Reviving for Survival: New Peasants and New Networks in Campania and Sicily, Italy

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Peasants have predominantly been associated with a rhetoric tied to a past, pre-industrial society, a view cultivated by agricultural modernization efforts. New development pathways, particularly in Europe, have reshaped rural spaces and the forms of interaction they embed. Though obscured in the modernization process, the presence of peasant and peasant-like farm realities, perseveres. Especially since the 1990s, Italy, as in all of Europe, is marked by a wave of re-peasantization—an emergence of agriculture that is distinguishably more peasant-like. This process is driven not by peasants of the past, but by new, third-millennium peasants seeking viable alternatives in farm-based livelihood. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the manifestation of this phenomenon in two small farms in Campania and Sicily, in the south of Italy. To address this study aim, qualitative, field-based case study research was conducted, combining two main methods interviews and observations. Each farm's inner operational functioning, especially its practices, strategies and pursued objectives, as well as its surrounding social networks were analyzed following the concept of re-peasantization, as elaborated by rural sociologist Jan van der Ploeg. This work sought to explore (1) how the two farms' operational functioning reflects and/or deviates from the re-peasantization framework; and (2) how knowledge and nested market networks interplay with the achievement of the farms' objectives. Contextual specificities were fundamental for understanding the perceived viability and mode of "doing food and agriculture" given the particular setting. Descriptive and thematic findings foremost revealed that both farm operations pursue strategies that strongly ground them in both the material and immaterial resources of their territories, diversify their agricultural activities, while trying to minimize dependence on external inputs and/or expertise. Establishing new peasant networks helped to diversify not only their activities, but also their sources of knowledge, and market circuits. This two-case study contributes to the documentation of new peasant realities in Italy, while drawing attention on the need for decentralized, sub-regional rural development policy efforts to be more supportive and recognizant of peasant-like, contextually grounded agricultural realities.

Key words*:* Re-peasantization, New Rural Development, New Peasants, Networks, Nested Markets, Knowledge, Territorial Valorization, Italy

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Introduction

Worldwide, persistent agricultural industrialization has severed the ties between realms of food production and consumption (Goody, 1982). In parallel, this process of distanced, non-transparent producer-consumer relation has amplified the "opacity of food" (Nicolosi, 2006). Modern forms of food provision and procurement are likened to a global "placeless foodscape" (Morgan, Marsden & Murdoch, 2006). Adding to these systemic flaws are the sustainability concerns associated with the modern agri-food system. The harmful effects of agricultural production on global environmental and socioeconomic health are now well-acknowledged (FAO, 2017; Sage, 2012; Vandermeer, 2009). Among these, market consolidation of the agri-food industry has "squeezed" small-to-medium sized farmers between input and output industries, compromising their autonomy (Marsden, 2003; Ploeg, 2018).

Following the Second World War, in the 1950s, the intellectual premise to "modernize" agricultural operations and landscapes became dominant practice—one that has contributed to both the depreciation and neglect of peasant agriculture in the public imaginary. Coupled with a concomitant glorification of entrepreneurial farming, this conceptual erasure has hollowed a theoretical gap for addressing peasants, especially in more "developed" socio-economic contexts (Ploeg, 2008). Yet, empirical realities of peasant-like farming are diverse, dynamic, innovative and are equally present in "more developed" settings as they are in "less developed ones". As revealed in a recent FAO report, the presence of peasant and peasant-like agriculture is indeed a contemporary phenomenon: "small-scale farmers produce over 70% of the world's food needs (…) in nominal terms, the number of peasants and smallholders has increased" (Maass Wolfenson, 2013, p.1).

Within the Global South and North alike, farmers' responses to the squeeze have been and continue to be diverse, alternative and contextually-situated in time and space. In Europe, accompanied by a rising environmental movement in the 1990s and a consumer emphasis on quality food, a new rural development model emerged to redefine and widen the role of agriculture beyond its traditionally productive premise. Rural landscapes and spaces have, accordingly, been reconfigured to create a diverse and complex countryside, fluctuating within and across different settings (Halfacree, 2006; Murdoch, 2006). Europe has indeed been marked by a recent, distinct wave of "re-peasantization"—the various emancipatory, sustainability-oriented objectives that farmers pursue in a general context of a dependency (Ploeg, 2008). Although re-peasantization entails in making agriculture again more peasant-like, it does not imply a return to some idyllic agrarian past. Re-peasantization is fueled by peasants of the present—new peasants—who are innovative in both their on-farm operational strategies and the social networks they construct to achieve their objectives (Ortolani et al., 2017; Ventura et al.,

2008), more particularly the networks of knowledge (Fonte 2008; Fonte & Papadopoulos, 2010) and of market relations (Ploeg, Jingzhong, & Schneider, 2010).

Manifestations of re-peasantization, of course, are subject to contextual variability—national and regional histories, socio-economic structures, geographic topographies, among others, enable and produce distinct modes of farming. Countries such as Italy, holding historically complex ties with agriculture and regionally distinct food cultures (Montanari, 2017; Scarpellini, 2016), offer interesting grounds for assessing expressions of the re-peasantization phenomenon. Today, Italy's diverse agricultural landscapes, still marked by a prevailing presence of small farms (EC, 2016), place emphasis on territorial valorization, region-based quality-attributes and the agro-ecological traits of the locality in question (Casini et al, 2012; Fonte & Cucco, 2015; Knickel, Renting, & Ploeg, 2004; Renting et al., 2008). Given this richness and complexity, Italy serves as an interesting context for the exploration of present-day manifestations of re-peasantization.

In contributing to the body of literature documenting new peasant realities in Europe and Italy, the main purpose of this dissertation is to comprehensively explore, through qualitative case-based analysis, the ways in which re-peasantization, including the on-farm strategies associated with its process, is manifested within two small Italian farms in the southern regions of Campania and Sicily. A secondary objective is to incorporate the dimensions of knowledge and nested markets as it is assumed these will enrich the analysis of re-peasantization. Accordingly, the unit of the analysis is the individual farm— its operational practices and rationales serve as the central axe of observation, including pursued diversification activities, and production and marketing schemes. A secondary axe focuses on the farm's networks—particularly paying attention to its participation in mainstream and/or nested markets, as well as to its constructed knowledge networks—and how these interplay with/support farmers' practices and /or rationales in the achievement of said objectives. In line with the ethos of case study research, context is considered crucial for the study (particularly the historical, social, cultural, economic and environmental context that each case is imbedded in).

In exploring how these farms operate, and how these "new peasant" farmers define, rationalize and perceive their activities, two research questions have emerged as especially significant:

1. How do on-farm practices for each case-study reflect and/or deviate from the theory of re-peasantization?

2. What are the operational strategies used to attain pursued objectives, and how do knowledge and nested market networks interact with the achievement of said objectives?

Previous studies adopting a similar approach in the Italian context have typically either relied on quantitative survey methods and empirical data analysis (Casini et al., 2012; Oostindie et al., 2002)

or have examined the topic from a particular lens such as assessing the role of urban-rural connections in the rural development process (Henke & Vanni, 2017). A book published recently by Canale & Ceriani (2013) compiles various new peasant narratives across Italy, presenting them as plural experiences of what "farming differently" means in a modern context, though the adopted approach is one more akin to documentary storytelling than theoretical qualitative inquiry. To the best of my knowledge, qualitative case-based analysis exploring re-peasantization practices and strategies at the farm-level in Italy is limited. Further, the additional two dimensions of interest—knowledge and nested market networks —offer a new lens for assessing the phenomenon.

Both farms selected for study are characterized by diverse agricultural and non-agricultural practice, including tourism, biodiversity promotion, local food systems, territorial valorization, education, and organic farming practices, among others. Their social networks are widely varied, weaving different types of knowledge and market relations. The first, NOTEdi, is a farm and agricultural enterprise located in the village of Giarratana (Ragusa province, Sicily) that produces and sells saffron and other wild aromatic and officinal plants including rosemary, sage, oregano, laurel and thyme. They have a land plot for cultivation, a greenhouse, and an office/lab space for on-site processing and packaging. Metafarm, the second case, is a cultural association and "social food lab" located in the village of Montepertuso (Salerno province, Campania) that offers a tourism-oriented eno-gastronomic experience of rural agriculture. Much in line with its strong educational pillar, Metafarm invites visitors to forage and cook with local wild foods—an activity termed "gastronomic trekking". Each selected site has three young staff members, individually holding unique professional and/or educational backgrounds, and a distinct team role. Both cases were selected by the researcher, as they exemplify information-rich cases for exploring the theoretical frame of re-peasantization.

Following this introductory section, the work is organized as follows: Chapter 1 reviews the literature relevant to the topic under study, namely the theoretical background of re-peasantization and the definition of key terms, and contextualizes the study in both time and space; Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used and restates the research questions in light of limitations and chosen methods; Chapter 3 discusses the observational, and the descriptive and thematic findings of each case study; Chapter 4 interprets and discusses the significance of key emergent themes, and how they have addressed said research questions; and Chapter 5 concludes with an overview of the main findings and directs future research.

Chapter 1. Literature Review

In order to thoroughly understand the process of re-peasantization and how it is contextualized within Italy, the reviewed literature is divided into three sections. In the first, re-peasantization is theoretically situated within a broader tradition of peasant studies, followed by a conceptual depiction of the entrepreneurial-peasant farming typology. The latter is then used as a basis for portraying and discussing emerging "new peasants" as protagonists in re-peasantization processes. Attention shifts, in the second section, to the concept of networks, focusing specifically on knowledge networks and nested market networks, as circuits shaped by said new peasants for fulfilling their set objectives. Lastly, the third section is devoted to the discussion of re-peasantization within the European frame, highlighting some elements of European agricultural policy, and more specifically of the Italian agricultural context which help to situate the exploration of re-peasantization in the present two-case study.

1.1. Contextualizing Re-peasantization within Peasant Studies

Across timeless and shifting geo-cultural contexts, the peasant reality has existed as one not needing justification, as a way of life that "just was". However, perceptions of the peasant have shifted between appraisal, celebrating values such as valor, dignity, and independence to ones depicting misery, greed and inferiority. The latter was, for instance, typical in societies based on feudal economic relations (Bernstein, Friedmann, Ploeg, Shanin & White, 2018). Industrialization and urbanization, though impacting societies distinctively, marked an important turning point when peasants became a subject worthy of documentation and defense. With rising urbanization, sentiments of nostalgia and longing became intertwined with the perception of the countryside as a place of serene human dignity relative to the city's chaos. This representation was captured in a myriad of art and literary forms, such as for instance, in Tonnies's (1955) concept of the "rural idyll", in fictional writings such as *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy's account of the Russian peasantry embodied by the character Levine, and in Federico Garcia Lorca's various poems longing for the Andalusian countryside. Generally, the peasant was either vilified or romanticized, but rarely ever respected or treated with grandeur (Bernstein et al., 2018; Shanin, 1990). Over time, general intrigue into the life of peasants has led to a discipline entirely devoted to its name. Though a more exhaustive historical account of peasant studies has been recently reviewed elsewhere (Bernstein et al., 2018), certain points merit brief recapitulation.

The "birth" of peasant studies is found in the work of Alexander Chayanov, an agrarian economist who documented Soviet Russia's peasantry in his 1925 publication *Peasant Farm Organisation.* In 1966, *The theory of peasant economy* was released as the English version of Chayanov's original work, a seminal book which envisaged peasant agriculture as a distinct economic

system, existing separately from and in contradiction to capitalism. Equilibrium is a central principle, whereby labor in a peasant family farm does not surpass subsistence needs, so that net profit is neither sought nor attained, and naturally, no wage labor is hired. Wages, interest, rent, and profits—the constitutional elements of capitalist economies—are presented as co-dependent so that a breach in one causes systemic dysfunction in the whole operation (Chayanov, 1966). From this point emanates Chayanov's clear assertion that peasant units cannot be studied applying the neoclassical free-market rationality. Rather, family farms use a logic grounded in non-monetary worth. The degree of labor performed ebbs and flows in accordance with what is subjectively deemed sufficient—both consumption and labor are continuously modified to ensure their reproduction (Bernstein et al., 2018). A figurative excerpt from the book describes this reasoning: "all they can see before them is the net product of their work, and there is no way of dividing days of labor into bushels of wheat." (Chayanov, 1966, p.xvi).

Though released in the same year as *The theory of peasant economy* (1966), Eric Wolf's *Peasants* (1966) represents another school of thought, influenced by Marx, whereby the peasant farm exists in relation to the larger structure, i.e. the State and its dominant economic ethos. The contrast with Chayanov's view of the peasant organizational form resonates strongly in the following excerpt: "(…) the size of the effort which it must put forward to replace its means of production or to cover its ceremonial costs is also a function of the ways in which labor is divided within the society to which the peasant belongs, and of the regulations governing that division of labor" (Wolf, 1966, p.8). In an urbanized and industrialized society based on capitalism, peasants are thus perceived as secondary wealth-creators (Wolf, 1966). Indeed, this echoes Marxist philosophy, positioning human will as subject to the relations of production: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness"[1] (Thomson, 2009, p.152). According to Wolf (1966), the peasant farm, although capable of applying its own "inner logic", remains nonetheless bound to the socio-economic structure it is situated in.

Deemed foundational to the field, these two theoretical branches gave way to an array of academic approaches, which have, in turn, shaped both current and future-oriented insights of the meaning ascribed to "peasant" as the individual, to "peasant farm" as the economic unit, and to "peasantry" as the collectivity. Of relevance is to highlight that it is, above all, a question of agency that distinguishes one school from the other. The strength of Wolf's (1967) approach lies in its ability

[1] Originally sourced from Karl Marx (1956), Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in Bottomore, M. and Rubel, T.B.(Eds.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 51-52 [Original work published in German in 1859].

to bridge commonality between different peasant societies as a cohesive political-economic struggle. However, by ascribing a secondary role to peasants' agency, the emergence and re-emergence of peasantries in the future becomes an improbable reality. Meanwhile, Chayanov's (1966) approach has been critiqued for insufficiently considering the impact of systemic forces on the peasant farm (Bernstein et al., 2018). To summarize, agency in Wolf's approach is dependent on systemic constraints while in Chayanov's, destiny is primarily self-determined and less consideration is given to the impact of system constraints. Given this distinction, the Chayanovian framework is conceptually more relevant for discussing contemporary and future trajectories of farming practices which may exhibit more or less peasant-like features. Shanin (2017) synthesizes Chayanov's theory as: "the message is one of difference of operational logic, of output, and of outcome as well as of the possibility, at times, of actual retreat of the classical capitalist forms of production in the face of family farming" (p.2). So, as industrial farming continues to transform and transition, so too does peasant farming (Bernstein et al., 2018).

These two conditions—to understand the peasant-as-agent, and peasant society-as-process—are fundamental for both identifying and perceiving peasant-like farming as a phenomenon both emerging and reemerging, a path which Ploeg (2008) followed when he coined contemporary peasant processes as "re-peasantization". In order to better explain the latter, it is first essential to distinguish between two farming style typologies—peasant and entrepreneurial—that will further explain this chosen theoretical framework. Of note is to state that contextual and structural forces, the focus of Wolf's approach, are neither dismissed nor ignored in this framework—they co-exist together with inner agency to carve trajectories of possible emancipation from the downward "squeeze" on agriculture.

1.2. Entrepreneurial and Peasant Agriculture

During the post-WW2 reconstruction era spanning 1950 to 1990, agricultural modernization pushed its premise forward. In the Global North and South alike, there was a universally imposed morality which positioned rural society as backward and in need of expertise to help fasten the pace of its "upgrade" (Woods, 2011). Entrepreneurial farming was greatly advocated as a model to follow, one in which farmers' survival relies primarily on external capital in the form of agro-industrial inputs (e.g. fertilizer and other chemical inputs, and industrial seeds), as well as mechanization and financial credit (Sage, 2012). Specialization is typically central to this form of agricultural production, encouraging dependence on the global market system via integration into both of its input and output value chains. During this period, and especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were mounting alarmist tones regarding the fate of peasants, such as the one voiced by Henri Mendras in *La fin des paysans* (1970), a

book title translating from French to "The end of the peasantry". Though his contextual focus was France, Mendras pointed out some distinguishable features of the entrepreneurial farm[2]. He contrasted the peasant's artistic, immeasurable agricultural practice—intimate love, knowledge and respect for the land—with the entrepreneur's more mechanic, emotionless ties with the land. In a time when countryside landscapes were undergoing mass change, Mendra's grim vision of a disappearing peasantry can be summarized as one rooted in the peasant farmer's shifting auto-gaze: from a self-perception as producer to a self-perception as producer-for-the-market (Mendras, 1970).

The '90s witnessed the emergence of a new rural development paradigm—one that resisted (and continues to resist) modernization's production-driven ethos and redefined agriculture's role in society (Ray, 1998; Ploeg, Jingzhong, & Schneider, 2010). By favoring the heterogeneity and context-specificity of rural space (Halfacree, 2006), what markedly distinguishes these new rural realities from their entrepreneurial counterpart is their social construction—the spaces created and the relations these spaces embed (Fonte, 2008; Ray, 1998; Renting, Marsden & Banks, 2003; Ploeg et al., 2010). Formulated as a symbolic space, farming is released from its mere agricultural function, hollowing space for new consumption and production practices. Central to this trajectory although not limited to it, is the small farm practicing peasant-like agriculture. While dominant post-WW2 discourse has "manufactured the invisibility" of the peasant as a past reality (Ploeg, 2008), actually, peasant-like agriculture is alive and present. The dissonance between this epistemological absence and its real presence draws attention to the importance of unraveling what is meant by "peasant" farming today.

In *The New Peasantries*, Ploeg (2008) provides a comprehensive definition of the modern peasant condition, pointing to three key elements which together reiterate Chayanov's (1966) emphasis on agency: controlled resource base, dynamic co-production, and market diversification. The peasant farm's most fundamental characteristic is its aptitude to directly control its resource base, thus sustaining a contextually balanced reserve independent from external inputs. Internal ecological resource reproduction, such as closed-loop recycling of natural reserves plays an instrumental role in farmers' capacity to be autonomous (Levidow, Birch, & Papaioannou, 2013). Accordingly, agro-ecological science[3], as opposed to yield-oriented science, has been associated with peasant farming practice and farmers' food sovereignty (Altieri, 2009). Resources are not limited to those bred by nature, but also encompass more abstract constituents such as knowledge and social relations (Ploeg,

[2]For further elaboration on the characteristics of the entrepreneurial farm, see Chapter 2 "*La terre, le travail et le temps*" (pp. 62-95) and Chapter 5 "*L'entrepreneur et ses décisions*" (pp.160-198).

[3] Agro-ecology is defined as a science "based on enhancing the habitat both aboveground and in the soil to produce strong and healthy plants by promoting beneficial organisms while adversely affecting crop pests" in Alteri, 2009, p. 2-3.

2017). The second facet, related to the first, is co-production—the perpetual interaction between man and physical natural environment in shaping agricultural and agricultural-based activity. Put briefly, co-production allows for examining emergent new rural phenomena, such as social farming or agri-tourism, which may not be explicitly rooted in agricultural production per se, but affiliated to it. Lastly, as much as possible, peasant farms rupture or avoid ties with global markets, preferring to participate in self-curated and diversified markets, with minimal external dependency. Equilibrium remains an important guiding principle throughout—the peasant farm is more equipped to survive, to cultivate autonomy and to build resilience towards contextual factors which may be unfavorable.

These two conceptual understandings of farming practice—entrepreneurial and peasant—should however be treated as just that, concepts, as opposed to mutually exclusive, fixed entities. Niska, Vesala, & Vesala (2012) have argued that despite the tendency of policy discourse to use one or the other, "no farmer is a peasant or an entrepreneur in essence" (p.457). Rather, this dualistic typology creates the necessary theoretical openness for capturing heterogeneity, whereby modern farms typically express features across the spectrum between the two (Ortolani, Bocci, Bàrberi, Howlett, & Chable, 2017). Today, the global rise of entrepreneurial-like farming and market deregulation have, in some cases, ruptured and weakened peasant life and relations, resulting in depeasantization processes. Recalling the input of Shanin (2017), peasant society is a process—at times and places it is weaker, in others it is stronger, creating a push-and-pull between depeasantization and re-peasantization. Re-peasantization has made itself clearly noticeable as a wave of agriculture that is "(…) once again becoming more peasant-like and is also attracting new entrants, especially young people who are enlarging the rank and file of the peasantries" (Ploeg, 2017, p. 18).

1.3. So, Who Are the "New Peasants"?

Waves of re-peasantization are embedded within a broader cultural shift oriented towards ecological awareness and the reframing of the peasant identity as positive (Bernstein et al., 2018). The realization that human food consumption is tied to both the immediate and broader socioeconomic and environmental context, has placed sustainable agriculture at the heart of the debate on planetary health (Pretty, 2008). Values stressing "new lifestyles and forms of self-organization and active citizenship" inspire this new age of farming (Ferraresi, 2013, p. 80). Against the backdrop of an environmentally, socially and economically unsustainable global agri-food system, new peasants and the re-peasantization processes they fuel are foremost driven by emancipatory motives, with emphasis on sustainability and autonomy (Ploeg, 2008).

Both in places traditionally marked by existing and non-existing farming activity, these "return to earth" values (Ferraresi, 2013, p.1), presumed destined to extinction by Mendras (1970), are being revived and reinterpreted. As expressed by Bessière (1998), "concepts such as "peri-urbanization", "rurbanization", "urban de-concentration" and "urban exodus" clearly indicate that present-day rurality cannot be associated with the former "peasant" society"" (p.22). New peasants are protagonists in this story of returning back to the "specificities of soil, the local and the knowledgeable farmer" (Ploeg, 2017, p. 9). In the attempt to capture their often-heterogeneous agricultural activity, a broad terminology has been used to describe them: "neo-farmers", "neo-peasants", "new pioneers", "new agrarians", "back-to-the-landers" (Belasco, 2005; Brunori et al.; 2013, Jacob,1997; Mailfert, 2007; Tregear et al., 2007, as cited in Orria & Luise, 2017), "peasants of the XXI century" or "neo-paysans" (D'Allens & Leclair, 2016; Ventura & Milone, 2007, as cited in Ploeg, 2017). Irrespective of the appellation, these new peasants altogether comprise third-millennium farmers of all ages who intentionally want to remain in farming and farming activity—this inclusive definition aims to rupture the peasantry's ties with stagnancy, non-productivity, periphery, or an incapacity to possess entrepreneurial skills (Ploeg, 2008). It opens up space for observing multiple realities and farm workings which exist today. Fundamentally, as recent studies have shown, innovation is not excluded from new peasant practice, it is rather one of its integral elements (Orria & Luise, 2017; Ortolani et al., 2017). Reiterating that the peasant-entrepreneurial farming dualism should be acknowledged as an ambiguous typology (Niska, Vesala, & Vesala, 2012) to be used primarily as an analytical tool, there is room for exploring how these two may overlap in new peasant realities. In summarizing the discussion thus far, it is helpful to graphically present the key characteristics associated with the agricultural entrepreneur- new peasant typology (see Table 1)—this serves as a useful reference tool throughout the rest of the work.

Table 1. Key areas in the process of re-peasantization

Key areas	*Agricultural Entrepreneurs*	*New peasants*
Land	Ample use of chemical fertilizers	Putting soil biology centre stage; mixed farms; multifunctionality
Investments	Mechanical technologies that replace labour	Skill-oriented technologies
Credit	Credit central in farm development	Own savings, labour investments, cooperation, pluri-activity
Decision making	Economic rationality, farm accountancy	Labour income, solidarity, reciprocity
Relations with the community	Individualism, isolated	Community orientation combined with autonomy and pride

Source: Ploeg, 2018, p.241.

1.3.1. New Peasant Networks

Driven by autonomy and sustainability, today's farmers are being both strategic and innovative in their construction of multi-actor networks (Murdoch, 2006; Ortolani et al., 2017), as a way of widening their social and economic independence (Bessière, 1998). Though the notion of social network tends to imply the use of internet social communication platforms such as Facebook©, the concept has a deeper historical imprint in the field of sociology (Scott, 2017). For the purpose of this study, social networks are understood as the mechanism through which "the movement, the flows of capital, money, commodities, labour, information and images" are mobile through time and space (Lash & Urry, 1994, p.11), or equivalently, as the flow of both material and immaterial resources (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992).

In rural development literature, it has become an important concept (Murdoch, 2006), though some scholars prefer to use the word "web" rather than "network" (Ventura et al., 2008). Some characteristic elements of social networks are worth recalling. First, they can emerge within and across different spatial arenas—global, national, regional, local (Murdoch, 2006) and second, they can be maintained over large distances, not relying exclusively on face-to-face relationships (Ventura et al., 2008). Interactions can be mediated via telephone, internet, or other information technology platforms.

Counter-urbanization and a thriving rural service sector are considered key structural factors in the breeding of a "network rurality", though the use of micro-level social values—trust, respect, collaboration, learning—also influence the building of network ties (Murdoch, 2006). Murdoch (2006) was inspired by Wittel's (2001) concept of "network sociality" to depict the process as a deliberate construction of social relations based on mutually shared interests. New peasantries, given their cultural orientation towards the aforementioned "return to earth values", may be more inclined to appreciate and apply such social values in their operational workings. The relevance of networks to the frame of new peasantries is captured in a paragraph by Ventura et al. (2008) stating that "(…) being part of a network is a first step towards survival. (…) Once within a network, one can strive to improve one's own position in it in order to gain autonomy or reduce dependence on others" (p.153). When studying rural networks, Marsden, Murdoch, Lowe, Munton & Flynn (1993) have highlighted the importance of conceptualizing place as a junction of social relations, allowing one to observe the means through which actors' "interests and objectives are constructed, represented and come into effect" (p.152). The voluntary will in choosing to construct certain social ties or not is of utmost importance here.

In examining manifestations of re-peasantization, this study pays additional attention to the concept of network, exploring it from both the knowledge and market lens, assessing the extent to which network participation is strategically used to reflect set objectives. Often these new peasant networks are compositely diverse and made-up of multiple actors.

1.3.1.1. Knowledge

From a sociological point of view, when considering how knowledge interplays with the constructed networks of new peasant realities, "a particular type of knowledge is defined not by its content but by the way it is embedded in social relations" (Siebert & Laschewski, 2010, p.62). This becomes all the more evident when the forms of knowledge typically associated with the peasant and entrepreneurial mode of farming are compared. Particularly important to the discussion are two knowledge types—local and scientific.

Local knowledge is place-, time- and culture-bound, experiential, and non-uniform. Tovey & Mooney (2007) drew a further distinction between lay and tacit local knowledge. The former is very much associated with a place-based savoir-faire about agricultural production, product characteristics, and the local environment (Fonte, 2008). Two of the aforementioned characteristics of peasant farming—resource base and co-production—are essentially grounded in lay knowledge. Comparable to a knowledge gatekeeper, sometimes called "local expert", this kind of knowledge resonates with earlier

writings emphasizing the uniqueness of peasant farming as one relegated to the soil-savvy farmer and and associated artisan-like labor—the *art de la localité*[4] (Mendras, 1970). Lay local knowledge is very much intertwined with the concept of territory[5]. Tacit knowledge is less about technical information and more about the norms that guide social interaction, yet still important because it can "strengthen informal social networks and social relations, promoting trust and social cohesion" (Fonte, 2008, p.210). On the other hand, scientific knowledge is evidence-based, specialized, formulaic, and not necessarily place-based. Due to its standardized invariability, scientific knowledge has been classed as superior to its local counterpart, that is deemed more difficult to codify (Fonte, 2010a). Scientific knowledge was the pillar upon which agricultural modernization rested in its mission to "upgrade" peasant farming to the entrepreneurial model. The dynamic interplay of these distinct knowledge types mirrors the social relations embedded in new peasant networks, in a way that often seeks autonomy from the agri-industry's scientific expertise.

1.3.1.2. Nested Markets

Another way of examining networks surrounding new farm realities is to assess the types of market relations they contain. As outlined, the diversification of market relations is considered, along with the maintenance of a resource base and co-production, the third key element of the peasant farming model. The term "nested markets" has been proposed by Ploeg et al. (2010) to define newly emerging markets embedded *within* broader global markets, yet with circuits of food provision that function distinctively *apart* from those of the main markets. Among other types, they often comprise direct supply mechanisms or relations (e.g. farmers' markets, farmers' cooperatives, box schemes). Fundamental to such distribution routes is their non-standardized price-setting, whereby producers are autonomous in the price-setting process, often considered a benefit to them and consumers alike (Ploeg et al., 2010). However, in emphasizing that nested markets are active social constructions, not only is the food provision channeled in completely distinct ways, but the relations that govern these selected routes are also governed in distinct ways. The creation of and participation in nested markets enables farmers to spread out the source of their incomes, and not depend entirely on intermediaries to meet their economic objectives. It is helpful here to draw upon the entrepreneurial-peasant farming typology

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[4] This phrase translates from French to "art of locality". For further elaboration, refer to p. 63 in Mendras (1970), Chapter 2 "*La terre, le travail et le temps*" (p. 62-95).

[5] Territory is a concept used throughout the dissertation to designate the locality where each case study is imbedded in. The definition was specifically derived from the French conceptualisation of *terroir* as it is used in Mediterranean Europe: "a combination of biophysical and cultural elements that combine to produce place-based tastes and flavors—to conceptualize additional spatial and ecological aspects of territory (and locality), such as the actors, their activities, forms of social organization, and agricultural practices in particular places and their influence on the foods and drinks produced there" (Bérard et al. 2005 as cited in Bowen & Mutersbaugh, 2014).

for underlining this distinction. Whereas the entrepreneurial farm typically responds to the free-market forces of supply and demand, peasant farming is rather guided by natural ecological processes. So, by way of distancing itself from the global markets, the peasant farm can better respond to those ecological motives and be more resilient to the pressures of the agricultural squeeze. This discrepancy was highlighted in the 2008 food-oil crisis, as the dominant entrepreneurial farming model is considered less resilient to sudden price volatilities (Woodhouse, 2010). Nested markets are thus reconstructed as a survival strategy for staying "*in* the game" yet maintaining a degree of removal *from* it. In the context of rising new peasant farms, Ferraresi (2013) termed this "deintermediation", to reflect a cultural desire of eliminating or diluting the intermediary's (e.g. sales representative, distributor) role. Diversified and nested markets are an important consideration in the study of new peasant realities.

1.4. Re-peasantization in Europe and Italy

1.4.1. A brief overview of European Agricultural Policy

Small farmers' responses to the "agricultural squeeze" are, above all, context-specific and heterogeneous (Ploeg et al., 2010). Since the early 1990s, the European countryside has experienced a noteworthy wave of re-peasantization (Ploeg, 2008). Alternative farming practices, along with their alternative food provision channels, have been very much associated with the new paradigm for rural development—a countryside where consumption increasingly complemented productive activities (Fonte & Cucco, 2015; Goodman, 2004; Ploeg et al., 2010). This transition also coincided with a general increased public skepticism towards the agri-food system, cultivating the consumer "quality turn" demand for traceable, safe and healthy food (Goodman, 2003; Goodman, 2004; Nicolosi, 2006).

Policy formulations were responding to this broader socio-cultural change. Through the implementation of the European Commission (EC) Regulation No. 2078/92 "on agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside" (EC, 1992, p.1), the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) 1992 MacSharry Reform was the first to institutionally recognize and incorporate agri-environmental measures into the agenda (Fonte & Cucco, 2015; Tudisca, Di Trapani, Sgroi, & Testa, 2014). These measures encompassed, among others, support for environmentally-friendly organic practices and regulation for the protection of Geographic Indications (Fonte & Cucco, 2015). From thereon, the European Model of Agriculture was instilled, characterized by an overall shift from productivity- to producer-oriented support, sustainable farming practices and expressed concern for the environment (Knickel, Renting, & Ploeg, 2004). Currently, these measures are delineated by EC Regulation No. 1698/2005 "European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development" (EAFRD), and manifested in the CAP's second Pillar,

which each European Member State filters through its national and regional Rural Development Programs [RDPs] (Tudisca et al., 2014). Co-financed by Member States (Bureau, Debucquet, & Orden, 2013), RDPs are geared towards the cultivation and promotion of rural communities' socioeconomic well-being in order to avoid rural exodus (Bellia, Pilato & Scavone, 2013).

The fundamental principle driving the European Union's (EU) policy changes has been agricultural multifunctionality[6]. While there is yet unanimously accepted definition of multifunctional agriculture (MFA), the debate has been summarized as divided into two camps: the positive and the normative approach (OECD, 2001). As outlined in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture, Europe has particularly played an important role in formulating and implementing the latter, arguing that beyond the mere production of economically valuable private goods, agriculture fulfills many societal functions—socio-economic livelihood of diverse rural communities, environmental protection and landscape preservation, resource management, and production of safe and healthy food (EC, 1999). On the other hand, the positive approach, dominantly used policy debates, is also favored by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001). In this model, MFA is interpreted vis-à-vis a neo-classical market regulation perspective, concerned foremost with the World Trade Organisation (WH)'s anti-trade distortion criteria (Renting et al., 2009). In the context of growing public concern for environmental matters and food traceability in the early '90s, European agriculture's increasingly multifunctional character was conceived as a foundational basis for supporting rural development efforts (Renting et al., 2009).

Recognizing the breadth of MFA as a contested policy issue (Renting et al., 2008), of relevance is to note that each Member state acknowledges the theoretical importance of MFA for the CAP's two chief pillars[7], though particular facets are at times more pronounced depending on nation-based agricultural and rural development contexts (Pierangeli, Henke, & Coronas, 2008).

1.4.2. European Re-peasantization Strategies

Indeed, multifunctionality is considered a crucial element of new peasant farming, but not of entrepreneurial farming (Ploeg, 2008). Examining re-peasantization in the European context, new peasants use a number of strategies to achieve their objectives: "deepening", "regrounding" and "broadening" (Ploeg, 2008) comprise the three relevant strategic typologies that will be used within the

[6] For an extensive review of the concept, refer to Renting et al. (2009).
[7] The CAP budget is allocated to its two main pillars: (1) Direct Payments (programme for agricultural subsidies); and (2) Rural Development Programme (measures for promoting and supporting the socioeconomic and environmental well-being of rural areas). In contrast to the first pillar entirely financed by the EU, the second pillar programmes are co-financed by local, regional, national and EU funds.

two-case study presented in this dissertation. According to this framework, deepening involves adding product value through agricultural means, such as applying organic methods, high-quality production, and on-farm processing, among others. It is also often tied to certification schemes such as Geographical Indications (GIs) or EU-certified organic labelling which enhance the product's value. Broadening efforts also entail in adding value, yet through non-agricultural means. On-farm activity is broadened to include a diversity of both economic (e.g. agricultural tourism) and non-economic functions—social, ethical, environmental (e.g. biodiversity protection and landscape preservation) and cultural, among others (Renting et al., 2008). Over the last three decades, broadening activities have been subject to ample political contention, as they are most fundamentally tied to the notion of MFA. Lastly, regrounding implies a figurative and literal re-rooting of resources in the territory—a strategy very much linked to agro-ecology, that is used by new peasants as a way to confront the environmental flaws of the agro-industrial system. Regrounding, considered "one of the prime ingredients of re-peasantization", is also an economic strategy, as it aims to reduce cost, whenever possible, by using and re-using what's already available (Ploeg, 2018, p. 240). The practice of regrounding is also often tied to deepening, as origin-of-place products are likely to embed quality-based value.

Together, these three strategies constitute the model through which the case studies in this qualitative study will be assessed. It is important to reiterate some important considerations. First, it is the unity of traditional agricultural activities (e.g.: vegetable production), and new farming activities (e.g.: on-farm processing) that are emphasized—neither the activities nor the earnings derived from them should be treated and considered separately (Ploeg, 2008). Second, worth restating, the degree to which each strategy is used varies according to contextual factors both internal and external to the farm.

1.4.3. Re-peasantization in Italy

Italy's ties with agriculture are complex, multifaceted and non-uniform. As depicted by Montanari (2017), for most of the country's history, there was indeed a "manufactured invisibility" of the countryside with regards to food production—the countryside was not only obscured by the city but also appropriated by it. Only recently has this tendency been reversed, a shift that is seemingly associated with a changing perception of the Italian peasant or *contadino* identity (Montanari, 2017). Epistemology sheds further light on this history. In the Middle Ages, the *contado* signified the countryside dominated by city. It is indeed the word from which *contadino* derives, which does not simply mean "one who comes from the countryside" as it does in its French equivalent *paysan,* but also points to a hierarchal, subordinate relationship as an "inhabitant (or worker) of the land dominated by

the city, and at its service" (p.19). One can say that *contadino* is pejoratively perceived, as it implies a position devoid of agency. The word's derogatory use in Italy is presumably more palpable in the country's southern regions, where the countryside was compartmentalized into large feudal estates or *latifundia* until the 1950 agrarian land reform (Russo, 1999). For instance, in Sicily, a social division was drawn between those who work manually—the *braccianti* and *contadini* (landowning and renting peasants)—and the landowners who do not, the *baroni*, often owners of large *latifundium*, and the *borghesia,* or bourgeoisie (King, 1971). In between, there was also the *galantuomini,* to designate "those who dressed elegantly and lived a life of leisure" (King, 1971, p.24). Meanwhile, mid-size modern farms were more historically prominent in the territorial composition of Northern regions (Rizzo, 2016). While pertinent differences—cultural, social, political and economic—continue to demarcate Italy's twenty regions, North-South discrepancies are especially important, in both pre- and post-WW2 eras (Leonardi, 1995).

In the years following the war, the condition of the peasantry was one characterized by a feeling of mass discontent and crisis (Dickinson, 1954; Gramsci, 1966). Despite Europe's pro-modernization framework being fully operative in the 1950s-60s, the general persistence of small peasant farms, though to varying degrees, affected the pace and path of Italy's agricultural history (Fonte & Cucco, 2015). Comparatively to the South, the North was generally quicker to adopt agricultural modernization (Fonte & Cucco, 2015) and experience economic growth (Leonardi, 1995). The regions of the *Mezzogiorno*[8], a socio-geographic umbrella-term used to describe Italy's Southern regions and Islands, were marked by a jarringly high rate of illiteracy, hunger, and poor infrastructure (OECD, 2009). They were the target of a preliminary period of state-led aid via the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, a parliament-run development fund investing in the socio-economic advancement of southern Italy and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia (Leonardi, 1995; OECD, 2009). Though entrepreneurial farming had established itself as the basis of Italian agriculture by the 1980s (Fonte & Cucco, 2015), post-war Italy remained nonetheless considered a "dual economy" (Leonardi, 1995).

Regional differences still remain important for discussing and describing agricultural trends (Dal Ferro & Borin, 2017; Fonte & Cucco, 2015). Relative to Northern areas, Southern and Central regions are typically characterized by small farms with mixed and perennial cultures, seasonal dependency, and where pluri-activity and diversification are encouraged (EC, 2016; Fonte & Cucco, 2015). Today, Italian agriculture and foodscapes are strongly associated with place-based and region-based quality attributes (Casini, Contini & Romano, 2012; Fonte & Cucco, 2015; Tregear, Arfini,

[8] See Gramsci (1966), King (1971) and/or Leonardi (1995) for a more elaborated discussion of the *Mezzogiorno*.

Belletti, & Marescotti, 2007). This reflects a markedly high concern among Italian consumers for food quality and safety (Scarpellini, 2016). Further, non-agricultural activities have recently grown in Italian rural areas (Henke & Vanni, 2017), spaces which are currently inhabited by just over one-fifth of the population (EC, 2016). Moreover, alternative food provision networks are diverse, made-up of Ethical Purchasing Groups, or *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale* (GAS)[9] distribution points and the Slow Food web, among others. Given the challenge in attempting to define what falls within the frame of non-conventional agriculture in Italy (Fonte & Cucco, 2015) as well as significant regional differences in farming practice, Italy serves as an interesting context for exploring present-day manifestations of re-peasantization at the farm level.

Although re-peasantization as it has been discussed so far will be used as the guiding theoretical frame of reference, the objective of this qualitative study is to assess, how and to what extent two farms in Campania and Sicily deviate from and/or reflect said model. A case study design, as will be outlined in the following chapter, allows for such an analysis.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1. Research Approach and Design

To explore the leading research questions, a qualitative, field-based approach was selected. Qualitative research allows for the holistic exploration and understanding of a particular social phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015; Stake, 2010). In defining the modus operandi of qualitative inquiry, Stake (2010) asserts: "Each researcher will do it differently, but almost all of them will work hard at interpretation. They will try to convey some of the story in experiential terms. They will show the complexity of the background, and they will treat individuals as unique, yet in ways similar to other individuals." (p.31). Qualitative research has been defined as interpretive, experiential, personal and situational (Stake, 2010). For the purpose of this study, emphasis is particularly placed on the latter, insofar as context is critical for understanding and documenting organizational culture and human experience (Berger, 2015). Context refers to the idea that people or entities studied are part of an organism—be it social, family, organizational, community, religious, political, or economic, among others. In contrast to the often-causal purpose sought in quantitative inquiry, qualitative researchers shed light on the diversity and complexity of an issue, by attempting to capture multiple voices integral

[9] The definition of *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale* (GAS) as used in Fonte & Cucco (2015)—"Typically, GAS are groups of households (between 30 and 80 in number) that co- ordinate their purchases in order to buy food and other goods on the basis of ethical principles, including solidarity. Food provisioning is organized through voluntary "co- ordinators" and orders are usually managed via the Internet".

to said context (Patton, 2015). Reality as shaped by human interpretation mirrors the social constructionist world view, a philosophy that reflects the subjective nature of qualitative research, insofar as "experiential researchers seek multiple realities, the different meanings that different people give to how things work" (Stake, 2010, p.63), and realism, by definition, seeks to convey a context-dependent truth (Patton, 2015).

In this particular study, a sought understanding of "how things work" is to explore how the re-peasantization process is manifested at the farm level, while paying attention to the context it is embedded in. Like many complex social issues, re-peasantization can be analyzed qualitatively or quantitatively—the choice is fundamentally one of nature or numbers (Ploeg, 2018). Quantitative analysis involves assessing re-peasantization as a structural process in numerical trends, with large samples of farms over lengthy periods of time, such as previous studies conducted in Holland and Brasil (Oostindie, 2015; Schneider & Niederle, 2010). On the other hand, a qualitative purpose entails in studying the farm's nature—the organization, dynamics and motivations of agricultural production, which can include multiple, mixed farming styles, some considered more "peasant-like" than others (Ploeg, 2018). Expressions of re-peasantization are therefore not only contextually situated in time and space as macro-processes but also as micro-processes within the same farm unit.

To address the research questions, a two-case cross-sectional design is devised. A case study relies on multiple data sources for data collection and implies context-sensitivity (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Further, in contrast to a single-case study design, two-case studies were preferred, with the intention to highlight contextual variability. Whereas quantitative analysis treats unique cases as "errors" or "outliers", external to scientific explanation and divorced from the phenomenon under study, qualitative research treats this case-and-context uniqueness as meaningful to understanding (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The researcher observed and assessed each case separately, conceiving them as two distinct realities. A more detailed account of the case selection rationale and case definition is provided in section 2.3.1.

2.2. Role of the Researcher

In reflecting the various data collection methods used, the researcher's position varied in time and space, in a manner such that: "the extent of participation is a continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as full participant to complete separation from the setting as spectator, with a great deal of variation along the continuum between these two end points" (Patton, 2015, p.336). Moments of complete engagement and immersion in activities were simultaneously interwoven with observation, note-taking and social interaction with what was being observed. In the Metafarm case

study in Campania, the researcher participated in gastronomic trekking activities alongside the tourists, constantly shifting her gaze from insider-to-outsider—taking observational notes, foraging, asking questions to the key informant/guide, chatting with the participants, and photographing the setting. In the NOTEdi case study in Sicily, the researcher partook in harvest sessions, raw product packaging and deliveries, order preparation, meetings with manufacturers, vendors, local producers and institutional personnel such as the provincial Chamber of Commerce and the *territorio Ibleo's* Local Action Group[10] (LAG), called *Gruppo d'Azione Locale* (GAL) NatIblei. In both case studies, the researcher also attended various activities and meetings considered relevant to the case, ranging from more convivial ones such as family meals and other social events, to more formal ones like associative meetings (e.g.: Amalfi Coast Slow Food Consortium, see Table 3 for further detail). Altogether, these also contributed to a deeper understanding of the cases' social, cultural, economic, historical and geographic settings.

While the participant-observer position allowed the researcher to have a direct insight into the selected study sites, the notion of reflexivity was acknowledged and considered throughout the field work process. In qualitative research, reflexivity is an important element, as it "challenges the view of knowledge as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective" (Berger, 2015, p.220). Reflexivity highlights the personal and experiential dimensions intrinsic to qualitative field research. It assumes that the researcher's personal social position and characteristics (e.g. gender, culture, history, past experiences, political philosophy, beliefs, among others) may influence the ways in which one observes (Creswell, 2014). The research may have been affected in three ways: (1) field accessibility, (2) nature of researcher-researched relationship, and (3) the researcher's personal worldview (Berger, 2015).

First, access to the field is ultimately limited by participants' perception, fondness and trust towards the researcher. The researcher acknowledges that, due to time and resource constraints, the data collected are somewhat dependent on respondents' willingness to share information. Evidently, this varied according to the case and respondent. Second, as a graduate student in Food Studies whose role to respondents was disclosed, the researcher's relationship with those researched shifted. For instance, with Metafarm, the tourists sometimes expressed curiosity and interest in the researcher's

[10] A Local Action Group (LAG) is a non-for-profit sub-regional entity composed of both public and private rural organizations representating various socio-economic sectors. LAGs can apply for financial assistance through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in the form of grants in order to implement the Local Development Strategy of their respective territory. The main objective of the local development strategies is to support their respective rural areas especially through the implementation small-scale projects. In this way, LAGs are better equipped to target the particular needs and priorities of their territory.

academic background, and her presence may have influenced the types of discussions that took place throughout the Gastronomic Trekking activity (i.e. food systems-related topics). Had the researcher not been there, these conversations may not have emerged—her mere presence may have altered the natural flow of social interactions in both sites. However, this is considered an inevitable potential effect of all field-based inquiry (Berger, 2015). Third, as a student in this particular field, the researcher risked being more drawn to certain observations over others—however this is also inherent to qualitative design given that "the researcher is the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation" (Patton, 2015, p.57).

In both case studies, the researcher had already visited the sites prior to field work. Particularly, she had met with key informants, participated in some in-situ and ex-situ activities a few months prior to fieldwork. This allowed her to have a preliminary "first taste" of the organizational structure of the examined cases. As an ex-situ activity co-organized by Metafarm and a cooking school in Rome, the researcher attended a gastronomic trekking session in one of Rome's public parks. She also had already visited Montepertuso, where the main activity takes place in Campania, during an academic trip. With NOTEdi, the researcher assisted and participated in a promotional sales activity at the Eataly supermarket in Rome, where the key informant had set up a temporary stand for promoting the company's products. She had also visited the site during the previous autumn's saffron harvest, and was able to observe the more season-dependent activities. Last, a short while following field work in both sites, the researcher attended the international Terra Madre Salone del Gusto[11] in Turin, Italy, where both farms, Metafarm and NOTEdi, participated. The researcher collected observational notes from all these preliminary experiences. These off-field experiences diluted the unfamiliarity of the cases being studied, thus allowing the researcher to prepare for fieldwork beforehand (e.g.: designing the semi-structured interview guide).

2.3. Research Methods

2.3.1. Case Study Definition and Selection

While there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a case (Patton, 2015), it is a recognizable cohesive organism such that "the parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational but it is a system" (Stake, 1995, p.2.). Patton (2015) adds that a case is also a time-and-space bounded system.

[11]Terra Madre-Salone del Gusto is an international, bi-annual gastronomy exhibition hosted by Slow Food. It gathers farmers, artisans, academics, among others, from all around the world. More information about the event can be found on the event website, from the September 2018 edition: www.salonedelgusto.com/en

By employing a case study design, the researcher's objective was, first and foremost, to capture, in-depth, each case's complexity. The unit of analysis was the farm entity, whereby the researcher sought a systemic understanding of its internal organization, as well as of the surrounding contextual factors and social networks (knowledge- and market-based), which nurture and/or stall the farm's operation. Yin (2003) underlines an important point: "If the unit of analysis is a small group, for instance, the persons to be included within the group (the immediate topic of the case study) must be distinguished from those who are outside it (the context for the case study)" (p.24).

Both cases were purposefully selected by the researcher, as they represent information-rich exemplary cases for illuminating and exploring the theoretical construct of re-peasantization. Feasibility constraints were an important consideration in the selection process. Time limitations, namely the researcher's academic deadlines influenced the researcher's choice, given that she had already established communication with the key informants months prior, and collaboration/coordination was therefore easier. Moreover, given that field work was self-financed, the researcher's ability to be hosted on-site was an advantage for selecting these cases. Language also impacted case selection—the key informants are fluent English-speakers so they offered unique accessibility to those particular case sites. Though the researcher speaks fluent Italian, they assisted in translation when necessary, and served as important bridging-points between the researcher and the contextual network actors.

2.3.2. Qualitative Data Collection

Fieldwork is considered the crux of qualitative inquiry—the researcher is directly implicated in the daily realities of the examined cases (Patton, 2015), serving as the key data collection instrument (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 2010). Favoring qualitative as opposed to quantitative data collection methods is essentially a matter of depth versus breadth—the former is not restricted by "predetermined analytical categories" (p.257), and the purpose is rather to elucidate a nuanced, complex understanding of the issues and context in question (Patton, 2015).

For each case study, from beginning of June to end of July 2018, the researcher spent just under one month collecting data in-situ. The key informants (and farms' co-founders), provided most of the insight into the sites' respective function and structural organization, though the data was not limited to their perspective. A more complex and nuanced representation was sought, so the researcher sought to interview people directly implicated in the farms' social networks.

Data collection combined three methods, described individually in further detail below: field observations, face-to-face interviews (one-on-one and focus groups), documentary information and

audio-visual documentation. A detailed, thick, story-like description of the examined cases was sought. Some of the data collection methods were decisively predetermined, while others emerged with the field work experience, such as the researcher's decision to conduct focus group interviews. Data organization occurred simultaneously with data collection, such that all data was chronologically sorted. Documentary material was catalogued separately.

2.3.2.1. Field Observations

The researcher kept a daily, dated logbook containing observations from both participatory- and direct-observation activities: physical setting, the types of activities that took place, the individuals who participated in the activities, the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those under observation, and other details such as names of plants and places in local dialect, proverbs, depictions of interview- and non-interview-based social interactions, and anecdotal stories. Observations were very detailed, rich and descriptive. They included direct and recalled quotations with the intent to best capture and communicate the lived fieldwork experience and "insiders' perspectives" (Patton, 2015). Field notes also included the researcher's personal reflections, thoughts and opinions on what was being observed, as well as some preliminary data interpretations. Though combined together in writing, the field observations and reflections were then separately treated and analyzed. Field observations were particularly useful for describing the setting and complementing locals' place-based narratives as documented in the interviews. Observations also included those from activities which the researcher participated in both prior to and ensuing field work, as they were previously described in section 2.2.

2.3.2.2. One-to-one and focus group interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and comprised open-ended questions, intended to elicit participants' emic perspectives and views (Creswell, 2014). The choice to conduct focus groups was emergent, not pre-planned. Besides the actors internal to the farm organization, the interview selection of external actors was based on their deemed importance to the farm's socio-economic functioning and structure—this included people in networks both established and in-development (determined by the founders themselves). If deemed feasible and relevant, the researcher also branched-out to interview other local actors, not necessarily in direct contact with the farm. Table 2 and 3 (on p. 30 and p.31, respectively) provide a detailed description of all the interviews conducted by the researcher for each case study. The content of these two tables will be referred to for guiding the reader through the findings in Chapter 3 and the discussion of findings in Chapter 4. Each individual interview ranged from 20 to 40 minutes, on average.

The guiding, semi-structured questionnaire was initially designed for both cases, and then modified slightly to reflect each case. It is divided into six thematic sections (see Appendix A): operational farm data and description of team members, mission and objectives pursued (operative rationale), economic and labor dimensions, policy context, environmental context, and social networks. Prior to certain interviews, a subset of guiding questions was prepared beforehand and verified with the supervisor in order to reflect the particular actor's role—i.e. questions tailored to shop vendors/owners were different from those tailored to producer/collaborators in NOTEdi's case (see Appendices B-E). Interviews were conducted in both Italian and English, a decision which depended on the respondent's fluency and ease. When interviews took place in Italian, the guiding questions were translated and double-checked by the researcher's thesis supervisor (whose native language is Italian) prior to interviews. A total of 26 face-to-face interviews were conducted, including 6 focus groups, and 20 one-on-one interviews. Though Italian is not the researcher's native language, her fluency was sufficient for conducting the interviews—when necessary, she ensured shared meaning by probing for further clarification. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher during and following data collection.

Table 2. Case study 1 (NOTEdi): Interview descriptions

Respondent appellation	Network role/Key function	Interview type	Type of production and/or activity	Age	Gender	Location[12]
Nd Key Informant 1	NOTEdi co-founder/Marketing and Sales Representative	OtoO	Saffron, aromatic herbs + other dried products	20-30	M	Giarratana
Nd Key Informant 2	NOTEdi Co-Founder/ Production Specialist	OtoO	Saffron, aromatic herbs + other dried products	20-30	M	Giarratana
Nd Key Informant 3	NOTEdi co-founder/ Financial management and general administration	OtoO	Saffron, aromatic herbs + other dried products	20-30	M	Giarratana
Shop Owner/Vendor 1	NOTEdi product retailer	OtoO	Bar-café/Specialty shop	40-50	M	Modica Bassa
Shop Owner/Vendor 2	NOTEdi product retailer	OtoO	Wine bar/Specialty shop	40-50	M	Ragusa Ibla
Shop Owner/Vendor 3	NOTEdi product retailer	OtoO	Restaurant/Specialty and grocery shop	40-50	M	Ragusa Superiore
Shop Owner/Vendor 4	NOTEdi product retailer	OtoO	Specialty shop	40-50	M	Giarratana
Agricultural Producer 1	Potential collaborator/ knowledge exchange	OtoO	Oregano + other aromatic herbs	60-70	M	Monterosso Almo
Agricultural Producer 2	Potential collaborator/ knowledge exchange	OtoO	Citrus fruit	30-40	M	Pedalino
Agricultural Producer 3	Potential collaborator/ knowledge exchange	FG[13]	Saffron	60-70	M	Agrigento
Agricultural Producer 4	Potential collaborator/ knowledge exchange	OtoO	Oregano, saffron + other aromatic herbs	30-40	M	Giarratana
Director, GAL NatIblei	External[14]	OtoO	N/A	60-70	M	Canicattini Bagni

[12] All of the interviews took place in the province of Ragusa, except for two which took place in Agrigento (province of Agrigento) and Canicattini Bagni (province of Syracuse)
[13] Focus Group (FG) interview between the researcher, Nd Key Informant 1, Agricultural Producer 3 and his wife.
[14] External to NOTEdi's market and knowledge networks. This meeting was sought by the researcher.

Table 3. Case study 2 (Metafarm): Interview descriptions

Respondent Appellation	Network role/key function	Interview type	Type of production and/or activity	Age	Gender	Location
Mf Key Informant 1	Metafarm co-founder/ trekking guide/ experiential designer	OtoO	Rural, enogastronomic tourism	30-40	M	Montepertuso
Mf Key Informant 2	Metafarm co-founder/ psychotherapist/ social designer	OtoO	Rural, enogastronomic tourism	30-40	F	Montepertuso
Mf Key Informant 3	Metafarm co-founder/stage designer/ technical assistant	OtoO	Rural, enogastronomic tourism	30-40	M	Montepertuso
Family Farmer 1	Neighbor-GT collaborator	OtoO	Family agriculture	70-80	M	Montepertuso
Family Farmer 2	Neighbor-GT collaborator	OtoO	Family agriculture	70-80	F	Montepertuso
Restaurant Owner	Neighbor-GT collaborator	OtoO	Restauration	50-60	M	Montepertuso
Producer/ Farm tour operator	Slow Food Amalfi Coast Member[15]	OtoO	Lemons and honey/ tourism	50-60	M	Amalfi
Tourism association President/ Hotel owner	Slow Food Amalfi Coast Member	OtoO	Hospitality and tourism	40-50	M	Praiano
Young Farmer	External collaborator	FG[16]	Wheat and honey	20-30	M	Rofrano
GT Visitors [17]	Visitors/GT Participants	FG[18]	N/A	20-60	M,F	Montepertuso

[15] The researcher attended an Amalfi Coast Slow Food Consortium meeting which gathered, among others, Mf Key Informant 1, Producer/Farm tour operator and Tourism Association President/Hotel owner.
[16] This interview took place between the researcher, two key informants, and the young farmer during an afternoon trip to Rofrano and the Cilento Regional Park. The meeting took place because Metafarm went to purchase bee colonies from the young farmer and to visit his wheat farm. For further description, refer to Chapter 3.2.3.3.b.
[17] Interviews were held with a total of 10 visitors in focus group format.
[18] Three focus groups were conducted during four different time periods—one German couple (female, male) in their twenties, one with two friend-travellers (females) from NYC in their thirties, one with an older couple (female, male) from Calgary, Canada in their late fifties, and one with two 20-40 year old couples (two females, two males) from Australia and Canada.

2.3.2.3. Documentary information

Over the course of the fieldwork, content from printed material including product packaging, posters and pamphlets, among others, was collected. Websites for describing the farm entities (http://notedi.com/it and https://www.metafarm.net/en) as well as the vendors' shops, and producers' cultivations were used to supplement interview- and observation-derived data. Key informants also shared email communications with the researcher regarding eligibility criteria for event participation (e.g. Salone del Gusto in Turin, Tourism Fair in Rimini). In Metafarm's case, online opinion-reviews left by tourists on Airbnb Experience© and Trip Advisor© web pages about the gastronomic trekking experience were analyzed (https://www.airbnb.ca/experiences/168343; https://bit.ly/2Tf0bbw, both of which were last checked by the researcher on 15 October 2018). In NOTEdi's case, the researcher collected informational and promotional pamphlets used by the informants during fairs and other events.

2.3.2.4. Audio-visual material

Audio-visual material included recorded interviews, as well as photographs taken by the researcher on-site. Interviews were audio-recorded using a mobile telephone application and included, in addition to the researcher-respondent conversation, some background noise (e.g.: birds, farm animals, fruit-picking, tasting), which was also used, though minimally, for describing the physical settings. In some cases, due to circumstantial logistical difficulties, interviews were not recorded, but detailed notes were taken to compensate, including direct quotes (this was the case for three interviews). Unless indicated otherwise, all photographs included in the thesis were taken by the researcher on-site. These included photographs from event and activity participation (e.g.:planting, harvesting, cooking, attending guided tours), interview settings, and the researcher's personal observations, both internally and externally to the research site.

2.3.3. Ethics

The research protocol complies with the code of ethics as outlined by the researcher's affiliated academic institution, The American University of Rome (AUR) in Rome, Italy. The university's template was referred to for designing both the informed consent and photographic release forms. These were first approved by the researcher's thesis supervisor before being distributed to and signed by the interviewed research respondents in the data collection phase. The researcher also prepared a project information sheet for respondents interested in learning more about the research objectives. The project's topic of investigation and main objectives were disclosed verbally. All three ethics documents—project information sheet, consent form, and photographic release form—were translated

to Italian, and distributed in either English or Italian depending on the respondent's preference (see Appendix F and Appendix G). Participants' information was ensured to remain anonymous and confidential. The researcher offered to share the thesis once it would be completed, to those interested.

2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis and synthesis is considered an ongoing, symbiotic process grounded in the continuous deconstruction and re-construction of gathered data (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 2010). Due to the density and depth of data collected in this study, the analytical process required a preliminary strategy for narrowing down the focus and beginning to tease-out the information. Following an inductive analytical strategy, the proposed theoretical framework guided the field work and data analysis process. Accordingly, re-peasantization strategies, knowledge networks and nested market networks, as discussed in the reviewed literature, were the three conceptual axes or lenses through which the researcher began to read the data and reveal some general themes. This analytical approach involves "discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data" such that "findings emerge out of the data, through the researcher's interactions with the data" (Patton, 2015, p.542). After thoroughly reading through the data, the researcher examined whether and how the identified patterns shed light on or deviated from the theoretical frame of re-peasantization.

Data for each case were examined and analyzed separately by the researcher. The individual information collected from the four raw data sources (interview transcripts, observational field notes, documentary information and audio-visual material) were combined together for analysis. Reflective notes were treated apart. Analysis was divided into two successive phases: (1) identification and coding of themes, and (2) thematic categorization. In the first, short-hand coding in the margins or "first-cut coding" (Patton, 2015), was implemented for organizing the data into key word-categories. In the second round, color-coding was additionally used to classify and identify themes as well as descriptive, contextual information (in this case, socio-economic and physical setting, and people). The researcher subsequently read the data several times before creating and classifying codes—these supplementary rounds revealed nuances and sub-themes in and between the diverse narratives.

Each case comprises two categories of findings—descriptive and thematic (see Chapter 3). A detailed description of each case was outlined, including the surrounding setting (e.g: geographic location, climate, topography, population, socio-economic context) and people (farms' team member as well as their social networks). Themes portrayed multiple voices and perspectives about the case under study, and were supported by various quotations extracted from the interviews. The cases were then discussed both separately and comparatively in Chapter 4.

2.5. Validity & Reliability

Given the nature of qualitative inquiry—namely, that it is dependent on subjective judgement—it has been subject to much debate and controversy, especially concerning its methodological validity (also called "credibility") and reliability (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Qualitative case studies typically exhibit stronger validity and lower reliability (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010).

To address and enhance validity, the researcher triangulated the data, by cross-checking and comparing the data for consistency across the four methods in which it was collected. The hybrid use of multiple data sources is a major strength of case studies (Yin, 2003). Namely, observations were compared with interviews and documentary information, and respondents' different points of views were compared between each other. Another validity strategy used was to provide a comprehensive, thick description of findings—"when detailed descriptions of the setting are provided and many perspectives about a theme are offered, the results become more realistic and richer" (Creswell, 2014, p.251). Last, as previously elaborated in section 2.2., the researcher adopted a self-aware, reflexive approach to the inquiry. Together, these three strategies intended to increase validity and enrich the overall quality of the study.

Reliability in qualitative case research is more difficult to account for, as it departs from the notion that no two studies are ever exactly the same (just as no two researchers hold identical approaches and world views). However, to maximize reliability, the researcher documented in an operational manner the steps she followed in conducting the research, with the purpose of strengthening the procedural replicability.

2.6. Limitations

The study involved some limitations. Given time and resource constrains intrinsic to the researcher's Master's degree completion, case selection as well as the number of cases included in the study was limited. Multiple case studies, perhaps in the same context, would have been a viable alternative had there been more time devoted to case research and selection process. Due to the seasonal variability inherent to the farms' activities, the researcher acknowledges that seasonality is an issue to consider in the design of her study. Though she was limited to the summer time, conducting field work during other seasons may have potentially led to different observations and findings.

Both cases were purposefully selected for their feasibility with regards to time, access and financial considerations. Costs were considerably reduced given that the researcher was hosted in the areas of study. Although, this also allowed the researcher to extend her stay in each place. Accessibility

was fundamental, in that, because the researcher had already met with the key informants prior to the study phase, relations of trust and familiarity were already built, allowing for greater access prior and on the field. Altogether these factors impacted the study's methodological scope and approach.

As mentioned previously, another limitation rests in the researcher's role. By being directly implicated in the study sites, the researcher acknowledges that her presence may have altered the natural "flow" of social and organizational processes being studies. However, this an inherent feature of the case study design, insofar as "no aspects of knowledge are purely of the external world, devoid of human construction" (Stake, 1995, p.100). Her role may not have been accepted by all respondents to the same degree, and this may have led to the withholding of information. Similarly, given her disclosed role as researcher, some respondents may have selectively curated the information according to what was deemed expected and non-detrimental to their relationship with key informants. The researcher addressed this through the formulation of open-ended, non-leading questions. Overall, the researcher tried, in the best of her capacity, to match her own experience and that of the participants, in an effort to balance the insider-outsider dialectic and capture the emic voices.

There were some unplanned on-field limitations. First, in both cases, though Italian and English were spoken in all the interviews, the immersive observations in more informal settings, though most took place in Italian, were at times limited by the use of local dialect. Specifically, Neapolitan (in Montepertuso) and Sicilian (in Giarratana) at times hindered the researcher's ability to follow the conversation. Often the key informant translated to Italian or English. In the first case, the researcher was limited in terms of mobility through the Amalfi Coast—public transport is irregular and sparse, making the meeting with other potential territorial actors difficult. In the second case, socio-cultural norms (as they will be discussed in Chapter 4) proper to Giarratana and the surrounding area, limited the researcher's ability to detach from the key informant in connecting to and meeting with other, external actors. Specifically, trust was an important consideration insofar as the researcher needed constant justification for conducting her interviews—she required the mediated introduction of the key informant to ensure respondent participation. These limitations on the field were coupled with the fundamental limitation of time—for instance, had the researcher had more time, she would have sought and hired a local interpreter.

Lastly, in the choice to choose "depth over breadth" in qualitative case analysis, the study findings and interpretation were limited to the two distinct realities—they are not reflective of the respective study areas as whole, but rather aim to shed light on the process of re-peasantization at the farm level, that is the central aim of this dissertation.

Chapter 3. Descriptive and Thematic Findings

This chapter discusses the qualitative, field-based findings for each case separately. Collected data was divided into two categories: descriptive and thematic. In the former, the regional setting was described combining the use of bibliographic references, observation and interview data, with particular emphasis on the physical, socio-economic and historical setting. Then, the studied entity and its main activity are described—the staff members, the founding philosophy and the overall operation including activity/production processes. A complementary description of the relevant networks and actors involved was provided, highlighting the market relations and knowledge forms imbedded in these networks. With regards to theme-based findings, given the detailed depth of the data provided, the researcher extracted the themes deemed most relevant and reflective of the interactions and interviews that took place on-site. Four key themes were identified for each case.

3.1. Case Study 1. NOTEdi: Cultivating Aromatic and Officinal Plants in the Monti Iblei

3.1.1. Setting the Scene in Sicily

Situated just south of the Italian peninsula, Sicily is Italy's largest region. It is also the largest island of the Mediterranean Sea, comprising nine provinces, two small islands, Ustica and Pantelleria, and the Aelian, Aegadian and Pelagian archipelagos (Azevedo, 2015). According to the EU Nomenclature for Territorial Units (NTUs), Sicily is included, along with Sardinia, in the "Islands" macro-region category (Eurostat, 2018). It is considered a "less developed" or "convergence" region, marked by one the highest unemployment rates in the country at 22%, and a per capita GDP that is 75% lower than the EU average, and 44% lower than in the Centre-North regions (Azevedo, 2015; EC, 2017a; ISTAT, 2017). Sicily is one among five Italian regions designated with an administrative "autonomous" status—this means it has greater control over regional legislations and management of funds.

The region's geographic position has attracted many different peoples, a migratory history which has marked the island with a particularly rich multi-cultural heritage. Having been colonized by the Ancient Greeks, Sicily was also ruled by a myriad of civilizations among which the Romans, Arabs, Normans, French and Spanish (Dimico, Isopi & Olsson, 2017). Thru these different stages, the region's relationship to agriculture has been socially and economically significant (Basile, 1941; De Angelis, 2000). Prior to Italy's unification in 1860, the population's leading vocation was agriculture, which was structured according to a Medieval feudal land tenure system known as *latifundia* (Russo, 1999). Until Italy's agrarian reform in the 1950s, the *latifundia* remained the dominant form of territorial organization, consisting of very vast farmland estates usually devoted to a single crop of

grain, olives, wine or citrus fruit (King, 1971; Russo, 1999). The historical significance of such traditional crops further elucidates the island's relation to agriculture. For instance, lemons and oranges trace back to the Arabic invasion of Western Sicily in the first half of the ninth century (Attlee, 2014), becoming, since then, an important economic branch of the agricultural sector. In the year of Italian unification, Sicilian citrus production bred more profit than any other agricultural activity in Europe (Attlee, 2014). It was also a time that marked the emergence of the Sicilian *Cosa Nostra*, now called "Mafia", the secret criminal organization whose origins have been suggested to be associated with citrus fruit production and the *Conca d'Oro* citrus plains surrounding the regional capital of Palermo (Attlee, 2014; Dimico, Isopi & Olsson, 2017).

Today, Sicily's agriculture is faced by two important socio-structural changes. Rural depopulation continues to affect the island—while 97% of the total land area is classified as "rural", it is inhabited by only 3.4% of the population (EC, 2017a). From 2000 to 2010, the number of farm holdings decreased by 25.7%, while the total utilized agricultural area (UAA) increased by 10.4% which reflects a 48.6% increase in the average area per holding in the same time period (EC, 2013). With an average farm holding size now equivalent to 6.3 hectares, this figure is roughly half that of the Italian average (EC, 2016). Most of the population is concentrated in large towns and cities along the northern and eastern coasts, with just under 70% of the population living in the urban hubs of Palermo, Catania, Messina, Caltanissetta, and Enna—where employment is most concentrated, particularly in the service sector (Azevedo, 2015). This has led to the stark imbalance in population density between coastal cities and inland areas, the latter historically important for agricultural activities (Scrofani & Novembre, 2015). Coupled with an ageing farming population (EC, 2017a), rural areas traditionally tied to agriculture are being altered and reshaped.

3.1.2. Giarratana, the "Pearl" of the Monti Iblei

As the territory marked by the earliest human settlement on the island (Di Blasi & Arangio, 2014), the Hyblaean area, also called "Val di Noto", comprises Sicily's south-eastern provinces of Syracuse, Ragusa and part of Catania. The city of Syracuse, on the Ionian Sea, was once the epicenter of Magna Graecia—a name given to the Hellenistic coastal settlements of southern Italy. In 1693, an immense earthquake and tsunami destroyed Southeastern Sicily, an event that led to substantial population loss and re-dispersion away from the coasts and towards the inlands. Eight towns were rebuilt in the eighteenth century in Baroque architecture—Catania, Noto, Modica, Ragusa, Scicli, Avola, Caltagirone, Militello Val di Catania, and Palazzolo—which together in 1992, were nominated as the "Late Baroque Towns of Val di Noto" on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization [UNESCO] World Heritage list (UNESCO, 2018a). Relative to the island as a whole, historical and territorial transformations proper to south-eastern Sicily are considered atypical, affecting population distribution in a unique way (Di Blasi & Arangio, 2014). Small-to-medium sized inland towns are more prominent than in the northwest and northeast, creating a more spread-out, balanced density of inhabitants. Tourism in the area is also less developed, although some "pockets" of tourism are growing, particularly since the official UNESCO designation, in places like Noto, Ragusa and Syracuse (Di Blasi & Arangio, 2014).

Deriving its name from the Hyblaean mountain range, the Hyblaean *Monti Iblei*, the territory, called *territorio ibleo* by locals, is still visibly marked by dry white limestone rock, whose use traces back to the prehistoric period (Dipasquale, Megna, & Prescia, 2014). As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, the stone's presence in the area is widespread, embedded in the more recent edificial Baroque architecture and in the rural landscape, and ancient structures called *murraghi* (Di Blasi & Arangio, 2014). This field-based stone structure reflects the area's historical agrarian-based economy, once primarily based on cattle-farming. Even today, the important role ascribed to agriculture is reflected in the rich repertoire of terroir products, characteristic of a typical Mediterranean diet—olive oil, wine, cheese, wheat, legumes, tomatoes, and carob, among others—many of which have received place-based quality designations such as the European Geographical Indications (GIs) or the Slow Food Presidia[19] certifications (Camera di Commercio Ragusa, 2015). The high-quality attribution is often linked to features inherent to the natural southeasten Sicilian environment—a dry Mediterranean climate, the southeastern sirocco wind from the Sahara Desert, and a soil rich in volcanic material. The area is also marked by multiple protected natural reserves which embed a rich biodiversity, and is home to Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano.

Figure 1. *Terrace landscape of the Ragusa countryside, along the outskirts of Giarratana.*

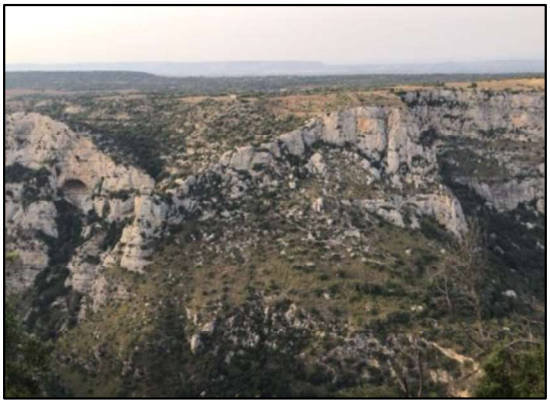

Figure 2. *Limestone rock extended over the territorio Ibleo's Cavagrande del Cassibile Natural Reserve.*

[19] As defined by Slow Food on their website: https://bit.ly/2PY1P2n.

What further distinguishes south-eastern Sicily from other areas on the island is the relatively low presence of *latifundia* and Mafia activity throughout its history (Di Blasi & Arangio, 2014). Indeed, discussions with local inhabitants and respondents pointed to the relative wealth and "good" status of the province of Ragusa as being superior to that of Catania and Syracuse, associated with an almost absent organized crime and a high presence of banks, such as the Banca Agricola Popolare di Ragusa, which offers ample employment opportunities. Further, the role of agriculture in Ragusa remains particularly prominent. Provincial data from the year 2009 revealed that agriculture contributes 8.3% to the value-added economy (the remaining 10.6% in industry, 7.8% in construction, and 73.3% in services). Considering that the average national and regional percentage values for value-added agriculture are 1.8% and 3.5%, respectively, Ragusa ranked first, as the leading national province in this sector (Camera di Commercio Ragusa, 2011).

Amid the flatter foothills of the Monte Lauro, the highest peak of the Monti Iblei (restuing 1000 meters above sea level) and once-active ancient volcano, lies Giarratana (see Figure 3). As one enters the small municipality of just over 3,000 inhabitants located twenty kilometers from the province's more inhabited and visited capital sharing the same name, Ragusa, a road sign greets "*Giarratana, la perla degli Iblei*", "Giarratana, pearl of the Iblei". Perhaps the pearl connotes a place yet-to-be discovered by tourists, or alludes to the shade of the town's most prized agricultural product—the Giarratana Onion. In the summer harvest witnessed by the researcher, producers drive slowly through the village's narrow streets, with cases of bulbs stacked in the back of their mini trucks, shouting aloud in local dialect: "*I cipuddi i patati i caroti i pira*!", "Onions, potatoes, carrots, pears!". Local inhabitants stock their cellars with them for everyday use (Figure 4). *La Sagra della Cipolla*, held annually every august, is a harvest festival precisely dedicated to this uniquely large and sweet onion, now a Slow Food Presidia product. Onion aside, Giarratana's economy is still largely based on agriculture, as is the case for much of the territory. According to key informants, olive oil, honey, almonds (used for making white nougat *torrone*), oregano and wheat are considered its most traditional, pillar products.

Figure 4. *View overlooking Giarratana with the Monti Iblei in the background.*

Figure 4. *Giarratana onions stored in a local inhabitant's cellar.*

3.1.3. NOTEdi: Descriptive Findings

3.1.3.1. NOTEdi's Operational Functioning

3.1.3.1.a. Production

Translating from Italian to "a hint of", NOTEdi is an agricultural company devoted to the small-scale production and sale of aromatic and officinal plants. In 2014, it was initially founded as "NOTEdi Zafferano", a name that reflects its then-exclusive focus on saffron cultivation. In early 2018, the company broadened the scope of its production to include seven aromatic herbs and spices—thyme, laurel, oregano, rosemary, sage, wild fennel, chili pepper—a choice motivated both by market demand and a desire to increase sales through a diversified production. With just under two hectares of flat terrain on the outskirts of Giarratana, 550 meters above sea level, NOTEdi's operation is small-scale, choosing to focus their efforts on high-quality as opposed to high-quantity production. For saffron for example, NOTEdi has a "no more than 1 kilogram" production philosophy, a choice justified by the view that 1 kg satisfies the labor invested-quality equilibrium. As shareholders are also workers, limited human resources make it so that only a limited amount is produced, yet one that guarantees a profitable return, seeing how there is no additional labor cost.

The plot of land is rented from one of the founders' uncles at a very inexpensive yearly rate. As the company is still in its early experimental phases, the team is still adjusting the land's repartition in an attempt to also account for consumer preferences. Some plants are therefore prioritized and occupy more space than others, though this decision also depends on the quantity required for packaging the final product. NOTEdi's two-hectare plot equates to 20,000 square-meters (m^2) currently divided as such: 2,000 m^2 of saffron, 9,000 m^2 of oregano, 8,500 m^2 of thyme, 500 m^2 of sage, 200 m^2 of chili

pepper, and 1000 m^2 of fennel. All of the latter plants are native cultivars—NOTEdi purchased seedlings from a local *vivaio*, a plant nursery owned by the team's friend. Rosemary and laurel, dispersed abundantly on the founders' private home properties, are rather sourced there and not intentionally planted—these are also "less popular" sales-wise.

As a bulb-based plant, saffron is an exception, sourced externally from the region—in the first two years of cultivation, NOTEdi purchased bulbs from the Netherlands and Italy (Sardinia and Umbria) to establish the base of their production. Saffron reproduces only by bulb-duplication, meaning that its pollen is sterile and cannot generate seeds. Indeed, bulbs duplicate two-to-three-fold every year, thus breeding an exponentially growing annual yield, a physiological property generating a "natural surplus" that allows NOTEdi to harvest and sell the bulbs as a separate product.

Given this abundance, the company no longer needs to purchase bulbs, which after a few years now, have adapted to the territorial agro-ecology and can be called saffron bulbs *from* Giarratana. On the other hand, the remaining plants, like oregano for instance, can be reproduced by either pollination or duplication—for duplication, one can simply cut off a segment of the plant and re-plant it in the soil. Most of the plants' wild counterparts can also be found throughout the territory, as the pedo-climatic conditions are especially favorable for the cultivation of aromatic and officinal plants: easy-draining calcareous soil and a dry mountain climate, characteristic of the Monte Lauro. All of the plants are perennials—they can live more than two years and only need to be re-planted every few years, depending on seasonal temperatures and each plant's life cycle. Though NOTEdi has not yet devoted any land space to seed-saving, it is an objective they hope to fulfill in the future, in order minimize cost and rely completely on a self-renewing production. The only plant they do not produce on-site, yet source locally, is the Giarratana Onion, though this is also an objective to be attained within the next year. The plants need minimal water, and a built-in irrigation system feeds the planted rows.

Harvest and transformation takes place in accordance with each plant's life-cycle: chili pepper in the spring time, oregano and thyme in the summer, fennel seeds and saffron flowers in the fall, while sage, rosemary and laurel can be picked year-round. For example, in the third year of saffron cultivation, NOTEdi reached the highest peak of their harvest at 1 kg of fresh saffron flowers in one day, which equates roughly to 150-200 grams of dried saffron pistils. Average daily harvest is 50 grams of dried saffron pistils, and an overall average season yields 500 grams, though their goal is to attain a 1 kilogram harvest (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 6. *NOTEdi's fall saffron harvest.*

Figure 6. *NOTEdi's summer sage harvest.*

The company's focus on dried products is not only driven by market demand, but also by the resiliency that such plants have in this particular physical environment, requiring minimal care and attention on the field (compared to other more traditional forms of agriculture in the area). Overall, they are more "secure products that have a long shelf-life" (Nd Key Informant 2). While the conditions are favorable for minimal pest control, invasive weeds are identifiably the main problem, one that requires time-consuming manual labor to manage. Weed recognition, nomenclature and physiological properties are deemed important for sustaining a healthy production. Though NOTEdi does not have official organic EU certification, the production methods abide by organic principles and legal requirements.

3.1.3.1.b. Product processing and packaging

In addition to the plot of land, NOTEdi rents an office space in the village center which is used as a lab for transforming raw materials, packaging final products, as well as for processing and preparing orders for delivery. NOTEdi is responsible for all aspects of their product process—from land cultivation to retail distribution, and at times also adopts the sales role (e.g.: fairs). Now, they have three product lines, each with a different brand—NOTEdi *Spezie*, NOTEdi *Fiore*, and NOTEdi *Zafferano*. The former comprises the aforementioned additions—thyme, laurel, oregano, rosemary, sage, wild fennel, chili pepper—as well as two spice blends combining a select few of these. This line also includes the Dehydrated Giarratana Onion, the only non-herb or spice product that is entirely new to enter the regional market, insofar as "normal" transformations of the onion are sold as jam or pickled confections. NOTEdi Fiore is a line of flower bulbs, including their own saffron bulbs, as well as iris, daffodil and tulip, all sold to the floricultural market or to any interested hobby gardener or farmer. To

date, saffron however remains the “star” product, available in three forms—as dried pistils, powder, or flower bulbs. With minimal reference to medicinal properties, current marketing efforts are geared towards the sale of these diversified products for culinary purposes (except the flowers, of course), and more specifically towards Italian culinary customs given that the current market reach is primarily limited to Italy.

NOTEdi’s small-scale production matches their small *al dettaglio* confection—ten-gram packages are prepared for retail. In the case that large quantities are ordered, other local producers help to fulfill and complete the demand. Packages are sold individually but also in a six-pack gift-box (see Figure 7). Marketed as a build-your-own, easy-use “dried herb and spice library”, it allows the consumer to personalize favorites. Though saffron powder is available in this package format as well, saffron pistils are separately bunched in glass jars (see Figure 8).

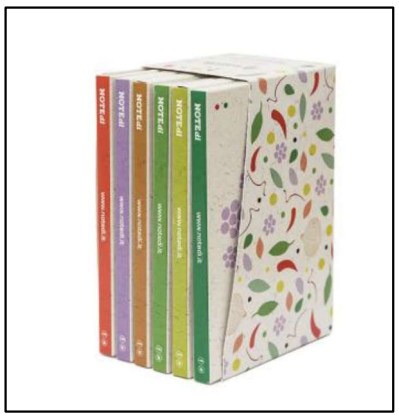

Figure 8. *NOTEdi Six-package dried herb and spice "library".*
Source: NOTEdi website (notedi.com).

Figure 8. *NOTEdi jar of dried saffron pistils.*
Source: NOTEdi website (notedi.com).

3.1.3.1.c. Team Organisation

A widened production was also accompanied by the incorporation of a new team member in charge of administration and financial management, and the official establishment of a commercial division, responsible for developing national and international business relations, conducting market research and product marketing. NOTEdi’s current team is comprised of three young men in their twenties, all *Giarratanese,* natives from Giarratana, and equal shareholders in the company, yet carrying quite distinct roles. Each contributes a specific skillset—marketing and business relations, production and technical construction, and administration/financial management—with the intention of creating a synergistic division of labor. The transformation of raw materials—processing, packaging and distribution—is often a collective endeavor. For two members, a family business in food and agriculture was proposed as a career path, yet they refused and opted to launch their own new venture.

In the last few years since its foundation, the company has experienced considerable growth (mainly with saffron). NOTEdi has not yet reached the point of self-reliance—each team member is involved in supplementary income-earning activities. At the moment, all of the revenue generated from NOTEdi's sales is reinvested back into company. More precisely, investments have been mainly oriented towards the registration of trademarks with the provincial Chamber of Commerce[20], an effort that, although costly, has helped them to solidify their brand name. Eleven products are currently registered on the market, while nine are in-development.

Seeing that NOTEdi's brand has been strengthened, coupled with an ability to produce a consistent quality, the team is currently driven by primarily economic objectives. Dedicating the majority of efforts to marketing and sales is deemed necessary for ensuring a profitable return and for attaining future goals—growth, collaboration with other producers, and client expansion. Curtailing cost is essential to their operation, especially with regards to obstacled deemed surmountable through self-education, such as the building technical infrastructure. Harvested plants are dried and stored in the 160m^2 greenhouse and on drying racks, both of which were self-assembled (see Figure 9). The fence surrounding their land space was also self-constructed. Building a dehydrator from scratch was a more challenging undertaking, one that although time-consuming, saved a lot of money in the long-term, and represented an important step forward in the experimentation and conception of new dried products.

Figure 9. *NOTEdi greenhouse, drying racks and harvest baskets.*

[20] The Chamber of the Commerce for the three south-eastern provinces of Catania, Ragusa and Syracuse—*Camera di Commercio di Catania, Ragusa e Siracusa*—located in Ragusa Superiore, Ragusa, Sicily.

3.1.3.2. Myriad, Hybrid Network Circuits

NOTEdi's two main network circuits mirror two branches of their organizational structure—marketing and sales, and production. Administration and financial management meddles a little in both. Though holding different purposes, both circuits are compositely diverse and resort to both traditional and novel knowledge forms. For both production and marketing/sales, social media, namely Facebook© and Instagram©, play a vital role in both attracting new clients and professional networking. Within this context, client refers to both shop vendors/retailers who sell NOTEdi products and individual consumers who purchase NOTEdi products. Instagram© was singled out as being more useful as a marketing than a sales tool, relative to Facebook© that is used for both. Some of the interviewed local producers also stated that they learned about and connected with NOTEdi via the latter.

3.1.3.2.a. Marketing & Sales

NOTEdi's client base is categorized according to its relational nature—direct and non-direct—both of which were described as growing. For the former, although the shops' specification varies (e.g. wine shop, typical product shop, etc.), the criterion shared by all of them is their characteristic of being a small, specialty store, and not large retailers (e.g.: supermarket). Shop vendors/owners are directly approached by NOTEdi's marketing and sales representative, in person or by telephone. At times it is the reverse, where by retailers may discover the company via word of mouth, in person, via Facebook© or the website. For individual clients, it is consistently one-way—they always contact NOTEdi for placing orders via Facebook©, website, Instagram© or direct public sales opportunities such as fairs. Word of mouth is important for product promotion at both the local and the extra-local levels.

Direct clients

Contact and communication with shop vendors/owners are managed by the marketing and sales representative. For the time being, the shops are located within Sicily, in other Italian regions (especially in the Centre-North), and in a few international locations. The majority of vending points selling NOTEdi products in Sicily are located in the *territorio Ibleo* in towns such as Syracuse, Modica, Ragusa and Scicli. With the exception of a few, many of these are also located in places that are marked by a steady flow of tourism (especially in the last few years since the UNESCO "Val di Noto" designation). NOTEdi typically prefers to sell its products to shops who prioritize and celebrate local typical products, exclusively from Sicily and majorly from the specific territory. All of the interviewed shop vendors/owners expressed this place-based delimitation as their core criterion. Physical proximity was expressed by NOTEdi's marketing and sales representative as a factor facilitating face-to-face

relations and door-to-door delivery with clients within the territory, a direct arrangement which the shop owners/vendors also articulated a fondness towards. All of the shop owners/vendors described their relationship with NOTEdi using words like "collaboration" and "friendship" and most highlighted their appreciation for youth such as NOTEdi, involved in agricultural initiatives. They expressed pride and happiness in supporting such activity as a form of territorial promotion and/or valorization. Still, trips are exceptionally made to other areas in Sicily, especially to the urban hubs of Palermo and Catania for delivering packages or meeting with potential new vendors. Further, while the international network remains limited to a select number of European countries (Holland, France, Spain), NOTEdi manages deliveries and communication directly—communication remains direct though at times not face-to-face. This is also the case for certain shops in Italy, especially those further in the Centre-North.

Belonging to this category of direct-relation clients is the unique case of Eataly©. An internationally renowned mega-store of typical Italian food holding strong ties with and promoting Slow Food, it has storefronts in various world cities including its birthplace Turin, NYC, Boston, Chicago, Sao Paolo, Stockholm, Munich, Doha and Tokyo, among others. During a period of two months, NOTEdi held a promotional sales booth at the chain's Roman branch and received national and international exposure from city dwellers and travelling visitors (see Figure 10). This exposure, though temporary, significantly contributed to product promotion, networking and widening the client database. Though still a process in-the-making, supplying Eataly would allow NOTEdi to meet its current objective of economic growth and broaden product and increased brand visibility. When asked why Eataly is not considered a "supermarket" and therefore fits within NOTEdi's no-large retail criteria, one of the co-founders asserted:

> *"Large retailers like Despar© and Conad© work with agricultural industries for competitive prices. Industries have big machines, they can lower the price a lot, and they can provide large quantities. Eataly is the opposite because they focus on quality, not on if you are small or big, nor if you can sell your product at a competitive price."*—Nd Key Informant 1

In other words, Eataly© is understood as a gateway for small, budding producers like NOTEdi to access a larger market interface without severely compromising their products' sale price. The example of Slow Food Presidia products was shared as a type of product sold on the store's shelves.

Figure 10. *NOTEdi's promotional booth at Eataly, Rome, Italy*

Similar to the context of fairs, NOTEdi's temporary booth installation was also considered a way to sell directly to and relate with the public. Types of networking relations established were widely diverse—business owners, friends of business owners, producers, food bloggers, journalists—spanning countries such as Denmark, Argentina, Libya, and Greece, among others. From behind-the-booth observations, the researcher could note that consumer approach involved the senses (reflecting the physiological essence of aromatic herbs), whereby passing shoppers are incited to "smell and guess" the name of the herb in the sample container. In general, consumers were fond of the products and were particularly drawn by the packaging esthetic. Like the shop vendors/owners, many also expressed support for youth "doing good deeds" and "promoting local products", an expression of empathy which often led to a purchase.

Indirect clients

Due to limited human resources, time and practicality, NOTEdi also filters their products through intermediaries, via either distributors or sales representatives in other regions of Italy, or those in Sicily considered too far to sustain regular visits with, such as Palermo. These could be regional representatives/distributors, responsible for dispersing the products to stores within an entire region or city-wide representatives/distributors. In these cases, NOTEdi's client relationship is mediated, whereby there are no direct relations with the retailers, and the retail shops are chosen and managed by the representative. However, this is still a minimal practice relative to the company's current repertoire of mostly local vendors.

The company once experimented with hiring a territorial sales representative, but due to divergent business philosophies, this was abandoned. As a general operative rule, NOTEdi tries to limit intermediaries, especially within the territory, as a way of building long-lasting, more trust-worthy social relations with their clients, but also as a tactic for increasing economic independence:

> *"Because we don't go through an intermediary and our product is high-quality, direct sales allow us to gain the entire profit margin. In comparison, many other Sicilian producers lose a lot of their profit margin due to the involvement of representatives, so they need to produce more and need more land to attain their desired objectives. We use less land, yet make the same money."*— Nd Key Informant 3

Fairs

Local, regional, national and international food and agricultural fairs play a vital role for marketing and sales. Fairs are categorized into three types—Business to Business or "B2B", and Business to Consumer, or "B2C", or a combination of both. If time and financial feasibility allow, NOTEdi participates in fairs as frequently as possible either as a company with a promotional sales booth or simply as an observer-participant, a role that is usually individually adopted by the marketing and sales representative. Both B2B and B2C fairs represent a way of networking and gaining exposure, though what distinguishes the two is the latter's sales-focused context—physical proximity guarantees immediate revenue and contact with the public. B2B fairs are an opportunity to meet shop vendors, distributors and sales representatives, promoting a general ambiance favorable to networking. As mentioned, fairs vary in their geographical scope, thus targeting different consumer groups. While these geographical scopes are not mutually exclusive, some certainly serve more than others to extend market visibility beyond the local/territorial horizon. NOTEdi has participated in all types of fairs—at the local level, in Giarratana's famous *Sagra della Cipolla*, where people from neighboring towns often attend; at the regional level, in Ragusa's *Fiera Agroalimentare Mediterranea*; at the national level in Milan's *Tutto Food*, and at the international level in Slow Food's *Terra Madre Salone del Gusto* (see Figure 11). The latter is an example of an event that mixes both B2C and B2B forms of interaction. Team members, especially the marketing and sales representative, alternate their roles between, for instance, a sales-person at the booth and a marketing representative, holding private meetings with potential international buyers. Observations drawn from the *Salone del Gusto* were similar to those collected in Rome's Eataly©—the sense of smell and a "guessing game" was used to attract clients who were fond of the gift-box package and their narrative as youth "returning to rurality" and their "roots". What differentiated the two was that by virtue of being a fair, *Salone del Gusto* attracted a

wider range of buyers, distributors and sales representatives, entrepreneurs as well as food writers and academics.

3.1.3.2.b. Production (Knowledge) Network

Figure 11. *Behind NOTEdi's booth at the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto, Turin, Italy.*

Aside from the assumed production-related knowledge the team acquires through personal reading and education, the local community serves as a considerable information source. Given Giarratana's small size, agricultural vocation and proximity to other nearby towns, word of mouth is an important communication and development tool. Social relations are well-established with a myriad of local producers varying in age and experience—some are friends, some are family members, and some whose experience with the cultivation of aromatic herbs lies on a spectrum from more experimental to more expert. What fundamentally knits these diverse actors together is their understanding and familiarity with the shared territory—its history, its ecology, its environment and the socio-cultural tendencies of the people who inhabit it. NOTEdi's co-founder, refers to the community, in general, as a complementary learning source to his self-acquired botanical and agronomical know-how:

> *"I inform myself, I document, I read. When I do not know something, I look for it, I study it. But I regularly communicate with so many people who have the experience, you know? You learn more from the people who have experience. (...) Here, towns are fundamentally based on agriculture, so there is a lot of knowledge about the field."*
>
> —Nd Key Informant 2

Fairs and an established network of local producers also play an important role for the production facet of NOTEdi's operation, as described in further detail below.

Other producers

Deemed fundamental to NOTEdi's current functioning and future ambitions are a web of local producers in the territory who produce aromatic herbs and plants, or saffron, or both. Altogether they comprise diverse ages and skill-levels—well-experienced producers, persons devoted to other agricultural vocations yet experimenting with this niche, as well as persons with no past agricultural experience who have adopted it as a hobby.

> *"I was looking for something that did not exist, something niche, that we don't see in large distribution. Oranges, grapes…are cultivations that exist over thousands of hectares. But in the end, with the years, these things always go to die. I do not even remember how I came across saffron, surely by researching for more "particular" products."*—Agricultural Producer 2

This very diverse circle of people, who at the moment mostly represents a social exchange platform for knowledge and ideas, are called "future collaborators" by NOTEdi, as many of them express interest in forming a cooperative alliance. If NOTEdi receives a very large order that they cannot fulfill due to limited land space, these producers can also help fill the gap. In addition to knowledge-sharing, these informal meetings often include a show-and-tell element—a producer may bring a product they have been experimenting with to show, as a new creation/iteration of the raw material which NOTEdi doesn't produce and discovers.

These relations were initially established owing to either simply knowing of one another via word of mouth, or from producers' purchase of NOTEdi saffron bulbs. Many, curious about emerging saffron cultivations as a niche market, researched and experimented with the plant. Save a couple, the majority of these producers don't have an established brand, selling their yields within a limited local network of consumers, exclusively to distributors or not selling yet at all. One exception was a retiree in the south-western province of Agrigento, based outside of the Hyblaean territory, with no previous agricultural experience who discovered NOTEdi a few years ago via Facebook©, became interested in saffron and subsequently purchased a number of bulbs. Despite the considerable age gap, he has become an important figure, given his discovered passion for the plant, his ability to experiment and create innovative products under his own brand name, namely saffron-based liquor and *amaro*.

Fairs

Though fairs are attended primarily for marketing and sales purposes, they are at times also a useful learning tool regarding new production methods. One example is Amsterdam's GreenTech, a B2B and B2C fair focused on innovation in the horticultural technology industry. Marketing and

branding is NOTEdi's strongpoint, an ability for them to have a comparative advantage relative to others, whose expertise may be limited to high-quality production. A production-centered collaboration, then, is an avenue they are exploring and have ambitions to realize.

3.1.4. NOTEdi: Thematic Findings

3.1.4.1. Aesthetic Appeal

One of the most prominent themes to surface from the interviews with both NOTEdi and their surrounding producer-vendor network (interviews) is the perception of the company's branding and packaging as unique. All of the shop vendors shared the view of the products as visually attractive, and easily "sellable", particularly as an "herb-and-spice library" concept and gift-box. Many of these plants are commonly found in the territory—either foraged in the wild, planted in herb gardens for everyday use, or retrieved from a friend or family members who is a producer him/herself. So, in a context of abundance and availability, aesthetically appealing products become a selection criteria for vendors to distinguish "innovative" producers from those who have "regular" packaging.

For producers, unique visual branding was rather expressed as one associated with or the byproduct of marketing knowledge, a skill deemed lacking in the surroundings, or in the region as a whole:

> *"You know what the problem here is, in Sicily? A farmer is good at being a farmer but isn't good at being a salesman."*—Nd Key Informant 1

While many producers focus on high-quality production, often following organic or biodynamic methods, rarely are they responsible for selling their own products. All of the interviewed producers stated that their client sales are almost entirely filtered through an intermediary, namely a sales representative or a distributor. Fearing minimum economic needs may not be met, many end up selling their products at a lower price than its absolute value. The risk of not making that minimal profit is considered too high. Others, not so dependent on intermediaries, such is the case for NOTEdi, rely on both direct and indirect methods to sell their products. A few producers emphasized their on-the-field expertise as being ampler than NOTEdi's, especially with regards to more traditionally cultivated herbs such as oregano:

> *"Let's say I've had a lot of experience in the field. I'm not an agronomist. I have no experience as an agronomist. I do not want to deal with agronomy. I work my way, and someone, some agronomist, says to me "how do you do this?" … I do it this way and I have no problems."*—Agricultural Producer 4

Fusing these two types of expertise—production and marketing—was therefore conceived as a mutually beneficial, complementary effort that would inspire co-learning. Producers perceived their knowledge gap as one that can be filled by NOTEdi and vice-versa. In addition to diluting the role of the middle-man, it would also be a way for some to access a broader market sphere that would otherwise remain unfamiliar. In turn, for NOTEdi, this would imply extending the scope of production and transformation-centered knowledge. Forming a type of collaboration would potentially allow for a collective increase in the sheer quantity of production. Although they perceive each other as knowledgeable in these respective domains, the type of knowledge is more hands-on-experience- than education-based.

3.1.4.2. Niche, but More Niche "Up There"

Although herbs and saffron have been present in Sicily's environment for many centuries, their cultivation as a distinct agricultural branch is a more recent phenomenon, reflecting a modern trend to rediscover and revive them. Overall, these plants were perceived by small producers as a more viable venture than traditionally established territorial cultivations such as citrus fruit, tomatoes or grapes which have been monopolized over large coastal land extensions. Even producers who have started their venture with the cultivation of more customary herbs, such as oregano, have recently begun diversifying their fields as a competitive survival strategy. With an over-ten-year experience cultivating oregano, one of the interviewed producers recently incorporated saffron into his endeavor and expressed this idea of finding economically sustainable ways to remain relevant in the agricultural realm:

> *"It's been so many years that they've been here. Since the years of Christ, herbs were already there, but always in their spontaneous form. From spontaneous to cultivation, it's been about thirty years, here. (...) These last two or three years there has been a boom. The economic crisis has made itself felt, and people throw themselves into the countryside."*
>
> —Agricultural Producer 4

From the lens of both producers and vendors, a distinction was further drawn between saffron and aromatic herbs. Bearing in mind that Italian saffron has been traditionally produced in other regions such as Abruzzo and Sardinia, Sicilian saffron is considered a more novel cultivation. This view was also shared by more experimental producers seeking timely avenues for entering the market, paths in which consumer demand has been less saturated, describing Sicilian saffron as a rare product to be appreciated by select consumers willing to pay the price:

Aromatic herbs have been known to us for hundreds, for thousands of years, but today, you know, there is a sort of trend with these aromatic herbs. This is the right time to ... Possibly saffron, as something a little more niche. (...). For example, Italy imports a lot of aromatic herbs. More than 80%.(...) From countries like Iran, Spain, ... but the narrative is always this: imported products with inferior quality. And they are cheap, like the oranges. Italian and Iranian saffron—one has nothing to do with the other. So, unfortunately, when I present saffron to people, they say "it's very expensive"...but it takes a lot of work. (...) They are niche products that are highly appreciated.—Agricultural Producer 2

However, while pockets of saffron and aromatic herb production are growing in Sicily, market demand is concentrated elsewhere. NOTEdi, their network of producers and vendors expressed that such products are more attractive to consumers in Northern regions, or to visiting tourists, rather than to locals. Because of favorable soil and climate conditions, it is easy for local consumers to access these plants either by growing them at home, by taking some from a neighbor or friend who grows it. There is abundance, and the local lay consumer doesn't purposely seek it out. This view was more pronounced for aromatic herbs than saffron which is considered a more unique territorial product than say, oregano or thyme. The vendors, who, in addition to aromatic herbs in aesthetically appealing packages, consider saffron to be a separate market branch, and a product with an ascribed rarity.

"Here, everyone has them! (...) They have the oregano, chilli pepper, spices, ... it's our culture to do this... and to have ...if there is a small piece of land, we plant it. In the balcony, in the vases. Or, if you do not have it, I have it and I'll give it to you. Now, I've produced some oregano, if you're a friend of mine, I'll give you some oregano. We sell here in Sicily, but the greatest demand is in the North. The further up you go, the more market there is."
—Nd Key Informant 2

3.1.4.3. Quality as Guiding Principle

In all of the interviews and observations, quality was the recurring catch phrase. Even when the researcher met with producers who don't produce aromatic herbs or saffron, like olive oil and cheese, it was repeatedly emphasized. It was the guiding principle, influencing producers' practice and vendors' selection, voiced in two main ways—quality as care, and quality as place-and-people-based.

In the first, quality was associated with careful product treatment, an immaterial trait desired by vendors and practiced by producers. For NOTEdi, quality is the driving philosophy of their cultivation, and this is especially the case for saffron, a trait that mirrors its attributed niche value. Though the founders initially started by experimenting with its wild counterpart, they opted for the domesticated

crocus sativus variety because of its assumed higher-quality, associated with a denser concentration of phytochemical properties. While saffron isn't a particularly demanding plant, its mid-autumn harvest requires patience, precision and numerous hands. Flowers bloom for barely a two-week interval, and founders rally friends and family together to help with the collective task (see Figure 12). Like most wild edible flowers, saffron should be harvested early morning, immediately post-bloom. Three stigmas are then hand-plucked from the center, and should be dried immediately after extraction for ensuring that "optimal quality is contained" (Nd Key Informant 1). This is the process repeated daily, yielding a total seasonal average of 200,000 flowers, equivalent to roughly one kilogram of dried saffron pistils. Aromatic plants, though still harvested in accordance with their seasonality, are not so time-sensitive. For instance, oregano is typically harvested in the heart of summer, left to hang dry in bunches in the greenhouse, and then cleaned and processed manually in the lab (see Figure 13).

"For oregano, only the tips of the lighter green stalks are used, where the flowers are, because this part conserves the highest quality"—Nd Key Informant 3

A producer who has been cultivating oregano since 1990s, has another method, describing the various filtering steps that the oregano must undergo before it reaches the perceived accepted standard for sale. Manual weeding is practiced by all producers, with the occasional use of hand tools like a hoe. Overall, the component of manual work was emphasized greatly by producers, who expressed a sense of pride and satisfaction with their procedural rituals.

Figure 13. *Manual harvesting of saffron pistils in NOTEdi's lab.*

Figure 13*. Cleaning and preparing dried oregano for packaging process in NOTEdi's lab.*

All actors articulated a strong place-based narrative—a product's quality was most linked to its territorial origins. All respondents referred to the territory as *territorio Ibleo*. Many of them described it as "rich" not in economic terms, but rather in terms of its fertility and climate, as a place that offers a lot and is blessed with undiscovered potential. Territory is inscribed in NOTEdi's story, apparent in the

way the team members rationalize their undertaking, as well as a characteristic feature of their website and marketing material. This was a generally similar depiction given by all producers, both new and more experienced—cultivation as foremost a reflection of and rooted in the territory.

Definitions of place expressed by NOTEdi product vendors were more nuanced—the criteria was voiced differently, though quality-as-place consistently remained the leading catchphrase. "Organic" either was not mentioned as a requirement or was explicitly mentioned as a non-determining factor of the product selection process. Some discussed the importance of the constituent ingredients, some mentioned the no-large scale retailer factor, one stressed culinary utility, and one mentioned "km-0" to connote the exclusive focus on local (*territorio Ibleo*) products. The variability in responses also depended on the nature of the shop in question. For instance, a wine shop/bar, set different quality-based criteria than a small grocery-restaurant spot. Another factor that impacted the decision was also the demographic of the clientele. A wine bar/specialty shop owner in Ragusa Ibla (one the Val di Noto towns experiencing rapid tourism growth in the last few years) expressed a "looser" restriction in their conception of territory for certain products, as a way of satisfying passing tourist consumer demand:

> *"So, they are mainly products from the territory but to have a wider range, I also have wines from other areas. But my policy is always Sicily. This is important. Do you know how many companies, how many producers from the outside have tried to put their products in this shop? But I rejected them. Not because they do not make a quality product, but because my policy is Sicily."*—Shop Owner/Vendor 2

A vendor and owner of a grocery shop/café-restaurant in less-touristy Ragusa Superiore, was stricter in his conceptual delimitation of place, limiting the stock of his products to those only originating from the *territorio Ibleo*. In this case, quality incorporated not only territorial origin but also the producer. Before purchasing a product line, the owner said he pays a visit and organizes local tasting events with the producer, to obtain a deeper understanding of the face and story behind the product:

> *"To know the quality, you have to know the origins. Like, I know olive oil because I used to pick olives, I went to the place, because I tried different kinds of olive oil, I listened to different peoples' opinions about it. So, you can try to find your way with quality, because I don't think there is just one way. People have different ideas about wine, beer, cheese. I think you have to go back to the product to know the quality."*
>
> ——Shop Owner/Vendor 3

NOTEdi's personification as three young people who have "returned to the land", as people tied to the place from where they come from, is positively perceived by the onlooker, whether vendors, consumers or producers. So, place does not only comprise the physical space, but also the people it embeds. Being young is part of NOTEdi's characterization as perceived by their surrounding network and by more transitory acquaintances such as fairs, etc. One shop owner in Giarratana expressed this notion:

> *"Giarratana is already less worse, we have many young people, like NOTEdi, that are starting to open up new activities and we must admire what they do. Notwithstanding all the problems that are here in Sicily, the crisis ... it's not that everything works so well. (...) It's about admiring all these guys who want to return. Also, because the territory allows it…to cultivate, to produce these good products…good, good! The climate, the territory ... We have here the Giarratana Onion. I really want to value Giarratana's products. It's something that's missing"*—Shop Owner/Vendor 4

However, while a sense of territorial support (via quality product selection) was expressed among the shop owners/vendors, the producers, although also expressing their relationship with NOTEdi as collaborative, held a different, perhaps less joyful, conception on territorial cooperation.

3.1.4.4. Lack of Faith in the Other: Distrust, Jealousy, Non-Cooperation

All producers spoke of the lack of cooperation as associated with a shared socio-cultural tendency to mistrust one another. Interviewed shop vendors/owners did not address this theme. In the agricultural realm, this often inclines one to take non-collaborative paths. When probed as to why, the general justification was to depict it as "just the way things are around here". One producer describes this as a character trait rooted in Sicily's settlement history:

> *"So, I'll explain to you, in my opinion, you know what it is? It's that we are used to being submissive. Our people, the Sicilians, have always been dominated by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Spaniards, Turks…they all came here. Every one of us has suffered a little bit this thing. So, by tradition, by culture, it is not that we don't believe in it, but we are skeptical about the cooperative, of the cooperative form. From the beginning, I am convinced that you are already out to get me, so I prefer not to do it."*—Agricultural Producer 1

A difference was observed between the more experienced, established producers and the ones who are experimenting or have recently started cultivating aromatic plants. The former expressed more disillusionment with the notion of cooperation because of past failed attempts and experiences which

marked them with skepticism. Such producers, though still open to collaborate with NOTEdi, stated that the extent of knowledge and advice they willingly share is limited and curated, choosing to disclose only certain, select information. Those who have more recently begun didn't explicitly articulate secrecy. So, insofar as there is knowledge-based construction, there is a simultaneous knowledge-based protection. One saffron producer, located outside of the *territorio Ibleo*, was the only one already part of a local cooperative (twenty producers), describing his experience as:

> *"Unfortunately, this cooperative has some weaknesses, many members are far away so the contact is scarce and non-continuous. I'm part of it but I do not feel integrated."*—Agricultural Producer 3

Therefore, while the arrangement was deemed convenient, the particular social organization was faulty, one that incites the seeking of diversified social relations, such as a more intimate collaboration with NOTEdi. This highlights that agricultural cooperatives may not always be effective, depending on what the producer deems as important cooperative features, and suggests that other forms of informal collaboration may be more effective.

By maintaining friendly relations with a network of producers and potential collaborators, NOTEdi holds a hopeful vision for the future, one that is perceived as contradictory to "the old, traditional mentality geared towards short-term profit and not long-term socio-economic gain" (Key informant 1). Though generally people associate this mentality as pertaining to that of an older generation, it is one that lingers, as ingrained in the social behavior even of some new, younger generation producers. A third-generation citrus producer, though aware of failed attempts in establishing orange cooperatives in his town, was more hopeful:

> *"(...) Today, we young people see that it can beneficial, it can all be positive. If you have an idea, I have an idea, we exchange them, maybe something better comes out of it. Once, there was maybe a speech that you know something, you do not tell me that you're afraid of me, I'll steal the customer, I'll make you lose money, so that's the wrong mentality that there is. Now, slowly, slowly, this mentality is changing. [Key Informant 1] thinks so, I think so, maybe someone else. But still there is the old school of thought that hinders. It's a pity, (...) we would all do well. A collaboration serves to grow, not to kill each other. It is not easy to find like-minded people here. (...)"*—Agricultural Producer 2

Mistrust was also manifested at the institutional level, as disappointment and negative feeling expressed towards the other, embodied by the governing body at territorial, regional and national

levels. Many gave up in trying to receive financial help in the past, and others don't even attempt to try because of what is perceived as either an unjust system or a process filled with time-consuming bureaucracy.

> *"I don't count on the State, I have realized it's a large disappointment. Sicily is made like this, I don't know why. (...). Here, you are a little abandoned."* —Agricultural Producer 4

NOTEdi described themselves as among those who have tried applying for rural development funds in the past, but were discouraged by "the exasperating and time-consuming paper work, with criteria that is seemingly ever-changing and inconsistent" (Key Informant 1). Two producers described the system as unjust and the dispersion of funds as faulty. At the European level, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)'s regional rural development funds filtered through Europe, were depicted as a program always favorable to the larger producers, the ones who are already well-established and seek to further expand their operation, not to those who are looking to start-up. While all producers were aware that an EU-funded financial aid program is available, none tried to apply due to its conception as a system that is not designed to support new-comers:

> *"Young people, up to forty years, have the possibility to take advantage of European funds. I informed myself about this a few years ago. For example, I did not want to buy twenty hectares of land, I wanted to buy two. But do you know what they do? They give the funds, the money, only for land purchases worth a minimum value of 200,000 euros. Do you know to who this thing works best for? To those who already have a large company that want to increase their company's capacity (...) An investment of 200,000 euros, I cannot do now (..)... I have a family ..."*—Agricultural Producer 2

While the issue of mistrust and non-cooperation at the micro-level was expressed as a socio-cultural norm that is hopefully changing, the same problem at the structural-institutional level was deemed one rooted in poor regional governance. To highlight the deficiencies inherent to both types of non-cohesion—person-to-person and institutional—respondents (save the shop vendors/owners), pointed *su*, or "up", to compare their perceived behavior (Sicily as well as Southern Italian regions in general) to that of the Northern regions. Producers expressed that the Northern regions are more "advanced" when it comes to cooperation and collective forms of organization amongst farmers.

Given that the region is the central decision-making body, all initiatives and dispersion of funds must filter through it. As one producer expressed, even if smaller, more local groups such as the

territorial LAG[21] association (the director of which was interviewed by the researcher) has good intentions and expresses a desire to support local projects, the process must first be coordinated with the Regione Sicilia, and is, as a result, too slow and time-consuming. Another producer recalled Sicily's legislative autonomous status as an unexplored, misused opportunity for implementing change and reforming the region's agriculture-based economy and funding process. In summary, there was a general discrepancy between the narrative of the LAG representative and the producers.

3.2. Case Study 2. Metafarm's Gastronomic Trekking in the Monti Lattari

3.2.1. Setting the Scene in Campania and the Amalfi Coast

The second case study is located in Campania, a region in the southwestern Italian Peninsula bordered by five other administrative regions: Lazio to the northeast, home to the nation's Roman capital, Molise to the north, Puglia to the northeast and Basilicata to the east, with its western coastline running along the Tyrrhenian Sea. Populated by just under 6 million people, a figure equivalent to a density of 424.6 inhabitants per km^2—twice the national average (201 inhabitants per km^2)—Campania is the most densely populated region in Italy (EC, 2012; ISTAT, 2015). The metropolitan belt of its capital Naples covers less than 20% of the regional surface area, yet it carries 80% of its total population (D'Alisa, Burgalassi, Healy, & Walter, 2010).

Like Sicily, Campania is considered a "less developed" region relative to the rest of the country due to its high unemployment rate and low per capita GDP (EC, 2017b). Organized criminal activity and corruption remain one of the region's important social problems. In recent years, this has been exemplified by the ample media attention that Campania has received for the *Terra dei fuochi* ("Land of fires"), also called *Triangolo della morte* ("Triangle of death")—the largest illegal waste dump area in Europe, associated with Camorra, the Neapolitan Mafia (D'Alisa et al., 2010). While the breadth of this topic merits a separate research inquiry, it is one should not be ignored when addressing matters dealing with agriculture and rural development.

Since Antiquity, Campania has held strong ties with agriculture. Termed *Campania Felix* by the Romans, which translates from Latin to "fertile countryside", its biodiverse landscape weaving volcanic soil, pastureland, plains, high limestone mountains, has long been valued as a natural agricultural setting superior to that of other Italian regions (Unger, 1953). Unlike most of rural southern Italy, dominated until WW2 by extensive landholdings called *latifundia* (Russo, 1999), Campania's

[21] See footnote 10.

countryside was mostly made up of very small properties, and this is particularly the case for the northern Salerno province (Unger, 1953).

Agriculture and food production still play an important role for the regional economy—small and medium enterprises comprise 40% of total agricultural output, mainly for the production of pasta, tomatoes, dairy products, citrus and other fruits (D'Alisa et al., 2010). However, the sector has undergone significant structural changes. From 2000 to 2010, the number of farm holdings in Campania declined by 35.5% (288, 090 holdings today) yet the total utilized agricultural area (UAA) decreased by a mere 4.6% in the same time interval (Eurostat, 2013). The latter suggests an increase in the average holding size, which currently stands at 4.0 hectares (Eurostat, 2013)—a figure three-fold less than the Italian 12-hectare average (EC, 2016). Immediately following WW2, the region's average land property size was recorded as 1.6 hectares (Unger, 1953). Notably, while 91.5% of its land area is classified as rural, only 5% of its population currently lives in rural areas. Such trends reflect a changing agricultural fabric tied to structural phenomena—the disappearance of many small-size farms, rural depopulation, the ageing of the agricultural population coupled with the low prevalence of youth participation in farming activity (EC, 2017b).

Campania comprises five provinces—Avellino, Benevento, Caserta, Napoli, and Salerno—the latter being home to the Amalfi Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage cliffy coastline, renowned for its "great physical beauty and natural diversity" (UNESCO, 2018b) as well as its proximity to the Vesuvius, the still-active volcano that once destroyed the now-archeological sites of Pompei and Herculaneum. Stretching from the towns of Vietri Sul Mare to Positano, the Coast attracts increasing, massive waves of international tourists every year and the village of Positano has become its postcard emblem. Remarkably, in a region greatly affected by the socio-economic crisis (EC, 2018b), Positano and the Amalfi Coast remain relatively sheltered from its effects, thriving from the continuous prosperity generated by the tourism sector. According to the *Azienda Autonoma Soggiorno e Turismo Positano*, the town hosted 400, 000 overnight stays and 140, 000 visitors in 2017 (Velluso, 2018). These hubs of mass tourism as pockets of prosperity is a phenomenon present across Italy, in cities and areas such as Rome, Venice, Florence and the *Cinque Terre* National Park in the northern Liguria region.

3.2.2. Montepertuso, a Humble "Hole" of Traditional Agriculture in the Monti Lattari

For describing Montepertuso's immediate setting, three central topics emerged: the socioeconomic shift marked by the tourism boom, the terraced landscape, and Montepertuso's unique, still-present farming community. In addition to the researcher's field observations, these descriptions

were also extracted from narrated memories of locals who have lived in Montepertuso since their childhood, having therefore witnessed time-sensitive changes.

3.2.2.1. Economic Shift from Agriculture to Tourism

About fifteen-hundred steps above seaside Positano, lies Montepertuso—a small village of just over 300 inhabitants, which along with neighboring Nocelle and Positano, comprise the Positano commune, north of the Salerno province. Translated to "mountain with the hole" in local Neapolitan dialect, Montepertuso is settled amid the Lattari Mountains Regional Park, a chain of mountains stretching inland across the Sorrento and Amalfi Coasts. The park's name, meaning "mountains of milk", reflects the territory's past deeply rooted in goat- and cattle-based agriculture. A local farmer recounted this past reality:

> *"So many cows! The whole village had so many cows! The mountain was all grass. Every morning, at two o'clock in the night, one hundred to two hundred people went to prepare the pasture. They climbed up the mountain, up there, and prepared the pasture…like a procession!"*
>
> —Family Farmer 2

Prior to and during the Second World War (WW2), the territory was characterized by hunger, poverty and high fertility. Family agriculture, although not as lush and abundant as today, mainly due to poor infrastructure (e.g. water shortage), was the population's socio-economic basis. Over the last fifty years, the relevance of this activity has significantly been diluted due to the tourism boom which took off in the early 1960s and is currently the primary economic sector. Especially following WW2, travelling Italian and expat writers, artists and celebrities boasted and documented Positano's beauty, among which American writers Gore Vidal, John Steinbeck and Truman Capote, French writer André Gide, Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli, and Roman photographer Antonia Cesareo. This period of post-war prosperity and modernity generated the still-ongoing phenomenon of land abandonment, as agricultural activity is left behind in favor of the economic security assured by tourism. Although the sea's image is still Positano's central "selling point", fishing communities present in the 1960s are barely existent today.

3.2.2.2. Terraced Landscape

With the neighboring village of Nocelle, Montepertuso is considered one of two towns with a still-present agricultural community, albeit its prevalence has dissolved. Akin to giant stairs leading up to the mountaintop forest, the terraced topography is proof of a remnant rurality (see Figure 14).

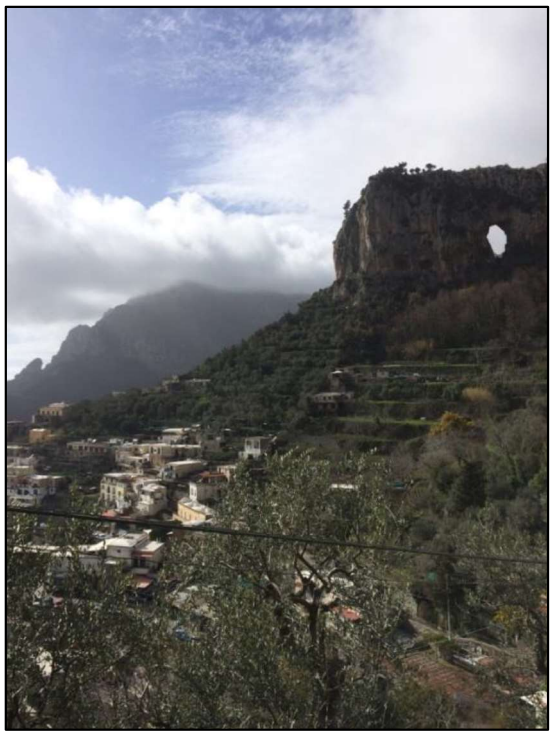

Figure 14. *View overlooking Montepertuso's terraces and "hole".*

Traditionally constructed to produce arable land on steep slopes, terraces are characteristic of much of the Mediterranean Basin's landscape heritage—those found on the Amalfi Coast date back to around 950-1025 AD (Caneva & Cancellieri, 2007). Measuring land occupancy is tricky and imprecise—measured roughly by the number of gardens one has, a dimension contrasted with the more commonly used hectare for measuring flatland. Supported by dry-stone walls locally known as *macere*, the Amalfi Coast's terraced walls were originally built for growing profitable tree crops, namely grape vines, chestnuts and lemons (Savo, Caneva, McClatchey, Reedy, & Salvati, 2014). Lemons, whose cultivation has been documented since the Middle Ages, are a vestige of the area's traditional rural culture and picturesque topography (Piscitelli, 2011; Tarolli, Preti, & Romano, 2014). Specifically, the *sfusato Amalfitano*, a large and oblong-shaped lemon with a thick, edible peel is the main local cultivar, also used for the production of the famous *limoncello* digestive liquor. Although the Mediterranean climate is predominant in Campania, the coast's drastic altitudinal shift from sea to mountain has produced a micro-climatic gradient. Upward from Montepertuso towards the top of the Monti Lattari, one finds a rather temperate environment populated by a forest vegetation of oak, chestnut and pine trees. Chestnut trees have long been integral to the cultural-environmental landscape, traditionally co-existing with vines and lemons, as their wood is used for the construction of the *pergola*—a

horticultural support system for hanging fruit (Piscitelli, 2011). Given an ageing farming population, such traditional knowledge is being lost and irreplaced:

> *"The problem is that the vast majority of our farmers, 99% are above 55 years old. We do not have young people. We are also losing the knowledge of how to make a terrace. Time after time, the soil pushes up and collapses. It's not good. Because when you call a new company, they arrive, they want fast money. It's a disaster! We are losing the knowledge of how to make the pergolas. The young guys, they know nothing."*
>
> —Producer/Farm Tour Operator

3.2.2.3. Montepertuso's Present Farming Reality

For Montepertuso's local farmers, the area's architectural topography embodies an arduous agricultural reality. Despite visible farmhouse abandonment, the presence of farming activity lingers and presents quite the striking contrast to chaotic Positano, stationed right below. Here in Montepertuso, agriculture is still practiced mainly using traditional methods. Farmers, many of whom belong to the baby-boomer generation, can be seen walking through their gardens with a *falcia* dangling from their side-pocket—a sharp, crescent moon-shaped garden hoe used for manual weeding (see Figure 15). Indeed, the physical constraints fostered by the stairs doesn't favor the use of machinery, and most land labor is still performed by hand. Lush and diverse, the family-farmed vegetable gardens are reflective of the ingredients used in the typical, local Neapolitan cuisine—eggplants, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, squash, cauliflower, lettuce, beans, potatoes, onions, basil, and a colorful array of tomato varieties (see Figure 16). Providing shade to these edible grounds are various fruit and nut trees—hazelnut, walnut, chestnut, fig, mulberry, apricot, prune, and the *sfusato* lemon trees. Seed-saving, crop rotation and organic production methods, such as the utilization of a water-and-copper herbicide, are common practice. Adding to this multilayer agricultural design are farm animals, such as rabbits, chickens, pigs, turkeys, whose living conditions are restricted by limited space. Cellars filled with wine, hanging cured pork-based *salami* and *prosciutto*, canned tomato and fruit preserves, are visual evidence to the year-long labor that survives the winter months.

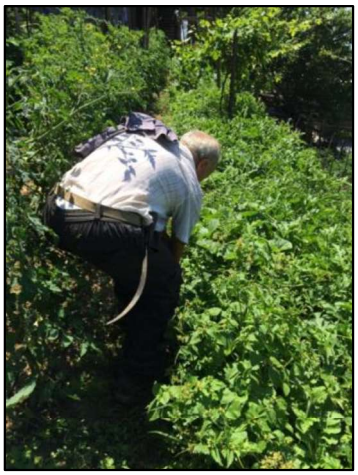

Figure 15. *Family farmer weeding his garden using a "falcia".*

Figure 16. *Vegetable garden in Montepertuso with Amalfi Coast in the background.*

Transport amid the terraces remains difficult. Originally a carriage road built by the Romans, the 50-km winding, narrow road known as the State Road 163 Amalfitana, connects the coastal towns (Piscitelli, 2011). Built less than 40 years ago, it is considered a relatively recent innovation, allowing for the mobility of a dense number of vehicles. From Positano to Montepertuso, the road threads through the village heart and central *piazza*, but in all other parts, one must walk up and down steep steps. Amid the terraced garden paths, mules and a special pulley system (see Figure 17) are utilized for transporting goods.

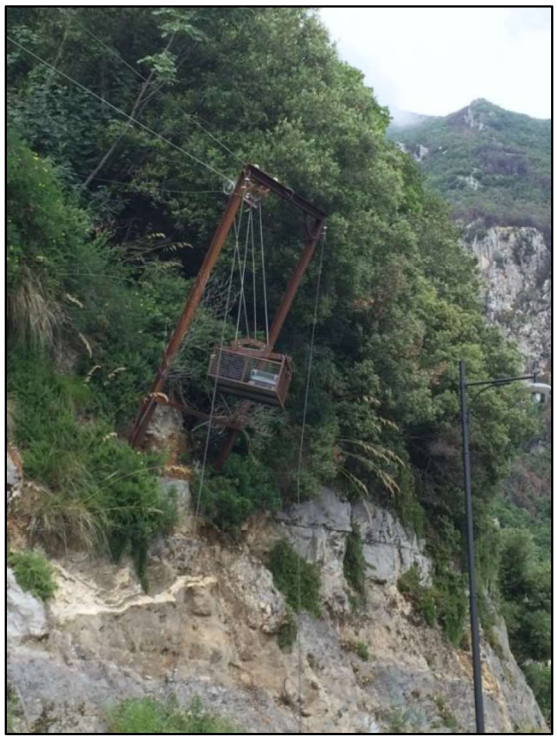

Figure 17*. Pulley system.*

3.2.3. Metafarm: Descriptive Findings

3.2.3.1. Gastronomic Trekking: Forging a New Path

Positano commune's historical shift in economic activity, likened to a veritable "changing of skins" (Key Informant 1), plays a very important role in contextualizing the operation of the second case study. Based in Montepertuso, Metafarm was founded in 2014 as a cultural association with an objective to host different activities, connecting visitors to a still-present farming reality of local food production, transformation and consumption. From Ancient Greek, the prefix *meta* translates to "beyond"—Metafarm therefore denotes a post-modern conception of farming. Metafarm's main activity—Gastronomic Trekking (GT)—is a socio-enogastronomic experience designed to reconnect visiting tourists to the local territory via a sensory rural experience. The motivation for designing this activity is to challenge the dominant tourism system perceived as consumerist, formulaic and disconnected from the territory. GT is thus an innovative way of creating a new economy around a territory-based experience, while proposing a more sustainable form of tourism. Key informants emphasized the motivation of designing an activity to *with* people instead of *for* people (the latter being characteristic of more "formulaic" tourist experiences in the area).

Metafarm's three founders have fused together their distinct branches of expertise to create the experience—design, psychotherapy, and stage design—inviting visitors to forage and cook with wild edible foods in their "social food lab" and "itinerant cooking school" (www.metafarm.net/en). A designer by profession, the founder is in charge of guiding the GT visitors, simultaneously adopting the role of educator and chef. The stage designer sets up the kitchen's spatial layout, guiding the visitors through the ingredient preparation and cooking components of the activity. He also helps in marketing material, namely website design. The former two team members thus interact directly with visitors on a regular basis. In line with Metafarm's emphasis on reviving rural space through sociality, the psychotherapist holds a directorial function, designing the activity in ways that guarantee moments of conviviality and group-development, yet never directly interacts with the visitors. She is also responsible for education and research aspects and regularly leads projects with the local community. Altogether, they refer to themselves as "metafarmers".

Advertised on Trip Advisor© and Airbnb Experience© as to-do day activities in the area, Metafarm is particularly strategic about attracting people to their mountain activity. Precisely, GT is rooted in the combination and transformation of two activities which typically attract tourists in the area—hiking and cooking. As staff members explained, visitors tend to follow guidebook itineraries which allow for a constrained experience of place. Popular walking routes such as the Path of the Gods,

and “classic” pasta-making classes with pre-prepared ingredients were given as examples. With the intention to build a sense of surprise, visitors are not provided with a very detailed itinerary prior to the GT activity. By using a certain marketing vocabulary which reflects those more common activities, like “cooking class” and “wine tasting” and “hiking”, GT intends to attract a number of people deemed necessary for minimal economic survival. Recently, within the previous two years, the founders observed a boost in the attendance and demand for the activity, able thus to rely on it as a stable source of income, though two of three team members partake in supplementary income-generating activities. Driven by both economic and innovative motives, Metafarm co-founder illustrates this split tension:

> *“There is a proverb we say: “entrare seco, e doppo diventare chiato”. Chiato in our dialect means one who is fat! So, it means that the entrance is very narrow, and after getting in, you move in a larger space, in a more comfortable position. Changing the situation. Saying we are doing a special cooking class, and showing them something different, that often they don’t expect.”*—Mf Key Informant 1

Lasting about five hours, the GT activity is composed of three successive parts. First, an informative introduction to the context and history of the place is narrated by the founder-operator, a discourse which incites visitors to imagine Montepertuso and Positano before the tourism boom. An hour of guided foraging follows, hiking along a path leading up to the terrace of a Bed & Breakfast (B&B)—this is the highest point of Montepertuso before the forest trails. Inherited by the founder from his grandparents, the B&B was once a family farmhouse occupied by animals, vines and vast vegetable gardens. Overlooking the coast and Positano, the house is now used, in addition to accommodation, as a space for hosting the culinary, social and eno-gastronomic component of the GT activity—visitors collectively prepare, cook and taste their wild findings.

Wild edibles aren’t simply found on the flat terraced spaces, but equally in between the cracks of the dry-stone walls, as one walks up the stairs. Though the practice of foraging is clearly distinguishable from agricultural cultivation, both share the element of seasonality—the availability of wild edibles peaks in the spring months when rainfall is more abundant and is also subject to yearly climate inconsistencies. The ability to regularly host a spontaneous foraging activity is testament to an important local biodiversity. To feel this biodiversity, visitors are encouraged to use their senses—to touch, feel, taste, smell, hear the different wild plants as they collect them. Each one is associated with a particular quality reflective of its physiological or cultural uses. Among the various wild plants collected are *nepeta*, one of seventy wild mint varieties found in the area, *porcellana* or purslane, considered an obnoxiously invasive and bad-tasting weed by local farmers, *farinello* or wild spinach

which takes its name from the flour-like powder staining its inner leaves, and milkweed, a key ingredient of the Italian Wedding Soup which "marries" meat and wild greens. Non-foraged ingredients are also incorporated to complement what is collected, sourced daily or weekly from an established, consistent network of local producers. These include prosecco and white wine produced in Ravello from a local *falanghina* grape variety, honey, bread, all-purpose flour, semolina, and dairy products—cow's milk *ricotta*, *mozzarella fior di latte*, *caciotta* and butter. Although the menu is subject to change, the latter are consistently present in each course and throughout the seasons, as a way of showcasing products tied to a tradition of dairy farming and supporting local producers. Further, the farmhouse, the host space of the GT activity, has a productive vegetable plot, used for complementing GT's wild menu when needed (e.g. zucchini, lemon leaves, aromatic herbs), although its use remains mainly sporadic. Considering that GT combines foraged ingredients, garden produce and local agricultural products to run its activity, it is designed as a rural experience connected to local agriculture and with the intention to valorize it.

Following the foraging-hike, visitors collectively prepare a five-course vegetarian meal. In line with its social, relational features, participants are divided into sub-groups of two or three, each one assigned with different tasks reflecting the different culinary uses of the collected foods—one is assigned a bag to collect wild flowers, another for cooked leaves, one for aromatic herbs, and one for a fresh salad. The same applies for the cooking phase: each person is assigned to a different work station—such as preparing the pasta dough, picking flowers off their stems, rinsing leaves, or grating cheese. The meal typically begins with an *aperitivo* served while the group collectively cooks, and includes several starter bites such as: two types of *bruschetta*—one garnished with a non-basil based pesto, using wild leafy greens such as *galinsoga* or "gallant soldier", another topped with ricotta and wild edible flowers such a red valerian, poppy, and milkweed; melted *fior di latte* cheese on a bed of lemon leaves, and zucchini flower tempura (see Figure 18 and Figure 19). Then, a wild salad decorated with edible flowers is served, followed by two main dishes that vary and can include dishes such as poppy seed crepes stuffed with herbed ricotta, hand-made wild spinach gnocchi and a mixed cooked green quiche. For dessert, a traditional *casatella* with sweetened lemon ricotta, always accompanied by a seasonal homemade digestive liquor—the summertime essences were *finochietto* (wild fennel) and *nocino* (walnut). Due to the activity's unpredictable and spontaneous nature, the menu is always created along the way depending on what is available across the seasons and across the paths. Although the activity follows a general structure of "parts" as illustrated so far, rarely are two meals exactly the same. Throughout the culinary preparations, conversations relating to themes of food provenance, food transparency, production, and cultural foodways in the visitors' home countries are typically raised.

Figure 19. *Meal preparation with GT visitors.*

Figure 18. *Lemon leaf and fior di latte appetizer.*

3.2.3.2. Who Are the Gastronomic Trekkers?

Thru the summer months, Metafarm hosts about four GT trips per week, a number that reflects the peak of tourists flocking the Amali Coast during that time. Metafarm prefers the use of the word "visitors" to denote the more engaged, yet still transient role, that GT intends to evoke in its participants, distinct from the conventional in-and-out experience of place. Over the nine GT activities attended by the researcher, the majority of visitors (comprising both those interviewed in focus groups and observed) comprised English-speakers from countries like USA, Canada, Australia and Ireland, varying in age, gender, professional and academic backgrounds. They all came from urban areas such as NYC, Calgary, Munich, San Francisco, and Melbourne. Annual attendance data provided by Metafarm's founder revealed that for the last three years (2016, 2017, 2018), visitor attendance is approximately made up of 98% English speakers (50% from USA, 20% from Canada, 25% from the United Kingdom, and the remaining 5% a mix of other English-speaking nationalities) and 2% "other", including Italians. On average, groups were composed of eight to ten people, although eight is deemed the "ideal number"—a number that, according t Key Informant 1, doesn't compromise the intended group intimacy. The group's social composition was inconsistent—small groups comprised of pairs and married couples, others made up of one large family, or simply groups of friends. None were lodged in Montepertuso, but rather in one of the tourist trio-towns of Positano, Amalfi or Ravello. Their stay on the Amalfi Coast was, for the majority, composed of very short trips, hopping from one town to the next along the coast.

Promoted as an eno-gastronomic experience, GT is equally an educational group activity, designed to encourage questions, forge team-building and fuel discussion. Very few had any previous foraging experience, yet the majority had already attended a cooking class. The level of engagement and curiosity between the groups varied greatly—some attendees were fully engaged, curious to learn while others appeared less involved, anticipating the more leisurely, meal-eating component. A

common way of discerning between the two was their social behavior towards the hosts—while some expected a certain degree of "service", others treated the hosts as equals, helping with tasks like setting the table. A notable observation was that those participants who were connected to the realm of food in some way—dieticians, nutritionists, academics, passionate cooks—generally demonstrated more interest in the activity than those who were not.

3.2.3.3. Social and Knowledge Network

External to their own diverse expertise, Metafarm founders have an established social network of actors implicated in the operative functioning of GT. These are divided into two types: the neighbors in Montepertuso who are directly involved and the non-neighbors who comprise mainly local actors in the Amalfi Coast territory, less explicitly implicated than the former. Both also represent different forms of knowledge. Old recipes, botanical books, and other forms of non-socially derived knowledge also contribute to the continuous development and reformulation of the activity.

3.2.3.3.a. Neighbors

Depending on the group's age and physical capacity, one of four possible trails is selected, as some are more strenuous than others. Although the foraging mainly takes place in the Regional Park's shared public spaces (e.g. walls and communal paths), private areas are at times resorted to. An established, informal agreement with certain neighbors allows for the use of their garden space during the activity. Interviews were conducted with the three actors involved, all born and raised in Montepertuso: one garden-to-table restaurant owner and two family-farmers. Older in age, they have known the founder and his family since childhood. Visitors walk through the private paths, interact with the neighbor-farmers while picking a few garden ingredients such as green onion flowers, zucchini, and *sfusato* lemon leaves along the way. These familiar agreements manifest themselves in the form of non-monetary exchange, or barter. For instance, by walking the visitors through the restaurant's garden, adorned with tomatoes, basil and eggplants, passing the outdoor dining terrace, the founder-guide promotes the restaurant to GT visitors in exchange for the use of the space.

> *"[Mf Key Informant 1] is a very good person and I care about our friendship. I also like that he goes down there, to show the garden, to take things, it is very nice. The circle always widens, you know?"*
>
> —Restaurant Owner

Given that trekking and foraging take place in the morning, the visitors are usually immersed in the rural reality by interacting with local farmers as they tend their gardens and harvest the day's

produce. If another path is chosen, the group pit-stops in a farmer's home where they find homemade biscuits already prepared to taste, a type of social interaction that the farmer expressed fondness towards.

However, the activity is not uniformly approved by all community members, a sentiment that has spurred a certain degree of conflict, according to Key Informant 1. So, while foraging is inherently spontaneous, the followed paths are prescribed insofar as they depend on a community support system, akin to a social contract. When asked about his agreement to collaborate by allowing GT visitors to trespass into his garden, one farmer depicted this as an extension of his long-time friendship and extended family ties to some of the GT staff members. Notably, while both interviewed and observed farmers support the activity, they rarely ever practice foraging themselves. Some neighbors would even reveal the "best spots" for foraging weeds they would have otherwise gotten rid of. These actors also represented a certain degree of lay, traditional knowledge, sharing their lived experiences with the local environment and agriculture.

3.2.3.3.b. Other Network Actors

Other actors, though less direct and informal, are nonetheless fundamental to Metafarm and the success of the GT activity in Montepertuso. The Slow Food (SF) Movement plays a crucial role, given that its founders have been connected to it even before Metafarm's establishment, and were inspired by its principle of "good, clean and fair" food. As members of both the regional executive committee of Slow Food Campania and consortium leaders for Slow Food Amalfi Coast, Metafarm's founders are regularly weaved into the local, regional, national and international SF webs. Further, in holding a Slow Food-certified Master's degree as a wild herbs specialist, Key Informant 1 is able to complement his role in Metafarm with that of being a teacher and gastronomic expert in other settings. Such side-activities include specific educational, taste workshops or teaching season-long programs in collaboration with local schools, such as the *Ritorniamo al campo: Scuola Viva* SF program. The latter is a weekly, three-month long program educating elementary school children about agricultural and

Figure 20. *Elementary school children building a wild edible herbarium.*

food traditions by, for instance, immersing them in their town's tradition of lemon cultivation in a local lemon farm and guiding them through the preparation of a wild edible herbarium (see Figure 20).

Lastly, being part of the SF community, Metafarm founders are invited to partake and attend many events such as the international Terra Madre-*Salone del Gusto,* as well as various other events such as the *Palio del Grano*, where they met a young wheat farmer and wild beekeeper from Campania's Cilento region who now provides Metafarm with bee colonies for honey production. Honey tasting is an activity in-development that Metafarm hopes to weave into GT in the future, thus foreseeing the need for valorizing apicultural knowledge.

Metafarm also belongs to other civic associations such as *Associazione Startup Turismo*, a national association of young entrepreneurs working in the tourism sector, as well as WWOOF Italia[22] and *Casa delle Erbe*[23]. The tourism sector, represents the more entrepreneurial knowledge needed for learning more about Metafarm's market sector. Attending certain fairs such as the national Rimini Tourism Fair allows staff members to learn, discover where they fit in the market and offers a networking opportunity for future collaborations such as finding agriturismo who would be willing to host the activity elsewhere.

Such versatile involvement with diverse actors and knowledge forms, while not directly linked to Metafarm, dynamically fuel and shape the association as well as the development of its activities. As the circuit of actors widens, the knowledge web simultaneously broadens.

3.2.4. Metafarm: Thematic Findings

3.2.4.1. Fall or Fortune: Ways of Seeing the Future

With the number of annual tourists visiting the coast annually exceeding load capacity, the notion of sustainable local development, is contextually tied to that of sustainable tourism, a notion which Metafarm rationalizes as one of their fundamental "raison d'être". Those working in rurality are thus constrained by the local reality of tourism which is perceived as unavoidable. All study respondents recognized the negative impacts of mass tourism on the local community in the form of overcrowding, overpricing, transport-induced pollution, and unhappy residents. Yet, they didn't share the same forward-looking vision.

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[22] World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) Italia is the Italian branch of an international network of national organisations providing homestay opportunities for people to volunteer on organic farms.

[23] Casa delle Erbe, translating to "house of herbs", is an educational movement and network that took off in the early 1990s, led by a woman named Maria Sonia Baldoni. Its main purpose is to host activities and educational courses concerning the recognition of edible wild and officinal herbs, both for leisure and for work, in different regions across Italy.

On the one side, Metafarm key informants (Mf Key Informant 1, Mf Key Informant 2, Mf Key Informant 3), the lemon producer/farm tour operator and the tourism association president/hotel owner, while not radically opposed to tourism, altogether envision a different form of tourism, one that "creates a new dialogue between rurality and tourism" (Mf Key Informant 2). For Metafarm, sustainable tourism is "going back to the future"—reviving rurality in a way that is relevant to a contemporary reality. Generic tourism in the area was expressed as formulaic, following a certain recipe that favors and prioritizes transient consumerism. This latter perspective emphasized the need for diversifying experiences of tourism and spreading people outwards from the coast. Though still oriented to tourists, GT offers an alternative to the incessant in-out concentrated coastal tourism by making visitors "live a rurality that they would otherwise only see in photographs" (Mf Key Informant 2). And while this beauty is used to lure the tourist gaze, several respondents voiced the invisibility of farmers as problematic. The following two excerpts further illustrate this outlook:

> *"The farmers should be the main actors, because if we have the UNESCO heritage recognition, it is thanks to the territory's conformation. The territory has not only been made by God, it has been made for millennia by the peasants. Dry-stone walls, the Lord did not make them. The dry-stone walls were made by the Amalfi Coast's peasants. Lemons, we imported them in the year 900 after Christ. The first terraces were made in 1000 AD. Thousands of terraces have been made, these terraces have shaped the landscape. (...) But today, the farmer is not taken into consideration." (...) "We are gardeners now, not farmers really. This is a tragedy, but it's the real situation."*
>
> —Producer/Farm Tour Operator

> *"The tourism sector needs to help the farmers because we sell the land, the place. When you see the Amalfi Coast, we have this view. But at this moment, we have a tourism sector that is very rich and a farm sector that is very poor, and we need to make a synergy."*
>
> — Tourism Association President/Hotel Owner

Though at the core of this vision of sustainable tourism lies the inclusion and participation of rural areas, other respondents held a less alarmist view, speaking more amply of the economic security that tourists provide, without addressing the need to include farmers. Those sharing this viewpoint often recalled a poverty and hunger-ridden past as a point of reference, compared to a prosperous present sustained by the place's beauty. Themselves witnesses to the area's changing socio-economic fabric and to the chaos caused by excess tourism, these locals didn't state a pressing need for change, feeling somehow protected "up here" from the havoc "down there". One respondent referred to

tourism, and particularly the place's beauty as shelter from the economic crisis, otherwise affecting many areas in Italy:

> *"It's good. With tourism, everybody works. Electrician, carpenter, plumber, everything. In the winter, everybody works. Here, the crisis never came…never! (…). Outside of Positano, yes, there is an economic crisis…in Castellamare, all those areas. But the Coast…this place is too beautiful."*
>
> —Family Farmer 1

And the restaurant owner, who applies a more sustainable ethic to his restaurant practice by sourcing locally and using the vegetable garden, held a mixed view on the matter, acknowledging the ecological flaws of the current tourism pattern yet praising the economic return that the sector offers:

> *"Positano will end only if the mountain collapses. Positano is kissed by God. Tourism in Positano will never end, thanks to God. It should be a little, let's say, calmed down, not as many people, but anyone in the world wants to say "I have set foot in Positano", even for a day, for an hour. (…) the more people come, the more Positano is known. Already, wherever you go…in New York, in Canada, in France, in London, in Russia, any travel agency, you will find the postcard of Positano and Capri. It is very famous! There are too many people, too much. But you can't do anything. In the sense that, they bring wealth and money. So, you accept them, obviously. But if you see, Positano is one thing. Here, above, it's another. But even here, there are many bedrooms…lots of people are coming up here too. And for Montepertuso, this is a great thing, finally."*
>
> —Restaurant Owner

The theme of sustainability also emerged in describing the nature of the GT activity itself, described as sustainable by Metafarm's founders due its "low impact" and "low cost". The lemon producer/farm tour operator in the nearby town of Amalfi also shared this view of GT, as being *more sustainable* than his own agricultural practice, albeit organic, because it uses what is already available in the wild without cultivating anything.

Though a few visitors criticized Positano for being overcrowded, sustainability wasn't a prominent theme and none referred to the notion of sustainable tourism. When it was mentioned, sustainability was rather spoken of in terms of consumption of wild plants as contributing to dietary diversity, as a way to reduce waste and as a way of forging an immediate connection to food. Reflecting on the experience, one visitor said:

"And we spend so much time I think in Canada, probably North America, (...) trying to get rid of the weeds to make everything look perfect, but why should we not be going after and choosing some of these items that we can actually consume and use for our own purposes? So that to me was a real eye-opener, I really appreciated that."

— GT Visitor from Calgary, Canada.

3.2.4.2. Foraging as Traditional Culinary Rite

Montepertuso's rural reality is testimony to the fact that mountains are just as intrinsic to the territorial legacy as the seaside. These mountains embed a story of foraging as tied to a place-based culture and history, a story divided into three important chronological chapters that the GT guide-chef shares with visitors at the onset of the trek. Prior to the post-WW2 economic boom, when hunger was prevalent, collecting wild edible foods was commonplace, considered a necessity complementing an often-insufficient farm production. Following the war, the onset of modernity and tourism-driven economic boom diluted the culinary use of wild edibles. Family farms were able to live primarily off of their productive gardens and livestock agriculture, supported by an improved infrastructure. The third and last of these phases, postmodernity, relevant to Metafarm, focuses on the re-discovery of tastes and the promotion of local biodiversity. Each wild plant and herb is treated in a unique way, according to its culinary and physiological properties. While some plants are only used for their stems, others are collected for their leaves or flowers.

The neighbor network (Family Farmer 1, Family Farmer 2, Restaurant Owner) also recounted a similar historical timeline, yet their responses revealed a generational gap in the practice of foraging. Unlike their parents or grandparents, the local farmers grew most of their life in the post-WW2 productive era and didn't rely as much on foraging for food sustenance. One farmer recollected her early childhood as a time when foraging was more present, used to supplement the not-so-productive vegetable gardens (due to poor water infrastructure). It was a time when people planted tomato varieties that didn't need any water to grow, and eggplants and peppers were not cultivated at all. In view of current circumstances favorable to abundance, farmers no longer perceive foraging as a necessity, discarding it for two main reasons. From an aesthetic standpoint, wild plants and herbs are considered invasive "weeds" which destroy their beautiful gardens, and from a gustative standpoint, they are bad-tasting. Even though the respondents admitted they rarely ate or cooked with foraged plants themselves, only a limited selection of wild plants was considered "acceptable" for use in the kitchen for either their taste or beauty qualities, such as wild nettle to make *ravioli*, or decorative wild borage flowers. Some even expressed disgust at the thought of eating other plants foraged during the

GT activity like purslane, which they consider "too wild". Piles of purslane de-rooted and set aside for compost or animal feed were visual proof of this. This generational gap was also stressed by the fact that some farmers can recognize the plant's physical properties, yet not its name nor its culinary use. An interaction between a group of tourists, Key Informant 1 and Family Farmer 1 depicted this nuance:

Addressing Mf Key Informant 1: "What's the name of this one again (pointing to the Gallant Soldier)? What do you use it for?

Addressing the visitor group: "He's giving you these herbs? Here are some nice green beans instead!"

—Family Farmer 1

Although this older generation is fond of GT as an idea, using words like "alternative", "innovative" and "smart" to describe it, foraging is far from common practice for them. One respondent perceives GT as foremost a way to expose outsiders to a local mode of life:

"(..) he takes them to see reality ... he takes them to the hole, he takes them to the gardens to see the herbs ... (...) ... It's not the usual restaurant tourism where you sit down, you eat, and you leave. You pay and go. He shows, collects the herbs and then cooks with them... it's the very idea of cuisine, how it's realized, how we do it here. We go to the garden, we pick vegetables and we eat them.

—Family Farmer 2

Their knowledge of foraging is limited by their inherited know-how, restricted to a few familiar wild plants. This suggests that foraging as performed by Metafarm's GT, is grounded in the combination of tradition and novelty, being revived and practiced in ways which are not entirely familiar to locals of the previous generation.

An analysis of the transcribed visitor focus group interviews, observational notes from participation in the GTs, and analysis of online reviews left by visitors (see section 2.3.2.3. for a short description of online documentary data collection), revealed that the most common narrative for describing the experience was the use of vocabulary like "authentic", "unique", "local cuisine", "gastronomic heritage" . This view matches founders' motivations for developing GT as an activity showcasing the forgotten gastronomic uses of wild edible plants and herbs, and offering visitors an experience that stands out relative to others in the area. One visitor-respondent expressed this uniqueness in the immediacy and transparency of the foraging-cooking experience, a skill which he hopes to bring back and practice at home:

"I'd really to learn more about this, so I can go into a forest and be able to say "ok, that's edible" and then take that and be able to transport it into our food, because in the grocery store, you don't know what process it has gone through multiple iterations, right?"—GT Visitor from San Francisco, USA

Generally, a common complaint was the involved physicality of the trekking component—both with regards to the foraging environment and the act of foraging itself. There was a shared sentiment of perceived risk—on the one hand, bodily safety associated with physical exertion and on the other, an insecurity associated with the possibility of foraging a non-edible, or even toxic plant. Some also noted the preference of being in smaller, rather than in larger groups, which allowed for a more intimate experience. A noteworthy visitor observation was the seemingly inconsistent satisfaction with the meal—plates were at times left almost untouched, others preferred certain dishes, and others consumed everything. This signals a gap between the generally extremely positive feedback of the experience itself and the gustative component which wasn't uniformly appreciated.

3.2.4.3. Frail Cooperation, Faulty Governance

Respondents generally revealed that people in the area (Montepertuso and the Amalfi Coast) are socially divided, highlighting a lack of cooperation. For some, this was emphasized as a socio-cultural tendency towards individualism rather than one oriented towards the common good. Others stressed incoherence at the institutional governance level, and a few discussed both these concepts simultaneously. Comparisons with Italy's North-Centre regions were often drawn to stress weak social organization as a characteristic attributable to the Campania region and the South Italy macro-region.

Local family farmers producing for self-consumption and economically independent from the tourism sector, spoke of individualism as a lack of social cooperation at the non-institutional level. For farmers, this translated to the absence of agricultural cooperatives, claiming that a cooperative spirit has always been absent in Montepertuso. One respondent linked this absence with the village's current land abandonment phenomenon, drawing a comparison with the more prominent presence of social cooperatives in the North. Two respondents mentioned that while cooperatives do exist along the Coast, they remain few, giving the example of Ravello's wine or Amalfi's lemon cooperatives. Neighbor-to-neighbor relations were generally described as "good", each one perceived as minding his or her own business. By contrast, as previously mentioned, Metafarm founders held a different experience, describing an ongoing conflict with certain village residents who dislike the GT activity. This hostile sentiment has been manifested in acts of sabotage, suggestive of jealousy and suspicion towards divergent initiatives:

"(...) this morning probably, you have seen, in the first part I didn't forage. Because they sprayed herbicide on the walls (...). Because they saw me walking every day, bringing 10 people, and 10 people, they probably think "oh he's making money"..."

—Mf Key Informant 1

In addition to citing individualism as integral to the socio-cultural identity, respondents working in the tourism sector (Mf Key Informant 1,2, and 3, Producer/farm tour operator, and Tourism association president/Hotel owner) also expressed a sentiment of disillusionment towards the Regione Campania—the regional governance body, which among other roles, is in charge of dispersing EU funds and implementing territorial development strategies. Having therefore immediate repercussions on the viability of future directives, weak institutional governance was generally likened to a weighty barrier for the realization of territorial and local projects. Altogether, the Regione Campania was portrayed as profit-driven, unsupportive, seeped in slow bureaucratic processes and devoid of cohesion.

Incoherence and disorganization were expressed as an obstacle to achieving a common rural development and rural tourism strategy in the Amalfi Coast. Stressing that each town municipality works disjointedly from the other, one respondent particularly discussed the *Cinque Terre* National Park of the northern Liguria province, as exemplary of a properly managed, "well-organized, functional tourism model", given the agreement between the neighboring villages on the daily limitation of visitors allowed and the prohibition of motor vehicles.

Insofar as tourism entails a more secure investment than agricultural or rural tourism projects, the regional administration's main priority was considered d to be profit, devoting most of its energy to sustaining external tourist revenue, while neglecting other sectors. A need for creating a local economy was proposed, and more specifically one that focuses on the development of rural tourism. Accordingly, the regional government was also perceived as unsupportive in light of new initiatives which may deviate from the mainstream "formula" of doing things. One respondent expressed this as a flaw characteristic of southern Italy—young people have innovative ideas that are stalled by a non-cooperative institutional system. Another respondent drew a link between socio-cultural individualism and poor regional support, referring to his rural initiative and that of Metafarm's as exceptions in the territory:

"If [Mf Key Informant 1] and I were in Val d'Aosta or Trentino Alto Adige, we would travel with a personal jet. Because there is another culture there, where such activities are supported, they are helped. (...) Many things are common between there and here. But many regions, Trentino Alto Adige, Val d'Aosta, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, are a little

bit different (…) They have a more open mind than here. Here the problem is personal envy. We are very individualistic. Too much." —Producer/Farm Tour Operator

Bureaucracy was identified by Metafarm's founders and other local actors as an additional flaw, both at the regional and local governance levels. The family farmers did not address this issue. The LAG of the Monti Lattari, which Metafarm, and Slow Food Amalfi Coast Consortium belong to, was not perceived as a particularly helpful source of territorial support. Termed a "bureaucratic elephant" in one of the narratives, the LAG was delineated as elitist with regards to both the social composition of its members and the types of projects considered eligible for funding.

Moreover, applying for financial support at the regional level was deemed a time-consuming, fruitless act filled with paper work not worth the required effort. Altogether, the tone was suggestive of frustration and despair, in the face of dysfunctional governance. Accordingly, respondents expressed a preference for taking matters into their own hands, free from any official constraint. Markedly, the respondents interviewed working in rural tourism projects, including Metafarm, saw themselves as combatting a faulty, poorly governed system.

"(The Regione) still doesn't feel the problem. The mayor doesn't feel the problem. Every year he says we got 10,000 tourists more…congratulations! For what? What did you earn? You increased the economy? I don't know if you made the locals richer or poorer…"—Anonymous

3.2.4.4. Profit, Prophet, or Pioneer?

All respondents were openly asked to elaborate on the perceived role of the guide, replies which demonstrated variability and complexity. These were divided into two categories—self-perceptions and others' perceptions.

From Metafarm's point of view, in a context which tends to valorize one "script" of tourism, GT is a socially innovative initiative, defining themselves as innovators and pioneers relative to the mainstream, and as mentioned previously, as metafarmers. Though, at some moments, when the groups were dispersed and uninterested, there was an observed and expressed sense of frustration/hopelessness towards the inevitability of feeling at times, like "just another tour guide", or "waiter", indistinguishable like others in Positano. Moreover, while certain forms of knowledge are needed for designing the activity, the founders do not particularly consider themselves as experts in neither.

Together, the tourists typically used words such as artist, chef, and entrepreneur to describe the role of Mf Key Informant 1. Artistry stressed the activity's spontaneous, creative characteristic, given that a menu is never pre-planned. "Knowledgeable" was a commonly cited descriptor, pointing to a

knowledge that, for the large majority, was completely novel, unfamiliar and admirable. One visitor held a different perspective:

"Prophet. I think he is building a following, a reverence for food.
Sort of like a Prophet of the land."
—GT Visitor from New York City, USA

None of the tourists in the focus group depicted Mf Key Informant 1 as a farmer or as someone involved in agricultural activity. A few tourists made reference to GT as a clever and unique business idea, and one that should be replicated:

"I need to hire someone like him in my future…in my future eco-hotel!"

—GT Visitor from Melbourne, Australia

Similarly, this latter view was shared by another respondent:

"Smart, in entrepreneurship terms. Business-wise, it's perfect. First, because nobody does it. Secondly, because many people want to get to know the real natural products. Lots. Even foreigners, and you only see foreigners. So, it's a line, a market segment that is unoccupied, and that is smart to take on (...)."—Restaurant Owner

All of the neighbor-locals, including the family farmers, articulated a parallel perception as the visitors with regards to the notion of expertise. Mf Key Informant 1 was rather seen by them as an expert of wild plants, who is very educated and familiar with this field, an aptitude reflected in his use of botanical vocabulary and Latin nomenclature. This is contrasted with their own foraging and wild plant knowledge, which they see as limited to what they grew up collecting, using only local dialect for plant nomenclature. One of the respondents compared this to an educational specialization, requiring a certain in-depth study, similar to how one would study law, or medicine.

The farmers, on the other hand, while acknowledging this form of expertise, viewed this knowledge as explicitly limited to the world of wild plants, not agriculture, gasping at the risk of confusing the two fields and their respective, distinct know-hows. One respondent (Family Farmer 1) described this as "only knowing wild herbs and not the good stuff", pointing to his vegetable gardens. What ties these perceptions together is their attribution of GT (and its embodiment) with an innovative, niche quality, even though their interpretations of what the latter implied varied. For Metafarm and actors working in rural tourism, innovation was equated with more sustainable tourism. For tourists and the restaurant owner, innovation meant creative, intelligent and crafty entrepreneurship. For the farmers, it was deemed innovative as a way of showcasing another local way of life.

Chapter 4. Interpretation of Findings and Discussion

In light of the individual descriptive and thematic findings outlined in Chapter 3, the section that follows will simultaneously discuss the cases both jointly and apart, whilst drawing attention to the contextual setting of their respective territories. The two case studies were interpreted as two distinct rural realities and expressions of re-peasantization at the farm level, particularly highlighting the ways in which they diverge from or echo European re-peasantization strategies—namely, regrounding, broadening and deepening (Ploeg, 2008). Of importance, is to recognize that the three strategies are not equally pertinent to the two cases. Depending on the farm's (*inner*) sought objectives and its contextual (*external*) circumstances, some are more or less implemented. In other words, the degree to which one, two or all strategies are applied is a reflection of farmers' agency and will to become "less entrepreneur" and "more peasant-like" or vice-versa (Pérez-Vitoria, 2005, as cited in Ploeg, 2008, p.138). Accordingly, neither the characteristics intrinsic to the new peasant-entrepreneur typology (refer to Table 1), nor the strategies of re-peasantization are treated as mutually exclusive. Very much associated with these strategies are the knowledge- and nested market- based networks formed by the two farm entities, a topic that will be addressed further along in the chapter. Particularly, the chapter is divided into two sections: (1) the first discusses and interprets the findings within the re-peasantization framework, particularly with regards to farm-level operational strategies; (2) in the second, attention is shifted to the concepts of nested market and knowledge networks.

4.1. Re-peasantization Revisited

It has been shown that NOTEdi and Metafarm are situated in very distinct socioeconomic and geographic settings. Whereas agriculture still plays a significant role for the *territorio Ibleo*'s inland economy, coastal tourism is the Amalfi Coast's dominant economic sector (despite a persistent reality of terraced farming in Montepertuso). In Giarratana, subsistence family farming as it was observed in Montepertuso was not present—agriculture as a professional undertaking was more prevalent. Though the two contexts are clearly distinct, both are nonetheless characterized by the agricultural "squeeze" at the local level—viable avenues for non-conventional agricultural initiatives are perceived as narrow. In combining both novelty and tradition, NOTEdi and Metafarm have intentionally constructed paths which deviate from the mode of "doing food and agriculture" as it is commonly understood in their respective places. Diversification is a key overarching theme characterizing the practice of both farms—diversification of activity, knowledge forms and markets. What fundamentally distinguishes one from the other is that agricultural production per se is more evidently a central activity for NOTEdi than it is for Metafarm. In this respect, Metafarm's activity is perhaps a little more complex to delineate

within the framework of re-peasantization. It is understood as a more divergent case relative to NOTEdi. These discrepancies and nuances will be discussed in further detail and in light of contextual circumstances.

4.1.1. Broadening and Deepening

Albeit in distinct ways, broadening and deepening strategies are intended to augment value-added. Compared to entrepreneurial farming, the growth and creation of value-added is central to peasant practice such that Gross Value Added (GVA) typically represents a larger part of total Gross Value Produced (GVP) for the farm entity (Ploeg, 2008). Through the incorporation of non-agricultural activities, broadening means augmenting the value-added at the farm level, considering that "the agricultural sector as a whole is conceptualized in terms of co-existence, meaning by this that alongside "productive farming" there are other "rural development" types of farming" (Ploeg, 2008, p.155). Broadening activities have also been associated with a reinforcement of place-based social capital (Sonnino, Kanemasu & Marsden, 2008). Deepening, on the other hand, is about increasing the value-added per product unit vis-à-vis the agricultural and transformation processes (e.g.: quality-oriented and/or organic production). For both broadening and deepening activities, multifunctionality plays a key role in supporting European rural development initiatives.

NOTEdi's operation is fundamentally characterized by depth—high-quality, territory-based, small-scale production abiding by organic principles, as well as on-farm processing. As was highlighted in Chapter 3, quality is the farm operation's guiding principle, directing production decisions and transformation techniques. It was particularly expressed in two ways—quality-as-care and quality-as-place-and-people. NOTEdi's rationale to limit yield quantity to "no more than 1 kg" is indeed motivated by a choice to prioritize the achievement of "optimal" quality—yield is produced without compromising the care and craftsmanship deemed necessary for attaining desired quality standards. In this respect, NOTEdi fits within the general tendency in the new rurality framework to develop quality-based branding of the product and the territory (Orria & Luise, 2017), a concept that will be revisited in the discussion of nested markets. Following seasonal life-cycles, each plant is treated uniquely and most of the work is done manually. Saffron served as an illustrative example—the manual tediousness of a time-limited, communal harvest becomes embedded in the product's value, contributing to its rare, niche characteristic. This view was equally shared by vendors, producers and NOTEdi founders. The operation is also very much rooted in place-based cultural markers. The cultivation of aromatic herbs, which are traditionally found in the wild or grown in home gardens, are reconfigured as a practice tied to ancient territorial identity and the plants as *terroir* products—

producers considered the collection and use of aromatic plants as an ancient regional practice. In their effort to "return to rurality", the youth, along with their careful tilling of the land space and the soil, thus become symbolic pillars for product quality and value-creation, a narrative that was particularly appreciated by the shop vendors/owners who select their products for sale. Fonte (2008) termed this the "origin of food approach" to territorial rural development in which traditional skills and products are recuperated, revived and valorized, an approach that is also more typical of Mediterranean than Northern European countries.

In NOTEdi's case, deepening is very much tied to, and to a certain extent, dependent on broadening—the field of operation is broadened from mere production to include processing, marketing and sales, and financial management. On-site processing allows for endogenously-driven innovation, or innovation from within, to take place. One must recall that contrary to popular belief, craftsmanship, territory-based production, and cultural rootedness are very much integral to new, peasant-like realities (Da Via, 2012). NOTEdi's dehydrated Giarratana Onion illustrates this latter point. Regarded by the community and the territorial food repertoire as a "traditional" agricultural product par-excellence (also a certified Slow Food Presidium), NOTEdi has transformed the onion in an innovative way. By presenting it in a form that deviates from typical onion confections, they have added value to it while simultaneously introducing new ways of consuming it. Individual packaging of the finished products and their personalized instructions for culinary use is a further example of value-added. Together, both the broadening of activity to include marketing and processing as well as the deepening of product value are ultimately oriented towards the valorization of product quality. Narratives from NOTEdi's network of producer-collaborators explained that losing value to intermediaries and off-farm processing is contextually more commonplace. NOTEdi's objective is thus to seize more of the value that would otherwise be lost, a maneuver known as "value capture" or equivalently, "sustainable wealth creation" (Marsden & Smith, 2005). Of relevance is to emphasize that with peasant and peasant-like farming, "a frequent error is to interpret the centrality of craftsmanship as an expression of non-economic behavior" (Ploeg, 2008, p.117). Certainly, in producing more than raw materials, NOTEdi seeks autonomy in the design and decision-making process of their final products.

In contrast to NOTEdi's focus on deepening, Metafarm's Gastronomic Trekking (GT) can be interpreted as an extreme broadening strategy. It is through broadening that the frame of agricultural multifunctionality is most apparent (Sonnino, Kanemasu & Marsden, 2008)—agriculture transgresses the limits of its normative productive function to incorporate societal needs (e.g.: care for the environment, recreational activities). As an experience of local food culture and rurality, GT can arguably be considered a product. Although, given its intangibility, it is challenging to speak of product

depth as it is conceived in the re-peasantization framework. Whereas for NOTEdi place-based product valorization was embedded in the to-be-consumed product itself, in GT's case, it lies within the consumed experience of place, one that is nonetheless connected to and showcases Montepertuso's agricultural tradition via the foraging of wild food plants. Hosted in a B&B space once used as a farmhouse, agricultural production is no longer a central activity—the garden is used to complement the GT meals— it is, rather, minimally complementary to a fundamentally non-agricultural activity. In this sense, the definition of broadening is challenged, as it is usually the reverse—"other"agricultural activities typically complement a mainly productive one. To further elucidate this complexity, it is pertinent to reiterate the importance of setting, especially in light of the area's mass tourism phenomenon. This merits further elaboration.

The use of wild plants in Europe has been historically associated with food scarcity or famine (Łuczaj et al., 2012), and knowledge about them was considered vital in periods of food insecurity triggered by wars or natural disasters (Morreale, 2018). In Italy more precisely, wild food currently stands at the intersection of two processes: the erosion of traditional local knowledge associated with these plants, typically used by elderly people, as well as a parallel heightened interest in them as neglected, underused food sources by young or middle-aged, often urban dwellers (Ghirardini et al., 2007). Once used for family farming purposes, many of Montepertuso's abandoned gardens have been repopulated by wild food, thus creating a symbolic tie between once-cultivated lands and a resurrected foraging practice. Instead of conceiving these spaces as dead or deserted, as is the view of local family farmers, GT conjures them as nodes of food abundance. One can say that Metafarm challenges the definition of "productive" farming as it is conventionally understood. In a setting like the Amalfi Coast, where agriculture has become irrelevant and the "local" foodscape has been diluted owing to a fast-pace tourism industry, Metafarm stresses the illusionary abundance of touristic, restaurant food as consumption-driven, imported, and non-reflective of the territory's foodways, equally called "food from nowhere" (Fonte, 2010a, p.1). By weaving the ancient tradition of foraging with contemporary gastronomic script, GT's main objective is to offer an authentic, unique food experience that stands apart from "the global tide of standardization" (Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012, p.72). In light of the visitors' general perception of GT as a unique, local activity, one can say that the GT experience invokes and revives, though in a novel way, Montepertuso's culinary heritage. Indeed, "the culinary heritage of rural areas is strongly linked to a peasant identity and to specific eating habits and production" (Bessière, 1992, p.29); it is also "an expression of a specific community, is composed not only of ingredients and dishes, but also of bodily practices and living performances" (Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012, p.70). Foraging fits into this frame as "a set of ideas and images about people,

practices, and history (…)" (Searles, 2016, p.25). *Outsiders* (transient visitors) are thus temporarily immersed in an *insider* socio-cultural identity via a connection to an ancient gastronomic tradition that once complemented and was very much tied to "productive" agriculture. Gastronomic heritage then becomes an immaterial and marketable good, and could therefore be an instrument for rural development projects (Bessière, 1992; Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012). Given the spatial proximity to Positano and the generally diluted relevance of agriculture in the area, GT as cultural culinary heritage is thus interpreted as a broadening of agricultural activities in the area, though one that involves an inversion—the main activity being non-production.

Both farms embed other broadening activities. Social and educational dimensions are important for Metafarm—beyond an eno-gastronomic experience, the activity brings people together to share a moment of conviviality and to learn about a place and the "how-to's" of foraging. Social and educational functions are less evident in NOTEdi's case, though the team sporadically hosts socio-educational gatherings on its land, such as private visits or local tourism events. Biodiversity promotion and environmental protection were explicitly stated by Metafarm founders as motivations for the creation of the GT activity—instead of depending on "food from nowhere", GT promotes the seasonal biodiversity as well as the products of local producers. It has also been highlighted elsewhere that the hiking and preservation of paths can be a mode of contributing to rural sustainability and sustainable tourism (Piscitelli, 2011). In abiding by organic production and agro-ecological principles (no use of chemical inputs, co-produced resources), NOTEdi draws attention to the environmental and sustainability-oriented values of their production. However, it is important to highlight that the company does not yet have quality or organic certifications, a point that will be elaborated further in a subsequent section concerning nested markets.

For both deepening and broadening activities, "the sustainable rural development potential exceeds their economic benefits" (Sonnino, Kanemasu & Marsden, 2008, p.18), a facet that reflects a socio-cultural valorization of the movement to return-to-rurality and small-scale farming activities (Bernstein et al., 2018). Economic motivations do remain important nonetheless.

4.1.2. Regrounding

On the path motivated by less specialization and more pluri-activity, as well as less dependency and more autonomy, regrounding of agricultural activity in local resources is instrumental for new peasant and peasant-like realities. By minimizing reliance on external inputs as much as possible, both NOTEdi and Metafarm are in the pursuit of "some form of endogenous development in which economic activity is reformulated so as to be based more firmly on local resources, physical and

human" (Ray, 1998, p.3). Regrounding means both an ability to practice pluriactivity and "farm more economically" (Sonnino, Kanemasu & Marsden, 2008), thus intensifying labor and reducing cost. The natural place-based ecology, and especially soil fertility and climate, is crucial for NOTEdi and Metafarm's abilities to utilize (and re-utilize) what's already available. Meanwhile, both environmental and economic costs are reduced as much as possible. For Metafarm, the naturally rich biodiversity proper to the Monti Lattari is understood as a low-cost, low-environmental impact resource for conducting the GT activity. Edible plants found and foraged in the wild are spontaneous and seasonal, and GT curates its activity according to the natural ebb-and-flow of that cycle. While they represent an immensely abundant, self-renewing resource, it is not one that is intentionally controlled and managed from within—this facet arguably differs from the "classic" definition of peasants (and new peasants) whose most essential feature is a self-controlled and managed resource base. Complementary use of externally sourced products such as cheese, butter, and wine, abides by the principle of *terroir*—products that have traditionally been grown in the area, sourced directly from local producers.

Similarly, Giarratana's favorable pedo-climatic conditions allow for the non-fussy cultivation of aromatic herbs and saffron. Equally found in the wild, they are plants with an ability to thrive in this particular physical environment without too much care, and due to their self-duplication properties, are renewable resources—both of these physiological traits allow NOTEdi to lower environmental and economic costs. Moreover, duplication-generated surplus permits the sale of other products derived from the same plant, such as saffron bulbs. NOTEdi's inner operational logic and independency from agri-inputs is thus largely contingent on agro-ecological principles, a science also associated with small farmers' sovereignty (Altieri, 2009; Levidow, Birch, & Papaioannou, 2013). Further, given the small scale of the operation, all the field work is performed manually so that no expensive machinery is required. NOTEdi's operation better fits with the new peasant typology as outlined by Ploeg (2008) whereby co-production and a self-controlled resource base are symbiotic. Perhaps external input costs comprise those spent on product marketing and branding—namely, patented trademarks, package design and confection (paper and jars). In this sense, NOTEdi deviates from "classic" peasants in so far as marketing and sales are allotted more time and economic investment than production. In other words, production costs are minimized so as to allocate a larger portion of the budget to marketing and branding, which in turn gives them a territorial comparative advantage.

In addition to ecological capital, both farms are grounded in their own human resources—prioritizing the diversified 'brain capacity" of their team to attain set objectives rather than depending on external expertise. Pluri-activity *on farm* rather than specialization *off-farm* is preferred (ultimately a question of value-added versus value lost thru the supply chain). NOTEdi and Metafarm each have a

compositely diverse team in terms of expertise—a point that will further be elaborated when discussing knowledge dynamics. Regrounding, in both physical and human resources, is thus considered of utmost importance to both cases, though Metafarm's activity is somewhat more "dependent", not on agri-industrial inputs, but on the local natural environment and a consistently reliable local network of producers.

4.2. Networks of Support and Shared Value

Essential to both NOTEdi and Metafarm are their constructed social networks. It is important to highlight these networks (both nested market- and knowledge-based) as selected and curated. They often mirror the farms' set objectives, to evoke their "inner" logic and adopted strategies. Both farms rely on local and extra-local networks as a form of informal cooperation, which allows them to be autonomous main markets and governing forms of expertise. Recalling the concepts of network rurality (Murdoch, 2006) and network sociality (Wittel, 2001), network relations are deliberately formed on the basis of mutually shared interests. Precisely, "strategies to valorize a local food through valorizing its territory require a collective effort that activates mechanisms of social co-ordination and cohesion in the community" (Fonte, 2008, p.209). Territorial connections are consequently bridged, and a collective sense of place and belonging is reinforced (Fonte, 2008; Sonnino, Kanemasu & Marsden, 2008). Metafarm relies on a neighbor-community as well as regional, national and global networks (e.g.: Slow Food, Tourism sector) for the functioning of the GT activity. NOTEdi has an established web of territorial producers/potential collaborators, as well as a growing network of direct and indirect clients spanning local to global spheres.

4.2.1. Nested markets

New nested markets are an important feature of rural development efforts in that they represent circuits distinct from those of the main agri-food markets, the latter tending to favor relationships of dependency. In the realm of food and agriculture, the peasant-entrepreneurial typology further helps in clarifying this distinction: "In the peasant mode (grounded on *distantiation* and relative autonomy) the market is basically an outlet—it is the place where the products are sold, for better or for worse. In the entrepreneurial mode, the market is above all an ordering principle" (Ploeg, 2008, p.117). The notion of market *disantiation*, and the degree of distantiation, is important here—it implies the preservation of a certain distance from the main markets, and therefore less dependence on them.

NOTEdi and Metafarm, through their focus on wild and aromatic plants, have created *novel*, diversified nested markets based on the revival and reconfiguration of *traditional* products and

practices. Though the operation of both cases is grounded in territory and a strong sense of place, their market conduits are not exclusively local. Following the distinction drawn by Fonte (2008), both farms are involved in markets of *local production for distant consumption*, while NOTEdi is also imbedded in markets of *local production for local consumption*. In the latter, social proximity is emphasized in the reconnection of producers and consumers in the same place, while in the former, the process of food production and the valorization of place is stressed through value communication directed towards more distant consumers. Notably, for NOTEdi, it is primarily the product that "travels" to the consumer while for GT, it is the consumer who travels to the "product", or experience. At the time of its foundation, Metafarm expressed a desire to attract a more local community, yet through its embeddedness in the Amalfi Coast's tourism sector, the mass presence of non-locals constrains their market to a certain audience. This was made evident by the observation that only 2% of GT visitors originate from non-English speaking countries, Italians included. Given this socio-spatial context, Metafarm is unable to control or curate a target market for the GT activity and is essentially dependent on one outlet, that being the outsider's gaze. All the same, some authors have stressed that a more sustainable alternative would be for culinary revival projects to be foremost grounded in the local community itself (Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012). Interestingly, it is only when the experience travels to Rome or Milan, removed from the context of tourism, that it becomes one which attracts a more local audience. Metafarm thus seeks to diversify their markets by way of participating in such pop-up events as well as in fairs, like the Tourism Fair in Rimini. In events like the latter, GT is equally presented to potentially new visitors as much as it is to potential collaborators (e.g.: eco-hotel owners, agri-tourisms) who would be interested in sharing their space to host the GT experience. As pointed out by Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima (2012), gastronomic foodways, owing to their perceived authenticity and novelty, especially by tourists, have a distinguishable market value. Further, "local food-related practices and productive systems are often fragile and can be threatened by excessive exposure to foreign travelers and the needs of the tourism industry to minimize expenses, maximize gains and streamline operations" (Bélisle 1984 as cited in Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012, p.71). As was expressed by Metafarm founders and observed by the researcher during the field work phase, visitors were not consistently nor equally engaged in the experience, showcasing a sense of detachment from the intended meaning and design. Instead of participating with the guide, some expected an "ordinary" service-oriented cooking and wine-tasting class, distinguishable from others who demonstrated more enthusiasm and engaged participation. Along with the growth in attendance and booking reservations in the last two years, this suggests that GT is becoming a more popular and in-demand activity, attracting a wider audience than it did before.

NOTEdi, on the other hand, purposely selects their market outlets as well as the fairs and other events they partake in, both as exhibitors and observers. A strong emphasis on product branding allows them to cater to certain markets, like to the Northern regions where demand for their products is higher than in neighboring Southern areas. Diversification is thus manifested in the market outlets themselves, mixing a direct and indirect client base—small local-to-international specialty shops, local-to-international fairs, and large players like Eataly©. Indeed, as was previously underlined, Eataly represents a larger outlet that NOTEdi persistently sought. Matching the company's perception of Eataly© as a non-conventional supermarket, the store, though still considered a corporate venture, has been described as "a new retail format that offers a new food distribution paradigm inspired by concepts such as sustainability, sharing and responsibility" (p.477, Sebastiani, Montagnini, & Dalli, 2013). Quality is Eataly©'s cross-cutting principle, influencing their selection of products to be include on the store's shelves. In this sense, Eataly, as viewed by NOTEdi, is a space for both producers and consumers to share quality- and territory-based value—to sell in Eataly© means that the product is deemed to carry that value. As noted by Ilbery & Kneafsey, (2000), given that quality is a socially constructed concept, its interpretation is inconsistent and contested along shifting socio-cultural lines. Quality is perhaps more difficult to standardize than say, organic production methods following more quantitatively-oriented measurement. For companies like NOTEdi whose products are not labelled according to any certification scheme, a food hub like Eataly© does not only imply exposure to larger market channels, but it is also regarded as a filter through which consumers and producers can easily communicate a shared understanding of the quality construct. NOTEdi can therefore access a larger market interface whilst negotiating a fair quality-based price. The notion of shared value as a concept "that recognizes that societal needs, not just conventional economic needs, define markets" is relevant here (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p.5). Producers displaying their stock on Eataly©'s shelves seek to respond to and satisfy increasing consumer desire for safe, environmentally-friendly and transparent food (Goodman, 2004). Insofar as NOTEdi is still in the premature phase of its course, its priority is foremost to establish a solid local and regional market. However, its founders acknowledge that certification would become an eventual consideration, given that one of the company's objectives is to eventually increase sales and permeate international markets. Seeing how in southern Europe, territory, tradition and food quality are often understood as intertwined (Fonte, 2008), labelling is considered less of an immediate need in Sicilian and Italian markets, though regional differences persist. It is worth noting here the generally weakened meaning associated with food certification labels, in that they no longer guarantee the respect of agro-ecological production methods and sustainable principles, as has

been illustrated for the organic and fair-trade food labels, increasingly subject to agro-industrial appropriation (Buck, Getz, & Guthman, 1991; Guthman, 2003; Jaffee & Howard, 2010). Other labels, like Slow Food and Geographic Indication appellations, have also been questioned for their mechanisms of exclusion and commodification of place-based consumption (Lotti, 2010; West, 2013). These matters remain however widely contested.

Direct sales is a practice typical to nested markets (Ploeg et al., 2010). NOTEdi's participation in fairs and sustained face-to-face relations with various local/regional shop vendors/owners (such as the ones interviewed) was highlighted as a form of direct sales. By capturing an adequate share of the value added, direct selling is a way for farmers, particularly small and medium sized ones, to increase their market advantage (Pierangeli, Henke, & Coronas, 2008), especially in inland rural areas where agriculture plays a chief economic role (Scrofani & Novembre, 2015). The socio-economic benefits of partaking in direct sales has been observed among a variety of farmers in Sicily (Tudisca et al., 2014; Tudisca et al., 2015).

In both farming and *meta*farming models, the notion of food as a place-based identity marker serves as a mechanism for territorial valorization, applying what Ray (1998) has coined the "culture economy" approach to rural development. A culture economy comprises "the territory, its cultural system and the network of actors that construct a set of resources to be employed in the pursuit of the interests of the territory" (Ray, 1998, p.4). Emphasizing that food can be a carrier of cultural value, in that symbolic meaning is ascribed to its materiality, nested markets can flourish via a culture economy. Now more than ever before, the cultural value of foods has garnered significant importance as a counter-reaction to the availability of globalized foods and diets (Fonte, 2008; Searles, 2016). Culture economies are very much based in the territory, and can be regarded as working in parallel to, or the outcome of, regrounding strategies. In their study, Orria & Luise (2017) observed that "material practices of caring for the earth and products, as well as immaterial ones like a reinvented imaginary linked to a collective ancestral imaginary, involve people to commit on different levels (productive, consumerist, narrative)" (p.142). It has been discussed that GT, as an extreme broadening strategy, aims to bridge together foraging, gastronomy and a farming reality to showcase Montepertuso's cultural-food heritage. Precisely, Bessière (1992) adds "as identity marker of a region and/or as a means of promoting farm products, gastronomy meets the specific needs of consumers, local producers, and other actors in rural tourism" (p.21). In this sense, Metafarm's activity is still important to consider within new rural development trajectories, given that it is imbedded in new webs of production (local producers) and consumption (visitors). This interpretation is similar to one revealed in a study, also in Campania, stressing that initiatives focused on non-productive agriculture (as it is classically

understood) contribute nonetheless to rural development (Orria & Luise, 2017). In this sense, within a place affected by mass tourism, GT offers a divergent alternative to experiencing place as it is tied to agriculture, calling once more for the reconsideration of non-agricultural activity as complemented *by* agricultural ones as important for rural development.

Altogether, these nested markets embed several constructed meanings—cultural, environmental, quality—imbedded in food- and food experience-based shared value. In establishing and sustaining such nested markets, Metafarm and NOTEdi are pursuing autonomy though remain subject to the risk of becoming overturned by globalization—either by the tourism industry or through quality-based market appropriation. Diversified practices, such as direct and indirect sales are also an important facet. Such nested market networks remain important for capturing value and promoting a development model from-below, one that relies on contextual, local and tacit knowledge and builds on local resources (Sonnino & Marsden, 2006).

4.2.2. Knowledge

Similar to nested markets, knowledge networks in the described cases overlap across extra-local and local spaces, combining scientific and local (lay and tacit) knowledge forms, as they are distinguished by Fonte (2008). While both NOTEdi and Metafarm *know about and are embedded in* the main markets relevant to their operation—cultivation and sale of aromatic and officinal plants, and tourism, respectively—they actively retain distance *from* them.

NOTEdi makes use of all three knowledge types for their production and marketing/sales activities. Thru their production-knowledge network, local knowledge forms are combined with the more homogenous, science-based knowledge needed for cultivation and harvest. The latter is typically sourced from more formal settings like production fairs or self-taught from books and online platforms. Local knowledge comprises both the lay savoir-faire rooted in the specificities of the *territorio ibleo*, learned informally by others in the community, as well as the tacit knowledge guiding norms of social interaction as prescribed by virtue of being a *Giarratanese*. Lay production knowledge is NOTEdi's driving motive for collaborating with other producers. These have been selected based on their perceived know-how, which, as previously elaborated, lies on a spectrum from more experienced to more experimental. Experience-based skill is ascribed to those who have acquired a longer on-field understanding with aromatic and officinal plants, whereas experimental skill describes those who, although carry lay production knowledge, also convey new, innovative knowledge for product transformation (e.g. saffron liquor). In the former, the knowledge of experienced producers, though considered "lay" according to the definition by outlined by Fonte (2008), can also be scientific, or

rather, perceived as scientific—this line is blurry since their know-how is considered "expert" from the perspective of newer/younger producers like NOTEdi. The definition of "expert" in this interaction would be understood as "one who has already done it" (Fonte, 2010b, p.271)—it is this kind of knowledge most strongly tied to the achievement of high-quality standards. In exchange, NOTEdi was viewed by the producers as having the skills associated with commercial knowledge—the know-how facilitating their implication in the post-production aspects of their operation: marketing, packaging, retail and branding. Seeing how this kind of knowledge is viewed to be lacking in the area, and all the interviewed producers rely to some extent on intermediaries for the sale of their products, this commercial knowledge is ascribed with a high status as "expert" business-oriented knowledge. By contrast, from NOTEdi's perspective, this knowledge is mostly tacit, in that it is not codified or learned from any specific standard source. This self-perception is similar to that expressed by artisan producers in a study by Tovey (2009): "Their trading and selling skills are seen as part of their larger repertoire of skills in social interaction, not needing to be codified or formally taught." (p.31). On either side, knowledge of the other was valued and respected, so the collaboration was generally described as mutually beneficial.

With respect to retail and sales, knowledge interplays with the aforementioned construction of food quality (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000), a central concept to NOTEdi's operation. For both their direct and indirect clients, including shop vendors and consumers, local knowledge is primarily used to communicate food quality, given that no particular certification labels their products. The value-guarantee for these markets rather lies in the narrative constructed about the product and how it is presented to NOTEdi's clients (both direct and indirect). In face-to-face interaction, like direct selling or delivery to shop vendors, it is tacit knowledge that contributes more amply to quality construction because of a "personal relationship with the producer and their production practices" (Dargan & Harris, 2010, p.91). Immediacy and proximity are inherent features of direct sales. Moreover, given the small size of Giarratana and its neighboring towns, local consumers and some shop vendors may already know about NOTEdi and their production practices, helping to forge more intimate relationships of trust.

While in NOTEdi's case knowledge is indirectly communicated through the products' narrative, in Metafarm's case it is directly narrated to the visitors. Given the strong educational dimension of the GT activity, knowledge is essential to the operation, encompassing, among others, history of place, foraging, agriculture, tourism, culinary, group development, design, both locally and extra-locally sourced. Indeed, the valorization of cultural and historical identity includes the accumulation and transmission of local know-how, which in turn serves to re-enact history and be innovative (Bessière,

1998). In their process of transmitting knowledge, Metafarm relies on their team's diverse expertise—two of the team members may be regarded as "scientists" insofar as their expertise has been validated by educational institutions. Altogether, these forms of expertise include psychotherapy, group development, education, foraging and gastronomy. Equally important is the local lay and tacit knowledge derived from the neighbor network in Montepertuso as well as in territorial networks like the Slow Food Amalfi Coast Consortium. The former contributes vastly to the accumulation of lay agricultural knowledge. As elderly farmers raised in the village, their experience helps contextualize the story behind the foraging-gastronomic activity. Similar to the experienced producers in NOTEdi's network, they can be regarded as experts of the land. Yet, as outlined in the discussion of the theme "Foraging as Traditional Culinary Rite" in section 3.2.4.2., Metafarm founders and neighboring family farmers did not share the same information repertoire for plant recognition and use, highlighting that not only is a tradition *being revived* but it is also *being transformed* in novel ways. Further, these narratives revealed that the farmers regarded themselves as more knowledgeable in agriculture, and in turn saw Metafarmers as more knowledgeable with respect to tourism and foraging, not farming. Indeed, knowledge of the tourism industry is derived from personal experience (by virtue of growing up in the place) and external networks such as local, regional and international Slow Food communities. These tend to mix lay, tacit and scientific knowledges as they group different people like the Producer/Farm tour operator Amalfi and the Tourism association president /Hotel owner in Praiano. Foraging requires certification insofar as the guided recognition and culinary transformation of the plants is crucial for the unfolding of the activity—botany is, after all, a plant science. As the interviews and observations revealed, the guide was generally perceived by the visitors (as well as the neighbors-family farmers) as an expert botanist and haute-cuisine chef. Once again here, like in NOTEdi's case, "the definition of "expert" is widened to include non-scientists, and knowledge production becomes more inclusive" (Fonte, 2010a, p.23). The merging of knowledge related to foraging, agriculture and tourism are foundational in Metafarm's case.

4.3. Contextual Considerations and Implications

Survival strategies, as well as efforts to mobilize markets and knowledge are situated within a socio-cultural and policy context. In both studies, themes of distrust, non-willingness to cooperate, individualism and jealousy emerged as important topics—equally with respect to person-to-person social behavior as with institutional-level behavior. In Metafarm's case, at least one of these themes was addressed by the respondents, while in NOTEdi's case, they were expressed by all those

interviewed, except the shop vendors/owners. Responses varied according to the respondent's role and experience.

4.3.1. Socio-Cultural Setting

The interviewed producers in NOTEdi's network voiced that knowledge-exchange and social collaboration are not considered the "normal" way of doing business, seeing how the "traditional mentality" associated with individualism and non-cooperation, remains prevalent. Indeed, interviews revealed that despite a will to collaborate with NOTEdi, some producers expressed more reluctance to share the extent of their know-how. This was more pertinently voiced among experienced producers who depend on their agricultural activity as a main source of income—their articulated skepticism towards cooperation was due to previously failed attempts in trying to partake in it. Experimental producers seemed more willing to share knowledge without expressed restraint. Overall, it was a form of social behavior perceived as associated not merely to the agricultural realm but to all forms of cooperation in general, tied to Sicilian identity as "just the way we are here". Similarly, individualism and lack of cooperation were highlighted in Metafarm's case, conjured as generally associated with Campania's regional social culture and that of the Southern macro-region altogether.

In both cases, this social behavior was also expressed at the institutional level, and sometimes both were expressed as intricately tied to one another. Official forms of governance were generally perceived as weak, bureaucratic and incoherent. Seeing how the region is the central decision-making body for both, the social organization of both Regione Campania and Regione Sicilia were subject to criticism. From all respondents involved in tourism in Metafarm's case, the regional government was depicted as self-centered, profit-driven, and careless of the negative impact of mass tourism. They also expressed a sense of "fighting the system alone", an overall articulated feeling of abandonment—this was also expressed by producers in NOTEdi's network—farmers who want to start up don't have access to funds. Altogther, these findings shed light on the socio-cultural settings of the two studied cases as perceived by the farms and their surrounding network relations, and how these may interplay with agriculture-based activity and rural development initiatives at the farm level.

South-North differences in Italy's social organization and development history has been a well-documented subject, the scope of which is much broader than the aims of this research. Notwithstanding, a few points do merit consideration, especially for formulating concluding and policy-related remarks in the subsequent and final section 4.3.2. These identified themes depicting the social norms that interplay with both Metafarm's and NOTEdi's initiatives—distrust, non-cooperation, individualism, and jealousy—recall the work of two important publications: *Making democracy work:*

civic traditions in modern Italy by Robert D. Putnam (1993), and *The moral basic of a backward society* by Edward C. Banfield (1958). The former consisted of an extensive, longitudinal documentation and examination of the civic culture of twenty regional Italian governments, and how it is manifested in the Northern versus the Southern regions. Putnam's work highlighted that "the differentiation of social norm is highly correlated (and serves as a powerful element in explaining) varying levels of performance among regional institutions and even levels of economic performance during the post-war period" (Leonardi, 1995, p.169). Northern regions were characterized by a higher level of social capital— "collaboration, mutual assistance, civic obligation, and even trust were the distinguishing features" (Putnam, 1993, p.130). Emphasis was placed on the role of organized group action in the pursuit of collective socioeconomic goals.

On the other hand, social norms proper to Southern regions were similar to those depicted by Banfield (1958) in his field research documenting the socio-cultural behavior of peasant villagers in a small town in Basilicata. The theory of *familismo amorale* was proposed to describe an observed social conduct characterized by distrust, selfishness and envy for the other. As suggested, "in a society of amoral familists, no one will further the interest of the group or community except as it is to his private advantage to do so", the rationale being to "maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise" (Banfield, 1958, p.83). Putnam (1993) thus posited that, in the South, collective action for attaining long-term goals is seemingly incompatible with the priority of individual short-term gain. Notably, both authors refer to the rigid rural structure of the feudal *latifundium,* dominant in and common to all southern regions, as fundamental to consider, insofar as it is a historically-rooted "status system which leaves the peasant almost outside the larger society" (Banfield, 1958, p.155). In areas long-dominated by feudal land systems, Italian unification had very little impact on the persistence of such civic habits—the *latifundium* did indeed dissolve much earlier in the North than it did in the South (Banfield, 1958; King, 1971; Putnam, 1993).

This purpose of this subsection is not, by any means, to generalize these case findings to the multitude of other realities existing in the two respective contexts. It is however important to bring attention to these seminal works, given the cross-cutting themes of social and institutional incoherence that were expressed in both cases, and to point to the ways in which social behavior (as perceivably tied to regional governance) can potentially influence and shape the inner operational logic, strategies and networks of small initiatives like Metafarm and NOTEdi. A more thorough discussion of policy implications follows.

4.3.2. Policy Considerations and Implications

The majority of respondents' disillusioned perceptions of regional bodies as constraining rather than facilitating activity lead to the discussion of how policy can be improved at this level of governance. First, an overall conceptual gap should be reiterated such that, "while both re-peasantization and depeasantization waves seem to be ruptures, there is actually a continuity. What has disappeared in the interim period is the institutional capacity to recognize and understand peasants and peasant agriculture (Ploeg, 2018, p. 241)". European rural development policies should be more specifically recognizant of, inclusive and curated towards peasant-like agriculture. In parallel, this would involve the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)'s diluted focus on economic subsidies, which tend to favor larger operations, and a shift towards inclusionary access for support that better reflects the needs of small-scale, peasant-like farmers.

With respect to NOTEdi's case, the CAP's quantitative logic favoring the growth of farms already-in-expansion does not reflect the qualitative complexity of the small realities present in the *territorio Ibleo*, especially those in the early phases of their growth. Rather ironically, research on local development in Southern Italian regions has suggested that it is the extent of detachment that producers and processors maintain from the CAP and associated regulatory system—as one that favors "production-based subsidy structures, intensively-based production systems, low value-added chains"—which affects the degree of real success in creating new quality networks (Brusa, 2003, as cited in Marden & Smith, 2005, p.449). With that said, policies should encourage and incentivize lower-cost, small-scale farming. There is a further need to recognize the dissolving importance ascribed to "organic" as a marker of food quality by local actors and a parallel, growing recognition of territorial provenance (place and people) as a meaningful quality indicator (Dargan & Harris, 2010).

On another note, Metafarm's case illustrates that (at least for the time being) agricultural activity is not a viable avenue in a context superseded by mass tourism such as the Amalfi Coast, recalling from an earlier discussion that what is contextually deemed viable is defined by the emic perspective of local actors. There is therefore a need for policy structure to better account for complementary agricultural activity and *broaden* the definition to become more sensitive to such place-based nuances. Both these dimensions—quality and complementary activity—are surely complex and difficult to measure, though this should not justify their neglect in policy design.

Rural policy frameworks of Italian regions, as is the case for Europe at large, are formulated according to the EU agenda for regional rural development (EC, 2018c). This has important implications for agriculture, considering the inter- and intra-regional heterogeneity of landscapes, farm structures and cultivation practices (Fonte & Cucco, 2015). Accordingly, a more decentralized policy

approach specifically catered to the sub-regional-level, or the territory, would be valuable. This would involve the implication of non-state, local rural actors to adopt the role of "linking agents" (OECD, 2009)—actors able to draw upon regional and national EU funding sources for translating local actors' needs. Since the 1990s, the latter role has been assumed by the European LEADER[24] program. Precisely, LEADER "became identified as the primary delivery mechanism for this approach because its organizational structure removed control of rural development from state institutions and placed it in the hands of LAGs that provided a forum for participation by local people" (Navarro, Woods & Cejudo, 2015, p.2). However, as was expressed in respondents' perceptions of territorial LAG bodies, efforts are not always inclusive and regulatory processes are typically time-consuming, discouraging the participation of local actors in an unequal way.

In NOTEdi's case, there was a discrepancy in the expressed view of an interviewed LAG representative of the *territorio Ibleo* and that of local producers. In Metafarm's case, agricultural and agricultural-based initiatives were in general perceived as not integrated into the local LAG body, the latter preferring to select projects deemed worthy of funding that generally match the interests of conventional tourism (e.g. hotel buildings, etc). The LAG was also perceived as being too elitist. Findings from a recent case study conducted in Andalusia and Wales revealed that while LAG managers perceived their own efforts as positive and progressive in fostering local participation and decentralization, they also admittedly stated that LAGs' "capacity to act has been increasingly constrained by bureaucracy and the integration of the LEADER approach within broader RDPs" (Navarro, Woods & Cejudo, 2015, p.12). The impacts of LEADER thru Europe are of course mixed, depending on the context in question, with some demonstrating more success than others. Nonetheless, emphasis should be oriented towards the building of *new* local and territorial institutional networks, that reflect new knowledge and skills (Marsden & Smith, 2005), not totally dependent on the EU rural development policy framework.

On that account, policy support should echo and respond to the specificity of local, small-scale agricultural contexts, while taking into consideration how local networks—especially those relevant to nested markets and local knowledge—may interplay with small farmers' capacity. This is especially relevant for autonomous regions like Sicily, as was expressed by one of the producers, stressing that the region could have a more pronounced say in better including and representing small farmers' needs beyond those agreed upon by the CAP.

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[24] As stated on the European Network for Rural Development website (www.enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en#_edn1), "the term 'LEADER' originally derived from the French acronym for "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale", meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'"

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Downward pressure on agriculture has encouraged global ways of farming that are arguably more entrepreneurial- than peasant-like. The momentum to become "modern" has been coupled with a false apprehension and construction of peasant- and peasant-like rural realities as *passé* or, incompatible with the operative flow of post-industrial society. Findings and interpretations derived from these two case studies contribute to the recognition of peasant-like realities as both existent and functional—equally in Europe as they are in other parts of the world. Recalling the conception of re-peasantization-as-process (Shanin, 1990), "non-peasants are crucial to the way in which the peasantry disappears while the patterns of depeasantization shape the future of a post-peasant society" (p.136). Re-peasantization thus takes place together with industrialization, not separate from it. Thru these waves, multiple peasant-like realities emerge, subsist and fade. Relevant to the contemporary discussion of peasant realities is the acknowledgement that the once-derogatory meaning ascribed to peasant-hood has transfigured to a current revalorization of the peasant identity. This tendency is very much associated with the negative externalities reaped by industrial agriculture, increasingly acknowledged as unsustainable, unethical and tied to low-quality, placeless food (Sage, 2012).

Like re-peasantization, "rural development processes and practices are very strongly rooted in the specificities of time and space" (Ploeg et al., 2010, p.163). In Europe, the advent of the new rural development paradigm played an important role in redefining agriculture's role in society, carving space for new consumption and production in the countryside, which transgress agriculture's mere productive function. New peasant motives are best understood as those driven by emancipation—particularly autonomy and sustainability (Ploeg, 2008). They evoke a return to rurality, not a rurality of the past, but one rooted in and reflective of the present. As illustrated, findings from the two case studies have pointed to a clear operational logic guiding each farm's motives, strategies and social relations. It is worth reinstating here the works of Chayanov (1966) and Shanin (1990, 2017) for ascribing to the peasantry a conceptual uniqueness, allowing it to be both different and similar to other peasant realities.

Relative to the classic definition of the new peasant farm as elaborated in Chapter 1.2. and figuratively represented in Table 1, NOTEdi's and Metafarm's operational logics recognize the role of farmers' agency in resource selection and use, co-production and market participation. There is also clear emphasis on labor intensification rather than specialization, and on the use of natural resources. However, their rationales also diverge from it insofar as profit is sought—a desire to grow, among other objectives, was clearly expressed in both cases. In this sense, new peasant realities could exhibit more entrepreneurial-like characteristics. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the two cases were dissimilar

from one another in various ways. While deepening (through quality-based value added) was considered more pertinent to NOTEdi, broadening framed the understanding of Metafarm's GT activity as a cultural experience tied to agricultural tradition. Regrounding was central to both, though it was manifested differently—one controls resources through cultivation, while the other uses self-renewable resources found in the wild. In their rediscovery and reiteration of somewhat forgotten, more marginal resources, the specificities of people, place and natural ecology are fundamental. Decisively, resource mobilization allows for self-organization and autonomy: "clearly, those who possess superior sets of resources (both cultural and material) are able to act more easily upon their formulations than those who do not. (…) Greater resources often allow greater freedom of action, and even the means to acquire more such resources." (Marsden et al., 1993, p.140).

One such immaterial resource was the self-constructed knowledge and nested market networks surrounding both farms. It was shown that participation in circuits different from the main global markets and realms of expertise was beneficial to both. Decentralized and participatory knowledge consolidation "from the ground up" is applied. Local knowledge was particular important to this approach–collected and reinvented both informally and formally, from the more experienced to the more experimental, and across a variety of settings (Fonte, 2010a). Market networks were associated with the notion of shared value in both cases, though NOTEdi held more control in the curation of these markets. What also emanates from the study is that territory (historical, physical and social setting) is fundamental for understanding farmers' capacity to respond to the "squeeze", and by extension, which strategies, projects and resources are considered most viable in the context in question. Lastly, both NOTEdi and Metafarm were subject to certain place-based constraints (e.g. socio-cultural norms, local market saturation, mass tourism). As observed by Casini et al. (2012), "each territory has its own supply of resources of a social, cultural, human and natural character that represent the substratum on which new value for the agricultural sector and rural areas can potentially be produced" (p.197).

Given the considered contextual limitations, one can consider that NOTEdi and Metafarm resist the conventional way of doing food and agriculture in the context they are embedded in. Both cases can be discussed as socially innovative in that they diverge from the social norms they are embedded in. As put forth by Bock (2012): "By definition, social innovation flourishes at a distance from policy and policy-makers. Many rural inhabitants undertaking initiatives are disappointed by the market and the state and want to be in charge themselves." (p.569). NOTEdi's approach to initiate collaboration challenges the social script of distrust and non-cooperation for the achievement of shared goals, independently from state-led aid. Metafarm, through its implication in territorial collectives, aims to

challenge the status-quo of consumerism and non-territorial experiences, disconnected from agricultural realities. Notably, for both, efforts to collaborate and practice collective action "does not exclude economic success or a business-like professional operation and organization, even without profit orientation" (Bock, 2012, p.562). Nonetheless, these new peasant farms, though actively leading their decision-making process and presenting alternative solutions to ways of farming, ways of networking and ways of knowing, could benefit from more supportive, recognizant policies. With that said, given the methodological limitations of this two-case study (as outlined in Chapter 2.6), future research efforts should be geared towards a more extensive, longitudinal analysis that follows a multitude of cases in the two respective territories (these or other) to obtain a more holistic, thorough representation of involved actors' voices and broader contextual factors.

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Appendix A. General Guiding Questionnaire for Case Study 1 (NOTEdi) and Case Study 2 (Metafarm)

1. **<u>Operational data of farm and team members</u>**

a. Size?
   → total farm area; utilized farm area
b. Number of workers in organisation?
c. Land access—renting or purchased? What is the cost?
d. Location: geographic and socioeconomic context (regional, provincial, territorial, municipal)
e. Demographic/individual characteristics of main team members—professional and educational backgrounds/specializations, participation in other activities (economic and non-economic? Which ones? Is this the only source of income for each?)
f. Past:
   - Does your family have a history in agriculture?
   - History/story of the farm's founder

2. **<u>Mission and purpose</u> (*explore the rationale for doing things)***
   a. What are the main objectives pursued (economic and non-economic)?
      - profit/economic growth
      - produce a minimum revenue for living
      - produce for self-consumption
      - give work to friends and family
      - produce genuine, good food
      - to live in the countryside, open-air
      - to valorize territory/region
      - to be able to create revenue based on a personal passion
      - other (specify)

   b. What were your main motivations for starting your business? Were you inspired by any philosophies/people/past experiences? (*Understand how they rationalize what they do*; *how does this rationale guide their on-farm actions*)

   c. Are any other people conducting a similar activity as you in the region? And in Italy?

   d. Do you do this activity to survive? Are you involved in other income-generating activities?

   e. Vision of the future:
      - How do you see the future of your farm (*probe*: in expansion, in transformation, continuous innovation)? Is there a particular vision that you prioritize in the next few years?
      - What are your main benefits/costs/problems?
      - Do you aspire to improve your model/business? Why? How?
      - Are there any other activities you wish to pursue/products to include?
      - Do you wish to add any other team members?

3. Economic and labor dimensions

Revenue

a. In the last 3 years, how would you describe the economic turnout of the farm business? (regressing, stable, augmenting)
b. Renumerative form – salary-based, social cooperative, other?
c. Annual net revenue interval—*probe (if sensitive topic):* would you say that the business has grown, stagnated, or regressed in the last 2-3 years?
d. How much does the farm revenue contribute to total revenue of workers? Is the farm/activity/service marginal to the total income?
e. What is the total number of current on-farm, income-generating activities? What are they?

Labor

a. How many people work in the farm? How many family members/fixed workers/non-fixed workers?
b. Do workers work part-time or full-time? If part-time, what other work are they involved in?
c. Does each person have a specific role? Or does everyone do a little bit of everything?

Activity/production

a. Does the farm diversify activity? *(can be many of the answers below)*
   - Agriturismo
   - Product transformation
   - Direct sales
   - Recreational and cultural activity
   - Educational activity
   - Rural tourism
   - Social farming
   - Other (specify).

b. What are, in your opinion, the most important innovations you have introduced in your farm since its foundation?
c. In what ways, according to you, is your production focus/method different from others in the area?
d. What activities are you involved in for the rest of the year?
e. What is the local context/snapshot for your activity/production? Is it commonplace in the area?

Main cultivations (more relevant to NOTEdi's case)

a. What are your main cultivations? How many plants do you cultivate in total?
b. What are the different harvest, production, selection and storage periods/methods for each?
c. Who is responsible for the land's maintenance? Do you rotate the soil regularly?
d. From where do you purchase the seeds/seedlings?
e. How many different vegetables/types of produce do you grow? How many varieties of each? Are they traditional/local/hybrid/non-hybrid varieties?
f. Do you change the selection every year?
g. How do you decide which vegetables and varieties to grow?
h. Do you follow any/certain production techniques? Use of any herbicides/pesticides?Are there any ways in which you would like to improve your land space? Describe/specify (technology, efficiency, etc.)

Inputs

a. What are your inputs? (*probe*: herbicide, tools, packaging, etc.)
b. Where do you get them from? Do you have a fixed network?
c. How much do they cost?
d. Who takes care of the pick-ups/transport of goods? Or are the inputs delivered?
e. What are your annual total costs?

Markets and marketing

a. How do you promote/market your company and your products? Word of mouth? Fairs? Other?
b. Do you have a "target audience"?
c. Is the Italian market for your production/activity saturated or expanding? What about the regional one? Is there a lot of competition in the area?

Sales (more relevant to NOTEdi)

a. Campagna Amica, GAS, Coldiretti?
b. For now, you only sell in shops? (Restaurants and butcher shops in-development)
c. Do you have any particular set criteria for the kinds of shops you choose to sell your products in?
d. How do you find/establish your network of shops?
e. Is all your production method organic? If yes, why? If no, do you want to be certified?

Price-setting

a. How do you decide/fix the price of your product(s)/activity (ies)?
b. Do you need to consider any additional/added costs?
c. Does it ever change? If it does, why and according to which criteria?
d. How do people pay? Online?
e. Do you ask for any data when people purchase your product/service?

4.Policy context

a. With which legal entities did you need to register your business?
b. Are there any local and/or regional policies that help/limit the functioning of your business? (e.g. protected regional/national parks)
c. Is regional and/or local policy supportive?
d. Have you had funding from agricultural policy or rural development policy? *Specify...*
e. What kinds of initiatives in the area receive funding? *(How is farm inserted in the broader context?)*
f. Do you receive any subsidies at all? From which entities?

5.Environmental aspects

a. Are there any environmental problems in the surrounding area that impact the farm activity?
    - Groundwater pollution/contamination
    - Groundwater depletion
    - Nearby presence of landfill areas
    - Soil depletion and/or erosion
    - Climate change
    - Wildlife/biodiversity depletion/extinction
    - Land erosion

- Other (specify)

b. Are there any natural characteristics of the physical environment that favor/affect/inhibit your activity?
c. Do you use energy from renewable sources?

6.Social networks

Begin with: Can you please describe who are the most important people /institutions /organizations you are connected with for the functioning of your activity? (Perhaps draw a map of your networks)

a. Community (neighbors, etc)
How is your relationship with your neighbors, and community at large? (*Probe: Describe*)

b. With other producers
How is your relationship with other producers? (*Describe*)
Do they assist you in some way(s) in your activities? Do you collaborate?

c. With institutions
Are you registered/affiliated with an agricultural association/organisation?
- Professional (agricultural) organisation
- Producers' organisation
- Cooperative
- Peasant forum/association
- Other (specify)

Are you registered with any association/organisation (e.g. Coldiretti, Campagna Amica, Slow Food, etc.)?
How would you describe your relationship with said association/organisation?
Do you participate in any meetings/conferences?
Are there any communication problems/obstacles?

d. Do you interact with Municipal, Provincial, and/or Regional institutions?
e. Are you part of any local/territorial/regional initiatives?

Appendix B. Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews with NOTEdi Shop Vendors/Owners

(Shop Vendor/Owner 1, 2, 3, 4)

English

1. How did you meet [*Nd Key Informant 1*]?
2. How long have you carried NOTEdi's products in your store?
3. In general, what is your shop's criteria for accepting new product brands?
4. In your view, what makes NOTEdi products different?
5. Are there many other producers in the area?
6. Do you consider saffron and other spices to be two different markets or the same?
7. What is the saffron and spice market like—is it saturated or expanding? (*in Sicily and Italy as a whole*)
8. Have your orders for NOTEdi increased, been stagnant or decreased?
9. Is there a product in particular that sells more than the others?
10. How do you perceive NOTEdi?

Italian

1. Come hai conosciuto [*Nd Key Informant 1*]?
2. Da quanto tempo hai portato i prodotti di NOTEdi nel tuo negozio?
3. In generale, quali sono i criteri del tuo negozio per l'accettazione di nuovi marchi di prodotti?
4. Secondo lei, cosa rende diverse i prodotti di NOTEdi?
5. Ci sono molti altri produttori nella zona?
6. Consideri lo zafferano ed altre spezie per essere due mercati diversi o lo stesso?
7. Il mercato di zafferano e delle spezie—è saturo o in espansione? (*in Sicilia e in tutta l'Italia*)
8. I tuoi ordini per NOTEdi sono aumentati, sono rimasti stagnanti o sono diminuiti?
9. C'e un prodotto in particolare che vende più degli altri?
10. Come vedi l'azienda NOTEdi?

Appendix C. Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews with NOTEdi Producers (Agricultural producer 1, 2, 3, 4)

English

1. Are you from here? Have you lived here throughout all your life?
2. Does your family (parents, grandparents) have a history in agriculture?
3. How long have you had your land plot/your company?
4. What do you cultivate?
5. How many hectares do you have?
6. How did you learn how to cultivate [oregano, saffron, or other herbs/spices]?
7. How many years have you been cultivating [oregano, saffron, or other herbs/spices]?
8. The market for herbs and/or spices and/or saffron—do you think it's saturated or expanding? (in Sicily and in all of Italy)
9. How did you get to know [*Nd Key Informant 1*]?
10. How do you foresee a collaboration with NOTEdi?

Italian

1. Sei di qui? Hai vissuto qui per tutta la tua vita?
2. Does your family (parents, grandparents) have a history in agriculture?
3. Fa quanto tempo que hai il tuo terreno/la tua azienda?
4. Che coltivi?
5. Quanti ettari hai?
6. Come hai imparato a coltivare [l'origano, lo zafferano, o altre erbe/spezie]?
7. Quanti anni fa che coltivi [l'origano, lo zafferano, o altre erbe/spezie]?
8. Il mercato delle erbe e delle spezie—pensi che è saturato o in espansione? (in Sicilia e in tutta l'Italia)
9. Come hai conosciuto [*Nd Key Informant 1*]?
10. Come prevedi una collaborazione con NOTEdi?

Appendix D. Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews with Metafarm Network Actors (Family Farm 1, Family Farm 2, Restaurant Owner, Producer/Farm Tour Operator, Tourism Association President/Hotel Owner)

English

1. Are you from here? Have you lived here throughout all your life?
2. Does your family (parents, grandparents) have a history in agriculture?
3. Do you (and your partner) farm for leisure or subsistence?
4. How much land do you have? What do you cultivate?
5. Have you ever had any other jobs?/ Have you worked in other sectors?
6. Do your kids work in agriculture?
7. Do you have a generally positive relationship with your community and neighbors?
8. Do you go to Positano? How often? Why or why not?
9. How long have you known [*Mf Key Informant 1*]?
10. What do you think about on the gastronomic trekking activity? Why?
11. Do you/did you ever forage? Why/why not?
12. Since when have you let him occasionally use your space for his activity?
13. How do you perceive your collaboration with him?

Italian

1. Sei di qui? Hai vissuto qui per tutta la tua vita?
2. La tua famiglia (genitori, nonni) ha una storia in agricoltura?
3. Tu (e il tuo marito/la tua moglie) coltivate per il tempo libero o di sussistenza?
4. Quanti ettari di terra avete? Cosa coltivete?
5. Hai mai avuto altri lavori? / Hai lavorato in altri settori?
6. I tuoi figli lavorano in agricoltura?
7. Hai una relazione generalmente positiva con la tua comunità e i tuoi vicini?
8. Vai al centro di Positano frequentemente? Perché o perché no?
9. Da quanto conoscete [*Mf Key Informant 1*]?
10. Cosa ne pensi sulla sua attività “Gastronomic Trekking”? Perché?
11. Hai mai fatto una ricolta d'erbe spontanee? Perché? /Perché no?
12. Da quando hai lasciato che occasionalmente usasse il tuo spazio per la sua attività?
13. Come percepisci questa collaborazione con lui?

Appendix E. Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews with Metafarm's GT Visitors

General Information

1. How old are you? Where are you from? (*Take note if male/female)*
2. Is it your first time in Italy? First time in the Amalfi Coast?
3. What brought you here?
4. For how many days are you staying here? Where are you currently staying? (*In what town of the Amalfi Coast?)*

Gastronomic Trekking Activity

1. How did you hear about Gastronomic Trekking?
2. What attracted you to this activity while on vacation?
3. Have you ever foraged before?
4. Did you have any expectations before going on the trek? What were they? In what ways were they met/ not met?
5. How do you perceive [*Mf Key Informant 1*] and the GT activity?
6. What did you like most about this experience? Why?
7. What did you like least about this experience? Why?
8. Do you have any other remarks about the experience overall?

Appendix F. Research Ethics Forms (*English*)

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Project title (tentative, subject to change): Re-peasantization strategies in new rural realities: Two case studies in the south of Italy

Main objectives and study purpose

As part of the Master's of Arts in Food Studies program at the American University of Rome, the purpose of this field-based two-case study is to comprehensively explore the strategies, practices and networks of two small-scale farms in the south of Italy. A combination of in-depth, detailed data—namely observational field notes, face-to-face interviews and audio-visual documentation—will be collected by the researcher during a fixed period of time spent on-site in each location. The selected cases will be treated as two separate realities and expressions of modern farm-based livelihoods. Given the aim of grasping a systemic understanding of the farm entities' operative functioning, the researcher also intends to interview other involved stakeholders in the respective networks (e.g. visitors/tourists, consumers, local producers).

The records from this thesis research project will be kept confidential and anonymous, whereby only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the documentation. Questions or inquiries can be addressed at any time by contacting the researcher, Tara Dourian, directly via e-mail at: taradourian@gmail.com, or the project supervisor, Dr. Maria Fonte, at: mcfonte@icloud.com.

If you agree to take part in the study, please read and sign the attached Consent Form. Thank you.

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME

CONSENT FORM

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Project title (tentative, subject to change): Re-peasantization strategies in new rural realities: Two case studies in the south of Italy.

Researcher: Tara Dourian

Contact details: taradourian@gmail.com

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organizing the research must explain the project to you.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Participant's Statement

I agree that:

• I have read the notes and Information Sheet, and I understand what the study involves.
• I understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw immediately.
• I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
• I understand that such information will be treated as confidential and handled in accordance with the Italian legal provisions.
• I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in this study.
• I understand that the information I have submitted will be published in a report and that it may be part of future publications connected to the original purpose of this research.
• I agree to be contacted in the future by the researcher.
• I understand that my participation may be recorded. And I consent to the use of this material as part of the project.
• I have the right to withdraw for any or no reason, and at any time, and without any penalty.

I agree that my identity may be disclosed without permission. YES NO

Signature Date

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME

PHOTOGRAPHIC RELEASE FORM

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Project title (tentative, subject to change): Re-peasantization strategies in new rural realities: Two case studies in the south of Italy.

Researcher: Tara Dourian

Contact details: taradourian@gmail.com

As part of this research, I will be taking photographs. Please initial in the spaces below what uses of these photographs you consent to, and sign at the end of the release form. Photos will only be used in the ways you consent to. Your name will not be identified in these photos.

1._____ Photographs can be reviewed by the Researcher and his/her Advisor.

2._____ Photographs can be used for illustration in the thesis.

3._____ Photographs can be used for classroom presentations.

4._____ Photographs can be used for academic conference presentations.

5._____ Photographs can be used for promotional materials, such as brochures or fliers.

6._____ Photographs can be posted on a website for promotional purposes.

Name: _____

_____ _____

(Signature) (Date)

Appendix G. Research Ethics Forms (*Italian*)

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME

FOGLIO INFORMATIVO DEL PROGETTO

Titolo del progetto (provvisorio, soggetto a modifiche): Strategie di ri-contadinizzazione in nuove realtà rurali: due casi studio nel sud d'Italia

Principali obiettivi e finalità di studio

Come parte del programma Master of Arts in Food Studies presso l'American University of Rome, lo scopo di questo studio è quello di esplorare in modo completo e approfondito le strategie, le pratiche e le reti di due piccole aziende nel sud d'Italia. Un insieme di dati—note osservative, interviste faccia a faccia e documentazione audiovisiva—sarà raccolto dalla ricercatrice durante un periodo di alcune settimane trascorse sul posto in ciascuna sede. I casi selezionati saranno trattati come due realtà distinte ed espressioni di moderne strategie di sussistenza delle aziende agricole in Italia. L'obiettivo è di rappresentare una visione sistemica del funzionamento pratico delle nuove realtà agricole, tramite interviste a coloro che operano nell'azienda così come ad altri soggetti coinvolti nelle loro reti sociali (ad esempio visitatori/turisti, consumatori, produttori locali).

Le registrazioni effettuate durante le interviste saranno mantenute riservate e anonime. Solo la ricercatrice e il suo supervisore avranno accesso alla documentazione. Domande o richieste di chiarimento possono essere indirizzate in qualsiasi momento contattando la ricercatrice, Tara Dourian, direttamente via e-mail all'indirizzo: taradourian@gmail.com, o la supervisora del progetto, Prof.ssa Maria Fonte, all'indirizzo: mcfonte@icloud.com.

Se accetta di prendere parte allo studio, per piacere legga e firmi il Modulo di Consenso allegato.

Grazie.

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ROME

MODULO DI CONSENSO

Si prega di compilare questo modulo dopo aver letto il Foglio Informativo ed/o ascoltato una spiegazione sulla ricerca.

Titolo del progetto (provvisorio, soggetto a modifiche): Strategie di ri-contadinizzazione in nuove realtà rurali: due casi studio nel sud d'Italia

Ricercatore: Tara Dourian

Dettagli del contatto: taradourian@gmail.com

Grazie per il suo interesse a prendere parte a questa ricerca. Prima di accettare di partecipare, la persona che organizza la ricerca deve spiegarle il progetto.

In caso lei abbia dei dubbi su quanto contenuto nel Foglio Informativo o sulle spiegazioni già fornite, è pregato di chiarire i suoi dubbi con il ricercatore prima di decidere se aderire al progetto. Verrà fornita una copia di questo Modulo di Consenso da conservare e come riferimento in qualsiasi momento.

Dichiarazione del partecipante

Sono d'accordo che:

• Ho letto le note e il Foglio Informativo, e capisco cosa implica lo studio.
• Capisco che se in qualsiasi momento decido di non voler più prendere parte a questo progetto, posso avvisare i ricercatori coinvolti e ritirarmi immediatamente.
• Acconsento al trattamento dei miei dati personali per gli scopi di questo studio di ricerca.
• Comprendo che tali informazioni saranno trattate come riservate e gestite in conformità con le disposizioni legali italiane.
• Sono d'accordo che il progetto di ricerca sopra menzionato mi è stato spiegato con mia piena soddisfazione e accetto di prendere parte a questo studio.
• Comprendo che le informazioni che darò o che ho dato saranno pubblicate in un rapporto e che potrebbero far parte di future pubblicazioni collegate allo scopo originale di questa ricerca.
• Accetto di essere contattato in futuro dal ricercatore.
• Capisco che la mia partecipazione possa essere registrata. E acconsento all'uso di questo materiale come parte del progetto.
• Ho il diritto di recedere per qualsiasi o nessuna ragione, in qualsiasi momento e senza alcuna penalità.

Accetto che la mia identità possa essere divulgata senza permesso. SI NO

Firma Data

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LIBERATORIA PER LE FOTO

Si prega di compilare questo modulo dopo aver letto il Foglio Informativo e/o prestato ascolto alla spiegazione sulla ricerca.

Titolo del progetto (provvisorio, soggetto a modifiche): Strategie di ri-contadinizzazione in nuove realtà rurali: due casi studio nel sud d'Italia

Ricercatore: Tara Dourian

Dettagli del contatto: taradourian@gmail.com

Come parte di questa ricerca, farò fotografie. Si prega di indicare con una crocetta negli spazi sottostanti a quali usi di queste fotografie si acconsente e di firmare alla fine la liberatoria. Le foto verranno utilizzate solo nei modi per i quali lei darà il consenso. Il suo nome non verrà indicato in queste foto.

1._____Le fotografie possono essere esaminate dalla ricercatrice e dalla sua supervisora.

2._____Le fotografie possono essere utilizzate per l'illustrazione nella tesi.

3._____Le fotografie possono essere utilizzate per presentazioni in classe.

4._____Le fotografie possono essere utilizzate per presentazioni durante conferenze accademiche.

5._____Le fotografie possono essere utilizzate per materiale promozionale, come opuscoli o volantini.

6._____ Le fotografie possono essere pubblicate su un sito Web a scopo promozionale.

Nome: _____

_____ _____
(Firma) (Data)