

Towards a new food governance: Exploring the development of an integrated urban food strategy

Adanella Rossi, Gianluca Brunori

Dept. Agriculture, Food and Environment, University of Pisa (Italy)

adanella.rossi@unipi.it
gianluca.brunori@unipi.it

Abstract

In the context of growing awareness and social mobilization around the issues of sustainability of food systems, the building of a new food governance system appears crucial. The need to include new stakeholders engaged around food-related issues, but also, on the other hand, the complexity of the processes underlying a radical change of the production and consumption models, shows the necessity of a redefinition of the governance composition, of the modes of interaction between the actors/fields involved and of the operational and decision-making mechanisms that guarantee its effectiveness.

Within a framework of multi-level governance, the empirical evidence shows that the pathways of innovation developing at local scale are particularly interesting. Here you can find different connectedness amongst the actors involved, institutional flexibility, chances to experiment with innovative solutions. The urban contexts represent significant spaces of innovation in this regard. To face the problems related to food, cities can experience new technical, organizational, institutional and social pathways. The urban food strategies newly developed in a number of Western Countries are expressions of this potential.

This paper analyzes an initiative taking place in Italy (in Tuscany, in the territory of Pisa province), in which, since 2009, public and private actors have been interacting around the creation of an integrated strategy for the management of food-related issues. By going through the various stages of the process, it focuses on the cultural, organisational and institutional changes needed and highlights the critical points that emerge in the establishment of this alternative governance system. Even if still ongoing, the initiative provides some insights about the kind of operational support that these processes need.

1. The challenge of the transition of food systems

Within the broader issue of the transition to sustainability in the last two decades the attention paid to the problems related to food has grown, because of the critical issues that over time the development of global production and consumption systems have generated. The sustainability of the current food patterns has indeed become the subject of a growing debate. This has been enriched over time with new perspectives compared to the global (traditionally understood) issue of food security, as the complex interconnections between the practices of food production and consumption and many areas of human and social life have become clear. Food practices are connected with health, with economic activities, with the relationship with natural resources, but also with culture, with questions of ethics and social justice, with the quality of life and the social relations. The criticalities related to the food practices moreover seem to be likely to increase because of the new challenges that come from the growing environmental insecurity and from new socio-economic dynamics (alternative uses of resources, new poverties, changes in eating patterns) that create new competition and new forms of exclusion in the production and in the access to food.

The mobilization around the issue by new social actors has helped the development of the debate. Initially, the search for new models to manage the transition of food systems has seen engaged mainly the scientific world, the big institutions and international organizations and, in part, businesses. However, the centrality of the multiple questions related to food has progressively involved food movements, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations working on sustainability issues, which have increasingly begun to express their position and / or to translate into concrete initiatives their need for alternatives and agency. In this context, the spread of new networks active around food¹ and the related new practices of direct relationship between production and consumption (Solidarity-based Purchase Groups, Community Supported Agriculture, short chains, cultural and educational initiatives, as well as innovative inter-sectoral experiences) have given concrete expression to the new sensitivity and the new needs related to food emerging from society. Through their actions these movements have drawn the attention of the public opinion, the media, the world of culture, and in the end of politicians and administrators to the implications of food practices, to specific critical points of the mainstream patterns and to the need/possibility of alternatives. In some cases "black boxes" were opened (i.e. the price of food, the environmental and social injustice behind the production processes, the quality of the industrial food); more generally, the level of reflexivity on the food practices has risen, opening multiple strands of debate (i.e. right to food and affordability of a better quality food, environmental impact of different food systems, benefits and critical points of the engineering of food, etc.). This new cultural atmosphere has encouraged the flourishing of new initiatives, involving a multiplicity of public and private actors: rethinking of the dietary patterns, educational actions, initiatives for the reduction of waste, orientation towards eco-friendly processes/products, re-evaluation of seasonal, traditional and local produces.

¹ In the literature these networks are known as "alternative food networks" (Goodman et al., 2011) or "civic food networks" (Renting et al., 2012).

These growing reflexivity and social mobilization around the issue are arguably an expression of need and openness to change. At the same time, both the actions involving institutional actors and the grassroots initiatives are highlighting the complexity of this change and the consequent necessity of supporting its management adequately. The practices of production and consumption are in fact influenced by a plurality of components - referring to aspects of technical, technological, cultural, economic, organizational, legal and institutional nature -. A transition to more sustainable food patterns requires an approach that takes into account these system dimension.

The initiatives of change that have been undertaken show it in many forms. So, for example, a spread of more artisanal production techniques often collides with the constraints imposed by the regulatory framework (in which the standards were defined for other production models and with reference to a certain scientific-cultural approach); other legal complications arise in the implementation of innovative forms of public procurement (when it intends to give preference to local products); these complications are often also accompanied by organizational problems, because of the inflexibility of the forms of coordination imposed by the public procurement (the small and fragmented supplies by small-scale producers generally do not meet the quantitative and logistics requirements of buyers); the possibility that consumers change their consumption behaviour is linked to a deep cultural and value change, not easy in the context of strong conditioning that comes from the mainstream model (which influences food choices, as well as the positioning of these choices in the complex of the consumption choices); the educational models themselves can hardly get out of established frames (for example on nutrition), in their turn determined by the dominant systems of knowledge.

A system change obviously goes beyond the individual sphere of action and responsibility, both of citizens-consumers and of individual entrepreneurs, and implies a well more articulated and deep action on the system. In this perspective, the transformations taking place in society in the way of conceiving the relationship with food, its production and its consumption, and then the changes that are necessary in a perspective of sustainability, lead to look at the pathways that develop from below as significant processes of innovation. According to transition theories, the development in a collective dimension of new ways of thinking and doing can lead to the construction of new socio-technical systems (new patterns of relations, new systems of rules and new material and immaterial infrastructure) as an alternative to the dominant one (Schot and Geels, 2008). This is seen as a significant step in the innovation process, as, in particular critical conditions of the dominant system, these innovative pathways can trigger broader social changes (Elzen et al., 2011).

2. The construction of a new food governance

The increasing number of actors interested in a different organization of food practices and the multiple areas that compose this “new geography of food” (Wiskerke, 2009), but also, on the other hand, the complexity of the processes underlying a significant change in the production and consumption models, has brought to the fore the issue of governance. It is increasingly recognised in this sense the need to create a new food governance, through a redefinition of its composition and its spaces, of the modes of interaction between the actors/fields involved and of the operational and decision-making mechanisms underlying its effectiveness.

There are several aspects that come into play in this reconfiguration of food governance. The first step is the creation of conditions of food democracy, according to which all citizens have the right and the duty to participate in shaping the food system (Hassanein, 2003; Renting et al., 2012). This responds to the need for a rebalanced governance (Renting and Wiskerke, 2010), which can really give space to all the needs and visions emerging around food. The mobilization in active form of growing segments of society must be able to find expression in the representation of the interests and in decision-making processes. This with respect to the dominant role of the corporations of the food industry and of the retailing sector, which have over time set the rules of the system and shaped the patterns of behaviour in production and consumption (by acting on skills, values, meanings). Public actors have essentially endorsed these processes, supporting this development model of food systems through consistent regulatory frameworks, and also bending other local policies to it, such as territorial planning and policies for commerce. In the case of agricultural and rural policies, for long time defined within a governance framework dominated by powerful actors of the sector (even within the European policies), only recently the opportunities arising from the new forms of contact between needs of society and potentials of agricultural activities have been caught (food quality, culture, environmental and social services, etc.).

The model is therefore that of a *multi-stakeholder governance*, rebalancing the role of civil society, of the public government and of the market. A governance that can lead to incorporate other logics in the regulation mechanisms, so reintegrating the choices related to the economy into society and reconciling the private and the public interest.

A multi-actor and multi-agency approach of this type is suited to the representation of the transition of the food practices as a process of social innovation, in which a problem, collectively identified, is overcome through the mobilization of all the different resources provided by the actors involved (knowledge, ideas, skills, values, relationships) (Knickel et al., 2009; Klerkx et al. 2010; Murray et al. 2010). In this respect, it is clear the importance of the creation of institutional and operational conditions that ensure that all the different interests really find expression and that effective interaction processes, also able to influence decision-making, develop. It is ultimately to identify and test innovative forms of management of democracy itself, for example through the introduction of forms of deliberative democracy.

In operational terms, the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms really functioning through the empowerment of all the stakeholders, underlies the full implementation of another important principle for governance, that of subsidiarity, implying administrative and policy decentralisation (Commission of the European Communities, 2008; FAO, 2011).

This last aspect also refers to the multi-level character of governance (Bache et Flinders 2004; Termeer et al., 2010), that the recent literature acknowledges as crucial in dealing with food-related issues (Marsden, 2013; Sonnino et al., 2014). The mechanisms of governance, their redefinition and their implementation are in fact to be read at the different levels involved in the management of the food issues (*multi-level governance*), from the highest to the lowest levels. These different levels are clearly interconnected and are part of an integrated system, but they refer to different areas of action and related different spaces of interaction. It is with reference to this governance framework that the changes taking place (or the resistances to change) have to be read.

The supra-national and national levels are the ones that drive the processes of greater scope, such as changes in the regulatory frameworks that govern the practices of production and trade, the qualification of products, the policies sector, etc. It is the space in which non-governmental organizations, movements, civil society organizations, part of the business world and of the scientific sector are trying to have a voice with respect to the supremacy of the interaction between the strong economic actors and public actors (Bush and Bain, 2004). In some areas in recent years institutional spaces have opened up, in others there are still strong resistances. Even before than in the policies this action of pressure is leading to significant changes in the discourse and in the mainstream culture, which in their turn are beginning to reverberate in the strategies of economic and institutional actors (Brunori et al., 2013). A full effectiveness of the moments of governance is here, however, conditioned by the asymmetry of power between the actors.

On the other hand, the evidence is showing that the local scale is a promising level for the development of new, effective systems of governance. In the territories one can find flexibility, different connectedness among the various public and private actors involved, and therefore also a chance to experience innovative solutions. Subsidiarity here can result in a contextualisation of interventions based on the specific problems, needs and potential of local communities.

More specifically, the urban and metropolitan contexts are of particular importance (Brugmann, 2009; Morgan, 2009; FAO, 2011a). The weight of the cities in the demand of food has constantly grown as well as they have traditionally played a key role in driving the economic, political and cultural tendencies around food. In these contexts, however, the disconnection between food, consumption and territory as well as the problems related to food have greater expression. Within them the spread of new cultural and technical-operational approaches is therefore extremely significant. Indeed, it is in these contexts that many of the innovative pathways for the transition in food practices have recently developed. Within them the relationships between citizens-consumers and rural, peri-urban and urban production systems have in fact given rise to alternative solutions for food provisioning, in which new social and environmental values are generated and enjoyed. Within the urban communities food more and more often becomes a means of learning and social interaction. The networks that so develop around the new meanings of food and food-related practices increasingly show the potential to develop new "food citizenship" (Wilkins, 2005), as well as, on that basis, new civism, often inspired by new values (e.g. sobriety, sufficiency, solidarity, social inclusion) (Renting et al., 2012). The cities are actually appearing as potential spaces of social innovation around food and, in the new geography of food that they contribute to create, as spaces of system and governance innovation.

The local level is the one that currently shows the greatest potential for a reconfiguration of governance also with respect to the need to consider all sectors and dimensions involved in the transition to sustainable food systems (FAO, 2011a). It is necessary a *multi-sectoral* and *multi-dimensional* (or *multi-scale*) *governance*, that can take the right approach to the solution of a complex problem, characterised by manifestations in several fields, involving several scales in its implications and several levels of possible intervention (Termeer et al., 2010).

In that regard, the signs that come from the bottom push to overcome the sectoral and specialistic approaches traditionally adopted in the management of the various issues concerning production, distribution and consumption of food. These were and are in fact faced by the single policies concerning agriculture (very poorly defined locally), territorial planning (typically urban-centric), trade, education, health and welfare (the last three aimed at facing the critical aspects of the system), waste management. The alternative initiatives carried out in the territories are generally grounded on more integrated visions, according to which a sustainable relationship with food is not possible without consistent choices in the support provided to local production system (existing or potential), in the management of natural resources involved, in the selection of the distribution models to sustain, in the actions concerning culture, in the production of waste. These experiences show the broader coherence needed for an effective integrated approach to food questions.

A systemic approach to transition of food system goes however beyond the integration amongst sectors itself, taking into consideration all the dimensions diversely involved in the practices of production, distribution and consumption of food, which, as mentioned earlier, involve technical, social, cultural, legal, economic and ecological aspects. At local level this approach finds space to experiment and fine-tune new legal solutions and institutional tools and procedures, to co-create new knowledge systems and cultural patterns, to define new social contracts and re-found the market relationships, etc.

The local platforms of governance can create an “enabling environment” to the complex processes that underlie innovation around the food (Klerkx et al. 2010). As mentioned above, through the interactions that occur in these institutional settings amongst the multiple actors of the local systems innovative pathways are initiated which can then trigger wider processes of innovation. The dynamics of governance constitute an important means to that end. The interactions aimed at fostering communication and collaboration horizontally are crucial to make innovation emerge and consolidate. The vertical relationships with upper institutional-political levels and the presence of mechanisms to incorporate the bottom-up processes, on their part, play a key role in the up-scaling of innovation. Both of these governance dimensions benefit from actions of facilitation and intermediation that can foster cross-boundaries interactions (Howells, 2006).

3. The construction of integrated food strategies at local level

Underlying the creation of an integrated food strategy at local level, particularly in the urban-rural systems, is therefore primarily the effective participation of the different actors involved. In this context of mobilization and interaction the public administrations have particular responsibilities, but it is equally important the capacity and willingness of civil society actors and of the other subjects bearing new visions and instances to take part in this process with their own resources.

Through the new connectedness developed, urban strategies should help create conditions for consistent and coordinated action around food. For this purpose, the following areas of action can be identified:

- building new knowledge on the issues related to food and to the emerging challenges, fostering the encounter and integration amongst different sources of knowledge; the objective is the development of a new collective knowledge;

- redefining normative and regulatory frameworks, directly or indirectly related to the management of food, aimed at guiding the choices of the different actors; the objective is the construction of a new common sense, based on shared principles and goals;
- favouring the creation of infrastructure, material and immaterial, to support new approaches in the management of food (i.e. appropriate institutional frameworks and consistent regulatory systems; specific spaces of private-public interaction and tools for inter-institutional relations; communication networks amongst local actors; structures of micro-logistics in support of local food circuits).

All this implies intervene also (and even before) on the skills, tools and working methods, both for the public and the private actors.

Despite the diversity of contexts and related pathways, the numerous experiences around the world aimed at reorganizing food policies through the definition of urban strategies have gone through the areas of action aforesaid (Harper et al., 2009; Moragues et al., 2013).

Among these experiences there is also the project launched in the province of Pisa, in Tuscany (Italy), through an intervention of participatory action-research (Kindon et al., 2007) conducted by a team of the University of Pisa in agreement with the Provincial Administration. The action has involved municipal administrators, farmers and other entrepreneurs, various civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. It has promoted a collective thinking on the problems related to food at the urban level and has then initiated a process for the construction of an integrated policy and the definition of a strategy of action.

This experience is particularly relevant in consideration of its innovative character in the Italian context, in which it represents an useful pilot for experimentations in other territories. In the following sections we describe and analyse it in order to highlight the main critical points emerged from the process.

4. Processes and tools for building strategies on food: the pathway towards the Food Plan in Pisa²

4.1. The structuring of the pathway

The project, started in 2009, has developed in a context full of experiences and experimentations around food practices. These were the result of processes of change developed in the area over the last two decades, up to the latest trends. Passed the stage of modernization, in the 1990s a significant part of agricultural enterprises in fact opened up to the new vision of rural development, turning to production diversification and to multi-functionality. Also thanks to the support provided by the Public Administrations, these pathways have contributed to the development of the new citizens' attention to the values of local agriculture and food. More recently, this context has been highly enriched by the multiple experiences animated by the alternative networks of food. These have led to a new relationship between the agricultural sector and the urban communities, which has found an expression both in the market relations

² Many of the contents of the following sections stem from the materials produced in the project. In part they have been already utilised in a publication (Di Iacovo et al., 2013).

(the various initiatives of short chain) and, more generally, in a new connectedness, based on a shared approach towards the food meanings (Brunori et al., 2011). Together, these initiatives have favoured the formation of a different culture of food in the area and the creation of an environment enabling the development of other initiatives around food, which have seen many farmers open to innovative initiatives in collaboration with citizens and/or local institutions.

It is in this context that the action developed through the partnership between the University and the Provincial Administration has taken place, looking at the experiences at international level, but also at the local (economic, institutional and social) specificities. Its aim was to promote, through a participatory approach and an action of mediation, the production of new shared knowledge around the issues related to the sustainable management of urban food practices, the development of a common vision on which to set the process of change, the identification of rules and infrastructures to facilitate new collective approaches at operational level.

The action began by stimulating a public discussion on key issues related to food and the opportunity to build an urban strategy for food. During 2009-2010 several public initiatives with this aim were organized (seminars, workshops), which saw the active participation of citizens and actors from the world of research, production, distribution, third sector, territorial planning, education. These initiatives have certainly helped to create a new awareness among the participants, not only on the issues concerned but also on the multiple experiences already existing on the territory, on the potential existing as well as on the critical points to be faced.

In support of this awareness raising action, and also on the basis of the suggestions gathered during the public events, at the end of 2010 it was decided to formalize the process. A political act of the Provincial Administration formally defined its general objectives (Province of Pisa, 2010).

Then, a series of meetings with groups of specific categories of actors³ was carried out. They were conducted as informal discussions with the aim of bringing out the specific points of view and possible contributions of the single actors to the overall project. Such moments have led to identify all the competences and areas of action of the various public institutions, as well as the interests and fields of action of the other actors. The various discussions have led to represent the articulation of the issue, by mapping the areas and practices related to food (Fig.1). The results of this stage were reported and further discussed in a meeting involving all the categories of actors and in public events.

³ The groups involved officials of municipalities and supra-municipal organizations, health services agents, educators and researchers, farmers and other entrepreneurs, members of ONG, members of civil society.

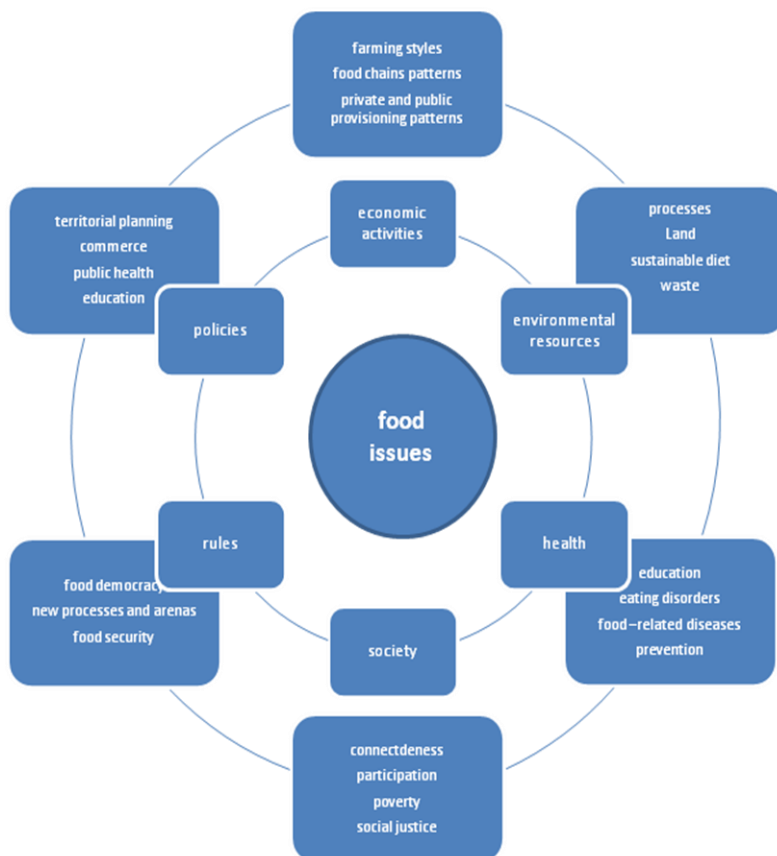


Fig.1 – The food issues

In order to increase the space for democracy, from the beginning a virtual place for discussion, work and external communication was added to the direct interaction (a platform web 2.0). This tool has helped to share contents and ideas both within and amongst thematic groups, has favoured the continuity of dialogue on the topic, with positive results in terms of new common knowledge, and has given more visibility to the process, favouring the adhesion of new subjects.

This activity of interaction has supported the definition of the institutional framework of the pathway to the Food Plan, leading to identify specific tools for its implementation - the *Charter*, the *Strategy*, the *Program Agreement*, the *Food Alliance*, the *Plan* itself. This work was done by the team of the University, and was submitted to the validation by the involved actors, through specific meetings. We describe below each tool.

The *Food Charter* contains the shared principles at the basis of the construction of new visions and work objectives. Therefore, it is a tool for sharing and alignment, designed to coordinate the actions on food by the plurality of actors in the Provincial territory. In particular, it addresses the concepts of food security and “sustainable diet”⁴; it assumes

⁴ The concept of sustainable diet was defined by FAO (Symposium on Biodiversity and Sustainable Diets - November 2010, Rome) as follows: Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets “are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable,

the principles of food democracy and redefines its actor at operational level; it sets the multiple goals of the Food Plan and identifies its tools in the coordination of the policies already available in the communities⁵.

The *Food Strategy* defines pathways, actions and organisational patterns, through which to put into practice the principles of the Charter, in the process leading to the definition of the Food Plan. Driving the public and private actors for their actions, it aims at creating a coherent framework for the choices in each area. To that end, the strategy identifies the specific objectives to be achieved through the Food Plan with reference to some transversal objectives, related to: health, knowledge, fairness, sustainability, innovation, organization.

The achievement of the objectives of the Strategy is up to the stakeholders through an appropriate use of their own room for manoeuvre, but within an integrated approach. For each goal the strategy in fact identifies the tools already available to the public administrations, which, overcoming a specialistic and sectoral approach, are thus used in a more effective and coordinated way, with reference to the shared visions and objectives.

The need for institutional tools of co-decision and interaction amongst the different stakeholders led then to the definition of specific spaces of institutional innovation.

Regarding the first aspect, the principles and objectives identified in the Charter and in the Food Strategy were translated into a formal agreement - the *Food Program Agreement* - aimed to coordinate the action of the various public actors.

At the same time, the establishment of a *Local Food Alliance* created a space for the private actors (business and social enterprises). It has a twofold function: interaction, to collect and coordinate the instances from the several stakeholders of the area; connection between public and private agents, to promote dialogue, formal participation in the definition of the pathway towards the Food Plan and monitoring action. To this end, the Alliance role was recognized by the public signatories of the Strategy.

At the end of the pathway, the *Food Plan* will be aimed at organizing the policies and the actions that local players decide to activate as integrated mode of action. It will so provide the operational details (the program of actions), through which to implement the Strategy.

4.2. The implementation of the pathway

This is thus the institutional framework through which the partnership between public and private actors of the territory of Pisa has structured the pathway for the creation of an integrated food strategy. With tools already realized and others still being finalized, at the end of 2014 the implementation of this process was still ongoing and, as expected, appeared not without difficulties.

accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources" (FAO, 2011b).

⁵ Territorial planning, commerce, education, health, environment, waste management, public procurement, training, welfare, agriculture, etc.

The *Charter* was signed by 23 of the 39 Municipalities of the Province. This not full adherence evidences the difficulty of implementing a so ambitious and complex project through a single process. Despite the effort for the creation of a collective knowledge and for an alignment around shared goals, some territories were unwilling / unable to take on the commitment. An important factor in this regard is the diversity of socio-economic characteristics of the Municipalities, and their different perception of the importance/urgency of the problem; moreover, it is relevant the different attitude to adopt a collective perspective, both in assessing that in tackling the problem.

The *Agreement on the Program*, although it found acceptance by various Municipal Administrations during the presentation, has been delayed in its formalization by the loss of Provincial institutional framework, as a consequence of the reorganization of the levels of government in Italy. This fact has undoubtedly weakened the role of coordination and animation played by the provincial administration; on the other hand, however, this has stimulated a more active role by the Municipalities, which identified a inter-municipal network already operating in the territory as a new leader of the process.

Regarding the *Food Alliance*, its territorial scale was too much wide on the operational level. Then, the last steps of the project were turned to test its structuring and implementation starting from more defined spatial and governance contexts. For this purpose, through the support of the action-research team but also through a strong active involvement of members of civil society, at the end of 2013 the establishment of a *Food Council* was promoted in a more restricted area, within the city of Pisa. The context is particularly interesting because of the wide variety of actions, sensitivity and players involved around the issues related to food. The initiative has incorporated most of the interests and objectives already identified for the integrated strategy, with the aim of stimulating, supporting and monitoring their implementation.

The *Food Council*, established as a formal association, has been recognized as a partner by an advisory body of the municipal administration. During 2014 it began to take concrete action on some specific fields of particular relevance for the city life (managing of urban gardens, setting up of a city park through a participatory process, cultural activities on food-related topics, participation in initiatives promoted by local social groups).

In the perspective of the growth of the *Food Council* it will be necessary to define the structure of the different levels of governance, from the sub-municipal level, to the municipal and supra-municipal level, until to the representativeness for a wider area. Started on a small scale, this initiative thus constitutes an interesting pilot within the larger project of the integrated food strategy at provincial level.

In support of the overall process, during 2012-2014 the action-research team has carried out some specific actions. One of these has been the strengthening of the links between the urban context and the peri-urban agricultural system, through a collection of instances by the farmers. Moreover, a specific action to facilitate the creation of a network of local farms was implemented, within the framework of the civic agriculture, defined in a participatory way (Lyson, 2004). This process has led to the definition of a *Charter of civic agriculture in the province of Pisa*.

5. Remarks from a work in progress

As we said introducing the issue, the pathway to the definition of an integrated strategy for the management of food-related issues can be seen as a space for testing an innovative model of "cooperative governance" (Ansell and Gash, 2008), aiming at coordinating the action of public and private actors according to the principles of food democracy. The ambitious goal of this interaction space is that of overcoming the traditional division of roles and areas of action amongst State, Market and Society, in favour of more hybrid forms of partnership and co-management, aimed at mobilizing all the resources available for the care of the common good. It is thus an expression of social innovation processes that will be crucial in the near future for the resilience of local communities.

The definition and implementation of this new governance is functional to the definition of a new socio-technical system by which the city reorganizes itself to face the transition to more sustainable and resilient (food) systems. A new connectedness amongst all the social, economic and institutional actors and, through that, the definition of new sets of rules and infrastructures are the components of this system.

The development of these processes cannot however be taken for granted. Although at the end of 2014 it was still ongoing, the experience started on the territory of Pisa provides some lessons in that regard.

The pathway, which is still active after more than five years but that has not fully achieved its objectives, shows the complexity of wide multi-actors processes, aimed at radically innovating established visions and practices, turning them towards new objectives. A reorganization of this type involves the development of new common knowledge and the co-definition of new working hypotheses and new tools. The related, necessary processes of interaction however take time, appropriate methods and a strong support of facilitation and mediation.

As highlighted in the study of the processes of social innovation, in addition to the presence of adequate institutional spaces of interaction (which in itself constitutes a strong innovation indicating the need to rethink the tools of democracy), an adequate methodological support and effective brokerage actions become crucial to favour the real involvement of all stakeholders, their active participation and effective interaction (Howells, 2006). To that end, the initiative analysed highlights the importance of:

- actions to facilitate a dialogue between different worlds (i.e. producers and consumers, but also producers and public administrators) and to facilitate the pooling of the related resources;
- actions of facilitation to bring out the specific visions and instances (supporting also the expression of the weaker actors), as well as brokerage actions to achieve shared goals;
- actions of mediation to overcome the possible resistances or frictions that the breaking of a sectoral approach often generates, in particular by the public (looking at the horizontal relationships amongst different sectors, but also at the different attitudes in that sense by actors differently positioned in the same sector);
- actions to overcome resistances to the dialogue and cooperation with the public, not uncommon by the civil society actors.

In addition to that, it emerges the necessity to work on the creation or strengthening of human capital, in particular amongst the institutions; on the development of a new institutional culture, as well as on a new culture of collaboration between public,

business and civil society; overall, on the development of a new social capital, oriented to the values of citizenship and civism.

The initiative analysed shows how much important is the process of active involvement of the various actors, with progressive assignment of roles and responsibilities, in the initiatives that see a prevalent role in the promotion and definition of the pathways of the public administration. Also the experience at international level show the greater weakness of top-down processes, that do not fully involve the various stakeholders (including the public actors of lower level) and do not create conditions for autonomy in the management of the initiatives. As a specific aspect, it emerges the importance to develop the institutional component of the public-private partnerships in its administrative role, beyond the political connotation, that, though it may be more visionary, may be even less stable.

The need to reorganize the pathway to face the difficulties emerged and to assure the duration and effectiveness of the processes confirms how equally crucial is a continuous monitoring activity on the usefulness of the facilities and infrastructures created (roles, tasks, processes, working methods) and on the effectiveness of the actions undertaken in the various areas with reference to the shared goals (Coplen and Cuneo, 2015). A high level of "institutional reflexivity" (Wolfe and Gertier, 2002), through an interaction open to the necessary adjustments in the approaches and methods of work, is an essential element to achieve effective forms of collaborative governance. All this is important in the transition towards more sustainable systems, looking at realizing pathways that can effectively mobilize the resources available in the territories and better meet the needs of the local communities.

As said introducing the case, the experience of Pisa represent a pilot in Italy. Recently, other initiatives has been promoted in other regions, driven by the same purposes. This experience so provides insights that can be useful to the local public actors and to the intermediators to fine-tune appropriate approaches and tools to support and facilitate the processes involved.

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