFNs to complement what is already known from the existing literature on the topic.

Section 7.2 presents and discusses the findings that respond to research questions 3 and 4, while section 7.3 considers the responses to questions 1 and 2. Section 7.4 reflects on the needs for further research that emerged from this study.

7.2 Identities and roles of AFNs: reflecting on what emerges from the dynamics of their activities

7.2.1 Relative importance of activities in GAS M

This research has explored a total of six activities that are part of the daily dynamics of the studied GAS. Three of them have been interpreted as material activities since they deal with organising and implementing food provisioning and imply monetary transactions around the exchange of food. Three other activities have been defined as civic activities because they deal primarily with organising occasions for socialising and initiatives to raise attention towards civic matters, and do not imply concrete economic transactions.

All activities have been schematised as processes where there is an instance of organisation and an instance of implementation. The overall process may reach different levels of intensity per each activity. This research has used activities' intensity as a proxy of their ability to influence the identity of the studied GAS. The higher the overall intensity of an activity, the higher the chance that it will take place and require the action and attention of people in GAS M. In turn, this increases the likelihood that an activity will influence, with its own features and purposes, the studied GAS' features and purposes and in turn its identity.

Civic activities mostly mobilise a very small group of people who know each other and create repeated occasions to reinforce their connections and acquaintance through the organisation and implementation of activities. Some of them are the founding members of the studied GAS, and are the people who manage the GAS M project as a whole. Members of this group share tasks connected to the organisation and implementation of activities relatively evenly, and despite being mostly committed to organising and implementing civic activities, they are also behind the initiation and organisation of material activities. In contrast, material activities involve a broad group of people. This includes people beyond the small group that manage GAS M, sometimes even people who are not part of the studied GAS (i.e. people who neither pay the association fee nor register in the mailing lists system). These are mostly people who do not know each other and who scarcely interact with each other while activities take place since they communicate mostly with the person who is responsible for the organisation of the activity and because their participation in GAS M activities is more or less random. Moreover, the task sharing among participants in material activities is not balanced. The majority of the participants join in with the implementation of events, while the burden of initiating and organising material activities is up to one person or a few people mostly from the management group. Producers are scarcely mobilised in any of the activities; when they are involved, it tends to be in the implementation phase.

Civic activities are considered as being more intense, and therefore more important in influencing the studied GAS's identity than are material activities, since the former are the only activities able to mobilise a tied group of people around common interests and to make them actively and evenly engaged with creating occasions where they can experience those interests together. It can therefore be maintained that socialising and raising civic awareness is what mobilises the most people in GAS M; this is therefore what GAS M's identity is primarily about when considering the intensity of its activities.

Existing studies have already pointed out that GASs are a combination of interests and activities aimed at fulfilling these interests. GASs are interested in promoting alternative systems of food provisioning as well as values of civic relevance which may be more or less related to food provisioning. GASs organise many different activities to fulfil their interests. The existing studies have explored just one of these activities, namely the exchange of boxes containing food products

(Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Fonte, 2013; Rossi & Brunori, 2010). In other words, existing studies have focussed on what this research has identified as one of GAS M's material activities. This research complements the mentioned studies as follow. First, it studies the dynamics of a GAS's civic activities, such as has not been investigated yet. Second, it specifies the relative importance of the different activities and related interests taking place in a GAS. Third, this research examines which groups within the GAS are actually mobilised in the different activities and, in turn, by the interests the activities aim to fulfil.

With the findings about which group is mobilised by which activity, this research can inform other studies on AFNs, beyond the works on GASs. There are some studies on CSAs (Communities Supported Agriculture) highlighting that most participants in CSAs are primarily interested in participating in the activity of obtaining food with specific physical features, primarily organic, fresh and local products (Pole & Gray, 2013). This research confirms these findings since it reveals that the broader group of people participating in GAS M are mostly mobilised by material activities connected to food provisioning.

At the same time, this research introduces a different view compared to other existing studies about CSAs. These studies distinguish between which activities and interests mobilise CSAs' managers and which activities and interests mobilise CSAs' consumers. The latter group is most likely to be involved in activities of civic and social relevance beyond food provisioning. The former group, on the other hand, is generally more interested in realising a provisioning system for organic, local, fresh products (Cox et al., 2008). In the present research however, the situation seems to be quite the opposite. Whereas the managers of GAS M are mainly interested in civic activities, the other participants are mainly interested in the food provisioning activities.

This research is informative for those studies on AFNs that have been examining participants' levels of involvement. Particularly, Flora and Bregendahl (2012) have studied the durability of the participation in CSAs. These scholars highlight that those people that are moved by more than one interest, namely a combination of interest in civic and food provisioning activities, are more likely to maintain their participation in CSAs over time compared to those who are moved only by a single interest (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012). The research presented in this thesis confirms this. It shows that the group of participants in the studied GAS who are involved in carrying out the GAS M project in both its civic and material aspects are also the people who show higher levels of continuity in terms of participation and full engagement. These are the people who are initiating and following up the organisation and implementations of activities, as well as being the founding members of the studied GAS.

Furthermore, this research provides insight on producers' involvement in AFNs. In terms of people's participation in GAS M activities, the results of this research indicate that the role of producers appears to be minor. They hardly ever involve themselves in organising activities, and most of them participate only in the implementation phase of activities which are initiated and organised by someone else; furthermore, few of them, (an average of 4 producers of 33 involved in the observation time), pay the association fee. CSAs share with GASs the fact that consumers play leading roles in the initiatives; nonetheless, from several studies on CSAs it also emerges that producers are actively involved too (Cox et al., 2008; Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Pole & Gray, 2013). They may be part of the management group (Cox et al., 2008); producers are also referred to as one of the groups more stably involved in CSAs in as far as they are moved by multiple interests, beyond the interest in selling (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012). In the research presented in this thesis, however, the role of producers in GASs appears diminished. The fact that they rarely contribute to the organisation of GAS M activities or pay the association fee are indicators of their low commitment to the GAS.

All in all, the studies commented upon until now concern CSAs where consumers play an active role, besides to other actors, and that operate in contexts where industrial agrifood systems are dominant (Cox et al., 2008; Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Pole & Gray, 2013). This research, however, provides a perspective on an AFN where consumers have a leading role and that operate within a traditional agrifood system. Compared to the CSAs in industrialised agrifood systems (Cox et al., 2008; Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Pole & Gray, 2013), the management group of GAS M is more motivated by civic and socialising activities than by food provisioning activities; moreover, consumers are much more involved than producers in as far as they are dominant in the management group and in initiating and organising activities.

7.2.2 What attracts attention and its significance in GAS M activities

This research identified seven themes discussed in conversations during activities of GAS M. Negotiating different views about GAS M is what attracts attention throughout the conversations about the seven themes.

In particular, three different views about the studied GAS emerge, these being supported by two different groups of people. First, producers and consumers who are not involved in the management of GAS M and mainly join in with the implementation of food provisioning activities, share an idea of GAS as a system of food provisioning which provides food with certain physical features. Second, the group of consumers and producers in the management group share an idea of the GAS as a project to promote and implement solidarity economy. Within this group, some focus on the promotion of critical consumption among a large and varied group of people. Others want to do more, such as raising awareness about various issues of civic concern not necessarily connected with food provisioning, by means of organising initiatives to reflect upon and promote critical thinking about these issues.

The view of GAS M as a system of provisioning of food with specific physical features comes clearly to the fore when producers and consumers who are not involved in the management group support those arrangements for the organisation and implementation of activities that guarantee logistic efficiency while exchanging products. This idea also emerges when producers and consumers discuss features such as provenance, organoleptic aspects, quality, safety and the transparency and the appropriateness of prices in relation to the physical features of the products. Producers and consumers are united in such discussions, and agree particularly on the importance of GAS M offering effective opportunities to make the provisioning of products possible and doing this in ways that satisfy both consumers' needs, in terms of type, quantity and prices of products, and producers' needs to earn adequate incomes.

The points discussed by producers and consumers who are not involved in the management group, from which the view about GAS M as a system of provisioning of products with specific features is derived, recall what scholars in the domain of AFNs have explained through the concepts and ideas of marketness and instrumentalism (Hinrichs, 2000), economic benefits and interests (Kirwan, 2004; Griffin et al., 2003). These scholars study cases of AFNs such as Farmers' Market (FM) and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) which operate in contexts of industrialised agrifood systems (i.e. in the US or UK). Through the concepts and ideas that have been mentioned, they seek to explain that material interests are behind producers-consumers relations in AFNs. Consumers want to satisfy their needs to obtain certain products at reasonable prices, whilst producers want to earn reasonable incomes from selling certain products (Griffin & Frongillo, 2003; Hinrichs, 2000; Kirwan, 2004). The research presented in this thesis expands similar findings to AFNs such as GAS M, which are operating in contexts where traditional aspects still dominate the agrifood systems.

The attention to the mentioned material interests is highlighted when producers and consumers in the studied GAS discuss logistic solutions and products features that can guarantee the satisfaction of these interests.

Nonetheless, the studies mentioned above maintain that the attention to material interests is accompanied by an interest in building up personal relationships of trust, reciprocity and respect between producers and consumers in AFNs (Hinrichs, 2000; Kirwan, 2004). From this research it emerges that this combination of interests holds true also for cases of AFNs, such as the studied GAS, operating in contexts where traditional aspects still dominate the agrifood systems. Moreover, this research specifies which groups of people show an interest in building up personal relationships of trust, reciprocity, and respect between producers and consumers. In particular, this interest is seen in those who are part of the GAS M management group. This interest emerges from the conversations during which they support the view of GAS M as a project promoting solidarity economy by means of spreading critical consumption and critical thinking on issues of civic concern, including those beyond food provisioning. This is highlighted by the fact that some people in the management group express satisfaction about the strong social ties connecting producers and consumers in GAS M.

The view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy emerges from discussions by people in the management group. It is, for instance, demonstrated through the way in which some people in the management group present and structure GAS M activities as occasions to raise awareness about GAS M and its mission to promote critical consumption, spread alternative lifestyles in terms of food provisioning, support causes that are connected to matters of civic relevance beyond food provisioning, such as public management of resources and social integration, and connect people with similar values about food provisioning and other matters of civic relevance concerning politics, culture, society, economy and the environment, to mention just a few. The view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy is also visible through the decision taken by some people in the management group about implementing GAS M activities in places where other organisations operate and with which GAS M can cooperate to organise initiatives of social, cultural, political, environmental, and general civic relevance that go beyond food provisioning.

Finally, this view of GAS M is highlighted by the fact that some people in the management group evaluate producers and their products in terms of their attention to environmental protection and to the preservation of food traditions, whether they run their businesses according to principles of ethics, legality, fairness, solidarity and small-craft production, their participation in GAS M activities and in initiatives that are aligned with GAS M's interests, and their political orientation.

Regarding the discussion points mentioned above and the emerging view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy by spreading critical consumption and critical thinking on civic matters that derive from them, GAS M appears to be more than just an organiser of occasions to satisfy the above-mentioned material interests and the willingness to foster social relations. The view promoted by some people in the GAS management group recalls what Papaoikonomou et al. (2012), when discussing some Spanish Responsible Consumption Cooperatives, have referred to as: socialising and learning spaces; spaces where participants feel they can express themselves, their values and lifestyles as well as where they can gain control of and shape food provisioning according to defined principles and engage with political militancy (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012).

In line with the GAS management group, the participants in Responsible Consumption Cooperatives also regard their experience in the Cooperatives as a way to connect to people with similar values, express these values and the lifestyles deriving from them, and learn from each

other's values and lifestyles as well as encouraging other people to learn from these values and lifestyles. Similar to the case of GAS M, the values connecting participants in Spanish Responsible Consumption Cooperatives go beyond principles of critical consumption. GAS M and the Spanish Responsible Consumption Cooperatives share the fact that they are contexts of political militancy; in other words, their participants re-connect with each other, share, learn and spread values of civic relevance concerning many different aspects, not least political matters, beyond food provisioning.

A general conclusion which can be drawn from this is that consumers-led initiatives within AFNs operating in contexts such as Spain and Italy where traditional aspects are predominant in their agrifood systems may engage with civic battles that go beyond shaping food provisioning according to principles of civic relevance. They engage with political, social, cultural, economic, environmental, and general civic battles. This is different from consumers-driven AFNs operating in contexts with industrialised agrifood systems. In those AFNs civic engagement is strictly related to food provisioning (Psarikidou & Szerszynski, 2012; Ravenscroft, Moore, Welch, & Hanney, 2013).

The findings of this research therefore enrich current AFNs studies, in particular the studies of consumers-led AFNs involved in both food provisioning and civic engagement. Concepts such as food democracy, food sovereignty and food citizenship serve as theoretical lenses that help to explain the civic engagement of AFNs in organising their systems of food provisioning according to certain principles of civic relevance (Renting et al., 2012). This research shows that commitment to promoting civic principles in AFNs may go beyond the creation of systems of food provisioning. Broader conceptualisations are therefore needed to frame the study of AFNs' civic commitment in a way that may capture their commitment to, and interest in, influencing broader political, social, cultural, and environmental matters beyond food provisioning, through the promotion of principles of civic relevance they support.

7.2.3 Implications for the overall identity and role of GAS M

A unitary identity for the studied GAS cannot be determined. Its identity is constantly shaped and re-shaped in the attempt to find a balance between food provisioning and civic commitment.

On the one hand, there is a very small, tied and committed group of producers and consumers engaged in the management of the whole GAS project. This group mainly organises civic activities and, when organising material activities, supports those organisational arrangements that allow civic values to be promoted. Some people in the management group focus on promoting values connected with the principles of critical consumption; some other people focus on values of broader civic relevance. Sometimes, tensions emerge around which civic values to promote. Eventually, one view prevails and the connected civic values are promoted, sometimes, potentially at the expense of logistical effectiveness and of the satisfaction of material needs of consumers and producers.

On the other hand there is a broad, weakly tied, and lightly engaged group of consumers and producers that is primarily interested in participating in the implementation of material activities. These people promote the food provisioning aspects of the GAS and focus on creating the arrangements that are necessary to implement food provisioning effectively, and in order to generate an appropriate level of incomes for producers, with the right quantity and variety of products showing specific physical features, at convenient prices, and with sufficient information and transparency for consumers.

Other recent studies on GASs focus on their food provisioning activities while paying little attention to their activities of civic commitment. These studies describe how routines and values

emerge and stabilise during the implementation of product provisioning (Fonte, 2013). They look into the opportunities and challenges for new producers and consumers who wish to enter GAS systems of product provisioning once such routines and values have been established; they also comment on the opportunities and challenges for such systems of products provisioning in terms of lasting and scaling up considering their established routines and values in the face of other existing systems of food provisioning with their own routines and values (Brunori et al., 2012; Brunori et al., 2011; Rossi & Brunori, 2010).

This research challenges the focus of these studies on activities of food provisioning as well as their findings about established routines and values in food provisioning systems such as GASs. This research reveals the predominance of civic activities and the lack of definitive values and routines. In the case of GAS M, values and routines are constantly redefined while the small group of producers and consumers managing the GAS as well as the broader group of producers and consumers who are not involved in management express different views about the GAS. Therefore, the real challenge in reaching a workable definition of a GAS's identity does not just lie in finding a balance between the GAS and the rest (e.g. the GAS' members and potential new members, or the GAS and other existing systems of food provisioning); it also exists in finding a balance among the varying views held by different participants within the same GAS.

In the studied GAS, the views of some people in the management group often prevail over the ideas of other members, although this may generate tensions both within and beyond the management group. The management group proposes and implements the arrangements that some people within the group consider most appropriate for the organisation and implementation of GAS M's activities. These arrangements mirror their views about GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy through the diffusion of critical consumption or by stimulating awareness and critical thinking about issues of civic relevance, also beyond food provisioning. Therefore, one of, or both, views end up being prioritised in several occasions. In other words, some people in the management group are often able to utilise GAS M and its activities in the aim of spreading civic values within and beyond the management of food provisioning, so as to influence the lifestyles of people within and outside the GAS, as well as to influence matters of social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and general civic relevance.

To cite R. Little et al. (2010), over the period of investigation, the studied GAS was in a situation where “the ‘ideology first, practicalities later’ approach appears to be a powerful influence” (p. 15). In other words, the arrangements adopted for the organisation and implementation of activities often prioritise efficacy in fulfilling the civic commitment of GAS M, possibly even at the expense of those arrangements that would have been more suitable from the point of view of logistical effectiveness and satisfying consumers' and producers' material needs while implementing food provisioning.

Following R. Little et al. (2010), the presence of tied groups strengthening their coherence around shared ideologies is crucial in order for an AFN to expand and be sustained (R. Little et al., 2010). The findings reported in chapter 6 of this thesis seem to suggest that a similar connection between the presence of branches of people tied around civic values and views and the opportunity for GAS M to be sustained and expanded is not straightforward. The studied GAS is going through a process of ideological selection, at the risk of isolation.

In a study on community farming in the UK, Ravenscroft et al. (2013) describe cases of people who leave the community, (i.e. self-exclude), because they feel they have accomplished their mission (Ravenscroft et al., 2013). In the case of GAS M, there are people who may decide to leave the GAS but the reason to do so is different compared to what Ravenscroft et al. (2013) found. As

chapter 6 showed, people in GAS M may decide to leave the GAS when they feel they cannot fulfil their opinions and views. Moreover, when people's views and initiatives' principles are not fully aligned with those prevailing in GAS M, these people and initiatives might be not favoured in, or prevented from, being part of GAS M and of its activities.

Furthermore, the situation in the studied GAS recalls the concept of *selective patronage* which Hinrichs & Allen (2008) identified as the strategy some local food promotion campaigns in the US use to select their targets on the basis of alignment with certain principles and views. According to these authors, *selective patronage* may imply the exclusion of categories of producers and consumers who could possibly be interested and benefit from being targeted (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008). Similarly, the research presented in this thesis shows that ideological selection may turn into material selection. In other words, it may result in precluding some producers and consumers from joining the GAS M activity of products provisioning and from fulfilling their material needs while selling and buying those products. Producers and consumers may be among those people and initiatives that might decide to leave GAS M, might be not favoured in, or prevented from, joining GAS M because their views and principles are not fully aligned with the ones prevailing in GAS M.

The priority given to the civic aspects and to their fulfilment as well as the ideological and material selection that are taking place in GAS M has three main implications. It has an impact on the equity of the system of food provisioning; it has an impact on the role GAS M plays in the context where it acts; finally, it impacts on the GAS's likelihood of lasting and expanding.

The equity of GAS M as a food provisioning system

Several studies on AFNs discuss the equity of the food provisioning systems these initiatives create. Different concepts have been introduced to frame this issue. Some studies use the concept of food justice (Gibb & Wittman, 2013); other studies use the notions of food sovereignty and community food security (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Allen, 1999); recent studies on CFNs use the concepts of food democracy and food citizenship (Lamine et al., 2012; Renting et al, 2012). Together these concepts refer to systems of food provisioning that ensure equal opportunities in terms of accessing high quality, adequate, and sufficient food and participating in the management of those systems and expressing diverse perspectives and ways of approaching food provisioning.

Several AFNs scholars have highlighted some threats to the equity of the food provisioning systems created by AFNs. According to them, such systems may end up not being fully inclusive, as concerns both the management and access to food. The reasons for this are economic exclusion (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Goodman, 2004; Macias, 2008), racial exclusion (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Gibb & Wittman, 2013; Slocum, 2006), logistical exclusion (McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011), and exclusion because of a lack of social and technical skills (Lamine et al., 2012). This research introduces a further reason that can hamper the inclusivity and therefore equity of the food provisioning systems created by AFNs. The dynamics of ideological and associated material selection that seem to take place in the case of the studied GAS may also occur in other AFNs.

The role of GAS M in the context where it operates

AFNs are generally seen as initiatives seeking to create the necessary conditions for farmers to have fair and regular opportunities to sell their products and for consumers to have access to high quality, traditional and environmentally friendly products at fair prices (Allen, 1999; Feenstra, 1997; Renting et al., 2003; Tregear, 2011). Existing studies on GASs have highlighted similar aims (Carbone, et al., 2007; Cembalo et al., 2013; Fonte, 2013; Sivini, 2007). The willingness to create

fair selling-buying opportunities for such products and producers also emerges in the case of the GAS studied in this research (chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Nonetheless, this research also points out some limitations to fully reach this goal. First of all, obtaining adequate economic incomes from selling products through GAS M still appears to be a challenge for the producers involved. Secondly, ensuring that an adequate quantity and variety of products is delivered effectively and regularly is also a challenge. Thirdly, some producers and consumers who are interested in joining the systems of food provisioning set up by GAS M may decide to suspend their participation in the GAS, may be not favoured in, or prevented from, being part of the GAS because their principles and views are not fully aligned with the ones prevailing in GAS M. Fourthly, civic activities which are not connected with food provisioning are a strong priority of the management group. Finally, when making decisions about the organisation and implementation of activities, the management group is often guided by the aim of effectively fulfilling certain principles of civic relevance. This may result in being ineffective in terms of fully satisfying producers and consumers' needs to sell and buy food products. Some decisions on activity scheduling and structuring are made in order to better convey the civic mission of GAS M despite the fact that they may potentially reduce opportunities for buying and selling. Other decisions about which producers and products to include in GAS M are taken depending on whether producers are aligned to civic principles, sometimes, potentially, at the expense of the organoleptic features of the products and of the needs of those consumers for whom the organoleptic features of the products are important. Other decisions concern the pricing of products that, according to some people in the management group, should also cover the costs of producers' civic engagement even if prices turn out not to be affordable for some consumers and imply reduced selling opportunities for producers.

With respect to this last point, a producer who is also part of the management group supports this way of deciding on prices. He could thereby be in a similar situation to what Galt (2013) has defined as self-exploitation or, in other words, in the situation whereby producers in CSAs accept working longer hours than they are paid for and for a low income because of the good social relationships with, and loyalty towards, consumers (Galt, 2013). In the case of the studied GAS, there is a producer who accepts to sell few products because of their high prices as far as those prices are the only possible ones covering the costs of doing organic and traditional production, using local varieties. The reduced economic profitability resulting from selling small quantities is compensated by the fulfilment deriving from being aligned to some principles of civic relevance.

All this leads to the conclusion that the studied GAS is more effective in terms of completing its civic mission than in creating fair, regular, and profitable selling-buying opportunities for small, traditional, environmental friendly farmers and for the consumers of their products. Considering that the GAS is based in urban areas and that also some producers who come from rural areas become involved in the civic mission of GAS M, it is possible to conclude that the GAS is spreading its civic mission in both urban and rural areas. It is contributing towards creating a community of people in both rural and urban areas who share and promote certain principles of civic relevance. This conclusion confirms and expands upon Spilková and Perlín's (2013) findings on Farmers' Markets (FMs) in Czech Republic.

More specifically, it confirms these authors' findings about the studied FMs being very important in terms of community building around certain principles and views in urban areas, while they fail to have a significant impact on economic development in rural areas (Spilková & Perlín, 2013). It expands upon these findings because in the case of this study on GAS M, community building is not limited to urban areas. Moreover, GAS M's capability to boost community is also hampered by

the above-described dynamic of ideological selection. Not every participant in GAS M fully shares the principles and views sometimes prevailing in GAS M community.

GAS M's durability and possibility to expand

Feenstra (2002) identifies four spaces that need to be created and maintained so that those initiatives of local food provisioning that can be classified as AFNs can be developed and maintained. Social spaces are intended as contexts and occasions for socialising; political spaces are indicated as opportunities to influence policy making; intellectual spaces are intended as forums to discuss ideals, principles, and visions that are the foundation of the initiative; economic spaces are meant as contexts and situations for viable and sustainable economic activities (Feenstra, 2002). The studied GAS is working on creating all the mentioned spaces: organising and implementing civic and material activities provides contexts and occasions for socialising, political involvement, and discussing principles, values and visions; organising and implementing material activities contributes towards creating the opportunity for economic activities.

Nonetheless, the work done by the studied GAS is hampered by the prioritisation of civic aspects and by the processes of ideological and material selection. This limits the possibility to participate in social occasions, and political engagement and reflection on principles. It also reduces the economic viability of the GAS. In turn, this is reducing the effectiveness of the studied GAS to create participatory and viable social, political, intellectual and economic spaces, and according to Feenstra (2002), this results in the reduction of an AFN's opportunity to survive and expand.

GAS M could be seen to be in the situation described by Mount (2012) as the least suitable one for adapting to the challenges and changes that every AFN goes through, as well as for its survival and expansion over time. According to the author, processes of change, not least due to the emerging of new views, are normal in the life of an AFN. Having a management structure which is open to renegotiation of boundaries and views is essential for an AFN to survive and expand over time, ensuring the capacity to adjust to changes while preserving its essential structure (Mount, 2012). Having a situation in GAS M where people and initiatives may consider to leave GAS M as well as having a situation in which they may be not favoured in, or prevented from, joining GAS M when they are not fully aligned with certain prevailing views represents the opposite of an open structure, and may become the challenge for GAS M's survival and expansion in the long-term.

This interpretation challenges the perspective of those scholars studying AFNs who maintain that core groups of activists with defined principles can contribute to mobilising participation, expanding initiatives and connecting it with other similar realities (Levkoe & Wakefield, 2013; Murtagh, 2010; Tovey, 1997). Nonetheless, the interpretation emerging from this research resonates with some other scholars who see AFNs as processes of continuous adaptation to changing circumstances (Nost, 2014) and contexts where learning processes take place among their members while they share their views (Cox et al., 2008; Milestad et al., 2010). According to these scholars, a key to forming durable AFNs is their capacity to find a balance among the various different views held by its members, and to adapt them over time according to the circumstances rather than sticking to unchangeable principles and views (Nost, 2014).

7.3 Implications for, and from, IR theory

This section of the conclusions reflects on how Interaction Ritual (IR) theory (Collins, 2004a) has been used for exploring the identity of the studied GAS. In particular, this section reflects on the implications of framing the study of AFNs within an IR theory-based approach that investigates AFNs by examining the dynamics of their activities.

7.3.1 Implications for IR theory: adaptation-operationalisation-application

The Model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities: an explorative adaptation of the model of IR

IR theory (Collins, 2004a) is based on the assumption that social phenomena are outputs of situations of interactions that are repeated over time and space. In order to understand social phenomena, the mechanism of the temporal and spatial repetition of situations of interactions needs to be disclosed. To this end, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) proposes the theoretical model of Interaction Ritual (IR) (Collins, 2004a). The model schematises the temporal and spatial dynamics of situations of interactions as a three-step process. The three steps consist of a preparatory, a central, and an outcomes phase. The passage from one step to the other takes place and allows the situations to reproduce over time and space. When a situation fulfils all the three phases it generates, among other outputs, a) a focus of attention, an emblem, that has been acquiring meanings in the situation, and b) feelings of being connected with the situation and of willing to be part of the situation and to repeat the same or a similar situation that are shared by the people involved in the situation (Collins, 2004a).

The model of IR (Collins, 2004a) details all the components and the connections of causality among them which are behind the passage from one step to the other of the situations of interactions (Collins, 2004a). IR theory (Collins, 2004a) proposes two ways of operationalising the model of IR (Collins, 2004a) in the study of social phenomena starting from their inner dynamics. One way is to carry out explanatory studies that verify some or all of the causal connections among the situations' components that have been hypothesised by IR theory (Collins, 2004a). The other way is to approach the study with an explorative stand which describes situations in the studied phenomena, comparatively and over time, and according to their features (Collins, 1983).

The research presented in this thesis chose the latter approach to study GAS M, namely by examining its inner dynamics. To this end, it implements an adaptation of the model of IR (Collins, 2004a) into a model that seeks to capture the different features generated at different moments within an AFN's inner dynamics. AFNs' activities are identified as their inner dynamics and are interpreted as figurations of situations of interactions. *The model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities* is the name given to the model introduced to adapt the model of IR (Collins, 2004a) to the case of AFNs. The model describes each activity as a two-step process. The first step, which recalls the preparatory phase of the model of IR (Collins, 2004a), coincides with the moment of an activity's organisation. The second step, recalls of the central phase of the model of IR (Collins, 2004a), and coincides with the moment of an activity's implementation. For each of the two steps, certain features emerge. Starting from IR theory (Collins, 2004a), these features are identified as feelings of attachment, (i.e. feelings of being connected with the situation and of willing to repeat the same or a similar situation), and common understanding, (i.e. focus of attention that acquires meanings in the situation). When feelings of attachment and common understanding are not generated, the process of organising and implementing activities stops. When they generate at a sufficient level the process continues and repeats.

In sum, this research provides a first adaptation of the model of IR (Collins, 2004a) into a model that seeks to frame explorative studies of the dynamics of AFNs' activities as a starting point to understand their identities and roles.

A dynamics-centred, unobtrusive and explorative approach to data collection and analysis: operationalising IR theory's theoretical and methodological guidelines

Following IR theory (Collins, 2004a), explorative and dynamics-centred studies of social

phenomena compare different situations of interactions, (i.e. the phenomena's dynamics), in terms of their features. It is crucial therefore to find unobtrusive strategies that ascertain the features of situations of interactions while they actually take place. In particular, the features of situations of interactions need to be inferred from naturally occurring data emerging while the studied situations of interactions occur (Collins, 1983).

Despite highlighting the importance of conducting studies in which situations of interactions play a central role and where all the information is inferred from the actual dynamics of the situations, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) maintains that some features of the situations may also show at an individual level, among the participants in the situations and because of their participation in the situations. In other words, these features reflect the reaction of individuals during their involvement in situations. Hence, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) proposes a combination of situations and actor-centred sources of information to ascertain the features of the studied situations of interactions and their implications for the overall identities of the phenomena the situations contribute to building up (Collins, 2004a).

The research presented in this thesis has made an operational effort to fully implement a situations of interactions-centred study of AFNs. To this end, it has worked on the selection and operationalisation of those theoretical and methodological guidelines of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) that allow inferring situations' features from characteristics of the situations *per se* which emerges from what actually happens in situations while they occur. All these features are expressed in the definitions of common understanding and feelings of attachment.

A first result of this operationalisation effort is the definition of unobtrusive methods of data collection to gather data on the figurations of situations of interactions in the case of the studied GAS, namely on its activities. The methods are observation of the implementation of activities in GAS M and the collection and analysis of primary and unwittingly documents produced during, and as result of, the organisation and implementation of activities. A second result of the operational effort is the definition of indicators to ascertain feelings of attachment as well as of a coding frame to disclose common understanding emerging during the unfolding of the GAS' activities. They have been operationalised and determined, respectively, as: 1) the intensity of activities in terms of their capacity to fulfil, repeat, and engage people in carrying them on; 2) what attracts attention in the activities, which sort of attention it generates, and what its significance is.

Although the indicators and the coding frame are specifically defined for the case of the GAS studied, the reasoning behind their definition can be generalised to other cases of AFNs and used as a basis for situations of interactions-centred studies in other AFNs. In other words, this research has brought some of the IR theory (Collins, 2004a) guidelines to a further level of operationalisation that can be used as a starting point for other IR theory-based studies or, more broadly, for studies that seek to investigate social phenomena, not least AFNs, by investigating their dynamics through explorative and unobtrusive approaches.

Other studies have applied IR theory to understanding religious rituals (Heider & Warner, 2010) and movements (Barone, 2007), outbreaks of nationalism (Collins, 2004b, 2012b), violence and conflicts (Collins, 2012a; Weenink, 2014), gender relations (Johnson, 2009) and dynamics in auctions (Herrero, 2010). All of them have focussed solely on disclosing what has been in this research presented and operationalised as common understanding. Hence the research presented in this thesis remains the only existing application of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to AFNs thus far which considers both feelings attachment and common understanding.

7.3.2 Implications from IR theory: model, conceptual categories and reasoning for explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs

The model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities: explorative and dynamics-centred studies of meanings and intensity

Chapter 2 of this thesis claims that the most recent and advanced studies on AFNs use a dynamics-centred and explorative approach to investigate these phenomena. These studies think of AFNs as outputs of negotiation processes that occur, on a day-to-day basis, during micro interactions between AFNs' actors. Meanings emerge from these negotiation processes from which AFNs' features and their implications for AFNs' identities and roles can be inferred. The identities and roles of AFNs, therefore, are continuously defined and re-defined during those negotiation processes (Kirwan, 2006; Mount, 2012). Until now, explorative and dynamics-centred studies have been introducing strategies to examine the negotiation processes of meanings creation whereby AFNs' features, identities and roles are defined and re-defined (Ammirato et al., 2013; DuPuis & Gillon, 2009; Papaioikonomou et al., 2012; Volpentesta et al., 2012).

This research brings dynamics-centred and explorative studies on AFNs a step further by introducing the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities and some tools to operationalise it. An understanding of AFNs' identities and roles is reached by deriving their features from the feelings of attachment and common understanding generated in their activities. Common understanding has been operationalised as that which attracts attention and interest during activities, and which also acquires a special significance that is specific to those activities and people involved. Common understanding, emerging in the studied GAS, has been established by looking at the meanings of what is discussed in conversations occurring during AFNs' activities. From those meanings views about the studied GAS emerge from which insight on its identity are derived. Feelings of attachment have been operationalised as the intensity of each activity of the studied GAS. The feelings of attachment of each activity has been ascertained by looking at the functioning of each activity in terms of its capacity to unfold over time and to attract people. Each activity has its own purposes and by determining the intensity of each activity, it is possible to deduce how far its purposes influence the overall purpose of GAS M, and therefore its identity.

All in all, by operationalising the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities, the features of the studied GAS and their implications in terms of the GAS's identity are disclosed from meanings negotiation in conversations as well as from the analysis of the intensity of GAS M's activities in terms of their capacity to unfold over time and to attract people. Hence, framing the study of AFNs using the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities has enabled a step forward in terms of the existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs. First, the model allows an explorative and dynamics-centred approach to be maintained since nothing concerning the features, identities and roles of AFNs is given by a-priori conceptual categories; rather the model introduces some guidelines to explore the functioning of AFNs' activities where features, identities and roles are continuously shaped. Second, the model allows us to go beyond the disclosure of processes of meanings negotiation used by the existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs to investigate their features and to infer insights on their identities and roles. The model also allows a look at the intensity of AFNs activities taking place to infer insights on AFNs' features, identities and roles based on the relevance of these activities in influencing these aspects.

In methodological terms, applying the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities to the study of GAS M implied a triangulation of data derived from different sources and as well as a combination of methods of data analysis. First, several different sources such as documents and field notes have been used to collect data on the same dynamics of the organisation and implementation of activities.

Second, quantitative data and methods of data analysis have been used to ascertain feelings of attachment in GAS M activities, while qualitative data and methods of data analysis have been used to discover common understanding in GAS M's activities. Triangulation is recommended to enhance the validity of studies (Berg, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). Hence, by introducing the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities, this research is also providing an approach to increase the validity of the findings of studies on AFNs since it is based on a combination of data sources and of qualitative and quantitative data.

Furthermore, IR theory (Collins, 2004a), the theoretical and methodological framework from which the model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities introduced by this research is derived, provides some conceptual categories and reasoning to interpret information inferred by operationalising the model in the study of AFNs. Some of them have been used to interpret the insights on the studied GAS, namely focussed crowds and individualized encounters, status group and energy stars, and the maximisation of solidarity payoffs. They are summarised below in order to show what they can contribute if used in further studies on AFNs; the focus will be on which aspects of AFNs they can contribute towards exploring and explaining.

Focussed crowds and individualised encounters: conceptual categories to interpret the importance of AFNs' activities in influencing AFNs' identities and roles

The conceptual categories of *focussed crowds* and *individualised encounters* (Collins, 2004a) were introduced in chapter 5 to interpret the overall performance of the activities identified and explored in the case study of GAS M.

Focussed crowds refer to those situations where people are in each other's presence even if they do not know each other and do not necessarily get to know each other while participating in the same situation. Moreover, those people are brought into that situation because someone external to the group participating in the situation has created the occasion; in other words, someone has defined a focus for the situation that suits some people's interest and provides them with a reason to participate in the situation. Individualised encounters are situations where people who know each other spend time together. Those people have common interests that mobilise them from time to time to repeat the encounter. These are self-reproducing situations because the input to meet again comes from within the group that is going to meet, from a person or persons within the group arousing the willingness to be in the same or similar situations by recalling the focus of the situations, or what has brought the people into the situation in the first place. According to IR theory (Collins, 2004a), individualised encounters are more intense than focussed crowds because the engine for them to unfold and repeat over time is within them. These encounters can recreate a tied and stable group committed to their repetition; hence they have the basic conditions to reproduce themselves internally (Collins, 2004a).

In conclusion of the analysis on the feelings of attachment generated in GAS M activities, material activities, (i.e. activities dealing with food provisioning), showed the features of focussed crowds, while civic activities, (i.e. activities dealing with civic engagement and socialising occasions), showed the features of individualised encounters. Hence, it has been concluded that the latter are more intense, and consequently influence the studied GAS's identity more than material activities do.

In summary, focussed crowds and individualised encounters are two of the conceptual categories IR theory (Collins, 2004a) proposes to interpret social phenomena from the features emerging from their dynamics of situations of interactions. As for the case of the studied GAS, those conceptual categories can be used to interpret the features of AFNs' activities and to infer from this the role

those activities play in the definition of the overall identities of the studied AFNs. When using these categories, the description of activities' dynamics in terms of how often they repeat, how able they are to complete, and to which extent they are able to involve participants, provides sufficient information from which to understand the role of those activities for the overall identities of AFNs. As shown in chapter 2 of this thesis, actors' rationalisations have been central in several studies on AFNs' identities and roles until now. By using the mentioned categories, actors' rationalisations can be replaced with the information on AFNs' features which emerges from observing the dynamics of AFNs' activities. In other words, actors' personal preferences and ideas, which may bias their rationalisations about the roles and identities of AFNs, are substituted for the interpretation of the features emerging from what actually happens while AFNs' activities take place.

Status ritual and energy stars: conceptual categories to interpret inclusivity of, and power relations in, AFNs

The conceptual categories of *energy stars* (Collins, 2004a) and of *status ritual* (Collins, 2004a) were introduced in chapter 6 to interpret the groups dynamics within the studied GAS and the way the studied GAS engage with other initiatives.

Status ritual are those situations where all involved people are in the same condition with respect to the dynamic of the situations. Everyone can contribute to carrying on the situation. Everyone can give their view, which will be mediated with other views and will contribute to shaping the overall foci of the situations and their significance. Energy stars are people involved in a situation who acquire a central position; they are people who are more motivated and committed than others and therefore become more influential in the situation, to the extent that they may impose their own views and their ways of carrying on the situation (Collins, 2004a).

After exploring the internal dynamics of GAS M activities, it has emerged that GAS M's activities can be interpreted as status ritual since there is no formal hierarchy while organising and implementing them, as well as in the overall organisation of GAS M. Nonetheless, some people in the management group of GAS M emerged as energy stars since they are the ones who take action mostly often and whose views often prevail when organising and implementing activities.

Status ritual and energy stars are just two of the conceptual categories suggested by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to interpret the ways people relate to each other in situations of interactions. In this study, they have been used to interpret people's relationships within GAS M and, as discussed above, they proved useful in understanding the level of inclusivity of the studied GAS. Hence, with such conceptual categories, IR theory (Collins, 2004a) provides useful tools that can be used to interpret group dynamics within the studied AFNs and the ways AFNs relate to people and initiatives external to them. Interpreting such dynamics is informative with respect to the issue of inclusivity of AFNs, but it can also be informative with respect to power relations in AFNs. Moreover, the mentioned categories follow the overall logic of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) that implies deriving all the information to be interpreted from what actually happens in the dynamics of the studied phenomena (Collins, 2004a). Hence, by using conceptual categories such as status ritual and energy stars in the study of AFNs, insights on inclusivity and power relations in AFNs are inferred by exploring the dynamics of their internal activities.

Maximising solidarity payoffs: conceptual reasoning to interpret the combination of civic and material aspects in AFNs

The conceptual reasoning about the maximisation of *solidarity payoffs* (Collins, 2004a) was introduced in chapter 6 in order to interpret how groups of people within the studied GAS decide

about their participation in all the possible activities.

According to IR theory (Collins, 2004a), participants in situations of interactions want to maximise their solidarity payoffs, their feelings of fulfilment for being part of and contributing to something they feel connected to because it is a context where they can share and find support for their interests and views (Collins, 2004a). Although maximising solidarity payoffs is not about economic fulfilment, it is connected with economic aspects for at least two reasons. First, economic support is needed in order to take part in those situations where solidarity payoffs are maximised, even if these situations do not have economic purposes, (e.g. money is needed to reach a place where a situation takes place or to join in events where these situations occur). Second, situations with economic purposes, (e.g. situations taking place while economic transactions occur during the production or exchange of products), may generate some degree of solidarity payoffs when some connections are made at the level of interests and views (Collins, 2004a).

After analysing the dynamics of GAS M activities, two groups emerged which are motivated, connected and fulfilled by three different views about the studied GAS. These groups also get engaged in different types of activities and in different ways.

Following the reasoning on the maximisation of solidarity payoffs (Collins, 2004a), the rationale guiding the different groups in their decisions about which activities to join and how to participate in them is outlined in chapter 6 of this research. The small management group is motivated and connected by the view of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy by means of spreading critical consumption or awareness and critical thinking about matters of civic relevance. They maximise their fulfilment when they contribute in those activities that are instrumental in realising the project of GAS M as a tool to promote solidarity economy. Both material and civic activities are instrumental to the project: the first create occasions for critical consumption, while the second create occasions to educate people about principles of critical consumption and other principles of broader civic relevance; finally, during the organisation and implementation of material activities, occasions are created to contribute to stimulating and giving expression to critical thinking about matters of civic relevance. The broader group of producers and consumers who are motivated and connected by the view of GAS M a system of food provisioning maximise their fulfilment when they contribute to, and get involved in, those activities that make food provisioning possible in an effective way, this primarily being material activities.

All in all, the conceptual reasoning on the maximisation of solidarity payoffs (Collins, 2004a) can be used to further explore and explain the participation in AFNs. Particularly, it can be useful in explaining what guides decisions in terms of which activities to be involved in besides the economic-material interest in selling and buying products with certain physical features at convenient prices. The reasoning on the maximisation of solidarity payoffs (Collins, 2004a) can support an explanation of how the mentioned economic-material interests combine with the civic ones. It is particularly useful for the new branch of studies on AFNs which focusses on AFNs, or CFNs, carrying out both activities of food provisioning and activities aimed at rising civic awareness (Renting et al., 2012). In line with the overall logic of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) that implies deriving all the information to be interpreted from what actually happens in the dynamics of the studied phenomena (Collins, 2004a), the reasoning on the maximisation of solidarity payoffs allows for explanations of how economic-material interests combine with the civic ones in AFNs by looking at the functioning of AFNs' activities.

7.4 Need for further research: comparative analysis and explanatory works on causal relations

This research has contributed to studies on AFNs in at least two different ways. First, the approach based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) chosen for this research has expanded the explorative and dynamics-centred approaches that are the most advanced approaches used in the study of AFNs. Second, the findings resulting from applying this approach to the exploration of a consumer-led initiative operating in a context with a traditional agrifood system and which acts on both food provisioning and civic engagement has helped to refine some of the existing findings on AFNs. All in all, this research has shown how nuanced the reality of AFNs can be. Even one single case such as GAS M can show many different features. By looking at the functioning of its internal dynamics, this research has allowed all of these features to be highlighted - which groups of participants are interested in the different features and to which extent, how these features combine over time and space, and what their relative importance is in defining GAS M's identity.

Highlighting all the possible nuances of AFNs and how they evolve and combine over time and space contributes to forming a grounded picture of AFNs. Hence, it is important for studies on AFNs to advance dynamics-centred approaches by: a) implementing comparative analyses of several AFNs, b) combining explorative with explanatory investigations where causal relations within and between dynamics are verified. The following recommendations provide input for future research, from the perspective of a dynamics-centred and explorative study built on IR theory (Collins, 2004a).

7.4.1 Comparative analyses of more than one AFN per study

It is important to study more than one case of AFNs at once, both within the same category and across different categories of AFNs. Comparing different case studies on the basis of the features emerging while studying their internal dynamics is recommended by IR theory in order to enhance the significance of the study's results (Collins, 1983, 2004a). Applied to the case of AFNs, when considering different cases of AFNs in a comparative way, more variety, nuances, and ultimately broader and more representative knowledge would emerge than when considering just one case.

This research was limited to just one case for two reasons. Firstly, operationalising IR theory (Collins, 2004a) in the case of AFNs, (i.e. defining the model for the dynamics of AFNs' activities, defining indicators of feelings of attachment and defining a coding frame to ascertain common understanding), was new and time consuming. When the operationalisation was completed, there was only sufficient time to consider one case. Secondly, using unobtrusive methods of data collection and analysis, as suggested by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) for explorative studies (Collins, 1983, 2004a), has required using very specific data sources and data that is not common to many cases of AFNs. In the Calabrian context, only one case was able to provide the necessary sources of data.

Nonetheless, this research has set the conditions so that future studies can use an IR theory-based approach to explore several cases of AFNs comparatively as well as considering cases from a broader variety of types of AFNs.

First, this research, inspired by IR theory (Collins, 2004a), has developed the theoretical and methodological approach to explore AFN's dynamics. In other words, this research has defined a model for exploring the dynamics of AFNs' activities, the methods of data collection and data sources that provide the necessary unobtrusive data on AFNs dynamics as well as indicators and coding frame for data analysis that future studies on AFNs can apply. These studies can invest the

time saved from the operationalization of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to investigate more cases of AFNs in a comparative way.

Second, starting from some of the results of this research, (i.e. indicators defined to ascertain feelings of attachment as well as the coding frame defined to examine common understanding), methods of data collection that rely on more standard sources of data than the one used in this research can be defined. Examples can be questionnaires, structured diaries and observations. These can be used to interview participants in AFNs and let them think about the functioning of AFNs' activities as well as observing them in a structured way while they participate in these activities. Questionnaires, structured diaries and field notes sheets can be used to enquiry about some aspects that, following some of the results of this research, appear to be relevant to infer the features of the dynamics of AFNs' activities. Namely, which groups participants involved in the study belong to, how often they participate in the different activities, and with which roles, what they talk about, what their view is on what they discuss or what events, people, places, principles, and any sort of tangible or intangible item they think is relevant in the everyday dynamics of AFNs' activities as well as what meanings they attribute to it.

Such methods of data collection do not allow unobtrusive collection of naturally occurring data, not least because they all imply a certain level of actors' rationalisations. Nonetheless, they represent means of obtaining information on the dynamics of AFNs' activities even when unobtrusive and naturally occurring data sources are not available. In turn, this will broaden the possible range of types of AFNs that can be investigated using an IR theory-based approach by future dynamics-centred and explorative studies. Such methods of data collection are still in line with IR theory's theoretical and methodological guidelines since, as mentioned above, its guidelines contemplate the possibility to partially rely on actors as sources of information on the dynamics of social phenomena. Such methods could not be explored in this research since they are a gain from this research's experiences and explorations. Moreover, this study chose a radically unobtrusive stance in order to verify what can be concluded by just looking at the naturally occurring dynamics of AFNs' activities. Relying, even partially, on actors as sources of information would have reduced this possibility.

7.4.2 Explanatory works which verify causal relations between and within AFNs' dynamics

When a phenomenon is approached for the first time with the lens of IR theory (Collins, 2004a), Collins (1983) suggests approaching it in an explorative way by identifying its inner situations of interactions and by comparing those situations over time and space according to their features (Collins, 1983). Following this reasoning, this study carried out an explorative investigation of a GAS and its dynamics. From this explorative investigation, two questions emerge that can be answered using an explanatory approach which looks at causal relations within and between the studied dynamics.

These questions have not been explored in this research because the operationalisation of IR theory (Collins, 2004a) in the study of AFNs was new and time consuming so there was insufficient time left to combine the explorative analysis done by this research with a further explanatory analysis. Nonetheless, implementing such explanatory analyses and replying to the two questions emerging from this research can contribute to advancing the literature both on AFNs and IR theory (Collins, 2004a). How this can be done is presented below while introducing the two questions to be answered by means of future explanatory IR theory-based studies on AFNs.

The first question concerns the relationship between the strength of ties among participants in situations of interactions and the extent to which the effort in carrying on the situations is evenly

shared by these participants, on the one hand, and the frequency of the same situations of interactions, on the other hand. IR theory (Collins, 2004a) hypothesises that balanced involvement in carrying on situations of interactions and strong ties among participants in the situations come along with high capacity of the situations to unwind and repeat over time (Collins, 2004a). The results emerging from this study appoint the opposite. Indeed, civic activities which score high in terms of strength of ties among their participants and of balanced involvement of these participants in their organisation and implementation, score low on frequency. This may possibly be explained as an indication for the establishment of certain activities. The guiding idea is that highly balanced involvement in carrying on activities and strong ties among participants may no longer result in high numbers of repetitions once the need for the activity as such has been widely accepted. Repeating a situation is considered as a way to confirm it (Collins, 2004a); when this situation has been able to reproduce an adequate degree of balanced involvement and of ties around its occurrence, it can be considered as established, and thus less at risk of being forgotten. Therefore, the situation does not need to be repeated, or confirmed, as often as it was before it reached the adequate degree of balanced involvement and of ties among participants.

The idea that, after a certain degree of balanced involvement and of ties among participants is reached, a situation's frequency stabilises is just a possible theoretical explanation that requires further confirmation. It is up to future research on AFNs based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) to enquire what is the causal relation between the frequency of AFNs' activities and the degree of balanced involvement and of ties among participants in the same activities, and if they are always positively correlated or not. Replying to this question would contribute to testing IR theory (Collins, 2004a) since one of its hypotheses would be verified by means of empirical evidence. Moreover, it would contribute to expanding knowledge on AFNs. First of all, it would allow verification of what realistic indicators of the intensity, and therefore, relevance of AFNs activities are in terms of influencing AFNs' identities. The extent to which the frequency of an activity alone can be a sufficient indication of its intensity and relevance could be ascertained. This, in turn, would result in enhanced understanding of the impact of AFNs' activities on the overall identities of AFNs. Second, it would allow us to verify what the relationship is between the presence of tied groups actively and evenly involved in carrying on AFNs' activities and the consolidation of these activities. Discovering this relation would in turn provide useful information on what can contribute to stabilising and giving durability to AFNs in general.

The second question that arises from this research and that can be responded to by means of further explanatory studies concerns verifying which sort of causal relation, if any, exists between civic and material activities in those cases of AFNs where both kinds of activities take place. IR theory (Collins, 2004a) assumes that people become involved in situations of interactions primarily because they want to maximise their spiritual fulfilment, which is reached when they can find situations where their ideas, views and feelings are shared and supported. Economic fulfilment is secondary and the involvement in situations of interactions with an economic purpose arises only when it is instrumental in recreating situations of interactions where spiritual fulfilment can be maximised (Collins, 2004a).

One of the results of this research shows that the management group of GAS M participates in both material activities, (i.e. situations with economic implications), and civic activities, (i.e. situations with only spiritual implications), despite their primary interest in the latter. This result is interpreted as a consequence of the fact that both types of activities are used to contribute to the same purpose of promoting solidarity economy around which the group connects, in which it feels interested, and by which it is motivated. Hence, both activities are used to maximise the spiritual fulfilment deriving from being in situations where ideas, views and purposes are shared and supported. In other words, this explanation of the engagement of the management group in both material and

civic activities testifies to the tendency that is in line with the hypothesis made by IR theory (Collins, 2004a) about the willingness to maximise spiritual fulfilment as the main discriminant when people choose which situations to participate in (Collins, 2004a).

Given the explorative nature of this research, its results contribute to refining this hypothesis. Testing it would require future explanatory research on AFNs based on IR theory (Collins, 2004a) that enquire what is the causal relation between civic and material activities, whether civic activities and material activities are positively related, and if the former have a positive influence on the latter. Answering this question would be meaningful both for the literature on AFNs and for IR theory (Collins, 2004a). IR theory would benefit because one of its hypotheses would be verified by means of empirical evidence. Likewise, verifying which (if any) causal relation exists between material and civic activities would expand our knowledge on AFNs because it would find out what is actually driving those initiatives. This research has described the combination of civic and material activities and associated interests in one case of AFNs. It has showed that this combination is in a continuous process of redefinition where civic activities and interests sometime prevail. Nonetheless, further research is needed to obtain insights on their causal relations.

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List of acronyms

AFN: Alternative Food Network
AIAB: Associazione Italiana per l' Agricoltura Biologica
CAP: Common Agricultural Policy
CFN: Civic Food Network
CSA: Community Supported Agriculture
FM: Farmers' Markets
GAS: Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale
GODO: Gruppo Organizzato di Domanda e Offerta
ICT: Information and Communication Technology
INEA: Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria
IR: Interaction Ritual
ISTAT: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
OBS: Observation
P: Project
PDO: Protected Designation of Origin
PGI: Protected Geographical Indication
PSR: Programma di Sviluppo Rurale
RDP: Rural Development Program
SFSC: Short Food Supply Chain
SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Science
SRM: Studi e Ricerche per il Mezzogiorno
UK: United Kingdom
US: United States

Appendix 1

First step of the data analysis:

July 2012 - October 2013.

**Variables for feelings of attachment and
categories for common understanding
in GAS M activities.**

Weekly orders. These are orders of products that are called on a weekly basis. They are generally exchanged on Saturdays. They involve local producers and products. They are mostly fresh food products but they can also be transformed food products and non-food items. The weekly orders mainly involve people who are associated with GAS M, which is to say that they pay an association fee every six months. Nonetheless, people who are not associated also book these products sometimes. The weekly orders mainly take place in the form of exchange of boxes with fresh products that are accompanied by a market.

Table A1.1 Activity weekly orders: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Personalised	Dummy variable. 1 if the participants in GAS M have the opportunity to compose their own boxes of products. 0 if this option is not offered.
Preassembled	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one option out of big, small and one single preassembled box is offered. 0 if none of these three options is offered.
Large	Dummy variable. 1 if the participants in GAS M have the opportunity to choose between big and small preassembled box. 0 if this possibility is not offered.
Small	Dummy variable. 1 if participants in GAS M have the opportunity to choose between big and small preassembled box. 0 if this possibility is not offered.
No. boxes large	Indicates the number of big boxes ordered by participants in GAS M.
No. boxes small	Indicates the number of small boxes ordered by participants in GAS M.
No. boxes personalised	Indicates the number of preassembled boxes ordered by participants in GAS M.
No. boxes preassembled	Indicates the number of preassembled boxes ordered by participants in GAS M.
Request of personalisation	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one participant in GAS M asks for a box personalisation compared to what is offered by the box. 0 if there are no requests for personalisation.
Amount personalisation	Indicates the monetary value of the requested personalisation.
No. producers personalisation	Indicates the number of producers involved in the personalisation because their products are either required or refused.
No. consumers personalisation	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who require the personalisation.
Market value	Indicates the monetary value of all the boxes ordered by the participants in GAS M according to the products' prices, as defined for the market (which occurs in combination with the boxes exchange).
Producers value	Indicates the monetary value all the producers involved in the boxes exchange obtain from all the boxes ordered by participants in GAS M. This value is different from the market value when a discount system is applied.
Gasisti value	Indicates the monetary value all participants in GAS M who order the boxes pay for all the ordered boxes. This value is different from market and producers value when a system of discount is applied.
GAS value	Indicates the monetary value GAS M obtains from all the ordered boxes. This value only exists when a discount system is in place.
% vegetables	Ratio between the monetary value of vegetables (i.e. vegetables, fruits, legumes) ordered through the boxes according to their market value and the market value of all the ordered boxes, times 100.
% dairy	Ratio between the monetary value of dairy products (i.e. milk, cheese, eggs) ordered through the boxes according to their market value and the

	market value of all the ordered boxes, times 100.
% other processed products	Ratio between the monetary value of processed products (i.e. every processed food product that is not dairy and comes from vegetable - mostly oil, jam, honey, bread, liquor, wine) which are ordered through the boxes according to their market value and the market value of all the ordered boxes, times 100.
% meat	Ratio between the monetary value of meat products (i.e. raw meat and processed meat) ordered through the boxes according to their market value and the market value of all the ordered boxes, times 100.
% non food items	Ratio between the monetary value of non-food products (i.e. ecological soaps, toilet/kitchen papers and similar) ordered through the boxes according to their market value and the market value of all the ordered boxes ordered, times 100.
% First producer	Indicates the percentage gained by the best selling producer in an exchange day for boxes in relation to the amount of total sales of boxes with respect to market value prices.
First producer change	Dummy variable. 1 if the best selling producer in an exchange day for boxes is different than the best selling producer on the previous exchange day. 0 if the best selling producer stays the same as the previous exchange day.
No. emails	Indicates the number of mails exchanged in a week around the topic of the weekly orders.
Booking time (h)	Indicates the amount of time given to participants in GAS M to make their bookings of weekly orders. It is computed as the hours between the call for weekly orders and the deadline to communicate the booking. When there are different booking frames for different products it is computed as a ratio between the sum of the different hours given to book times the number of products with each of the different booking frames and the total number of products.
Collection time (h)	Indicates the amount of time given to participants in GAS M to pick up the boxes they booked. This is computed in hours.
Change in the day of call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a change of day when the call for weekly orders is launched compared to the previous call. 0 if the day does not change.
Change in the day of booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a change in the deadline to communicate the booking for weekly orders compared to the previous booking. 0 if there is no change.
Change in the day of collection	Dummy variable. 1 if there are a change in the day the boxes booked for the weekly orders are picked up compared to the previous pick up. 0 if there is no change.
No. potential consumers	Indicates the number of people reached by the email calling for weekly orders.
No. real consumers	Indicates the number of people who book at least one box after a call for weekly orders.
No. real consumers associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who have paid the consumers' association fee.
No. real consumers rest	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who have not paid the consumers' association fee.
No. potential producers	Indicates the number of producers included in a considered weekly order and also all the producers included in previous weekly orders, even if not included in the considered weekly order.
No. real producers	Indicates the number of producers whose products have been chosen in a considered weekly order.
No. real producers associated	Indicates the number of producers, among the real producers, who have paid the producers' association fee.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for loose extra products compared to those available in the weekly orders. 0 if there is no such call.
Loose products booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a booking of loose products. 0 if there is not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of loose products. 0 if there is not.

Amount loose products	Indicates the monetary value of booked loose products.
No. producers loose products	Indicates the number of producers whose products are offered in calls for loose products.
No. consumers loose products	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call monthly orders. 0 if there is not.
Monthly orders booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a booking of monthly orders. 0 if there is not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of monthly orders. 0 if there is no such delivery.
Amount monthly orders	Indicates the monetary value of products booked through monthly orders.
No. producers monthly orders	Indicates the number of producers whose products are offered in calls for monthly orders.
No. consumers monthly orders	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book products from monthly orders.
Special orders call	Indicates the number of different calls for special orders launched.
Special orders booking	Indicates the number of different special orders available for booking.
Special orders delivery	Indicates the number of different special orders delivered.
Amount special orders	Indicates the monetary value of products booked through special orders.
No. producers special orders	Indicates the number of producers whose products are offered in calls for special orders.
No. consumers special orders	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book products from special orders.
Collective orders call	Indicates the number of different calls for collective orders launched.
Collective orders booking	Indicates the number of different collective orders available for booking.
Collective orders delivery	Indicates the number of different collective orders delivered.
Amount collective orders	Indicates the monetary value of products booked through collective orders.
No. producers collective orders	Indicates the number of producers whose products are offered in calls for collective orders.
No. consumers collective orders	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book products from collective orders.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one social meal organised. 0 if there is not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one other initiative that takes place. 0 if there is not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one meeting that takes place. 0 if there is not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if the day of the delivery of weekly orders is a holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.

Mode	Categorical variable. 0 if there are no weekly orders called and delivered as well as the associated market or if the weekly exchange of products takes place as buying in a farm shop. 1 if there is delivery of weekly orders and it is accompanied by a market. 2 if there is just the delivery of weekly orders. 3 if there is just the market.
Place	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of weekly order or the exchange of products for weekly orders takes place as buying in a farm shop. 1 if the place for the delivery of weekly orders is a squatted area. 2 if the place for the delivery of weekly orders is a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the place chosen for the delivery of weekly orders is a square of historical importance in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the place for the delivery of weekly orders is a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the place for the delivery of weekly orders is a random place.

Special orders. These are orders of products linked to special events. Generally those events have a very strong civic component, (e.g. support to producers affected by natural disaster, actions against workers exploitation), as well as being connected with special events related to cultural dynamics, (e.g. special orders of products for Christmas). Special Orders do not occur with regularity and they can involve other people beyond those associated to GAS M or subscribing to its mailing lists. They can involve other GASs and organisations. Producers can be from the region where GAS M operates, or also from other parts of Italy. Special orders can be made of fresh and transformed food products and non-food products.

Table A1.2 Activity special orders: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Type	Non numerical variable. Indicates which specific special order is considered.
Monetary amount	Indicates the monetary value of the products exchanged through special orders.
Request of personalisation	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a request for personalisation (e.g. different quantity, quality) compared to what offered in the calls for special orders.
% vegetables	Ratio between the monetary value of vegetables ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through special orders, times 100.
% dairy	Ratio between the monetary value of dairy products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through special orders, times 100.
% other processed products	Ratio between the monetary value of processed products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through special orders, times 100.
% non food items	Ratio between the monetary value of non-food products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through special orders, times 100.
% meat	Ratio between the monetary value of meat products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through special orders, times 100.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to consumers associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach the participants in GAS M who pay the consumers' association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for special orders. 0 if not.

Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASSs	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach the Connecting GASSs list. 0 if not.
Call to other GASS' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for special orders reach other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real consumers	Indicates the number of people booking products from special orders.
No. real cons. GAS M	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real cons. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who pay the consumers' association fee.
No. real cons. Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Co-management.
No. real cons. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who book products from weekly orders in the same week they book products from special orders.
No. real cons. Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real cons. Connecting GASSs	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASSs.
No. real cons. other GASSs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists.
No. real cons. other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GASSs' management lists.
No. potential producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in calls for special orders.
No. potential producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in call for special orders.
No. real producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for special orders.
No. real producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for special orders.
Average booking time (h)	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to book special orders. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to book for each called special order and the total number of different special orders for which a call is launched.
Average collection time (h)	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to pick up the booked special orders. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to pick up products for each special order and the total number of different special orders which are delivered.
Extension day of booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the booking time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Extension day of collection	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the pick up time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one special order is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for special orders is made. 0 if not.

Delivered	Dummy variable. 1 if products for at least one special order are delivered. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and book products through special orders.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call special orders.
No. emails booking	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to book products through special orders.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of special orders.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to call, organise, book and pick up products through special orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about special orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call special orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of special orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers booking	Indicates the number of people who write about the booking of special orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of special orders are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to the Connecting GASs list. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.

Organisation to other GASs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of special orders is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of special orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place booking	Categorical variable. 0 if no booking of products through special orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the booking takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the booking takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the booking takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the booking takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the booking takes place in a random place.
Place delivery	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of products through special orders. 1 if the delivery takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the delivery takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the delivering takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the delivering takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the delivering takes place in a random place.

Collective orders. These are orders of products that are not sourced from the surroundings of the town where GAS M operates. They can come from regional producers but also from national producers. They are often transformed food products or non-food items. They may involve people beyond those associated to GAS M and those who subscribe to GAS M mailing lists; often they involve other GASs.

Table A1.3 Activity collective orders: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Type	Non numerical variable. Indicates which specific collective order is considered.
Monetary amount	Indicates the monetary value of products exchanged through collective orders.
Request of personalisation	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a request of personalisation (e.g. different quantity, quality) compared to what offered in the calls for collective orders.
% vegetables	Ratio between the monetary value of vegetables ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through collective orders, times 100.
% dairy	Ratio between the monetary value of dairy products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through collective orders, times 100.
% other processed products	Ratio between the monetary value of processed products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through collective orders, times 100.
% non food items	Ratio between the monetary value of non-food products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through collective orders, times 100.
% meat	Ratio between the monetary value of meat products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through collective orders, times 100.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to consumers associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach the participants in GAS M who pay the consumers' association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for collective orders. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASs list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach the Connecting GASs list. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for collective orders reach other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real consumers	Indicates the number of people booking products from collective orders.
No. real cons. GAS M	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real cons. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who pay the consumers' association fee.
No. real cons. Co-	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Co-management.

management	
No. real cons. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who book products from weekly orders in the same week they book products from collective orders.
No. real cons. Awareness GASSs list	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real cons. other GASSs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASSs.
No. real cons. other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists.
No. potential producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in calls for collective orders.
No. potential producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in call for collective orders.
No. real producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for collective orders.
No. real producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for collective orders.
Average booking time (h)	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to book collective orders. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to book for each called collective order and the total number of different collective orders for which a call is launched.
Average collection time (h)	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to pick up the booked collective orders. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to pick up products per each collective order and the total number of different collective orders which are delivered.
Extension day of booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the booking time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Extension day of collection	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the pick up time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one collective order is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for collective orders is made. 0 if not.
Delivered	Dummy variable. 1 if products for at least one collective order are delivered. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and book products through collective orders.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call collective orders.
No. emails booking	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to book products through collective orders.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of collective orders.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to call, organise, book and pick up products through collective orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.

No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about collective orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call collective orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of collective orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers booking	Indicates the number of people who write about the booking of collective orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of collective orders are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to the Connecting GASs list. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of collective orders is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.

Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of collective orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place booking	Categorical variable. 0 if no booking of products through collective orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the booking takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the booking takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the booking takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the booking takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the booking takes place in a random place.
Place delivery	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of products through collective orders. 1 if the delivery takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the delivery takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the delivering takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the delivering takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the delivering takes place in a random place.

Monthly orders. They have been presented as orders of products to complement the products exchanged through the weekly orders. Monthly orders are scheduled on a monthly basis. The call addresses the same people addressed by the call for weekly orders. Monthly orders mostly concern transformed, local, food products. After few months they have been integrated in other orders.

Table A1.4 Activity monthly orders: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Type	Non numerical variable. Indicates which specific monthly order is considered.
Monetary amount	Indicates the monetary value of products exchanged through monthly orders.
Request of personalisation	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a request of personalisation (e.g. different quantity, quality) compared to what offered in the calls for monthly orders.
% vegetables	Ratio between the monetary value of vegetables ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through monthly orders, times 100.
% dairy	Ratio between the monetary value of dairy products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through monthly orders, times 100.
% other processed products	Ratio between the monetary value of processed products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through monthly orders, times 100.
% non food items	Ratio between the monetary value of non-food products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through monthly orders, times 100.
% meat	Ratio between the monetary value of meat products ordered and the total monetary value of the products ordered through monthly orders, times 100.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to consumers associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach the participants in GAS M who pay the consumers' association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for monthly orders. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASS list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach the Connecting GASSs list. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for monthly orders reach other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real consumers	Indicates the number of people booking products from monthly orders.
No. real cons. GAS M	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real cons. Associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who pay the consumers' association fee.
No. real cons.	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Co-management.

Co-management	
No. real cons. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who book products from weekly orders in the same week they book products from monthly orders.
No. real cons. Awareness GASSs list	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real cons. other GASSs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASSs.
No. real cons. other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists.
No. potential producers associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GASSs' management lists.
No. potential producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in calls for monthly orders.
No. real producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are offered in call for monthly orders.
No. real producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for monthly orders.
Booking time (h)	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after calls for monthly orders. It is computed as the hours between the call for monthly orders and the deadline to communicate the booking. When there are different booking frames for different products it is computed as a ratio between the sum of the different hours given to book times the number of products with each of the different booking frames and the total number of products.
Collection time (h)	Indicates the time, in hours, given to pick up the booked monthly orders.
Extension day of booking	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the booking time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Extension day of collection	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the pick up time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one monthly order is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for monthly orders is made. 0 if not.
Delivered	Dummy variable. 1 if products for at least one monthly order are delivered. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and book products through monthly orders.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call monthly orders.
No. emails booking	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to book products through monthly orders.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of monthly orders.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to call, organise, book and pick up products through monthly orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.

No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about monthly orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASSs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASSs. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASSs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASSs' management lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call monthly orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of monthly orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers booking	Indicates the number of people who write about the booking of monthly orders. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of monthly orders are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASSs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to the Connecting GASSs list. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASSs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASSs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of monthly orders is sent to other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.

Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of monthly orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place booking	Categorical variable. 0 if no booking of products through monthly orders takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the booking takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the booking takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the booking takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the booking takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the booking takes place in a random place.
Place delivery	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of products through monthly orders. 1 if the delivery takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the delivery takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the delivering takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the delivering takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the delivering takes place in a random place.

Loose products. These refer to two kinds of products. There are products that are available during the weekly exchange in the form of a market. For instance, the same producers who bring products for the weekly boxes also sell their products on their stalls. The second type of loose products refers to products whose availability is randomly announced. These are often announced when some extra products happen to be available. They are announced in the same call as the call for weekly orders, or in a call that gives a follow up to the call for weekly orders.

Table A1.5 Activity loose products: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Market products	Dummy variable. 1 if loose products are part of the market occurring during the weekly orders exchange. 0 if not.
Other Products	Dummy variable. 1 if loose products are part of a specific call accompanying the weekly call for orders and are different from those sold in the market. 0 if not.
Amount offered market products	Indicates the monetary value of the loose products available for selling at the market.
Amount offered other	Indicates the monetary value of the loose products which are available and are different from those available at the market.
No. of producers offered	Indicates the number of producers whose products are proposed as loose products.

Number of producers associated offered	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are proposed as loose products.
No. of producers non associated offered	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are proposed as loose products.
No. of Gasisti booking/buying	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market.
No. Gasisti booking/buying list GAS M booking/buying	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. Gasisti booking/buying Co-management	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to the Co-management list.
No. Gasisti booking/buying associated	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also pay the association fee.
No. Gasisti booking/buying weekly orders	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in calls for orders or who buy loose products at the market and who also book products from weekly orders.
No. Gasisti booking/buying Awareness	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to the Awareness list.
No. Gasisti booking/buying Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to the Connecting GASs list.
No. Gasisti booking/buying other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to other GASs' lists.
No. Gasisti booking/buying other GASs management lists	Indicates the number of participants in GAS M who book loose products proposed in a call for orders or who buy loose products at the market and also subscribe to other GASs' management lists.
Amount ordered market products	Indicates the monetary value of loose products bought at the market by participants in GAS M.
Amount ordered non market products	Indicates the monetary value of loose products booked by participants in GAS M after a call for loose products.
No. of producers ordered	Indicates the number of producers whose products are bought as loose products by participants in GAS M members.
No. of producers non associated ordered	Indicates the number of producers who pay the association fee, whose products are bought as loose products by participants in GAS M.
No. of producers associated ordered	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the association fee, whose products are bought as loose products by participants in GAS M.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one email about the organisation of loose products. 0 if not.

Called	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one email calling the order of loose products. 0 if not.
Booked/bought	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one email about the buying or booking of loose products. 0 if not.
Delivered	Dummy variable. 1 if loose products are delivered. 0 if not.
Booking time frame	Indicates the amount of time given to participants in GAS M to make their bookings of loose products. It is computed as the hours between the call for loose products and the deadline to communicate the booking. When there are different booking frames for different products it is computed as a ratio between the sum of the different hours given to book times the number of products with each of the different booking frames and the total number of products.
Delivering time frame	Indicates the time, in hours, given to pick up loose products.
Extension day of booking	Dummy variable. 1 if the deadline day to book loose products is extended compared to what was initially proposed. 0 if not.
Extension day of delivering	Dummy variable. 1 if the deadline day to pick up loose products is extended compared to what was initially proposed. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivering	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a delivery of loose product. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place delivery	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of loose products. 1 if the delivery takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the delivery takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the delivering takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the delivering takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the delivering takes place in a random place.

Producers / products proposal. This category does not refer to calls for orders. Instead, it is a proposal of potential products / producers to be introduced to GAS M. In other words, it encloses all those proposals for products / producers that have not made it to the stage of becoming part of any call for orders in the period of observation.

Table A1.6 Activity products and producers proposals: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Type	Non numerical variable. Indicates which specific proposed product is considered.
Monetary amount	Indicates the monetary value of products that have been proposed and exchanged.
Request of personalisation	Dummy variable. 1 if there is a request of personalisation (e.g. different quantity, quality) compared to what offered in the proposals of products.
% vegetables	Ratio between the monetary value of vegetables ordered and the total monetary value of the products that have been proposed and ordered, times 100.
% dairy	Ratio between the monetary value of dairy products ordered and the total monetary value of the products that have been proposed and ordered, times 100.
% other processed products	Ratio between the monetary value of processed products ordered and the total monetary value of the products that have been proposed and ordered, times 100.
% non food items	Ratio between the monetary value of non-food products ordered and the total monetary value of the products that have been proposed and ordered, times 100.
% meat	Ratio between the monetary value of meat ordered and the total monetary value of the products of the products that have been proposed and ordered, times 100.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to consumers associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach the participants in GAS M who pay the consumers' association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for products that have been proposed. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASs list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach the Connecting GASs list. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for products that have been proposed reach other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real consumers	Indicates the number of people booking the newly proposed products.
No. real cons. GAS M	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real cons. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who pay the consumers' association fee.
No. real cons. Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Co-management.

No. real cons. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who book products from weekly orders in the same week they book products from proposals of producers / products.
No. real cons. Awareness GAsS list	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real cons. other GAsS' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GAsS.
No. real cons. other GAsS' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GAsS' lists.
No. potential producers associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real consumers, who subscribe to other GAsS' management lists.
No. potential producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are proposed for orders.
No. real producers associated	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are proposed for orders.
No. real producers non associated	Indicates the number of producers who pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after being proposed for orders.
Average booking time (h)	Indicates the number of producers who do not pay the producers' association fee and whose products are booked after being proposed for orders.
Average collection time (h)	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to book the products proposed. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to book for each proposed and offered product and the total number of different proposed and offered products for which a call is launched.
Extension day of booking	Indicates the average time, in hours, given to pick up the booked products. It is computed as a ratio between the sum of hours given to pick up proposed and booked products and the total number of different proposed and booked products which are delivered.
Extension day of collection	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the booking time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if there is an extension in the collection time compared to the first proposal. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one producers / products proposal organisation is discussed. 0 if not.
Delivered	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for proposed products is made. 0 if not.
No. emails	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one delivery for one of the proposed products takes place. 0 if not.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the producers / products proposals organisation, call and booking.
No. emails booking	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call the orders of the proposed products.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to book the proposed products.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for producers / products proposal organisation.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people writing about the organisation, call, booking, and collection of the producers / products proposals.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.

No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about producers / products proposals. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call for orders of proposed products. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of producers / products proposals. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers booking	Indicates the number of people who write about the booking of proposed products. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of producers / products proposals are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to the Awareness list. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to the Connecting GASs list. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of producers / products proposals is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.

Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of producers / products proposals takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place booking	Categorical variable. 0 if no booking of products proposed through producers / products proposals takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the booking takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the booking takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the booking takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the booking takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the booking takes place in a random place.
Place delivery	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no delivery of products from producers / products proposals takes place. 1 if the delivery takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the delivery takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the delivering takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the delivering takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the delivering takes place in a random place.

Meetings. These are meetings scheduled on a monthly basis. They can be GAS M meetings when they involve people associated to GAS M or subscribers of the list GAS M. They can also be Co-management meetings when they involve just the subscribers of the Co-Management list. Both those meetings are about managerial issues and involve discussion about the vision and principles of the GAS M. Monthly meetings also includes GAS M network's meetings when they involve subscribers of the list Connecting GASs as well as subscribers of the list GAS M and other people and realities that are part of GAS M network or that randomly interact with GAS M. Those meetings are about the organisation of events, initiatives and activities at a network level and involve discussions of the network's vision and principles.

Table A1.7 Activity meetings: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Occurred formally	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting occurred in a formal setting. 0 if not.
Occurred informally	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting occurred informally (just chat with outputs decision shared later on in the list as meeting outputs). 0 if not.
Report is available	Dummy variable. 1 if a report of the meeting was circulated over at least one of the lists or in the forum. 0 if not.
Meeting GAS M network	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting was presented as involving GAS M and the other realities associated to its network. 0 if not.
Meeting GAS M	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting was presented as involving only the GAS M list subscribers and those associated to GAS M. 0 if not.
Meeting Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting was presented as involving only those subscribing to the Co-management list. 0 if not.
Meeting other GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if the meeting is presented as involving the subscribers to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach the participants in GAS M who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the call for meetings. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASs list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for meetings reach other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real participants	Indicates the number of people participating in the meetings.
No. real part. Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real part. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who pay the association fee.
No. real part. Co-Management	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Co-management.
No. real part. weekly	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who book products from weekly orders in the week when the meetings take place.

orders	
No. real part. Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real part. Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs.
No. real part. other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASs' lists.
No. real part. other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists.
No. real part producers	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who are GAS M producers.
Pre-Organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to organise the meetings.
Post-organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to deliver the report and conclude the formalities around the meetings.
Extension day of meeting	Dummy variable. 1 indicates if at least one meeting date has been postponed. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one meeting is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for meetings is made. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and report about meetings.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call meetings.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of meetings.
No. emails report	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to report about meetings.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to organise, call, and report about meetings. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about meetings. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.

No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call for meetings. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of meetings. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers report	Indicates the number of people who write about the report of meetings. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of meetings are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of meetings is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Report to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Report to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Report to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Report to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the reports of meetings are sent to them. 0 if not.
Report to awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Report to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Report to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Report to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of meetings is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.

Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of meetings takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place taking place	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no implementation of meetings or if takes place informally. 1 if meetings take place in a squatted area. 2 if they take place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if they take place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if they take place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if they take place in a random place.

Producers' visits. These are moments when participants in GAS M as well as participants in other GASs and in the GAS M network organise a visit to the producers who are part of the GAS M network or that may become part of the network. They are meant as socialising moments and ways to assess producers' work.

Table A1.8 Activity producers' visits: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Occurred	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Report is available	Dummy variable. 1 if a report of the visit was circulated over at least one of the lists or in the forum. 0 if not.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach the participants in GAS M who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for visits to producers. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASs list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.

Call to other GASS' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for visits to producers reach other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real participants	Indicates the number of people participating in the visits to producers.
No. real part. Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real part. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who pay the association fee.
No. real part. Co-Management	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Co-management.
No. real part. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who book products from weekly orders in the week when the visits to producers take place.
No. real part. Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real part. Connecting GASS	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASS.
No. real part. other GASSs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists.
No. real part. other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASSs' management lists.
No. real part producers	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who are GAS M producers.
Pre-organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to organise the visits to producers.
Post-organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to deliver the report and conclude the formalities around the visits to producers.
Extension day of meeting	Dummy variable. 1 indicates if at least one visit to producers' date has been postponed. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one visit to producers is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for visits to producers is made. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and report about visits to producers.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call visits to producers.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of visits to producers.
No. emails report	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to report about visits to producers.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to organise, call, and report about visits to producers. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about visits to

orders	producers. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs list. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call for visits to producers. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of visits to producers. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers report	Indicates the number of people who write about the report of visits to producers. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of visits to producers are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of visits to producers is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Report to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Report to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Report to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Report to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the reports of visits to producers are sent to them. 0 if not.
Report to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Report to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Report to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.

Report to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of visits to producers is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of visits to producers takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place taking place	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a visit to producers takes place at the producers' farms. 0 if visits to producers do not take place after being organised and called.

Social meals. They are collective meals that the participants in GAS M organise to accompany other activities such as the moments of boxes exchange, the monthly meetings, and other. They are open to the subscribers of the list GAS M and, sometimes, to other lists too. Among those, the more common are the lists Awareness and Connecting GASs. The social meals also include moments of reflections, as well as cultural and other entertainment activities to raise awareness on topics of interest for GAS M.

Table A1.9 Activity social meals: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Occurred	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Report is available	Dummy variable. 1 if a report of the social meal was circulated over at least one of the lists or in the forum. 0 if not.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach the participants in GAS M who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for social meals. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASs list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for social meals reach other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
No. real part. Gas M	Indicates the number of people participating in the social meals.
No. real part. associated	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list GAS M.
No. real part. Co-Management	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who pay the association fee.
No. real part. weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Co-management.
No. real part. Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who book products from weekly orders in the week when the social meals take place.
No. real part. Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Awareness.
No. real part. other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs.
No. real part. other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASs' lists.
No. real part. producers	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists.
	Indicates the number of people, among the real participants, who are GAS M producers.

Pre-organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to organise the social meals.
Post-organisation time (dd)	Indicates the time, in days, needed to deliver the report and conclude the formalities around the social meals.
Extension day of meeting	Dummy variable. 1 indicates if at least one social meal's date has been postponed. 0 if not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if the organisation of at least one social meal is discussed. 0 if not.
Called	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one call for social meals is made. 0 if not.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise, call and report about social meals.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call social meals.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged for the organisation of social meals.
No. emails report	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to report about social meals.
No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to organise, call, and report about social meals. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about social meals. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASs	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASs list. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASs' management lists GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call organisation	Indicates the number of people who write to call for social meals. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers report	Indicates the number of people who write about the organisation of social meals. Each writer is counted just one time.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the organisation of social meals are sent to them. 0 if not.

Organisation to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of social meals is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Report to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Report to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Report to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Report to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the reports of social meals are sent to them. 0 if not.
Report to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Report to Connecting GASs	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to the list Connecting GASs. 0 if not.
Report to other GASs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to other GASs' lists. 0 if not.
Report to other GASs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the reports of social meals is sent to other GASs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.

Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.
Place organisation	Categorical variable. 0 if no organisation of social meals takes place, or if it takes place online. 1 if the organisation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the organisation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the organisation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the organisation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the organisation takes place in a random place.
Place taking place	Categorical variable. 0 if no implementation of social meals takes place. 1 if the implementation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the implementation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the implementation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the implementation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the implementation takes place in a random place.

Other initiatives. This category groups many different events that the GAS M proposes to organise or to join, when they are organised by other realities. They are all a bunch of initiatives that go beyond the just listed activities. Other initiatives can be about building up critical minds on many themes, for instance local and national politics, environment, society, culture, and alternative lifestyles, to mention some. Often those activities address the list GAS M and the list Awareness. Other initiatives are connected with the general vision of the GAS M. They often stay at a level of proposals or early organisation. Some of them take place, even if just once. Nonetheless, other initiatives may become part of the GAS M routine.

Table A1.10 Activity other initiatives: variables for feelings of attachment (i.e. activity intensity). First step data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Type	Non numerical variable. Indicates the specific kind of considered other initiatives.
Proposed	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least an email proposing other initiatives. 0 if there is not.
Organised	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least an email about organising other initiatives. 0 if there is not.
Take place	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one initiative, in the category 'other initiatives' takes place. 0 if not.
Organisation time frame	Indicates the number of days spent per week to talk about other initiatives organisation. Per each counted day at least one email is sent about the organisation of the other initiatives.
Report is available	Dummy variable. 1 if a report of the other initiative that have taken place was circulated over at least one of the lists or in the forum. 0 if not.
Place	Categorical variable. 0 if there is no implementation of other initiatives. 1 if the implementation takes place in a squatted area. 2 if the implementation takes place in a neighbourhood in the town where GAS M operates. 3 if the implementation takes place in a square of historical value in the town where GAS M operates. 4 if the implementation takes place in a central square in the town where GAS M operates. 5 if the implementation takes place in a random place.
No. emails	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to propose, organise, and call other initiatives.
No. emails call	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to call other initiatives.
No. emails organisation	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to organise other initiatives.
No. emails proposal	Indicates the number of emails exchanged to propose other initiatives.

No. real writers	Indicates the number of people who write to propose, organise, and call other initiatives. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers proposal	Indicates the number of people who write to propose other initiatives. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers call	Indicates the number of people who write to call other initiatives. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers organisation	Indicates the number of people who write to organise other initiatives. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Gas M	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers associated	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who pay the association fee. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Co-management	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Co-management. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers weekly orders	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who are booking products from weekly orders in the same week they write about other initiatives. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Awareness	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Awareness. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers Connecting GASS	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to the list Connecting GASS list. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASS' lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASSs' lists. Each writer is counted just one time.
No. real writers other GASSs' management lists	Indicates the number of people, among real writers, who subscribe to other GASSs' management lists GAS M. Each writer is counted just one time.
Proposal to GAS M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Proposal to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Proposal to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Proposal to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders in the same week as the emails about the proposal of other initiatives are sent to them. 0 if not.
Proposal to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Proposal to Connecting GASS	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to the list Connecting GASSs. 0 if not.
Proposal to other GASSs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Proposal to other GASSs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the proposal of other initiatives is sent to other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Organisation to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives addresses the people who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Organisation to Co-management	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Organisation to weekly	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to the people who book products from weekly orders

orders	in the same week as the emails about the organisation of other initiatives are sent to them. 0 if not.
Organisation to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Organisation to Connecting GASS	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to the list Connecting GASSs. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASS' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Organisation to other GASSs' management lists.	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one email about the organisation of other initiatives is sent to other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
Call to Gas M	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach the list GAS M. 0 if not.
Call to associated	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach the participants in GAS M who pay the association fee. 0 if not.
Call to Co-Management	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach the list Co-management. 0 if not.
Call to weekly orders	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach participants in GAS M who book products from weekly orders in the same week of the calls for other initiatives. 0 if not.
Call to Awareness	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach the list Awareness. 0 if not.
Call to Connecting GASS list	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach the list Connecting GASSs. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach other GASSs' lists. 0 if not.
Call to other GASSs' management lists	Dummy variable. 1 if the calls for other initiatives reach other GASSs' management lists. 0 if not.
Loose products call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order loose products. 0 if not.
Loose products delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least a delivery of loose products takes place. 0 if not.
Weekly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order and a delivery of products from weekly orders. 0 if not.
Weekly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call to order products through monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from monthly orders. 0 if not.
Monthly orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from collective orders. 0 if not.
Collective orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a call for special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders call	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least a delivery of products from special orders. 0 if not.
Special orders delivery	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one social meal takes place. 0 if not.
Social meals	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one visit to producers takes place. 0 if not.
Producers' visits	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one meeting takes place. 0 if not.
Meetings	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.
Other initiatives	Dummy variable. 1 if at least one other initiative takes place. 0 if not.

Holiday	Dummy variable. 1 if there is at least one day of holiday. 0 if not.
Season	Categorical variable. 1 from the beginning of September to the end of February. 2 from the beginning of March to the end of August.

Table AI.11 Accounting scheme: category 'Activities' and related codes for common understanding (i.e. recurring foci of attention in GAS M conversations). First step data analysis

Activities ⁷⁷	
Codes within 'Activities'	Meaning
Weekly orders	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of boxes with products and to a market organised alongside the weekly exchange. Weekly orders are orders of products that are called on a weekly basis. They are generally exchanged on Saturdays. They involve local producers and products. They are mostly fresh food products but they can also be transformed food products and non-food items. The weekly orders mainly involve people who are associated with GAS M, which is to say that they pay an association fee every 6 months. Nonetheless, people who are not associated also book these products sometimes. The weekly orders mainly take place in the form of exchange of boxes with fresh products that are accompanied by a market.
Collective orders	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of collective orders. These are orders of products that are not sourced from the surroundings of the town where GAS M operates. They can come from regional producers but also from national producers. They are often transformed food products or non-food items. They may involve people beyond those associated to GAS M and those who subscribe to GAS M mailing lists; often they involve other GASS.
Monthly orders	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of monthly orders. They are orders of products to complement the products exchanged through the weekly orders. Monthly orders are scheduled on a monthly basis. The call addresses the same people addressed by the call for weekly orders. Monthly orders mostly concern transformed, local, food products. After few months they have been integrated in other orders.
Meeting ⁷⁸	Contents in the documents refer to the activities of GAS M and Co-management meetings. These are meetings scheduled on a monthly basis. They are indicated as GAS M meetings when they involve people associated to GAS M or subscribers of the list GAS M. They are presented as Co-management meetings when they involve just the subscribers of the Co-Management list. Both those meetings are about managerial issues

⁷⁷ In the list of activities reported in this table 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposals' are not listed. Nonetheless, they have been considered as separated activities in the first step of data analysis for feelings of attachment. From this first level of analysis on feelings of attachment it emerged that both 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposal' stay at a level of random proposal of products. They do not systematise into two definite activities of products provisioning. The proposals of these products often do not follow into organisation, calls for orders, booking, and distribution. When they do, the organisation, calls for orders, booking, and distribution is part of other activities of products distribution, namely weekly orders. The fact that 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposals' do not stabilise into independent activities also return when analysing the contents of emails and other documents considered in this study for the analysis of common understanding. Conversations about 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposals' are part of conversations about other activities of products distribution. The sort of data considered for feelings of attachment and the way they have been organised in the first step of data analysis allowed keeping them as distinguished activities. While it was not possible to do the same with the type of data used to disclose common understanding and the way they have been organised in the first step of data analysis. Considering this, 'loose products' and 'producers / products proposals' have not been considered as separated codes within the category 'Activities'.

⁷⁸ In the first step of data analysis on feelings of attachment, GAS M meetings and Co-management meetings have been considered as being two specifications of the activity 'meetings' together with the meetings of GAS M network. By the end of this first step of analysis it appeared that they begin as independent meetings but, later on, they often overlap. GAS M meetings often start as Co-management meetings that are, later on in the course of the organisation, extended to the list GAS M. The sort of data considered for feelings of attachment and the way they have been organised in the first step of data analysis allowed keeping the two types of meetings distinguished. While it was not possible to do the same with the type of data used to disclose common understanding and the way they have been organised in the first step of data analysis. Hence, GAS M meetings and Co-management meetings have not been considered as two separated codes within the category 'Activities'.

	and involve discussion about the vision and principles of the GAS M. In most of the cases meetings are organised as Co-management meetings and, time to time, extended to the list GAS M and to people who are associated to GAS M.
GAS M network meeting	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of GAS M network's meetings. They are meetings that involve subscribers of the list Connecting GASs as well as subscribers of the list GAS M and other people and realities that are part of GAS M network or that randomly interact with GAS M. Those meetings are about the organisation of events, initiatives and activities at a network level and involve discussion of the network's vision and principles.
Social meals	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of social meals. They are collective meals that the participants in GAS M organise to accompany other activities such as the moment of boxes exchange, the meetings, and other. They are open to the subscribers of the list GAS M and, sometimes, to other lists too. Among those, the more common are the lists Awareness and Connecting GASs. The social meals also include moments of reflections, as well as cultural and other entertainment activities to raise awareness on topics of interest for GAS M.
Producers' visits	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of producers' visits. These are moments when participants in GAS M as well as participants in other GASs and in the GAS M network organise a visit to the producers who are part of the GAS M network or that may become part of the network. They are meant as socialising moments and ways to assess producers' work.
Special orders	Contents in the documents refer to the activity of special orders. These are orders of products linked to special events. Generally those events have a very strong civic component, (e.g. support to producers affected by natural disaster, actions against workers exploitation), as well as being connected with special events related to cultural dynamics, (e.g. special orders of products for Christmas). Special Orders do not occur with regularity and they can involve other people beyond those associated to GAS M or subscribing to its mailing lists. They can involve other GASs and organisations. Producers can be from the region where GAS M operates, or also from other parts of Italy. Special orders can be made of fresh and transformed food products and non-food products.
Other initiatives	Contents in the documents refer to the activity other initiatives. They are many different events that the GAS M proposes to organise or to join, when they are organised by other realities. They are all a bunch of events that go beyond the just listed activities. Other initiatives can be about building up critical minds on many themes, for instance local and national politics, environment, society, culture, and alternative lifestyles, to mention some. Often those activities address the list GAS M and the list Awareness. Other initiatives are connected with the general vision of the GAS M. They sometimes stay at a level of proposals or early organisation. Nonetheless, other initiatives may take place, even if just once, and become part of the GAS M routine too.

Table A1.12 Accounting scheme category 'Cross-cutting issues' and related codes for common understanding (i.e. recurring foci of attention in GAS M conversations) First step data analysis

Cross cutting issues ⁷⁹	
Codes within 'cross-cutting issues'	Meaning
National network participation	Contents in the documents refer to the opportunity for GAS M to be part of the national network of GASs and the modality of participation.
Forum discussion	Contents in the documents refer to the use of the forum, or the call for participation in discussions taking place on the forum.

⁷⁹ The codes in the category 'cross-cutting issues' emerge as topics discussed during conversations on many different activities. They are the first step toward understanding that there are some topics of discussion that overcome the borders of activities. They have been instrumental to define the category 'Themes', which identifies all the themes returning in conversations of GAS M that occur while many different GAS M activities take place.

Products	Contents in the documents refer to products and producers. Main issues are related to producers behaviours and principles as well as products quality, quantity, variety, prices. Moreover the discussions are also about elimination or introduction of new products and producers.
Management, participation	Contents in the documents refer to the management of GAS M in relation to its vision and principles as well as to the way in which different groups of people intend to participate in GAS M.
Places	Contents in the documents refer to possible locations for GAS M activities.
Association fee, punctuality sub-/unsubscribe	Contents in the documents refer to requests for subscriptions or cancellations from GAS M mailing lists. They also refer to the association fee, the opportunity to introduce it and how to organise the association system.
Forwarded communications	Contents in the documents refer to topics of civic relevance concerning both food provisioning and other topics such as politics, economy, society, culture, environment, and life styles to mention some.

Table A1.13 Accounting scheme category ‘Themes’ and related codes for common understanding (i.e. recurring foci of attention in GAS M conversations). First step data analysis

Themes	
Codes within the category ‘Themes’	Meanings
Structure, purposes, and results intra activities	How to structure planned activities. Main moments, messages to be conveyed, purposes to be reached, expected results.
Products and producers	Products features, producers' behaviors, practices, ideas and issues related to these. Decisions about introducing new producers and products and excluding old ones.
Roles	Who does what in GAS M. Task assignment and practices.
Actors, events, opinions, and lifestyle	Sharing opinions and debating about something of interest for GAS M, (e.g. initiatives, topics, people, way of living).
Planning and priorities inter activities	Prioritising among activities and projects while prioritising among principles to be followed and missions to be accomplished.
Place	Locations for GAS M activities.
Network	GAS M connection with other, both regional and national, realities.

Appendix 2

**Second step of data analysis:
November 2013-January 2014.
Variables for feelings of attachment
and codes for common understanding
in GAS M activities.**

Table A2.1 reports the variables for feelings of attachment, (i.e. intensity), in GAS M's activities as defined during the second step of data analysis. The variables have been derived from those inductively inferred during the first step of data analysis. They were selected and elaborated upon with the aim to obtain variables which: show consistency over time and over the different activities⁸⁰. The variables reported in table A2.1 were further selected and underwent a process of patterning as explained in chapter 5. The chapter also reports the final variables used for the analysis of feelings of attachment in GAS M activities. They are a total of 14 variables (Table 5.1) which emerged to be informative for three indicators of activities intensity derived from IR theory (Collins, 2004a) and used in the analysis of GAS M activities' intensity.

⁸⁰ The matrix with all the variables and data is available to be consulted. The variables in the matrix include some extra variables compared to what reported in table A2.1. At the beginning of the second step of analysis, the extra variables have been included because they were thought to be informative for the last stage of analysis on GAS M activities' intensity. They were excluded only after further conceptual reasoning had been done in order to define the indicators of intensity. At that point, the extra variables resulted in being less meaningful moreover some of them showed to not be consistent over all activities. More explanations of variables selection and definition during the second step of data analysis on feelings of attachment in GAS M activities are reported in chapter 5.

Table A2.1 Variables of feelings of attachment in GAS M's activities. Second step of data analysis

Variables	Meaning
Number of different instances of organisation	Number of all the organised instances of activities' implementation, different from one another, discussed via email in the considered period of time. (Number of cases when at least one email is exchanged for the organisation of a new instance of activities' implementation in the considered period of time).
Weeks of organisation	Number of weeks when at least one email about one or more potential or already occurred instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Days of organisation	Number of days when at least one email about one or more potential or already occurred instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Weeks of postponing. Organisation	Number of weeks when at least one email about postponing one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Days of postponing. Organisation	Number of days when at least one email about postponing one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Weeks of extending. Organisation	Number of weeks when at least one email about extending one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Days of extending. Organisation	Number of days when at least one email about extending one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation is exchanged in the considered period of time.
Number of different instances of implementation	Number of instances of activities' implementation taking place in the considered period of time.
Weeks of implementation	Number of weeks when at least one instance of activities' implementation takes place in the considered period of time.
Hours of implementation	Total hours of implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
No. of different instances of implementation cancelled	Number of instances of activities' implementation cancelled in the considered period of time.
Weeks of instances of implementation cancellation	Number of weeks when one or more scheduled instance(s) of activities' implementation do(es) not take place in the considered period of time.
Hours of instances of implementation cancellation	Total hours the cancelled instance(s) of activities' implementation would have lasted if occurring in the considered period of time.
Number of different instances of implementation extended	Number of instances of activities' implementation that has been taking place for longer than was initially scheduled in the considered period of time.
Weeks of instances of implementation extension	Number of weeks when one or more already occurred instance(s) of activities' implementation happen(s) again as an extension of one or more scheduled instance(s) of implementation in the considered period of time.
Hours of instances of implementation extension	Total hours implementation of activities, taking place as extension of one or more scheduled instance(s) of activities' implementation, lasts in the considered period of time.
No. of different instances of implementation postponed	Number of instances of activities' implementation whose taking place has been postponed in the considered period of time.
Weeks of instances of implementation postponing	Number of weeks when the postponing of one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation takes place in the considered period of time.
Hours of instances of implementation postponed	Total hours the postponed instance(s) of activities' implementation would have lasted if occurring in the considered period of time.

No. emails	Number of emails exchanged about the organisation and implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
Total lists solicited	Total number of GAS M mailing lists involved in emails exchange on organisation and implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
No. emails per list	Number of emails exchanged about the organisation and implementation of activities per GAS M mailing list in the considered period of time.
No. people solicited	Numbers of people subscribing to the GAS M mailing lists involved in the emails exchange about organisation and implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
No. writers	Number of different people writing about organisation and implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
No. writers per list-subscribed	Number of different people writing about organisation and implementation of activities per GAS M mailing list(s) they were subscribed to in the considered period of time.
No. writers per list-addressing	Number of different people writing about organisation and implementation of activities per GAS M mailing list(s) they address in the considered period of time.
No. writers per group	Number of different people writing about organisation and implementation of activities per group they belong to in the considered period of time.
No. writers initiating	Number of different people initiating the email exchange about organisation and implementation of activities in the considered period of time.
No. writers initiating per list-subscribers	Number of different people initiating email exchange about organisation and implementation of activities per GAS M mailing list(s) they were subscribed to in the considered period of time.
No. writers initiating per list addressing	Number of different people initiating email exchange about organisation and implementation of activities per GAS M mailing list(s) they address in the considered period of time.
No. writers initiating per group	Number of different people initiating email exchange about organisation and implementation of activities per group they belong to in the considered period of time.
No. participants	Number of different people participating one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation in the considered period of time.
No. participants per list	Number of different people participating one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation per GAS M mailing list(s) they subscribe in the considered period of time.
No. participants per group	Number of different people participating one or more instance(s) of activities' implementation per group they belong to in the considered period of time.
Implementation place	Number of different instances of activities' implementation per location where they take place in the considered period of time.

Table A2.2 reports the full set of codes used to unveil common understanding, (i.e. forms of attention, what attracts attention, and its significance), in conversations about seven themes taking place during GAS M activities. The table reports the frequency distribution of each code and the frequency distribution of the co-occurrence of codes. The logic behind the codes and the way they have been used to unveil common understanding in GAS M are explained in chapter 6.

Table A2.2 is an extended version of Table 6.4, which is introduced and explained in chapter 6 of this thesis. Table A2.2 expands some of the information summarised in Table 6.4 in order to ease the reading of the table. Hence, and with respect to the codes indicating the mailing lists, groups, and activities of GAS M, Table 6.4 reports the frequency distribution only for those codes that recur the most or the least. Table A2.2 reports the frequency distribution of every code indicating lists and groups where conversations on the different themes circulate, as well as the activities during which those conversations take place. Moreover, table A2.2 reports the total frequency distribution of every code. On the other hand, table A2.2 does not report about ‘total number of lists’, ‘total number of groups’, and ‘total number of activities’. They are not codes, but rather labels that are introduced in Table 6.4 to summarise the results of other data on the different lists, groups, and activities in, and during which, themes are talked about.

Table A2.2 Codes for common understanding in GAS M activities, frequency distribution of each code, frequency distribution of codes' co-occurrence. Second step of data analysis

Codes, frequency distribution of codes' co-occurrence	Structure, purposes, and themes intra activities	Product and Producers	Roles	Actors, events, opinions, and lifestyle	Planning and priorities inter activities	Place	Network	Frequency distribution of codes ⁸¹
Agreement	71	35	46	17	15	6	10	122
Common sense	69	32	32	35	11	12	11	100
Common value	78	37	26	60	17	4	6	154
Disagreement	71	28	36	23	18	17	7	131
Smooth tone	204	132	60	96	23	31	11	406
List GAS M	65	21	7	37	2	14	0	69
Co-management List	169	22	63	35	31	16	20	217
Connecting GASs List	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	4
Awareness List	28	10	2	24	1	0	0	40
Official email GAS M	106	102	27	43	1	14	0	217
Forum	4	2	2	1	4	0	4	2
Other non-GAS M lists	93	86	22	51	4	2	1	201
Group consumers associated	31	23	27	16	14	12	5	95
Group consumers non-associated	10	5	12	6	1	4	0	33
Group producers associated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group producers non-associated	29	49	25	18	9	7	3	121
Group other	18	40	12	20	4	3	3	84

⁸¹ The total frequency distribution for each code, reported in the last column of table A2.2, may be lower than the sum of the frequency with which each code listed in the first column of table A2.2 occurs together with each code reported in the top row of the same table. The reason for this is that the same piece labelled with one or more codes reported in the first column may be labelled with more than one of the codes reported in the top row. In more concrete terms, this happens when one piece of text discusses more than one theme at once, (i.e. codes reported in the top row), and the features, (i.e. codes reported first column), of the conversations about the themes are the same for the different themes attached to that specific piece of text. Moreover the total frequency of the codes indicating the different GAS M activities may be higher than the total number of units of analysis analysed per each activity (Table 6.2). The reason for this is twofold: First, some units of analysis make reference in their contents to several activities; despite the fact that they were originally meant to refer to just one activity they have been selected for, (e.g. emails sent to organise a certain activity and in the subject referring to that activity), they also discuss other activities; the sections of these units discussing different activities are labelled with the codes corresponding to the activities discussed in the sections. Second, some other units of analysis are made of several conversations, (e.g. field notes from observing activities); each of them is labelled, among the other codes, with the code of the activity each conversation refers to. Hence one unit of analysis referring to one activity may contain several quotations from that activity and other activities. Everything that has been said until now alters the total frequency of each code but it does not alter the frequency of co-occurrence of codes in the first column of table A2.2 with the codes reported in the top row of the same table, which is what this study discusses.

No. of quotations	351	193	144	137	56	54	31	_82
Email	296	131	92	102	35	30	20	463
Face-face	59	63	53	36	23	22	8	153
Meetings	42	7	35	4	22	13	8	30
Other initiatives	170	36	67	93	20	13	16	277
Producers' visits	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	8
Social meals	12	3	1	0	0	0	1	17
Special orders	56	52	21	20	5	8	6	97
Weekly orders	65	88	24	27	10	17	2	166
Collective orders	16	9	9	0	0	0	0	24
Conversations outside of GAS M activities	52	7	27	31	8	11	11	80

⁸² 'Number of quotations' is not a code. It indicates the frequency distribution of each theme's code. Hence the total frequency distribution in this case is reported for each theme's code in the cells where each theme's code crosses with the category 'number of quotations'.

Appendix 3

Agrifood and socio-economic systems in Calabria.

A) General Information on Calabria

Table A3.1 Provinces and Municipalities in Calabria

Provinces	Number of Municipalities
Catanzaro	80
Cosenza	155
Crotone	27
Reggio Calabria	97
Vibo Valentia	50

(https://www.comuni-italiani.it)

B) Agrifood system

Table A3.2 Distribution of farms and farmed land per geographic area: mountain, hill, plain

Areas	Number of farms (in thousands)				Farmed land (in thousands of ha)				Average farmed land per farm (ha)			
	Total	Mountain	Hill	Plain	Total	Mountain	Hill	Plain	Total	Mountain	Hill	Plain
Calabria	137.8	35.8	82.7	19.2	549.25	159.5	306.4	83.3	3.99	4.45	3.7	4.33
Italy	1,620.9	275.95	833.3	511.6	12,856.04	2,840.4	5,759.01	4,256.6	7.93	10.29	6.91	8.32
Southern Italy	691.3	111.3	357.2	222.8	3,554.3	894.7	1,762.7	896.997	5.14	8.04	4.93	4.03

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2010a) VI Censimento Generale dell'Agricoltura.

Table A3.3 Percentage of farm per form of management

Areas	% of farms						
	Farm-owner directly involved in the farm management				Only employees involved in the management ⁸³	Sharing crop management ⁸⁴	Other forms
	With family labour only	With predominantly family labour	With predominantly non-family labour	Total			
Calabria	64.40	14.34	16.07	94.81	4.91	0.06	0.22
Italy	78.30	10.91	4.68	93.88	5.84	0.03	0.25
Southern Italy	73.56	13.30	6.98	93.84	5.89	0.05	0.23

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2007) Sistema di Indicatori Territoriali

Table A3.4 Percentage of working days per category of labour

Areas	% Working days per category of labour							
	Farmer-owner	Family members and other relatives of the farmer-owner			Total farmer-owner, family members and other relatives	Labour other than family labour		Total other than family labour
		Partner	Other family members	Relatives		Long term employees	Short term employees	
Calabria	38.34	12.04	9.74	2.29	62.40	1.77	35.83	37.60
Italy	51.24	14.20	11.93	3.58	80.96	5.17	13.87	19.04
Southern Italy	50.32	14.26	10.46	2.35	77.39	1.84	20.77	22.61

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2007) Sistema di Indicatori Territoriali

⁸³ Farm owner and family are involved only in organisational aspects. Employees do the manual work.⁸⁴ The farm owner hands over the management of the farm to another person. This person pays back the farm owner with half of the produce.

Table A3.5 Percentage of farms with and without self-consumption

Areas	% of farms				
	Without self consumption	With self consumption of products by the farmer-owner's family	With self consumption of products by the farmer-owner's family		
			Self consumption of 100% of value of final production	Self consumption of more than 50% of the value of final production	Self consumption of 50% or less of the value of final production
Calabria	6.18	93.82	45.97	20.08	33.95
Italy	19.21	80.79	34.02	15.27	50.71
Southern Italy	12.14	87.86	41.43	16.45	42.12

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2010a) VI Censimento Generale dell'Agricoltura

Table A3.6 Percentage of farms per selling channel: selling directly to consumers or other

Areas	% of farms							
	Direct selling to consumer	Direct selling to consumer		Other selling channels	Other selling channels			
		On farm	Outside farm		Selling to other farms	Selling to processors	Selling to wholesalers/retailers	Selling to societies of processors ⁸⁵
Calabria	64.01	87.08	24.36	46.89	13.80	24.04	60.31	15.93
Italy	26.09	77.84	33.14	85.17	18.62	14.95	50.54	37.01
Southern Italy	31.03	81.70	28.85	79.34	15.23	18.45	53.00	28.65

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2010a) VI Censimento Generale dell'Agricoltura

Table A3.7 Percentage value added at basic prices: agriculture and agri-food industry

Areas	Value Added at basic prices (% over total value added)	
	Agriculture	Agri-food Industry
Calabria	3.83	1.12
Italy	1.89	1.76
Southern Italy	3.15	1.57

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2010b) Conti economici regionali

Table A3.8 Number of distribution units per type of distribution channel

Type	Sub-type	Number distribution units
Non-specialised shops with prevalence of food products (medium-large distribution channels)	Hypermarket	23
	Supermarket	590
	Discount	37
	Minimarket and other	2,964
Total non-specialised		3,614
Shops specialising in food products (small-medium distribution channels)	Food, beverages, Tobacco, specialised food shops	62
	Fruit and vegetables	982
	Meat and meat products	1,634
	Fishery	448
	Bakery products and patisserie	418
	Beverages	89
	Tobacco	1,102
Other food products	293	
Total specialising in food products		5,028
Peddling	Food products	1,311

Own elaboration from Osservatorio Nazionale del Commercio: Statistiche strutturali (2013a) and Statistiche economiche (2013b)

⁸⁵ Societies of which the farm selling the products is part and that will transform the raw products and sell the transformed ones.

C) Socio-economic system.

Table A3.9 Unemployment and poverty rates

Areas	Unemployment rate			Poverty rate		
	Year	% of long term unemployed people within the total labour force	% of short term unemployed people within the total labour force	Year	% of poor families among all the families residing in the region	% people living in poor families among the overall population of the region
Calabria	2009	5.86	11.34	2008	25	28.4
Italy	2009	3.43	7.79	2008	11.3	13.6
Southern Italy	2009	6.17	11.91	2008	22.4	24.9

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2008, 2009) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

Table A3.10 Incidence of resident population per age group

Areas	People < 14 years old and > 65 years old / people between 15 and 64 years old	People < 14 years old / people > 65 years old	People between 15 and 19 years old / people between 60 and 64 years old
Calabria	49.39	76.81	103.71
Italy	52.16	69.45	80.42
Southern Italy	49.32	85.46	103.44
	<i>Dependency index</i>	<i>Index population turn-over</i>	<i>Index population in working age turn-over</i>

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2009) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

Table A3.11 Level of education per age group

Areas	Rate of people with no more than a middle school certificate within every 100 people of the same age-group ⁸⁶					
	People between 25 and 64 years old	People between 25 and 34 years old	People between 35 and 44 years old	People between 45 and 54 years old	People between 55 and 64 years old	People over 65 years old
Calabria	49.16	29.38	48.31	56.28	65.74	88.18
Italy	46.09	30.08	42.65	50.01	63.49	83.76
Southern Italy	53.12	35.75	52.77	58.64	68.15	87.48

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2009) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

Table A3.12 Families' access to services (rate among every 100 families)

Areas	Rate of families with uneasy access to services every 100 families										
	Access to chemists	Access to first aid medical help points	Access to postal offices	Access to police stations	Access to municipality offices	Access to food shops and markets	Access to supermarkets	Access to waste containers	Access to kindergarten (a)	Access to primary schools (a)	Access to middle school (a)
Calabria	30.7	69.9	34.9	48.9	38.4	26.2	44.3	23.5	22.8	15.7	21.4
Italy	21.7	54.7	27.1	38.5	34.8	21.2	30.3	19	15.7	16.8	20.6
Southern Italy	26.9	66.4	37	50.3	41.7	22.1	35.3	25	18.1	17.9	21.9

(a) In these cases, only families with at least one child enrolled in school are considered in the rate

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2009) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

⁸⁶ In Italy middle school includes students until 13 years old.

Table A3.13 Civil society engagement: bailout turnout and diffusion of volunteers' organisations

Areas	Year	Participation in elections		Year	Number Civil Society Organisation on Volunteer basis				
		Number of people voting per 100 people eligible to vote (Lower House)	Number of people voting per 100 people eligible to vote (Upper House)		N Civil society organisation	N just privately funded	N mainly privately funded	N just publicly funded	N mainly publicly funded
Calabria	2008	71.41	71.20	2001	363	93	99	44	123
Italy	2008	80.51	80.47	2001	18,293	4,553	6,325	1,155	6,164
Southern Italy	2008	76	75.85	2001	2,137	702	477	198	741

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2001, 2008) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

Table A3.14 Level of criminality

Areas	Rates of reported crimes per 1.000 residents						
	Extortion	Murder	Intentional damage	Theft in houses and shops	Theft of cars	Smuggling of drugs	Exploitation of prostitution
Calabria	18.67	3.10	97.66	211.15	362.33	47.98	1.75
Italy	11.02	1.15	107.12	461.98	291.61	58.00	2.47
Southern Italy	17.79	2.05	103.27	268.74	397.46	50.48	1.61

Own elaboration from ISTAT (2007) Sistema di indicatori territoriali

D) Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Calabria

Table A3.15 Websites consulted to gather information in general on Calabrian AFNs and on FMs (Farmers' Markets) in Calabria

Websites	Consulted for Calabrian AFNs in general	Consulted for FMs
http://www.biobank.it/it/index/BIO.asp		http://www.lamefino.it/Ultimora/lamezia-inaugurato-mercato-contadino-a-piazza-botticelli.html
http://www.campagnamica.it		http://www.lameziatimenews.it/citta/38-citta/3772-lamezia-approvato-regolamento-mercato-del-contadinoq-di-piazza-botticelli.html
http://www.ressud.org/		http://calabriadiceconomia.it/oggi-riapre-a-lamezia-in-piazza-botticelli-il-nuovo-mercato-del-contadino-inaugurazione-alla-1155/
http://www.retecosol.org/		http://www.prodottiregionali.net/2009/biomercato-lamezia-terme.html
http://www.loginbio.net/		http://www.comune.lamezia-terme.cz.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/1540
http://www.biodistretto.net/index.php/home/9-uncategorised/biodistretti-atlab-4-biodistretto-calabria-grecomico		http://www.cn24tv.it/news/46748/comune-lamezia-approvati-regolamenti-per-sistema-agroalimentare.html
http://www.reterurale.it/		http://dspace.inea.it/handle/inea/726
http://nukle.si/asi/luppo.com/		http://www.tipicamentecrotonese.it
http://www.parcospromonte.gov.it/		http://www.comune.crotona.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2983
http://www.parcopolino.gov.it/		https://www.comune.crotona.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2967/UT/systemPrint
http://www.galbatir.it/master.php?pagina=template/news.php		https://www.facebook.com/pages/Farmer-Market-K/269804188949/?views=0&sk=pe
http://www.galarati.it/index.asp?larghezza=1280&altezza=800		http://www.biobank.it/it/index/BIO.asp
http://www.serracalabresi.it/galnew/index.asp		https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?oe=UTF8&hl=it&ie=UTF8&msa=0&mid=zD8EKGmvqleg.KymCI-4pv3fA
http://www.galaragreantica.it/		http://www.cn24tv.it/tag/farmer-market.html
http://scaltamente.wordpress.com/		http://www.calabrianonline.com/articoli/crotona-continuano-gli-appuntamenti-con-il-farmer-market-domenica-la-giomata-delarancia-13328.htm
http://www.galilagraea.it/		http://www.comune.cicala.cz.it/index.php?action=index&p=1&art=43
http://www.galstia.it/		http://www.utolesorridenti.com
http://www.galkroton.it/		http://www.csoacartella.org/index.php/gas-felece-mirtullo
http://www.galatojonio.it/		http://www.gastro.it/
http://www.cogalmonteporo.net/		http://www.restipica.net/dalle-regioni/
http://www.galreventino.it/index.php		http://www.fattoredidattiche.biz/articoli-e-notizie/reti-di-fattorie/mercati-del-contadino-limpegno-dei-lanci-e-di-res-tipica.html
http://www.galravuto.it/new/index.php		http://www.mercatidellcontadino.it/
http://www.vallecrocchio.it/		http://www.comune.crotona.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2990
http://www.assagri.regione.calabria.it/		http://www.ilerotone.it/cronaca/2008-04-04/mercato-del-contadino-si-compra-minor-prezzo
http://www.regione.calabria.it/		http://www.ilerotone.it/cronaca/2008-07-15/arriva-il-farmer-market-la-spesa-si-fa-dai-contadini
http://www.provincia.cosenza.it/portale/index.cfm		http://www.eccellenze calabresi.it/news.asp?dnews=2950&cat=13&page1=Crotona-positivo-il-bilancio-del-mercato-dei-contadini-Farmer-market
http://www.provincia.crotona.it/		http://www.filieracarbato.it/mercato-bio.htm
http://www.provincia.catanzaro.it/		http://www.campagnamicaita/rete/Pagine/mercato.aspx
http://www.provincia.vibovalentia.it/		
http://www.provincia.rc.it/		
http://www.coldiretti.it/Pagine/default.aspx		
http://www.donneincampo.it/donneincampo/		
http://old.icea.info/Arce/ICE/Alitalia/Calabria/Home/tabid/183/Default.aspx		
http://genuinoclandestino.noblogs.org/		
http://www.campiaperti.org/		
http://liberaterria.it/		

http://www.atab.it/	
http://www.fileacortabio.it/	
http://alcentermielezia.com/	
http://www.slowfood.it/	

Table A3.16 Websites consulted to gather information on Calabrian GASS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale or Solidarity Purchasing Groups) and on producers who are in relation with GASS

Websites	Consulted for GASS	Consulted for producers in relation with GASS
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gas-UmCal/175968605818375		http://www.biobank.it/it/indexBIO.asp
http://www.utopiosorridenti.com/		https://www.facebook.com/pages/Azienda-agricola-lamirt%C3%A2a/3106670292708805
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Summary

This thesis aims to advance the understanding of identities and roles of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). It focusses on AFNs which operate in contexts where traditional aspects are still dominant within the local agrifood systems, and which act on both food provisioning and raising awareness about civic issues. This research examines the identities and roles of AFNs by shedding light on the dynamics of the organisation and implementation of their activities. For this, the thesis firstly adapts a theoretical and methodological framework for the investigation of social phenomena, starting by unveiling the functioning of their internal dynamics; secondly, it operationalises and applies the selected theoretical and methodological framework in order to analyse a case of an AFN which is led by consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations and carries out both food provisioning and initiatives to raise civic awareness in a context where traditional aspects are still dominant in the agrifood system.

Chapter one introduces the research and its objective and presents the four associated research questions. The first two are theoretical and respectively concern how an existing theoretical and methodological framework can be adapted to the analysis of AFNs starting from their dynamics and how this framework can be operationalised and applied to the analysis of AFNs' dynamics. The second two research questions are empirical and start by considering AFNs' activities as the main dynamics in AFNs. Moreover, they refer to a specific case of an AFN, namely a Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (GAS), which stands for Solidarity Purchasing Group. This specific case, i.e. GAS M, operates within the traditional agrifood system of Calabria, (a region in the south of Italy). In GAS M consumers play a leading role in carrying out activities both of food provisioning and of civic relevance. The latter two research questions enquire, respectively, what the relative importance of activities taking place in GAS M is for the construction of its identity, and how the identity of GAS M is produced and negotiated in conversations while these activities are carried out.

Chapter two reviews the literature on AFNs and positions the research within it. In particular, the chapter identifies two paths along which literature on AFNs is proceeding. One of them concerns the focus of studies on AFNs, while the other concerns the approach used by these studies. The chapter proposes to contribute to the development of these two paths along which the literature on AFNs is developing. Firstly, it proposes to study GASs since they align with the focus of interest of the latest studies on AFNs while their investigation can contribute to advance the knowledge deriving from the latter mentioned studies. GASs have been studied for their food provisioning activities, but have not yet been explored in terms of their civic activities. Chapter two proposes to explore and examine both of these in the case of GAS M. Secondly, the chapter proposes to advance dynamics-centred and explorative approaches to the study of AFNs, which are identified as the most advantaged approaches in the domain of AFNs. It proposes a theoretical and methodological framework, Interaction Ritual (IR) theory, developed by the American sociologist Randall Collins, in which dynamics are central and can be studied in an explorative way and that has not been yet operationalised in the study of AFNs. Unveiling processes of meanings' negotiation has been crucial for the existing explorative and dynamics-centred studies to infer the features of AFNs from which their identities and roles are derived. Within the frame proposed in this research, processes of meanings negotiation are studied along to other aspects of AFNs' dynamics such as their capacity to take place and repeat as well as to engage people. Examining processes of negotiation and meanings creation will be instrumental in understanding what it is about AFNs that attracts people's interest and attention and mobilises them. Shedding light on the

other mentioned aspects of AFNs' dynamics will be central to ascertaining their relative intensity. By combining the information on the intensity of dynamics with the information on what attracts attention in these dynamics, ranks of the most and least influential dynamics and associated foci of attention will be made and conclusions on their implications for AFNs' identities and roles will be derived.

Chapter three introduces the framework upon which this research is based, along with the theoretical and methodological approach derived from it. IR theory is presented as the theoretical frame whereby dynamics are the analytical starting point for understanding phenomena which build upon these dynamics. Moreover, the frame proposes the model of IR to schematise the functioning of the dynamics of social phenomena and some methodological guidelines to analyse these social phenomena starting from their dynamics. Chapter three then goes on to define the theoretical and methodological approach for a dynamics-centred and explorative study on AFNs as follows. The carrying out of AFNs' activities is seen as the main dynamic in AFNs. The functioning of this dynamic is schematised in the *model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities* as a two-step process. The first step coincides with the organisation of AFNs' activities, while the second step consists of their implementation. Activities flow from organisation to implementation and to new rounds of organisation-implementation. With each step there is a certain level of intensity in the activity, (i.e. *feelings of attachment*), and something that attracts attention and acquires a special significance, (i.e. *common understanding*). Investigating the levels of intensity and what attracts attention together with its significance while AFNs' activities take place returns information on the features of these activities. In turn, these features are crucial in understanding AFNs' identities and roles. The methodological guidelines instrumental to this are the following. First, a qualitative field of enquiry is chosen because it allows for explorative studies. Second, a case study is chosen as the strategy of enquiry to select those cases of AFNs where activities can be distinguished and studied in relation to their intensity and with respect to what attracts attention and its significance. Third, documentation on, and observation of, AFNs' activities are chosen as methods of data collection since they allow naturally occurring information on the dynamics of AFNs' activities to be inferred unobtrusively. Finally, a strategy of data analysis is proposed which exists in defining indicators and a coding frame to ascertain respectively the intensity of, and what attracts attention alongside to its significance in, AFNs' activities.

Chapter four introduces the context and case study as well as the reasoning behind their selection, and the first step of data collection and analysis. Calabria is chosen as the context of the study, this being a region in Southern Italy where traditional aspects are still dominant in the agrifood system, and thus a suitable context to explore AFNs operating within agrifood systems that are not totally modernised. Moreover, Calabria shows some features of socio-economic backwardness and several food provisioning initiatives, including AFNs, are emerging as laboratories to countervail some of these features. Hence, Calabria is also a suitable context for a case study because it is home to AFNs that contribute to both food provisioning and carrying out activities of civic relevance, such as working on countervailing some aspects of socio-economic backwardness within the context where they operate. GAS M, is selected to be studied since it is informative for both the empirical and the conceptual interests of this research. Empirically, it is relevant since it operates in a context with a traditional agrifood system, works on both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance, and involves consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations with a leading role. Conceptually, GAS M is relevant because it provides the sort of naturally occurring and unobtrusive sources of data on its activities that are needed for this dynamics-centred and explorative analysis based on IR theory. Chapter four presents the first step of data collection and analysis presenting the documents and observation sessions that are selected for the analysis. Moreover, it introduces the variables defined to capture any possible measure of the intensity in

each activity of GAS M as well as the categories proposed to ascertain what attracts attention in conversations during the implementation of activities.

Chapter five reports on the second step of data analysis and its results in terms of the relevance of each activity within the studied GAS in influencing its identity. The variables identified during the first step of data analysis are selected, elaborated, and, later on, clustered into three indicators. They measure the intensity of each activity in terms of the frequency of the activity, the strength of ties among the people involved, and the balance in the distribution of tasks for the accomplishment of the activity. High levels of these indicators are considered as signifying that an activity generates high levels of intensity. A total of six activities have been studied; three of them are connected with food provisioning, (i.e. material activities), and the other three are connected with raising awareness on civic issues and creating occasions to socialise, (i.e. civic activities). Activities of civic and social relevance resulted in being more intense overall than activities connected with food provisioning. Therefore, activities of civic and social relevance are considered as being more likely to influence, with the purposes they pursue, the identity of the studied GAS.

Chapter six reports on the second step of data analysis and its results in terms of how the identity of the studied GAS is negotiated in conversations which take place during GAS M's activities. The chapter starts from one of the categories introduced in the first step of data analysis to examine what attracts attention in GAS M's conversations. The selected category indicates seven themes which recur in GAS M's conversations. A coding frame is introduced to ascertain which sort of attention each of the seven themes mobilises when it is discussed in conversations and what the significance is of what is actually debated while these themes are under discussion. Chapter six shows that, regardless of the theme or activity, the focus of GAS M's conversations is on mediating different views about GAS M. Three views are debated repeatedly: first, the view that GAS M is a system of food provisioning and, as such, is expected to create occasions for producers to obtain economic benefits through selling products with specific physical features and for consumers to obtain some sort of satisfaction through buying the same sort of products. According to the second view, GAS M is a project to promote solidarity economy by creating occasions to think about and practice critical consumption. Lastly, the third view is of GAS M as a project to promote solidarity economy by creating occasions for critical consumption and by stimulating and spreading critical thinking on topics of civic relevance also beyond issues connected with food provisioning. It thus emerges that there is no one definitive GAS M identity; rather, it is undergoing a process of continuous renegotiation. Nonetheless, the latter two views, in turn, often prevail and override the other views since some people who manage GAS M use the opportunity to bring them forward while being actively involved in the organisation of GAS M's activities.

Finally, **chapter seven** sums up the results, contributions and recommendations of this research.

1) The first result and contribution concerns advancing the body of knowledge on the identities and roles of AFNs. This research contributes to this by bringing back insights on the identity of a case of an AFN which operates in a context with a traditional agrifood system, attributes both consumers and consumers-based civil society organisations leading roles, and works on both food provisioning and activities of civic relevance. From the insights of this research, it emerges that the identity of the studied GAS is not clearly defined. Instead, it is continuously re-shaped as it results from different spatial and temporal combinations of material activities and interests connected with the buying and selling of products with specific physical features, on the one hand, and of civic activities and interests related to spreading critical consumption or principles of civic relevance, even beyond food provisioning, on the other hand. The mentioned activities and interests attract different groups of people with different levels of intensity. Primarily civic interests and activities attract the small group that manages the studied GAS. Often some people in this group impose their

interests by choosing the organisational arrangements that are mostly in line with their interests. GAS M is undergoing a process of ideological and material selection which, together with the preeminence of civic interests, has three main implications: a) the equity of the food provisioning system recreated by the studied GAS is reduced; b) its role as a creator of occasions where producers and consumers can satisfy their needs of buying and selling products with specific physical features is reduced. Furthermore, while its role in building community, creating spaces for socialising and learning around the diffusion of civic principles is supported, this is limited to the people sharing certain interests; c) the durability of the project and its likelihood of expanding are limited.

2) The second result and contribution of this research is theoretical and methodological.

First of all, it contributes to refining IR theory. This research represents the first adaptation of the model of IR, describing the functioning of the dynamics of social phenomena, into a model that schematises the mechanism of AFNs' activities, which are identified as the main dynamics in AFNs. The research reinterprets IR theory in an explorative and strictly dynamics-centred way. This represents the first research that operationalises the guidelines of IR theory into an approach for data collection and analysis that allows information on AFNs' activities to be inferred unobtrusively as they naturally emerge while these activities take place. Furthermore, this approach provides analytical tools to ascertain the intensity of AFNs' activities, what attracts attention in these activities, which sort of attention, and what its significance is.

Secondly, this research has contributed towards advancing the existing body of explorative and dynamics-centred studies on AFNs. Previous studies have focussed on processes of negotiating meanings in order to infer insights on AFNs' identities and roles. Following IR theory, this research not only explores meanings negotiation during conversations occurring while AFNs' activities take place, but also AFNs' activities in terms of their intensity. In so doing, it complements what is said with what is done as a means to infer information on the identities and roles of AFNs. The result is that besides showing what issues are important in influencing AFNs' identities and roles, this research also shows which activities are important, and to which extent they influence AFNs' identities and roles. Moreover, this research has evoked some conceptual categories and reasoning, as introduced by IR theory, and has used them to interpret the dynamics of power and inclusivity of AFNs as well as what drives the participation in AFNs when deciding which activities to promote and to which extent. All the mentioned aspects have been explored in the literature on AFNs until now by relating actors' rationalisations. The mentioned conceptual categories and reasoning offer the possibility of exploring these aspects starting from data that emerges while exploring the functioning of AFNs' activities. In this way, this research contributes to overcoming actors' personal preferences and ideas, which may bias their rationalisations about the mentioned aspects.

3) Finally, this research gives some recommendations for further dynamics-centred researches on AFNs. First of all, future researchers may cover more of the variety of AFNs in terms of identities and roles by applying the approach developed by this research to study new cases of AFNs, in new contexts, and comparatively. Furthermore, it offers some inputs on how the approach can be refined so as to consider a broader variety of cases of AFNs in the analysis. Secondly, this research invites future researchers to start from what this research has discovered in terms of how to measure the intensity of material and civic activities in AFNs in order to implement future works that look into what influences the intensity of AFNs' activities and contributes to their stabilisation, as well as what the causal relationship is between civic and material activities, which activities and related interests are leading.

Riassunto

Questa tesi si propone di progredire la comprensione delle identità e dei ruoli di 'Alternative Food Networks' (AFN). Si concentra su AFN che operano in contesti in cui gli aspetti tradizionali sono ancora dominanti all'interno dei sistemi agroalimentari locali, e che agiscono sia su distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari sia su attività di sensibilizzazione su questioni di rilievo civico. Questa ricerca prende in esame le identità e i ruoli di AFN facendo luce sulle dinamiche di organizzazione e di implementazione delle loro attività. A tal fine, in primo luogo, la tesi adatta un quadro teorico e metodologico per l'indagine dei fenomeni sociali a partire dal funzionamento delle loro dinamiche interne; in secondo luogo, applica il quadro teorico e metodologico all'analisi di un caso di AFN che è guidato da consumatori e da organizzazioni di società civile e che svolge sia attività di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari sia attività di sensibilizzazione civica in un contesto in cui gli aspetti tradizionali sono ancora dominanti nel sistema agroalimentare.

Il **capitolo 1** introduce la ricerca, il suo obiettivo e le quattro domande di ricerca che la guidano. Le prime due domande sono teoriche. Rispettivamente interrogano come un quadro teorico e metodologico esistente possa essere adattato per l'analisi di AFN a partire dalle loro dinamiche e come questo quadro possa essere applicato all'analisi di queste dinamiche. Le seconde due domande di ricerca sono empiriche. Si fondano sul considerare le attività svolte da AFN come le loro principali dinamiche. Inoltre, si riferiscono a un caso specifico di AFN, vale a dire un Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale (GAS) chiamato GAS M. GAS M opera all'interno di un sistema agroalimentare tradizionale come quello della Calabria, (una regione del Sud Italia). Nel GAS M i consumatori svolgono un ruolo di primo piano nella realizzazione di attività sia di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari sia di rilevanza civica. Le seconde due domande di ricerca interrogano, rispettivamente, quale sia l'importanza relativa delle attività che GAS M svolge per la costruzione della sua identità, e come l'identità del GAS M venga prodotta e negoziata in conversazioni che accompagnano lo svolgimento di queste attività.

Il **capitolo 2** fa una recensione della letteratura su AFN e posiziona la ricerca all'interno di questo filone di letteratura scientifica. In particolare, il capitolo individua due percorsi lungo i quali la letteratura su AFN sta procedendo. Uno di essi riguarda il focus degli studi su AFN, mentre l'altro riguarda l'approccio utilizzato da questi studi. Il capitolo propone di contribuire allo sviluppo di questi due percorsi lungo i quali la letteratura AFN sta procedendo. In primo luogo, si propone di studiare i GAS perché si allineano con il focus dell'interesse dei più recenti studi su AFN. Allo stesso tempo, investigare i GAS può contribuire a progredire le informazioni derivanti dagli studi appena citati. I GAS sono stati studiati in relazione alle loro attività di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari, ma non sono ancora stati esplorati per quel che riguarda le loro attività civiche. Il Capitolo 2 propone di esplorare ed esaminare entrambe nel caso del GAS M. In secondo luogo, il capitolo propone di avanzare gli approcci esplorativi e centrati sulle dinamiche usati nello studio di AFN. Si tratta degli approcci più avanzati nel campo delle AFN. Il capitolo propone un quadro teorico e metodologico, 'Interaction Ritual' (IR) theory, sviluppato dal sociologo americano Randall Collins, in cui le dinamiche sono centrali per lo studio dei fenomeni sociali e possono essere investigate in maniera esplorativa. Questo quadro non è stato ancora reso operativo nello studio di AFN. Investigare processi di negoziazione di significati è stato cruciale per gli studi esistenti su AFN che usano approcci esplorativi e dinamici per dedurre le caratteristiche di AFN da cui derivano informazioni sulle loro identità e ruoli. Nel quadro teorico-metodologico proposto in questa ricerca, i processi di negoziazione di significati sono studiati insieme ad altri aspetti delle dinamiche in AFN, come la loro capacità di svolgersi e di coinvolgere partecipanti. Studiare i processi di negoziazione dei significati sarà determinante per capire di cosa attira interesse dei partecipanti in AFN e quale sia il suo significato. Fare luce sulla capacità delle dinamiche di

svolgersi, ripetersi ed attirare partecipanti sarà fondamentale per accertare la loro intensità relativa. Combinando le informazioni sull'intensità delle dinamiche con le informazioni su ciò che attira l'attenzione in queste dinamiche, si potrà capire cosa mobilita queste dinamiche e si potrà fare una classifica delle dinamiche più e meno influenti. Conclusioni sulle implicazioni per le identità e ruoli di AFN saranno derivati da queste informazioni.

Il **capitolo 3** introduce il quadro teorico che guida questa ricerca insieme con l'approccio teorico e metodologico che ne deriva. IR theory è presentato come un quadro teorico in cui le dinamiche sono il punto di partenza dell'analisi per la comprensione dei fenomeni che derivano da queste dinamiche. Inoltre, il quadro propone un modello per schematizzare il funzionamento delle dinamiche dei fenomeni sociali e alcune linee guida metodologiche per analizzare i fenomeni sociali a partire dalle loro dinamiche costitutive. Il capitolo 3 passa poi a definire l'approccio teorico e metodologico per uno studio dinamico ed esplorativo di AFN come segue. Lo svolgimento delle attività in AFN è interpretato come la loro principale dinamica. Il funzionamento di questa dinamica è schematizzato nel 'model of the dynamics of AFNs' activities' come un processo in due fasi. La prima fase coincide con l'organizzazione di attività, mentre la seconda fase consiste nella loro implementazione. In ogni fase c'è un certo livello di intensità (*feelings of attachment*) e qualcosa che attira l'attenzione ed acquisisce un significato speciale (*common understanding*). Indagare i livelli di intensità delle attività svolte in AFN e ciò che attira l'attenzione, insieme al suo significato, mentre le attività vengono svolte restituisce informazioni sulle caratteristiche di tali attività; a loro volta, queste caratteristiche sono cruciali per comprendere le identità e i ruoli di AFN. Le linee guida metodologiche strumentali per questo studio su AFN a partire dalle caratteristiche delle loro attività sono le seguenti. In primo luogo, il campo di indagine qualitativa è scelto perché permette di condurre studi esplorativi. In secondo luogo, il caso studio è scelto come strategia di indagine perché permette di selezionare quei casi di AFN le cui attività possono essere distinte e studiate in relazione alla loro intensità e rispetto a ciò che ne attira l'attenzione e il suo significato. In terzo luogo, documentazione sulle, e osservazione delle, attività studiate sono scelti come metodi di raccolta dati in quanto consentono di acquisire informazioni sulle attività così come emergono dal loro naturale svolgimento. Infine, viene proposta una strategia di analisi dei dati che esiste nel definire indicatori e un set di codici per accertare rispettivamente l'intensità delle attività studiate e ciò che ne attira l'attenzione, insieme al suo significato.

Il **capitolo 4** introduce il contesto di studio e il caso studio, nonché le motivazioni per la loro selezione e la prima fase di raccolta e analisi dei dati. La Calabria è scelta come contesto di studio essendo questa una regione del Sud Italia dove gli aspetti tradizionali sono ancora dominanti nel sistema agroalimentare. Quindi, la Calabria è un contesto adatto per esplorare AFN che operano all'interno dei sistemi agroalimentari che non sono completamente modernizzati. Inoltre, la Calabria presenta alcune caratteristiche di arretratezza socio-economica e una serie di iniziative, tra cui sistemi di distribuzione agroalimentare che rientrano nella categoria AFN, che stanno emergendo come laboratori per compensare alcuni dei motivi di arretratezza. Quindi, la Calabria è un contesto adatto per questo studio anche perché ospita casi di AFN che contribuiscono sia a creare sistemi di distribuzione agroalimentare sia a svolgere attività di rilevanza civica, come interventi per compensare alcuni aspetti di arretratezza socio-economica all'interno del contesto in cui operano. Il GAS M è scelto come caso studio poiché è informativo sia per gli interessi empirici sia per gli interessi concettuali di questa ricerca. A livello empirico, il GAS M è rilevante in quanto: opera in un contesto con un sistema agroalimentare tradizionale; svolge sia attività di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentare sia attività di rilevanza civica; infine coinvolge consumatori e organizzazioni della società civile guidate da consumatori con un ruolo di primo piano. A livello concettuale, GAS M è rilevante perché fornisce il tipo di fonti di dati che emergono dal naturale svolgersi delle sue attività e che sono necessarie per un'analisi dinamica ed esplorativa guidata da IR theory. Il Capitolo 4 presenta la prima fase di raccolta e analisi dei dati. Descrive i documenti e

le sessioni di osservazione selezionati per l'analisi. Inoltre, introduce le variabili definite per catturare ogni possibile misura dell'intensità di ciascuna attività svolta dal GAS M, nonché le categorie proposte per accertare cosa attira l'attenzione in conversazioni che accompagnano lo svolgimento di queste attività.

Il **capitolo 5** riporta la seconda fase di analisi dei dati e i risultati in termini della rilevanza di ogni attività svolta all'interno del GAS studiato nell'influenzare la sua identità. Le variabili individuate durante la prima fase di analisi dei dati sono selezionate, elaborate e raggruppate in tre indicatori. Essi misurano l'intensità di ciascuna attività in termini di frequenza dell'attività, della forza dei legami tra le persone coinvolte nell'attività, e dell'equilibrio nella distribuzione dei compiti che sono strumentali per lo svolgersi dell'attività. Alti livelli di questi indicatori sono considerati come elevati livelli di intensità delle attività. Un totale di sei attività sono state studiate; tre di loro sono collegate con la distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari (*material activities*) e le altre tre sono collegate con iniziative di sensibilizzazione su temi civici e con occasioni di socializzazione (*civic activities*). Attività di rilevanza civica e sociale hanno dimostrato di essere più intense nel complesso rispetto ad attività di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari. Pertanto, le attività di rilevanza civica e sociale sono considerate come più rilevanti nell'influenzare, con gli scopi che perseguono, l'identità del GAS studiato.

Il **capitolo 6** riporta la seconda fase di analisi dei dati e i risultati su come l'identità del GAS studiato sia negoziata in conversazioni che accompagnano lo svolgimento delle attività del GAS M. Il capitolo inizia da una delle categorie introdotte nella prima fase di analisi dei dati per esaminare ciò che attira l'attenzione nelle conversazioni del GAS M. La categoria selezionata indica sette temi che ricorrono in queste conversazioni. Un set di codici viene introdotto per accertare che tipo di attenzione ciascuno dei sette temi mobilita quando viene discusso e quale sia il significato di ciò che è effettivamente dibattuto mentre i temi sono discussi. Il Capitolo 6 dimostra che, indipendentemente dal tema discusso e dalle attività durante il cui svolgimento i temi sono discussi, il focus delle conversazioni nel GAS M è sulla mediazione diversi punti di vista circa il GAS M. Tre punti di vista sono discussi: in primo luogo, l'idea che il GAS M sia un sistema di distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari e, come tale, debba creare occasioni per i produttori di ottenere benefici economici attraverso la vendita di prodotti con specifiche caratteristiche fisiche e per i consumatori di soddisfare le loro esigenze attraverso l'acquisto dello stesso tipo di prodotti. In secondo luogo, l'idea del GAS M come un progetto per promuovere economia solidale creando occasioni per praticare il consumo critico è portata avanti. Infine, il terzo punto di vista sul GAS M lo presenta come un progetto per promuovere economia solidale attraverso la creazione di occasioni per il consumo critico ma anche stimolando la diffusione di pensiero critico su temi di rilevanza civica in genere, anche al di là di questioni connesse con la distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari. Risulta pertanto che non vi sia un'identità definita per il GAS M; piuttosto, questa subisce un processo di rinegoziazione continua. Tuttavia, gli ultimi due punti di vista sull'identità del GAS M, a turno, spesso prevalgono sugli altri mentre alcuni responsabili della gestione del GAS M organizzano le attività del GAS in modo tale che sia strumentali a portarli avanti.

Infine, il **capitolo 7** riassume i risultati, i contributi e le raccomandazioni di questa ricerca.

1) Il primo risultato e contributo consiste nell'avanzare il corpo di conoscenze sulle identità e ruoli di AFN. Questa ricerca contribuisce a questo approfondendo sull'identità di un caso di AFN che opera in un contesto il cui sistema agroalimentare è ancora in parte tradizionale, è guidato da consumatori e organizzazioni della società civile, e agisce sia sulla distribuzione di prodotti agroalimentari sia su attività di rilevanza civica. Dai risultati di questa ricerca, emerge che l'identità del GAS studiato non è definita. Invece, è continuamente riformulata come risultato di diverse combinazioni di attività materiali e interessi connessi con l'acquisto e la vendita di prodotti con

specifiche caratteristiche fisiche, da un lato, e di attività e interessi civici legati alla diffusione del consumo critico o di principi di generale rilevanza civica, dall'altro. Le diverse attività e gli interessi associati attirano diversi gruppi di partecipanti nel GAS e con diversi livelli di intensità. In particolare, gli interessi e le attività civiche attirano il piccolo gruppo di partecipanti responsabili per la gestione del GAS M. Spesso alcune persone in questo gruppo portano avanti i loro interessi scegliendo le modalità organizzative che sono più in linea con questi interessi. Il GAS M vede un processo di selezione ideologica e materiale che, insieme con la preminenza degli interessi civici, ha tre implicazioni principali: a) l'equità del sistema di distribuzione agroalimentare ricreato dal GAS M è ridotta. b) Il suo ruolo come promotore di occasioni in cui produttori e consumatori possono soddisfare le loro esigenze di acquisto e di vendita di prodotti con specifiche caratteristiche fisiche è ridotto. Inoltre, mentre il suo ruolo come promotore di comunità e creatore di spazi per la socializzazione e l'apprendimento è supportato, la comunità e gli spazi di socializzazione ed apprendimento ricreati coinvolgono prevalentemente persone che condividono determinati interessi civici. c) La durata del progetto GAS M e la sua capacità di espansione sono limitate.

2) Il secondo risultato e contributo di questa ricerca è teorico-metodologico.

Prima di tutto, essa contribuisce ad affinare IR theory. Questa ricerca rappresenta il primo adattamento del modello che IR theory propone per descrivere il funzionamento delle dinamiche costitutive dei fenomeni sociali in un modello che schematizza il funzionamento delle attività svolte in AFN. Queste sono identificate come le loro principali dinamiche. Inoltre, la ricerca interpreta IR theory in maniera esplorativa e rigorosamente dinamica. Questa rappresenta la prima ricerca che rende operative le linee guida metodologiche proposte dall'IR theory in un approccio per la raccolta e l'analisi dei dati che consente di inferire informazioni sulle attività svolte in AFN così come emergono dal naturale svolgersi di queste attività. Inoltre, questo approccio fornisce strumenti di analisi per accertare l'intensità delle attività svolte in AFN, quello che attira attenzione in queste attività, che tipo di attenzione, e qual è il suo significato.

In secondo luogo, questa ricerca ha contribuito a far progredire il corpo esistente di studi esplorativi e dinamici su AFN. Gli studi esistenti si sono concentrati sui processi di negoziazione di significati al fine di dedurre informazioni sulle identità e ruoli di AFN. Seguendo IR theory, questa ricerca, non solo esplora la negoziazione di significati nelle conversazioni che accompagnano lo svolgimento di attività in AFN, ma anche l'intensità di queste attività. Così facendo, questo studio integra ciò che viene detto con ciò che viene fatto come mezzo per dedurre informazioni sulle identità e ruoli di AFN. Il risultato è che oltre a mostrare quali sono le questioni importanti che possono influenzare l'identità e i ruoli di AFN, questa ricerca mostra anche quali attività sono importanti, e in che misura esse influenzano l'identità e i ruoli di AFN. Inoltre, questa ricerca ha ripreso alcune categorie concettuali introdotte da IR theory e le ha usate per interpretare le dinamiche di potere e di inclusione in AFN. Altre categorie concettuali sono state usate per spiegare ciò che influenza la partecipazione in AFN e le decisioni relative a quali attività promuovere e partecipare e in che misura. Tutti gli aspetti menzionati sono stati esplorati nella letteratura su AFN contando sulle razionalizzazioni degli attori di AFN. Le categorie concettuali usate in questa ricerca offrono la possibilità di esplorare questi aspetti partendo dai dati che emergono dall'esplorare il funzionamento delle attività svolte da AFN. In questo modo, la ricerca contribuisce a superare le preferenze e le idee personali degli attori, che possono condizionarne le loro razionalizzazioni sugli aspetti citati.

3) Infine, questa ricerca fornisce alcune raccomandazioni per futuri studi su AFN che si concentrano sull'esplorare le loro dinamiche costitutive. Prima di tutto, future ricerche possono coprire una più ampia varietà di casi di AFN applicando l'approccio sviluppato in questa ricerca per l'investigarne le identità e i ruoli a nuovi casi di AFN, in nuovi contesti e comparativamente.

Inoltre, questa ricerca offre alcuni input su come l'approccio sviluppato possa essere affinato in modo da considerare una più ampia varietà di casi di AFN nei futuri studi. In secondo luogo, questa ricerca invita futuri ricercatori a iniziare da ciò che questa ricerca ha scoperto in termini di come misurare l'intensità delle attività materiali e civiche svolte in AFN per scoprire cosa influenza questa intensità e contribuisce alla loro stabilizzazione. Inoltre, questa ricerca invita a riflettere su se esista un rapporto causale tra le attività civiche e materiali e quale sia questo rapporto.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift heeft als doel om een beter begrip te krijgen van de identiteit en rol van 'Alternatieve Food Networks' (Alternatieve Voedsel Netwerken - AFNs). De studie richt zich op AFNs die binnen een tamelijk traditioneel landbouw en voedselsysteem opereren. Hier spelen AFNs een belangrijke rol in de voedselvoorziening en in de discussie van maatschappelijke vraagstukken. Het onderzoek probeert de identiteit en rol van AFNs te achterhalen door de dynamiek van de organisatie en uitvoering van hun activiteiten te analyseren.

Hoofdstuk één introduceert het onderzoek, het doel van het onderzoek alsook de onderzoeksvragen. De eerste twee onderzoeksvragen zijn theoretisch van aard en hebben betrekking op de ontwikkeling van een analysekader dat inzicht in het functioneren van een AFN biedt. De volgende twee onderzoeksvragen zijn empirisch van aard en richten zich op de activiteiten en dynamiek in AFNs. Daarbij verwijzen de vragen naar een specifieke casus van een AFN, namelijk een 'Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale' (GAS), wat staat voor een Solidaire Inkoop Groep. Deze specifieke casus, genoemde GAS M, opereert binnen een traditioneel landbouw en voedselsysteem in Calabrië (een regio in Zuid-Italië). Binnen GAS M spelen consumenten een leidende rol. De laatste twee onderzoeksvragen richten zich op het relatieve belang van de activiteiten van GAS M voor het vaststellen van hun identiteit.

Hoofdstuk twee geeft een overzicht van het wetenschappelijk onderzoek naar AFNs en positioneert het onderzoek in de AFN literatuur. GAS zijn eerder onderzocht voor wat betreft hun voedselvoorziening praktijken, maar nog niet in relatie tot hun maatschappelijke rol. Er wordt dan ook voorgesteld om beiden te verkennen. Ook wordt er voorgesteld om meer aandacht te besteden aan dynamiek binnen AFNs. Daarbij wordt gebruik gemaakt van de Interaction Ritual (IR) theorie, die door de Amerikaanse socioloog Randall Collins is ontwikkeld. Het ontrafelen van onderhandelingsprocessen rondom betekenisgeving is van cruciaal belang om de identiteit en rol van AFNs te begrijpen omdat het inzicht biedt in hoe en waarom AFNs mensen mobiliseren. Daarnaast wordt duidelijk hoe intensief deelnemers bij de verschillende activiteiten en doelstellingen van AFNs betrokken zijn. In combinatie met inzicht in wat de aandacht trekt is het mogelijk onderscheid te maken tussen meer of minder belangrijke dynamieken en daarmee meer of minder belangrijke aspecten van de identiteiten van AFNs.

Hoofdstuk drie introduceert het theoretische en methodologische kader, die beide wortelen in IR theorie en daarmee focussen op de dynamiek binnen AFNs. Het uitvoeren van AFN activiteiten wordt gezien als de voornaamste dynamiek in AFNs. De werking hiervan is geschematiseerd in *een dynamisch model van AFN activiteiten* dat twee stappen onderscheidt. De eerste stap gaat over de organisatie en voorbereiding van AFN activiteiten, terwijl de tweede stap over de uitvoering en dus implementatie van activiteiten gaat. Organisatie en uitvoering wisselen elkaar af in voortdurende rondes; op elke uitvoering volgt een nieuwe organisatie indien een herhaling van de activiteit gewenst is. De organisatie en uitvoering van activiteiten kunnen verschillen in de intensiteit van betrokkenheid (oftewel 'feelings of attachment') die zij bij deelnemers oproepen, de aandacht die deelnemers eraan besteden en de betekenis (oftewel 'common understanding') die zij eraan verlenen. Door te onderzoeken hoe activiteiten verschillen in de betrokkenheid, aandacht en betekenisgeving, verkrijgen we inzicht in de functies van AFN activiteiten. Deze functies geven wederom inzicht in de identiteiten en rollen van AFNs. Methodologisch zijn de volgende keuzes gemaakt: ten eerste is er voor een kwalitatieve en exploratieve onderzoeksstrategie gekozen; ten tweede is ervoor gekozen om één AFN als casus te bestuderen; ten derde is ervoor gekozen om de normale, dagelijkse interacties te bestuderen rondom de voorbereiding en uitvoering van een aantal kernactiviteiten van deze AFN; de analyse is er vervolgens op gericht om te begrijpen hoe intensief

deelnemers bij de betreffende activiteit betrokken zijn, wat hun aandacht trekt en welke betekenis ze aan de activiteit verlenen.

Hoofdstuk vier introduceert de context, de casus (alsook de redenering achter de keuze hiervoor), en de eerste stap in het verzamelen en analyseren van gegevens. Calabrië is een regio in het zuiden van Italië waar traditionele aspecten nog steeds dominant zijn in het landbouw en voedselsysteem. Daarmee vormt Calabrië een geschikte context voor het verkennen van AFNs die opereren binnen landbouw en voedselsystemen die niet volledig gemoderniseerd zijn. Bovendien vertoont Calabrië enkele kenmerken van sociaaleconomische achterstand. De laatste jaren zijn er verschillende initiatieven ontstaan waarin voedselvoorziening op een nieuwe manier georganiseerd wordt, en die veelal ook andere maatschappelijke vraagstukken aansnijden. GAS M wordt gekozen als specifieke casus omdat het opereert in een context van een traditioneel landbouwsysteem, bijdraagt aan zowel voedselvoorziening als maatschappelijke vraagstukken, en consumenten en op consumenten gebaseerde maatschappelijke organisaties bij de voedselvoorziening betreft. Het hoofdstuk legt vervolgens uit hoe de dataverzameling binnen GAS M georganiseerd is, en documenten en activiteiten geselecteerd zijn voor analyse. Bovendien worden variabelen geïntroduceerd die de intensiteit in elke GAS M activiteit kunnen meten, alsook de categorieën die vast leggen wat de aandacht trekt tijdens het uitvoeren van activiteiten.

Hoofdstuk vijf rapporteert over de tweede stap van data-analyse, namelijk het meten van de relevantie van elke activiteit voor de identiteit van GAS M. De in hoofdstuk vier gedefinieerde variabelen worden gebruikt om de intensiteit van iedere activiteit te meten in termen van de frequentie van de activiteit, de sterkte van relaties tussen betrokken mensen, en de balans in de verdeling van taken voor het volbrengen van de activiteit. Hoge niveaus van deze indicatoren wijzen op een intensieve betrokkenheid van de deelnemers. In totaal zijn zes activiteiten onderzocht; drie hebben te maken met voedselvoorziening (in andere woorden ‘material activities’) en de andere drie zijn verbonden met bewustwording van maatschappelijke kwesties en het organiseren van sociale activiteiten (in andere woorden ‘civic activities’). Uit de analyse blijkt dat activiteiten met een maatschappelijke en sociale relevantie over het algemeen als intenser worden ervaren in vergelijking met activiteiten die met voedselvoorziening te maken hebben. Daarom worden activiteiten met een maatschappelijke en sociale relevantie geacht van groot belang te zijn voor de identiteit van de bestudeerde GAS.

Hoofdstuk zes brengt verslag uit van de analyse van wat de aandacht trekt tijdens de organisatie en implementatie van activiteiten en de betekenis die deelnemers eraan hechten. Uit de analyse blijkt dat zeven thema’s steeds weer terugkeren in de interacties over activiteiten en dus de aandacht trekken. Vervolgens is nader onderzocht welk soort aandacht elk van de zeven thema’s mobiliseert, in welke context de thema’s besproken worden en wat de betekenis is van de discussies. Hieruit blijkt dat de gesprekken doorgaans en ongeacht thema of activiteit draaien om de vraag waar GAS M in wezen voor staat. Daarbij blijken drie verschillende standpunten te bestaan. Ten eerste is er het standpunt dat GAS M een systeem van voedselvoorziening is en, dus, mogelijkheden schept voor producenten om hun bijzondere producten te verkopen en voor consumenten om de door hen gewenste producten te kopen. Volgens een tweede opvatting is GAS M een project dat een solidaire economie bevordert waarin bewustwording en kritische, politieke consumptie centraal staan. Tenslotte is er een derde opvatting waarin GAS M staat voor het bevorderen van een maatschappelijke verandering die verder gaat dan kritische consumptie of voedselvoorziening. Hieruit blijkt dat de identiteit van GAS M niet vast staat maar onderwerp is van voortdurende onderhandeling. Daarbij krijgen de laatste twee opvattingen vaak de overhand en voorrang door de inzet van de leiders van GAS M die ook veel van de activiteiten organiseren.

Tenslotte worden de resultaten, de bijdrage aan de literatuur en aanbevelingen van dit onderzoek samengevat in **hoofdstuk zeven**.

- 1) Ten eerste heeft dit onderzoek bijgedragen aan het bevorderen van kennis over de identiteit en de rol van AFNs. Het onderzoek laat zien dat de identiteit van de onderzochte GAS niet duidelijk gedefinieerd is maar onderwerp is van voortdurende onderhandeling over activiteiten die draaien om voedselvoorziening (materiële activiteiten) en activiteiten die zich richten op maatschappelijke verandering (politieke activiteiten). Deze activiteiten trekken verschillende groepen mensen aan die tevens verschillen in hun mate van betrokkenheid. Activiteiten rondom maatschappelijke verandering trekken een kleine groep aan maar wel de kerngroep die de bestudeerde GAS in wezen bestuurt. Zij kiezen er regelmatig voor om activiteiten rondom maatschappelijke verandering voorrang te geven boven activiteiten rondom voedselvoorziening. Er is zodoende sprake van een proces van ideologische en materiele selectie van activiteiten wat ertoe leidt dat er minder tijd en aandacht is voor het organiseren van mogelijkheden voor een andere voedselvoorziening en waarin producenten van bijzondere producten geïnteresseerde consumenten kunnen ontmoeten. Ook de sociale activiteiten richten zich met name op de kleine groep van politiek geïnteresseerden. Op de lage termijn ondermijnt dit de duurzaamheid van het initiatief.
- 2) Ten tweede levert het onderzoek een theoretische en methodologische bijdrage. Het is voor de eerste keer dat de IR theorie wordt toegepast om de dynamiek van AFN activiteiten te onderzoeken. Het is ook het eerste onderzoek dat de richtlijnen van IR theorie operationaliseert om een methodologie te ontwikkelen die de analyse van normale, dagelijkse en dus ‘natuurlijke’ interacties mogelijk maakt. Bovendien biedt deze aanpak analytische tools om de intensiteit van AFN activiteiten (welke de aandacht trekken en welk soort van aandacht) en betekenis daarvan vast te stellen. Daarnaast levert dit onderzoek meer inzicht op in de dynamiek van AFNs. Met behulp van IR theorie verkent dit onderzoek niet alleen het onderhandelen over betekenissen in interacties maar ook de intensiteit van interacties, wat inzicht biedt in de relevantie van het onderhandelde voor de identiteit en rol van AFNs. Het onderzoek laat zo zien welke zaken van belang zijn voor AFN identiteiten en hoeveel invloed bepaalde activiteiten daarbij hebben. Door toepassing van IR concepten en methoden is het mogelijk geweest om daarbij verder te gaan dan individuele voorkeuren en rationalisaties van individuele actoren maar te verkennen hoe identiteiten in interactie en dus collectief geschapen worden, waarbij tevens aandacht is besteed aan de mate van invloed die verschillende groepen actoren hebben.
- 3) Tot slot geeft dit onderzoek een aantal aanbevelingen voor verdere studies naar AFNs. Allereerst zou toekomstig vergelijkend onderzoek inzicht kunnen verkrijgen in verschillen tussen AFNs en het belang van verschillende contexten. Ten tweede nodigt dit onderzoek toekomstige onderzoekers uit om de intensiteit van de materiële en politieke activiteiten in AFNs nader te verkennen om meer inzicht te verkrijgen in de factoren die de intensiteit bepalen alsmede de interactie tussen materiële en politieke activiteiten.

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Simona

Wageningen, April 2015

About the author

Curriculum Vitae

Simona D'Amico was born on the 27th of September 1985, in Reggio Calabria, Italy. She grew up in Cataforio, a small village in a rural area of Reggio Calabria province. In 2004, she enrolled in the Bachelor's degree program in international cooperation and development at the Faculty of Political Sciences of Messina University. In September 2007, Simona obtained her Bachelor's degree cum laude. In the same month she moved to Rome to continue her studies in the field of international cooperation and development attending a Master's program at the Faculties of Economics, Anthropology, and Political Sciences of 'La Sapienza' University. Simona completed her Master's degree in September 2009. Her Master's dissertation was focused on the topic of social capital and rural development. Her research on the impact of social farming on the socio-economic development of a rural area in Southern Italy with high criminality rates received the highest score. In the same year of her Master's graduation, Simona obtained a scholarship to attend a Post-Master's degree program. She was among the 30 students selected to attend the 'International Master Program in Cooperation and Development' at the 'Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori' (IUSS), in Pavia. She concluded the Post-Master's degree with an internship at a cooperative society in Southern Italy. There, Simona has worked for four months at the start-up of a social and organic short food-supply chain. She wrote a scientific report about this experience and obtained her Post-Master's degree, in January 2011. In the same month she was granted a three years PhD scholarship. She conducted her PhD research on the topic of Alternative Food Networks in cooperation between Mediterranea University, in Italy, and Wageningen University, in The Netherlands.

Her email address for contact is: simona_damico@yahoo.it.

Education Certificate

Simona D'Amico
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan



Wageningen School
of Social Sciences

Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
Capita Selecta Agricultural and Rural Innovation Processes (RSO 51303)	WUR	2011	3
Contemporary Agrifood Studies (PureFood Advanced Scientific Skills Course)	WASS	2011	6
Research Proposal	RSO-WASS	2011	6
B) General research related competences			
Economics of Food Safety, Competitiveness and Applied Microeconometrics	Ex-Centro per la formazione in Economia e Politica dello Sviluppo Rurale	2011	4.5
Qualitative Data Analysis: Procedures and Strategies (YRM-60806)	WUR	2012	3
C) Career related competences/personal development			
Ispirare l'eccellenza nella ricerca. Competenze per sviluppare ed orientare la ricerca	Fondazione Crui	2011	1.5
'Conceptualising Interaction Processes in Civic Food Networks (CFNs)'	XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology, IRSA	2011	2
Scientific publishing	WGS	2012	0.3
Data Management	WUR Library	2013	0.4
'Interaction Rituals in Civic Food Networks (CFNs) in Calabria'	Guest lecture RSO 31806 Sociology of food provisioning and place-based development	2013	1.5
'From Alternative to Civic Food Networks. Themes and Theories in the European Scientific Debate'.	Week of lectures RSO 55806 Food Sociology: Emerging theories and themes	2013	2.5
'Voluntary Simplicity in Food Choices. A Seminar to Navigate Through Theory and Practices of responsible food consumption'	Organization WASS thematic activity	2013	3
'GAS (Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale). Responsible Consumers Initiating own systems of (non)food provisioning'	The day of Urban Farming Conference, Utrecht	2014	1
RSO Meetings organization	RSO	2014	2
Total			36.7

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load

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