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Agri-food system between global and territorial vision – Editorial

The territorial approach to the crisis in the global food system

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Recent trends in the agrifood systems emphasize a renewed “territorial turn”, characterized by the dynamics of territorial anchoring in agrifood systems, which identify new paths of rural development. Within a renewed interest in the theories of territorial development, the new place-based trajectories are usually the outcome of the interdependencies among actors, such as producers, consumers, markets and society (Horlings, Marsden, 2014). This process is characterised by a reconfiguration of agricultural and territorial resources, and is usually analysed from two perspectives, or “entry gates”:

- the agrifood sector, where differentiation strategies are at stake, through the provision of quality products, shortening of the food supply chain, etc.
- the rural space, which is meant as the space of both production and consumption, which promotes strategies of territorial development based on the provision of a composite basket of food and services (Pecqueur, 2001).

The two entry gates are strongly interconnected and can address paths of rural development, where alternative food networks and modern rurality contribute to sustainable rural development.

The articles of this special issue are set against this background and offer useful insights from both perspectives, sectorial and territorial. The introductory article by Bernard Pecqueur offers an interesting overview about the evolution of territorial approaches as opposed to the agro-industrial paradigm grounded on globalization of agrifood systems. The article discusses the complex relationship between the two approaches and their compatibility. The basic assumption (Gasselin *et al.*, 2020) is that one model is not substitutable for the other. This article suggests that the territorial model, if maintained and reinforced, can contribute to the evolution of the global model towards solutions to the impasses resulting from contemporary crises, notably the climate crisis. The various articles in this issue focus on institutional aspects, particularly policies in very different national contexts

The competitiveness of localized agrifood systems stands on territorial embeddedness, effective interprofessional forms of governance and cooperation networks, as pointed out by Mantino and Forcina, who explore the factor of competitiveness in the tomato supply chain of Spain and Italy. In their article, the authors show how coordination mechanisms within the localized agrifood systems represent a key dimension for competing in a globalised scenario. Networking, social capital and cooperation are key ingredients to empower territorial systems also through dynamics of social innovation, like in the Swiss case of Valposchiavo, presented in the article by Froning and Stotten, where territorial strategies based on the quality food network of organic products boost social innovation and sustainable territorial development.

Coordination mechanisms and collective action are also at the basis of localised modes of food provisioning relying on the growing importance of alternative food networks, like the farmers' markets initiatives. The reconnection perspective, aimed to connect consumers and producers (Fonte, 2008) is confirmed as a winning strategy in the farmers markets of northern Tuscany analysed in the article by Mengoni, Marescotti and Belletti. The provision of not only economic, but also social and environmental outputs is a key aspect that emphasizes the multifunctional role that alternative food networks play in building up new agricultural models based on the provision of tangible and intangible goods, which contribute to building up processes of modern rurality.

Set against this background, the role of policy is essential in boosting trajectories of multifunctional agriculture. The article of Doyon and Klein is coherent with this perspective and aims to address the issue of new territorialized agrifood systems, boosted by a policy initiative realized in Quebec, Canada. The two authors emphasise the close interdependence between the effectiveness of the reinforcing role of policies and the degree to which farmers and the local community are willing to engage in the adoption of measures of support themselves. Actually, as Travnikar and Bertoneclj indicate, this match is also influenced by the adequacy of financial resources. Analysing the adoption of agri-environmental measures in Slovenia, the two authors point out that, although the CAP has had an overall positive impact on the promotion of biodiversity, the level of premiums offered through the agri-environmental measures of the CAP to farmers has not stopped the abandonment of farmland, which is being pressed by tourism, in competition with agricultural production.

Nonetheless, when effective collective action and coordination mechanisms are at stake, a localised agrifood system may represent a valid alternative to build up

sustainable agrifood systems at all geographical levels. Actually, the alternativeness of the localised agrifood systems characterise also non-European countries, as shown in the Brazilian case-study. The article written by Cazella, Tecchio, Schneider and Boni offers interesting insights into the importance of cooperation and collective action with the purpose of valorising territorial resources and providing a basket of territorialized goods and services, in the Brazilian municipalities of Crediseara.

In conclusion, a territorial approach to the analysis of agrifood systems still seems able to provide valid solutions to develop sound business models based on multifunctional approaches to the farming activity delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to society.

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