

**TRANSFORMING THE RURAL:
GLOBAL PROCESSES AND LOCAL
FUTURES**

RESEARCH IN RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

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TRANSFORMING THE RURAL: GLOBAL PROCESSES AND LOCAL FUTURES

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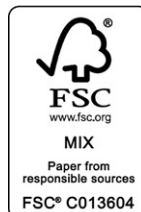
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this volume is to offer a sustained analysis of how global restructuring is enacted through specific social processes and the constraints as well as forms of agency to which this gives rise across different dimensions of rural life and livelihoods.

In recent decades globalisation has transformed rural societies and economies across the world. Much has been written by social scientists about the key actors and structures behind these transformations, as well as the uneven social and economic consequences of global change for rural regions. More recently, attention has turned to the broad socio-material processes – such as commodification and standardisation – that constitute globalisation, the power relations that arise in and through those processes and the constraints as well as opportunities for local action. The dynamics of globalising processes, and their effects on particular social groups, organisations and industries, has been researched in some detail. However, there has been limited scrutiny of which processes are fundamental to contemporary rural change, how these work in practice to transform the rural and the constraints as well as opportunities for rural spaces, populations and livelihoods created by such processes.

The volume *Transforming the Rural: Global Processes and Local Futures* arises out of four sessions organised by the editors at the XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology held in Lisbon, Portugal, between 29 July and 4 August 2012.

This collection of 15 papers provides a critical overview of the main global processes underpinning rural change in the 21st century. This is achieved by the identification of four key themes and processes affecting rural change: Financialisation, Standardisation, Consumption and Commodification. In what follows we offer a glimpse of what is included in each section giving more detail on the contents of the chapters. All the chapters gathered in the volume explore a plurality of processes of rural change from a variety of countries, namely the United States, Canada, Australia, Norway, Finland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

FINANCIALISATION

A growing body of research within studies of agriculture and food has become aware of the changing patterns of ownership and investment flows in agriculture and its value chains. Awareness is connected to the consequences of these

changes for farmers and rural communities, food and agriculture value chains and consumers of food and agriculture products. This emerging field of research in agro-food studies has become conceptualised as the financialisation of food and farming. However financialisation as a concept is not new as such. The concept has been around within the broader study of globalisation since the 1980s/1990s as an interdisciplinary approach (Erturk, Froud, Sukhdev, Leaver, & Williams, 2008) consisting of both economic and socio-cultural research (Klimek & Bjørkhaug, 2015). Building on this body of research, financialisation refers to the phenomenon where actors within private equity, venture capital, hedge funds and sovereign wealth funds (such as pension funds) become involved in the economy and its governing institutions (Epstein, 2005). Such actors have been found to buy into products, industries or businesses mainly aiming for profit making. They typically restructure the company to improve operations, then proceeding to sell the business to an actor who is willing to pay well. How does such strategies influence on the agro-food chains and rural areas?

In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007/2008 and with the consequence of rising prices in food and agricultural commodities, increasing financialisation has been observed in all parts of the agro-food chain (Brobakk & Almås, 2011; Burch & Lawrence, 2009, 2013; Clapp, 2014; Klimek & Bjørkhaug, 2015; Larder, Sippel, & Lawrence, 2015; McMichael, 2012). So called speculative investments in commodity and future markets have also increased dramatically. Asset managers increasingly invest in activities where they have never before been involved, such as in farmland, inputs to production, storage and logistics, inspection and certification, food production and processing, commodity trading or retail food services (Burch & Lawrence, 2009; Burton & Bjørkhaug, 2015; Lawrence, 2014). Is financialisation good and relevant concept to describe these developments? Lawrence (2015) argues that financialisation is still a 'concept in the making'. It is increasingly becoming a field of interest within rural and agro-food studies and will develop along the growth of research. Some empirical and spatial directions have already developed in recent studies.

One body of literature emerging in this field has focused on activities that have been called 'landgrab'. These are analysing the effects of foreign investments in land on small-scale farmers/peasants, local communities and property rights (McMichael, 2012; White, Borras, Hall, Scoones, & Wolford, 2012) such as dispossession of local farmers, change of production into biofuels or 'flex crops' (growing of most profitable crops irrespective of other needs such as food security for local populations) (McMichael, 2012, 2014). These activities have led to a concern about the balance of power in global and local food systems and food security. The main empirical locations of investigation have been investments in the 'green-belt' of Africa. This is currently shifting with increasing activity in farmland buy ups in all over the world and in all economies.

Another body of literature on financialisation focus on investments in the agro-food chain. These studies cover cases in which farms, industries or businesses in the agro-food chain are targeted for investment, how these activities influence on companies, value-chains and actors in networks related to the target company (Burch & Lawrence, 2013, Klimek & Bjørkhaug, 2015). Management issues and shifting and uneven power-relations among actors in the chain are among key questions raised in relation to these studies.

A major challenge with financialisation both in connection to land or food companies is its system of, or rather lack of, governance. Given globalisation and the neoliberal agro-food market model, an international system of governance is necessary to protect society against negative social, economic and environmental externalities (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009). How one country relates to these transactions versus others differs however quite substantially. Larder et al. (2015) show in a recent study of foreign investment in the Australian agro-food sector a major complexity of challenges that occur with such investments. While activities can be financially viable, local interests and concerns are neglected or not acknowledged, still, foreign investments in the agro-food sector are strongly encouraged by Australian government.

Chapter 1 of this volume, by Sarah Ruth Sippel, Geoffrey Lawrence and David Burch, examines the involvement of finance companies in the purchasing and leasing of Australian farmlands. Encouraged by the state, Australian agriculture is being targeted for investment by companies in the finance industry as part of the growing financialisation of farming. In their chapter the activities of the Hancock Company, a Canadian firm that is investing in farmland in northern NSW are being investigated. Sippel et al. point at a number of concerns emerging from these investments. The company is particularly criticised by community residents for failing to recognise the concerns of local people in pursuing its farming activities. While it is financially beneficial for companies to invest, Sippel et al. conclude that they do not do so in 'empty spaces' but in locations where people desire to ensure they live in a healthy environment and conclude by suggesting that this should receive more attention than what is currently happening.

Manuel Belo Moreira too, in Chapter 2, carries out an analysis of the recent history of financialisation activities in post-EU Portugal. Moreira's chapter makes the assumption that globalisation started at the end of the seventies as a state-led process of change of the economic system, conducted by policy makers around the world following the guidance of the neoliberal ideology. Within this ideology, financialisation, as the '...increasing importance of financial markets, financial motives, financial institutions, and financial elites in the operations of the economy and its governing institutions, both at the national and international levels' (Epstein, 2002) speeded up the development of a virtual economy, an economy based on capital moving in derivatives contracts rather than real products. With the global finance essentially occupied in doing business in the virtual world, there is a substantial risk of losing track with and interest in

a real economy that deals with real goods and services. Portuguese agriculture after its adhesion to the EU in 1986 first did benefit from a continuous flow of European funds aimed at the modernisation of the sector in order to make it compatible in competition with more developed agricultures. While these investments by the EU aimed for modernisation, Moreira shows that the crowding out of Portuguese capitals actually was counterproductive to the political objectives. Financialisation of the economy induced by EU and national policies created a situation where private investments in agriculture and rural areas actually were substituted by EU funding and hence delayed development in the sector.

Another empirical example is from a social-democratic model and shows that there is a rise in financialised investments also in Scandinavia, but political governance models make a difference to and have created some resistance to how such activities are performed (Almås, 2015; Klimek, 2015; Klimek & Bjørkhaug, 2015). Hilde Bjørkhaug, Jostein Vik and Carol Richards show in Chapter 3 how moving towards more market oriented models for agricultural production opens new investors, new types of investors and the consequences of this in Norwegian poultry production. Up until recent years, all agricultural production in Norway was strictly regulated through spatial policy (location), production quotas and other price and market regulations. Prices and products were handled by the farmers' cooperatives. A combination of international (e.g. WTO agreements) and domestic pressure gradually loosened the governmental regulation of chicken. Economic (e.g. new ownerships), technological (innovations throughout the whole chain), political and institutional (liberalisation) and cultural (e.g. in consumption and farming) changes have reconfigured the landscapes of chicken-meat production, opening up new opportunities not only for the chicken industry but also introduces new challenges and power relations.

While all chapters in the financialisation section address effects of globalisation, another take on globalisation processes and their potential influences on rural and agricultural communities is presented in Bruce Muirhead's Chapter 4 on possible effects of success of the Trans Pacific partnership (TPP) negotiations. International trade negotiations involving agricultural commodities have the potential to completely restructure the rural and how that happens is of critical importance. Canada is active in discussions designed to lead to a free trade agreement, the TPP that would also reduce public sector regulatory machinery in various areas, highlighting issues around financial activities, property rights and its structures. The chapter examines what will be expected of Canadian dairy should the TPP eventually be realised, through the comparative lens of existing dairy practice from several TPP negotiating partners, including Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Canada's dairy management model – supply management – which has preserved the family farm and rural communities while also giving producers' influence in the price-setting process, is as Muirhead shows, up for discussion.

STANDARDISATION

This second section of the volume focuses on the role of standards and standardising processes in the transformation of rural spaces. Standards are an increasingly significant mechanism for the regulation and organisation of the social world. According to [Timmermans and Epstein \(2010, p. 70\)](#), standards are ‘underestimated phenomena’ that render ‘the modern world equivalent across cultures, time, and geography’. In the process of constructing equivalences across time and space, standards have become a powerful and pervasive mechanism for governing conduct ‘at a distance’ within contemporary societies ([Higgins & Lerner, 2010, p. 1](#)). Rural sociologists and geographers have been at the forefront of research on standards and associated systems of auditing and certification ([Bain, Ransom, & Higgins, 2013](#); [Busch, 2000](#); [Fuchs, Kalfagianni, & Havinga, 2011](#); [Higgins, Dibden, & Cocklin, 2008](#); [Mutersbaugh, Klooster, Renard, & Taylor, 2005](#); [Ransom, Bain, & Higgins, 2013](#)). This is perhaps not surprising given the growing use of private standards and certification frameworks by actors – such as transnational retailers and agribusiness and, to a lesser extent, civil society organisations and activists – who exert a powerful influence over the use of agricultural and rural space. While relatively diverse in its scope, research on standards and standardisation to date by rural scholars highlights three broad themes: (1) the techniques and processes through which standards are constructed as well as adapted as mechanisms of governing; (2) legitimacy and accountability in the creation of standards and (3) the inequalities involved in the application of standards. The chapters in this section engage with and build on these themes in slightly different ways.

We have included four chapters in this section beginning with Chapter 5 by Lawrence Busch that addresses the ways in which standards are involved in making-up the world. Rather than being simply technical specifications that act on an already pre-formed world, Busch argues that standards are also ontological categories that bring worlds into being and make particular types of society possible. This in turn has significant consequences for agro-food governance, which is characterised increasingly by a tri-partite private standards regime where processes of standard-setting, accreditation and certification are integrated. For Busch, if we are to collectively decide what kind of society and what kind of agro-food sector we want, the recent turn to private standards (and away from government regulation) cannot be left in the hands of a few experts. Agro-food scholars have documented numerous health, social justice and environmental problems associated with private standards and standardisation. Busch contends that addressing these problems requires greater input into the development of standards from publics, but also a division of powers so that the bodies responsible for promulgating standards are different from those who enforce and adjudicate them.

While Busch is interested in how standards make particular social worlds and forms of action possible, the next Chapter 6, by Allison Loconto and Marc Barbier, focuses more specifically on how standards themselves are constructed. Through the use of participant observation during the development of an ISEAL Assurance Code, the authors examine how actors construct the tools that enable them to influence the broader transition to sustainability. Loconto and Barbier argue that in order to understand transitions in progress towards sustainability, it is important to be attentive to how these processes are accompanied by intermediation activities. They contend that intermediate objects (or boundary objects) are crucial in these processes as they help actors to create actionable knowledge. These intermediation activities and the production of actionable knowledge contribute to the ability of actors to govern markets in the transition towards sustainable agriculture.

The construction of standards is a theme taken up also in Chapter 7 by Maki Hatanaka and Jason Konefal. However, where Loconto and Barbier focus on intermediation activities, Hatanaka and Konefal are interested in the legitimacy issues involved in standards development. Using a case study of a multi-stakeholder initiative to develop a National Sustainable Agriculture Standard (LEO-4000) for the United States, the chapter examines the practices and politics of legitimization in non-state governance. The analysis of LEO-4000 indicates firstly the simultaneous construction of legitimacy and how standards affect the kinds of standards developed. Secondly, understandings of legitimacy are influenced by the standpoint of actors. Thirdly, legitimacy has become a strategic dimension of standard-development, which actors use to further their interests. Based on these findings, the authors contend that non-state governance that relies on normative democratic principles for legitimization is constrained in its ability to develop stringent standards. For rural areas, the implication is that they are becoming enmeshed in an emerging system of non-state governance that continues to be highly contested, particularly regarding who has the right to govern such areas.

The final chapter in this section, Chapter 8 by Minna Mikkola, considers (a) what kind of freedom there might be for farmers to produce in a way that suits their economic and sustainability interests in a global trading context where they are increasingly obliged to implement agro-food standards in order to survive and (b) how farmer's freedom might impact on the standardisation of food system development. The chapter presents an empirical exploration about farmers' freedom as a function of qualitative connection between interest in socio-economic achievement and willingness to align with standards. The different freedoms to produce food can be stylised as assimilation, freedom in economic interests and willingness to align with standards, and as entrepreneurship, freedom in economic creativity shunning standards. Freedom may also lie in organic (or extensive) farming protecting green values by particular standards and in self-sufficiency yielding independence, often distanced from socio-economic achievement. Mikkola argues that farmer's freedom as assimilation

has implications for the development of centralised and standardised food systems while the protection-oriented, entrepreneurial and independent agro-food systems may imply more local and sustainable food systems and options for increasing reconnection with social and natural environments. Finally, independence seems to dwell particularly in various forms of urban agriculture, questioning market forces. While standards obviously benefit the food trade there are power and transparency issues in the productive world order in need of better regard for farmers – and consumers’ – freedom.

COMMODIFICATION AND CONSUMPTION

This volume section brings together seven chapters that illustrate processes of commodification/de-commodification and consumption occurring in contemporary European rural spaces. In the 1990s, and particularly in the 2000s, a number of studies challenged the dominant ‘production oriented’ approach in rural studies, calling attention to the previously underexplored field of consumption and consumers’ matters in rural areas. At the outset of this debate, two different perspectives developed in subsequent scholarly works bringing forward consumption concerns.

The first perspective focused on the ideas around the ‘consumption countryside’ (Marsden, 1999) that aptly interlocks with processes of ‘commodification of the countryside’ (Clope, 1992; Woods, 2005). In the context of economic restructuring rural areas shifted their former status as places of production to multiple sites of consumption. Thus, a number of studies (Murdoch et al., 2003; Woods, 2005) pointed out that now goods and services were commoditised and enjoyed by city dwellers, tourists and visitors. Several producers were both driven by a desire to generate a revenue and to participate and develop the cultural and social economy of many deprived rural spaces. Middle class consumers were willing, on the one hand, to experience the rural idyll (an urban and bourgeois romanticised imagery of the rural where harmony, pristine nature, purity and stability were believed to be found) and, on the other hand, to escape from the vagaries of the city (where pollution, noise, overpopulation and stress abounded), a contrast that finds its roots in the pastoralist and romantic movements of the 18th and 19th centuries (Murdoch et al., 2003; Williams, 1973). The countryside has been marketed and promoted to appeal to a large number of consumers, by being often represented, together with its products and services, through the rural idyll imagery (Woods, 2005). Agro-tourism experiences, promotional initiatives, place branding, the commoditisation of new goods and services to generate income in rural areas (e.g. renewable energies, local foods) have been important mechanisms for their revitalisation and development. Therefore, a consumption-based rural economy has been an important device for the commodification of rural spaces and for ‘exploiting the aesthetic appeal of the

countryside' (Bryant & Goodman, 2004; Woods, 2005, p. 174). One consequence was the transformation of rural places together with their perceptions, not only of local residents but also of tourists, visitors, migrants and other incomers. Among many other factors, this has given rise to multiple and differentiated rural spaces that are disparately imagined, lived, experienced and consumed. However, the differentiated countryside can be also a source of conflict that defies the monolithic images about the rural so prominent in pastoralism (Murdoch et al., 2003; Woods, 2005).

Another body of work, looking at the emergence of new form of 'producers-consumers' connections and networks soon became a core area in rural studies. In the wake of the 1990s food scares (BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease and several outbreaks of Avian Influenza), the food system and its food qualities became further scrutinised. New consumer concerns for health and obesity, climate change, environmental pollution and animal welfare led to the emergence of specific innovations in the retailing of agricultural products with a strong growth of short food supply chains, farmers markets, CSAs (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003). This led to a scientific debate strongly polarised about the risks of the industrial and intensive global food system and its impacts on the environment, social justice and the quality of food, and the merits as well as the high expectations of the alternative food networks as reflected in the consumers' demand for organic, local, fairly traded or animal welfare friendly foods (Miele & Pinducciu, 2001).

However a number of studies have addressed the normative assumptions underlining these representations and the dichotomous thinking between the so-called globalised conventional food networks and the local alternative food networks and examined their actual impacts on local economies and rural development (Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012; Guthman, 2007; Morgan, Marsden, & Murdoch, 2008; Winter, 2003). These critical approaches brought forward the need to move beyond the normative assumption that 'local' is also 'just' and 'environmentally sustainable' and invite a more critical appraisal of the qualities of local foods and their effects in producers-consumers' relationships and urban-rural connections. More recently a less dichotomous approach to conventional and alternative food systems (or to urban and rural areas) is emerging in connection with the influence of post-structuralist approaches to rural studies (e.g. Actor Network Theory, more than human, material, embodied and visceral perspectives, see Goodman and Sage, 2016, Goodman et al., 2012).

Albeit in recent years there has been more attention to consumption issues in the scientific literature about the rural and its interlocked rural and agro-food commoditisation processes, we still know little about consumer practices viewed not only as reflexive or political acts (an aspect that has been vastly explored in the local and organic literature) but importantly as mundane, ordinary and routinised activities that engage with the rural and its representations (e.g. the rural idyll and its effect on products, services or experiences).

Consumption and consumers have yet failed to gain a more prominent position in rural studies, and despite the efforts of some scholars to reconnect production with consumption (Dubuisson-Quellier, Lamine & Le Velly, 2011; Fine, 2004; Goodman, 2002; Kneafsey et al., 2008; Lockie, 2002; Truninger, 2005; Truninger, 2010), the conceptual and theoretical tools of consumption studies are seldom employed in rural scholarship as already acknowledged by Fine (2004) (but see Brunori, Rossi, & Guidi, 2012; Fine, 2004; Lockie, Lyons, Lawrence & Mummery, 2002; Miele, 2006; Roe, 2006; Sassatelli, 2015 for some exceptions). Almost 20 years ago, Hilary Tovey identified 'a curious, if implicit, division of labour' between rural sociologists who focus on the organisation of agriculture, labour and production processes and food sociologists who focus on consumption matters (Tovey, 1997, p. 21). This very same division of labour recognised almost 20 years ago has not been totally effaced.

The seven chapters in this section engage with consumption issues, (de-)commodification processes and the connections between production and consumption in a variety of ways as an attempt to consolidate further the visibility of these issues in the rural literature. Some of the chapters cut across the two themes of consumption and commodification (e.g. Dulce Freire), others sit more comfortably in the consumption side (e.g. Cecilia Díaz-Méndez and Cristobal Gómez-Benito, and Monica Truninger and Ana Horta), and yet others offer nice illustrations of the enactment of commodification processes, either in rural spaces or echoing images of the rural (e.g. in the case of renewable energy presented by Ana Delicado, Mónica Truninger, Elisabete Figueiredo, Luís Silva and Ana Horta, the naturalness of organic egg production by Mara Miele, the dedicated buying groups 'GAS' described by Annamaria Vitale and Silvia Sivini and the supermarkets' marketing and packaging of leeks by Moya Kneafsey, Laura Venn and Elizabeth Bos).

Chapter 9 by Delicado et al. examines the effects of the commodification of the countryside through the siting of renewable energy high tech infrastructures in the Portuguese landscape. Delicado et al. analyse the media representations of wind power plants and their relations with the rural imagery and also examine the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) to account for disputes or conflicts brought about by the setting up of such infrastructures. Wind farms resemble technological artefacts which are impinging on previously perceived unspoiled rural landscapes, they transform the social and economic fabric of localities, influence social perceptions of benefits and risks, including property value and its speculation and generate in some cases discord and conflict between diverging local interests. The findings point out that aesthetic appreciations of rural landscapes are employed as one of the main arguments that conflict with the siting of wind farms in Portugal. As the authors conclude, in public consultation procedures wind power plants are seen as artificial devices that are out of place in the pristine rural setting.

Chapter 10 by Freire, takes a food regime approach informed by Friedmann and McMichael (1989)'s work and looks at the processes of commodification of olive oil in Portugal since the Great Depression in the 1930s until 2010. The chapter offers a contribution to this important literature in rural studies by extending the debate on food regimes to Portugal. By focusing the analysis on the Portuguese olive oil value chain – a core product of the UNESCO classified Mediterranean Diet that is increasingly capturing global consumers' distinctive tastes – Freire examines the articulation of market and state actions during the 20th century. This commodity experienced fluctuations throughout this period, with a growth phase until the 1950s, then a difficult crisis triggered by strong competition from other fats (margarines, butter, other types of oils) and finally a recovering phase regaining growth and success since the last years of the 20th century, mostly capitalising on the promotion of the Mediterranean Diet. In order to understand such configurations across three food regimes, Freire's looks at the strategies and actions of various economic and political players in different political regimes (from the authoritarian *Estado Novo* until the democratic period in place since 1974). The author also looks at the impacts of these configurations in local territories where olive groves are grown and analyses the contradictory local and global dynamics of rural development in that country.

Focusing on a mundane vegetable, the leek, Chapter 11 explores the ways in which UK supermarkets replicate some of the characteristics of short food supply chains. Kneafsey et al. analyse several examples of packaging and in-store information drawn from a range of supermarkets made available to shoppers. Such labelling devices provide insights into the degree of transparency and traceability of the British leek commodity chain and are used to examine supermarkets role in reconnecting consumers with producers. Guided by what colloquially they call a 'curious consumer' approach the authors analyse the labelling of packages of leeks in supermarkets looking for visual cues in the information displayed of the reconnections of consumers with producers. The results show that some of the information supplied the supermarkets mimic the characteristics of short food chains by offering precise data on the origin of the leek (name of the producer, from which farm it was sourced). Another interesting finding is that traceability and transparency in the food supply chain do not necessarily go hand in hand. Supermarkets often supply unintelligible information to consumers (bar codes and numbers) only intended for traceability purposes and not for transparency and consumer information. The information in the packaging also seems to give greater prominence to the communication of the values of the retailer (trust, quality, consistency) rather than the values of the producer, an aspect that is clearly more important in short food supply chains. The chapter concludes by pointing out that supermarkets offer a sort of 'pseudo-reconnection', that is, they provide information to consumers about the origin of production, but are careful to not displaying the inner workings of industrialised long food supply chains.

Chapter 12 by Miele looks at the production of certified organic and free range eggs to explore processes of commodification of nature through organic and animal welfare standards. Greater attention to and anxiety about farm animal welfare emerged at the end of the 20th century, as worries over food safety and food quality (connected to the BSE, FMD and other epidemics) pushed farm animal welfare into public discourse and political debate. In this chapter Miele looks at one of the ways in which consumers' concerns and anxieties about animal welfare are addressed by the Soil Association (the United Kingdom), whose organic standard is based on a scheme of production that endorses animals' natural life in the case of certification of organic eggs in the United Kingdom and at free range 'happy eggs' (Miele, 2011). Drawing on STS approaches Miele addresses the processes of producing 'naturalness' as food 'attribute' (to borrow from economics) and how 'the natural life of hens' is achieved in the context of eggs' production.

Drawing on a Marxist perspective, in Chapter 13 Vitale and Sivini explore the processes of de-commodification of specific local foods in South Italy. The central argument of this chapter is the need to look at the way social relationships shape the whole agro-food chain, from production through exchange to consumption. By looking at a case study of an alternative food network (AFN) in the form of a Solidarity Purchasing Group (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale – GAS) the authors examine (de)commodification processes with reference to four dimensions: labour, product, relationships and exchange. The analysis shows that the critical farmers of this GAS group have built new practices around agriculture. The labour and the living nature (animals, plants, water, land) constitute a dynamic relation of co-production and are not merely seen as factors of production. The goods are more than simple commodities because they show how the innovative practices of producers are aligned with the expectations of critical consumers. This is a way of reinforcing the use value of goods (demonstrating a process of de-commodification) instead of its exchange value (as it happens in any process of commodification). Moreover, these authors show how the exchange of goods is based on cooperation and solidarity instead of competitive relations, counteracting the logic of commodification. It also shows that the constituted network is the effect of social practices driven by relationships that take shape in the processes of experimentation, discussion, debate, collective learning and interaction between producers and consumers.

The final two chapters address the issue of healthy eating and describe specific policies aimed at promoting healthier diets. Chapter 14 by Díaz-Méndez and Gómez-Benito reports the evolution and reconfiguration of the Spanish public bodies perceptions on what constitutes a healthy diet, and how these ideas transformed food consumption patterns and were fed by representations of urban-rural contrasts. The authors undertake a content analysis of over 1,500 documents issued by agriculture and health authorities over a period of 50 years, looking at healthy diet guidelines. The chapter identifies four important periods of the configuration of healthy diet messages. The first

period in the 1960s marks the beginning of the consumer society wherein health messages about food were targeted at women living in rural areas with poor and unbalanced food diets. The second period, in the 1970s, saw the rapid urbanisation of the Spanish society. Here, health messages were targeted at urban women displaced from rural production areas, to help them acquire healthier food consumption habits. At that time, factory products were deemed safer to eat rather than the ones coming directly from the country (given the latter did not have to comply with strict hygiene and safety standards). Concerns around obesity also emerged during this period, bringing forward ideas around body size, shape and health. The third period, in the 1980s, featured the modernisation phase where the promotion of the Mediterranean Diet among consumers matched the investment in the marketing of national Spanish products and the promotion of eating local. The fourth phase featured the gradual medicalisation of food (e.g. functional foods) and a core attention to the relations between health, physical exercise and the Mediterranean diet more strongly. The chapter shows the co-evolution of policy guidelines on healthy eating and their impacts on consumption patterns and food representations among the Spanish population, producing four distinct periods where scientific knowledge, policy discourses and consumers eating habits are mutually affected and are cross cut by policy perceptions of the rural.

Chapter 15 looks at the school meals reform in Portugal and the promotion of healthier meals. The initiatives here described have been targeted at children given that in recent years there has been an increased incidence of overweight and obesity among the younger segment of the population. Truninger and Horta situate their case study in a primary school of a rural area in the Northern region of Portugal that has changed its school meals to comply with the new norms. Such reform compelled the school menus to have stronger nutritional standards as a way to start shifting the eating habits of children towards health. The chapter offers a contribution to a broader understanding of children lived experiences with food consumption in rural contexts, an issue that has not captured much scholarly attention. Departing from the rural and gastro idylls imageries, the authors explored three issues: (1) how the school and catering staff perceive children's acceptance of the new school meals; (2) the existence of contrasting views between the rural and gastro idylls and everyday life food consumption practices; (3) the relations of children with animals, plants and other nature, and how they contrast or juxtapose with the rural idyll. The results show that despite the production of hegemonic discourses around the rural idyll, children's food practices are heterogeneous and negotiated across different consumption contexts. For example, there was interference of the urban and cosmopolitan life in the foodways of children and their families living in rural areas, given the proximity to a medium size city (e.g. going to eat in a shopping centre or a fast food restaurant was not unusual). Moreover, the catering staff struggled to impose a standardised school menu to all the schools given the contrasting food tastes of children and their families across

the region. This challenged monolithic views about the rural, showing its differentiation and plurality, and forcing the company to cater to children tastes in a flexible way. Lastly, the results also defied a monolithic view regarding rural childhood and their reified relationships with animals, plants and other nature.

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