Bridging Food Production and Consumption: Empirical Support from a Survey of 800 Cases.

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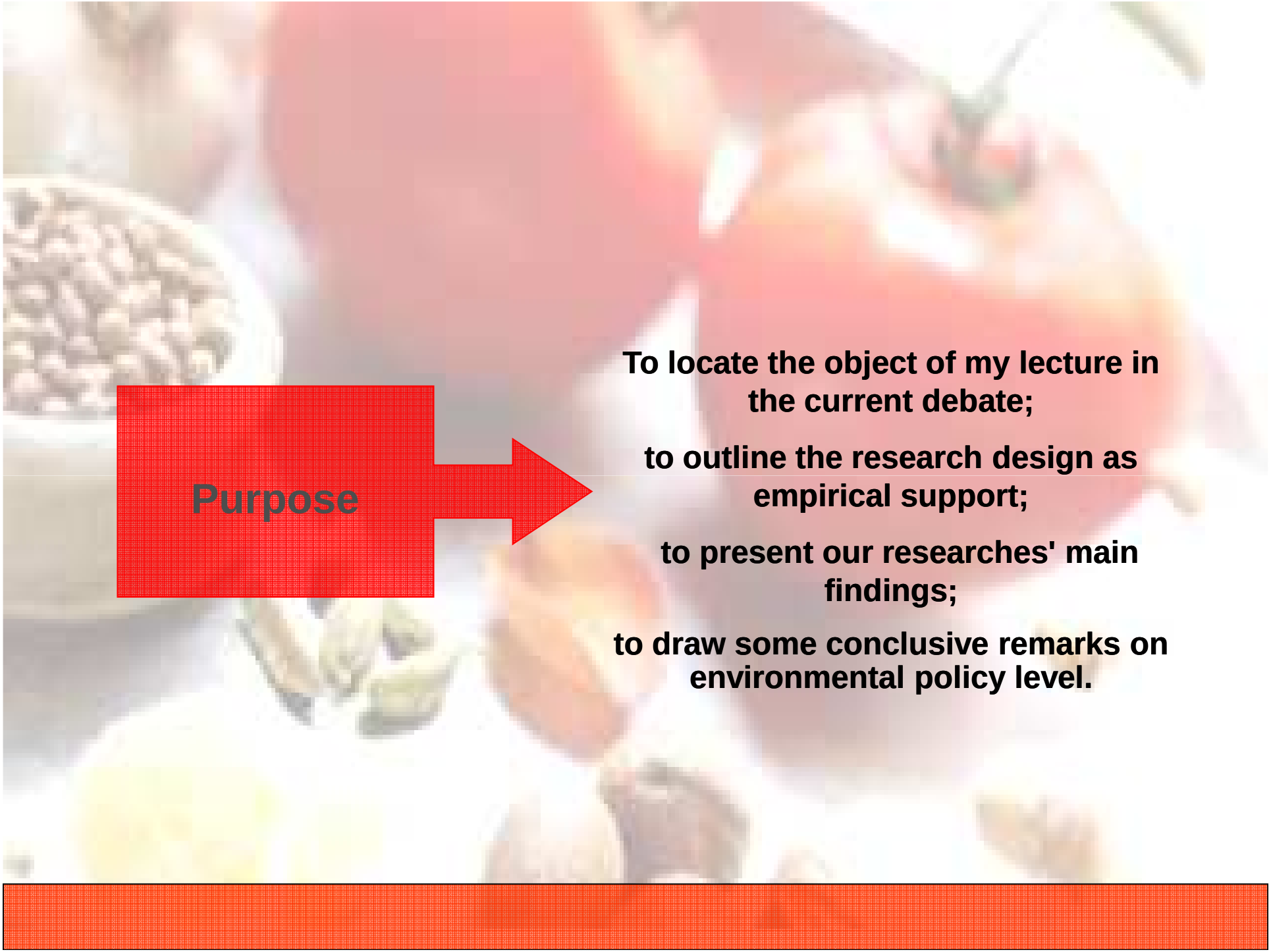
Elena Battaglini, PhD
Head of the Research Area on Environment, Territory and Safety
IRES Economic and Social Research Institute Rome - ITALY


Purpose
To locate the object of my lecture in the current debate;
to outline the research design as empirical support;
to present our researches' main findings;
to draw some conclusive remarks on environmental policy level.

BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Location within the current debate

The actual sub-disciplinary disjunction among food studies (rural sociology and sociology of food) reflects the dichotomisation of key concepts such as

structure and agency

which affects the current debate within sociological theories.

I1

Underlain by modernist ontology, sociological theory has been beset by a tendency to map these dichotomies onto others including: the objective versus subjective, the material versus cultural, the natural versus social.

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I1 Our main standpoint is that:
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BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

A selective description of the debate within *Sociologia Ruralis (1997-2006)*

Starting point: a seminal article of Hilary Tovey

Tovey, H. (1997) Food, environmentalism and rural sociology: On the organic farming movement in Ireland. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 37 (1) pp. 21-37

"Alternative agricultural movements, such as organic farming, demand that we somehow overcome this consumption/production divide in our thinking about food. From such movements rural sociologists can learn to look at food in a new way, as something whose meaning and values is not exhausted by its nutritional content, its economic cost or the political agreement underpinning its production but which is, as Fiddes says, "part of our way of life" (Tovey, 1997, p. 23).

SELECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBATE

The production-consumption dichotomy as reflection of the nature-society divide: the food networks.

Food-networks

Mann and Dickenson, 1978; Goodman, Sorj and Wilkinson, 1987; Mann, 1990; Goodman and Redclift, 1991.

"Although these contributions do not posit the active relational materiality of agricultural nature explicitly, the biophysical processes of agricultural production and food consumption are represented

as natural,

though relative and historically contingent, constraints to industrialisation,

placing these organic processes at the forefront of the analysis." (Goodman 1999, p. 19).

SELECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBATE

The production-consumption dichotomy as reflection of the nature-society divide: the actor-oriented approach (Wageningen University)

The actor-oriented approach

van der Ploeg, J. D. (1993) Rural sociology and the new agrarian question: a perspective from the Netherlands. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 32 (2) pp. 240-260.

As the food-networks approach, the actor-network is critical towards the structuralism of the mainstream rural sociology of commodity system.

It has been criticized as it considers rural development as a social construction and as a result of an auto-referential bargaining (Goodman, 1999).

SELECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBATE

The production-consumption dichotomy as reflection of the nature-society divide: the Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

The Actor-Network Theory

Goodman, D. Watts, M. eds (1997) *Globalising Food: agrarian questions and global restructuring* (London: Routledge)

Rejects categorical notions of 'nature' and 'society' and proposes instead a framework in which their interactions is conceptualized in term of heterogeneous collective associations "of elements of Nature and elements of the social world" (Latour 1993, p. 107).

"Networks differ in size, scope and power, but all obey the common principle of symmetry, that is of being co-productions of nature and society. Secondly, agency is collective and relational conceptualized as the collective capacity of humans and non humans to act " (Goodman 1999, p. 25).

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I3 Even Authors as Marsden and Arce have contributed to this Theory stressing the role of agency of social actors and thus becoming leaders if the so called consumption turn which reflect the cultural turn within social sciences.
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SELECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBATE

The production-consumption dichotomy as reflection of the material-cultural divide: the cultural marxism (Goodman and Du Puis, 2002)

Goodman, D. Du Puis, E. M. (2002) Knowing Food and Growing Food: Beyond the Production-Consumption Debate in the Sociology of Agriculture. *Sociologia Ruralis* 42 (1) pp. 5-22.

For these Authors the debate on consumption has been polarized on food either explained in terms of Durkheim's idea of 'totem' - as a symbol which represents social relationships- or in terms of Marx's 'fetish' – a symbol which hides social relationships.

"Through symmetrical organized activity" of movements as organic agriculture, Fair trade, anti-rBST groups, eco-labelling or the Slow Food movement "the fetish of food becomes the totem of mutual collective food and agricultural movements" (Goodman, Du Puis 2002, p. 16)

SELECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEBATE

The production-consumption dichotomy as reflection of the material-cultural divide: the Systems of Provision (SOPs)

Fine and Leopold, 1993; Fine, 1995; Fine, Heasman and Wright, 1996.

This approach "[…] expects different commodities or groups of commodities to be distinctively structured by the chain or system of provision that unites a particular pattern of production with a particular pattern of consumption" (Fine and Leopold 1993, p. 4).

Despite it has been widely criticized among the rural sociologists this approach has had a wide echo among food sociologists as this concept help to analyse either the cultural as the structural variables underlying product or process innovations (Signorelli, 2005).

THE RESEARCH

The overall target set

Analysis of the relations among risk perception, information and consumer behaviour with a view to defining adequate environmental policies aimed at enhancing consumers' trust.

The concept of risk has been here used as an analytical vector to bridge consumers' behaviour to production offer.

THE RESEARCH

Research questions

1) How does the perception of food risks differ among consumers?

2) Is there any relationship between the perception of risk and food eating? Which role does information play?

3) Are there any factor through which analyze and interpret the variations among risk perceptions and different consumption styles among social groups?

THE RESEARCH

Conceptual elements that can provide a response to the issues to be investigated

Definition of the risks linked to eating

Definition of correct information on food-related hazards

Definition of correct eating habits

Descriptive typology of consumers (level of information and awareness, eating habits, perception of risks)

THE RESEARCH

The research model: the underlying conceptions

Hazard:

It is inherent in something that has a character of inevitability, connected to extra-social factors (Ungaro, 2001)

Risk:

The possibility that human actions or event bring about consequences that bear an impact on what a social actor considers as being relevant (Renn, 1998)

THE RESEARCH

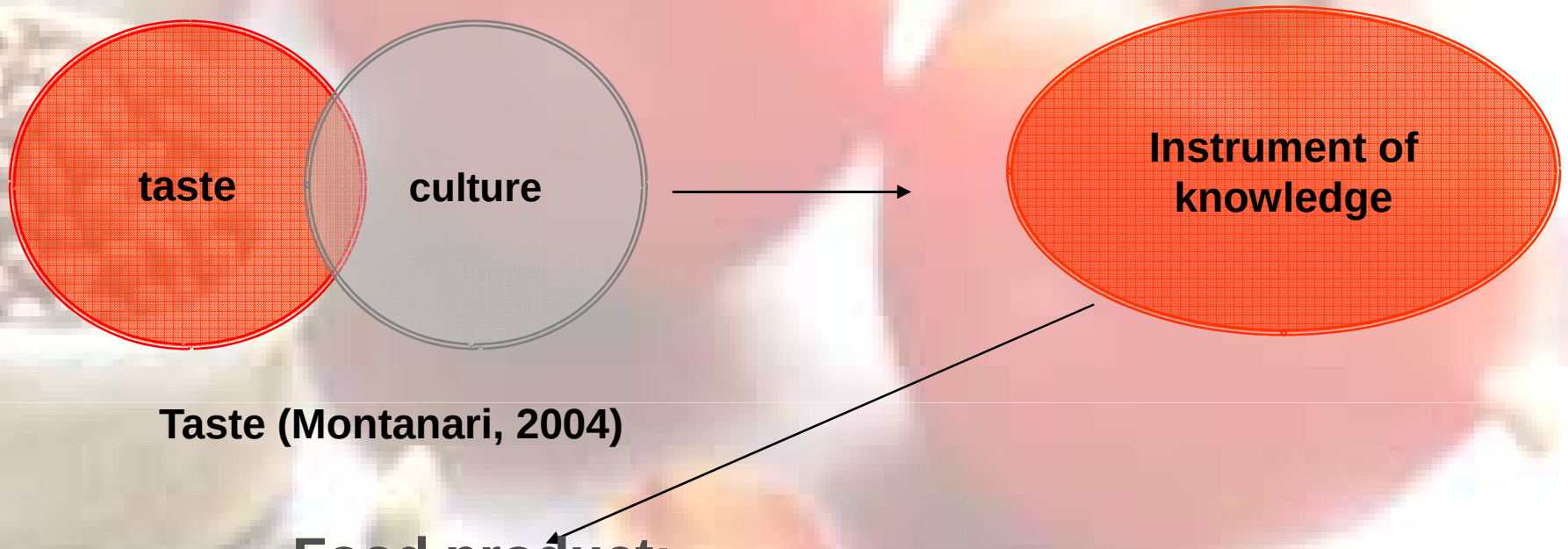
The analysis model: the underlying conceptions

Risk is a “dispositional” concept (Lazarsfeld, 1966):

It emerges in relation with other variables: information, health, quality of production and of products.

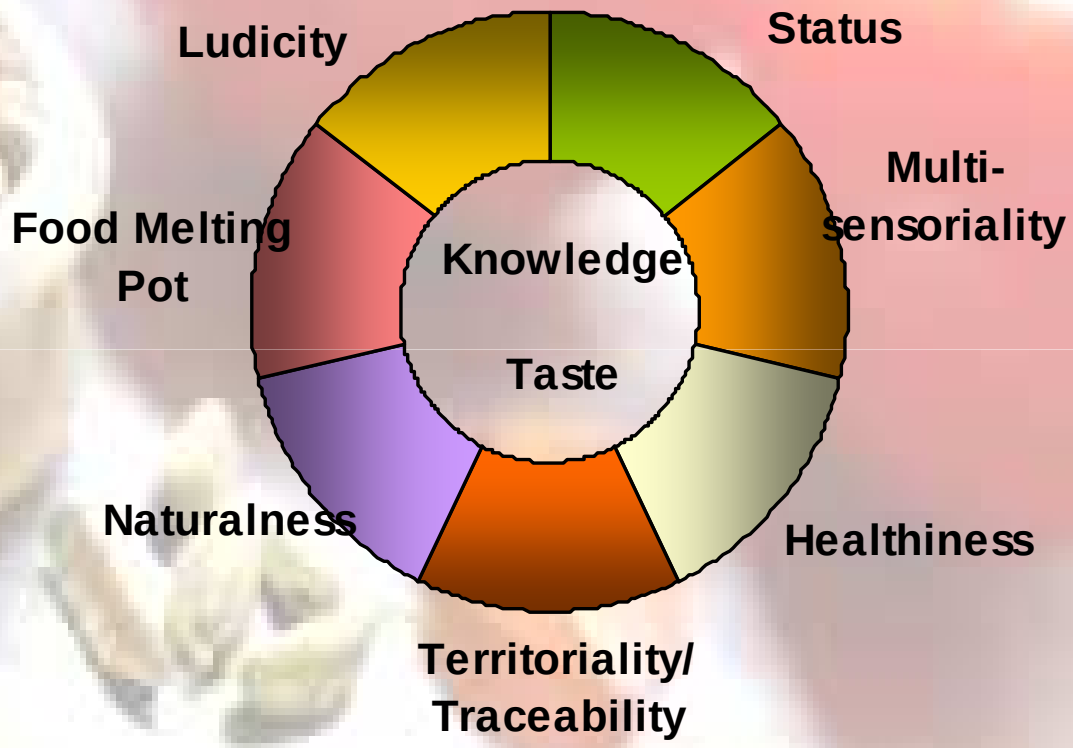
THE RESEARCH

The analysis model: the underlying conceptions



THE RESEARCH

The analysis model: the underlying conceptions



Source: adapted by Fabris, 2003

FEATURES OF THE AGRO-INDUSTRY

ECONOMIC DYNAMICS

LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES

Culture, values and attitudes

Information

Family structure

State of health

Socio-economical status

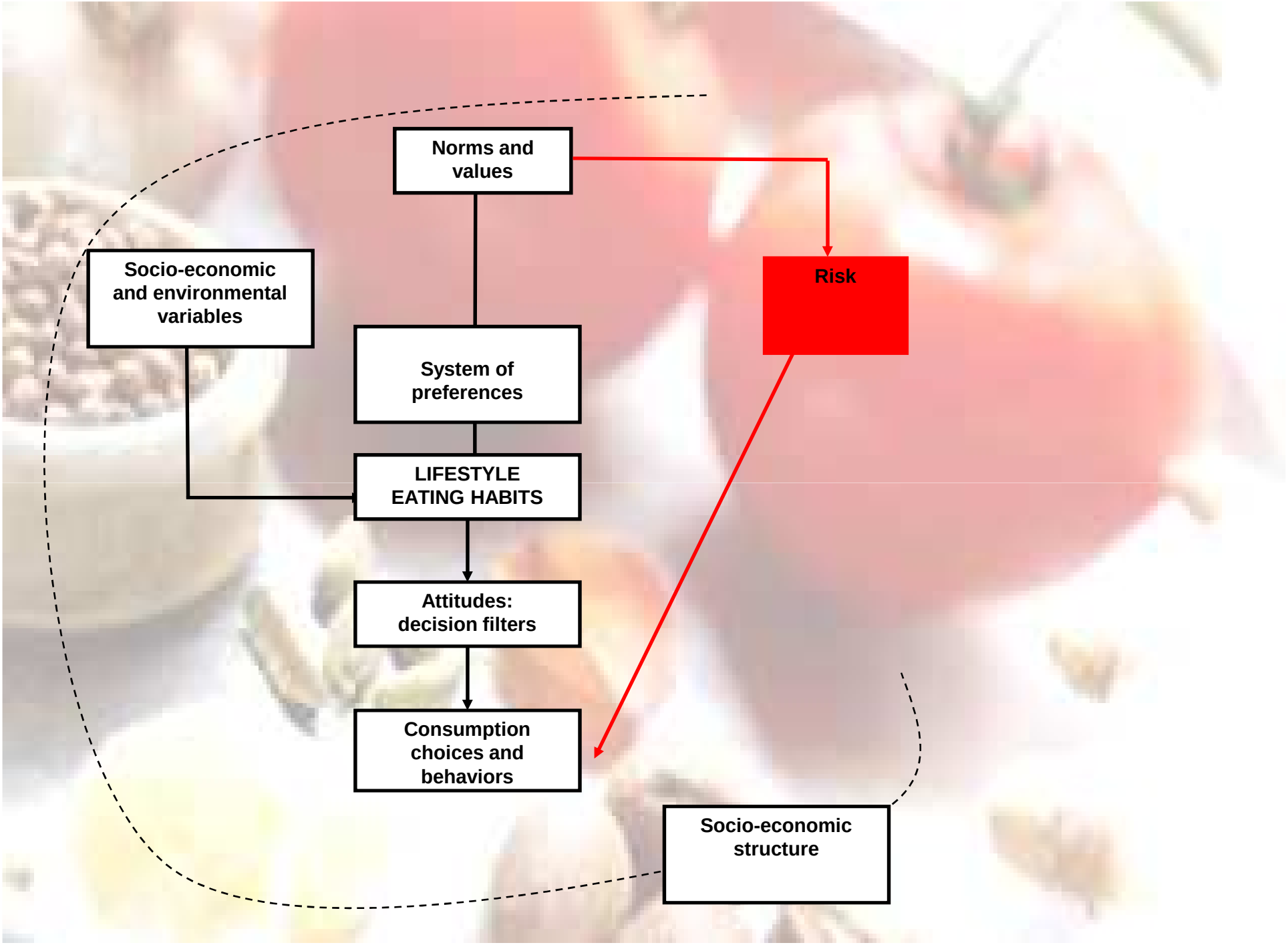
CONSUMERS EXPOSED TO RISK

EATING HABIT

LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES

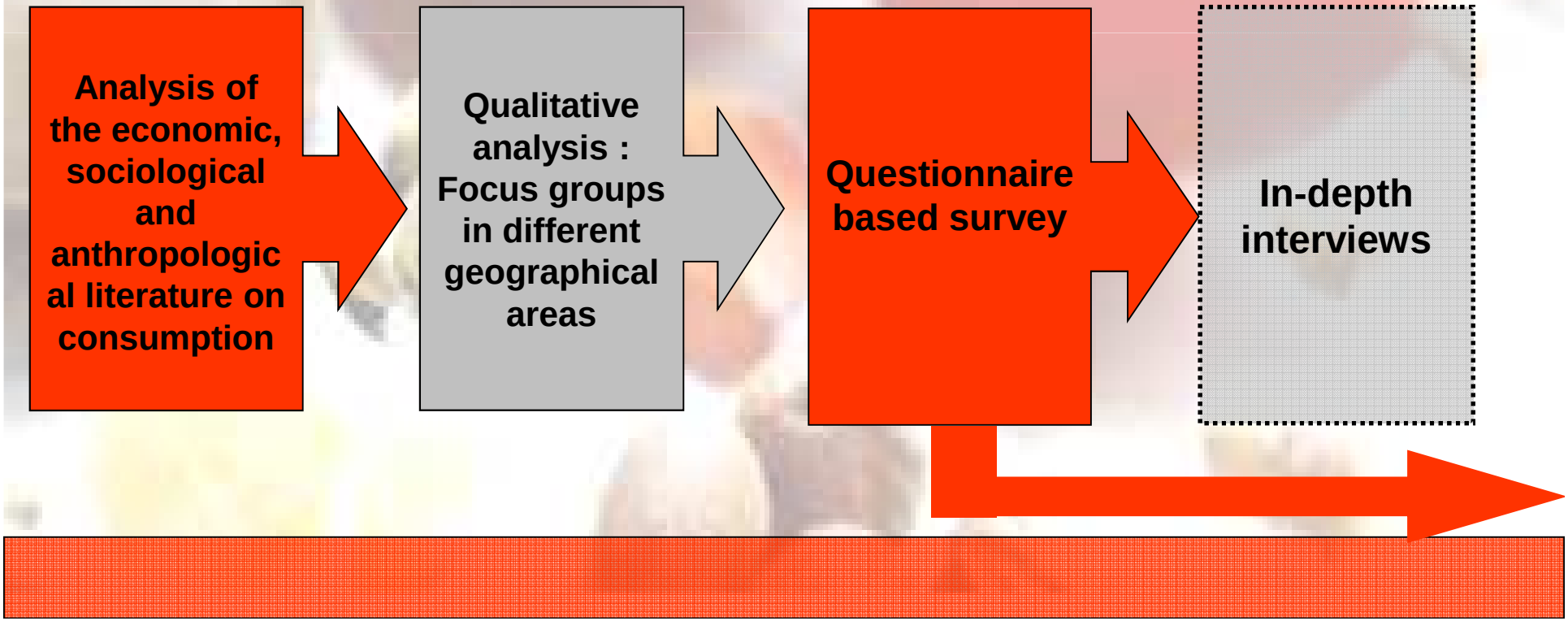
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

SOCIAL ORGANISATION


Norms and values
Socio-economic and environmental variables
Risk
System of preferences
LIFESTYLE EATING HABITS
Attitudes: decision filters
Consumption choices and behaviors
Socio-economic structure

THE RESEARCH

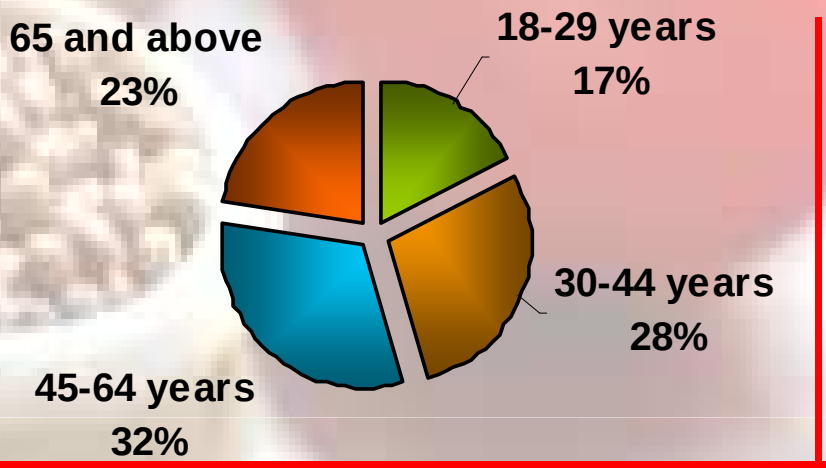
The research design

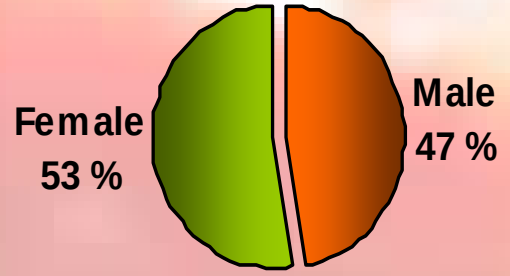


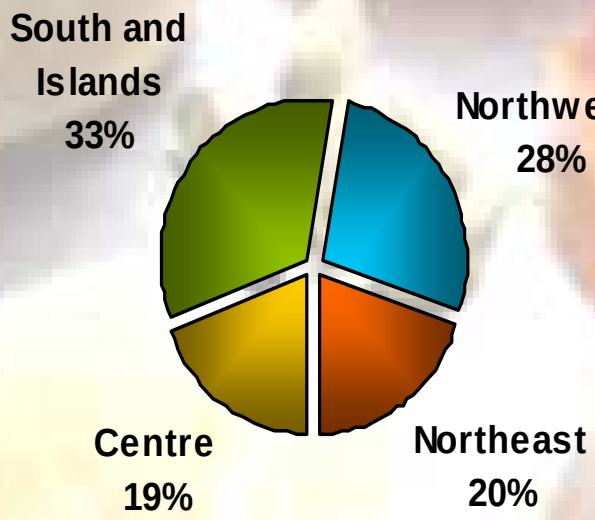
THE RESEARCH

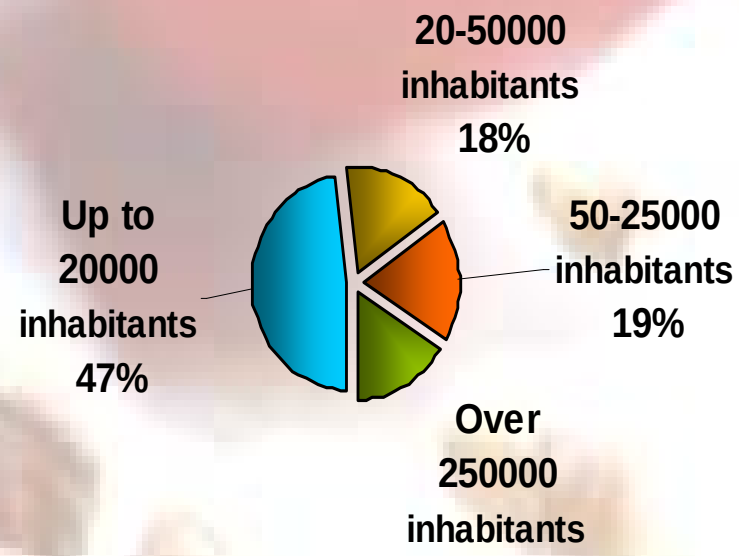
The questionnaire-based survey

The sample: 800 cases









THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Risks perception

87. 4% of respondents consider the food production system very risky

75.8 % of respondents feel anxiety when eating food

Risk Elements in the food production system	
Utilization of chemical products	95,2
Presence of GM Organisms	88,3
Transport system	82,1
Management of sale outlets	76,4
Non EU production	75,6
Absence of brand name	52,6

Sources of concern	
Hormones	67,1
Pesticides	66,0
Antibiotics	64,3
GMOs	38,3
Saturated Fats	38,0
Preservatives	35,2

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Information

73.2%
Well informed/
Very well
informed

Basic information
(correct food-eating habits)

Labels	**28.0 %**
Doctor	**10.8 %**
Books, magazines	**10.2 %**

Main Informational sources

Advertisement 8.5%
Advice at sales outlets 3.8 %
!

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Socioeconomic factors correlation to eating habits

		Socioeconomic Status Level				
		Low	Medium - low	Medium - high	High	TOTAL
Eating habits	Hygienists	13,7	16,5	15,6	17,2	15,6
	Bon Vivants	30,9	28,7	32,3	31,0	30,7
	Light eaters	23,0	18,3	11,5	23,0	19,2
	Traditionalists	19,4	20,0	21,9	17,2	19,7
	Gluttons	12,9	16,5	18,8	11,5	14,9
TOTAL		100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS
Consumers' typology

OPTIMISTS 46,7%

- Lowest perception of risk
- Age: between 45 and 65
- Married
- Compulsory schooling
- Pensioners and full-time employed

ALARMISTS 21,9%

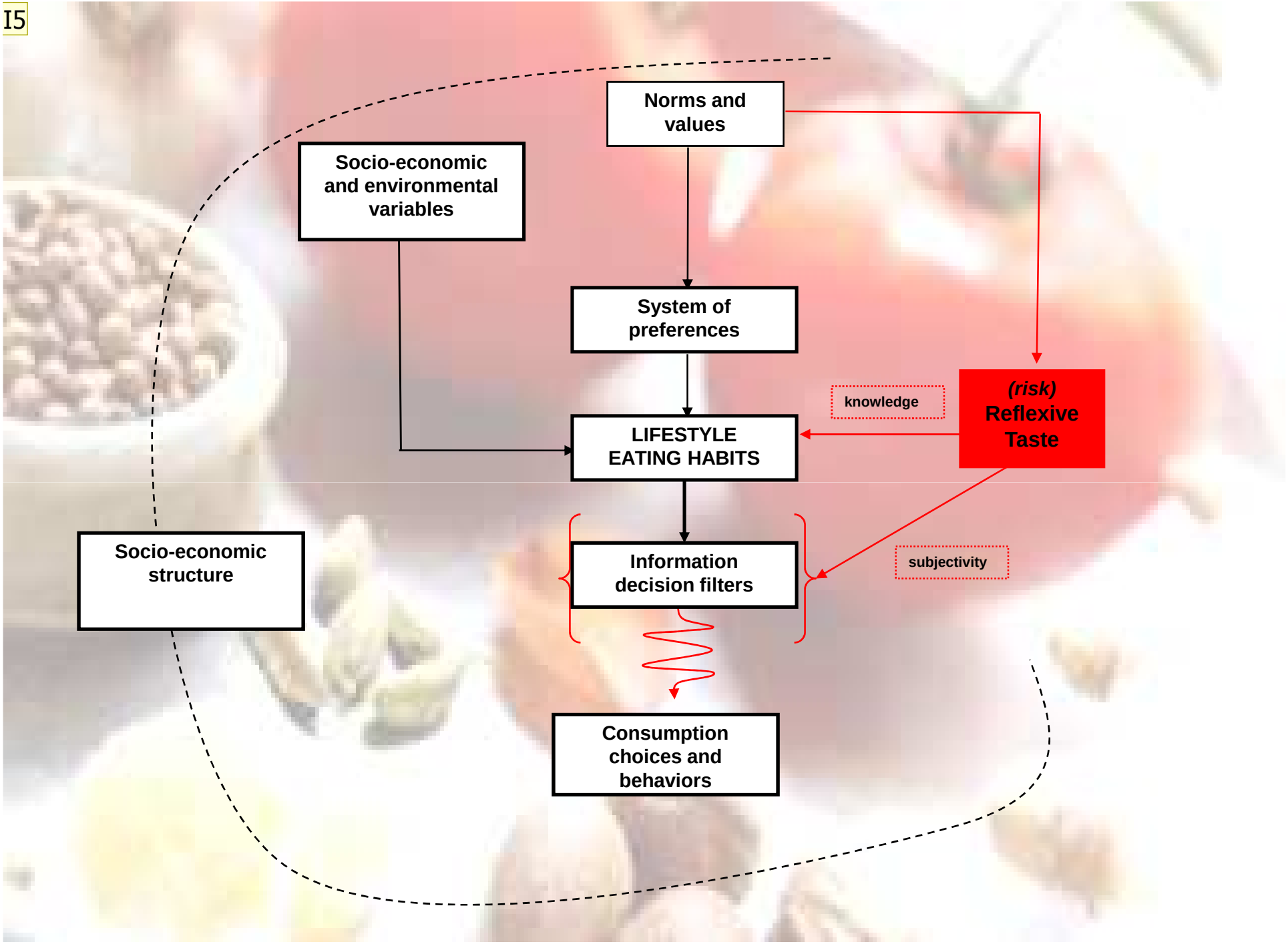
- Most worried and anxious
- Age: between 45/64
- Income: medium-high
- These are the persons who know the meaning of GM products
- Incoherent eating habits!

BALANCED HEDONISTS 6,8%

- Keen for quality
- Well informed
- Not excessively aware of risks
- Younger
- Higher cultural status (higher education)

TRADITIONALISTS 24,6%

- Not too worried about risks
- Less informed because they rely on common sense and on tradition
- The older
- Lower schooling
- They live in smaller centres
- Pensioners and unemployed
- Less affluent


Norms and values
Socio-economic and environmental variables
System of preferences
knowledge
(risk) Reflexive Taste
LIFESTYLE EATING HABITS
Socio-economic structure
Information decision filters
subjectivity
Consumption choices and behaviors

Diapositiva 25

I5 For further reserch we would like to explore the hypothesis that the incoherencies of consumers' behaviour despite the high level of risk perceptions could be explored by analysing the accessibility and more in general the accessibility to system of provisions (through the approach proposed by Ben Fine)

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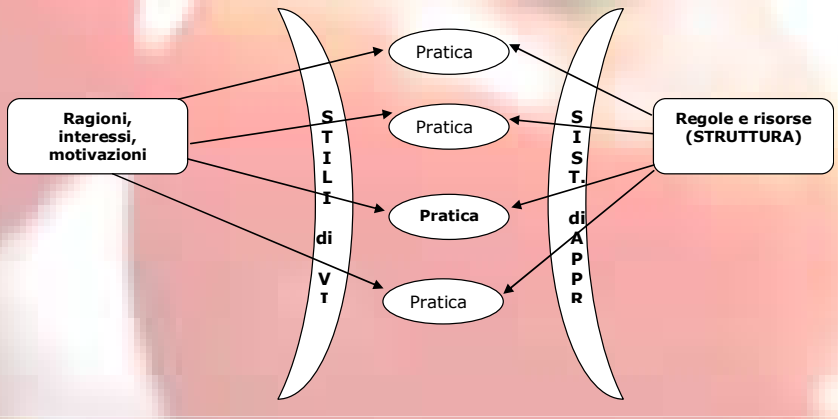
FURTHER RESEARCH

Spargaaren theoretical model



Spaargaren G., van Vliet B., 2000, *Lifestyles, Consumption and the Environment: The Ecological Modernisation of Domestic Consumption*, in Mol A. P. J., Sonnenfeld D. A. (eds.), pp. 50-76.

Spaargaren G., 2003, "Sustainable Consumption: A Theoretical and Environmental Policy Perspective" in *Society and Natural Resources*, n. 16, pp.687-701.

Spaargaren G., 2006, *The Ecological Modernisation of Social Practices at the Consumption Junction*, Discussion-paper for the ISA-RC-24 Conference 'Sustainable Consumption and Society' Madison, Wisconsin, June 2-3.


Our research show that the bridge between
food consumption and production is overshadowed by the
irrationality (or subjectivity ?) of consumers

FIRST CONCLUSIONS

Which policies to enhance food quality?

The principal hypothesis, according to which consumption and eating styles bear a direct relationship with consumers' perception of risks, cannot be controlled.

Risk society does not influence eating styles as much as it does the relationship between consumers and the food processing system as a whole. In view of just this high perception they have of food related risks, consumers ask to establish a relationship founded on trust.

It is difficult to regulate consumer trust. And if trust cannot be regulated with the traditional forms of command and control motivational decisions will be required as well as a dialogue between the principles, skills and objectives of all the actors of the food chain.

I7 Our research shows that the bridge between consumers' behaviour and production offer is overshadowed by the so-called irrationality of the consumer that we prefer to call subjectivity.

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BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

The concept of food chain

PROCESS	PHASE	PLACE
Cultivation	Production	Farm
Processing	Transformation	Agro-food enterprise
Conservation/Distribution/Selling	Distribution/trade/ selling	Storage Market POS
Cooking	Preparation	Professional Domestic cooking
Eating	Consumption	Table
Processing	Distribution/ recycling	Back-kitchen

Source: adapted from Murcott and Campbell (2004)

BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Which policies for which stakeholders?

PROCESS	PHASE	PLACE	PUBLIC POLICIES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	STAKEHOLDERS
Cultivation/Animal rearing	Production	Commercial farm	Spreading of Agricultural Best Practice (ABP) – eco-compliance. Integrated Product Policy (IPP). Incentives for the development of bio-dynamic, organic and eco-compatible agriculture. Utilisation of eco-efficient technologies. Incentives designed to enhance voluntary regulation. Company and collective brands. Certification systems: quality, typicality, eco-compatibility, corporate social responsibility, production traceability, product certification.	EU, Government, Local Authorities Entrepreneurs Workers Employers and trade union representatives Consumers' associations
Transform	Transformation	Commercial farm	Integrated Product Policy (IPP). Incentives designed to enhance voluntary regulation Certification systems: quality, typicality, eco-compatibility, corporate social responsibility, production traceability, product certification.	EU, Government, Local Authorities Entrepreneurs Workers Employers and trade union representatives Consumers' associations
Conserve/Distribute/ Sell	Distribution/Commerce/ Sale	Warehouse Market POS	Integrated Product Policy (IPP). Incentives designed to enhance voluntary regulation.. Company and collective brands. Certification systems: quality, typicality, eco-compatibility, corporate social responsibility, production traceability, product certification. Promotion of/adhesion to critical consumption initiatives. Adhesion to *Last Minute Market* or Food Bank initiatives.	EU, Government, Local Authorities Distributors Tradesmen Large retailers Workers Employers and trade union representatives Consumers' associations

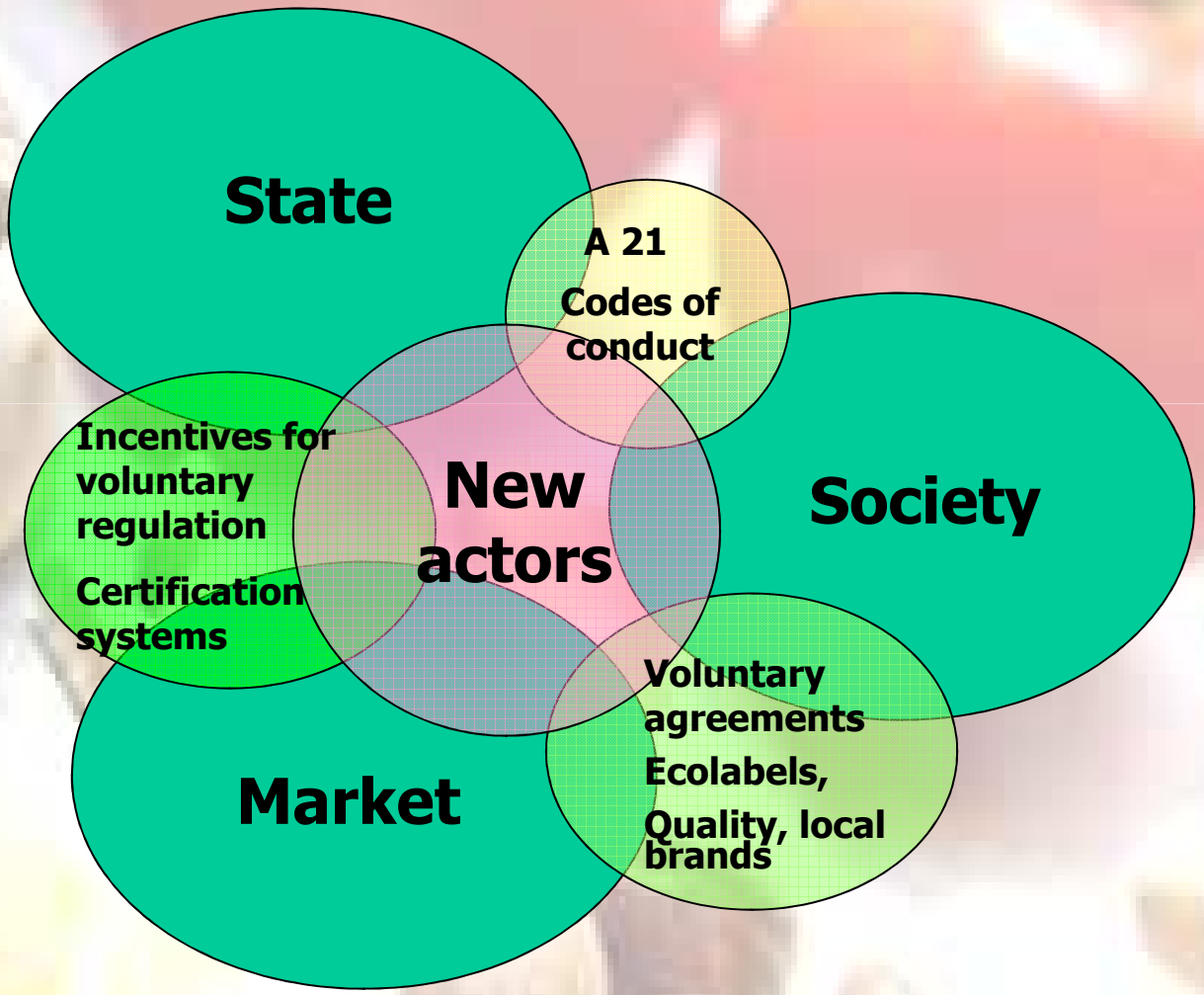
BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Which policies for which stakeholders?

PROCESS	PHASE	PLACE	PUBLIC POLICIES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	STAKEHOLDERS
Cooking	Preparation	Professional or Family kitchen	Purchase groups. Promotion of/adhesion to critical (reflexive) consumption initiatives. Adhesion to *Last Minute Market* or Food Bank initiatives. Care in the utilisation of packing materials. Utilisation of 'best technologies' in terms of eco-efficiency. Agreements involving quality restaurants with local producers with a view to safeguarding food biodiversity and to enhancing the territory. Policies aimed at shortening the food processing chain. Policies aimed at encouraging eco-efficient technologies.	Consumers Chefs, Restaurants Agricultural producers Local authorities
Eating	Consumption	Table	Purchase groups. Promotion of/adhesion to reflexive consumption initiatives. Agreements involving quality restaurants with local producers with a view to safeguarding food biodiversity and to enhancing the territory. Policies aimed at shortening the food processing chain.	Consumers Chefs, Restaurants Agricultural producers Local authorities EU, Government
Discarding	Elimination/recycling	Back-kitchen	Reduction of waste matter. Separate waste collection. Composting. Policies aimed at encouraging closed cycles. Adhesion to *Last Minute Market* or Food Bank initiatives..	Consumers Chefs, Restaurants Agricultural producers Local authorities EU, Government

BRIDGING FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Which policies for which stakeholders?



FIRST CONCLUSIONS

Which policies to enhance food quality?

To enhance trust, product innovation and spread the knowledge of the extraordinary expressions of our territories, it is necessary to forge a new system of alliances with the aim of establishing a "food quality governance"
which implies the involvement of new actors and a new generations of policy arrangements.