RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Urban food strategies and plans: considerations on the assessment construction

Giacomo Coppo[*], Sarah Stempfle and Matelda Reho

Abstract

In a context of growing attention to the issue of feeding the city, this article focuses on the role of the assessments guiding the processes of urban food policy and planning to reach Sustainable Food Security. The starting point is a collection of experiences dealing with some cities that in recent years have launched strategies for developing healthier and more sustainable food systems. Their analysis highlights the innovations in the construction of cognitive frameworks supporting food policies and planning, as well as the difficulties to explore the food phenomenon on the qualitative and quantitative level. Within a current research meant to address the food agenda in Venice, the authors take advantage from the case studies comparison to propose key themes and investigation methods a preliminary assessment of the existing food system. Considering the strong impact of the huge tourist flow that invests the city, daily, the foodservice sector is considered as the main challenging and strategical core-area for boosting impactful changes in the urban food system.

Keywords: Food Security, Urban Food Strategy, Sustainable Food Assessment

Background

In the last 15 years, food has internationally become an important topic in urban agendas and in scientific publications (Sonnino 2009; Morgan 2014; Ilieva 2016a). Some international chart and declaration[1] have tried to put down common objectives to arise the awareness around the importance of the theme, putting dow common objectives to be followed up by local food strategies. This interest embraces a dense group of themes related to territorial management, such as public health, social justice and inclusion, economic vitality, urban resilience, and environmental mitigation. The emerging concept of Food Security revises its classical definition (World Food Summit 1996) with a gaze towards sustainability (Sustainable Food Security: Donkers 2014; Sonnino et al. 2014), showing all the complex interlaces of food with economy, society and the natural environment. In cities, a shift of methodological approach in food policies making is put in practice, trying to re-orient the demand and not to generally comply with the food supply trends in the

global economy, to a demand oriented construction. In other words: if the food production and the global market are driven by factors that are difficult to be directed from urban contexts, it is argued that shaping new frameworks for consumer's choices (and thus re-orienting the demand) is what urban policies can do to foster change. As urban planners we agree with these arguments when considering urban food consumption as a main driver in shaping the food systems. Specifically, referring both to urban policies and urban planning, the urban food strategies are emerging (Sonnino 2014; Calori and Magarini 2015; Ilieva 2016b): these are processes of policy making and sectoral planning that, systematically, consider the food and its relations to the urban metabolism. Alternatively to systemic approaches, focusing on food can result in smaller actions that intervene by strengthening urban agriculture, alternative food networks and waste reduction. The added value of public intervention lies both in building a network and multiplying the positive impacts of these actions.

*Correspondence: gc.giacomo.coppo@gmail.com
Dipartimento di Progettazione e Pianificazione in Ambienti Complessi,
Università IUAV di Venezia, Ca'Tron-Santa Croce, 1957, 30135 Venezia, Italy

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[1] Seoul Declaration (ICLEI 2015); Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (2015); Adopted Draft of the New Urban Agenda, (UN, Quito, 2016).

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The comparative study of several cases permits to highlight different levels of definition and to distinguish between two main groups: 'strategic declarations' and 'action plans'. The former are limited to the identification of objectives and strategic lines and seem to have a more communicative character; the latter, instead, present operative contents and define interventions. In both cases, emerges a potential role of food as catalyst of policies (from health to environmental protection, from social justice to economical innovation) and a key for planning sustainable territorials systems. Academics track these new sensibilities from early 2000s (Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999); APA's *Food System Planning White Paper* 2005). In the USA, the American Planning Association seems to have played an important part in this process of promoting food in the planning field. In Europe a similar role can be attributed to the AESOP association that funds the Sustainable Food Planning Group (2009), meeting regularly for prompting discussion and coordination around food issues. In the UK, the Sustainable Food Cities Network (that reunites almost 50 cities) is a standing out example of tutoring and coordinating local governments towards food systems sustainability. All these entities recognize that the links between food and planning are many, spacing from societal to environmental, from the domain of health to the economy one, shaping the environment and bringing people together.[2] It has to be mentioned that, despite the enthusiasm that these considerations have brought to both academics and professionals, the local communities have not always appreciated the new interest of planners into the food agenda (Davids, De Olde, 2014), disclosing in development practice with many problematic and contradictory dimensions.

Between the many aspects we face when defining an urban food strategy, this article considers the assessment of the food system sustainability for a given context. This "scanning" step of the actual situation is essential to address any food strategy and monitor its efficacy (Moragues et al. 2013). From the literature we can point out some key aspects that are essential to make a robust food system assessment: the consideration of diverse spheres of food-related issues as well as the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from public, private and civil society sectors (Moragues et al. 2013); the definition of analytical parameters and research boundaries (Blay-Palmer et al. 2015); the construction of indicators able to measure progress in all the environmental, social and economic dimensions of food sustainability and security (Prosperi et al. 2015). Nevertheless, scientific literature doesn't seem having dedicated special attention to the implementation of food systems sustainability assessment at an urban scale. Two texts emerge for generally discussing the topic and confronting different examples: *What's cooking in your food system? A guide to community food assessment* (Pothukuchi et al. 2002)[3] and *Measuring progress towards sustainable food cities: sustainability and food security indicators* (Prosperi et al. 2015).[4] From Pothukuchi it comes to light that an assessment can be related to planning in an *integrated*, *participative* and *progressive* way; while Prosperi individuates the "theme-based/goal-oriented framework […] as the most appropriate to cover the variety of elements that constitute the urban food system".

There are even few guides and toolkits which can provide guidelines and advices for developing a food assessment; between them, two are representative for trying to answer the question at an interstate and international scale. In the United States of America, at the federal level, the "*Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*" has been released by the USDA (US Department of Agriculture) and at an international level, the FAO published a guide on Sustainable Assessment on Food and Agriculture Systems: the "*SAFA guidelines*". The aims of the two documents are different (and complementary): USDA's is mainly interested in the community while FAO's is directed to the entities (enterprises, organizations, etc.) acting on the food and agricultural system. Even if none of them can be actually took as an operational guide for assessing the urban food system strategies, the inescapable themes any food assessment should consider can be deduced: food accessibility and affordability (economical, spatial and cultural); the linkages of diets with health; the effectiveness of assistance programs; household food security; the political and community support; the food production economic, environmental (i.e. on soil, water, biodiversity, landscape) and social impacts; the costs of food transport and transformation in terms of water and

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[2] "Recognition that food system activities take up a significant amount of urban and regional land; Awareness that planners can play a role to help reduce the rising incidence of hunger on the one hand, and obesity on the other; Understanding that the food system represents an important part of community and regional economies; Awareness that the food Americans eat takes a considerable amount of fossil fuel energy to produce, process, transport, and dispose of; Understanding that farmland in metropolitan areas, and therefore the capacity to produce food for local and regional markets, is being lost at a strong pace; Understanding that pollution of ground and surface water, caused by the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture adversely affects drinking water supplies; Awareness that access to healthy foods in low-income areas is an increasing problem for which urban agriculture can offer an important solution" (APA, 2007).

[3] The text, written and edited by Pothukuchi, is published by the Community Food Security Coalition (California) and takes its steps from the concepts enounced in the Community Food Security Assessment toolkit (USDA 2002).

[4] Born from a project of the Planning and Geography school of the Cardiff University to improve the impact of the Sustainable Urban Food Strategies.

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energy use and GHG emissions; the disposal, recycle and reuse of food waste.

Methods

A comparative analysis of the assessment of some urban food strategy is proposed, focusing on how these strategies define the cognitive framework and relate to an internal effectiveness evaluation. The cases research has been conducted on the web, using keywords in English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. In relation to the big amount of documents intercepted, we selected only institutionally approved strategies that: approach to food as a systemic phenomenon, defining objectives and actions and demonstrating to operate not only to ensure food accessibility and affordability, but even to improve the food system sustainability. For this reason, all the strategic declarations that were too vague and the actions that were too punctual have been excluded. The resulting sample covers the following 11 strategies,[5] chronologically ordered: healthy and sustainable food for London (London 2006), spade to spoon (Brighton and Hove 2006 + 2012), food works (New York 2010), cultivating food connections (Toronto 2010), eating here (Greater Philadelphia 2011), Calgary eats! Food system assessment and action plan (Calgary 2012), Vancouver food strategy (Vancouver 2013), une alimentation durable pour tous (Lyon 2015), food policy di Milano (Milan 2015), good food, mieux produir bien manger (Bruxelles 2015) and good food (Bristol 2016). All the cases have been developed in the last 10 years, in municipal area or metropolitan regions of the 'global north', inhabited by a population that varies between 250,000 and 8 million people.

The comparison of the assessments that support the strategic processes allows to enlighten peculiarities, analogies and dissimilarities, opportunities and limits of the different experiences. This explorative study is paramount for improving the design and implementation of even more effective actions in contexts where similar instruments have never been adopted. In this sense, this work provided us a useful framework for a research we are currently conducting on Venice, aiming to picture a preliminary assessment of its food system. Although having signed the "Milan Urban Food Policy Pact", this city has not started yet to develop any effort to make its own food system more resilient and sustainable. The work is focused on the historical center of Venice and its island and carried through the lens of the foodservice sector that, adopting a place-based perspective, results as the most problematic and, at the same time, strategical core-area for implementing food-related programs and initiatives. Indeed, beyond representing a relevant traditional activity, this sector supplies and nourishes an astonishing and increasing number of tourists, that recorded an amount of over 4.5 million arrivals and over 10.2 million presences in 2015,[6] an astonishing number for a city of less than 265,000 inhabitants. More precisely, statistics record 56,356 residents in the "city of art" in 2014[7] and projections estimate the entrance of 83,000 non-residents in the "city of art", daily,[8] making presumable the predominance of non-domestic food-related dynamics in the considered area. Since, not surprisingly, the most part of the tourist flow is absorbed by the "city of art", where food-related problems and dysfunctionalities are concentered. In second place, despite its importance in the foodscape, the commercial foodservice sector has not yet been stressed in literature, differently to collective food provision (e.g. for schools or hospitals), whose role—more easily ascribable to institutional action—has been extensively examined.

Results and discussion

According to Bond et al. (2012), we can define a sustainable food system assessment as "any process that directs decision-making towards Food System sustainability".[9] The screening of the selected case studies shows how differently this assessment can be set. This is not much surprising since not only the cultural, legislative and political background these studies and plans come from, but also the moment of its redaction in relation to the progress of the strategy, differs from case to case, determining different willingness and needs shaping the assessment. Nonetheless, as researchers, we can state that this diversity is even an occasion to explore how different approaches can be applied into practice.

First of all, we need to recognized that not all the food strategies and action plans are accompanied by or refers to an overall assessment of the existing situation: some of them (as for the cases of Brighton & Hove and Lyon) seems to take it for granted, even if any previous published evaluation is found.[10]

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[5] Considering a total number of 52 urban strategies and plans released between 2001 and 2015, as measured by the study of Ilieva (2016a), the sample of 11 strategies and plans we consider represents more than the 20% of the total.

[6] Data provided by the Tourism Annual 2015 of Venice Municipality.

[7] Data provided by the statistic service of Venice (Servizio Statistica e Ricerca della Città di Venezia), http://www.comune.venezia.it/archivio/26622.

[8] Data provided by Italia Nostra Venezia, http://www.italianostravenezia.org/statistiche-su-venezia/turisti-pendolari-e-altri-visitatori/.

[9] It is quoted in Waas et al. (2014) as the most "all-inclusive" definition of SA.

[10] The revision of the list of references of the documents and the online research permit to state so. In this sense, the case of Brighton & Hove is peculiar because the lack of a general assessment of the Food System is partially filled by an in deep evaluation of one of its actions: the Harvest Project of urban agriculture.

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Analysing only the case studies that present an assessment of the overall food system, we propose a classification of different types of plans according to specific characteristics; it is a functional choice to achieve (and report) a more thorough comparative analysis of the cases, one that shows the possibilities and the limits of each approach to the assessment.

The first distinction proposed is between the *descriptive* and the *indicator based* assessments. The former category includes those cases for which the assessment is limited to a baseline study, that is a large collection of qualitative and quantitative data without the real definition of indicators (as for the cases of London, Toronto and Milan). The latter includes the cases that, besides the description of the food system, arrive to a selection of proper indicators with a varying level of in-depth examination. This first differentiation is built on the following definitions of indicator as "a way to measure, indicate or point to with more or less exactness", "something used to show the condition of a system" (Feenstra et al. 2005) or an "operational representation of an attribute (quality, characteristic, property) of a system" (Gallopin 1997)[11] or a "quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor" (OECD/DAC 2002).

In the descriptive approaches we encountered, the data are classified into thematic categories that change from one strategy to the other, according to the general framework of the document. Their structure is completely comparable to the baseline studies of the Great Philadelphia's and Bristol's studies or to the shorter descriptive introductions of the New York's, Calgary's and Bruxelles' ones. The limit of this approach lays in the complexity of conducting an *ex-post* evaluation of the progress of the strategy. This happens because of the difficulty to monitor the modifications with the *ex ante* situation in processing a big amount of partially fragmented informations. To permit a monitoring process over time, in fact, a set of indicators is needed.

For what specifically concerns the content or the nature of the indicators, we verify that each assessment that propose a set of indicators considers, with a different extent, the following themes: health and food education, "access to good food" aid programs, local food economy, food production and urban agriculture, and environmental sustainability. We recall the attached *table*, where an exploration of the thematic indicators selected by every analysed assessment is proposed. What can differ importantly, according to the intents and the procedures used for its definition, is the structure of the indicators set. Generally speaking, we can confirm what assumed by Prosperi et al. (2015, pp. 7–8), finding out that indicators sets of food systems assessments are preferably based on a *theme-based* or *goal-oriented* framework. More in detail, comparison shows three resulting types of set: the *synthetic*, the *omni-comprehensive* and the *operational.* The first one consist of a concise list of indicators (between 10 and 19, as for the cases of New York,[12] Calgary and Greater Philadelphia); the indicators are put together without any form of classification (New York), or they can be grouped with the goals of the strategy (Calgary) or the themes of the assessment (Greater Philadelphia). The omni-comprehensive approach consists of a wide and multilevel assessment, structured and complete. The only example of this approach is represented by the document: *How food secure is Vancouver in a changing world?* (2010), that collects 54 indicators and 99 metrics and is the only reference assessment found for the case of Vancouver. Its scientific accuracy in the process of construction of the indicators set from six determinant themes and their subtopics is noteworthy. In the operational approach, that in our analysis is represented by the cases of Bruxelles and Bristol, the indicators are developed starting from the proposed actions, as their measurable outcome. If the synthetic approach is really effective in communication, as the resuming table elaborated in the Greater Philadelphia strategy demonstrate (p. 26), the omni-comprehensive one is interesting for its deepening capacity and completeness even if its compilation seems to be long and complex. The operational approach, instead, seems effective in tackling the actions effects in time and in setting quantitative objectives. Referring to stricter definitions of indicators, that are the ones that require the association of a reference value to recognize its validity,[13] we discover that between the analysed assessments that defines indicators almost none of them present a reference value, thus limiting the evaluation to an internal monitoring progress of the change of the selected indicator. The only case that defines a kind of reference value is the Bruxelles' one, where the strategic goals are translated into measurable objectives.

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[11] The two quotations are took from *Measuring progress towards sustainable food cities: Sustainability and food security indicators* (Prosperi et al. 2015), p. 6.

[12] The adoption of 19 metrics for monitoring the New York Food Works Strategy is interesting because of the promulgation of the Local Law 52 in July 2011, which established reporting requirements for many different food-related initiatives, as previewed by the same strategy.

[13] As for the integrative definition released by Waas et al. (2014): *"An indicator is the operational representation of an attribute (quality, characteristic, property) of a given system, by a quantitative or qualitative variable (for example numbers, graphics, colors, symbols) (or function of variables), including its value, related to a reference value."*

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Ares of indicators considered in the selected assessments

Thematic areas considered	Selected strategies and assessments
Total purchased food	NYC, Clg
Local food production and transformation	USDA, NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc
Spatial access to good food	USDA, NYC, Clg, Vnc
Economic access to good food	USDA, SAFA, GPh, Clg, Vnc
Local or organic food consumption, purchase and/or procurement	SAFA, NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc, Brx, Brs
Food losses and waste	SAFA, NYC, Vnc, Brx, Brs
Food and health	NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc, Brs
Community-led trade	Brs
Food standards application to public or private foodservices	NYC, Brx, Brs
Food assistance programs	USDA, NYC, Clg, Vnc, Brs
Food training programs and education	NYC, Clg, Vnc, Brx
Political and community support	NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc, Brs
Food production and environmental/resources preservation	SAFA, NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc
Socioeconomic characteristics of the community	USDA, SAFA
Economic development (employment, activities)	SAFA, NYC, GPh, Clg, Vnc, Brs

USDA   COHEN B. *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*, E FAN publications, 2013.

SAFA   FAO. Sustainability Assessment and Food and Agriculture, SAFA Systems Indicators, FAO, Rome, (2013).

NYC   Food Works—A Vision to Improve NYC's Food System, New York City Council, 2010. Food Metrics Report 2014, New York City Council, 2014.

GPh   Eating Here—Greater Philadelphia's Food System Plan, DVRPC, 2011.

Clg   Calgary FS assessment and Action Plan, The City of Calgary, 2012.

Vnc   How Food Secure is Vancouver in a Changing World? 2010, Vancouver Food Policy Council, 2010.

Brx   Strategie Good Food "Vers un SystèmeAlimentaire Durable enrégion de Bruxelles-Capitale", BruxellesEnvironnement, 2015.

Brs   Bristol's Good Food Action Plan 2015–18, Bristol Food Policy Council, 2016.

While many authors stress the importance of a methodological rigorousness in assessing food systems, analysis confirms that several difficulties and limitations emerge in practice. Among the commonest, Blay-Palmer and colleagues (2015) point out three main orders of problems: a first related to data availability, accessibility, comparability, fragmentation and costs; a second related to the actual capability of translating the complexity and the extent of food systems into appropriate and feasible research methods; a third related to the setting of research boundaries, scale and scope, which will inevitably influence research results. What we discussed before gives an idea of the difficulties the strategies faced in exploring and describing the food system and of the need of a variable geometry for the assessment model, in order to be adopted and scaled to different situations. In regard to data availability, all the case studies we analysed encountered difficulties in collecting information on people's food habits (economic incidence of food shop, daily diet, food skills), food products provenience and environmental impacts related to specific products and diets. Considering that the principal data sources of the analysed assessments are public statistics, surveys, focus groups and specific scientific investigations, it is evident a strong limit in measuring new dimensions that are central to the realization of Sustainable Urban Food Systems is represented by cost and time.

Another important aspect is the role that existing food projects, realised by the private initiative and acting in a more sustainable way, can assume. In some assessment (as for the Calgary), specific projects are analysed and reported as best practices: an example to which direct the action. In other cases, and with particular consideration for the case of Bristol, the existing projects take a big part in the strategy definition. For the realisation of the "Bristol's Good Food Action Plan 2015–18" a call to action has been released, in order to collect "the plans and aims of many groups across the city-region". In even other cases, that is for the Milano Food Policy, efforts have been made, during the first steps towards the policy definition, to list all the actors acting in the food system in a new, positive and sustainable way.

These considerations bring us to ponder about other possible ways of bringing together institutions, citizens and food entrepreneurs in the construction of the assessment, that is a key point for the case of Venice, where the foodservice sector is so relevant but at the same time fragmented and difficult to be examined systematically. Considering the policy orientation of our planning approach, in the case-study of Venice we assumed the assessment of the existing situation as an essential starting point, which constitutes a needful basis both for formulating goals and indicators, and for monitoring the effects of the forthcoming strategies and policies. According to acknowledged methodological suggestions (Moragues et al. 2013; Blay-Palmer et al. 2015), we structured the research process in three steps. Firstly, we started with a rapid and explorative assessment of the foodservice system, underpinned by the analysis of existing data and documents, web research and informal

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discussions with stakeholders. Once pictured the emerging scenario, the research is meant to identify key-topics, proceeding with a more issue-based approach. To fill information gaps, new data need to be collected with qualitative methods (surveys and interviews). Finally, the results will be used for defining areas of policy relevance, achievable objectives and indicators, as well as best practices to be fostered and enhanced. The sources of data used in this phase are: the census of the national statistical office (ISTAT), the registry of businesses of the Chamber of Commerce (CCIAADL), together with regional, provincial and municipal open datasets. Once checked the quality of the data and refined some row databases, we could extrapolate elements of quantitative analysis such as total amount, sizes, typological segmentation, entrepreneurial and territorial density of the Venetian foodservice sector. Weighting the 11.1% of the whole economic activities at municipal level in 2015, the sector records a continuous growth, much higher than the general one. In Venice's historical center and its islands, in 2016 the foodservice counts 1348 businesses. In line with the segmentation at national level (Fipe 2015), the sector turns out to be polarized by conventional restaurants or similar businesses preparing and serving meals, from the one side, and bar or similar businesses without kitchen, from the other side. In addition, the physical occupancy of the foodservice includes a number of utility rooms (warehouses, offices, laboratories, changing rooms, etc.) which is equivalent to the total amount of the bar, as well as the ever growing "plateatico" spaces (i.e., the ones occupying the public land). Besides giving evidence of the important physical dimension of the considered sector in the urban environment, mapping is very useful for pointing out spatial relations, enabling a greater integration between food action and planning approaches and thus need to be implemented.

In parallel, it is traced the existence of entrepreneurial attitudes sensible to food-related issues, sometimes organized in more or less structured networks of restaurateurs and local growers adopting logics of integrated agri-food and territorial responsibility.[14]

The only regulatory and law device for the food and beverage delivering activities is the Municipal Guideline of 2012, which individuates differentiated preserving zones in the urban tissue and introduces some quality criteria for allowing new businesses opening or relocations. Attention is given to fresh and "km 0" food, organic products, typical cuisine without use of precooked or industrial food, dedicated supply for food intolerances. Together with this tool, other ongoing experimental projects mainly centered on quality certification labels[15] should be further enhanced for boosting changes towards a best food system.

On one side, this framework offers some initial elements to reconnect and valorize for restructuring the territory-food-table chain in a more sustainable and resilient way; on the other side, it stresses that the interlinkages between foodservice and tourism play a relevant role in shaping the Venetian foodscape and thus represent a key area for developing effective policies and strategies.

Conclusions

The exploration of Food Strategies and Action Plans reveals a very varied and changing framework, not only in relation to the differentiated degrees of comprehensiveness or orderliness of the provided assessments, but also looking at the themes and concerns that are deepened time by time. The assessment building process, together with the use of specific indicators within it, seems to reflect a progressive enrichment and enlargement of the food discourses, shifting from mere health concerns, to wider meanings of biosecurity and well-being, towards the building of a new complex paradigm of sustainability (Marsden and Morley 2014).

The construction of a possible roadmap for Venice's food action can surely learn and take advantage from this pathway. At the same time, it can inspire more general considerations.

Preliminarily, it can be detected the operative need of making readable the ongoing experiences from their characterizing aspects: assessment construction, strategy delineation, actions development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The plans analysis should be valorized setting up more systematic instruments, such as a dedicated observatory, which could maintain an up-to-date database of both food strategies and other good (and bad) practices (in different food-related sectors). Such platform could be the "place" for exchange and constructive discussion both between researchers and practitioners; a "place" where knowledge on sustainable urban food system creation can be permanently recorded and accessible, in order to enhance coordination and exchange in food strategy implementation processes.

Due to the variety of action and the complexity of their interactions in the food arena, we argue that the elaboration of cognitive, informative and evaluative tools, require the building up of participatory and public–private partnerships systems that can be accessed and increased by different stakeholders. Indeed, food-related

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[14] Two examples are: the association "The Good Welcoming Restaurants of Venice" that supports food genuineness, quality, origin, typicality and security, and the members of the "Slow Food Chef's Alliance" that defends food biodiversity and local cultures.

[15] "Sustainable Venice", a label that is granted on the basis of requisites and indicators specifically designed for different sectors; and "Detourism", an integrated campaign for promoting a slow and more responsible tourism.

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issues embrace dynamic and partially informal phenomena, which are hardly to match with the conventional institutional database building, but are important to detect, represent and promptly update, in order to support and strengthen informed consumption and policy choices. This concern stands behind some experiences in urban and metropolitan areas (Lupia 2014) that seem to give good results adopting bottom-up updating processes, such as web-mapping. The sustainability assessment of the foodservice in Venice historical city—where dynamics are highly tourist-led—is functional to light up the discussion on the the building of a more healthy, justly and sustainable city's food system. Sure enough, the active involvement of the private operators is essential for collecting data as: the percentages of short chain origin, the amount of waste production, the ways of west processing, and so on; and understand the reasons that stand behind quantitative evidences. What comes out from first research, is that the creation of quality brands or labels at local level can help both collecting information from the stakeholders willing to endorse them, and at the same time addressing them towards good practices.

The emerging framework in which the urban agendas on the food question are getting to work is characterized by diversity, fragmentation and on-going changing; it expresses the need of a creative space for action, free from inhibitions and constraints, but able to govern the multidimensional and multifunctional aspects of food environments, involving a large plethora of different stakeholders. Once again, this opens a challenge for planning (Morgan 2009; Dezio and Marino 2016), that is called to renew and refine its capabilities, pathways and methods in order to deal with the food as a catalyst and activating factor of synergies.

Authors' contributions

Competing interests

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