

## **Controversy and sustainability for geographical indications and localized agro-food systems: thinking about a dynamic link**

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“Let’s go back to the field” could have been another subtitle for this special section, which aims to consider and recognize local agro-food systems as complex and dynamic networks. However, the same expression could also be used to illustrate the background for this special section: Let’s – first – go back to the field through two illustrations based on localized food product controversies in international food media discourses.

### **Illustration 1: The Parmesan “wood pulp controversy”**

In an article by Dana Hatic titled “That Shredded Parmesan in Your Fridge Might Actually Be Wood, Says the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act”, published on 16 February 2016 on the website Eater[1], we can read: “The FDA determined that the company’s ‘100 percent Parmesan cheese’ included such fillers as wood pulp, cellulose, and cheddar — but no actual Parmesan. The company’s president is scheduled to plead guilty to criminal charges this month and could get a year in prison and a \$100,000 fine” (Hatic, 2016).

Different sources indicate that retailers would stop selling this product and that consumers are confused, but a 21st February 2016 article published on the website DairyReporter[2] notes: “Shredded Parmesan market growing despite wood pulp controversy”. Author Douglas Yu wrote: “After various media outlets reported that much of the shredded 100% Parmesan cheese in the US contains wood pulp this past week, sources told DairyReporter that the shredded Parmesan cheese is safe, and that the market will continue to grow” (Yu, 2016).

### **Illustration 2: The latest twist in the long-running battle between Greece and Denmark over Europe’s most controversial dairy product**

In the article “Defining a Name’s Origin: The Case of Feta”, published on 19th March 2015 by the WIPO[3], we read: “Under Greece’s 1988 legislation, the composition and production techniques of Feta are protected (EC, 2002). Domestic producers were largely unaffected, but importers faced new challenges to marketing cheese in Greece using the Feta name” (WIPO, 2015).

We also learn that “in 1991 Greek authorities seized a shipment of Danish Feta cheese on the grounds that it violated this legislation, which represented the start of a series of IP disputes over the use of the Feta name.” The controversy is still alive 27 years later.

In the UK, the *Telegraph* published an article entitled “European Commission cheesed off after Danish dairies flout ‘feta’ ban” on 31 January 2018. According to the article, “The European Commission has now demanded the Danes stop selling the cheese to non-EU countries as feta in a formal complaint. Only Greek feta can be labelled feta under EU law, which defines it as a brined cheese made in Greece from sheep milk, sometime mixed with up to 30 percent of goat’s milk. The Danish variant is made using chemically blanched cow milk and is smoother, creamier and less apt to crumble. It is now sold in Denmark as ‘salad cubes’ or ‘white cheese’” (Crisp, 2018).

At the beginning of a book aimed to help consumers find their way through a jungle of information about food health and food products, the authors of “Food and Nutrition Controversies Today: A Reference Guide” highlight both the quantity and the complexity of food controversies and write: “Although there are a myriad of food and nutrition controversies, the book focuses on 16 of them” (Chandler Goldstein and Goldstein, 2009, p. 1).

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This paper forms part of a special section “Controversy and sustainability for localised agrofood systems: thinking a dynamic link”.



Two of these are organic food and food labelling, which are at the core of local and localized food production and consumption. In fact, the two illustrations we begin with exemplify not only controversies about food labelling, here linked especially to localized food products, but also two of the most prominent controversies of this kind (possibly only Champagne or Parma ham may compete). Furthermore, they emphasize the extent of the entanglement related to food controversies. Illustration 1 involves the mislabelling of a well-known product of origin engaging lawyers, producers, retailers and consumers as well as product innovation and materials like wood or milk. In illustration 2, lawyers and producers are apparently major components of a controversy in a global-market perspective. The 1991 case to which the text involving Greek authorities refers ended up as the concrete application for the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for feta cheese, first registered in 1996. Though it was cancelled in 1999 because several countries argued that the name was generic and had been used for a long time in countries other than Greece, the PDO was eventually confirmed in 2002 by the EU commission and reaffirmed by the Court of Justice in 2005 (CJE/05/92 CoJ, 2005).

The 12 contributions to this special section will hopefully shed new light beyond these examples. In the meantime, those illustrations will help us to introduce concretely and more specifically the concepts of localized agro-food systems (LAFSs) and geographical indications (GIs) that are central to this issue. We will then address the concept of controversy while the subsequent section will consider the reason we proposed linking these three notions. After presenting the table of content including titles and authors' names of the 12 papers, we will reflect on how controversies, LAFSs and GIs are addressed, tackled or defined in the different articles, eventually focussing on the role of controversies in GIs and LAFS processes.

*About LAFSs and GIs in this special section: a multidisciplinary approach to localized agro-food systems and geographical indications*

Certification systems of food quality – whether national, international, public or private – are current tools for market regulation and for today's global food governance. The official labelling systems, where the third party is often a state institution protecting and/or promoting local food products, local agro-food systems, and GIs, have been at the heart of European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for more than a generation.

LAFSs are socio-technical and territorial realities that have largely developed over the last 20 years but also became the objects of new questions and controversies. As defined by Sanz-Cañada and Muchnik “A Local Agro-Food System (LAFS) is a form of production of local identity-based foods explicitly grounded in specific territorial dynamics of agriculture, food and consumption networks. The aim of [an] LAFS involves generating territorial dynamics, based on collective action, as a way of valorizing local food identity and adding value to local resources, such as agricultural landscapes and ecosystems, local knowledge, local social networks, food traditions and cultures, and native vegetable varieties and animal breeds, among others” (Sanz-Cañada, 2016, p. 1). The promotion of LAFS products can be realized through a GI process, which has been a central part of the CAP since 1992 (with the Council Regulation “(EEC) No 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs[4]”, adjusted in 2006 through Council Regulation; “(EC) No 509 and 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs[5]”; and extended in 2012 through the Regulation “(EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs[6]).

GIs, therefore, include three types and levels of official protection either through the PDO, the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) or the Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG). While the first two require a connection to a specific place, this geographical link is

not necessary for the TSG and is, therefore, not as relevant in a special section about LAFSs. Following the European Commission, the WIPO uses the following definition, to which we also refer to in this special section: “A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. [...] Since the qualities depend on the geographical place of production, there is a clear link between the product and its original place of production[7].” Let us note that these types of food products related to a specific place and know-how can also be defined using other terms, e.g. as the more generic term “local and localized food” (Bérard and Marchenay, 2007) or “typical food” (Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2013). As they originally concerned the European market’s LAFS and GIs hold particular interest for researchers in ethnography, economy and rural studies in Southern Europe (e.g. Sylvander, 1995; Bérard and Marchenay, 1998; Moity-Maïzi and Bouche, 2011); later, this interest crossed the Atlantic (e.g. Barham, 2003; Trubek, 2008; Desoucey, 2010), and has now extended to become a global issue and an international research field on all continents (see Marie-Vivien *et al.* in this issue).

The *British Food Journal* has regularly published articles on local food products and GIs over the last 30 years (especially from the 1990s and related to the first EEC regulation about the protection of GIs) with increasing interest, particularly in recent years (e.g. Quiñones Ruiz *et al.*, 2018; Leufkens, 2018; Kizos *et al.*, 2017; Zhao *et al.*, 2016). Nowadays, these topics involve researchers, products, countries, and legislations worldwide and generate new reactions, issues and viewpoints. Several recent books and journal issues have focussed on GIs as interesting but ambivalent, complicated and complex alternative agro-food systems, both in Europe and beyond. Presented in a regional and territorial perspective, the special section of the *Culture & History Digital Journal* emphasizes the importance of local governance and the role of collective networks in LAFSs and GIs (Sanz-Cañada, 2016). Two recent special sections of *Sustainability* also focus on LAFS and GIs. Taking an environmental approach, Brunori *et al.* (2016) probed whether local and localized foods are more sustainable than “conventional” foods. In 2019, Mancini co-edited a special section with articles reflecting upon “Motivations, Drivers, and Barriers to the Development of Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Consumption Patterns”. Consumers and GIs are also central in “Knowing Where It Comes From: Labeling Traditional Foods to Compete in a Global Market” a book about labelling food, consumer power and citizen responsibility (Parasecoli, 2017). Taking an even more political perspective, Bonanno *et al.* (2019) considered GIs an element of “the contemporary global neo-liberal agri-food system” in their new book called “Geographical Indication in the Development and Democratization of Global Agri-Food”; they highlight the ambivalence of local food and GIs as real alternative food networks and question their potential power for emancipation and democratization (pp. 1, 3). Although controversies are implicit, or sometimes explicit, in all these studies, none of them uses the topic of controversies as an entryway to illuminate the complexity and dynamism of LAFSs and GIs.

This special section, therefore, proposes a multidisciplinary reflection on a particular and rarely explored issue concerning the role played by controversies in the sustainability (environmental, economic, social and cultural) of local and localized food products. It builds on practical experiences related to LAFSs and GIs with the aim of examining the role and the management of emerging controversies for the sustainability of food systems always caught in a tension between markets and cultural heritage.

#### *About controversies*

Controversy is a contentious topic. Commonly used as a synonym for debate, conflict or disagreement, we refer here to the field of the “sociology of controversies” that emerged in France in the 1990s under the auspices of Latour and Callon (Akrich *et al.*, 2006a) and has been extended in recent years, particularly with regard to sociology and history of sciences,

communication, information and journalism (Lemieux, 2007; Chateauraynaud, 2011; Gingras, 2014; Badouard and Mabi, 2015c; Raynaud, 2018). Although here we mention one emerging field of study, there is actually no real agreement about the definition of a controversy. Some authors highlight the public debate aspect while others focus on the process itself. Basically, we can distinguish two streams of thought. On the one hand, we find a socio-historical perspective where the construction of scientific knowledge is central, an approach that Lemieux qualified as a classical approach (Lemieux, 2007) “revealing” power relationships (Raynaud, 2017). Raynaud especially works on scientific controversies he defines as organized debates aimed at producing scientific knowledge: “If we focus on the form, the controversies are comparable to debates or public jousting that falls into the category of conflicts. If we focus on content, now, controversies are about statements that are closely related to a specific form of activity: producing true knowledge about the world[8]” (Raynaud, 2018, p. 18). On the other hand, there is an “actor-network” insight that has inspired a pragmatic approach where controversies are elements of the construction of the social, either as a closed controversy with peers or a public one with laypersons (Lemieux, 2007; Chateauraynaud, 2011).

Following Badouard and Mabi (2015b), the controversy is “the expression of a disagreement, a confrontation between different rationalities, different conceptions of the same problem and of the social world in which it unfolds” (p. 11). Regardless of the definition or the goal, almost all of them agree that controversies emerge from technological or scientific innovations that are related to food and based on uncertainties that are or may become problematic for society, e.g. the potential impacts of genetically modified organisms on health and the environment.

Although the sociology of controversies is certainly a great source of inspiration and stimulation for this special section, we decided to open it to broader considerations, where disagreements and uncertainties are at the core but not necessarily in a techno-scientific order. We aim to use controversies in a larger sense focusing not only on scientific and/or and technological controversies but also on debates and public disputes, or narrower context (emphasizing food issues, particularly local food systems, production and consumption). Gingras underlined the fundamental difference between scientific controversy and public controversy: while the first concerns a subject “to be discussed between peers” in a limited milieu, the second can affect all citizens even if they do not have the same type of knowledge or do not share similar principles (Gingras, 2014, p. 10). This ties in with Lemieux’s (2007) reflections, which additionally considered controversies “like series of tests gradually instituting a new state of the social world (see footnote 8)” (p. 193).

In relation to Simmel’s thoughts about conflict, we would especially underline the importance of the total relationship in any controversy. Simmel (1904) noted first that “Opposition is not merely a means of conserving the total relationship, but it is one of the concrete functions in which the relationship in reality consists” (p. 493) and concluded that “whatever in this whole seems to be an element of division is thus in reality only one of its elementary forms of socialization” (p. 494). In line with the delimitation proposed by Badouard and Mabi (2015a), we consider here controversy not necessarily as a defined conflict or an opposition but rather as a *stage for open dialogue in the dispute*. Studying this phase, where problems can be discussed and can evolve, allows us to shed light on public debates (and how they are organized and shared) and to point out the importance of communication for a social dialogue. In this issue, following the pragmatic approach, we can consider “controversies as the necessary and dynamic communication elements of, and for, a social dialogue”.

#### *Why link controversy, sustainability and the LAFS and GI?*

Callon *et al.* (2001) stressed that controversies should be considered in a dynamic and positive manner in order to reach mutual understanding and comprehension, often in a context of

uncertainty, thereby contributing to enriching democracy (p. 28). This special section aims to emphasize the dynamic role of the multiple sources of controversies for geographically certified products, taking into consideration the boundaries of the network, knowledge, practices and actors' identities. The special section also considers controversies emerging from various steps or scopes including production, processing, distribution and consumption, in addition to environmental, social or cultural issues, such as local employment.

In this perspective, we have the pleasure of presenting here 12 contributions covering four continents and comprising 11 research papers and one viewpoint paper[9]. We believe that they will contribute to exploring and discussing the roles of controversies in relation to the dynamics and sustainability of a food system and/or certification. None of the 12 aims to present cartography of given controversies within local and localized food systems, but each probes the disputes emerging from a given context by identifying the involved network, revealing disagreements and highlighting the relationship between the parts. This approach to LAFSs and GIs permits the revealing of not only the actors, forces and alliances within groups or communities but also assessing the role played by controversies in the reality of LAFSs and GIs and to build something like a shared meaning (but never definitive). It also puts emphasis on, and confirms, the role played by controversies regarding the dynamic and the governance of LAFS and GIs that are always oriented towards the recognition and repositioning of actors.

We open this special section with four general research papers (Articles 1, 2, 3 and 4) as a matter of introduction to the field on LAFSs, GIs and their construction. They cover the legal regulations around GIs and other certification systems as slow food in several countries and in different perspectives. All together they provide an overview of involved actors and issues relevant to explore the governance of the GI specification elaboration through concrete case studies from Europe to Asia, e.g. Ossau-Iraty, Parmigiano-Reggiano or dried fish. We present then three case studies that are not only focusing on concrete products but also on questions linked to sustainability, biodiversity or taste (Articles 5, 6 7 and 8). In a third session three articles present three affairs (Art. 8, 9 and 10), in the sense of Boltanski meaning that "to some extent, affairs always involve the question of *the state*, which, by definition, presents itself as *the guarantor of reality*"(Boltanski *et al.*, 2010, p. XVII) about Bitto cheese, Parmigiano-Reggiano sales in crisis situation and veal meat perception in UK. One article is of methodological order and presents the hybrid forum 2.0, an approach of controversies (Article 11). The last article (a viewpoint paper) compares LAFS and GIs in Argentina and Spain (Article 12).

Below is a list of the titles and authors in the issue, including the number we refer to in the following text (e.g. reference to article 1 will be "Art.1"). Descriptions of each article are implicitly given in the editorial, and the corresponding abstracts can be easily found online in the special section section:

- 1/ BFJ-04-2019-0242.R1: Controversies around geographical indications: are democracy and representativeness the solution? By Delphine Marie-Vivien, Aurélie Carimentrand, Stéphanie Fournier, Claire Cerdan, and Denis Sautier.
- 2/ BFJ-10-2018-0713.R2: Contested knowledge: changing practices in origin-food communities by Mariagiulia Mariani, Claire Cerdan, and Iuri Peri.
- 3/ BFJ-10-2018-0720.R1: The map and the terroir adapting geographical boundaries for PDO and PGI in Norway by Atle When Hegnes.
- 4/ BFJ-10-2018-0662.R2: Innovation and typicality in localised agri-food systems: the case of PDO Parmigiano Reggiano by Maria Cecilia Mancini, Filippo Arfini, and Marianna Guareschi.
- 5/ BFJ-10-2018-0719.R2: From Ossau and Iraty to PDO Ossau-Iraty: the long-term construction of a product based on two distinct places by Morgane Millet.

- 6/ BFJ-10-2018-0718.R3: The notion of Mosel wine and its controversies by Håkon Aspøy
- 7/ BFJ-04-2019-0243: Bringing terroir back to the roots? A methodological proposal for studying local food products by Lucile Garçon.
- 8/ BFJ-11-2018-0738.R1: Open conflict as differentiation strategy in Geographical Indications: The Bitto Rebels case by Diego Rinallo and Valentina Pitardi.
- 9/ BFJ-06-2019-0400.R1: May trust and solidarity defy food scares? The case of Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO sales in the aftermath of natural disaster by Davide Menozzi and Corrado Finardi.
- 10/ BFJ-10-2018-0708.R1: From inhumane to enticing: Reimagining scandalous meat by Kristie O'Neill.
- 11/ BFJ-10-2018-0717.R1: At the heart of controversies: hybrid forums as an experimental multi-actor tool to enhance sustainable practices in localized agro-food systems by Virginie Amilien, Barbara Tocco, and Paal Strandbakken.
- 12/ BFJ-10-2018-0711.R4: We recovered food heritage, and then? Value enhancement and promotion of local agri-food products in Argentina and Spain by Cintia Analía Barrionuevo, Elena Espeitx Bernat, and Irene Julie Velarde.

*Controversies as an entryway to the world of LAFSs and GIs in this special section?*

In line with Latour, who defined controversies as the background for the construction of science, controversies are what constitute, give meaning to and allow LAFSs and GIs to materialize. It is not a question of ignoring the institutional framework, like laws and regulations that are essential (this issue offers many examples through Articles 1, 3, 5 or 12), nor norms or conventions that play a central role in the development of those food products (e.g. through Articles 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10). Nor does it mean that we should forget traditions, the weight of knowledge or social practices, or the dynamics between actors (e.g. through Articles 2, 5, 6, 7 or 9). Rather, it is a matter of focussing on conflicts, oppositions, disagreements and dialogues as pillars of the common construction of a reality that is based not only on established frameworks that actors must accept but also on interactivity and co-creation. This can lead to constructive exchanges and reflections, individual civic commitments or collective engagement (e.g. Articles 2 or 8) and, eventually, to a more sustainable conscientiousness about agro-food systems (see the hypothesis presented in Article 11).

As tradition, which is both a state and a process (Amilien and Hegnes, 2013), GIs and LAFSs build both on change and continuity (Allaire *et al.*, 2011). The specific product is almost constantly in the making as emphasized by Mancini and her co-authors in their paper analysing the determinants and the impact of innovation in the case of PDO Parmigiano-Reggiano (Article 4). Geographical indication is a process involving many stakeholders including local people in a common project. As underlined by Marie-Vivien and her co-authors, each GI relies on a specific code of practices, and those who are not “complying with GI specifications will be excluded from using the name; defining GI specification necessarily generates controversies, crystallizing value conflicts” (Article 1).

*Rethinking GIs through controversies*

The papers presented in this issue emphasize the role of controversies as both a constituent, and a sideway, in the development of LAFSs and GIs. Several authors focus on the emergence of the controversies in the process of specification and definition of the

specificities (e.g. Articles 3, 4 or 5). Issues linked to governance and power relationship also bring out disputes (e.g. Articles 4, 1, 3 or 2), eventually constituting a component in the dynamics of the construction of product qualification (e.g. 4, 5 or 8).

Contrary to technical controversies such as GMOs, for example, controversies about LAFSs or GIs rarely build on disagreement about the delimitation of the certification system, especially since the definitions of GIs are laid down by law. As the articles in this special section emphasize, the controversies appear elsewhere, for example, in the construction of the geographical indication itself or in the uncertainty of the sustainability of the LAFS. Either top-down or bottom-up, GIs are therefore “by definition” the results of multi-stakeholder processes and objects, or subjects, of permanent negotiation. “Defining GIs necessarily generates controversies. Indeed, GI registration responds to multiple and sometimes contradictory objectives; the process of drawing up the GI specifications crystallizes value conflicts and generates controversies that must be overcome for the GI to exist and be successful” write Barrionuevo and her co-authors in paper 12.

Thinking about GIs through controversies allowed the authors of this special section to underline that a GI is not predefined, as other certification labels are, and that controversies are a concrete element of the common building of rules and specifications (e.g. Articles 2, 3 or 5). Asking themselves about ways people can resolve a controversy, they suggest a more democratic dialogue including, for example, better representation and greater transparency of the specification or GI process or arbitration of state authority (e.g. Articles 1 or 12). We also notice that controversies can stimulate solidarity and shared identity (Article 9). Moreover, controversies are embedded in the recognition of public space and local history and stimulate the repositioning of the actors in relation to a possible common good, or to the personal/local/collective interests and power bonds (e.g. Articles 5, 2, 7 or 8).

As such, they can be described as a path along the never-ending construction process.

### *Controversies as a path along a process*

Controversies often emerge during the construction of the code of practices, when actors need to agree about the definition of the characteristics of a particular product, or at the time of delimitation of what is considered “local”. Collaborating in order to describe the specifications is a strategic point at which controversies appear, as defining the quality of the product “crystallizes existing value conflicts” (e.g. Articles 3, 1 or 8). This leads to a new way of analysing the sense of “local” from various points of views. The polysemy of the word local “shows that it covers a great diversity of practices, but also of temporalities considering the relationships with the environment”, writes Garçon in Article 7. It draws different strategies of localization through practices of selection seeds (e.g. Articles 7, 1 or 12).

Disputes are specific not only in regard to agreement about definitions within the code of practices but also when these are amended or reconsidered. Studying the often-forgotten definition of taste in the specifications of Mosel wine, Aspøy underlined how taste is redefined through different types of narratives that develop in, and within, controversies, permitting the reconsideration of boundaries. Both taste and actors re-define themselves in relation to each other (Article 6). In this sense, the study of the Ossau-Iraty case also illustrates a group, such as producers in a GI, who co-evolve (Article 5). Going further, some groups involve stakeholders who interact with each other, learn together and from each other, and shape a community where new actors, such as consumers, for example, are invited to redefine the frames and innovate (Article 2). In addition, the Bitto case includes not only consumers but also NGOs, journalists and other new actors, such as the Consortium for Safeguarding the Heritage of Bitto, to create the cheese (Article 8).

Questions of governance and power tensions are also current instigators of controversies. Issues linked to quality food schemes are often based on asymmetric relationships, where controversies open the discussion to minorities also, as in the case of

Bitto cheese (Article 8) for promoting biodiversity (Article 7). In the Ossau-Iraty case, controversies permit actors who consider themselves excluded or harmed to reorganize themselves and claim their place in the “public space” (Articles 2 or 5).

Although discussing specifications and power relations are the most usual triggers for controversies, Menozzi and Finardi illustrate how a crisis like a sanitation or food hygiene disaster can provoke a controversy, referring to the how the qualities of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese after the earthquake were questioned by the mass media because of potential health risks. New actors intervened first when the controversy was progressively installed in the Italian public space: the state defended the consistent qualities of the product under PGI in an attempt to limit the economic losses of the sector while international networks (political and scientific, such as Slow Food) called for solidarity to guarantee the survival of cheese makers (Article 9).

#### *Controversies as a methodological tool*

Most previous examples testify, more or less explicitly, to the methodological interest of controversies. In the case of the PDO cheese Ossau-Iraty, Millet explains that “local stakeholders share a sense of belonging that has been built through space and time, and which is translated into a collective qualification of their product.” She particularly emphasizes that sharing a common sense of frontiers or history is not a fact but the result of negotiation between different interests and views on controversial objects as a frontier or tradition (Article 5). Focussing on concrete PDO and PGI codes of practices of Norwegian food products, Hegnes observes that understanding, forms and material environment are continuously adapted. He then considers controversies as transformative practices, where translations of meaning, reorganization of social relations and the transformation of things are the pillars of quality schemes (Article 3). Controversies are thus a sort of implicit methodological instrument in the making of a GI where “translation” plays a fundamental role. For this reason, they can also work as a methodological tool for researchers.

Controversies often emerge at the start of a research process and call for a new view that looks towards points that had not been considered initially. The paper on hybrid forum is based on this idea and aims to see controversies as potential instruments for providing an overview of a field to be studied (Article 11). The article about Mosel Wine offers a good example of study where controversy became a methodology: initially guided by questioning about the effects of climate change on the identity and specificities of Mosel Wine, it ends in shedding new light. Discovering the controversy about the very definition of the characteristics of this wine, the researcher was thus reoriented by the field towards a deconstruction of the notion of Mosel Wine itself. The question of its taste and of the “terroir effect” appeared to be at the heart of the debate. The emergence of these controversies in the research process eventually led to a rigorous focus on narrative analysis, “exploring elements such as plots and storylines, taking into account a chain of events in a specific order and resulting in a chain of causes or in a diversity of rhetoric to describe the product” (Article 6).

#### *Controversies as a tool for communication and engagement*

Although controversies can be used as a methodological tool, they are far from the only relationship a researcher may have with public disputes: A researcher also participates – and is often – part of the controversies, for example, as expert. The roles of historians, lawyers or sociologists in the construction of LAFs and GIs should not be underestimated, either before, during, or after the process (e.g. Articles 1, 3 and 8). In the viewpoint written by Argentinean researchers, we understand that “Universities have played a significant role, not only by providing consultancy or training but also by generating other methods of involvement that we could frame as “participatory action research” or “cooperative” processes. From this



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perspective, it is not just about observing, systematizing and providing a scientific laboratory analysis; about building, jointly and dialectically, the different views/visions stemming from the actors throughout the different stages of this process" (Article 12).

The experimental hybrid forums in Norway and the UK aim to propose "a dialogue, create awareness, facilitate collective exploration and learning, cooperation and integration of a plurality of points of view – on a given controversy for creating social engagement" (Article 11). Therefore, controversy is definitely a communication tool, not necessarily for reaching an objective, as underlined here, but in the facts.

Controversies are "revealers" of a matter. While compromise would secrete the source and terms of a conflict to reach an agreement, controversies throw light on an issue and offer more information. Communication is then both a means of information and a way of expressing an idea, in the socio-historical approach of the PDO Bitto cheese offered here by Rinallo and Pitardi. In spite of, or because of, the "warrior" language, we see that the tension between the different strategies and interests initiated the controversies. The GI was perceived both as a quality to support the local economy and to protect cultural knowledge and as a sign to inform and educate consumers. There is eventually one dynamics of communication, where the different perceptions are embedded in each other and mutually support the development of Bitto cheese as a whole process (Article 8).

O'Neill demonstrates the changes in public discourses about veal, which shifted from being a "repugnant" type of meat because of animal crating, to a positive type of food. The paper not only accentuates the importance of food controversies in regard to food consumption embedded in routines and non-reflexive habits, but also the fundamental role of mass media. Once introduced in the public space, controversies disrupted the old-fashioned views, created novel environmental perspectives, inspired other food practices and made veal an edible product (Article 10). The veal meat case is one among many examples where the media discourse contributed to highlighting a situation, increasing information, motivating self-reflection and potentially inspiring engagement in the controversy itself (e.g. Articles 8, 2, 5, 4, 6 and 9). Public debate puts tensions on the civic space and not only within a restricted area.

In some difficult or complex cases, controversies can lead to disengagement. But in their quite unique comparison of three cheese productions within different food schemes in two different countries, Mariani and her co-authors not only underline that controversies stimulate dynamic dialogues that are the heart of the food labelling construction in the three cases, but that it ends to a form of collective engagement they defined like "communities of practice" (Article 2).

This engagement, from all actors, also contributes to the dynamism of controversies, which are the engines of their own change. In the case of the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese crisis, the role of the controversy was to communicate, to open the debate to a very large audience, and to stimulate all actors to become involved in the dialogue and for the state to get involved. In this case, the controversy being a public issue helped producers to survive in a difficult situation. At the same time, it informed a larger population about the PDO attributes, its history and the effects of the earthquake on the conditions of production for small milk producers and processors. Moreover, in some ways it strengthens the product's reputation and contributes to the resilience of an LAFS that is now better known than before (Article 9). Although not comparable in aim or in scope, the Norwegian hybrid forum played a similar role as the first controversy regarding the value of local fish was replaced with more environmental and cultural dimensions in the second forum because of common outputs of the open dialogue (Article 11).

### *To conclude*

Although inspired by pragmatic sociology, the controversial approach for this special section is not confined but rather public, and not necessarily of a sociotechnical order but

rather often based on juridical and empirical disputes. The articles in the issue testify to a diversity of definitions and forms of controversies, but all emphasize public debate and the role played by communication. Controversies emerge in the process of qualification, e.g. definitions of boundaries or of concepts, like the notion of the local, even though it is widely used in the rhetoric of collective processes of certification. Controversies are found in power relationships, but positions can evolve thanks to a controversy. Controversies can also move and change actors' views of the objects and the involved actors in a territory, creating a shift towards a more democratic dialogue.

Especially GIs build on controversies as they concern both the construction and the defence of a common heritage (the definitions of which include several different aspects including spatial limitations, techniques, resources, know-how, relevant actors, markets, producers [legitimate or not], practices, etc.). Food systems with quality labels and GIs are, therefore, complex networks of actors sharing co-constructed knowledge, rules and standards, sometime produced after long and conflictual negotiations never stabilized but always questioned.

Two main issues seem, then, to emerge, respective of economic and market, and societal and discursive orders. At an economic- and market-development level, controversies can be considered as drivers. Several papers highlight the difficulties involved in establishing and maintaining a product's specifications and commitments during a certification process that generally involves not only producers but also various other actors, including consumers, processors and other stakeholders. The issue of geographic delimitation is often questioned and reconsidered after the GI has been tested in the real market through productive and commercial practices (e.g. when borders have been delimited in a way that can work unfairly). Thus, the sustainability of certification linked to a geographic area is partly conditioned by this capacity to manage controversies and to implement a cultural adaptation: New negotiations, reformulations, or translations of the GI's agreement and specifications must be implemented in light of experiencing the practices and positions of actors.

At a more societal level (where health is increasingly associated with food) socio-technological controversies are a central part of the development of new technological practices or challenges both for production and processing. Controversial sustainable practices sometimes require "external experts" or new spokespeople (human or non-human), as underlined in pragmatic sociology, e.g. to confront the specifications of a product and market realities and who can lead to new points of view and new controversies. The challenge of certifications/GIs is, therefore, to be able to identify, negotiate and formalize new generalizable rules for all actors in a geographic area and a localized food system. The original rules and specifications evolve over the course of collective and individual experimentation, and through confrontations with markets and consumer expectations, become objects of disagreement and tension that stress social controversies and exclusions.

The articles in this issue shed light on controversies as a source of dialogue, as revealers, as methodological tools and as central components in the dynamics of construction of product qualification. They demonstrate that "looking through" controversies offer a new perspective. Controversy can open new doors, although it may all lead to the same corridors. Especially interesting is the role of the controversy as a revealer since it makes it possible to expose perspectives, arguments or practices that were not visible in the given administrative or legal framework. This allows a change in the vision of the problem and ways to understand it differently, as emphasized by Chateauraynaud (2011), who defined controversies as drivers of change and alternative initiatives.

Following Hegnes's cultural adaptation work (in Article 4), this special section also highlights the importance of ongoing dynamics and change in localized agri-food systems

and GIs. What characterizes those food products and the quality schemes in which they are framed is the “in between”. The real specifications are neither the starting point nor the point of arrival (or last agreement). By starting point, we mean the first framework ruled by the law, the norms and the conventions. By point of arrival, we think about a determined product in a determined scheme with a given definition and strict specifications. These points delimit the state of the food product. And yet, local and localized products are constantly evolving, fruits of the tensions between the market and the domestic worlds, confined between the public and the private, caught between producers and consumers, pulled through opposition or cooperation, and trapped between the global and the local. All these pressures and movements are sources of controversies, and all those processes of transition and constant construction are likely to be a characteristic of local and localized products. Ultimately, it is an issue about the construction of possible worlds: controversy as an initiator of openness to knowledge and its production. This special section considers controversies as necessary and dynamic elements of a dialogue that collectively emerge and influence all actors, human or non-human. Controversies are, therefore, essential in terms of adaptation, transition and transformation of, what Callon calls translations, Hegnes calls adaptation work and Chateauraynaud refers to as pragmatic transformations (Akrich *et al.*, 2006b; Hegnes, 2012; Chateauraynaud, 2011).

Let's give the final word to Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe who inspired this special section:

Markets are tools which efficiency in the production of wealth and well-being is unequaled to this day. But they must be organized for their social yield to be optimal, and their organization must be the object of thorough reflection. (Callon *et al.* 2001/in English 2009, p. 234)

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#### Notes

1. The Eater is a recognized website that describes itself as “a food and dining network of sites and brand of Vox Media”.
2. The dairyreporter.com is a website offering news and analysis regarding the dairy industry and markets; the site describes itself as delivering “the latest industry news and analysis directly to your inbox”.
3. WIPO is the world intellectual property organization, the “global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information and cooperation”, describing itself as “a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 192 member states.”
4. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1992/2081/oj>
5. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2006/510/oj>
6. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2012/1151/oj>
7. [www.wipo.int/geo\\_indications/en/](http://www.wipo.int/geo_indications/en/)
8. Our translation.
9. “Where content is dependent on the author’s opinion and interpretation”, available at: [www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/author\\_guidelines.htm?id=bfj](http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=bfj)

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