

**PART C – RESEARCH PROJECT**

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**Project title:** Consuming Anthropocene: Environmental Crisis, Consumption and Everyday Life

**Acronym:** Consumocene

**Abstract:** This three-year project examines the consequences of the Anthropocene on consumer culture, especially the impact of pollution on the relationship between the consuming self, food and the environment. It consists of two work packages (WPs): 1) the analysis of qualitative data on organic food consumption in Italy, resulting in the publication of a monograph and two articles; and 2) a series of academic seminars on the relationship between the environmental crisis and consumer society, resulting in a coedited volume. The project will be hosted at the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

WP 1: Pollution is now so pervasive that it poses a risk to life on Earth, forming one of the key facets of the Anthropocene. The food system is both a cause of this pollution and one of its victims. As a result, artificial contamination has become a major issue for all sorts of consumer behaviours and discourses. Using qualitative data on Italian families, farmers, shop-owners, and community activists, the project shows that organic food consumption is an attempt to manage the sense of uncertainty originating from pervasive pollution. It reveals how food culture plays a key role in linking the self and the environment, and in mediating tensions between them. Consuming organics is not simply an individualized, calculated reaction to risk, however. Because food is part of everyday life, food-mediated experiences of pollution involve people not as rational actors but as social beings, who rely also on affect and tradition and behave in complex, contradictory ways.

WP 2: Recognising the complexity of the Anthropocene, the project will organise a series of ten interdisciplinary seminars on consumer society and the environmental crisis. These seminars will host key figures from across the sciences, art, and civil society, broadening the scope of debate and strengthening the project's impact.

**Key words:** Anthropocene, Environment, Pollution, Consumption, Food, Uncertainty, Risk, Anthropology, Sociology, Science and Technology Studies, Theories of practice

## 1. EXCELLENCE

### 1.1 Quality and credibility of the research/innovation plan (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary, inter/multi sectoral and gender aspects)

#### Context

“Anthropocene” is the name given to the new epoch of consuming environmental disruption that is replacing the Holocene, the stable period which saw agrarian societies flourish over the past 11,000 years. The new epoch’s name has been chosen to highlight the dominant role humans now play on Earth, modifying the planet to such an extent that their imprint will remain visible far into the future.<sup>1</sup> The mass consumption of goods and services by *Homo consumens*<sup>2</sup> is a major force in this global process.<sup>3 4</sup> As a result, scholars across the social sciences increasingly recognise that the environmental question shapes consumer culture profoundly.<sup>5 6 7</sup> Manmade pollution is one of the main consequences of the Anthropocene.<sup>8</sup> Artificial toxins are now so abundant that some researchers claim we are living on a “synthetic planet.”<sup>9</sup> Consumption thus takes place in a world where artificial substances of varying toxicity are virtually ubiquitous, showing up in mundane loci such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, homes, food, and bodily fluids.

The global food system plays an important role in the spread of pollution.<sup>10</sup> Production, distribution and consumption of food have all changed dramatically since 1945, resulting in what sociologists call a “corporate food regime.”<sup>11</sup> This system has increased resource use and output immensely. It has done so through the appropriation and substitution of many natural components and ecosystem services with synthetic technological alternatives.<sup>12</sup> Food has thus become responsible for toxic waste, biodiversity loss, and non-communicable diseases.<sup>13</sup> The refashioning of nature by the corporate food regime has led to a societal backlash that spans social movements dedicated to agroecology and individual acts of culinary escapism.<sup>14</sup> Controversies about artificial contamination acquire significance in this cultural milieu.<sup>15</sup> The history of organic food has tracked this long-term change, beginning with the industrialisation of agriculture and diet between the two World Wars.<sup>16</sup> Organics are now one of the fastest growing sectors of the global food economy.<sup>17</sup>

#### Theoretical issues

Anthropologists have studied two main aspects of organic food: the attempt to make food better through the reinvention of artisanship,<sup>18 19</sup> and the allied attempt to change the food system through grassroots activism.<sup>20 21</sup> Underlying this scholarship is a complex notion of food value as materiality and as socio-ecological relation. This notion stems from the work of Graeber on objects as social processes,<sup>23</sup> Latour on the inseparability of nature and society,<sup>24</sup> and Marx on the tension between use and exchange.<sup>25</sup> Value as materiality originates in the physical, corporeal properties of food. Value as socio-ecological relation lies in the interaction between farmers, retailers, consumers, etc., and between humans and their non-human counterparts—animals, plants,

<sup>1</sup> Palsson, G. et al. 2013. Reconceptualizing the ‘Anthropos’ in the Anthropocene: integrating the social sciences and humanities in global environmental change research. *Environmental Science & Policy* 28: 3–13.

<sup>2</sup> Szerszynski, B. 2012. The end of the end of nature: the Anthropocene and the fate of the human. *Oxford Literary Review* 34 (2): 165–184.

<sup>3</sup> Hornborg, A. 2011. *Global Ecology and Unequal Exchange: Fetishism in a Zero-sum World*. Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Urry, J. 2010. Consuming the planet to excess. *Theory, Culture & Society* 27 (2–3): 191–212.

<sup>5</sup> Dauvergne, P. 2008. *The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment*. The MIT Press.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, D. 2012. *Consumption and its Consequences*. Polity.

<sup>7</sup> Wilk, R. 2016. Is a sustainable consumer culture possible? In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Actions to Transformations*, S. Crate and M. Nuttall eds., pp. 301–318. Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Landrigan, P. et al. 2017. The Lancet Commission on pollution and health. *Lancet* 391: 462–512.

<sup>9</sup> Casper, M. Ed. 2003. *Synthetic Planet: Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Life*. Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Sage, C. 2012. *Environment and Food*. Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> McMichael, P. 2009. A food regime genealogy. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (1): 139–169.

<sup>12</sup> Goodman, D. and Redclift, M. 1991. *Refashioning Nature: Food, Ecology and Culture*. Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> Willett et al. 2019. Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. *Lancet* 393.

<sup>14</sup> Levidow, L. 2015. European transitions towards a corporate-environmental food regime: agroecological incorporation or contestation? *Journal of Rural Studies* 40: 76–89.

<sup>15</sup> Eurobarometer. 2019. *Special Eurobarometer 91.3: Food Safety in the EU*. European Food Safety Authority.

<sup>16</sup> Reed, M. 2010. *Rebels for the Soil: The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement*. Earthscan.

<sup>17</sup> Willer, H. and Lernoud J. Eds. 2019. *The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2019*. IFOAM.

<sup>18</sup> Grasseni, C. and Paxson, H. Eds. 2014. Special Issue on the Reinvention of Food. *Gastronomica* 14 (4): 1–80.

<sup>19</sup> Siniscalchi, V. and Harper, K. Eds. 2019. *Food Values in Europe*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>20</sup> Carrier, J. and Luetchford, P. Eds. 2012. *Ethical Consumption: Social Value and Economic Practice*. Berghahn.

<sup>21</sup> Pratt, J. 2009. Incorporation and resistance: analytical issues in the conventionalization debate and alternative food chains. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9 (2): 155–174.

<sup>22</sup> Seshia Galvin, S. 2018. The farming of trust: organic certification and the limits of transparency in India. *American Ethnologist* 45: 495–507.

<sup>23</sup> Graeber, D. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. Palgrave.

<sup>24</sup> Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Marx, K. 1867/1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1. Penguin.

microbes. This project explores organic food's value in a polluted world.

Social scientists have traditionally analysed pollution as a form of symbolic meaning created by the transgression of cultural constructs of nature and society.<sup>26</sup> While still important,<sup>27</sup> on its own this paradigm de-emphasizes toxicity as material property and objective harm. This project approaches pollution not as a cultural construct, but as an instance of what science and technology scholars call "natureculture"<sup>28</sup> or "collective"<sup>29</sup>—the interaction of living and non-living things that can be both nourishing and harmful.<sup>30 31 32 33</sup> Researchers writing from this perspective have explored toxicity in highly-contaminated sites<sup>34 35</sup> and among disadvantaged groups.<sup>36 37 38</sup> Part of this work has focused on food.<sup>39 40 41 42</sup> The project advances this literature by looking at low-level contamination (real or imagined) in ordinary settings and among mainstream publics.

Another important theoretical focus has been the existential consequences of pollution, with anthropologists talking of confusion, uncertainty, unpreparedness, and experimentation as characteristic of life in the Anthropocene.<sup>43 44 45 46 47</sup> These negative states of being include routine acts of consumption performed to protect the self from toxicity, ranging from the realm of ecological household goods to that of natural diets. In the latter case, these acts create or destroy value depending on whether food is seen as a saviour of natureculture or as a culprit of its impairment. Culinary avoidances such as lay vegetarianism, eating wholefoods, and opposition to GMOs all partake of this dynamic.<sup>48 49 50 51 52 53</sup>

From this perspective, then, consumption in the Anthropocene entails a condition of ambivalence and risk similar to the one sociologists have identified as constitutive of late modernity.<sup>54 55 56 57</sup> The project draws on this shared theoretical ground to strengthen its argument about the effects of the environmental crisis on consumer culture. However, it also recognises a key limitation of both the Anthropocene and late modernity rubrics: the tendency to overgeneralise social change and privilege rationalising views of reflexivity. To overcome this limitation, the project draws on theories of practice and everyday life. These describe ordinary actions as both changing and, more often, reproducing society,<sup>58</sup> and eating as made up of bodily activities, emotions and cultural habits.<sup>59</sup> Practice theory shows how food helps accommodate or reject distant structural forces in our lives.<sup>60 61 62</sup> Because the ecological crisis is now one of these forces, it shapes consumer society deeply, even though our awareness of this remains erratic.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Douglas, M. and Wildavsky, A. 1983. *Risk and Culture*. University of California Press.

<sup>27</sup> Dürr, E. and Jaffee, R. Eds. 2010. *Urban Pollution: Cultural Meanings, Social Practices*. Berghahn.

<sup>28</sup> Haraway, D. 2008. *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>29</sup> Latour, B. 2004. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>30</sup> Paxson 2008. Post-Pasteurian cultures: the microbiopolitics of raw-milk cheese in the United States. *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (1): 15–47.

<sup>31</sup> Roe 2006. Things becoming food and the embodied, material practices of an organic food consumer. *Sociologia Ruralis* 46 (2): 104–121.

<sup>32</sup> Besky, S. and Blanchette, A. Eds. 2019. *How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet*. University of New Mexico Press.

<sup>33</sup> Dunn, E. 2008. Postsocialist spores: disease, bodies, and the state in the Republic of Georgia. *American Ethnologist* 35 (2): 243–258.

<sup>34</sup> Brown et al. 2004. Embodied health movements: new approaches to social movements in health. *Sociology Health & Illness* 26 (1): 50–80.

<sup>35</sup> Lock, M. 2019. Toxic life in the Anthropocene. In *Exotic No More*, J. MacClancy ed., pp. 223–240. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>36</sup> Checker, M. 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. New York University Press.

<sup>37</sup> Curson, P. and Clark, L. 2004. Pathological environments. In *Controversies in Environmental Sociology*, R. White ed., pp. 238–256. CUP.

<sup>38</sup> Shapiro, N. 2015. Attuning to the chemosphere: domestic formaldehyde, bodily reasoning, and the chemical sublime. *Cultural Anthropology* 30 (3): 368–393.

<sup>39</sup> Gille, Z. 2016. *Paprika, Foie Gras, and Red Mud: The Politics of Materiality in the European Union*. Indiana University Press.

<sup>40</sup> Hoover, E. 2017. *The River Is in Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>41</sup> Sternsdorff-Cisterna, N. 2015. Food after Fukushima: risk and scientific citizenship in Japan. *American Anthropologist* 117 (3): 455–467.

<sup>42</sup> Vedwan, N. 2007. Pesticides in Coca-Cola and Pepsi: consumerism, brand image, and public interest in a globalizing India. *Cultural Anthropology* 22 (4): 659–684.

<sup>43</sup> Auyero and Swistun 2007. Confused because exposed: towards an ethnography of environmental suffering. *Ethnography* 8 (2): 123–144.

<sup>44</sup> Boholm, A. 2003. The cultural nature of risk: can there be an anthropology of uncertainty? *Ethnos* 68 (2): 159–178.

<sup>45</sup> Samimian-Darash, L. and Rabinow, P. Eds. 2015. *Modes of Uncertainty: Anthropological Cases*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>46</sup> Lakoff, A. 2008. The generic biothreat, or, how we became unprepared. *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (3): 399–428.

<sup>47</sup> Vine, M. 2018. Learning to feel at home in the Anthropocene: from state of emergency to everyday experiments in California's historic drought. *American Ethnologist* 45 (3): 405–416.

<sup>48</sup> MacKendrick 2010. Media framing of body burdens: precautionary consumption and the individualization of risk. *Sociological Inquiry* 80, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Wilk, R. 2006. Bottled water: the pure commodity in the age of branding. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6 (3): 303–325.

<sup>50</sup> Freidberg, S. 2004. *French Beans and Food Scares: Culture and Commerce in an Anxious Age*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Taussig, K-S. 2004. Bovine abominations: genetic culture and politics in the Netherlands. *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (3): 305–336.

<sup>52</sup> DuPuis, M. 2000. Not in my body: rBGH and the rise of organic milk. *Agriculture and Human Values* 17 (3): 285–295.

<sup>53</sup> Szasz 2007. *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minnesota Press.

<sup>54</sup> Bauman, Z. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Polity.

<sup>55</sup> Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. Sage.

<sup>56</sup> Giddens, A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity.

<sup>57</sup> Zinn, J. 2016. Living in the Anthropocene: towards a risk-taking society. *Environmental Sociology* 2 (4): 385–394.

<sup>58</sup> Ortner, S. 2006. *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*. Duke University Press.

<sup>59</sup> Warde, A. 2016. *The Practice of Eating*. Polity.

<sup>60</sup> Halkier, B. 2010. *Consumption Challenged: Food in Medialised Everyday Life*. Routledge.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson, P. 2015. *Anxious Appetites: Food and Consumer Culture*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>62</sup> Shove, E., Trentmann, F., and Wilk, R. Eds. 2009. *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture*. Berg.

<sup>63</sup> Lamine, C. 2008. *Les intermittents du bio: Pour une sociologie pragmatique des choix alimentaires émergents*. Éditions Quæ.

## Original argument

Based on preliminary analysis of data collected in Italy, this project makes two key contributions to social theory. First, engaging with work on value, the environment, science and technology,<sup>64 65 66 67 68</sup> it shows how certain “comestible commodities”<sup>69</sup> represent icons of the Anthropocene, objects whose material and relational value evokes essential features of the epoch. In organic food’s case, these features are the deep uncertainty about the reconfiguration of nature-society into pervasive pollution and the perception of food as perhaps the most prominent, and apparently most easily accessible, medium between the self and the environment. Second, drawing on theories of practice, embodiment and gender,<sup>70 71 72 73 74</sup> the project argues that because grocery shopping and eating are practices of everyday life, food-mediated experiences of the Anthropocene are rooted in people’s bodies, family life, sense of place, and shared traditions. This rootedness is both an advantage and an obstacle in the context of the environmental crisis, explaining why people behave in contradictory ways towards it when practicing ordinary consumption.

**Food, pollution and uncertainty:** Many Italians consume organic food to avoid harmful substances in their diet and to offset the pollution absorbed from their surroundings, hoping to reduce toxins in their bodies. This evidence emphasises food value as materiality. Most conventional foods today contain potentially harmful substances at levels considered safe by regulators, who rely on scientifically-determined thresholds to assess risk.<sup>75</sup> As technical devices, however, thresholds are undermined by scientific controversies, economic interests, politics and scandals.<sup>76</sup> To prefer organics, which rejects the notion of safe contamination, exposes an uncertainty that fosters precaution in the face of techno-scientific assurances.

Engaging with both symbolic and realist understandings of pollution, I show how this precaution stems from the perceived transgression of a desired order (a subjective construct), but also from the acceptance of the risk posed by toxins (an objective assessment). Choosing organics to avoid and offset pervasive pollution indicates a desire for purity of ultimate Holocene origin—the purity of preindustrial nature-society. This evidence has important cross-cultural equivalents, linked to the development of a global food system during the Anthropocene.<sup>77 78 79 80</sup> Some Italians eat organic food to right the environmental wrongs of society, rather than to escape toxicity. This evidence further displays value as materiality and a sense of uncertainty. However, in this case consuming organics is primarily an altruistic action, and the combination of subjectivity and objectivity involves ethico-political convictions alongside information about food’s negative impacts.

Eating organic food, then, represents an attempt to manage the uncertainty resulting from the reconfiguration of nature-society into ubiquitous pollution both as private individuals and as responsible citizens. Doing so, however, does not mean that people are now *constantly* thinking about toxins, nor that they rely *solely* on abstract, technical information to guide their behaviours. Coping with pollution is something done inconsistently rather than coherently, and by building on feelings, cultural traditions, and household dynamics.

**Uncertainty and everyday life:** Italians who eat organic food often express a folk medicinal discourse, or “lay epidemiology,”<sup>81</sup> which attributes disease to food’s manmade toxins. This epidemiology entails food value as materiality. Partaking of humoral medicine,<sup>82 83</sup> it combines subjective embodied discomfort with discourses about alleged objective toxicity, reinforcing both kinds of evidence. An important part of this folk discourse are gustatory, olfactory, and mnemonic experiences of rustic foods deemed to be “organic-by-default.” This corporeal evidence links the individualized body to farming practice and local culture, revealing food value as

<sup>64</sup> Alkon, A. 2012. The socio-nature of local organic food. *Antipode* 45 (3): 663–680.

<sup>65</sup> Tsing, A. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>66</sup> Heller 2013. *Food, Farms & Solidarity: French Farmers Challenge Industrial Agriculture and Genetically Modified Crops*. Duke U. Press.

<sup>67</sup> Lien, M. 2015. *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish*. University of California Press.

<sup>68</sup> Wurgaft, B. 2019. *Meat Planet: Artificial Flesh and the Future of Food*. University of California Press.

<sup>69</sup> Heath and Meneley 2007. Techne, technoscience and the circulation of comestible commodities. *American Anthropologist* 109(4):593–602.

<sup>70</sup> Pink, S. 2012. *Situating Everyday Life: Practices and Places*. Sage.

<sup>71</sup> Sutton, D. 2014. *Secrets from the Greek Kitchen: Cooking, Skill, and Everyday Life on an Aegean Island*. University of California Press.

<sup>72</sup> Carolan, M. 2011. *Embodied Food Politics*. Ashgate.

<sup>73</sup> Goodman, D. 1999. Agro-food studies in the ‘age of ecology’: nature, corporeality, bio-politics. *Sociologia Ruralis* 39 (1): 17–38.

<sup>74</sup> Kimura 2016. *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists: The Gender Politics of Food Contamination after Fukushima*. Duke U. Press.

<sup>75</sup> Degreef, F. and Scholliers, P. 2019. Trust in food in the modern period. *Food and Foodways* 27 (1–2): 1–13.

<sup>76</sup> Callon, M., Lascoumes, P. and Barthe, Y. 2009. *Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy*. The MIT Press.

<sup>77</sup> Abbots, E.-J. 2013. Negotiating foreign bodies: migration, trust and the risky business of eating in Highland Ecuador. In *Why We Eat, How We Eat: Contemporary Encounters Between Foods and Bodies*, E.-J. Abbots and A. Lavis eds., pp. 119–138. Ashgate.

<sup>78</sup> Dewan, C. 2019. Impure foods: entanglements of soil, food, and human health in Bangladesh. *Gastronomica* 19 (1): 99–102.

<sup>79</sup> Rodman, S., Palmer, A., Zachary, D. et al. 2014. “They just say organic food is healthier”: perceptions of healthy food among supermarket shoppers in Southwest Baltimore. *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 36 (2): 83–92.

<sup>80</sup> Schösler, H., de Boer, J. and Boersema, J. 2013. The organic food philosophy: a qualitative exploration of the practices, values, and beliefs of Dutch organic consumers within a cultural–historical frame. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 26 (2): 439–460.

<sup>81</sup> Davison, C., Frankel, S. and Smith, G. 1992. The limits of lifestyle: re-assessing ‘fatalism’ in the popular culture of illness prevention. *Social Science & Medicine* 34 (6): 675–685.

<sup>82</sup> Raffaetà 2013. Allergy narratives in Italy: naturalness in the social construction of medical pluralism. *Medical Anthropology* 32(2): 126–144.

<sup>83</sup> Whitaker, E. 2003. The idea of health: history, medical pluralism, and the management of the body in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 17 (3): 348–375.

socio-ecological relation. In everyday life, eating organics is performed through “synesthetic reason”,<sup>84</sup> or through affect as well as cognition. Italians experience the foods they eat—conventional, organic, rustic—as sensory indexes of value that support or challenge different kinds of abstract evaluations. Food practices are viewed as polluting when they violate a culinary heritage based on this sensory experience and on “structures of feeling”<sup>85</sup> that frame an historically-situated countryside as “Nature.” The desire to avoid aspects of industrial food in one’s life is thus an attempt to recover the relational value of farming in the Anthropocene.

Italians, however, do not necessarily express a single reason for eating organics, but different ones depending on context. They also keep buying significant amounts of conventional food. These apparently contradictory behaviours are common in alternative consumption phenomena. Looking at them through the lens of practice and gender theory,<sup>86 87 88</sup> I show how this contradiction points to the conflict between structure and agency, and thus to the limitations of consumption as a purposeful strategy for coping with pervasive pollution. Contradiction is especially relevant to women, for whom consuming organics can be a struggle to reconcile fears, personal interests, daily routines, and family responsibilities. This finding has relevance beyond Italy.<sup>89 90 91</sup>

By documenting ordinary aspects of organic food consumption—embodiment, cultural heritage, personal contradiction—the project demonstrates how eating organics represents a reasonable, rather than a rational, practice for managing and possibly resolving the uncertainty of the Anthropocene.

### Research objectives

Anthropological studies of the Anthropocene tend to focus on the impacts of global environmental change on small-scale communities that depend directly on the natural environment for their livelihood.<sup>92 93</sup> Though important, this work does not account for people who work and live away from nature in highly artificial settings. This project will therefore contribute to answering the following questions:

- 1) What does the Anthropocene look like through the lens of mass-consumer society?
- 2) What can food consumption tell us about the relationship between the self and environmental degradation, especially pervasive pollution?
- 3) How do consumers see the interplay between nature and society now that the latter is said to have completely enclosed the former?
- 4) How do consumers negotiate the tension between subjective experience and objective information about the environmental crisis?
- 5) Why do some people view food consumption as a way of protecting themselves from the environment, while others see it as a way of protecting the environment from ourselves?
- 6) How do embodiment, sensory experience, and family life help or hinder recognition of the pollution problem?
- 7) Why do people draw on tradition, memory and collective heritage to negotiate the dilemmas of consuming in an age of global environmental change?

### Expected results

This project will show how commodities can evoke humanity’s current socio-natural predicament. It will help advance social-scientific debate on the Anthropocene by placing consumer society at the heart of analyses of global environmental change. The project will document how people experience pollution and the new nature-society collective through consumption. It will also show how this experience is highly contradictory and contextualized, not a matter of cause-and-effect. Underlying some social science accounts of the Anthropocene is an overgeneralisation of cultural change. Part of this argument, as of older ones about “radicalized modernity” and the “risk society,” is the suggestion that we are living through a new epoch of environmental awareness and reflexivity. By detailing the socio-material limits of reflexivity, the project will render the complexity of Anthropos by analysing the contradictions between individual experience and global processes.

### Field site and methodology

WP 1 is based on the analysis of qualitative data gathered in Italy. Contrary to common stereotype, Italy suffers from widespread pollution and from a deep ambivalence towards its diet. Italians’ attitudes to food are rooted in

<sup>84</sup> Paxson, H. 2013. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. University of California Press.

<sup>85</sup> Domingos, N., Sobral, J. and West, H. Eds. 2014. *Food Between the Country and the City: Ethnographies of a Changing Global Foodscape*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, K. 2013. *Buying into Fair Trade: Culture, Morality, and Consumption*. New York University Press.

<sup>87</sup> Lyon, S., Ailshire, S. and Sehon, A. 2014. Fair trade consumption and the limits to solidarity. *Human Organization* 73 (2): 141–152.

<sup>88</sup> Andersen, A. 2011. Organic food and the plural moralities of food provisioning. *Journal of Rural Studies* 27 (4): 440–450.

<sup>89</sup> Cairns, K., Johnston, J. and MacKendrick, N. 2013. Feeding the ‘organic child’: mothering through ethical consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 13 (2): 97–118.

<sup>90</sup> Mares, T. 2017. Navigating gendered labor and local food: a tale of working mothers in Vermont. *Food and Foodways* 25 (3): 177–192.

<sup>91</sup> Som Castellano 2015. Alternative food networks and food provisioning as a gendered act. *Agriculture and Human Values* 32 (3): 461–474.

<sup>92</sup> Brightman, M. and Lewis, J. Eds. 2017. *The Anthropology of Sustainability: Beyond Development and Progress*. Palgrave.

<sup>93</sup> Chua, L. and Fair, H. 2019. Anthropocene. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, F. Stein et al. Eds., pp. 1–19. CUP.

their appreciation for regional cuisines, whose role in social reproduction has been well documented.<sup>94</sup> Over the years, the country has become an inspiration for quality food,<sup>95</sup> a fame achieved through a mixture of legislation, activism and marketing. Though successful, this mix has led to controversies, which anthropologists have studied in detail.<sup>97</sup> The country's dietary anxieties, on the contrary, have been looked at less often. Historically, Italy's transition to modernity entailed a process of industrialization that affected all aspects of its food system. By the turn of the century, the weight of multinational corporations had grown considerably in the Italian food economy. In 2009, supermarkets accounted for 70% of total sales. Italian diets have changed accordingly. In 2004, 66% of cupboard purchases comprised semi-prepared foods and 17% ready-made meals. Ideas about the higher quality of Italian food have thus been crafted by powerful politico-economic forces whose interests are vested in an invented tradition.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, despite widely-publicized beauty spots, Italy faces considerable pollution.<sup>99</sup> This project goes beyond previous work on Italian food exceptionalism by documenting how Italian diets are the product of the same industrial agri-food system found in most advanced economies, and by contributing the first study of Italian consumers' concerns for environmental contamination.

Fieldwork took place in two regions, Sicily (in 2007–2008, 2011–2014, and 2019–2020) and Piedmont (in 2016–2018). This research happened at a pivotal time that saw the Italian organic food market expand by 178%. WP 1 thus represents the consolidation of a long-term ethnographic undertaking whose intensive character is one of its strongest aspects. Data collection consisted of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, taking place at several sites. First, I worked in organic food stores and farms. I also frequented organically-managed urban allotments and "solidarity purchase groups."<sup>100</sup> Rather than a stereotypical view of the phenomenon, my regular visits to these places offered a unique chance to witness the nuances and mundaneness of engaging with organic food in agriculture, retail, and leisure. These activities generated qualitative data of an observational and verbal nature, which was recorded in written form in a field diary.

Using snowball sampling, I traced connections from these sites back to families and individuals, with whom I carried out 57 semi-structured interviews, mostly with women aged between 20 and 70, often married and with children. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Drawing on practice theory, I designed the interviews to address beliefs, feelings, and behaviours concerning not just organic food but food in general, exploring why people might *not* want to eat organics or found it difficult to do so. I also arranged grocery shopping "go-alongs"<sup>101</sup> with informants both in town and in the countryside. I visited their homes for guided tours of food-related spaces and participated in their meals. Furthermore, I joined in community activities and attended a variety of meetings and public events, both regionally and nationally.

By planning my study so, I was able to gain a much deeper understanding of organic food's place in everyday life than by relying only on interviews and reported behaviour. The significance of pollution emerged spontaneously from this research design. Additionally, I collected documents such as articles, videos and advertisements relating to organic food and, eventually, pollution. This process was guided in part by a post-humanist approach and in part by noting the networks of dissemination that informants brought to my attention. This archival research helped me better contextualize the phenomena within Italy's post-industrial economy and environment. My understanding of Italian foodways has been made more intimate, and thus ethnographically richer, by my positionality as a native who has local ties of kith and kin. This condition has given me access to a treasure trove of ordinary events and long-term structures through which I was able to witness the recent spread of organic food among older generations and new social groups.

Data was collected through snowball sampling and is thus not statistically representative. Empirically, I sought to understand why an increasing number of Italians consumes organic food. A qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate to capture the ordinary nature of consumer engagement with the Anthropocene. Data analysis will rely on grounded theory,<sup>102</sup> i.e. the inductive coding of diary entries and interview transcripts to identify and connect thematic clusters through an iterative process.

### Interdisciplinary aspect

This project uses theory from anthropology and sociology to advance its analysis of consumption in the Anthropocene. More broadly, it builds on the interdisciplinary potential that the social sciences exhibit towards the Anthropocene as manifested in the similar way these disciplines have responded to the concept. First, social scientists have welcomed the view that nature and society are mutually constitutive and thus no longer

<sup>94</sup> Counihan, C. 2004. *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family and Gender in Twentieth-century Florence*. Routledge.

<sup>95</sup> Counihan, C. 2019. *Italian Food Activism in Urban Sardinia: Place, Taste, and Community*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>96</sup> Siniscalchi, V. 2019. *Slow Food: The Economy and Politics of a Global Movement*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>97</sup> Grasseni, C. 2016. *The Heritage Arena: Reinventing Cheese in the Italian Alps*. Berghahn.

<sup>98</sup> Conti, P. 2007. *La leggenda del buon cibo italiano e altri miti alimentari contemporanei* [The Legend of Italy's Good Food and Other Contemporary Culinary Myths]. Fazi Editore.

<sup>99</sup> Armiero, M. and Hall, M. Eds. 2010. *Nature and History in Modern Italy*. Ohio University Press.

<sup>100</sup> Grasseni, C. 2013. *Beyond Alternative Food Networks: Italy's Solidarity Purchase Groups*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>101</sup> Kusenbach, M. 2003. Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography* 4 (3): 455–485.

<sup>102</sup> Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage.

separable, which lies at the heart of the Anthropocene concept. This view can avoid the empirical pitfalls that an exclusively social epistemology has historically incurred, such as disregarding the environmental question.<sup>103 104</sup>

<sup>105</sup> The project speaks to this dialogue in WP 1 by putting pollution—as a more-than-human issue—centre stage. Second, social scientists have also shown that underlying some uses of the new concept is a “naturalist narrative”<sup>106</sup> that depicts humanity as a generic force, paying scant attention to issues of inequality, difference and place.<sup>107 108</sup> In this vein, the Anthropocene concept risks replacing a dualism—nature vs. society—with a new absolute category—generic nature-society—which may itself lead to empirical blind spots.<sup>109 110 111 112</sup> The project draws on this criticism by recognizing the analytical significance of gender relations and that of local constructs of the “natural” and the “cultural” as *separate* domains of life.

In WP 2, the project will harness the Anthropocene’s interdisciplinary potential by organising ten monthly seminars where natural and social scientists, civil society actors and artists will be invited to reflect on key aspects of the current environmental crisis. While the Anthropocene has garnered considerable scholarly attention, it should also be noted that the idea risks becoming just a trope or a new “theory of everything,” due to its appeal as a post-natural, post-social, and post-political concept. Experts, activists and artists thus have a critical role to play in ensuring the idea retains the clarity needed to illuminate the most pressing issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The seminar series, provisionally called *Consumer Society in the Anthropocene*, will contribute to this endeavour by fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. The series will result in a coedited volume, ideally entitled *The Anthropocene: A Consumer Society Dictionary*.

### Gender aspect

As explained above, this project looks at gender as a key analytical variable to understand the issue of contradiction between agency and structure for a significant proportion of the sample.<sup>113 114 115</sup> The monograph will contain a chapter dedicated entirely to this issue (see section 2.2 below).

## 1.2 Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host organization

The project will build on and complement work on consumerism, households, and the perception of environmental problems currently being carried out by several researchers at the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (for more information about the Institute please see section 3.4).

Anthropologist Dr Sekeráková Búriková, with whom I have been in contact during the preparation of this proposal, has a long-standing interest in the social life of things—the ways that people use objects to create social relations and cultural meaning. Her main areas of research and teaching are material culture, economic anthropology, and consumption. She has published on household divisions of labour<sup>116</sup> and on the relationship between consumerism, sustainability and religion.<sup>117</sup> Collaborating with Dr Sekeráková Búriková will thus help sharpen the project’s focus on women’s food-centred work of care and its relationship to environmental concerns. This collaboration will build on our mutual interests and our shared use of the ethnographic method.

Sociologist Dr Strapcová is currently leading a three-year project on the subjective perception of environmental values in Slovakia. Together with her team (Dr Kusá, Dr Búzik, and Mgr Zeman), she is studying the impact of the environment on social life, especially the new condition of human existence caused by so-called global civilizational risks following the modernization process.<sup>118</sup> Drawing on the work of Ulrich Beck, Dr Strapcová examines how environmental problems resonate in public opinion, with a focus on the development of Slovakian

<sup>103</sup> Lever-Tracy, C. 2008. Global warming and sociology. *Current Sociology* 56 (3): 445–466.

<sup>104</sup> Manuel-Navarrete and Buzinde 2010. Socio-ecological agency: from human exceptionalism to coping with exceptional global environmental change. In *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology*, Redclift and Woodgate eds., p.136–149. Edward Elgar.

<sup>105</sup> Tsing, A. et al. Eds. 2017. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>106</sup> Bonneuil, C. 2015. The geological turn: narratives of the Anthropocene. In *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity in a New Epoch*, C. Hamilton, C. Bonneuil, and F. Gemenne eds., pp. 16–31. Routledge.

<sup>107</sup> Isenhour, C. 2010. Building Sustainable Societies: A Swedish Case Study on the Limits of Reflexive Modernization. *American Ethnologist* 37 (3): 511–525.

<sup>108</sup> Reno, J. 2011. Beyond risk: emplacement and the production of environmental evidence. *American Ethnologist* 38 (3): 516–530.

<sup>109</sup> Hann, C. 2017. The Anthropocene and anthropology: micro and macro perspectives. *European Journal of Social Theory* 20(1): 183–196.

<sup>110</sup> Lidskog and Waterton 2016. Anthropocene—a cautious welcome from environmental sociology? *Environmental Sociology* 2 (4): 395–406.

<sup>111</sup> Löwbrand, E. et al. 2015. Who speaks for the future of Earth? How critical social science can extend the conversation on the Anthropocene. *Global Environmental Change* 32: 211–218.

<sup>112</sup> Moore, J. Ed. 2016. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. PM Press.

<sup>113</sup> Allen and Sachs 2007. Women and food chains: the gendered politics of food. *International Journal of Sociology and Food* 15 (1): 1–23.

<sup>114</sup> Certeau, de, M., Giard, L. and Mayol, P. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Living and Cooking*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>115</sup> Koch, S. 2012. *A Theory of Grocery Shopping: Food, Choice and Conflict*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>116</sup> Búriková 2019. Paid home-based childcare in Slovakia: Informal markets and care loops. *Journal of European Social Policy* 29: 653–665.

<sup>117</sup> Búriková, Z. 2011. Consumerism in Slovak Catholic Homes. In *Religion, Consumerism and Sustainability: Paradise Lost?* K. Soper and L. Thomas eds., pp. 137–151. Palgrave.

<sup>118</sup> Strapcová K. “Climate change and environmental issues in public opinion in Slovakia,” online seminar, Institute for Sociology, 26/11/2020.

society after 1989.<sup>119</sup> This project is aligned to my own research in terms of its broad theoretical framework and will thus represent another important source of scholarly exchange. The advantages will be mutual. On one hand, I will bring a focus on qualitative methodologies and in-depth analysis of case studies; on the other, I will learn how to use and make sense of data from large-scale quantitative surveys.

Dr Búzik and Mgr Zeman are also involved in work on the spread of consumerism and the stratification of consumer societies. This research examines how purchasing behaviour has changed over time and space in Eastern Europe, especially as a result of the influence of globalization on retail trends.<sup>120</sup> This topic connects to a burgeoning anthropological literature on alternative foods in post-socialist societies,<sup>121</sup> including organics,<sup>122</sup> and will thus represent a third area of collaboration at the Institute.

WP 2 includes three types of joint activities that will help foster a fruitful and stable scientific interaction with the host institution. The first activity will be a reading group with the above-mentioned researchers (and possibly with other ones yet to be identified and with doctoral students) aimed at discussing texts about shared topics of interest. An academic reading group is the perfect way to develop rapport and brainstorm ideas for further collaboration. Given the research profiles of those involved, the broad theme will be consumer society's relationship to the environment. The second activity will stem from the discussions of the reading group and will consist of a seminar series with invited speakers. The series, currently named *Consumer Society in the Anthropocene*, will include ten events and will be sponsored by the Slovak Academy of Sciences for the benefit of scholars and the wider community. The talks will explore ten keywords, which will be chosen together with colleagues at the Institute. Depending on the keyword, a prominent member of the natural and social sciences, the humanities, the arts, or civil society will be invited as a guest speaker. Whenever relevant, members of the Slovak Academy will be invited to the talks. The third activity will be the coediting of a volume based on the seminars, provisionally entitled *The Anthropocene: A Consumer Society Dictionary*.

### 1.3 Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence

Throughout my academic career I have been extremely mobile, believing that being exposed to different disciplinary contexts is crucial to the development of one's research potential. After graduating in Classics with a specialisation in Ethnology in Italy, I moved to the UK to pursue my interests in anthropological sciences. In London I studied first environmental anthropology at UCL, then economic anthropology at Goldsmiths, receiving extensive training in data collection and analysis. In London I also started my track record of winning competitive research grants. After obtaining my PhD, I worked at the University of Palermo in the Department of History, Anthropology and Geography, then in Bergamo's Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, and in Turin, in the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society. I am therefore applying to SASPRO 2 out of this strong conviction in the role of mobility for excellent science.

My doctoral fieldwork, funded by a three-year grant from the UK Economic and Social Research Council, centred on the study of ethical consumption movements in Sicily. It focused on fair trade and organic foods, integrating anthropological and sustainability literatures. As an Italian Talented Young Researcher (ITALY®) at the University of Bergamo, I explored worker-recovered enterprises in Lombardy and their links to food-based solidarity economies. In Turin I was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow and the Principal Investigator on a project that studied the impact of austerity on Piedmont's alternative food networks during the late 2010s. One of the thematic foci of this research was farmers' and consumers' concerns for environmental risk, together with their concepts of food quality and "nature." The project I am proposing, therefore, draws on the knowledge and expertise I have developed in these previous posts and uses a specific set of results gathered over more than a decade of data collection.

My publication history clearly shows independent thinking and interdisciplinary interests. In addition to being almost all single-author, my publications have appeared mainly in high-quality international and national journals, and with well-known academic presses. Several of them have appeared in sociology and geography outlets, in addition to anthropology ones.<sup>123 124 125 126</sup> Recently, I have been publishing more in economic rather than in environmental anthropology to keep the data I plan to use for my monograph unpublished.

<sup>119</sup> Strapcová K. "Inequalities and increase of global environmental risks," international conference, Slovak Academy of Science, 21/11/2019.

<sup>120</sup> Buzik, B. and Zeman, M. Values in the Regulation of Consumer Behaviour. *Sociologia* 52 (5): 411–431.

<sup>121</sup> Jung, Y., Klein, J. and Caldwell, M. Eds. 2014. *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World*. University of California Press.

<sup>122</sup> Aistara, G. A. 2018. *Organic Sovereignities: Struggles over Farming in an Age of Free Trade*. University of Washington Press.

<sup>123</sup> Orlando, G. 2018. From the Risk Society to Risk Practice: Organic Food, Embodiment and Modernity in Sicily. *Food, Culture & Society* 21 (2): 144–163.

<sup>124</sup> Orlando, G. 2018. Understanding Alternative Food Networks after the Crisis: Testing Four Scenarios in Italy. In *Alternative Food Networks: An Interdisciplinary Assessment*, A. Corsi et al. eds., pp. 137–162. Palgrave.

<sup>125</sup> Orlando, G. 2017. Space, Pollution and Food Transgressions: Organic Food Consumption in Palermo. *Rivista Geografica Italiana* 124 (2): 139–153.

<sup>126</sup> Orlando, G. 2017. Recovered Enterprises in Italy: Theory, History and Early Findings. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* LVIII (3): 661–678.

## 2. IMPACT

### 2.1 Enhancing the future career prospects of the researcher after the fellowship

My reason for applying to SASPRO 2 is two-fold. First, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship is the kind of grant that allows to conduct “blue-sky” research, giving the Principal Investigator considerable freedom to explore a topic. While the focus of my project in Turin was strongly empirical, to mature as a scholar in Bratislava it will be entirely analytical. I should also like to note that the programme requires grantees to stay at their host organisations throughout the year, so a project involving anthropological fieldwork would not be possible. The second reason for applying is that the Fellowship will allow me to complete a monograph, the lack of which represents the biggest weakness of my CV and the main reason I have thus far been unable to secure a permanent academic position. The other publications I have planned will also elevate the profile of my curriculum, considering their nature and the prestige of the journals selected (see section 2.2).

Conducting the proposed project will enable me to strengthen and develop further my expertise in the interdisciplinary field of consumer studies, and particularly food studies. Exposure to the work being carried out by researchers at the Institute for Sociology will broaden my knowledge base and intellectual horizons. It will also considerably increase my employability across a variety of social science disciplines. At the same time, the secondment in the non-academic sector planned as part of the project (see section 2.4 below) will enhance my transferability to the public and private sectors, should I decide to pursue that route (given my research topics and expertise, this could be an actual possibility).

The grant will allow me to secure three more years of employment, with a view to obtaining a permanent post in 2024. After being forced to take a career break for family reasons immediately after I received my doctorate—a crucial stage in one’s career—I see the SASPRO 2 programme as an opportunity to consolidate my path. The research project, outputs, and dissemination activities I am proposing will all have a considerable impact in developing my career towards the attainment of a longer-term position.

### 2.2 Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results

The project’s results will be disseminated primarily through four scientific publications: a monograph and two articles in WP 1, and a coedited volume in WP 2. The monograph, entitled *Consuming Anthropocene: Organic Food and the Uncertainty of Toxic Life*, comprises nine chapters.

The Introduction discusses the book’s theoretical approach as explained in section 1.1 of this proposal.

Chapter 1 is a concise historical examination of Italy’s agri-food system, its organic food phenomenon, and the country’s environmental problems since 1945, the conventional start date of the Anthropocene.

Chapter 2 analyses organic food’s value through techno-scientific disputes. It draws on informants’ discussions of food scares over the course of a decade involving four agents of pollution: recombinant DNA in EU organic food regulations, dioxins in Italian buffalo mozzarella, glyphosate and radionuclides in imported durum wheat.

Chapter 3 discusses the idea that eating organics can offset toxicity absorbed by the body in a polluted area by analysing informants’ opinions and sensory perceptions of their surroundings as damaged landscapes. It focuses on events of ordinary toxicity in air, water and mediated locales such as landfills and industrial sites.

Chapter 4 talks about people who consume organics to protect the environment, rather than to protect themselves from it. Using data collected among a number of solidarity purchase groups and community-supported agriculture schemes, it considers how these examples of food activism were formed, failed or prospered, highlighting the contradictions of ethical consumption.

Chapter 5 examines value through embodiment using three kinds of data: informants’ narratives of mundane health complaints such as colitis, dyspepsia, and intolerances, together with the lay epidemiology used to explain them; their contrasting sensory evaluations of conventional and organic fresh produce; and childhood memories of Italy’s transition from a peasant to a post-industrial society, evoked by organic foods’ sensual properties.

Chapter 6 explores the notion of “organic-by-default” and its value in relation to peasant farming. It looks at instances of consumption of nonorganic, rustic foods in Italy’s mountainous interior—an area experienced as being less polluted than the coastal cities—which show how the senses and cultural notions of culinary quality can supersede the discourse of organic certification.

Chapter 7 explores the role of gender in organic food consumption, reflecting on the prevalence of female informants in the sample. Drawing on women’s narratives of family life, it documents the difficulties of accommodating culinary anxieties, environmental aspirations, and family life, especially in terms of everyday constraints such as stores’ locations, the choice of goods, personal preferences, prices, and spare time.

The Conclusion summarises the book’s argument and reflects on the role of the social sciences in understanding, and possibly changing, the Anthropocene.

I am currently working on the manuscript and I envisage having written an initial draft by the start of the

fellowship. A grant from SASPRO 2 will thus support writing final drafts of all 9 chapters (see section 3.1 for the project's timeline). Currently I do not have a book contract because I wish to complete the manuscript before contacting publishers. However, I am considering an invitation to submit a book proposal from Hannah Ferguson, editor for environment, food and agriculture at Routledge. Alternatively, I will approach Berghahn, University of California Press, or Duke University Press.

The planned journal articles of WP 1 will explore two important topics in relation to the Anthropocene: the role of class in phenomena of alternative food consumption, and the moral economy of ethical food trading. The first topic deals with the thorny issue of affordability and elitism, both as material and symbolic constructs. Class and inequality are two crucial aspects of everyday life and therefore shape consumer engagements profoundly, including those that stem from the intersection of consumer culture and environmental crises. For reasons of length, coherence and expediency, I have decided to leave out this topic from the monograph, although the theoretical framework employed in it will apply also to the article in question. The second article will deal with one facet of my long-term fieldwork, the moral economy of people who work in fair trade retail. This is a fascinating topic that addresses a key challenge of consumer society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: achieving social justice through markets. I will submit these articles to *Journal of Consumer Culture* and *American Ethnologist*.

The fourth publication of this project, in WP 2, will be a volume provisionally entitled *The Anthropocene: A Consumer Society Dictionary*. This volume will include papers from the seminar series *Consumer Society in the Anthropocene* and will be coedited with colleagues at the Institute for Sociology. I will approach Bloomsbury or Palgrave Macmillan as potential publishers.

The project's results will also be disseminated through conference attendance. During the fellowship I plan to attend one major conference a year, in all likelihood those of the American Anthropological Association, European Association of Social Anthropologists, and European Sociological Association. I will present drafts of the monograph chapters and articles at these events. Further participation in smaller thematic conferences will be evaluated during the course of the project.

### **2.3 Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the project activities to different target audiences including prospects for responsible research and innovation**

Communication with both expert and lay audiences will be a key part of the project. In keeping with the Horizon 2020 objective "Science with and for Society," the seminar series *Consumer Society in the Anthropocene* will be entirely dedicated to fostering not only scientific dialogue among peers, but also interaction with members of the local art scene and civil society. This task in WP 2 aims to benefit both the scholarly community at the Institute for Sociology and Comenius University, and the wider public in Bratislava, following the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI).

Special attention will be paid to communication with non-academic audiences. The Anthropocene concept has drawn considerable public attention since it was first posited. Documentaries such as Edward Burtynsky's *Anthropocene: the human epoch*, the Fridays For Future protests, and the disputes over glyphosate and plastic show that the Anthropocene is an idea whose time has come. In order to harness this considerable potential for the public understanding of science, the project will create a blog to communicate with a lay audience on the issue of consumer society's relationship to the environmental crisis. A social media profile will also be set up, in all likelihood on Twitter. I already have experience of this kind of engagement, having managed a blog for the project I carried out at the University of Turin (<https://altfoodcrisis.wordpress.com/>).

### **2.4 Potential for cooperation with the application sector**

SASPRO 2 strongly advises candidates to do a 1-month secondment for each year of the project. With regard to this, I believe that three types of organisation would add value to the project and to myself as a future jobseeker. The first type is an environmental NGO, possibly one dealing with problems of pollution and/or with food and agriculture. This could be a local, national, or locally-based international organisation. A trade body of the local organic food sector might also be a good candidate. The second type of organisation is a consumer association, a company doing consumer research, or a governmental body dealing with consumer rights. The third one is a news organisation that covers the environment, food, consumer issues, etc. This could be a printed or an online media group (e.g. a newspaper, website, blog, etc.). In terms of desired outcomes, these secondments would be highly beneficial in acquiring applied skills that could be used in the private, state, and third sectors. They would also allow me to further develop my non-academic communication skills, which I already practiced during my time in Turin and afterwards, when I consulted as a freelance anthropologist for advertising agencies working with clients in the food sector. The secondments will therefore also strengthen the project's RRI component. The SASPRO 2 administrative team will assist in finding specific hosts during the grant's negotiation period.

### 3. QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION (INCLUDING GANTT CHART)

#### 3.1 Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan

The table below shows the project's structure.

| Work Package | Task                                 | Deliverable                                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1            | Analysis and write-up of data        | 1 monograph, 2 articles                      |
| 1            | Revision after peer review           | 1 monograph, 2 articles                      |
| 1            | Conference attendance                | 3 presentations minimum                      |
| 2            | Organisation of a reading group      | 1 seminar series                             |
| 2            | Organisation of a seminar series     | 10 seminars                                  |
| 2            | Editing of a volume                  | 1 edited volume                              |
| 1-2          | Management of an internet blog       | 78 posts minimum (1 fortnightly for 3 years) |
| 1-2          | Management of a social media profile | 156 posts minimum (1 weekly for 3 years)     |

The Gantt chart below shows the project's timeline.

| 2021                                                  | 2022 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        | 2023                              |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        | 2024 |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|--------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Year 1                                                |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Year 2 |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   | Year 3 |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| N                                                     | D    | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O      | N                                 | D | J | F | M | A | M                                     | J | J | A | S      | O    | N | D | J | F | M | A | M                           | J | J | A | S | O |  |  |
| Analysis and write-up of data, 1 monograph, 18 months |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|                                                       |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 Articles, 6 months                  |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|                                                       |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   | Revision after peer review, 12 months |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| Conference attendance, 3 years                        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| Organising 1 reading group, 12 months                 |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|                                                       |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        | Organising 10 seminars, 12 months |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|                                                       |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   | Editing 1 volume, 12 months |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| Management of an internet blog, 3 years               |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| Management of a social media profile, 3 years         |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |        |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |

The project will also include three 1-month secondments in the non-academic sector.

#### 3.2 Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources

The project's tasks are structured to lead coherently from one to the next. The nature of the project does not raise any special issues concerning extra resources, which will come from the fellowship's research allowance.

#### 3.3 Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management

The project will be managed through the creation of an Individual Development Plan in conjunction with the Scientist in charge. This will be used to coordinate the different phases and tasks of the project and monitor its progress through short- and long-term goals. The plan will set the goals for the preparation of deliverables and for dissemination and communication activities (as outlined above). Its progress will be reviewed every four months together with the Scientist in charge, throughout the grant's duration. Given its nature, the project poses no significant risks to the researcher nor to anyone else involved. Please see the separate Ethics Self-assessment for an evaluation of the project's ethical issues.

#### 3.4. Appropriateness of the institutional environment (research topics, infrastructure, resources)

The Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences is the largest research organization in the field of sociology in Slovakia. It is active in teaching in the field of sociology as well as in neighbouring disciplines, including anthropology. The Institute is responsible for carrying out international comparative research programs in Slovakia, such as the International Social Survey and the European Values Study. It publishes the country's premier sociology journal—*Sociológia - Slovak Sociological Review*—which includes two issues in English annually. Together with the Department of Sociology at Comenius University, the Institute founded the Slovak Archive of Social Data. The Archive provides access to the data for researchers and the public. The Institute has also its own library. Besides national research projects, the Institute participates in respected international grant schemes and is actively involved in international academic cooperation. Since 2013 it has hosted three Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellows. In terms of the facilities required for the successful completion of this project, the use of an office with a computer, printer, and wireless Internet are the minimum requirements.