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Prologue. The role of localized agrifood systems in a globalized world

Dominique Barjolle, Giovanni Belletti, Andrea Marescotti, François Casabianca, Artur Cristovao, Marcello de Rosa, Paulina Rytkönen

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PROLOGUE. THE ROLE OF LOCALISED AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS IN A GLOBALISED EUROPE

Dominique Barjolle[a], Giovanni Belletti[b], Andrea Marescotti[b], François Casabianca[c], Artur Cristóvão[d], Marcello De Rosa[e], Paulina Rytkönen[f]

In recent times the importance of territorial connections between firms is a subject of growing attention, mainly in relation to the increasing globalization of the food system and the ability of large agro-industrial firms to consolidate their power on global food systems, while breaking their links to pre-determined territorial areas. At the same time, some limits of globalization have emerged, mainly in environmental terms, but also in a social and economic perspectives. "Local" is therefore subject of renewed attention both by policy makers and researchers, and the specificities of the territories are no longer perceived as obstacles to the spread of a homogeneous development model, but as a potential resource to be exploited within neo-endogenous growth models.

A growing literature is focusing on the concept of Localized Agrifood Systems, at the beginning developed in Mediterranean countries and particularly in France, where they are called *Systèmes Agro-alimentaires Localisés* (SYAL). SYALs are defined as "production and service organizations (agricultural and agrifood production units, marketing, services and gastronomic enterprises, etc.) linked by their characteristics and operational ways to a specific territory. The environment, products, people and their institutions, know-how, feeding behavior and relationship networks get together within a territory to produce a type of agricultural and food organization in a given spatial scale" (Muchnik, 1996; Muchnik and Sautier, 1998).

The SYAL approach is based on the concept of territory, here standing for a combination of natural, human, social, economic, technical, and institutional factors shaping a particular agricultural or food product both for local and external actors. On the basis of the SYAL concept, some scholars have analysed the (re)emergence of locality in restructuring food production and consumption, with a special emphasis on the capacity of SYALs to front globalization proposing, somehow, an "alternative" to the mainstream.

In 2008 a European Research Group (ERG) on SYAL was founded and gathers today 30 research and teaching institutions in eight European countries (http://syal.agropolis.fr/). A SYAL research and development network was also set up in America, by Universities and research centers from the U.S.A. and many Latin-American countries.

The ERG SYAL aims at clarifying the different meanings of SYAL concept and its limita-

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tions, under three different profiles: (i) as a concrete object, that is a set of activities in a given territory; (ii) as an approach, that is as a way of thinking and analyzing agricultural and food activities in their systemic and local interactions; and (iii) as an organizational category which can be supported by public policies and development projects.

Research activities of the SYAL ERG are focused to the following thematic areas and issues (Muchnik, Sanz Cañada, and Torres Salcido, 2008):

- Localized Agrifood Systems and new challenges of European agricultures: sustainable development, preservation of biodiversity, landscapes, food and cultural heritage, environmental resources, territorial public goods and multifunctionality.
- Functioning and organization of Localized Agrifood Systems: governance, diversity of entrepreneurial and organizational patterns, localization/delocalization of production activities, institutional networks related to production, learning processes for resource specificity, innovation, marketing and consumption, relationships with the market, agribusiness sectors and consumers.
- Territorial systems for training and innovation: links between the local know-how and innovation; territorial networks for research, development, innovation and training.
- Distinctive signs, territorial labels and certification processes of place-based food: protected designations of origin, geographical indications, organic agriculture, integrated production, fair trade agriculture; rules, technical standards and organizational requirements for territorial anchoring; quality innovations systems, territory and vertical coordination.
- Food and gastronomic cultures: economic and social values of the different food cultures; new relationships between rural and urban worlds; rural tourism.
- Social capital, social exclusion and territory: poverty, local employment and rural development, collective action and cooperative enterprises.
- Policy instruments suited to the Localised Agrifood Systems: European Union policies and programs, regional and local policies, comparison between EU policies and other regions of the world.

This special issue collects seven papers on these themes, published in this number and in the next one of this Journal. These papers were presented at the 11th European IFSA Symposium of the International Farming Systems Association, "Farming systems facing global challenges: Capacities and strategies", held in Berlin, Germany, in 2014, within the workshop "The Role of Localised Agrifood Systems in a Globalised Europe". Its objective was to promote the exchange of research frameworks, methods and results and to strengthen the European SYAL network. The European importance of this topic is justified by the specific dimension of the relations between food and local communities or territories, constitutive of their culture and recognized, for instance, through the protection of Geographical Indications and policies on rural development.

The papers in this special issue show, from different points of view, some of the many themes tackled by SYAL scholars.

The paper by Belletti, Brazzini, and Marescotti, analyzes the reasons why firms make decisions whether to use or not to use a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), or a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), for their business. In order to explain the different levels of use of the PDO/PGI by firms, the Authors, on the basis of two case-studies in Tuscany, show the importance of how product specifications are drawn by local actors, concluding that much of

the use of PDO/PGI relies on the coherence between firms' typology and the rules set out in the product specifications.

On the same theme, the contribution by Sidali and Scaramuzzi investigates the relationship between group heterogeneity and cooperation patterns in the consortia for geographical indications in Italy. Problems arising by growing quality standardization coupled to increasing firms' heterogeneity are analyzed in relation to the case of the Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO. The Authors found that when entropy increases within the production system, free-riding and exclusion problems may emerge, and a formal institutionalization of sub-consortia within a well-established common GI may be successful.

De Rosa, Adinolfi, Bartoli and Chiappini analyze the importance of rural development policies in the EU to promote value creation. Their paper investigates firms' access to financial opportunities and different adoption strategies used by firms to promote value creation in the food supply chain with protected geographical indication products. They show how farms working inside GI chains show a higher aptitude to create value through rural development policies.

Policies are also observed in the paper by Rytkönen, with reference to the New Culinary Country program implemented in Sweden to foster rural dynamics. An evaluation of the program has been carried out through focus groups and interviews, to assess the impact and main outcomes with a number of indicators. Cooperation among firms at a local level, and between firms and institutions, have proved to be the main factors behind the most successful experiences.

Mobilizing the concept of "territorial anchorage", defined as "*a localized process of collective learning carried out in order to create resources*", Millet and Casabianca analyze the historical process that brought to the emergence of new locally-grounded dynamics in the food systems of Pyrenées Atlantiques and Corsica Island, after quite a century of milk supply for Roquefort cheese system, suddenly withdrawn. Such process led the local actors to create PDO cheeses based on the local breeds. The authors show to what extent the influence of the previous period, when both areas were under the domination of Roquefort firms, still remains in defining the cheeses' specifications and managing the local resources.

Dervillé and Wallet focus on the role of geographical proximity within short food supply chains. Sustainability and development of relocalized food chains are discussed in the light of institutional economics, showing how coordination mechanisms developed by the actors within these food chain configurations respond to both economic and political logics. The relevance of a unique qualification system of short food supply chains at the EU level is questioned and devices that could support its effectiveness are suggested.

The picture that emerges from these papers is multifaceted, and helps to highlight the complexity of the challenges that organized actors involved in local food systems are facing.

Sharing research results and co-building scientific orientations, theoretical frameworks as well as operational methods amongst these various papers allows to provide recommendations and tools to public and private actors of rural development, based on the territorial specificities of agrifood products.

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