

Anthropology of food

Articles VARIA

Social agriculture, antimafia and beyond: toward a value chain analysis of Italian food

Agriculture sociale, antimafia et au-delà: vers une analyse de la chaîne de valeur de la nourriture italienne

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Abstracts

Français English

Le texte se propose de mener une analyse préliminaire de la chaîne de valeur de l'alimentation italienne à partir de l'analyse de l'agriculture sociale, en particulier les fermes sociales associées aux « activités antimafia ». L'analyse part du principe selon lequel l'agriculture sociale est multifactorielle. Le texte repose sur trois études de cas issues de régions italiennes différentes : la Sicile, la Campanie et le Latium. La ferme sicilienne est la plus développée en termes de sophistication de la production ; la ferme de Campanie, de petite taille, accorde une grande importance résultats non liés aux produits de base, notamment le bien-être et la restauration des paysages ; la ferme située dans le Latium, enfin, offre une réponse tangentielle aux activités de la mafia, bien que ses gestionnaires les définissent comme une forme de résistance directe à la mafia à Rome.

The paper proposes to carry out a preliminary analysis of the Italian food value chain based on the analysis of social agriculture, in particular social farms associated with “antimafia activities”. The analysis is based on the assumption that social agriculture is multifactorial. The text is based on three case studies from different Italian regions: Sicily, Campania and Lazio. The Sicilian farm is the most developed in terms of production sophistication; the small Campania farm gives great importance to non-commodity results, including well-being and landscape restoration; and the farm in Lazio offers a tangential response to the mafia's activities, although its managers carry out a form of direct resistance to the mafia in Rome.

Index terms

Mots-clés : chaîne de valeur, multifonctionnalité, agriculture sociale, capital social, gestion du paysage, mafia, antimafia

Keywords : value chain, multifunctionality, social farming, social capital, landscape management, mafia, antimafia

Full text

Introduction

- 1 This paper is part of a broader study exploring a value chain analysis of Italian food. The approach analyzes value creation starting from the territory, passing through the various transformation processes, wholesale and retail transactions, and down to the perceptions and practices of the final consumer. Italy is somewhat unusual from the standpoint of western European transformations, with the persistence of a multitude of producers and commercial channels, and the delayed emergence of large-scale retailers (McCorrison 2007). Slower Italian transformations are mirrored in the ample network of farmers' markets and small shops, and widespread consumer concern for the quality and distinctiveness of food (FIVA 2017). This concern privileges the relationship between the territory and its products. Extensive city-sponsored networks of mainly fruit and produce markets struggle to survive, but continue to bolster among the general public awareness of food production factors countervailing mass produced foods.
- 2 Although it is common to speak of alternative food systems in the Anglo-Saxon literature (e.g., Guthman 2008), we stress here that the farms described are not 'alternative' in the sense of rejecting a principle of market performance, but instead are 'social' in that they balance multiple priorities, and measure outcomes not only in terms of economic performance, but also in terms of social – and environmental – results. These farms are legally classed as cooperatives and, as such, forefront their social aims. Yet they are still firms with powerful entrepreneurial underpinnings that must be competitive economically in order to survive. Careful accounting, with precise assessment of economic costs and benefits, are fundamental features for firms with little or no public support, enterprises that are triggering a new way of managing the economy (Berruti 2019: 92). These characteristics place the firms in a long European tradition of the social economy, where concern with social justice is prioritized in production and allocations choices (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005: 2037). The social economy represents a historically constituted space moving between formal state policy, market entrepreneurship and alternative circuits (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005: 2038).
- 3 Actors in the social economy cultivate multiple interests associated with strongly separate conceptual spheres. This wide-spectrum approach to organizational management is consistent with the notion of multifunctionality, a concept that has guided EU agricultural policy over the last twenty years (Cairol *et al.* 2009). Among the many functions associated with agriculture are landscape management and upkeep (termed green functions), water quality assurance and flood control (blue), social dimensions including rural cohesion and vitality, and the promotion of historical and cultural heritage (yellow) (Van Huylenbroeck *et al.* 2007: 7). A chief function is food provision, security and safety (white). Each single social enterprise must make a choice of how to position its activities in this range of options, and with what priorities. The

choice of strategy must be compatible with constraints represented by market forces, public policy, with the possibility of drawing from or spilling over into alternative food systems and practices.

- 4 To facilitate the exploration of this complexity we use value chain analysis. Value chain analysis ‘includes the whole cycle of the organization, production and delivery of products from inception to use and recycling,’ and constitutes a fundamental tool for mapping all activities concerned with the market and public policy (Kaplinsky 2004: 1). The value chain is known in Italian as the *filiera*, a concept with broad currency in everyday life, including food shopping at fresh produce markets where retailers act as knowledge brokers explaining the details of product creation (Black 2005). Its utility in economic analysis is to draw attention away from exclusive physical transformation to include the social and other conditions that sustain production (Kaplinsky 2004: 8). In the social economy, these sustaining conditions are of prime concern, as are non-economic outcomes that include many of agriculture’s multifunctional consequences. The broadening of outcome concerns is relevant both in terms of “systemic efficiency” and “point efficiency” (Kaplinsky 2004: 9). Systemic efficiency in econometric terms is the overall viability of the organization, while point efficiency concerns a single step in value generation. In a conventional firm, the latter is concerned exclusively with profit, while in the social organization non-economic considerations also come into play.
- 5 Value chain analysis is particularly useful in probing the sources of injustice in global trade. This is seen in Kaplinsky’s (2004) study, and in others like Valkila *et al.*’s analysis of coffee markets linking Latin American producers to consumers in Finland (Valkila *et al.* 2010). The latter study explores fair trade certification, and reveals that such certification does not provide coffee bean producers with significant advantages in terms of revenue. In a similar way, the social farms described here all embrace an antimafia identity, yet assert that such identity may not guarantee sufficient revenue to survive. For this reason, antimafia farmers must capture a broad range of value production to be successful. Italian antimafia movements came into being in the 1890s, later to be suppressed under Fascism, and only to re-emerge significantly in the 1990s (Santino 2015). Today various associations proclaim antimafia identity, two of the most prominent being Associazione Libera and NCO, discussed respectively in the cases of Sicily and Campania. The farmers in Rome belong to no such network, but see their activities as a bulwark against mafia-like infiltration in the nation’s capital. All three have high public visibility in supporting the antimafia cause. Yet as in the case of fair trade certification, this visibility by itself may not be enough to ensure economic viability.
- 6 Kaplinsky’s value chain analysis of the sources of injustice on global markets pinpoints intangible knowledge as a key factor that can boost producer revenues by allowing them to occupy a broader segment of the value chain (2004: 16). Product innovation is also important (Kaplinsky 2004: 31), and we find from our own case studies that product innovation, to be meaningful, must be pursued within a solid understanding of market trends.
- 7 According to another econometric study one of the limitations of value chain analysis is the static and linear character of the underlying flows (Faße *et al.* 2009: 45). This criticism resonates with the vision shared by actors in the social economy, who recognize the utility of the linear conception, but treat value production as non-linear and dynamic. The linear and static quality of the value chain dissolves when the management system introduces ideas of efficiency moving beyond purely economic variables. In this more complex understanding, each transition point in value production is open for discussion, unpacking its determinacy to create opportunities for

new interpretations capable of providing outcomes often in contrast with a principle of economic efficiency.

8 This paper proposes to describe how antimafia activists leverage the multifunctionality of their agricultural operations, and how they conceptualize production relations that would normally be considered a value chain.

9 As legally incorporated cooperatives, the farms described are part of a long historical tradition. The three seem to represent a new wave in the Italian cooperative movement in having opened themselves up to Alternative Food Networks as a way of dealing with the current environmental, social and economic crisis in the food economy (Fonte and Cucco 2007).

Methodology

10 The authors eschew a positivistic approach to interviewing subjects (Roulston 2018). Background knowledge of the sites investigated comes from the literature and ongoing contact. Focus was achieved through a series of interviews using a semi structured format, and questions aiming to elicit reflections on the value chain as an analytical tool. This dialog around loose discussion points involved interviewees chosen through the method of ‘the focused selection of the microcosm,’ based on the artificial construction of a limited space reflecting different points of view (Bobbio and Pomatto 2007: 11).

11 These are the questions contained in our interview template. What actors belong to your work world, including people, concepts and things? What are the principal stages of your production process understood as a value chain? What actors are involved in each stage? How were these relationships established, and in what way do they resist change? Is the value chain concept useful in discussing your activities? How do you manage innovation? Does climate change affect your activities? What are the intellectual reference points for your enterprise? Is discussion with banks and financial institutions different from other types of interlocutors? What impact have criminal organizations had on your pursuits?

12 Three areas are taken into consideration. Two are noted for their history of organized criminality, western Sicily and northern Campania. The third area, Rome, has recently attracted media attention owing to what is called Rome Capital of Mafia (Abbate and Lillo 2015). Our interest is in the role played by social farming in these settings, an activity defined by Law 141 of 2015. The terms of this law are consistent with the so-called orientation law (Decreto Legislativo n. 228) of 2001, which identifies the broad social and economic impact of farming. Law 141 makes specific reference to the multifunctionality of social farms, their health related and social impact, and the utilization of confiscated mafia assets (Perretta 2018).

13 A powerful backdrop for the literature on these areas is social capital theory, which asserts that a historic lack of civic culture is to blame for the presence of socially destructive forces especially in southern Italy. In both Sicily and Campania organized criminality has captured control of vast sectors of civil society. Politics in the management of Rome is also colored by this factor. Putnam’s much discussed 1993 study claimed that the lack of social capital is rooted in remote history. This assertion has been exposed to ample counter evidence, identifying in Sicily and elsewhere a capacity for community organization dating back to remote times¹. In Campania in particular, the recent reuse of confiscated assets highlights the loss of power by organized criminality and the rise of social capital, in contrast with the local bonds

exploited by organized criminality (Mosca and Villani 2012). Rome too has an important tradition of civil activism, especially among grassroots organizations in the last part of the 20th century (Mudu 2014)².

14 The idea that social farming can have positive transformational capacity is also found in Law 109 of 2006, which governs the reassignment of confiscated mafia estates. Indeed, the law describes the necessity to maintain the economic viability of confiscated property. It also establishes that such property can be granted for use free of rent to cooperatives having a social function. The social functions listed in the law include employment, drug rehabilitation, and training activities aiming to encouraging a culture of legality. Both the farms in Sicily and Campania explored here operate on confiscated estates. The farm in Rome operates on underutilized land belonging to the city of Rome. The land is underutilized, the activists claim, owing to speculative forces which they term broadly of a mafia type.

15 The rise of social cooperatives in mafia-ridden areas coincides with a flourishing of quality farm production with strong attention to the peculiarities of the territory. Their niche agricultural products reach an increasingly specialized and competitive market. One of the great success stories of Italian agriculture is innovation in Campania and Sicily, and particularly in the case of wines³. The social cooperatives described here share this concern for excellent and innovation.

16 Sicily is the iconic home to mafia, notably in the western valley taking its name from the Belice River. The southern part of this valley is called the Belice Corleonese, a toponym that gives us the Corleone mafia of cinematic fame⁴. The area north of Naples was once the site of Italy's most distinguished agricultural tradition, and gave way to brutal mafia action especially linked to the illegal dumping of toxic waste. In particular, the Campania region is home to the mafia-type organization known as the Camorra, and its 'Casalesi' branch, active in the area described here, has been recent described as one of Camorra's most stable and powerful clans (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia 2015)⁵.

17 Rome has its own mafia-like organizations, whose infiltration of local institutions recently led to convictions under mafia-specific article 416bis of the Italian criminal code (Pacelli 2018). As we noted, a broad literature drawing from social capital theory (e.g. Schneider and Schneider 2003) suggests that citizen engagement can play a fundamental role in strengthening civil society to countervail mafia's deep destructive capacity. A striking expression of this civic empowerment is precisely social farming.

18 Mafia is present to a greater or lesser extent in all Italian regions. Statistics released by the agency that oversees the assignment of confiscated mafia property show that all twenty regions have a mafia presence, although in terms of expropriated property, Sicily stands far above any other⁶. This paper does not intend to provide a comprehensive survey of antimafia social farming in Italy. It instead focuses on three case studies drawing from well-established social farming activities in three different regions. These three cases were chosen precisely because they are well established and well known in the local and national community. The actors interviewed represent the public face of these three cooperatives, and are known to anyone familiar with this sector.

The *Placido Rizzotto* Social Cooperative in Sicily

- 19 The *Placido Rizzotto* cooperative is located in the Belice Valley, within the province of Palermo⁷. The valley hosts an ancient agricultural tradition. Historically it was dominated by Roman *latifondi*, later transformed into feudal estates, and finally converted into large-scale capitalistic farms in the early 19th century. These lasted until the Agrarian Reform of 1950, after which land was fragmented progressively, in a trend reversed in more recent years with the consolidation of smallholding estates. The terrain is naturally arid, although studies show that water shortages are artificially created by corrupt politics and mafia control (Giglioli *et al.* 2008).
- 20 *Placido Rizzotto* is located within the township of San Giuseppe Jato, a municipality of 8,500 residents. It was once the 'sovereign territory' (Santino 2015) of various mafia bosses. Sovereignty is particularly evident in the practice of 'name lending' (*prestanome*), where mafia property is placed legally in the name of citizens above suspicion to avoid confiscation in the event of conviction. The practice of name lending makes the confiscation of mafia property a laborious process.
- 21 *Placido Rizzotto* is part of a consortium of cooperatives founded in 2001. It produces under the commercial name of *Centopassi* ('Hundred Steps'), a name taken from a celebrated film chronicling the murder of an antimafia activist in the 1970s. The metaphor expresses spatial proximity, since honest citizens often live within a few steps of mafia criminals. A temporal dimension is also involved: a hundred steps is the moral journey required for the community to free itself of mafia control.
- 22 These antimafia cooperatives first emerged under the umbrella of *Associazione Libera*, a pioneering national association founded in 1995 by a street priest from Turin. The early 1990s witnessed the genesis of many antimafia groups, part and parcel of a broad citizen response to soaring mafia violence; large segments of southern communities were mobilized in various embryonic movements (Schneider and Schneider 2003). *Libera* played a leading role in advocating legislation allowing confiscated mafia estates to be assigned to social cooperatives. Law 575 of 1965 made it possible to confiscate property belonging to convicted mafiosi, with the provision that the property should become a public asset supporting antimafia initiatives. But antimafia legislation in Italy is discontinuous, and the law enabling the assignment of these estates was only passed in 1996 after a major campaign spearheaded by *Libera* (Picciotto 2015). *Placido Rizzotto* and other newly constituted cooperatives were assigned confiscated land thanks to this law. Carrying forward these initiatives required strong local commitment, with few national resources available to support them. A national agency was created to oversee the assignment and management of confiscated property, but only in 2010.
- 23 Under the terms of the 1996 law, confiscated property passes to the municipal authorities, and is then assigned to an appropriate legal entity. Long-term use rights are given out, and the property continues to be publicly owned. The general rule is to assign these estates to cooperatives, many of which were fostered by *Libera*. Cooperatives allegedly make penetration by mafia racketeers harder. Such is the case of the *Placido Rizzotto* cooperative, whose members purport to represent a model of virtuous collaboration. Racketeering is prevalent in most business sectors in Sicily, including farming. Mafia not only extorts protection money (*pizzo*), but imposes the hiring of workers specified by mafia, the use of specified suppliers, the privileging of specified distribution channels, and so forth. Cooperatives are said to be less subject to such conditioning because they are fragmented among different actors.
- 24 One of the cooperative members interviewed in March of 2018, Stefano, joined the cooperative in the early years, and became responsible for the management of its winery in 2008. At first, he was skeptical about the cooperative's capacity to yield

economic returns, but was gradually drawn into deeper involvement. He told an amusing story of how he was invited to help the cooperative by operating a tractor that had been confiscated from a convicted mafia boss. No one wished to operate the vehicle, since concerned about the criminal's response. The person was in prison, but had strong ties with the territory. Stefano took up the challenge, and no consequence ensued. He described this as his epiphany, after which he joined the cooperative and became a key member. He was a farmer coming from a privately owned farm in the area, and found a new entrepreneurial opportunity in *Placido Rizzotto*.

25 This anecdote showed caution in dealing with mafia property, but optimism in considering this type of social activism a viable future, linking individual benefits to those of the community. From a business standpoint, a competitive advantage was land at marginal initial cost. This did not diminish the challenge, however, since the land had not been worked for years and required major investment to become productive again. We might note that land is seen by Sicilian farmers as more than a productive asset. Stefano claimed that land held by a name lender is rarely worked because of its ambiguous status. Lawful farmers consent to have land placed in their name because they have no choice, but it is essentially abandoned. This treatment is considered to violate the intrinsic character of land, which is to be part of a productive agricultural system. Even the name lenders, according to this account, are pleased to see the property restored to its natural vocation.

26 *Placido Rizzotto* made a conspicuous investment in farm development. A public agency created in the early millennial years, specialized in funding commercial activities promoting a principle of legality, provided a grant of one million euros. To this sum, the cooperative members matched a half million-euro loan secured by using personal assets as collateral. These resources allowed *Placido Rizzotto* to create a winery, and finance the significant cost of implanting a quality vineyard. The assignment of confiscated mafia estates, and the availability of credit for antimafia cooperatives, gave the cooperative a significant competitive edge. With 25 hectares of vineyards they produce about 100,000 bottles of wine year for a market value of some €400,000. Their winemaking facilities have the capacity to produce 200,000 bottles a year, which they do on behalf of allied cooperatives with whom they share production orientations. All products are sold under the brand name of *Centopassi*. Combining various cooperatives in a consortium allows them to build the critical mass necessary to reach international markets.

27 The interview with Stefano was more of a conversation around loose discussion points than a formal research activity⁸. Given its size and production complexity, the value chain notion has significant prominence. The stages are well known to those operating in viticulture, from the selection of plants, to vine management, to pruning, to the harvest and winemaking. Image is a critical aspect. Key identity features are quality, innovation and antimafia activism. Antimafia identity is forefronted in all the technical charts provided for their wines, with indications of whose property was confiscated for each plot of land, and wine names drawn from victims of mafia violence. Innovation is found in experimentation with both autochthonous and international grapes. Quality is sought and publicized especially by employing the services of Italy's most celebrated pruning specialists. Stefano estimates that sympathy for antimafia activism is important for domestic sales, but abroad there may be little knowledge of this movement, and wine sales are guaranteed by quality alone.

28 *Placido Rizzotto* began as a set of activists with limited farming background, organized through *Associazione Libera* and various public agencies. These activists were soon joined by people like Stefano, farmers with expertise. A turning point came

when the cooperative took on debt secured by personal assets, and many members abandoned the initiative. The core that stayed expresses strong commitment to their mission. Stefano is today a sophisticated professional in the wine business, knows the major orientation of the quality wine market, and the writings of specialized authors such as the biodynamic wine advocate Nicolas Joly (2007). He visits the major European trade fairs personally to keep abreast of market developments.

29 Some management choices are dictated by their stance as a social cooperative, and key decisions are determined by discussion among cooperative members. This was the case, for instance, in their choice to utilize semi-automated bottling equipment rather than a fully automated system. The latter requires the employment of only one worker, while the former requires four. This augments production costs, but also supports their chief aim which is to provide dignified employment. Stefano believes, with good reason, that one factor encouraging local criminality is the paucity of legal work opportunities.

30 From a systemic perspective, the 'bottom line' is covering costs while supporting innovative practices that help ensure continued commercial success. Yet the bottling equipment choice shows that some elements of point efficiency are geared more to social than financial needs. In terms of multifunctional outcomes, social objectives were repeatedly mentioned. Stefano and his colleagues also expressed pride in landscape outcomes, and delight that confiscated property is now given productive life. He repeatedly stressed wine quality as a fundamental factor in organizational success. Consumers may buy their products once to support the antimafia cause, but will not continue if the product turns out to be poor.

31 The role of intangible knowledge is seen in the production of wines with character, quality and market appeal. Grapes themselves have limited market value, and sell for as little as €15 a quintal. If the cooperative were to sell grapes rather than wine their gross revenues could be as little as €30,000 or, 7% of their gross revenues sold as wine. It is the ability to produce wines with high domestic and global appeal that increases the cooperative's share of overall value chain earnings.

32 When we visited the vineyard again in March of 2019, it was significant to find that the cooperative was experimenting with aging in terracotta containers, a technique other Sicilian producers have adopted with intriguing results. As Kaplinsky notes, innovation is fundamental if local producers wish to garner a greater share of value chain revenues. In the social economy part of these greater revenues are 'invested' in social outcomes.

Nuova Cooperazione Organizzata and the Cooperative Eureka in Campania

33 Casal di Principe is located in the Campania region, north of Naples. The area around Casal di Principe is notorious for organized criminality. It was once a flourishing agricultural district, in Roman times known as the *Campania Felix*, or the "Inspired Countryside." Today it is known as the *Terra dei Fuochi* ('Land of Fires') owing to its illegal toxic waste sites (Yardley 2014). The Casalesi clan takes its name from the town, and was the most ferocious of the region, engaged in criminal acts that reached a peak with the murder of an antimafia priest, Don Peppe Diana, in 1994. The territory is characterized by strong individualism (Berruti and Palestino 2018), which degenerated into a fierce attack on any expression of community cohesion. This predatory entrepreneurial attitude is visible not only in heaps of rubbish and in the ravaged

landscape, but also in the housing style, with isolated homes secured within fortress-like compounds. Many were built illegally, and constitute a visual blight (Berruti and Palestino 2019). Recently the town has experienced an antimafia Renaissance in both politics and cultural life, thanks the activities of the mayor elected in 2014.

34 Not by chance, the name chosen by the leading social cooperative in *Terra dei Fuochi* duplicates the acronym for the area's most ferocious criminal organization, the *Nuova Camorra Organizzata*, or NCO. For the social cooperative NCO stands for *Nuova Cooperazione Organizzata* ('New Organized Cooperation'). The name heralds a desire to combat mafia on its own terrain, turning criminal relations into cooperation and giving new life to confiscated assets (Ciano 2018).

35 NCO is a network of networks, as is often found in food activism (Grasseni 2013). An important sales and promotion point is the restaurant called 'New Organized Cooking' (also NCO). It hosts a laboratory specialized in the innovative transformation of local food products, mostly grown on confiscated mafia estates. The NCO consortium aspires to promote civic growth in the region, through a culture of inclusion and legality. These cooperatives provide support for citizens with disabilities as a distinctive feature of their activities. Numerous social cooperatives are part of the consortium, including *Al di là dei sogni* ('Beyond dreams'), *Eureka*, *Un fiore per la vita* ('A flower for life') and *Agropoli*. Our attention focused on *Eureka*.

36 *Eureka* is a social cooperative whose chief activities are viticulture and winemaking. It works 17 hectares of land with three permanent cooperative members and two or three seasonal workers. Most of the property is confiscated mafia land; a few plots are private holdings belonging to one of the cooperative members. Five hectares are devoted to viticulture, twelve to fruit production, mostly peach and pear. Their winemaking facilities have upstairs dormitories for a half dozen guests disabled by mental illness or difficulties in social integration.

37 We had the opportunity to interview the head of *Eureka*, Vincenzo, in July 2018. This was in addition to many other visits to the farm starting in 2017.

38 The cooperative has complete winemaking facilities, including bottling equipment capable of processing still and sparkling wines. Some of their sparkling wines are bulk fermented, using the Charmat method so common in Italy; others implement bottle fermentation. They have five hectares of vineyards, and do not anticipate expanding their grape production, since the volume of grapes produced by five hectares saturates the winery's production capacity. Their limited-growth business model is oriented to the needs of their community, including their disabled guests. Their wine-derived income is about €24,000 per annum, with a target of some €40,000. This income covers the needs of the cooperative members and their guests. The budget is tight, and cash flow a major concern. The highest costs are in grape production and winemaking. Among the costs are treatments for pest and mold, tractor operation, seasonal labor, bottles, corks and so forth. Grapes are harvested in the autumn, but the wine is only sold in the spring and summer. To ease cash flow, Vincenzo has diversified into fruit production.

39 Pears and peaches are sold in the winter months while still on the trees to generate immediate revenue. A wholesaler buys the entire crop, organizes the harvest and sells to regional supermarkets. This is a form of 'vertical coordination' (McCorriston 2007) which generates low revenue for the producer and leaves little room for innovation. Vincenzo is fully aware that this model benefits wholesalers and retailers while penalizing the producer, but accepts a marginal position in the fruit producing value chain because these modest revenues support their core business which is winemaking.

40 When they first started their agricultural operations in 2005 the cooperative

produced wheat, because operating costs are low, risk marginal and expertise requirements slight. But revenues are far too small to sustain the economic needs of the cooperative. Thus starting in 2007 they began to plant vines, whose production characteristics are the opposite of those listed for wheat. Each vine represents a cost of some €50, including labor required to establish and maintain the individual plant. Five hectares of vineyards are home to about 20,000 vines. As in Sicily, grapes only yield significant revenue for the cooperative if converted into wine. But this requires a capital investment and sophisticated production skills.

41 From the value chain perspective, Vincenzo noted that each step in the process should be directed by a designated worker with specific skills. But in practice everyone shares in all phases of the production process. Economic viability is fundamental, but here as in Sicily some production choices support social outcomes rather than economic efficiency. A specific example of this is the use of their handicapped guests for some labor operations, notably turning bottles (*remuage*) in the storage racks before final bottling. In theory, the cooperative could invest in expensive automated equipment, but instead use the traditional technique as a way of providing their guests with a dignified labor opportunity.

42 Vincenzo stressed the landscape outcomes of their activities. A distinctive innovation of their operations is the use of ‘married vines’ i.e. vines trained on living trees. This vine management technique has more burdensome labor requirements than the common trellis, but revives a visual landscape that was once typical of the *Campania Felix*, dating back to ancient times. Married vine were abandoned especially during the period of predatory mafia entrepreneurship, which wrought so much damage to the landscape. About a third of the cooperative’s vineyards are married vines, keeping local traditions alive and reinforcing local identity. Maintaining these vines requires specialized vine workers known as spidermen, and increases production costs. This is yet another example of how social and environmental outcomes can take precedence over pure economic efficiency.

43 As in the Sicilian case, *Eureka* are economically viable thanks to their control of broad segments of the value chain. They could not survive by producing grapes alone. Winemaking, however, requires sophisticated skills aligned to the needs of a competitive market. Vincenzo participates in the major national wine fairs, and has intense interaction with the other sparkling wine producers of the area. Vincenzo contributes meaningfully not only to the civic revival of the general territory, but also to the strengthening of the local community of sparkling wine producers. This he has done to overcome traditional rivalries among producers. For instance, he brought in innovative French sparkling wine consultants to provide advice not only for his operations but for those of other local firms which are economically oriented rather than social. He believes these initiatives, like collaborative dialogue itself, will strengthen the local production system with benefits for all.

44 Among other important environmental and food outcomes is the conservation of a grape variety, *Asprinio*, which is uniquely suited to this “terroir” (Buondonno et al. 2006). *Asprinio* belongs to a little grown subspecies of wine grapes (*Vitis Vinifera Sylvestris*) which would be extinct were it not for producers like *Eureka*. His operations thus revive an important feature of the traditional landscape, while preserving a significant expression of plant diversity.

The **CORAGGIO** Cooperative in Rome

45 The *Cooperative Coraggio* (*Cooperativa Romana Agricoltura Giovani*) was founded in 2015 as one of several cooperatives established on underutilized public land in the city of Rome. We interviewed the president of the cooperative, Giacomo, in August of 2018. Giacomo has been involved in urban activism since the early 2000s. He represents an innovative trend within Rome's radical experiments, which historically involved the illegal occupation of public or private property (Mudu 2014). These experiments would probably fall under the heading of 'alternative' practices. Giacomo's innovation is to work with a reconceptualized set of market forces, and operate within formal public policy rather than against it. He is fully part of the social economy with strong commitment to the multifunctional objectives outlined above.

46 Giacomo contributed to our loosely structured discussion with no hesitation. The first actor in his world is the territory. Rome is the most extensive green city in Europe, yet farming is in decline in part because of speculation by developers who hope to convert farmland into construction sites. This speculative strategy is such that Rome's agricultural land values are seven times higher than the EU average. A hectare of arable in Rome is worth about €50,000 against an EU average of €7,000, and an Italian average of €17,000. Giacomo defines the relationship between developers and public administration as being of a mafia type, and destructive not only of the city's economic potentialities, but of its landscape heritage.

47 The second actor is political activism and its relationship with public administration. Historically this relationship has been antagonistic, but the new movement has a new mission: they seek rent rather than illegal occupation. The third actor is unemployment; Italy has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Europe. Land gainfully employed can offer economic hope to people with few resources. Another actor is social media, which links activists to a broader community.

48 Their main organizational philosophy is diversification, which aligns well with the idea of multifunctionality. Public space in Rome is notorious for its poor maintenance, and the cooperative provides accessible public space for the local community at no cost to the public administration. Landscape remediation is another factor, made necessary by the heavy exodus from agriculture. The cooperative creates youth employment, and provides the local community with an attractive natural environment, a didactic farm, and healthy local food.

49 The cooperative pays rent with a 15-year renewable leasehold on 22 hectares of farmland, of which two are given over to cereal cultivation, and half a hectare to vegetable crops. They pay a rent of about €6,000 per year; since 2017, they have received a roughly equivalent EU farm contribution.

50 Currently only a small portion of their revenue is generated by farming. Their fruit and olive trees, planted with a financial contribution donated by a locally resident citizen, will take several years before they generate revenue. Other crop choices are limited by the absence of irrigation. In addition to wheat, they produce drought-resistant sorghum from which they make bread and pasta.

51 The production process starts with land that had been abandoned for years by the time the cooperative was finally allowed to work it. The land had to be reclaimed initially at great physical and financial cost. Every season there are then the usual activities of plowing, tilling, sowing; and the harvest. For many of these activities they use the paid services of neighboring farmers with expensive heavy equipment and consolidated farming skills.

52 Commodity production provides only a part of their revenue. Two hectares of land are given over to durum wheat. It costs about €500 per hectare to produce the wheat, which then yields a per hectare market value of some €800. Their two hectares of

wheat represents a net market value of about €600, hardly enough to support their needs. The cooperative sells a small portion of the wheat on the local commodity market, and uses the rest to make pasta sold at their farm. This is a way of extending their earnings in the value chain and privileging local markets. They have the wheat milled by a private stone miller, and process and package the pasta themselves. He estimates that the production cost for half a kilogram of pasta is €1.90, knowing that the going price for store-bought pasta can be as low as €0.70 per half kilogram. Yet local citizens buy this product because they support the cooperative and value locally produced food. The cooperative also produces winter horticultural crops, like cabbage and lettuce, also sold at their facilities. Production costs are high and organic yields low.

53 They cover costs, and improve their farm, thanks to the support of an estimated three hundred local citizens, who not only purchase food products, but also attend events, which can draw in as many as six hundred people from different parts of northern Rome. They aim to increase farm product sales, but at the same time maintain their social and environmental function. At the current time, farm sales constitute a small portion of their gross €70,000 annual revenues. Most revenue is reinvested in the farm, which is why their salaries are so low, about €300 per each of the 10 cooperative workers, irrespective of the role performed. They started their operations in 2013 with 17 members; the others abandoned the project because dissatisfied with their economic performance. Those who stayed on, like Giacomo, are as much interested in social and environmental outcomes as they are in financial ones. All current cooperative members pursue other part-time activities to make ends meet, but are confident that eventually they will become financially self-sufficient as a cooperative.

54 The challenge will be to develop agricultural products that allow value addition through product transformation. Pasta and bread have this characteristic, as do processed foods like grilled eggplants packed in olive oil. These are the products they sell at their store and promote at the luncheon events they organize. This range of products will be extended to other specialties in the future, like marmalades.

55 Cooperative members see themselves as specialists in farming and environmental heritage preservation. Indeed, they offer training to individuals and to schools in environmental appreciation. Their strategy is not to move up the value chain to reach a global public, but to focus on a short value chain configuration with local appeal. Their value chain activities, today restricted to cereal production and limited vegetable crops, will expand, but always with a view to reconceptualizing operations in such a way as to leverage opportunities to involve the local public in value creation which is also social and environmental.

Conclusion

56 We started our explorations with the claim that antimafia farms are more social than alternative. With weak public support, such cooperatives must generate sufficient revenue to maintain necessary investments and provide for the needs of the workers. Yet as social farms, all are interested in pursuing outcomes, which go beyond financial returns. These outcomes can be thought of as social, environmental, and food related. We have seen examples of this in all three cooperatives, from employment impact in Sicily, to social welfare in Campania, to landscape remediation in Lazio. We should note that all three organizations see themselves as examples of commitment to a culture of legality, which they believe will help rescue their respective territories from

the grips of a mafia presence that has weakened the fabric of their communities. All three cases involve sophisticated entrepreneurs who have acquired significant expertise in navigating complex markets, and equally complex public policy. They must necessarily understand their production operations as a value chain, but choose to think about the parts and the whole in innovative ways, challenging established farm production practices in such a way as to pursue multiple outcomes. The most obvious example of this is the choice not to use automated equipment in some production operations, precisely because the cooperatives are more committed to providing dignified labor than they are to pursuing profit.

57 Many citizens in the world today realize that eating is an agricultural act, and this awareness draws the public to closer interest in the stages of agricultural value production, including a concern for social justice. The visibility of value chain factors is most salient when the consumer and the producer share the same local territory. When they are united by a global market, instead, these factors are less vivid in the mind of the consumer, who may nonetheless still be influenced by the idea of justice, which social cooperatives purposefully highlight as a defining feature of their overall production process.

58 The value chain concept, however difficult to convey to the consumer, is of compelling importance to producers, even those operating in the social economy. Value production in farming necessarily involves a physical product transformed through stages that are well known to professionals operating in this economic sector. But the specific approach to product transformation can be oriented to various outcomes. For example, in viticulture vines require a support system to be productive, most commonly the trellis owing to its versatility. The viticulturists explored in Campania instead use the technically inefficient married vine management system, because it has important implications for local landscape heritage. They are producing grapes for wine production, but using techniques whose value goes beyond pure production considerations. In this way, we can see that from a technical standpoint, the production process can be considered linear if the outcome is limited exclusively to an economic variable. But if the outcome balances among different variables – social, environmental, landscape, food – then the process will no longer appear in linear terms, because each stage of value creation condenses a host of opportunities which can be differently orchestrated to attain different aims.

59 Rakoupolos (2015: 67) notes that in Sicilian cooperatives labor relations are at once personal and impersonal, navigating tensions within the neoliberal market. This is a liquid society, to which the response can only be fluid (Bauman 2013). In the rich history of the Italian cooperative movements, effort has been made to stabilize relations between market and mutuality through a specific legal framework governing a system of production today under threat owing to the increasing importance of impersonal financial markets in all areas of economic production, including farming (Zamagni and Zamagni 2008: 116). The measures employed by these financial markets are skewed in favor of profit-making companies; and the utilitarian principles they use to assess performance are anything but neutral. Rakoupolos (2015: 66) reminds us that neoliberalisms are mixed systems capable of blending contrasting claims.

60 The actors described here are examples of this blending of claims, pursuing economic viability while consciously resisting an impersonal market logic through ever changing responses to fluctuating political and economic conditions. The complexity of their production processes, and the shifting conditions in which they operate, make it senseless to talk of a monolithic form of resistance. Instead, every stage in the production process – i.e., the value chain – must be assessed continuously to identify

opportunities to balance prevailing tensions in favor of principles of mutuality and environmental sustainability. As cooperatives embracing an antimafia identity, all of this is articulated within a culture of legality based on transparent relations with the broader community.

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Notes

1 Controversy over the role of social capital in southern Italian history was stirred by Putnam's classic 1993 study, the most effective rebuttal being that of Sabetti (2000). The idea of social capital today is part of a standard if contested narrative used by many citizens to discuss society and economics.

2 Herzfeld (2009) has explored the implications of civic movement in Rome's urban setting.

3 There is an ample literature on innovation within Campania wines. An interesting study of business challenges for Campania wine producers is found in Rossi *et al.* (2012).

4 Anton Blok (1974) carried out research in this area in the 1960s and showed how mafia roots reach back to the early 19th century.

5 We use the term mafia as a blanket expression to cover organized criminality, but recognize that the Campania mafia is usually called Camorra (Sales 2015).

6 See ANBSC (2019).

7 Rakopoulos has published a series of articles (especially 2013, 2014, 2015) on farming and cooperatives in the Belice valley from which this section draws. The section also draws from the web site of *Centopassi* (<https://centopassisicilia.it/it/>, accessed July 17, 2018).

8 The interview described here was conducted in February of 2018. But the authors have ongoing contact with Stefano and other actors associated with the cooperative.

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