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# Integrating top down policies and bottom up practices in Urban and Periurban Agriculture: an Italian dilemma

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## Abstract

The paper deals with some relevant and contradictory aspects of urban and peri-urban agriculture in Italy: the traditional exclusion of agricultural areas from the goals of territorial planning; the separation between top-down policies and bottom-up practices; the lack of agricultural policies at local scale. In the first part the paper summarises the weak relation between urban planning and agriculture, showing how in Italy this gap has been only partially overcome by new laws and plans. Moreover the paper focuses on how, due to the lack of suitable solutions coming from regional and local planning, a large number of vibrant initiatives were started by local stakeholders. In order to show the limitations and the potentialities of these various approaches, three peculiar experiences based on Milan, Turin and Pisa are presented. They give a cross-section of the variegated Italian situation, demonstrating that a major challenge in Italian context affects the fields of governance and inclusiveness.

## Introduction

Today it is becoming more and more evident that the future challenges for sustainable development will involve cities as most of the world's population is and will be living in urban areas. The capability of understanding and providing suitable solutions for an uncertain future is essential for reducing the impact of cities on the planet's natural resources. In this regard, research on smart cities is focused on city renaissance mainly by means of ITC technologies, innovative transportation and clean energy, which although providing important solutions are still widely criticised (Hollands, 2008). Therefore, in respect to a less ITC-based smart city, growing attention is being paid to the relationship between cities, food provision and

agriculture due to its possible impact on social stability (Wiskerke, 2009; Morgan and Sonnino, 2008) and its possible follow up on urban planning.

Before modernisation in Europe, cities used to consider food management as a strategic policy for ensuring rights and stability for their inhabitants (Steel, 2008). After the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) intervention and market liberalisation, cities started to ensure mass consumption and food provision through long chains of large intermediaries, retailers and caterers (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). As a result the interest for local production decreased and the management of agricultural land close to the city lost its relevance (Gereffi et al., 2005),

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In the last decades, the new trends of the growing population, energy distribution and reduction of natural resources, are generating new tensions on food prices/provisions and are increasing urban food instability, starting from the lower classes (Brunori and Guarino, 2012).

In this new critical framework, Urban and Peri-Urban agriculture (UPA), in its diverse forms (ordinary food production, alternative food networks, community supported agriculture, short food chains, civic agriculture and community gardens), is receiving more and more attention. A number of diverse projects are providing innovative solutions in many cities so that UPA is now a cross-cutting topic, with contradictory definitions due to its multiple aspects and increasing interest.

The UPA concept incorporates issues related to urban rehabilitation, sustainable development, health, access to safe food, water and waste management, social stability, better integration among generations and cultures, city resilience and also new forms of economic engagement. UPA gathers together people with diverse aims, capabilities, aspirations and initiatives for creating a new urban daily life. It also allows for the organisation of social coalitions that are able to redefine food policies - today led by large hegemonic retailers - and provides a more democratic environment for sharing choices concerning food (Brunori and Di Iacovo, 2014a).

The way actors interact with UPA is normally the result of a negotiation process among the various public and private stakeholders such as municipalities, city planners, civil society, consumers, third sector associations, new enterprises linked to UPA (farmers and their associations, processors, caterers, trainers, traders) and also schools and families. Due to such a large number of variable factors, UPA does not always receive coherent attention from public bodies as well as from various related sectoral policies (planning, agriculture, education, commerce). How can we deal with such a multi-layered target?

Starting from this question the aim of this paper is to deal with UPA issues in Italy, by highlighting some relevant aspects connected to its contradictory process from a planning perspective. Namely, (i) the tra-

ditional exclusion of UPA valorisation, usually performed in terms of urban growth, from the goals of territorial planning, (ii) the too sharp-cut distinction between top-down policies and bottom-up practices in urban and rural areas, and (iii) the lack of governance of the agricultural sector at municipal and provincial scale, quite completely left to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). As such, by considering the dynamics in the Italian context, the aim of this study is to find coherent pathways for the food-UPA discourse in urban planning. To this end three case studies, in Milan, Turin and Pisa will be discussed, mainly focusing on the particular way in which the relation among top-down policies and bottom-up practices are performed. By their comparison it will be possible to understand how today food is becoming both a major target of planning and a tool for a better integration of different sectoral policies (social, health, environmental, economic, cultural).

### **Planning in Italy: an adverse separation between agricultural and territorial policies**

The Italian planning system is affected by a traditional separation between urban and agricultural policies that impacts at various levels of government, from the Region to the Municipality. Until today in the municipal planning documents UPA land has remained a white area on the map, out of planning jurisdiction. This contradictory relationship can be understood by shortly recalling its evolution. In Italy the main tool of the planning system consists in the municipal plan (MP) or "Piano regolatore generale". The Law 1150/1942 assigned to this plan, inter alia, the function of defining building rights (firstly to residential areas), thus shifting the emphasis from those that may be used for different functions. The aim was to refer the planning regulation to the farming "zones" (Art. 7), which was then confirmed by the Law 765/67 and DM.1444/68 on urban standards. In the latter the agricultural areas were simply classified in terms of maximum "building density". This approach created a gap between agricultural policies - focused on farming "activities" according to CAP intervention - and urban planning, focused on farming "zones" with three possible results: to become urban, to remain farming zones, and to become potentially buildable land in accordance with some conditions (Urbani, 2006). At the end of the 1970s, the Regions became re-



sponsible for territorial planning (Presidential Decrees 11/77 and 616/77) and introduced innovative changes in planning regulations. At that time agricultural policies and CAP intervention started to be increasingly managed at regional level thus devoting more direct consideration to farming activities.

In the 1980s and 1990s, these developments encouraged the evolution of policies that overcame the limited field of municipal planning through the involvement of regional and provincial levels. In those years, the Regions issued many organic laws concerning urban and territorial planning (Cinà, 2000), and delivered special regulations for agricultural activities within the planning system at different scales. At provincial level, with the Territorial Coordination Plans, the agricultural areas were identified according to their different conditions and vocations. Consequently, a discipline to be transposed into municipal plan was implemented. Many municipalities defined more complex analysis and proposals for agricultural sector also at the local level. Among these, we can cite the MP of Giussano for the protection of cultural aspects (Paolillo, 2009), the MP of Luzzi for the proposed "minimum units of production" (Caligiuri et al., 2008) and the MP of Verona for his updated methodology of analysis (Montresor, 2012). However, it still remains difficult to implement these approaches due to the weak relationship between the aims of public interest established by the plan and the farmers' goals.

More recently the new regional planning laws (e.g. in Tuscany, Lombardy, Liguria), having acknowledged the important role of the agricultural areas in environmental and landscape protection, have started to regulate the building rights concession only in strict connection with farming activities. For example, in Tuscany the L.R. 1/2005 no longer establishes the old buildings ratios and the rationale for any volume addition is founded on the definition of a "minimum farm area" supported by a "business plan for agricultural and environmental improvement" (art.41).

This excursus on the half-hearted attempts to plan agricultural areas within the territorial planning instruments, and without an integrated vision of agricultural economy, would not be complete if one does not consider the contradictory support of landscape protection policies for planning agricul-

tural areas. In this context, the new conceptualisation of landscape planning related to the European Landscape Convention and the Italian Landscape Act (D.L. 42/2004) have provided new potential for enhancing landscapes and agricultural areas. The Landscape Convention introduced a significant opening to landscape as a product of human intervention (art. 1) connected with agricultural policies (art. 5d). The Landscape Act broadened the range of landscape planning actions which were once limited to some categories of environmental relevance (L. 431/1985). In short, the latter established that each regional landscape plan can also consider agricultural landscapes as elements to be protected, both as a natural-environmental value and as an artificial man-made landscape (art. 131). Therefore, rural areas become part of a purely conservative strategy for enhancing landscape, nature and cultural heritage, that still remain un-related to the complexity of the economic system within which they are included (Urbani, 2006).

The new landscape plans are defined according to a structured set of principles and devices normally accompanied by wide cognitive frameworks, fervent directives, strict requirements, confident predictions and a large set of local institutions and associations that are supposedly ready to intervene. Yet these over-equipped plans are scarcely linked to the regional 'Rural Development program' originating from CAP which also includes landscape policies, and are not supported by operational conditions able to achieve their objectives. Therefore they remain weak, simply based on the reduced operational field of top-down governance. They claim to be cross-sectoral but remain based on only protection rules.

Meaningful examples of this new generation of landscape regional plans are those approved in Piedmont (Regional executive committee of Piedmont, 2009), Liguria (Regional council of Liguria, 2011) and Apulia (Regional executive committee of Apulia, 2015) where the potential of landscape policies in preserving the agricultural Italian landscape appears to be overestimated (Cinà, 2009, 2012). As a matter of fact, it appears to have been a big misunderstanding to imagine that the conservative system of landscape protection could affect the dynamics of agricultural landscape transformation, mostly depending on purely economic interests.



In short, ever since the start municipal planning has been limited to the classificatory function (zoning) of new developments. Meanwhile, regional legislation and its related plans have attempted to regulate agricultural areas, combining urban issues to those of agricultural land and its relationship with the environment. Finally, two levels of regulations have been established: one related to the aspects of production activities and the other to protection. Unfortunately, their effectiveness is still limited as they are not adequately specified on the basis of the real agricultural market and on the changing dynamics of the stakeholders involved. UPA planning has been directly affected by these ineffective approaches.

### **Urban and peri-urban agriculture: asymmetric approaches in three urban contexts**

As reported in the previous chapter, there is still a large gap between planning and agricultural policies in Italy. In a framework of this kind, a project for rooting UPA in urban transition still requires an appropriate response in terms of knowledge, brokerage among stakeholders, rules and governance. Due to the lack of suitable solutions coming from spatial planning, various stakeholders implemented a large number of initiatives in autonomous but not always convergent ways. According to the transition management theory (Loorbach and Rotmans, 2006; Geels, 2004), in this situation, UPA enhancement should be based at least on the following factors: a strong interaction among public and private stakeholders open to participatory approaches, a political environment that is capable of managing multiple connections between groups of interests, a greater technical competence in public and private stakeholders, easier access to physical (land) and immaterial (cultural) resources, and the stakeholders' ability to focus on a wider social perspective rather than on their own individual interest.

Starting from this evidence we will discuss the three above mentioned peculiar experiences of Milan, Turin and Pisa. From a methodological point of view, the Milan case study is mainly analysed toward a literature review; on the other hand, information related to the Turin and Pisa cases are the outcome of a long-term action research activity started in the 2010 in both territories.

The case of Milan is characterized by a top down approach, which was modified over time by the manifest weakness of public governance and the relevant role of local stakeholders and the third sector (NGOs and other non-profit organizations). By contrast, the case of Pisa is characterized by an extra institutional evolution and the gradual involvement of public stakeholders. Finally, the Turin case is characterized by the presence of a deep-rooted food culture linked to the Slow Food experience (Schneider, 2008) that is at present developing on the basis of a mixture of bottom-up and top-down initiatives. As eloquent cross-sections of the variegated Italian situation, these cases are now facing changes aiming at integrating food policies and UPA in an overall strategy of urban transition.

### **The case of the south agricultural park in Milan: a disconnected network of weak top-down policies and vibrant bottom-up practices**

The innovation of UPA projects, at the level of formal planning and bottom-up initiatives has found a particular area of interest also in the planning and design of agricultural parks (AP). AP addresses the issues of UPA areas both by regulating their uses through a multifunctional strategy and by protecting the environmental and landscape assets.

In a first phase, the potential of an agricultural green belt at municipal scale was experienced in a few cases. One example is the AP of Ferrara (1970s) that designed the recovery of the agricultural areas along the city walls and their connection to the Po river (Amati, 2012).

Later, the South Milan Agricultural Park (SMAP) made a quantum leap compared to previous experiences. Established in 1990 as a regional park, and planned as a green belt extending to the neighbouring municipalities, it introduced a metropolitan strategy. The SMAP (47,000 hectares, 61 municipalities) spreads east south west in the Province of Milan and covers most of its UPA areas. It has two main key uses: the "urban belt park" devoted to the enjoyment of leisure time within important natural assets and the AP (also including urban functions). Unlike other regional parks in Lombardia, it has so far been managed by the Province of Milan and now under the government of the new – and still uncertainly defined - Metropolitan City.



Looking at 25 years of the SMAP management, the overall appraisal is disappointing at most levels (Aquilani, 2014). Both the operational plans, (identified by the Territorial Coordination Plan, 2000), namely the Plans of Urban Belt (PUBs) and the Fruition Plan, have not been processed; the Management Plans (2003) and the Agricultural Sector Plan (2007) have not been updated (Vescovi, 2012); finally, also the opportunity to re-launch the SMAP into EXPO 2015 has been lost.

The PUBs are textbook examples of both the grandiloquent objectives of planning and the inconsistent ability to effect a top-down governance, mainly based on the expropriation mechanism and the equalization of development rights (the so-called "perequazione"). Actually the PUBs were planned by the provincial government (centre-left parties) and their implementation was based on the expropriation/compensation of private areas to be used for the park project (Targetti et al. 2010). Private land-owners expected to concede their properties would be compensated with building rights in some selected buildable areas. Therefore, the newly acquired public areas would be leased out to farmers or other parties, provided that the respect of the landscape, the reclaiming of the natural elements, a short food chain and the possibility for all citizens to benefit from the large metropolitan green areas would be guaranteed. The main objective of the SMAP was to create five large metropolitan parks characterized by the co-existence of agriculture, nature and public facilities.

Unfortunately, due to the conflict between the social partners, these plans failed to achieve the final approval and, following a political change in the government of the City and the Province of Milan (from left to right parties), they were submitted to strong real estate pressures and were declassified (Vescovi, 2012). Moreover, the Park Authority did nothing to prevent large urbanization projects (areas of Cerba/Rosate/Vignate 770,000 sqm), or the collapse of the agricultural system caused by the construction of the eastern ring road (Teem). Consequently in 1999-2009 the municipalities of SMAP increased the urbanized areas by 4% at the expense of agricultural areas.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the SMAP has

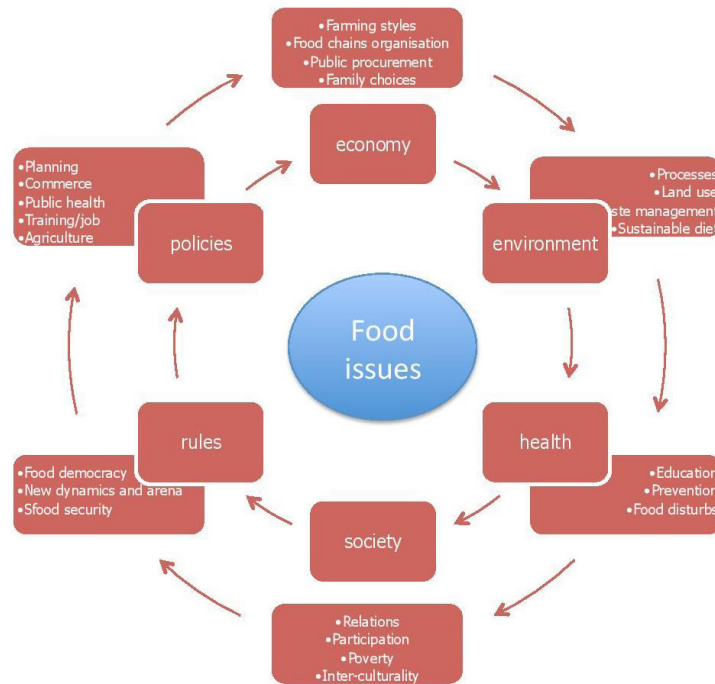
imposed fruitful limitations on the use of the land thus ensuring an institutional coverage for the containment of urbanization. Moreover, it has also facilitated the development of positive trends which all originate from the bottom. Therefore, institutional action has been combined with, and sometimes replaced by, various practices carried out by committees and associations, who have raised the banner of the park in order to defend their territories. In several cases a partial bottom-up planning initiative took place, which was implemented by various stakeholders and public bodies. This approach gave rise to some relevant components of the SMAP, such as the Ticinello Park, "Wood in the city" Park, Quarries Park, Vettabbia Park, thus highlighting the possibility of network farming and urban functions in a more transversal framework.

More recently a complex set of stakeholders have spontaneously begun to share common principles and tools in order to improve the agricultural activities and protect the environment and landscape. In fact, a process of self-empowering occurred in which farmers switched from a holding position to a planning approach and a gradual restructuring of the agricultural sector. The original planning approach of the Territorial Coordination Plan, remained too limited to the zoning regulation, was then overtaken by events (Branduini and Scazzosi, 2011). As a result new consortia and rural districts based on sustainable and multifunctional agriculture were born, such as the Milan-Agricultural District, the Rice and Frogs, Three Waters, the Olona Valley, as well as the establishment of the Rural District for ethic economy.

All these initiatives advanced in combining environmental protection with economic aspects, and public commitment with private interests, but the farming sustainability is far from being settled (Migliorini and Scaltriti, 2012). Therefore, it is evident that the park's salvation mainly depends on the reinforcement of the farming economic role as the main factor, among the others related to multifunctional agriculture that is able to contrast the real estate development.

#### **The Pisa experience: a growing interconnection on food initiatives in a fertile and competitive environment**

In the area surrounding Pisa there has been much debate concerning food, food planning and UPA



**Figure 1:** Pisa, Food issues (source: authors)

in the last few years due to an increasing active interest of local communities, institutions and farmers. The university has played an active role in this process by organising public meetings and implementing research projects on alternative food networks, civic agriculture, organic agriculture, ecosystem services and food planning in agreement with institutions, association and local food movements. In the area private and public institutions implemented a number of initiatives with the aim of defining a kind of food deal regarding new urban policies (Brunori et al. 2014b).

Since 2005 short food chains have grown spontaneously in Pisa thanks to farmers' markets and since 2010 a community of private stakeholders supporting UPA has been established. In this area there are numerous ethical purchasing groups and a district for ethical economy. Resourceful farmers are reshaping their agricultural activities bearing in mind environmental and social sustainability (e.g. [www.ilmulinodipietra.it](http://www.ilmulinodipietra.it), [www.ortietici.it](http://www.ortietici.it)).

As for public stakeholders, many municipalities in the Province of Pisa have set up community gardens (in Pisa specific Guidelines have been approved) and this Province implements the largest number of social farming initiatives in Tuscany. Since 2007 the Valdera Health Society has formally included social farming into its public health

plans. Public procurement in school meals was also started by local municipalities in order to promote a diet based on local and organic products (Galli et al., 2014). The Valdera Health Society has introduced educational activities on food as well as supporting people who are less able to access food.

In the Valdera area some participatory initiatives for planning and programming were launched (Valdera 2020), which competed successfully with the policies implemented in Pisa. In 2011, following a research-action on "carrying capacity" and a methodological proposal to include ecosystem services in local planning, both coordinated by Pisa University, the "Valdera Union" (a voluntary association of 15 municipalities established to organise public services in the territory of the Arno and Era river basins) launched a participatory planning project ([www.valdera2020.it](http://www.valdera2020.it)). The aim of this initiative, which lasted one year and involved approximately one thousand stakeholders and citizens, was finalized to design future strategies for the area based on four main thematic areas (territorial planning, institutions, economic development and environment, welfare). 17 strategies and 100 actions were defined following a European Awareness Scenario Workshop. By means of a poll organised on a web platform local residents were classified on the basis of the territorial distribution of population, by age and sex. Actions regarding food, agriculture,



**Figure 2:** Pisa, Urban food strategy (source: authors)

environment and planning were introduced in the group discussions and ranked according to an open poll. The best ranked strategies and actions were taken into consideration in the “Valdera strategic plan” approved by the Valdera Union.

In 2011, thanks to this fertile environment and the formal agreement with the Province of Pisa, Pisa University launched a “Food planning” project with the aim of coordinating and integrating all the aspects and activities related to food issues (Brunorand Di Iacovo 2014a). Various meetings supported by a web 2.0 platform involved municipalities and other public institutions, scholars and professionals, citizens and associations, so that they could exchange ideas and co-produce new knowledge on these issues. As a result a map of the stakeholders and goals involved in the Food plan (Figure 1) was defined. This exercise increased the collective understanding of the existing links among policies, local economy, environment, health, society and the possibility to design innovative rules affecting food choices. There then emerged an increasing awareness of the role played both by civil society and local public institutions in innovating the approach to food management. The organisation of food governance was considered the way to facilitate the involvement of all actors in the frame of a sustainable food management (Figure 2). To this end the urban food strategy was based on few elements like (i) a food

chart, (ii) a food strategy, (iii) a food plan, (iv) the organisation of a food alliance among private actors and (v) a formal agreement between public actors.

The main principles introduced by the Food chart focus on sustainability, social justice and the organisation of a fair relationship between urban and rural areas also regarding planning activities. The Food chart was transformed into proposed practices and a Food strategy which describes the goals (health knowledge, equity, sustainability, innovation, and organisation), the actions and stakeholders to be involved. The Food strategy establishes that the municipal plans must safeguard the land dedicated to agro-environmental activities as green infrastructures for daily life. In 2012 the Food chart and the Food strategy were both approved by the Pisa Province and by 19 municipalities including those belonging to the Valdera Union. In 2013, in accordance with the Food strategy two main tools were developed:

- a Program-agreement among public stakeholders in which each subscribing actor commit itself, according to its field of activity, in the direction designed by the Food strategy with specific goals and indicators.
- a Food-alliance grouping private stakeholders (associations and citizens of Pisa) engaged in co-planning new initiatives in agreement with public actors and monitoring the Pro-



gram-agreement activities.

At present this initiative has been stopped due to the administrative reorganisation of the Italian Provinces. Pisa University is leaving the project leadership to the local stakeholders, and the Valdera Union is willing to take on the project by promoting a dialogue with the main stakeholders in the area of Pisa and the Food-alliance to re-launch the Food strategy.

Finally in the Pisa Case a large amount of actors is contributing to the definition of a new approach to food planning issues. Normally actions start separately but gradually converge in more organised forms. The related process of social empowerment is facing a strong complexity and it risks failure in front of institutional changes and the difficulty of achieving immediate results. Consequently the conflict between the different ways of thinking urban planning and food planning is still being negotiated according to the forces and the views of different actors on the field.

#### **The Turin experience: attempts of mutual learning among public and private stakeholders**

Following the progressive dismantling of the car sector (FIAT) and the subsequent innovative development policies, Turin is reshaping its social and economic identity as a city for tertiary services and tourism. In this scenario, the food sector is a field of innovation towards a new identity. In this sense the Slow food movement, that holds its bi-annual exhibition "Salone del Gusto" in the most famous FIAT plant in Turin, is a paradigmatic example. The "Salone del gusto" has given Turin an international reputation as being a centre of quality food, which experiments with innovative food production and distribution patterns. In addition, it deserves to be known for the Porta Palazzo market, one of the largest traditional food markets in Europe and an important tourist attraction, where one can find a large variety of local products. Turin also houses the headquarters of Eataly the first and largest Italian retail outlet for typical food. In this particular environment, various initiatives on food and UPA have been implemented by public and private stakeholders although not always coherently.

The local public bodies started to explore food issues and their connection to city planning. Since

2000, the Turin Province and local municipalities have been supporting local collective purchasing groups, together with several other projects related to multifunctional agriculture in UPA areas. The authors were involved in some of these processes by organising specific action research activities or being involved as research observers.

In 2011 the municipality of Turin launched the "TOCC" (Turin-city-to-growth) project in the framework of "Torino-smart-city". Its goal was to upgrade and develop UPA in order to increase urban sustainability. To this end a quite large amount of peri-urban and under-used land was surveyed. Moreover, maps and ideas for illustrating the project were prepared by technical staff and presented to citizens in order to explore the possible use of public land around and within Turin's boundaries. A second initiative was also established by trying to implement the Villaretto Agricultural Park in the Municipal plan. However, although they received strong communicational support, the outcome of these initiatives is still quite limited for two reasons: Lack of support from the planning department of the Turin Municipality, which is politically more oriented to the implementation of built-up areas, and lack of interaction with private stakeholders.

Besides their direct effect, the value of these initiatives lies in the possibility of attracting more attention to the UPA theme and legitimating new active stakeholders in the field (Dansero and Puttilli 2013). In fact, at operational level a large number of small but effective initiatives were carried out on various scales by private stakeholders – farmers and farmers' associations - and by third sector companies. These initiatives have some features in common such as: giving new value to abandoned land (private or public); being economically sustainable although providing public goods (social and relational); involving adolescents and often women in innovative hybrid forms of enterprises; being strongly connected to local communities and groups of citizen. In this perspective, two initiatives deserve to be cited among others: the "Venaria Orti" project, which divided a property into small, organised gardens and rented them to local citizens who wanted to dedicate themselves to small agricultural activities; and the case of "Cavoli Nostri", a farming cooperative established on



the land of some properties owned by Cottolengo (a distinguished religious institution), where organic vegetables are cultivated and people with disabilities take part in the agricultural work thus producing positive economic and social results.

Other projects are also being developed in the small municipalities around Turin that are trying to generate new opportunities of socialisation, integration and training for the young or less empowered people. Some of them are supported by local municipalities that do normally offer land and initial support for projects, as in the case of the "MiraOrti project" in Turin, a community garden that also organizes educational activities for primary schools (Baldo, 2012) and "Orto che cura" in Collegno which involves disabled people. Actually, there was much public interest in all of these projects although they are still organized on a small scale.

However, the vitality of the food discourse in Torino also motivated relevant stakeholders in the agricultural sector to modify their strategies from corporate attitudes to wider goals. This is the case of Coldiretti, the most important farmers' union in Italy, which has given birth to "Campagna Amica", a farmers' association that combines educational and economic activities. In the last few years in Turin, Coldiretti established many "Campagna Amica" markets in order to meet the demand for local/quality food and create new opportunities of income for small farmers. The initial aim of the association was to represent the economic interest of its associated farmers by creating new networks and visibility in the urban context. Slowly but surely, a different idea of the city and the local system emerged. In this context UPA areas may support the city's resilience by achieving better quality food and providing innovative services.

To this end Coldiretti implemented a series of initiatives on social farming and a network of approximately 35 farmers, 15 social cooperatives, local health consortia and municipalities in order to provide services for citizens and less empowered people (disabled, addicts, prisoners, refugees, the elderly) (Di Iacovo et al., 2014). All these initiatives, promoted by economic associations and by civil society, gradually managed to involve the local authorities in a more comprehensive project thus creating jobs for about 40 less empowered people

(over the last three years), new services for hundreds of citizens, better economic positions for the farms and social cooperatives involved, and a more effective public intervention on health policies.

The increase in initiatives and debates has helped to create a turning point in the food and UPA discourse, generating new interest in public institutions as well as in the food-farming economy. More recently, in the third strategic plan called 'Turin metropolis 2025, the city has launched the "Turin food capital" program. The food issue is expected to become one of the preeminent development issue axes of this on-going program. Moreover, some other initiatives, such as the Food start Lab "Towards a food local agenda in Turin" and the project "Turin smile", are working toward an overall food policy (Dansero and Toldo, 2014). The latter allows for a progressive mutual understanding of the public-private stakeholders involved in broader top-down policies and vibrant bottom-up initiatives, considering food planning and land use as the tools of a more sensitive strategy of urban qualification and resilience. This seems to be a promising path for connecting the UPA issues to urban transition, but this path is still far from overcoming traditional interests and the limits of a too self-reported city planning.

## Conclusions

There is still a gap in the Italian context between the increasing interest in UPA and food issues, fostered by new stakeholders and the deficient planning tool-box, which provides strategies, regulations and technical tools. This divergence cannot be solved just by laws and plans at institutional level. Therefore it is essential to review the planning approach by reframing a brokerage among policies and practices, public and private stakeholders, competences and interests from an integrated perspective. This review should affect not only the vertical integration in spatial planning practices (top-down vs. bottom-up) but also the horizontal integration between the sectoral planning practices related to agriculture.

In support of this argument, the three above mentioned experiences prove that a reframing approach is already in progress, but in scarcely synergic forms, which encompass the re-



markable auto organizational resources of local stakeholders and also the strong limitations of planning and governance at institutional level. These cases offer more than a hint for reflection. In the South Milan Agricultural Park, faced with a never consolidated public governance, there have been innovative experiences that were developed even though the stakeholders sometimes ignore or distrust one another. Therefore, by observing the problem from the viewpoint of the local farmers and the third sector, we can ascertain that although there has been some evolution in terms of consolidation of productive activities and new initiatives, it is still difficult for the farmers to overcome the new challenges of the market without a strong organizational support from the Park Authority, providing a strong and inclusive governance.

In the case of Pisa on one hand the relevant role of civic engagement of the University emerges through a research-action approach; on the other, it emerges as a third stakeholder working to overcome the distance - and mediate win-win solutions - between the institutions and stakeholders. As a result, the current pending situation requires a more coherent commitment from the local institutions in terms of rules, policies, knowledge and practices in order to offer stronger pillars to a sustainable food planning.

In the case of Turin the progressive merging of different approaches among public and private stakeholders is now leading to a new phase. In this case the rich constellation of practices and the first steps of a public food policy (firstly by the Turin food plan) provide the planners and the community with the opportunity of building a far more efficient public space to trigger a proper governance for food-UPA issues.

Yet governance is not a quiet long river. According to Voß and Bornemann (2011), it is part of a process of change during which transition cannot be seen as the rational activity of an external driver of social change. On the contrary, it is the outcome of a laborious process of benchmark, negotiation and understanding among diverse positions and stakeholders in situ impacting at local as well as at higher level. As such the assessment of diverse options is demanding in terms of mediation and it implies the presence of an influential public stakeholder that is able to guarantee an effective space for discussion

and support a subsidiarity among different actors. That said, the first challenge in the Italian context in the field of governance and inclusiveness is to overcome the limitations concerning the tradition of the top down planning system. However, one should not rely on the idea that inclusiveness is the panacea of all evils. In fact the challenges crossing the question of UPA and food are also focused on many other goals such as:

- to effect an urban and territorial policy able to impact on UPA reconciling the demands of productivity and organic farming;
- to implement urban projects - in UPA areas - able to enrich the city without reducing agriculture to urban scenery useful for cheap urban utopias (as unlikely vertical gardens);
- to strengthen the revolutionary impact of new food cultures, both at local and global level.

To this end, a full inclusion of UPA in urban planning is part of a process that is known to be necessary but is still moving its first steps.

To foster its implementation two kinds of expertise come into play: on one hand, that of the planners committed to updating their disciplinary approach in agricultural area planning; on the other hand, that of the experts and scholars from other fields (agronomists, sociologists, geographers, economists, etc.) who are helping to raise the issues of UPA in all its importance, giving significant contributions in terms of food planning. At this point it is essential that the distinction between these two planning approaches, which echoes that of the historical opposition between town and countryside, is overcome through appropriate forms of disciplinary interaction and social participation. In this frame planning the territory will include the organization and economy of UPA and all the benefits UPA may produce according to various policy goals.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict



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