



Foodies' movement fostering stakeholders' networks: A regional case study

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Abstract

The central theme of this work revolves around the foodies' movement under three perspectives: firstly, from a conceptual point of view to give account of its relevance in terms of consumer demand; secondly, to verify how, from the supply side, this movement can to some extent encourage and/or strengthen the creation of networks of local actors indispensable to encourage the meeting between the needs of the demand and supply of typical food products; thirdly, based on a case study to demonstrate that the movement of foodies can be exploited within a political action aimed at reorienting local tourism development. A national case study – Alghero, IT – was analysed. By positioning the rural and urban spaces with respect to the foodies' phenomenon, the existence/absence of networks between local stakeholders some obstacles emerged so as many opportunities. The stakeholder analysis was applied and discussed. This method was very useful for identifying the role, power and leadership that the various local actors have in favoring or hindering the creation of connection networks between the city and the countryside, and in the requalification of the supply of typical foods that fit well into the current demand trend.

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Introduction

The growing mobility of people and foodstuffs outlines new and multiple connections between tourism, food and agriculture, and new scenarios for territorial relations between urban and rural actors mediated by food consumption and production linkages. This is certainly an ancient theme for agrarian-economic research. Barberis saw the epochal passage from the conception of food as a means of sustenance to an idea of 'eating as a source of entertainment', reasoning on the rebalancing between city and countryside (2009): an almost prophetic statement when looking at food tourism growth and the current foodie phenomenon that drives an important part of the current tourist movement.

Almost a decade ago, a UNWTO report (2012) highlighted the importance of food tourism:

In recent years, Food Tourism has grown considerably and has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism. Both destinations and tourism companies are aware of the importance of gastronomy in order to diversify tourism and stimulate local, regional and national economic development (p. 5).

Still, it was remembered that 'For many of the world's billions of tourists, returning to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes, cuisine, gastronomy has become a central part of the tourism experience' (UNWTO, 2012, p. 4).

As far as the foodies' movement, the book of Getz *et al.* (2014) provides an exhaustive description and definition of the 'foodie' that should be recalled in some steps as useful to clarify the point of view adopted in this paper. These authors reported that the term was coined by Harpers and Queen Magazine, but it jumped to the fore thanks to Barr and Levy (1984), who reported this definition:

a foodie is a person who is very very very interested in food. Foodies are the ones talking about food in any gathering – salivating over restaurants, recipes, radicchio. They don't think they are being trivial – Foodies consider food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama (recalled from Getz *et al.*, 2014, p. 53).

In 1992, the American Heritage Dictionary provided a similar definition, emphasising the appearance of the *pleasure*: 'A foodie is a person who has an ardent or refined interest in food' and who eats food not out of hunger but due to its interest or hobby. In the literature, the term foodie has replaced the snob 'epicure' or 'gourmet' (Watson *et al.*, 2008, Watson, 2013; Weston, 2006) and proposed a sort of identikit of the two figures of *gourmet*

and *foodie*: the former typically refers to a man of advanced age and high social level, while the foodie, described as a 'son of consumerism', usually refers to young couples belonging to rising social classes who appreciate the food tasted in restaurants and try to replicate it at home. Foodies collect food experiences and celebrate restaurants much more than tourists collect souvenirs (Morgan *et al.*, 2008).

The central theme of this work revolves around the foodies' movement, which contains a multiplicity of expressions of interest in food: from the food sciences to health and nutrition, from food fads to university courses and cooking schools.

Within the study framework, the foodies' movement is considered interesting under an agricultural and territorial development perspective, and, specifically by focusing attention on the basic connection between urban and rural actors and sectors as a prerequisite for satisfying the foodies' research for food excellence.

In this paper, the foodies' movement remains to the back from the demand side and is considered for its supply side implications in fostering the linkage between the spaces of food production and consumption.

Specifically, as a basis of argument, the study wants to discuss if and how much the foodie culinary phenomenon can really induce rural/local development.

In this context, rural development passes through the construction of networks between local actors, networks that develop on several levels: within the more specifically rural space (the space of food production, but also of its consumption); within the urban space (the space of food consumption with specific reference to culinary and tourist phenomena); in the connection between rural and urban space (Benedetto, 2011). The greater the networks of relationships and tight linkages – and the stronger the integration between actors operating in the agricultural sector and those operating in other segments of the economy – the greater the agricultural development, but also that of the entire local territorial system.

The study subject is somewhat 'ancient' because, starting from a case study, it aims at nurturing a discussion around which much has been debated: namely the *relationship* between city and countryside. As an issue, awareness of which among Italian agrarian economists goes back to the past and passes through the extensive literature that revolves around the definition and characterisation of rural and local systems and the role played by agriculture within them (Basile & Cecchi, 2001) and which was reaffirmed around fifteen years ago (Basile & Franceschetti, 2004). It is still alive and should be possibly reinforced for opening new and future directions in the light of some recent phenomena (Bazzani & Canavari, 2013).

Therefore, the paper intends to tackle an old theme in the light of a renewed and expanding tourism movement linked to the use of food, and to investigate how the creation/induction to the construction of social capital can create local/rural development through the analysis of a case study. It is believed that this is a privileged observation point, from which to observe policy in action.

The study presents a ‘regional case study’ and discusses it with the support of a stakeholder analysis approach. This is a very useful tool to build the map of relationships and analyse the role that each local actor plays within a network, and to identify any critical issues and/or opportunities for successfully implementing a local development policy. In this case study, the development policy adopted aimed precisely at exploiting the phenomenon of foodies for the purposes of territorial development, aiming to create a close link between local actors, food producers and intermediate and final consumers of food.

1. Background

1.1. *Foodies: a constantly evolving multi-faceted movement between urban and rural*

Over the years, the term foodies has incorporated several figures that revolve around food and that are not necessarily associated with the consumption experience. As a broader definition that gives an account of this terminological expansion, we report that of Getz *et al.* (2014) which defines the ‘foodie’ as:

a food lover; one whose personal and social identity encompasses food quality, cooking, sharing meals and food experiences; foodies incorporate all aspects of food into their lifestyle, which often leads them to travel for new and authentic food experiences (p. 6).

It is just looking at the experiential component that the terminological difference between food tourist and foodie clearly emerges. In the first case, the same work of Getz *et al.* (2014) defines food tourism as ‘travel for the specific purpose of enjoying food experiences’ and therefore, represents only part of the term foodie, but does not exhaust it. In the second case, in fact, the experience of the journey is not separated from the pleasure of food that becomes charged with symbolic meanings, such as an expression of the local identity of the host or of the health-related properties of some foods, on which the foodie seeks the greatest amount of information. In addition, the

foodie phenomenon includes a wider audience of consumers who look to the tasting of food as a pleasure and opportunity to share 'zero km' products, both in urban and rural areas.

The foodies' phenomenon is also linked to the emergence of the so-called 'locavores': as recalled in Brain (2012), this term was added to the New Oxford American Dictionary in 2007 and refers to a person who attempts to eat food produced within a 100-mile radius. Therefore, these are foods that are preferably typical products closely related to the places of production. The new consumers look for emotions and want to taste the food, but also listen to the production history (the origins, the production process, the recipes, the name of the grower and his story) and interact directly with the producer or any actor that plays a major role in producing typical food that they are buying.

The term foodies is associated with an experience or a search for pleasure (Yeoman *et al.*, 2015) that is expressed in the most varied ways whenever 'you consider the permutations of food with cooking, socializing, lifestyle' (Getz *et al.*, 2014, p. 68). Moving away from the experiential dimension, intended as a specific tasting of food, a plethora of various manifestations are included in the same term, such as food events, shows and awards, food festivals, culinary journalism, courses, books and fantasies, all of them representations of said metamorphosis. This new phenomenon implies a shift of attention from the realisation of the product to its tasting, from the purchase of the goods to their preparation and consumption, from the product to the relative health content, from the agricultural production field, mainly rural, to the predominantly urban one.

If, on the one hand, the foodies' phenomenon represents a new and powerful marketing lever to be exploited in the valorisation of agricultural productions, on the other hand, it imposes an examination of the balances existing in the relationship between city and countryside. In other words, a sort of competition between rural space and urban space, but also within rural areas and within urban spaces, has been created in terms of tourist attraction in which food is at the heart of the experience and the object on which to focus the debate. From the phenomena of rural tourism and experiential tourism, in which there is a movement of consumers moving from the city to the countryside, we have also observed the presence of an inverse flow, or of a multidirectional flow that moves from city to city while remaining in an urban or peri-urban space. Catalysts of this second flow are typical restaurants, specialty cafés and resorts, where special menus are designed as a tourist attraction with food as the main element.

Therefore, urban spaces and rural spaces, which are non-homogeneous economic entities that interact and influence each other need a balanced development and this objective must be placed at the centre of the policies

adopted in both areas of intervention (Rinaldi, 2017; Cavicchi & Stancova, 2016; Hall & Gössling, 2016). However, in most cases ‘urban-biased policies have prioritized urban development and opportunities over agriculture and peasants during the first three decades’ (Chen *et al.*, 2016, p. 2).

Figure 1 shows a representation of the supply methods applied to meet the food demand based on values such as exclusivity, quality, authenticity, co-creation with foodies. Here, we are clearly in the field of urban creativity and food initiatives.

The other theme is that of rural creativity and food. In this regard, one observes (Meo, 2015) that the food marketing approach has become part of the rural space where farms and agri-food companies are increasingly applying various information channels to their products and/or the firm, that are typical of urban space but also global: TV, social networks or the web, using these media to sell the product. Several successful cases make the direct relationship with customers a strength factor of the agri-food firms paying great attention to modern means of communication.

Figure 1 - A conceptualisation of urban food tourism (from Getz *et al.*, 2014, p. 116)



1.2. Building social capital, the better way to fostering local/rural development

A theme already discussed in the literature that deals with local and rural development returns: it is the presence/absence of social capital and the relative ability to influence the performance of economic policy actions.

The notion of social capital referred to is that of a neo-institutional approach, according to which this is represented by institutions, relationships, norms that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions within a society. This capital is not only the sum of institutions that build a society but represents the glue that maintains unity in a society.

Therefore, the theme that we want to recall, once again, is associated with the different capacity of places to put in system manifest and hidden skills and attitudes, so that such a political approach will lead, and have led to different results in the European and national sphere. As already highlighted (Benedetto, 2011), the ability to cooperate in a community (individuals, firms) is one of the determinants of the economic development of a territory and categories such as trust, loyalty, and social cohesion are fundamental for this economic coordination mechanism.

There is copious literature dealing with the role that social capital has assumed in the theories of growth and development. Here, we recall three forms of social capital which are very useful to accompany the path of reflection that we will develop in this paper, starting from the schematisation proposed by Ostrom and Ahn (2003). These are forms of capital that are fundamental in inducing collective action and are represented by: 1. Loyalty; 2. Networks; and 3. Formal and informal rules or institutions. These three forms of capital contribute to the success of collective action thanks to the presence of a fundamental category which is represented by trust. This category is nurtured and strengthened precisely within the networks, institutions and mutual loyalty in which groups of individuals of a society are immersed. This is an operating mechanism that has also become fundamental to explaining the success and development of various economies.

It was widely argued that the creation and/or strengthening of social capital is a priority objective in the policies of development of rural areas: the greatest emphasis must be placed on the backward and inner areas, where the construction of social capital even becomes a development output.

Even the World Bank, since the late 1990s, included the creation of social capital as a goal to be achieved in development interventions at the level of individual communities, as well as the EU which started procedures for measuring social capital in individual Member States (Benedetto, 2011).

The problem then becomes that of identifying the mechanisms that induce individuals to cooperate and the contextual factors that favour the

strengthening or the creation of social capital, in order to choose the most suitable instrument to achieve this goal.

The reference to the rural development policies adopted by the EU since the 1990s seems almost obvious: great emphasis was given to local participation and concertation in order to promote an endogenous development of areas falling under Objectives 1 and 5b; the partnership between the various subjects is formalised within Local Action Groups (LAGs) that manage the funds disbursed to implement local action plans. Throughout its evolutionary path, this policy has placed at the centre of development the vision of the territory as a 'network of relations', as a source of contextual knowledge and behavioural codes that are classified by the neo-institutionalist theory as unwritten rules, intangible factors that have a fundamental weight in the development of a territory. Thus, these local action plans have played a fundamental role in the development of institutional capacity of rural communities and brokering connections in the local economy (Scott, 2004). Furthermore, analyses carried out in specific territorial contexts have shown that animation actions are an important element of operation (Katona-Kovacs *c*, 2011).

Yet, with specific reference to the LEADER programme it was emphasised (Idda & Benedetto, 2003) that rural development policies were lowered in areas characterised by a potentially different response capacity. The primary objective then becomes that of maturing the conditions that favour the emergence or strengthening of cooperation.

The results of some studies highlight the path of external solicitation through the role played by formal institutions (local administrations) and by the political class that governs the territory. Basically, they focus on the role of formal institutions in the production of social capital. Indeed, a 'correct' strategic approach in which the planning process is born with a specific objective, that is, to exploit the tourism development of the city to ensure economic impact on both urban and rural areas.

The construction of social capital/networks becomes, therefore, fundamental as a link between city and countryside, with a view to exploiting the phenomenon of foodies for the purpose of local development. In this regard, while much has been said at a theoretical level about the role of social capital as a driver of local and rural economic development, less investigated and certainly more critical is the topic of building and strengthening the social capital in a given territory. Some international studies (Putnam *et al.*, 1993; Putnam, 2000) focused on the measurement of social capital also using Italy as an object of observation, but they mainly addressed the topic to the national or, at best, the regional scale.

The case study analysis approach allows seeing some theoretical frameworks in action within micro-realities where no statistical data for

measuring social capital can be found. This is because intangible factors, such as loyalty, trust, informal or unwritten rules are difficult to measure while being very powerful in ensuring the formation of lasting and successful relationships.

2. Materials and methods

Figure 2 shows the path of analysis that is addressed in the study. Specifically, the main question to be answered is if, through the impulse promoted by the foodies' movement, opportunity arises to strengthen the link between the city and the countryside, and to favour the activation of local animation policies aimed at building a network between actors belonging to different sectors of the local economy.

Regarding the aim of our investigation, as suggested in the literature, it is particularly useful adopting the case study method to deepen specific and unique activity and to collect individual opinions (Yin, 1994; Schell, 1992; Stake, 1995; Zainal, 2007).

The analysis of case studies will allow highlighting the structure of the relationships, the category and the role of the actors involved, the functioning mechanisms of the policies adopted, the results achieved, the criticalities and problems encountered.

The material on which the analysis was focused relates to a bottom-up approach born to link urban and agricultural sectors, actors and local institutions.

The investigated experience was the Mondo Rurale case study, aimed at implementing food policies through a model of relationship between city and countryside, and the adoption of procedures aimed at supporting local productions within the circuits enjoyed by tourists visiting the city of Alghero (Northern Sardinia) and its surroundings. A detailed description of the policy implementation path will be described in the next paragraph; here we just want to say that the University of Sassari was involved, through an agreement, to apply stakeholder analysis (SA) in support of political action.

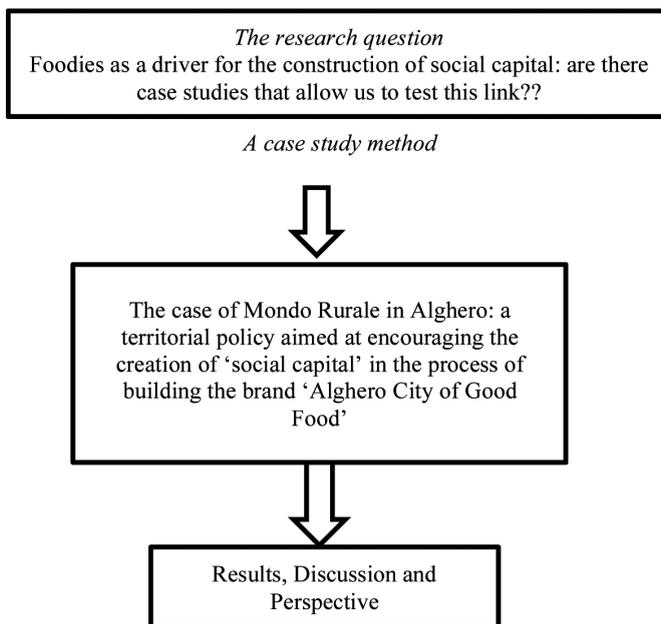
This method is widespread in several spheres: for example, it is applied at European level to share reforms with stakeholders before their adoption in order to identify and overcome any critical issues, as well as to strengthen possible alliances that guarantee the success of the initiatives. Several studies have applied this tool with the aim of promoting participatory management of rural and local resources (Álvarez-Fernández' *et al.*, 2020; Mannetti *et al.*, 2019; Benedetto *et al.*, 2014a, 2014b).

Additionally, in the case of the Rural World, it was considered appropriate to combine political action with the use of this tool, precisely to qualify

and identify the various stakeholders, to know their points of view with the ultimate goal of favouring the success of the strategy of local development.

Among the different SA approaches, that proposed by Schmeer (2000) was chosen, as it best meets the needs of the present study.

Figure 2 - The research path



The guidelines for this approach follow five steps:

1. Identifying key stakeholders;
2. Collecting and recording information;
3. Filling in the stakeholder table;
4. Analysing the stakeholder table;
5. Using the information.

As suggested by Schmeer (2000), this study collected stakeholder' (S) information and characteristics such as: name, role and organisation, internal/external position of stakeholders (internal are those that work within the organisation promoting or implementing the policy, while all others are external); interest, the S's interest in the policy or the advantages or disadvantages that policy implementation may bring to the S; alliances, organisations that collaborate to support or oppose the policy; resources, the

quantity of resources (human, financial, technological, political and other) available to the S and his/her ability to mobilise them; power, the ability of the S to affect the implementation of the local development policy; and leadership, the willingness to initiate, convoke or lead an action for or against the local development policy (Schmeer, 2000, p. 8).

The approach followed was substantially generative and the analysis was essentially focused on highlighting possible future research developments, based on the use of foodies as a tool for enhancing rural areas and responding to new stimuli for tourist demand. Within this conceptual framework, the aim was twofold: to analyse the reaction of a local territorial system in the face of the challenges posed by the final demand for food; and, to study through which mechanisms it is possible to activate this reaction in such a way that the results can be effective and long lasting.

The case study selected in order to support our path of analysis is presented below.

3. A regional case study: the city of Alghero and the action of Rural World

The 'Rural World' initiative was started in the Municipality of Alghero (Sardinia Region) in 2015, as a tool of local animation aimed at creating a link between rural space and urban space, while exploiting the tourism phenomenon, in continuous expansion in the Catalan city. The project aimed to combine the demand and the purchasing behaviour of intermediate and final consumers by offering food produced from raw materials coming from the agricultural territory of Alghero. The problem was very urgent, mainly due to the severe crisis in the agricultural sector – with almost 4,000 uncultivated hectares – which led local farmers to ask for support from the institutions, having no indications on how to direct their production and being disconnected from the rest of the market.

The 'Rural World' initiative was a step of a medium–long-term strategic development path, supported by the Department of Economic Development, which had as its objective the elaboration of the Food Plan that aimed to 'implement food policies through a model of relationship between city and countryside and the adoption of acts and procedures to promote food policies in support of local production'.

For this purpose, a coordination group for the 'Alghero, City of Good Food' project was set up, which had the task of governing the process and identifying logistical and promotional organisational models for the achievement of some main objectives:

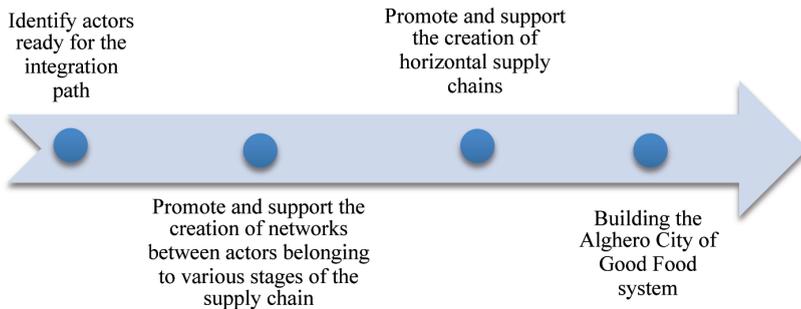
1. Rural World. To support farmers' incomes through initiatives that allow them to intercept the most important consumption centres in the city and in the area and to build commercial synergies with other economic sectors;

2. Support the strengthening of the entrepreneurial capacity of farmers, supporting them in the promotion and marketing of products;
3. Strengthen the economic system of the city of Alghero, with a view to integration between sectors and the intersection of supply and demand, between agricultural and agri-food businesses and catering businesses;
4. To increase the innovation, aggregation and cooperation capacity of enterprises;
5. To build a gastronomic circuit of quality cuisine that is characterised by strong territorial roots of food; food as a cultural and emotional experience capable of representing and describing Alghero and its territory;
6. To promote local, typical and quality food and wine choices among consumers;
7. Reposition Alghero among the most popular gastronomic destinations;
8. Build the image and reputation of the company, overcoming the flattening and downward homologation that destroys distinctiveness;
9. Differentiate the catering on offer by creating added value that derives from the use of local quality products;
10. Connect the food and wine offered to quality tourist itineraries, promoting the local agri-food products, through the creation of support and coordination tools that characterise the tourist offers by integrating the cultural dimension with the landscape and environment and with the food and wine.

The connection with the foodies' movement was very clear: this was a strategy that aimed to adapt and build a food supply capable of meeting the needs of a demand that was becoming increasingly evident. The municipal administration's goal was precisely to exploit the phenomenon in terms of local development, repositioning the city of Alghero in terms of food and wine.

The path of animation was structured in different steps as indicated in Figure 3, exactly because of the awareness that the process would bear fruit only in the long run, and of the difficulties to create shared intentions and vision among the many operators involved. Several meetings were attended by operators belonging to the various sectors of the local agriculture (fruit and vegetables, wine, cheese, oil, flour/bread) and by small and large firms. In several meetings, which took place over the course of two years of activity (2015-2016), all the different operators involved in the production and consumption of food (farmers, restaurateurs, hoteliers, farms) were called to express the problems encountered in the sale of products on the one hand, and in the purchase of local raw materials on the other.

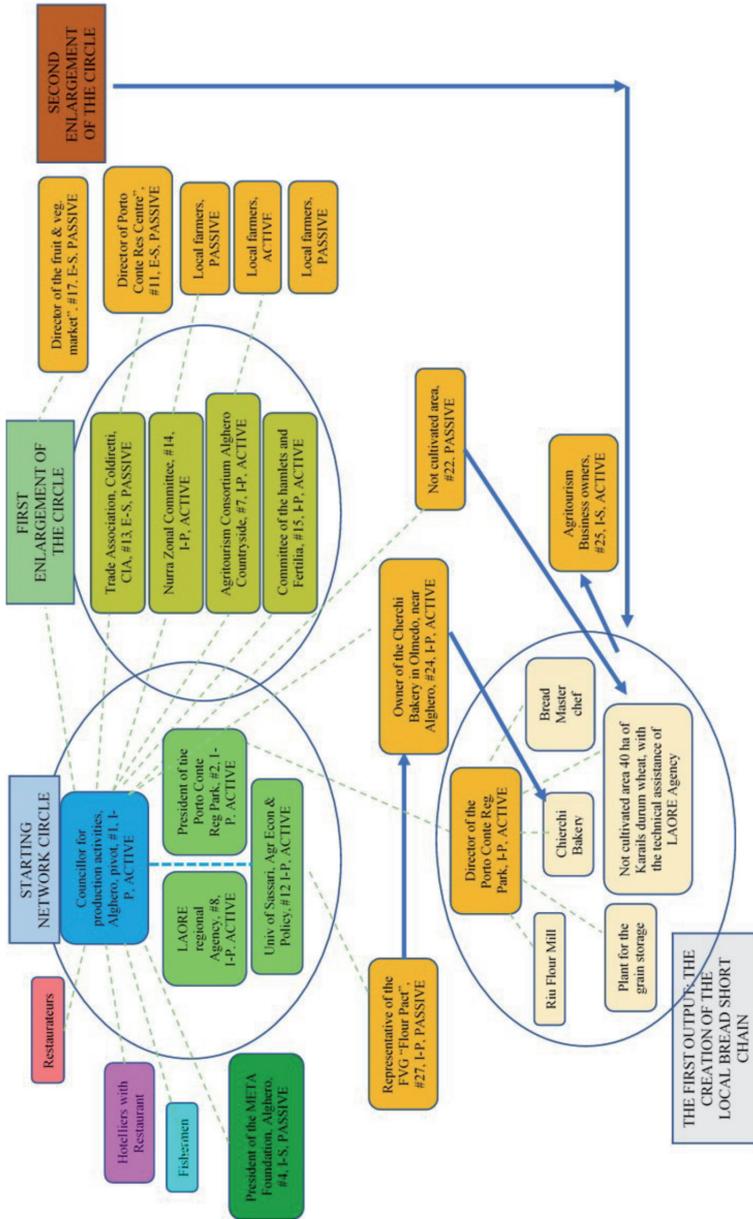
Fig. 3 - Path of animation aimed at linking supply and demand for agricultural goods



The aim of the local administration was to support a concertation action between the parties, that firstly met at separate tables, and then at several plenary meetings organised in the country districts with the help and technical-scientific support of the regional institutions (Research and Development Institutions, LAORE, University, Porto Conte Regional Park) (Figure 4). This action apparently seems very simple, ‘let’s put people together’: easy to say but certainly difficult to translate into practice. In this regard, it is worthwhile underlining the Councillor’s foresight, who wanted this initiative by giving ample space to the operational activities, which were the most difficult for a politician to activate.

During these meetings, the case study of the ‘Flour Pact’ was presented. This was the first agreement adopted in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (IT) for the production of high-quality flours and derivatives with sustainable methods and economically accessible to all. It was considered of fundamental importance to present this successful initiative that was born voluntarily from the bottom through a participatory path, in order to show that when the initiatives are shared, they are effective and last over time. Within the Flour Pact, farmers, processors and consumers jointly started a path during which the costs of production and processing of wheat were shared. Buyers decided in advance the quantity of product to be purchased, assuming part of the business risk and committing to anticipate part of the final expenditure; thus, covering the initial costs incurred by the farmers. An element of fundamental importance in the pact was the creation of a loyalty relationship and trust among the active parties, guaranteeing highest quality through the total chain of production, transparency and mutual exchange, thus making certifications redundant, and succeeding in fixing prices of the final product. The bases were therefore laid for the building of a short supply chain where crops, farms and artisanal factories could also be visited thanks to their

Figure 4 - The path of connections of the urban-rural network in the Alghero case study



geographical proximity. The University of Sassari actively participated in this initiative, supporting the process with different skills (economists, agronomists, microbiologists, oenologists). From an economic point of view, SA, was conducted directly by the university staff that joined the municipal administration in its action of animation.

The policy subjected to evaluation with the SA was represented, specifically, by a series of action lines aimed at building networks between city and countryside. The possibility for creating stable commercial relationships with restaurants by sharing a protocol for the experimentation of the 'Alghero City of Good Food' project in which restaurateurs undertake to guarantee the presence of typical products/dishes in their menu according to precise minimum percentages divided by type of food (e.g. in the case of 100% craft beer, 70% local and regional wines, 100% extra virgin olive oil, 100% bread, 80% local/regional fruit and vegetables, 50% water) was outlined.

The objective of the SA was to categorise the stakeholders based on their interest and influence with respect to the context of analysis. In the approach used (Schmeer, 2000), 'interest' was defined as a flow of benefits with respect to the implementation of a specific policy, while the 'influence' of the category of actors was synonymous with power: within the latter were more variables such as the presence of resources and the ability to mobilise them, knowledge of processes and leadership.

Policymakers should use the information generated by the SA to develop and implement strategic communication and negotiation plans.

Furthermore, policymakers may use the results in open discussions with stakeholders in an effort to build consensus. This allows stakeholders to see where they are relative to others and encourages discussion on how to address the opposition's concerns.

The results of the SA are presented below; which was carried out largely during the internal meetings of the Rural World programme (October–November 2015) and partly during the following year, moving us within the process of development of the 'Alghero City of Good Food' project.

3.1. The results of the SA

Table 1 presents the list of actors who could have an interest in the selected policy, classifying them by organisation, role and position. The position of each stakeholder was assigned on the basis of a double classification: internal (I) if operating in the organisation/body that is promoting the implementation of the policy (in this case within the project promotion group, see Figure 4, starting network circle); external (E) in all other cases.

According to Reid and Arcodia (2002), each stakeholder was also labelled as ‘primary’ or ‘secondary’ based on their direct or indirect involvement in the implementation of the policy. In order to assess the ‘importance’ of each organisation, stakeholders were assessed for their power and leadership and classified into four groups of importance as shown in Table 2.

Table 1 - Priority stakeholders: organisation, role, position, reason

Organisation	Role	Position	Reason
1 Municipality of Alghero	Councillor for Production Activities	I-P	Organisation and logistics
2 Regional body	President of the Porto Conte Park	I-P	Organisation and logistics
3 Director of the Porto Conte Park	Director of the Porto Conte Park	I-P	Organisation and logistics
4 Municipal body	President of the META Foundation	I-P	Organisers
5 Social cellar of Santa Maria La Palma	President	I-P	Providers of supply chain
6 Trade association	Representative of the Italian Farmers Confederation	I-P	Sponsor
7 Agrotourism Consortium of Alghero	Vice President	I-P	Human Res. supporting
8 Regional body	LAORE regional agency representative	I-P	Political Res. supporting
9 Regional body	Department of Agriculture assessor	E-S	Political Res. supporting
10 Regional body	Department of Tourism assessor	E-S	Political Res. supporting
11 Porto Conte Research Centre	Representative	E-S	Research supporting
12 University of Sassari	Different skills	I-P	Research supporting
13 Trade association (Coldiretti, CIA)	Representative	E-S	Human Res. supporting
14 Nurra zonal committee	Different figures	I-P	Organisers
15 Committees of the hamlets and of Fertilia	Different figures	I-P	Organisers
16 Humanitarian Association Rural Commitment	Representative	E-S	Human Res. supporting

Table 1 - continued

Organisation	Role	Position	Reason
17 Fruit and vegetable market	Director	E-S	Supply chain buyers
18 Local farmers	Grapes	I-S	Providers of supply chain
19 Local farmers	Olive	I-S	Providers of supply chain
20 Local farmers	Fruit and vegetables	I-S	Providers of supply chain
21 Local farmers	Cheese	I-S	Providers of supply chain
22 Owners of land in Nurra	Not cultivated areas	I-S	Potential providers of supply chain
23 Local processing industries	Owner of San Giuliano oil company	I-S	Providers of supply chain
24 Local processing industries	Owner of the Cherchi Bakery in Olmedo	I-P	Proponent of the establishment of the typical Algherese bread chain
25 Agritourism business owners	Ledà d'Ittiri Agritourism	I-S	Supply chain buyers
26 Accommodation	B&B owner	E-S	Supply chain buyers
27 Regional association	Representative of Friuli Venezia Giulia "Flour Pact"	E-P	External example of integration process in flour production

* I = Internal; E = External; P = Primary; S = Secondary.

Group 1 includes stakeholders with leadership and high power;

Group 2 includes stakeholders with leadership and medium power;

Group 3 includes stakeholders with leadership and little power;

Group 4 includes stakeholders without leadership and medium and little power.

Power refers to the ability of the stakeholder to affect the implementation and the efficacy of the 'Mondo Rurale' policy, due to the strength or force possessed (for the calculation, see Schmeer, 2000). In other words, power was associated with the resources a stakeholder could mobilise in order to support their position.

Leadership was specifically defined as the willingness to initiate, convoke or lead an action for or against the implementation and efficacy of the 'Mondo Rurale' animation. The stakeholder either had this characteristic ('yes') or lacked it ('no').

Another element evaluated for each stakeholder was the knowledge of policy: the level of accurate knowledge the stakeholder had regarding the

policy under analysis, and how each stakeholder defined the policy question. This was important for identifying stakeholders who opposed the policy due to misunderstandings or lack of information.

Stakeholders included in Group 1 belonged to institutions with high capability of influencing the event implementation by means of their ability to mobilise several resource types (human, structural, professional and political, but not financial). The final position of stakeholders #24 and #27 within this group was due to the fact that, thanks to the example of the Flour Pact described during the ‘Mondo Rurale’ animation days, a definitive impulse was given to the establishment of the local durum wheat chain. Stakeholder #24, but also #3, were decisive in the implementation of the supply chain.

Group 2 gathered stakeholders representing different categories of entrepreneurs that drew income from the main activity they carried out (agricultural, industrial, catering and hospitality); they therefore represented the ‘operating workforce’, whose absence could have seriously affected the success of the Mondo Rurale action.

Most local associations were perceived as not having leadership and were ranked in Group 3; this means that, even without their financial support, the organisers and other stakeholders had the power of carrying out the Mondo Rurale policy due to the community’s capability of self-financing. This group also contained industrial wine producers and the director of the fruit and vegetable market.

Group 4 included local institutions that had low power and lacked leadership; it also included two representatives of regional institutions that could have had high power (having financial resources) but were just external supporters of the initiative and had a low leadership.

Table 2 - Classification of stakeholders by level of importance (leadership and power analysis)

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
#1	#7	#5	#4
#2	#18	#6	#8
#3	#19	#12	#9
#24	#20	#13	#10
#27	#21	#14	#11
	#22	#15	
	#23	#16	
	#25	#17	
	#26		

With regard to the level of knowledge of the territorial management policy, it was clear that primary internal stakeholders and the direct animators of Mondo Rurale had high knowledge (Table 3, Group 3).

Table 3 - Classification of stakeholders by knowledge levels

Group 1: Low	Group 2: Average	Group 3: High
#6	#5	#1
#9	#7	#2
#10	#8	#3
#13	#11	#4
#17	#16	#12
#27	#18	#14
	#19	#15
	#20	#24
	#21	
	#22	
	#23	
	#25	
	#26	

All other actors directly affected by the political action were involved in a cascade: Group 2 that included stakeholders with an average level of knowledge, as they were not the direct creators of the initiative; Group 1 that included secondary and external stakeholders.

Table 4 presents the stakeholders' position map of supporting/opposing actors, built on the basis of significance and sector of activity. The category of institutions was generally favourable to the activation of this city/countryside relationship management policy, with 'strong' or 'moderate' supporting levels. A 'strong' attitude was defined as an attitude that supported or opposed the whole line of intervention; 'moderate' when the opposition or support referred only to some aspects of the policy.

Table 4 - Stakeholders' position map

Position	Strong supporters	Moderate supporters	Neutral	Moderate opponents	Strong opponents
Institutions (regional, local)	#1	#11	#4		
	#2	#12	#6	#5	
	#3		#17		
	#8				
	#9				
	#10				
Association		#13		#7	
		#14			
		#15			
		#16			
Local farmers		#18			
		#19			
		#20			
		#21			
		#22			
Agritourism		#25		#26	
Agroindustry	#24		#23		
External institution			#27		

All actors that fell into the group of moderate supporters were public and private institutions (local entrepreneurs, trade associations) that could certainly have benefitted from building the network, but that were not direct animators of the initiative. Stakeholder #24 was certainly a very important local actor that participated at all meetings, and for this reason was placed among strong supporters. It was a master baker, owner of a company located in a municipality near Alghero (Olmedo), that already had the idea of revitalising the production of some typical breads of the Alghero tradition (*Pa Punyat*, *Pa de Casa*, *Coca Orida*) through the completion of the supply chain by introducing the production phase of the raw material (durum wheat). The storytelling of the Friuli Venezia Giulia experience gave a strong boost to its activation: the relevance of typical regional breads and sweets was a long-term problem, also in relation to complaints about the poor quality of durum wheat flour imported from America compared with the wheat grown in the Sardinian region. Rather than commenting on local actors who were neutral with respect to the implementation of the policy, it is

worth spending a few words on stakeholders who were positioned among the group of opponents, albeit moderate. This group was made up of operators from different segments of the economy (production and/or services) who always attended the meetings, animated the debate and expressed a positive opinion about the initiative undertaken: this was the reason why they were considered 'moderate' opponents. However, their position revealed a significant disconnection between administrative, institutional and economic institutions: in other words, they underlined the fact that the success of their economic activities, in terms of business growth and promotion of territorial development, was due to their individual merits in financing themselves thanks to the proper functioning of their economic activities, without the support of local institutions. From this position, they demonstrated a certain diffidence on the success of local animation in terms of concrete results: in short, even if they believed that cooperation was useful for the development of relations between city and countryside, they were not entirely convinced that administrative institutions were able to provide the necessary support to facilitate the development of the cooperation itself. The group was represented by active and lively actors who participated autonomously in the local economy, but that who needed the support of local administrations in terms of services (transport and promotion actions). Indeed, many accommodation businesses (agritourism and B&B), which were located in the Alghero countryside far from the city centre, underlined the need to activate services that would allow more effective touristic connections between the city and the countryside: these services were completely absent or inefficient and everyone had to provide the service privately.

3.2. The first outcome derived from the local development strategy

As highlighted in Figure 4, the first effect of the action aimed at enhancing and facilitating local cooperation was the creation of the durum wheat bread supply chain.

An agreement was signed between the Porto Conte Park – which was in charge of aggregating the agricultural producers operating in areas around the Park, the Riu flour mill, the Cherchi bakery and a bread master chef. Karalis durum wheat, a typical native Sardinian wheat, was sown on 40 hectares and about 1,000 quintals were produced; the grain was then purchased by the Park, collected and stored in a plant under concession by the region, and then purchased by the mill to be transformed in separate production lines. The flour was finally purchased from the Cherchi bakery, also equipped with a retail network in the city of Alghero. Another element shortening the supply chain, which was certainly at zero km, was the

production of the yeast obtained from the strawberry/Arbutus tree plants in the mountains near Alghero. In this way, the whole process was carried out on a strictly local scale. This experience of recovering the bread tradition found its roots in the strong motivation of the master baker together with his family. The quality of the product/process was guaranteed by the location within the Park, which provided its own brand, by the prohibition of the use of pesticides or chemical agents and strict specification. The bread entered the circuit of the most important agritourism restaurants in Alghero and its surroundings. The prospects of this bread supply chain experience were already outlined: building the Sardinian bread quality brand as well as enlarging the number of wheat producers; and widening the experience to include other sectors, such as fruit and vegetables, and the production chain of wild pigs fed with legumes derived from the crop rotation of local grain. The goal of building a successful little-case, even if partial, was achieved putting the premises for widening its sphere of action and relying on the effectiveness of the imitation process by other local farmers. Meanwhile, a similar action was replicated in other areas of Sardinia, such as Sanluri (in the south of the island) where Civraxiu, a typical bread, is produced.

However, despite this partial result, a long way has yet to be built for the final result.

From the point of view of the characterisation of the relationships set in motion in building the supply chain, the rules-in-use (Ostrom, 1992) certainly played a fundamental role, aimed at implementing repetitive actions that produced results both for individuals themselves and for others. For example, this was in the case of the relationships activated by the University of Sassari (# 12), by the Director of the Park of Porto Conte (# 3) and by the master baker (# 24) who became pivotal figures of this secondary network.

At the same time, great importance must be attributed to the trust and loyalty on which a large part of the relationships put in place were built, in so confirming what has been maintained in the literature: the role of man, the sum of values recognised and experienced through consolidated interpersonal relationships. This consideration was true especially if associated with the pivotal figure (# 1) of the entire network of relationships. In fact, although the path of Mondo Rurale is still in operation, it has undergone a change caused by institutional breakdown due to a new governance of Alghero's Productive Activities Department. This change has produced a slowdown in the activities planned along the path of local animation, the easing of the liveliness of the relationships between institutions that had formed the control room from the beginning and a change in the direction taken. As the reference figure disappeared, some mistrust emerged on the part of local actors regarding the possibility of relying on the same operating mechanisms: people change and the cutting of animation policies changes.

However, the policy output obtained continues its development process by being able to govern itself with the support of the institutions, as has already been observed in other regional case studies (Benedetto & Corinto, 2014).

The process of building the Alghero City of Good Food was long and complex, but it is an example of a desirable development path that, starting from the bottom, has spread along concentric circles through the construction of a network of relationships based on intangible but 'strong' values like loyalty and trust. Indeed, a 'proper' strategic approach in which the planning process was born with a specific objective, that is to exploit the tourism development of the city and ensure economic impact on both urban and rural areas (Mayer *et al.*, 2016).

4. Discussion

Moving along the path of analysis (Figure 2), this section tries to interpret our results with the help of some theoretical frameworks, without which it would be difficult to develop rules and suggestions, and intertwine the positive and normative economy.

The case study of Mondo Rurale represents a privileged point to analyse the issue of creation and/or strengthening of social capital, to categorise stakeholders and investigate the functioning mechanisms of relationships among them. Furthermore, the application of the SA allowed determination of the final position of each group of stakeholders interviewed – in favour or against the animation policy promoted by the Municipality of Alghero. The objective of the action was to encourage a balanced development between the city and the countryside, directing the use of uncultivated lands towards productions that surely had a market within the city of Alghero – in the Ho.Re.Ca. channel – but also in the surrounding countryside, where agritourism or rural tourism are widespread.

The action path, structured in sequential stages, was guided by a proper marketing approach aimed at satisfying the tourist demand, increasingly oriented towards the search for typical products and recreational experiences where food occupies a central place. The ultimate goal was to create 'Alghero City of Good Food' by a structured project.

However, it is clear that the political action was driven by the need to overcome a crucial 'knot' that had led to a crisis in the countryside, where agricultural producers had given up cultivating the land due to the lack of an outlet in the market for cultivated products, which often were not even collected, or because of a real lack of market orientation. On the other hand, a demand for local products, from short and typical supply chains, was expressed by the catering and city hotel operators.

This separation can be framed both as a poor entrepreneurial attitude but also as a poor attitude in local operators towards the creation of relationships and cooperation networks. This is a limiting factor for the economic development that characterises the whole territory of Sardinia, for which the construction of social capital becomes itself a development output. From this point of view, the action carried out by the Municipality of Alghero can be considered from a local empowerment perspective (Ostrom, 1990) aimed at encouraging and supporting the management of natural resources and production activities through long-term self-organised and self-governed systems.

The primary objective of Alghero Municipality was that of maturing the conditions that favoured the emergence or strengthening of a cooperative attitude, being convinced that it could trigger a virtuous circle of cooperation-social capital (networks). This approach, adopted by the municipality, was consistent with part of the literature that states that the stock of social capital, by leveraging on cooperation, can be increased thanks to external solicitations by formal institutions (local administrations) and by the political class that governs the territory (i.e. Leonardi & Nanetti, 2010; Nanetti & Holguin, 2016). However, the case study illustrates how it is not easy to settle the situation because it was a problem to identify the origin of this virtuous circle and answer the questions widely debated in the literature (i.e. Boix & Posner, 1998): is it the attitude towards cooperation that leads to the formation of social capital? or is it cooperation that takes root where there is a certain set of political and social relations?

The case study of Mondo Rurale presents itself as a middle ground between the two options, in the sense that in the face of an effective inability to make a urban-rural system and in the face of a still weak attitude for cooperation – both within the urban and agricultural spaces – the municipal administration proceeded to build a network of basic relationships that would then guide the whole process in a cascade.

Figure 4 shows the path of construction of the network of relationships that revolved around a pivotal figure represented by the Councillor for Productive Activities of the Municipality of Alghero who had the ability to build an institutional bridge seeking collaboration with other local institutions, such as the university, the Porto Conte Regional Park and the META Foundation; in the case of the university, creating relationships *ex novo* and sewing previously disconnected threads. It can be observed that this process took place in successive steps involving the main actors, always preceded by official but private meetings with each stakeholder. Subsequently, meetings were organised with homogeneous groups of stakeholders: firstly, trade associations, then agricultural operators gathered in small groups in all the villages located in the countryside near Alghero. The step-by-step process

served to prepare the ground before starting the public confrontation with the complex social system, by bringing together different social partners and stakeholders, and producers with different entrepreneurial skills.

For its part, the university, taking advantage of its network of relationships based on its knowledge and consolidated contacts, involved one of the stakeholders active in an extra-regional case study in the belief that only a concrete example would have provided the right push to start a locally constructive cooperation. The choice was dictated by the fact that the environment in which it was necessary to sow the seed of cooperation was difficult to govern. The direct testimony from the case study of the 'Flour Pact' help to overcome the difficulties that even the farmers of the Nurra of Alghero were facing. The environment of the villages, as mentioned, was animated by heated and often sterile competition and strong individualism, where some operators were unwilling to share their entrepreneurial successes with others.

The creation of the short chain of typical Algherese bread, described above, represents an important outcome of the action of Mondo Rurale and allows us to learn some lessons that can be replicated in the same territory by other entrepreneurs, or even in other territories (in Sardinia or other regions).

The first lesson was closely related to the quality and role of the stakeholders involved in local political action. Including the university in the project group, for example, was fundamental: it made it possible to use not only scientific knowledge indispensable for identifying development strategies and monitoring tools, but also to exploit existing and consolidated relationship networks, shortening, in this way, the time necessary to search for information essential to the success of the initiative. This confirms what has been well highlighted in the literature (Leonidou *et al.*, 2018), namely that 'higher education could facilitate innovation management and entrepreneurship development successfully' (p. 7). Similarly, the involvement of some subjects belonging to the local community, endowed with power and leadership and who enjoyed the trust of the community, facilitated the participatory process.

The creation of the bread supply chain was a very important result, and it was also greatly hoped for by the project group to support and accompany local operators already open to cooperation and ready to create rural/urban networks with facilitation actions already discussed above, especially by the Porto Conte Park. Furthermore, it is useful to add that a sort of farmers' market was conceived and launched following the days of Mondo Rurale, creating an emporium of typical products made by about twenty companies that boast the quality seal of the Porto Conte Park.

The success of the bread supply chain was to serve as an example to follow, by imitation, in the medium and long term by suspicious operators.

Basically, by tracing a path for the diffusion of organisational innovation, well known to agricultural economists, which sees agricultural entrepreneurs classified as innovators, intermediate adopters and laggards (De Benedictis & Cosentino, 1982).

A second lesson that is worth underlining concerns the fact that the external facilitation action carried out by administrative institutions brings almost immediate results where it finds fertile ground: where the subjects are open to cooperation and building networks. However, it also produces humus on which it can germinate and continue its development path.

The third lesson we have learned was that the foodies' phenomenon has proved to be a fundamental driver in the local development path, aimed at creating a typical product to be included in the catering circuit, activating the desired link between production space and consumption space, rural and urban. Linking the urban brand (Alghero City of Good Food) to the consumption of local products becomes an indispensable policy to facilitate and encourage the development of the link between city and countryside, preventing the food and wine offered from being provided by extra-local or extra-regional producers. This lesson is considered relevant in the light of the growing attention put to the UNESCO brand of Creative Cities of Gastronomy, where it has been noted that this link is not always required within the objectives and documents necessary for the attribution of the brand (Forleo & Benedetto, 2020).

5. Conclusions and future research directions

The connection between quality food production and tourism is one of the bases of the sustainable development of a territory.

The reported experience of a local initiative aimed at enhancing the territorial resources and opportunities offered by tourist flows, highlighted that the creation, especially from the bottom, of networks joining local actors becomes fundamental for the purposes of urban-rural development.

This paper reports a case study analysis and suggestions that will be deepened both by implementing wider research over different animation experiences located in other areas, and by enriching the case studies' analysis and comparison.

What is interesting to point out about the experience of Mondo Rurale linking Alghero city and its rural surrounding areas is summarised below.

Firstly, the experiences and paths emerging from the real world and territories, with their limits and merits, show the need for building valuable territorial relationships between different segments of the local economy. On the other hand, the well-known fragmentation of Sardinian local systems and

the poor attitude of Sardinian operators to cooperate is in itself an index of economic fragility.

Secondly, the focus on the need for strong linkages between people and places with different characteristics is crucial in order to build local reliable and durable development prospects. The case study put emphasis on two relevant dimensions to be associated with the local food 'product': networks or the relational dimension; resources and places, or the territorial dimension.

Thirdly, strictly related to the previous comment, the linkages between the creation of a network and territorial development requires the interplay of macro, meso and micro levels of social capital by linking, along a long-term path, both public institutions at different governance levels and sectorial spheres and private entities.

Finally, the action of Mondo Rurale made it possible to start a process of redevelopment of typical local products, to be offered to tourists and to be introduced within the foodies' movement. This process, even if still limited to a single typical product, could be replicable for the realisation of other local products that can contribute to valorising the food offers of local restaurants, in so satisfying and strengthening specific tourist targets, generally with high income level. At this regard, a limitation of the study is that it mainly reflects the point of view of rural operators captured by the stakeholders' analysis, while a lower attention was paid to the voices of urban actors and tourists.

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