

---

# Les relations ville-campagne face à la question alimentaire *Journée Rural 2021*

---

Social capital and cooperation between actors in southern  
Albania: a case study on Gjirokastra cheese

PhD candidate: Elda MUCO  
Dr. Elena Kokthi  
Dr. Mélanie Requier-Desjardins

Typical agro-food or territorial products play a central role in development strategies carried out by local actors which can be transformed into a very important development vector of rural areas (Pecqueur, 2001).

# The cheese of Gjirokastra

- Typical product related to a territory
- Perceived by the consumers
- Consumers are willing to pay a premium price



## What is happening with the cheese of Gjirokastra in the market?

- the usurpation
- consumers lose real value

## The impact on breeders/cheese producers

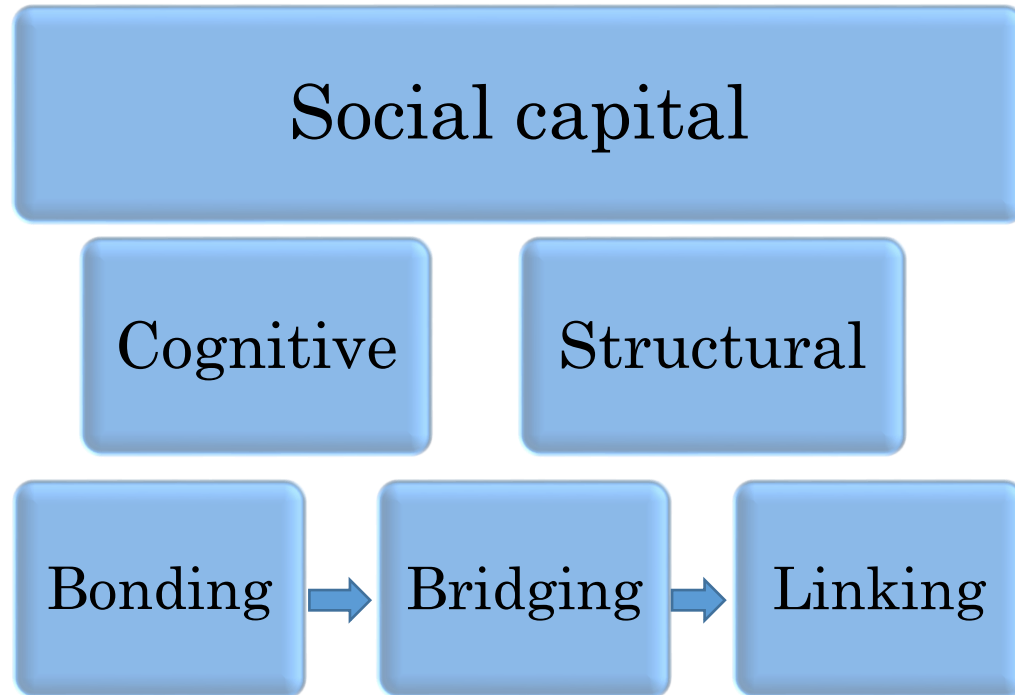
- Market loss
- Income decrease

Several research suggests the European quality certification such as GI as a possible solution to avoid low profits to farmers and producers (Kokthi et al, 2016).

However, GI can constitute a possible protection instrument if the producers/farmers cooperate with each other.

Though, the conditions which make possible the networks and the process of cooperation are strongly linked, among others, with the concept of social capital.

# Theoritical framework



- Structural social capital is the network (number of people) that an individual knows (density, connectivity, hierarchy) and can draw benefits such as information and assistance (Burt, 1992; Tsai et Ghoshal, 1998).
- Cognitive social capital: set of shared norms, values, attitudes and individual beliefs related to trust, reciprocity and cooperation (Uphoff and Wijayaratna, 2000).

Bonding: represents close relationships between actors (family, friends, neighbors, etc.).

Bridging: promotes long-distance relationships to solve community problems by sharing information and mobilizing common resources.

Linking: refers to formal relationships between individuals with different social positions and powers.

# **Research methods**

# The objective of the research

## The general objective:

to analyze the level of cooperation around a potential implementation of a GI in a given territory (Gjirokastra region, southern Albania) on a specific product (cheese) using the concept of social capital.

- 1) The first objective of this study is to understand what are the perceptions of the national actors about geographical indications in Albania, what is their degree of awareness on this issue.
- 1) The second objective of this study is to analyze the nature of social capital and its impact on the level of cooperation.

# The research questions

- 1) What is the role of social capital on the process of certifying typical products?
- 2) How do cognitive social capital and structural social capital affect the level of cooperation between actors?

# Methodology



shutterstock.com • 748851169

- Some definitions about social capital, cooperation, collective action, GI, etc.

- The identification of social capital indicators



- Identifying the actors

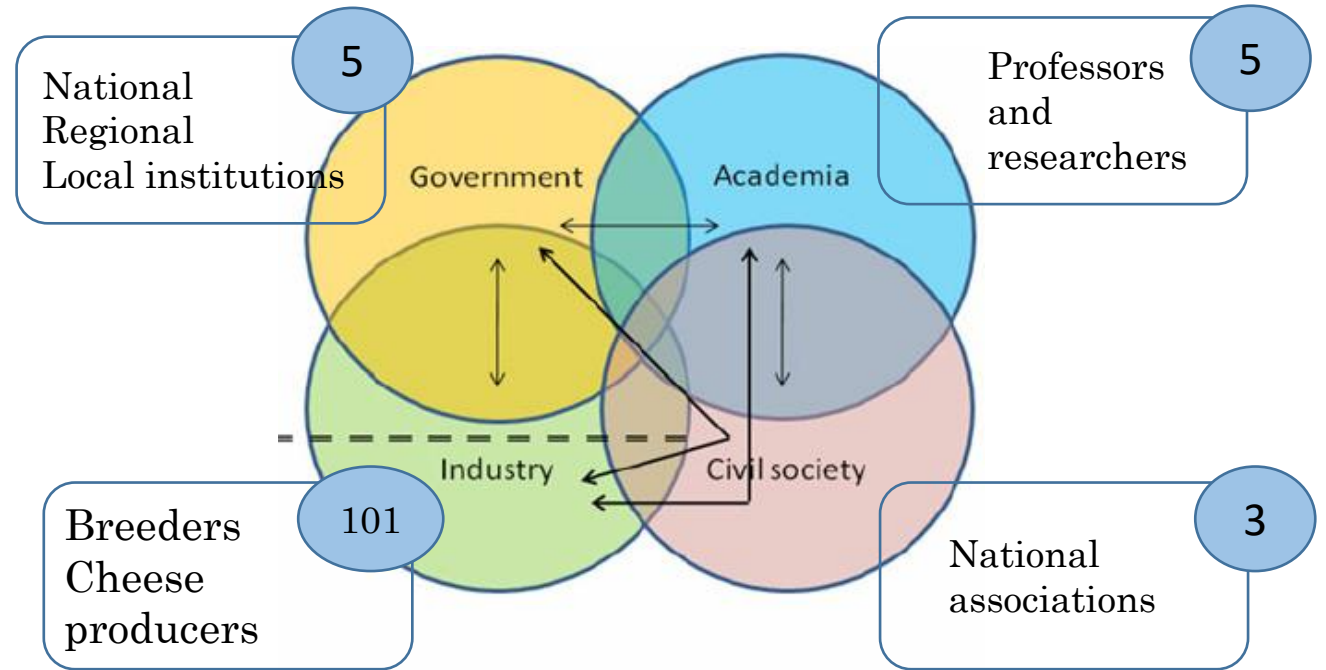
- The limit of study area

- The elaboration of questionnaires

# Methodology



- Identifying the actors
- The limit of study area
- The elaboration of questionnaires



The main criteria for delimiting the area:

- the number of breeders and producers
- the total number of ruminants
- the average number of ruminants per household
- the distance between breeders and producers



# Methodology



shutterstock.com • 748851169

-Some definitions about social capital, cooperation, collective action, GI, etc.

-The identification of social capital indicators



- Identifying the actors

- The limit of study area

- The elaboration of questionnaires



- Field work : sampling survey

- Data analysis

# Methodology



- Field work :  
sampling survey

- Data analysis

**SCAT (Social Capital Assessment Tools) =>  
Krishna (1999)**

Structural social  
capital

- Organizational density
- Social ties
- Collective action

Cognitive social  
capital

- Trust
- Solidarity
- Reciprocity
- Cooperation

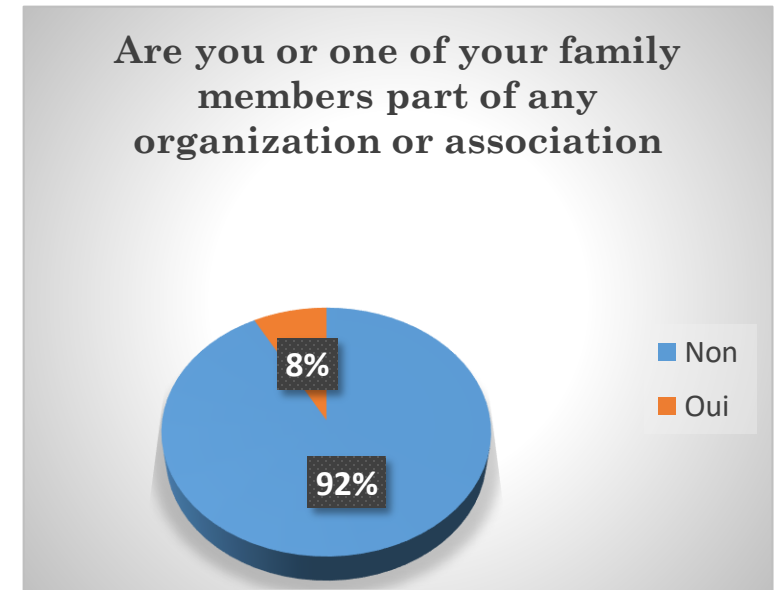


**Structured questionnaires with  
closed questions**

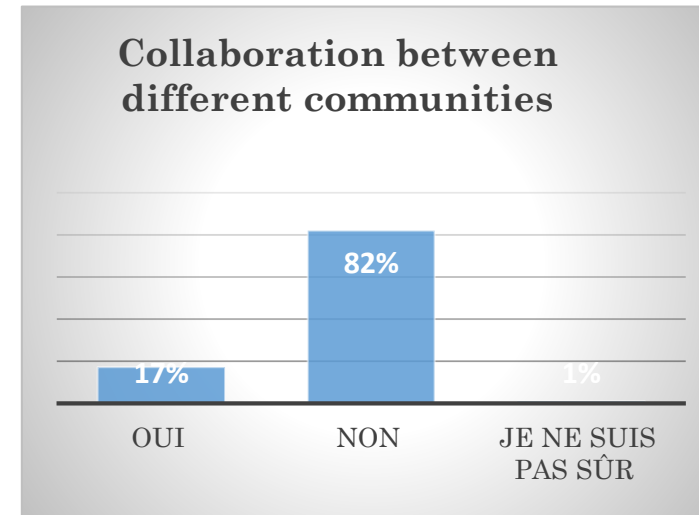
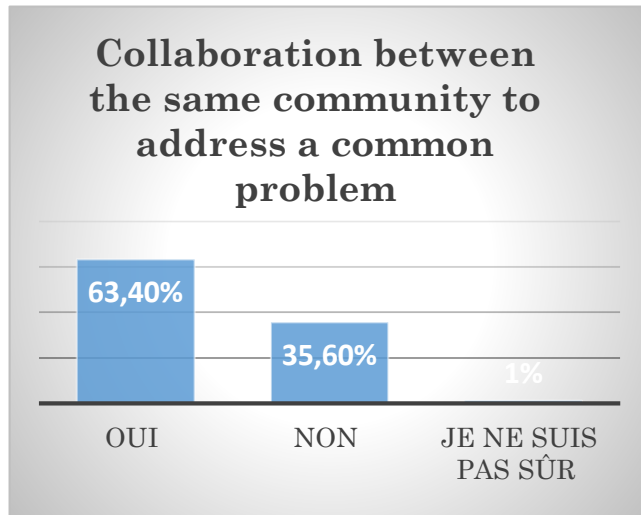
# **Data analysis**

# Structural social capital: civic engagement

- Weak indicator
- Lack of regional and local associations
- Lack of organisational diversity
- Lack of willingness to participate in different groups linked to
  - the lack of trust in the institutions,
  - Lack of credible institutions
  - Unclear legal framework about organizations/associations
- Lack of bridging relations



## Structural social capital: Network and collective action (local governance)



- The presence of bonding collective action is limited in the same community
- Few collective action outside the village
- lack of participation in community life

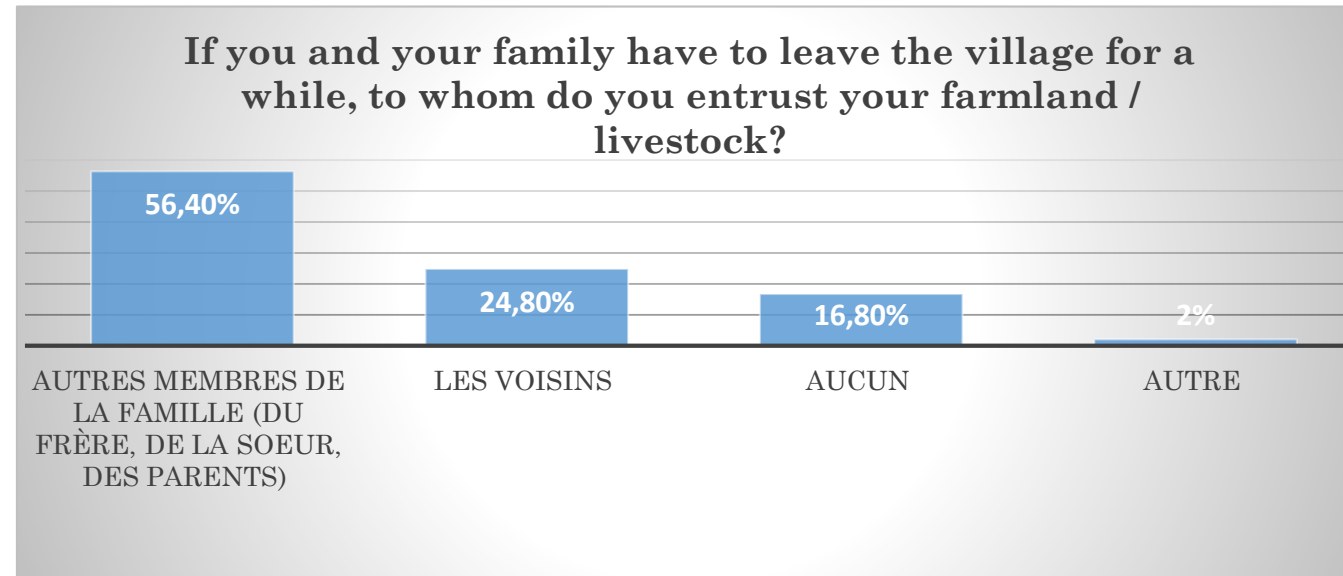
# Bridging ties of structural social capital

Weak indicator of social capital:

- hinders the creation and the expansion of ties
- hinders the acquisition and sharing information
- lack of information about the innovations in agriculture
- dependent society, incapable to take the initiatives
- collective communities: the power in the hand of one person ( the role of leader )
- lack of information about the quality signs related to the product of origine

**Structural social capital non existent → the indicators that measure this type of social capital are very weak or influence negatively the process of cooperation**

# Cognitive social capital : trust



- Low level trust outside the family cycle
- The level of trust is limited in the same community

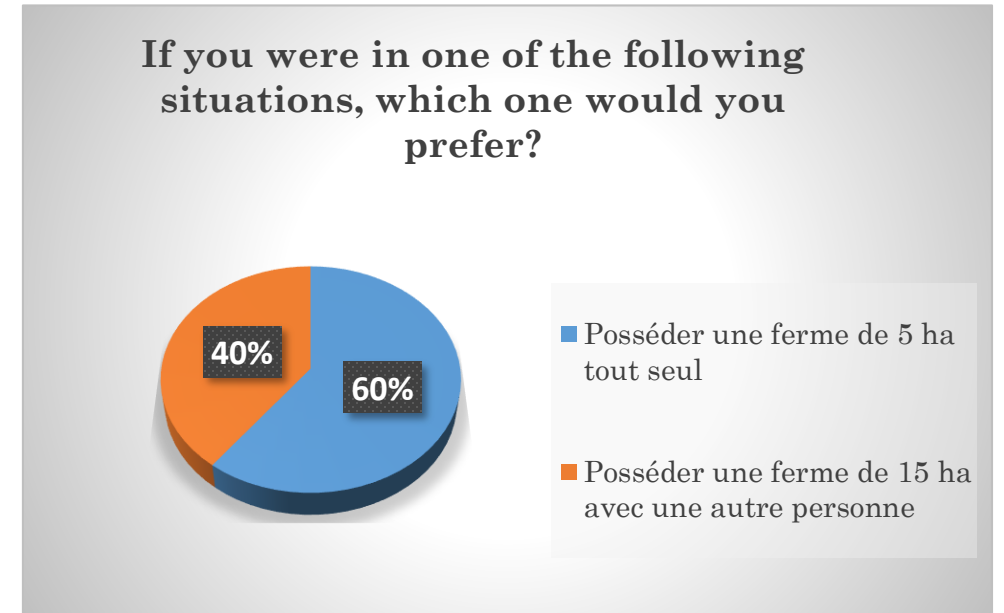
# Cognitive social capital : cooperation

## Formal cooperation

- Weak indicator (almost non existant in the study area).
- It is due to non credible institutions.
- the institutions are not able to protect the right of partnership (problem of corruption) and ineffective in solving the problems of property.

## Informal cooperation

- Presence of some informal cooperation related to sector activities such as: grazing, milking, etc.
- On the other hand, a decrease of informal cooperation from one year to another.



# Bonding ties of the cognitive social capital

Strong network in the same community can influence negatively the process of cooperation :

- the exchange of failed cooperation experiences
- can lead to corruption and emigration of the population
- create corruption in the distribution of goods to a small part of the community
- lead to pessimism by sharing life problems or failures

**Presence of cognitive social capital but in a narrow level, limited in the same community which is not helpful for the process of cooperation in the countries like Albania**

# Bonding / Bridging / Linking

## **Bonding: strong presence of bonding**

- makes the society inactive, which implies a lack of innovation in the region.
- bonding can lead to corruption or criminal activity.
- a society influenced by a strong bonding relationship is less likely to cooperate with members outside the family or friendly group.

## **Bridging: low level of bridging means**

- a society closed in a tight group.
- a negative impact on the level of cooperation.
- societies that do not develop bridging relationships are more likely not to cooperate with each other.

## **Linking: low level of linking means**

- little exchange between institutions and the community.
- little communication between the community and the local government which increases transaction costs, increases corruption attempts and hinders the activity of local authorities.
- hinders the involvement of development projects in the study area.
- difficult access to credit.

# Conclusion

- Local actors have little or any knowledge on Geographical Indication.
- Incomplete legal framework.
- Structural social capital develops cooperation. Its absence in our case prevents the process of creating a GI. Inactive society to take decisions.
- Cognitive social capital in our case plays a negative impact on the formal cooperation process, which is a *sine qua non* condition for the creation of GI. Closed society in a tight social circle.

# Conclusion

The low endowment in social capital is related to;

- the mistrust of rural actors mainly linked to the absence of credible institutions;
- the lack of trust prevents the actors from gains obtained through effective cooperation;
- the history has reinforced a primitive form of social capital located in family cycle, and not in market networks;
- foreign occupation and socialist political organization has affected the low civic engagement and voluntary cooperation.

# Limits and recommendations

- Promoting successful cooperation stories.
- Creating LAG through a participatory approach between national actors and local actors.
- Informing local actors about different strategies for the valorisation of local resources.
- Definitive legal framework and adapted to the conditions of Albania.
- Increasing the efficiency of national and local institutions and capacity building at the administrative level.



**Thank you for your  
attention!**