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Wheat and resilience: Evaluating transition community initiatives in Friuli Venezia Giulia region

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Abstract

Whenever public policies do not provide clear vision and leadership in the effort to drive transition towards sustainability, local communities often take the lead, organize, and mobilize support for solidarity economy initiatives. These change processes imply paradigmatic and structural innovation, participation of new actors, redefinition of boundaries of power, institutions, and legal framework. Transition is one of the key concepts to understand these processes (Bonaiuti, 2013). Transition communities are transitioning away from high environmental impact, in the attempt to become resilient, hence ready to adapt to significant changes (Mälgand et al, 2014).

The literature provides different frameworks to analyze transition initiatives through the evaluation process implementation, outputs and outcomes (Luederitz et al., 2016; Piani e Minatelli, 2016). Among these, the conceptual model presented by Forrest and Wiek (2014) introduces a set of categories for transition path reconstruction – intervention action, actors, barriers, and outputs, to evaluate the impact of transition initiatives on communities and sustainability. Following this framework, the aim of the present research is to evaluate ongoing transition initiatives in Friuli Venezia Giulia region. The Regional Law 4/2017 provides nowadays a legal framework for similar initiatives, supporting solidarity economy processes which promote self-sufficiency and resilience of local communities.

The analysis will focus on three local food supply chain experiments, each of them presenting substantially different procedural approaches and alternative levels of commitment of local institutions and communities:

- Pan e farine dal Friûl di mieç (i.e. 'Bread and Flour from the Middle Friuli') started in 2015 as an experimental project to foster a local, sustainable and inclusive supply chain for flour and bread. The local community counts about 13.000 inhabitants, mainly jeopardized on a rural area (95 people/km²). A multi stage approach has led to the progressive involvement of local stakeholders, gathered together under a mutual responsibility agreement on production and consumption of primary goods.
- The Patto della Farina ('Flour Agreement') is a short food supply chain agreement localised in the eastern area of Friuli Venezia Giulia. In 2014 two local farmers, a miller, a baker, and a

group of concerned consumers, signed the first agreement for the local production and transformation of ancient wheat varieties. At the beginning of the crop year, producers and consumers transparently negotiate a fair price for the products, with consumers committing to buy at least 10 kg of flour per family along the year. Nowadays, about 200 families participate in the initiative, while the participation of entrepreneurs is steadily growing.

- The Municipality of Muzzana del Turgnano undertook the Pan e farine di Muçane ('Bread and Flour from Muzzana') project in 2014. The Municipality manages local commons for the community. The 20ha farming activity is at the core of a socially inclusive supply chain initiative. The project area is mainly rural, and counts 2.543 inhabitants with a population density of 104,69 people/km².

The results of this evaluation will provide an outlook on these transition initiatives, highlighting their strength and success, together with inefficiencies, limitations and mistakes to be addressed.

Keywords : transition, resilience, community