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Sustainable Development – Environmental Governance

**A Vade-mecum for Food Champions:
How to influence Stakeholder Engagement for the
development of Urban Food Strategies**
A Study on Policy Entrepreneurship in Cork (IR) and Bergamo (IT)

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ABSTRACT

The detrimental impact of the current global food system on both society and ecosystems requires a systemic shift towards a more sustainable state. As projections claim that almost 70% of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050, the importance of the role of cities in tackling the sustainability of the food system decisively increases, especially within the context of climate change. To date, a few pioneering urban governments adopted so-called urban food strategies (UFSs), which are holistic plans integrating a full spectrum of issues related to urban food systems, from food production to waste management.

Due to its very recent development, the phenomenon of UFSs has been scarcely investigated in scientific literature. An interesting perspective to explore it, is the study of agency of crucial actors, so-called food champions, often belonging to civil society, who invest time, energy and resources to push the topic of food onto the municipalities' agenda. This research specifically investigates the strategies undertaken by these actors in order to involve stakeholders, which represent a fundamental premise for the potential development of UFSs.

Policy entrepreneurship and leadership literature provided the theoretical concepts underpinning the case study research conducted in two European cities, which have started developing their UFSs, namely Cork (IR) and Bergamo (IT). The investigation of strategies implemented by actors and actor groups was performed considering the variety of contextual features influencing both the agency of food champions and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

The results showed that policy entrepreneurship is often a collective phenomenon, based on the agency of actor groups, rather than individuals. Moreover, it is paramount that champions are highly sensitive to the social, economic and institutional context within which they act. This allows them to define problems and create visions that best fit interests and perspectives of the stakeholders, as well as to reinforce trust and reputation, necessary for cooperation and collective action.

The final section of this report includes a vade-mecum for food champions, which presents the major insights gained through the empirical study. Recommendations are made for potential change agents of the urban food system, eager to engage stakeholders along the path of the urban food revolution.

Keywords:

Urban Food Strategies - Policy Entrepreneurship – Collective Leadership – Food Champions – Stakeholder Engagement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| AR | Agriculture Roundtable of Bergamo |
| CLT | Complex Leadership Theory |
| CFPC | Cork Food Policy Council |
| GHG | Greenhouse Gas |
| GYO | Grow Your Own (Vegetables) Scheme |
| PE | Policy Entrepreneurs |
| SC | Network of Sustainable Citizenship – Bergamo |
| SPGs | Sustainable Purchase Groups |
| UFSs | Urban Food Strategies |

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Definition. The global challenge of a sustainable food system

Over recent years, the international community has gradually acknowledged that the issue related to food system¹ needs to be coupled with sustainability requirements. Depletion of freshwater resources, reduction of biodiversity, soil erosion, and contamination, land use change and deforestation generally represent the detrimental impacts that the current highly energy and capital-intensive agro-food system has on the environment (Feenstra, 2002; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999; Sage, 2015; Wiskerke, 2009). One major example is the contribution of the current food system to climate change: the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) emitted from production to consumption ranges between 19 and 29% of the global GHG emissions (IAASTD, 2009; IPES-Food, 2016; Vermeulen, Campbell, & Ingram, 2012).

The societal and human impacts are similarly severe: 2 billion people suffer from obesity and related diseases (WHO, 2016), while 836 million people are still undernourished (UN, 2015), although annually one-third of the food produced - about 1.3 billion tonnes per year - is wasted (Gustavsson, Cederberg, Sonesson, Van Otterdijk, & Meybeck, 2011). These figures provide an overview of the unsustainable status of the current food system, strongly related to high instability and uncertainty of food security worldwide (Marsden & Morley, 2014).

The financial, fiscal and fuel crises have further deteriorated this worrisome picture over the recent years, contributing to redefining the geography of food insecurity, which is no longer only a Global South's issue (Sonnino et al, 2014). Hence, given the high unsustainability of the current food system and the widespread food insecurity that it has generated, it is crucial to keep questioning current food-related policies and practices so far implemented, not only in developing countries but also in the global North.

According to UN data, 66% of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050 (UN, 2014), dramatically increasing the importance of the role played by cities in tackling climate change, fostering adaptation measures for food security.

1.1.1 The answers of cities: Urban Food Strategies and Programs

To date, some scholars have recognised that cities are taking on a new role: "to drive the ecological survival of the human species by showing that large concentrations of people can find more sustainable ways of co-evolving with nature" (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010, p. 210). Indeed, as Marsden (2012, p. 2) states:

"Whilst we clearly must not lose sight of the macro-global picture, we also need to realise that in order to imagine and plan realistic alternatives it is necessary to adopt a more creative eco-economy paradigm which re-places', and indeed relocates, agriculture and its policies into the heart of regional and local systems of ecological, economic and community development".

With this regard, pioneering urban governments, especially in North America and Europe, have been making an attempt to address food security challenges through the adoption of so-called urban food strategies (UFSs). UFSs are roughly defined as "a process consisting of how a city envisions change in its food system, and how it strives towards this change" (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013, p. 6). The goal is the adoption of a holistic official plan or roadmap helping the city in integrating a full spectrum of issues related to urban food systems, within a single policy framework that includes all the phases of food production to waste management (Mansfield &

¹ A Food System is defined as "the range of activities by which food is produced, processed, distributed and consumed, and the influences on, and outcomes of those actions" (Jennings, Cottee, Curtis, & Miller, 2015).

Mendes, 2013). Public or semi-public institutions – from municipalities to hospitals, schools and prisons - through delivering nutritious and healthy meals, boosting the employment in the regional food sector as well as reducing CO2 emissions due to transportation (food miles), have the opportunity to support re-localization, greening and moralization of food procurement in the city (Wiskerke, 2009).

Given the impact of food on various sectors - from public health, education and social inclusion, to energy, water, and economic development - urban planners need to reach out to, and build alliances with, like-minded people in the city, from local government to civil society members (Morgan, 2009). This can in turn contribute to strategically improve social, cultural, environmental and economic health and well-being, of the whole city (Mah & Thang, 2013). The ongoing process of convergence of public actors, in the form of local governments and municipalities, with new and critical forms of food production and consumption originated within the civil society (citizens associations, Universities, NGOs, private actors etc) is leading to the “rise of an integrated and territorial mode of food governance”(Wiskerke, 2009, p. 377), whose patterns are not yet clearly defined.

Scholars agree that defining what a sustainable food strategy entails is incredibly difficult due to its multidimensional nature and the specific features that it can assume in the local context where it is implemented (Mendes, 2007; Moragues-Faus et al., 2013; Morgan & Sonnino, 2010; Wiskerke, 2015).

On a general level, Urban Food Strategies (UFSs) can be defined as “manifestations of different orders of dynamics in policy change, including subtle alterations in practice, instrumental shifts, as well as challenges to prevailing policy ideas” (Mah & Thang, 2013, p. 98). The Municipalities engaging with food strategies show various levels of “commitment to food”(Morgan & Sonnino, 2010, p. 222), defined as “the most important ingredient in the recipe for urban food security” (Morgan, 2009, p. 346). In some cases, they produce comprehensive strategic documents and detailed plans, with specific financial and policy instruments; in others, they only publish declarations of intent and so-called food charters, which are not followed by any concrete measure or regulation (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013).

Despite the shape that the UFS may take, in terms of comprehensiveness of measures, or legal and normative instruments, it is claimed by scholars and practitioners that each step towards its creation require a “proactive intervention from a range of stakeholders” (Carey, 2013, p. 123). Carey one of the main authors of the Bristol Food Strategy - widely recognised as one of the most successful case of UFS, points out the “huge potential” of engaging local businesses and community in a collaborative relationship in order to trigger the systemic change now needed to address the structural unstustainability of the food system.

1.1.2 The role of “Food Champions” for the engagement of stakeholders in UFSs

Some authors have so far attempted to investigate which factors may help to explain the variation in the implementation of UFSs. Among them, Mansfield and Mendes (2013), starting from pre-existing research, identified factors encompassing structural and procedural issues in order to explain the functional and operational capacity of cities to develop UFSs. The structural factors mainly refer to the institutional boundaries given by the local government’s mandate, while, within the procedural factors, they collocate the actors which have played a key role in operationalizing food policy goals and consequential actions to achieve them, and which have coordinated the process of food governance in the city (p.43). As stated by Moragues-Faus et al. (2013), “it is paramount to create and nurture an environment or momentum around food and sustainability to be able to start bringing in stakeholders and interests to the process” (p.15).

Mendes (2007), focusing on the role of these actors in the case of Vancouver Food Policy, explains the role of “strategic brokers to address food system issues” (p. 103) played by a coalition of farmers, nutritionists, researchers and citizens interested in food related issues. The pivotal role of these stakeholders in pushing food onto the municipalities’ agenda has been reported also in the cases of Toronto, San Francisco and London (Mansfield & Mendes, 2013), shedding light on their importance, not only as individuals, but especially as organised networks, composed of a broad set of actors working inside and outside city hall, organisations and community groups who share the same concerns (Mendes, 2007, p. 104). Their actions in the context of UFSs’ creation range from broad-based outreach activities, including the organisation of conferences, network building, to facilitation of social learning processes. These are often “networks of activists and organisations generating novel bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved” (Seyfang & Smith, 2007, p. 585).

Moragues-Faus & Morgan (2015, p. 1561), write about “food champions” or “policy entrepreneurs” as key enabling agents of a new form of policy making, within which a new informal connection between food planning and policy making occurs. As stated also in Sadler, Arkua, & Gillilanda (2014), these highly active stakeholders have proposed in many cases, options and alternatives that have facilitated policy change, revealing opportunities for further scholarly investigations on the dynamic of policy change in urban food systems, from a policy entrepreneurs’ perspective.

For this purpose, it is therefore possible to relate the activities of the actors above mentioned, to the strategies implemented by so-called policy entrepreneurs. Policy entrepreneurs are skilled actors, who invest their own resources, such as their time, expertise and reputation, and perform a number of important functions in the policy process, including defining problems, mobilizing public opinion, and formulating policy solutions (Kingdon, 2003; Roberts & King, 1991).

Indeed, especially within the context of urban climate governance the role of policy entrepreneurs turned to be a crucial and necessary ingredient for setting and implementing sustainable development agendas (Bulkeley, 2010, p. 234).

Furthermore, it is fundamental to emphasize that given the strictly collaborative and participatory approach generally adopted in the development of UFSs, these actors appear to be essential, as without their activity, it would not be possible to reach neither a broad involvement of stakeholders, nor, therefore, a UFS.

Ultimately, as stated by Meijerink and Huiteima (2010) and given the often-reported collective nature of the actions performed (i.e. their acting as organisations and groups), it is useful to adopt a wider definition of policy entrepreneurs, to encompass both individual policy entrepreneurs and collective policy entrepreneurship.

1.1.3 Knowledge Gap

There is limited literature analysing the processes and factors leading to the establishment of UFSs, mainly due to the fact that UFSs are such a recent phenomenon. Moreover, the scholarship has not focused on the agency perspective, from both individual and collective points of view. In order to enrich this body of literature it is crucial to explore new examples and practices, which are widely increasing worldwide. By doing so, this research will also contribute to fulfil the increasing interest and need to explore the work of leadership “as less the property of individuals and more as the contextualized outcome of interactive, rather than unidirectional, causal processes” (Gronn, 2002, p. 444).

It is therefore important to explore and understand which (collective) actions and strategies need to occur in order to achieve a first, but fundamental, step towards the creation of a more sustainable food system in the city, i.e. the engagement of stakeholders in the process of creation of UFSs.

1.2 Research Objective and Questions

The research objective of this study is twofold. Generally, it aims at deepening the knowledge on the recent phenomenon of urban food strategies, by delving into the fundamental and initial phase for their establishment, i.e. the involvement of stakeholders. Secondly and specifically, this research attempts to provide further and in-depth knowledge about the role of agency for the engagement of stakeholders in collaborative and participatory governance arrangements, such as UFSs, by adopting, and eventually enriching, the lens provided by policy entrepreneurship and leadership theories. To do so, a conceptual framework will be elaborated, and applied to the investigation of two UFSs, adopted in two European cities, namely Bergamo (Italy) and Cork (Ireland). The insights gained during the research will allow to derive some recommendations (in the form of a vade-mecum or guide) for potential change agents of urban food systems (so-called food champions).

It is relevant to notice that it is not the aim of this research to measure the effectiveness of policy entrepreneurs' strategies for stakeholders' engagement in terms of impact/outcomes of urban food strategies, nor to analyse the whole process of policy-making and implementation of the UFSs. Indeed, as argued by Goodlad, Paul, & Croft (2005), the importance of community involvement lies in its nature of being a fundamental right and essential component in the policy process that bring to reaching decisions, regardless of outcome (p. 926). The same authors emphasize the need for empirical research that investigates how and who is involved and who is represented. Furthermore, Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed, & McAlpine, (2006, p.115) claim that "local engagement may help build community capacity to address future problems, and that this may be more significant than the results of the actual development projects".

I will try to explain which actions policy entrepreneurship undertakes in order to stimulate inclusive stakeholders' engagement in UFSs' development, by answering the following:

- Research Question

How does policy entrepreneurship stimulate an inclusive stakeholders' engagement in the development of urban food strategies (UFSs)?

Sub-questions

1. *Which strategies implemented by the policy entrepreneurship for an inclusive stakeholder engagement, are found in the literature?*
2. *Which factors define the variation of inclusive stakeholders' engagement in UFSs?*
3. *Which exogenous/contextual factors might affect the role of policy entrepreneurship in stimulating stakeholders' engagement in UFSs?*
4. *What level of inclusive stakeholder engagement do we see in practice?*
5. *Which policy entrepreneurship's strategies can be detected in practice?*
6. *Which lessons can be drawn with regard to the causal relation between policy entrepreneurship's strategies and the variation in inclusive stakeholder engagement in UFSs?*
7. *How can we advance theory dedicated to policy entrepreneurship and urban food strategies?*

1.3 Societal and Scientific Relevance

The scientific relevance of this research, as partly stated in the previous paragraph, lies in the attempt to enhance the literature focused on agency and, specifically, to understand how policy entrepreneurship acts to engage stakeholders to drive potential sustainability transitions. Policy entrepreneurship literature has mostly focused on national and international policy processes, partly overlooking how policy entrepreneurship develops and acts within more locally based policy initiatives. As argued by Huitema, Lebel, & Meijerink (2011), policy entrepreneurship need to be studied within other jurisdictional scales and settings, as communities and non-state actors, given also that policy-making nowadays occurs within a less formal and strictly political venue, but rather within, at times vague, governance arrangements. Moreover, some authors (e.g. Meijerink & Stiller, 2013) have identified overlapping features of policy entrepreneurship and leadership. The leadership theories have only recently started exploring the role of collective leadership in complex systems, abandoning the “heroic” (Imperial et al., 2016) conceptualisation of leaders, and rather focusing on their distributed actions and functions within groups and networks. Building on these elements, this research attempts to provide and apply a framework analysing the agency of policy entrepreneurs (also called food champions) for the involvement of stakeholders. The framework, enriched and integrated with concepts from the leadership literature, will also pay due regard to those relevant contextual features, influencing agency.

The agency of sustainability champions might be studied in future research in other sectors, inspired by an integrated framework, as elaborated here. Ultimately, this report tries to provide further insights on a still understudied topic, such as the development of UFSs, and especially on the initial process of involvement of stakeholders, for an empowering and participatory policy-making.

Through the exploration of how policy entrepreneurship influences variation in the inclusiveness of stakeholders, the societal relevance of this work lies in the attempt to inspire new agents of change, i.e. to make recommendations for individuals or group of individuals, from inside and outside institutions, eager to become food champions, and contribute to change their urban food system towards a more socially and environmentally friendly status, through an inclusive collective action, as first step for the development of UFSs. Indeed, as stated by Blay-Palmer, Sonnino, & Custot (2016, p. 31) “sharing of good practices is a common solutions to shared global pressures, is one tool that could be used to foster information sharing, build bonding and bridging social capital and ultimately stronger global sustainable food system networks”.

1.4 Research Framework and Outline of the Research

Figure 1 shows the research framework. It will be developed and applied to two case studies, namely Cork and Bergamo, two small-medium cities in Europe with differing food strategies, expected to be different also in terms of the level of inclusiveness of stakeholders’ engagement. The empirical research will help to formulate recommendations in the form of a “vade-mecum for food champions”.

The report is structured as following: Chapter 2 provides the reader with an overview on the theoretical concepts underpinning this research, from which a conceptual framework has been elaborated, as visible at the section 2.2.

Chapter 3 concerns the explanation of the methodology chosen. It includes the strategy followed to select the cases, the operationalisation of the independent variable (i.e. the policy entrepreneurship’s strategies) and the intermediate variable (i.e. the inclusive stakeholder engagement), the clarification of the methods for collecting and analysing data, and to conclude, a brief reflection on the overall methodological approach.

In Chapter 4, the results are presented. First, every case is discussed independently, following step by step the operationalisation of the variables operated in the methodology chapter. Second, a comparative analysis of the results follows the graphic representation of the results for each case (see section 4.3). Chapter 4 ends with some general considerations about the most interesting results, according to differences and similarities emerged from the analysis. Chapter 5 includes the in-depth discussion of the results. Chapter 6 provides a general conclusion of the research and a “Vade-mecum”, including the most important lessons learnt to be a potentially successful change agent, or food champion.

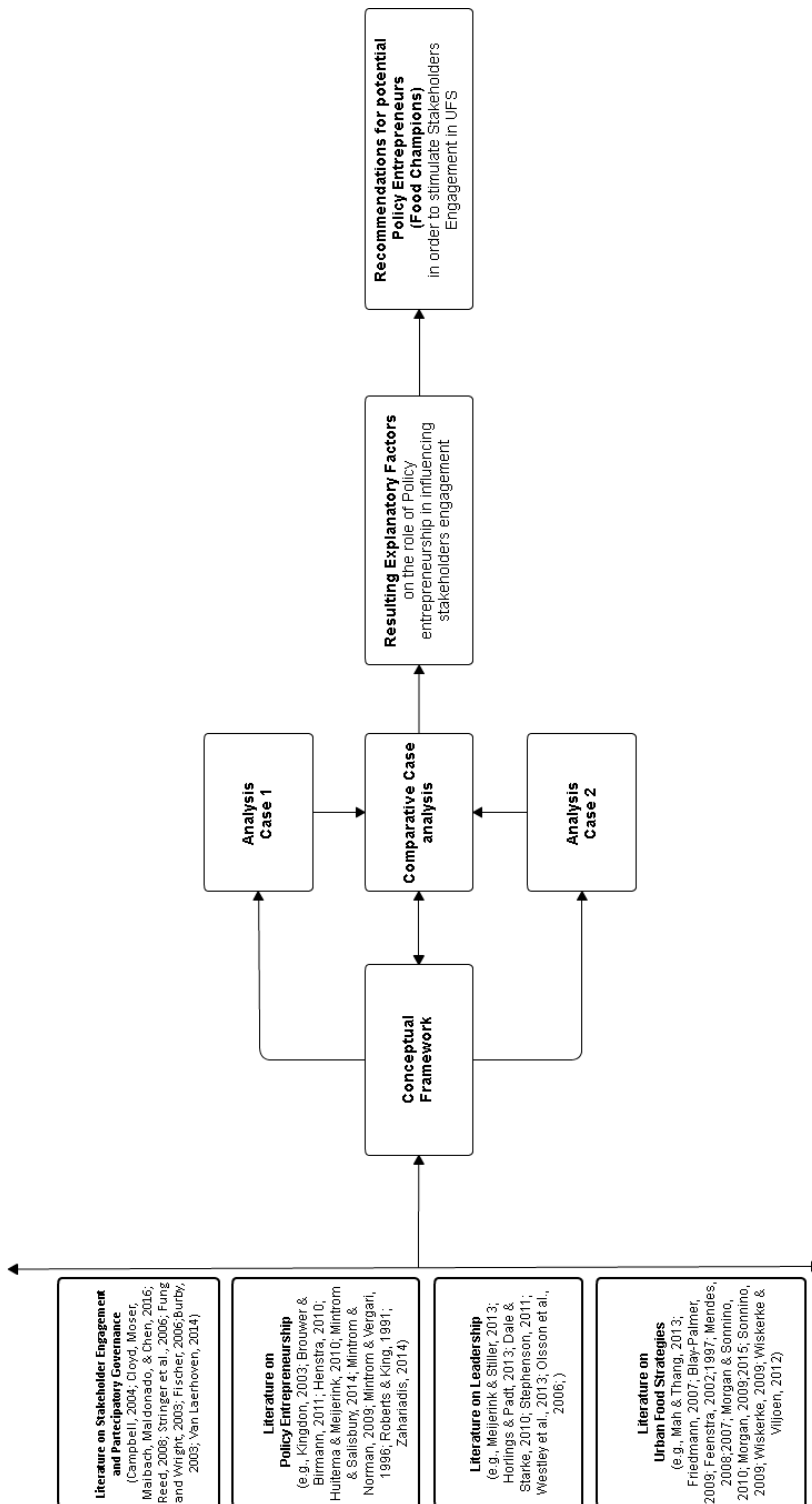


Figure 1. Research Framework

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction to key concepts

In this chapter, I will outline and analyse the most relevant concepts underpinning this research, from a theoretical point of view. I will adopt the terms independent variable (policy entrepreneurship's strategies) and intermediate variable (inclusive stakeholder engagement), and analyse their relation. The dependent variable depicted in the Conceptual Framework below (section 2.2), i.e. the establishment of Urban Food Strategies, represents the final Sustainable Development Goal, to which the engagement of stakeholders leads, together with many other factors, whose analysis is outside of the scope of this research. Therefore, the causal link between the intermediate and the dependent variable is not in here explored, as it would mean ascribing the existence of UFSs only to the strategies of policy entrepreneurs aimed at the engagement of stakeholders. The latter, indeed, is only one, although fundamental, element for the development of UFSs.

Although the core of this work is studying the role of policy entrepreneurs in influencing stakeholder involvement, it is of utmost importance firstly providing a definition as comprehensive as possible of UFS, as well as generally taking into consideration the influence that a variety of social, political, environmental elements composing the context, exerts on the actions of policy entrepreneurs (PE), as justified in the Knowledge Gap section (1.1.4).

In order to build my conceptual framework, I will borrow notions and interpretations from multiple theories, as a transdisciplinary approach and theoretical pluralism allow for an exploration of overlapping and complementary theories, which is useful for the advancement of our knowledge from a theoretical point of view (Meijerink & Huitema, 2010). Thus, I will analyse agency, leadership and policy entrepreneurship within complex systems and sustainability transitions (Huitema & Meijerink, 2010), as the concept of UFS may suggest. Indeed, the issue of sustainability of food systems and, more generally, "how to feed the world in 2050" is one of those problems called "wicked". According to Head (2008), and as also reported by Ardoin et al. (2014), wicked problems as those related to sustainability in its three dimensions social, environmental and economic, and are complex, multi-causal, unstable, uncertain, with no clear cause nor solution. These issues require multiple forms of knowledge, perspectives and expertise, and, mostly, "engaging individuals and organisational stakeholders in policy-making and implementation" (Ardoin et al., 2014, p. 361). As confirmed by Blay-Palmer et al. (2016, p. 39) "consistent with the Complex Adaptive Systems literature, sustainable community food initiatives are multi-scaled, complex, distributed systems that have the capacity to adapt and organize themselves through an evolutionary, emergent and self-organizing process".

Literature to build the conceptual framework has been selected through searches in Scopus and Google Scholar. The search terms adopted are "policy entrepreneurship", "policy entrepreneurs", "urban food policies", "urban food strategy", "stakeholder involvement", "policy entrepreneurs' strategies", "leadership", "collective leadership". The criteria for the selection of the articles were based on the relevance of the topic, and the type of journal – a significant part of the literature dealing with leadership and policy entrepreneurship is focused on business and management issues, rather than environmental governance ones.

2.1.1 Urban Food Strategies – A holistic way to envisage urban food systems

The theoretical framework underpinning the development of UFSs and programmes, conceived as a holistic approach to the food system, able to sustainably face the social, environmental and economic issues of our days, has been partly built on a re-conceptualisation of the agro-food paradigms and related food geographies, as outlined in Renting & Wiskerke (2010). The authors distinguish between the mainstream agro-industrial model, based on industrialisation, modernization, standardization of food production chains, and globalisation

of food markets, and the recent development of a more *integrated territorial paradigm*, rather focused on “social relation of proximity and to valorise specific territorial resources” (Renting & Wiskerke, 2010, p. 1903).

The latter model supports the proximity of social relations, and the valorization of nature and landscape conservation, tourism, education and care. Indeed, it has been reported by a growing body of literature that supporting food production, processing and distribution approaches according to local physical conditions as well as socio-cultural traditions, strongly reinforces social embeddedness and consumer trust, as well as environmental friendly practices (Marsden & Morley, 2014; Morgan & Sonnino, 2010; Murdoch et al., 2016; Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003; Sage, 2003; Wiskerke, 2009).

This can be considered as the starting point from where the idea of UFS recently emerged.

Providing a clear and straightforward definition of what urban food strategy means is not an easy task. As mentioned in the Introduction of this report, food planning and provisioning have never represented a distinct urban issue, instead mostly connected to rural and regional development. Indeed, among the most relevant and common issues tackled by municipalities, we find for instance waste management, health, public transport, education, parks, and recreation (Wiskerke, 2015). Nevertheless, scholars agree upon the fact that the urban-rural divide as well as the “silos approach” has caused critical shortcomings in urban food research and policy-making. For instance, the widespread idea that urban food insecurity might merely depend on a production’s failure, rather than distribution’s, has so far prevented the elaboration of “much-needed interventions in the realm of food affordability and access” within cities (Sonnino, 2009, p. 428).

In the Introduction’s chapter, I have provided the reader with an overview of the major environmental and social threats produced by the food system status quo. The origins of these threats are so highly complex and interdependent, that designing solutions able to create resilient food systems in the city, is an “enormous challenge” (Wiskerke, 2015, p. 15). However, the development of these solutions necessarily starts from the acknowledgement that it is possible to address them only collectively and comprehensively (Lang, 2010).

With this aim in mind, Wiskerke (2015) has provided some guiding principles for the creation of a resilient urban food system. The four guidelines listed below result from a comprehensive approach widely recognised as fundamental by the literature.

The first step is adopting a city region perspective. The term city region food system has been defined as, “the complex network of actors, processes and relationships to do with food production, processing, marketing, and consumption that exist in a given geographical region that includes a more or less concentrated urban centre and its surrounding peri-urban and rural hinterland; a regional landscape across which flows of people, goods and ecosystem services are managed.”² (Jennings, Cottee, Curtis, & Miller, 2015). Indeed, it is crucial to understand that from a spatial as well as an economic point of view, the current model of urban development is spread out well beyond the urban boundaries, and the interaction of several nodes embraces the regional area (Wiskerke, 2015). One example is represented by the many food provisioning channels linking the rural hinterland with the centre of the city.

²The presence of inverted commas - direct citations - not followed by the indication of the page number, is due to the fact that the source is not paginated, as it occurs in this case, and for all the articles published in the Journal “Ecology and Society”.

The second point highlighted is the need to connect the flow of resources and waste at the urban level. This would allow the transformation of something harmful into something useful and valuable, reducing the detrimental environmental and human impact of waste flows.

Similarly, the third principle suggests the creation of synergies, not only on a material level – as in the case of the connection of flows – but also on a policy level, via the use of food as a link between different urban policy objectives. This coupling would serve a variety of purposes simultaneously, producing several benefits on the social, economic and environmental level. There are several examples of urban green spaces as community gardens or rooftop farming designed to be multifunctional systems. Within the same project it is possible to produce a good amount of food, and therefore reduce urban food insecurity; enhancing biodiversity and the environmental and air quality; promoting creation of jobs, e.g. focused on maintenance and training of the green spaces; developing educational activities for adults and kids, around sustainable agriculture and diets, and ultimately strengthening community building and social cohesion (Pothukuchi, 2015; Twiss et al., 2003; Wiskerke, 2015).

However, the aforementioned principles fall under the umbrella of the fourth: the overarching need of planning for urban food systems (e.g. Blay-Palmer, Sonnino, & Custot, 2016; Morgan, 2009, 2013; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999; Renting & Wiskerke, 2010; Sonnino, Moragues-Faus, & Maggio, 2014; Wiskerke, 2015). As briefly described before, food has a great potential to play as an integrating factor of policies for a sustainable urban development. Therefore, to translate this potential into concrete action, a major effort is required to address these challenges on a coordinated and structured level, throughout the adoption of so-called urban food policies or strategies.

Scholarship has not yet reported an extensive and complete definition of urban food strategies (UFS). The first authors who started conceptualizing the idea food planning in the urban agenda are two scholars based in the US, Kameshwari Pothukuchi and Jerome L. Kaufman, between the end of the '90s and beginning of years 2000 (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Hence, a systematic theorization of local programs, plans, practices, policies and roadmaps focused on food sustainability is still missing.

The most adopted definition of urban food strategies and programmes in literature is the one provided by Moragues -Faus et al (2013), who refer to “a process consisting on how a city envisions change in its food system, and how it strives towards this change” (2013, p. 6). More recently, Calori and Magarini (2015) defined UFSs as governance arrangements, aimed to connect actors and topics related to food, through the identification of actions, goals and procedures, needed to define, evaluate and implement urban food strategies and programmes (Calori & Magarini, 2015, p. 39).

Although procedures and action limits of UFS sometimes seem to not be clear and tangible, it is possible to recognise four main objectives they try to reach, as Baker & De Zeeuw (2015, p. 29) point out:

1. Giving all citizens equitable (physical and economic) access to safe, healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food, in order to reduce or eliminate hunger, food poverty and dependence on external food aid.
2. Providing adequate nutrition and public health for people at risk of over or under malnutrition, and related health problems.
3. Stimulating the local and regional economy along with enhancement of urban food security, through the promotion of sustainable food production, processing and distribution.
4. Ensuring that the urban food system overall promotes environmental sustainability, diversity and resilience.

Currently, there are very few municipal strategies/plans/ programmes in place worldwide that comprehensively address all these challenges (Baker & De Zeeuw, 2015; Calori & Magarini, 2015; Sonnino et al., 2014; Wiskerke, 2015). Indeed, the novelty of these policy solutions as overarching frames, is also a major reason why proceeding with an evaluation of the various measures established in accomplishing the goals above stated is a hard, if not impossible, task. Similarly, as many of these local experiences are actually ongoing, it is not possible to provide more than an overview of planned measures.

2.1.2 Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

The nature of most environmental issues is typically complex, uncertain, and affects multiple actors on multiple scales (Loorbach & Shiroyama, 2016; Miller et al., 2014; Reed, 2008). Therefore, a more transparent and dynamic decision-making process, that combines a variety of values and knowledge to better adapt to climate change is required. Top-down approaches to decision making, in which only professional environmental managers, public officials and experts in general play a role, failed to recognise crucially relevant local realities, perspectives and input (Smith, 2008, p. 354), that are addressed in bottom-up and collaborative procedures. As confirmed by Ansell & Gash (2008), collaboration in this context becomes necessary, in order to merge types of knowledge, more and more distributed and specialized, within increasingly complex and interdependent institutions.

In order to create this ideal situation, the importance of embedding an inclusive stakeholder participation into environmental decision-making processes, from a local to international level has been recognised by scholars (Reed, 2008; Sherman & Ford, 2014). Participation in this research is conceived as a “process where individuals, groups, and organisations choose to take an active role in making decisions that affect them” (Reed, 2008, p. 2418). Similarly, stakeholders are considered those “who can be affected by or can affect a decision” (Ibid).

The heterogeneity and uncertainty associated with the societal challenges posed by climate change and related sustainability issues, require merging values and worldviews of multi-level actors, who should create new relationships, in order to enhance multi-directional information flows and creating flexible ways to effectively provide answers and solutions to their environments (Fraser et al., 2006). The interaction among stakeholders is claimed to lead to social learning, that in turn facilitates the understanding and appreciation of opposing views, the resolution of conflicts as well as the creation or consolidation of relationships among heterogeneous individuals or groups (Stringer et al., 2006).

Besides the need for having an encompassing view on problems and solutions, there is a normative reason behind the engagement of stakeholders in the policy-making processes. It entails the right of people to be involved in management processes, through a “a collective-will formation oriented towards a notion of public quality of life” (Hajer, 2003, p. 191), as supported in the deliberative democracy literature, and authors such as Stringer et al. (2006) and Van Laerhoven (2014).

Hence, involving stakeholders and more generally the community into planning and decision-making leads to generally stronger plans (Burby, 2003), and to “a more effective, equitable, relevant, sustainable and credible adaptation outcomes” (Sherman & Ford, 2014, p. 418). As Heritage & Dooris (2009) also highlight, during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the active participation of communities was affirmed as pivotal for environmentally, economically and socially sustainable development. This urged local governments to launch a consultative and consensus-building process with citizens and local

organizations and to formulate their own sustainable development strategy. Local inputs are indeed highly considered especially in adaptive management, since they are claimed to yield better and sustainable outcomes (Stringer et al., 2006). Broad citizens' participation and bottom up approaches for adaptation measures in general require for "the recognition by key agency personnel that they will have to become engaged in activities that are outside their own agency mandate, and that they may have to agree to involvement from parties who are affected by their management decisions but have no legal authority" (Allen & Gunderson, 2011).

With special regards to local sustainability agenda and community participation, Heritage & Dooris (2009), citing the World Health Organisation, emphasize the fact that attempts focused on improving health in communities are believed to have major positive impacts only when an "effective and concrete community action" leads the priorities' settings, the decision, and implementation processes. However, in order to be able to do so, empowerment, ownership, and control over endeavours and destinies are necessary (Ibid.).

With the term empowerment, we mean "process by which relatively powerless people work together to increase control over events that determine their lives and health" (Laverack, 2006, p. 113). As the author explains, the process of community empowerment entails a progress of individuals, communities and groups towards more organized and broadly based forms of social action (Ibid.). This process is described as starting with individual action converging in small groups' development until forming community organisations and partnerships, which ultimately lead to social and political actions. During this process, information circulates, as citizens are listened and they get opportunities for empowerment, i.e. influencing present and future planning decisions at the community level, through their active participation (Burby, 2003).

Theorists of Empowered Participatory Governance as Fung and Wright (2003), or Fischer (2006), have identified three major features of this type of governance arrangements: "(1) a focus on specific, tangible problems, (2) involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them, and (3) the deliberative development of solutions to these problems" (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 15). These features are present in empowered deliberative democracy, which "relying on the participatory capacities of empowered citizens to engage in reason-based, action-oriented decision making, the strategy and its principles are offered as a radical political step toward a more democratic society" (Fischer, 2006, p. 23). In this context, political space for participation is created and shaped by social understanding, provided collectively by institutions as well as citizens, at the same time (Ibid.). Knowledge and learning provide empowerment's opportunities. The valorisation of best practices promoted by good food ambassadors, pioneers and innovators, education and awareness activities promoting sustainable and healthy food consumption, is at the base of the development of UFS (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013, p. 18).

For instance, Hayhurst, Dietrich-O'Connor, Hazen, & Landman (2013) report how the presence of researchers and experts together with community organisations, played a key role in the process of empowerment of community and more specifically of stakeholders. Indeed, the "co-generation of knowledge with researchers and increasing participants' capacity to use this knowledge" (Reed, 2008, p. 2420) represents a crucial element for sustainable development. Within these informal and formal associations knowledge, skills and competencies are created and exchanged, letting the involved actors towards a greater control of what concerns them (Laverack, 2006).

The concept of empowerment through participation is therefore based on the idea that participation is a solid way to promote social learning among stakeholders, which, in turn, helps "stakeholders recognizing the diversity of mental models (epistemological constraints) and to see the situation (in its social and biophysical

dimensions) as one system or common pool resource in which they are interdependent with others” (Collins & Ison, 2009, p. 370). This is an ultimate way to further stimulate “concerted action among stakeholders” (Ibid.).

Therefore, PE could strongly encourage this empowerment process with a variety of strategies aimed at making the stakeholders aware and engaged on the path towards sustainable urban food system.

In food system planning and policy, at any scale, the set of actors affected by any type of decision is very broad, as it may affect consumers, multinational food corporations and environmental and justice movements. This means that the range of interests and goals of all of these actors is highly diverse. Table 1, elaborated on Campbell (2004, pp. 343–344), provides a clear overview on sectors, values, interests/focus and position/goals of stakeholders.

| STAKEHOLDERS | VALUES | INTERESTS/FOCUS | POSITIONS/GOALS |
|--|--|---|---|
| Global industrialized food system - Conventional (corporate) stakeholders including agribusiness, conventional farming and ranching, corporate organic farming; food brokers, processors, manufacturers, and retailers; seed and fertilizer companies; labour unions | -Food as commodity -Profit maximization -Efficiency -Scientific (biotechnology) | -Large-scale production -Vertical integration of agricultural inputs, processing, retailing -Control of production, distribution, marketing -Homogenization of foods and palates | -Reduction of economic risk through vertical and horizontal integration -Product specialization -Control of market share -Influence consumer shopping and eating behaviors |
| Emergency food movement Including antihunger advocates, soup kitchens, food pantries, food banks, food-gleaning operations | -Food as entitlement -Social welfare -Poverty alleviation | -Reduce societal costs of hunger -Improve individual health -Emergency food relief for low-income households and individuals -Strengthening food assistance programs | -Getting food to low-income consumers (dependence on charitable institutions, surplus commodities, food programs) |
| Alternative food system - Community food security advocates including community gardening and urban agriculture proponents, community organizations, and public | -Food as an individual and community right -Economic viability -Environmental sustainability -Social equity/justice | -Urban based -Reduce societal costs of hunger -Improve individual health through food access | -Structural change -Build community food resources and access (individual and household) -Create economic opportunity |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| health and other policy organizations | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self-reliance -Individual and community empowerment -Connect food producers and eaters -Food democracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promote public health -Protect local agriculture -Create urban-rural partnerships -Develop “food citizens” |
| Sustainable agriculture movement including small- and large-scale, diversified farming operations; organic farmers; natural food stores, co-ops, and other retailers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Environmental sustainability -Biodiversity -Economic viability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rural based -Direct marketing (producer/grower focused) -Environmental risk reduction, elimination -Maintaining place-based, seasonal foods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structural change -Protect local agriculture -Promote diversified operations -Promote sustainable agricultural practices |
| Food citizens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Food as an individual and community right -Environmental sustainability -Economic viability -Participatory democracy (“food democracy”) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Connect urban and rural -Build community food resources -Food safety -Individual and public health -Place-based, seasonal food consumption -Direct connection of producers with eaters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structural change -Develop economically viable, environmentally sustainable local and regional food systems (foodsheds) |
| Food system “bridgers” Planners and Municipality as whole | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic viability -Environmental sustainability -Social equity -Environmental justice -Civic participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community development -Economic development -Environmental protection -Citizen participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community empowerment -Equitable, sustainable allocation of resources |

Table 1. Overview on Food System Stakeholders

As shown by Table 1, an inclusive involvement of all these sectors and actors appears extremely important in order to reach a common, shared vision on how structuring and planning for resilient and sustainable food system, starting from local scale.

Below, I have elaborated specific criteria to define the concept of inclusive stakeholder engagement. I formulated the following criteria for the operationalisation, based on the information provided by the literature, to which I added other notions, according to my understanding and perception of the topic at hand. Ultimately, the operationalisation of the following will be performed in the Methodological section (3.2.2).

➤ **Inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group**

This criterion is the most straightforward one, as it builds on the already mentioned variety of stakeholders and interests that have to be taken into account. As clearly stated by (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013) the creation of a vision around food and the future of food sustainability in the city, needs to be shared by all the stakeholders, in order to create the premises for cooperation over time. Therefore, "it is important to engage as many stakeholders as possible in developing this future sustainable food city, so that different interests and points of view are represented and integrated in the joint venture" (2013, p. 20).

The inclusion of the stakeholders and the formulation of the shared vision is considered "paramount" by the authors, as "the stronger they stand, the more support they will gather, and the better they will be able to withstand changes in the political configurations of the municipality" (Ibid.).

➤ **Involvement of large businesses (large-scale retailers and producers)**

Creating awareness about the impact of treating food as merely commodity and source of profit, as it is mostly perceived by these type of actors, is pivotal for a concrete and potentially effective development of UFS. These actors exert an enormous influence on the way food is globally produced, distributed and consumed, as well as on the policy-making at every scale, around food (Lang & Heasman, 2015; Sonnino & Spayde, 2014). It is therefore crucial to stimulate, in the long run, a behavioural change among these stakeholders, in order to ensure that the change and the transition towards sustainability is systemic, embracing individual consumers as well as top worldwide retailers and producers.

➤ **Scale of Actions and Interests represented**

The importance of including at the table stakeholders from different scales lies on the very nature of an urban food system, which cannot be considered solely an urban issue, as explained in the Introduction section. Given the interconnectedness and reciprocal influence exerted between each of the links of the food supply chain, its reform or change require a systemic and holistic approach, that should not be constrained by jurisdictional or geographical boundaries. Ideally, an UFS should consider to provide the canteens of the schools, for instance, with both local and fair trade products. A failure to do so carries the risk of not tackling the issue entirely and comprehensively, but rather to follow "elitist or narrow defensive localization" strategy (Campbell, 2004, p. 346).

However, the focus on the "local" dimension of the food system, should embrace a city-region area (Dubbeling, 2013; FAO, 2011; Jennings et al., 2015) rather than being just city-centred. This approach, which would include the urban centre and peri-urban and rural hinterland (Dubbeling, Hoekstra, Renting, Carey, & Wiskerke, 2015, p. 9), might facilitate the creation of "regional food hubs", and thus, greatly improve both social and economic opportunities for residents and businesses, and the ecosystems services provisioning for urban and rural areas (Ibid.).

➤ **Breadth of causes and aims represented**

The nature of food systems is complex, as well as the identification of its problems and solutions. Therefore, it is important that those groups fighting for social, economic or environmental causes do not allow minor differentiations and particularisms to divide them, when it comes to improve the sustainability of the current food system. Indeed, as shown by Johan Rockström and Pavan Sukhdev during the “EAT Stockholm Food Forum”, held in June 2016 in Stockholm, food is a topic embracing and including all of the other global and crucial issues tackled in the Sustainable Development Goals (Rockström & Sukhdev, 2016). In pursuing sustainability of the food system, we pursue the achievement of almost all the other SDGs. Therefore, it is important that also stakeholders from other relevant sectors not strictly related to food are involved in the discussion around the creation of an UFS.

➤ **Level of Engagement of the stakeholders in the agenda setting**

The definition of engagement of stakeholders in the adopted agenda setting is aligned with the perspective of Collins & Ison (2009), which argue the importance of participation in terms of enabling mechanism for enhancing and reinforcing social learning through capacity building, rather than equalling participation to extent to which stakeholders have decisional power. Participation in this sense represents a way of guarantying social learning between civil society, private sectors and institutions (Stringer et al., 2006). The opportunity for the community as well as for businesses to provide valuable inputs and feedbacks to the Institutions, ensures that it is more likely that UFS and local plans in general, will adapt to the local needs, and to any kind of unexpected change of circumstances - as assumed in complex systems and adaptive management literature (Ibid.). The same authors talk about a “two-way communication and information flows”, as the learning process is both vertical and horizontal when participation is ensured in the agenda setting: vertical in the way inputs arrive to the institutions from the civil society and the private sectors; horizontal because it links the various stakeholders’ groups to each other. Hence, “interactive practices of deliberation” (Hajer, 2003, p. 187) which includes stakeholders at early stages, as in the agenda setting, means also building “active forms of trust in institutions” (Ibid.), that is claimed to be no longer assumable nowadays. This is ultimately a way to ensure more democratic processes as well as results in policy-making (Stringer et al, 2006).

➤ **Level of engagement of the Municipality**

If involving private businesses is of utmost importance, a strong and clear manifestation of commitment to act from the municipality, and institutions in general, is even more crucial. Any of the goals related to a sustainable and fair food system are reachable if institutions are not strongly involved. Compartmentalisation and short-thinking (IPES-Food, 2016), represent big threats for the development of an UFS, and hence the achievement of its objectives, as reported in the previous section about UFS (2.1.1).

Food policy-making at every scale, from local, national to international levels need to work in order to ensure that “global market provisioning in food commodities is reconciled with health, environment and development concerns” (IPES-Food, 2016, p. 73). This might be realised through joined-up policies and planning, across constituencies, departments and institutional levels, in order to “reach across divides and creating new constituencies of pooled interest” (IPES-Food, 2016, p. 71).

With regard to the scope of this research, it is seemed reasonable assuming that the municipality is the most relevant institution to analyse in terms of engagement in these initiatives, as it resulted to be so in most of the cases study provided by the literature dealing with the development of urban food councils and strategies. For instance, public food procurement as well as concession of vacant land available for urban agriculture are among the most adopted measures by local administrations in order to valorise short and sustainable food chains, and ensuring health promotion in public structures (Campbell, 2004; IPES-Food, 2016; Morgan &

Sonnino, 2010; Sonnino, 2009). As already stated, it is not part of this research dealing with and evaluating the content and the measures of the urban food strategies, therefore the analysis of the engagement of the Municipality, will be explored only in terms of presence of officials at the table, and type of role played and the functions exerted by them in that circumstance.

➤ **Representation of all the different social groups**

This criterion refers to the importance of including people belonging to minorities or deprived groups among the group of stakeholders in the city. This is considered an important element, as most literature on UFS stresses the fact that very often Alternative Food Networks and short food supply chains (incubators of sustainable practices, from which most of the stakeholders participating in UFS come from), are phenomena to which mostly wealthy and well-educated citizens take part. A meaningful example is shown in the research conducted by Forno, Grasseni, & Signori (2013), about Solidarity Purchase Groups in Northern Italy, which will be further mentioned in section 4.2.3.

The theoretical foundation of this dimension is the fact that UFSs and the necessary stakeholder engagement are a way to ensure a food secure city, within which ideally every resident has access to fair, sustainable, and culturally appropriated food. Although the presence of actors committed to social justice and inclusion in the community, is to some extent already an important vehicle to raise the voice of disadvantaged groups, it would be preferable that they have a direct representation in the table around which UFS would be create.

2.1.3 Policy Entrepreneurship

The role of policy entrepreneurs, individuals broadly defined as “those who make things happen” (Crona, Ernstson, Reed, Prell, & Hubacek, 2011) has been analysed throughout the years in several fields of study (policy-making process, policy change and innovation, until more recently environmental governance). Scholars have adopted a variety of names to refer to it: from policy entrepreneurs to champions, brokers, change agents, social innovators or institutional entrepreneurs (Ibid.). PE have been defined as power brokers, manipulators of problematic preferences and unclear technology, and coalition enablers, willing to change current ways of doing things in their area of interest (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Zahariadis, 2014).

Although Kingdon (2003) mentions clearly that a prominent characteristic of PE are taking risk, other rejects his claim, preferring to keep the focus on their tendency to introduce innovations (Brouwer, 2015; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). In order to perform change they “invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 179). Generally, they are on the alert for opportunities, seeing chances to link policy proposals - solutions - to problems and participants - political momentum - accepting risks and failures (Brouwer, 2015; Brouwer & Biermann, 2011). Moreover, they are present and active throughout the whole policy process, from idea development until the implementation phase. Indeed, they do not limit their activity to the generation of innovative ideas or to the mere translation of those into policy proposals (Brouwer, 2015).

They can come from inside (bureaucrats or politicians) as well as outside (academics, individual citizens or NGOs representatives) governments (Meijerink & Huitema, 2010) as we identified them notably for the actions they take rather than for the position they occupy (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011). It is indeed the social status of the policy entrepreneurs, their background, job, and education etc. that influence their access to the various types of resources. In Meijerink & Huitema (2010) it is shown that mostly experts from the scientific community played the role of policy entrepreneurs in the water management transitions studied by the

authors. Although they may belong to shadow networks, meaning no official linkage to the governmental bureaucracies and the decision-making arena, academics and NGOs gathered and combined their different expertise to develop and, at times, test, new ideas in pilot projects. This can be considered as an important feature to achieve an inclusive stakeholder engagement, given that the great array of disciplines represented by these collaborating actors may stimulate a linking effect between various environments of professionals and stakeholders.

This research considers the participation of stakeholders as empowering activity, therefore the importance of PE relies also on its potential role in “enhancing the capabilities (agency) of communities to craft their own institutions” (Barnes & van Laerhoven, 2014, p. 194). Therefore, policy entrepreneurship, or more general strategic agency, as facilitator of the process of development of urban food strategies and food councils in our case, represent a paramount element to move forward the process of transformation or transition towards sustainable food systems.

According to the literature, there are identifiable strategies usually implemented by policy entrepreneurship to succeed. I considered here those relevant to contribute to inclusive stakeholder engagement, as depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 2, section 2.2).

➤ **Defining Problems – Issues Linking**

The definition of problems requires entrepreneurs to combine appropriately social acuity and skills in conflict management and negotiation (Dale & Sparkes, 2011; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010; Mintrom, Salisbury, & Luetjens, 2014). To create a wide vision on how tackling arising issues, the PE need to be able to encompass many different interests, perspectives and “ways of knowing” about the same issue (Meijerink & Huitema, 2010). The same authors give the example of a successful approach put in place in one of the case studies analysed, where PE linked proposals for an innovative water management approach - originated within an epistemic community (the environmentalist one) - to additional goals, relevant for other networks focused on the goal of regional development.

The same has been reported in Brouwer & Biermann (2011) who called this specific strategy “issue linking”. This would represent an attempt to couple the core issues to other relevant ones, in order to reach a broader range of stakeholders and convince them to take action collaboratively. In the specific context of this research, what is relevant to analyse is way they frame solutions to the issue of food within the city, as an overarching framework to cope with other relevant social issues such as health, social exclusion etc. Therefore, scholars claim the importance of “Marketing sustainable food as part of a vibrant, healthy, and progressive city or responding to organised civil society demands” (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015).

I will consider within this strategy, the exhibition of sensitivity of the PE towards understanding ideas, concerns, and perspectives of others, within the local context (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). As reiterated in Mintrom & Vergari (1998), citing Lavoire 1991 (p.36, 49), the entrepreneurship in order to be successful needs to be a “culturally embedded participant who picks up the gist of the conversation”, as it is crucial that he/she has high level of sensitivity to understand what others are looking for.

Crona et al. (2011) and Westley et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of PE in influencing the “construction of visions or framings” facilitating the organisation of people around an issue towards a desired solution, i.e. the collective action. In doing so, it is pivotal to understand the approach adopted in order to spread the ideas, reaching the stakeholders and creating a vision shared by as many people as possible.

➤ **Leading by Example**

Mintrom & Norman (2009) highlight the capacity to create working models of the proposed change, in order to show its effectiveness and spread relevant information about it.

A major challenge for PE is overcoming the widespread perception of risk that introducing a (policy) change may cause within the political environment as well as among civil society. Therefore, it becomes rather important that the policy entrepreneurs “take the ideas and turning it into action themselves”, attempting to reduce the general fear towards the new, by demonstrating to the rest of the stakeholders the workability of their proposals (Mintrom & Norman, 2009, p. 653). This functions as a genuine and concrete example of their commitment to trigger change.

Leading by example and demonstrating real commitment is, therefore, crucial for entrepreneurs to win credibility.

➤ **Building Trust (through Relationships), Motivation and Legitimacy**

Trust is both a result and a precondition for cooperation, as argued by Hardin (2001), cited by Brouwer (2015, p.190); without trust, policy change trajectories, of any type, are very unlikely to be pursued (Brouwer, 2015, p. 205). Policy entrepreneurs nowadays act within an ‘institutional void’, as stated already, where there are “no clear rules and norms according to which politics is to be conducted and policy measures are to be agreed upon” (Hajer, 2003, p. 175). Therefore, in this context characterised by the loss of stable and formal political settings, societal actors become main characters in the new politics, and trust cannot be considered granted as it was. That is why trust assumed a primary role, and “formats to generate it among mutually interdependent actors” need to be found (Ibid., p. 184). Social capital is a great incubator of trust within communities and social groups (Putnam, 1993), being “made up of norms and network that enable people to act collectively” (Anger, 2003, p. 391 citing Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 226). It facilitates cooperation and coordination in social organisations, and especially in the context of activity of PE, who needs to gain trust from the community of stakeholders in order to be successful in their engagement. The emerging stakeholder social capital may lead to efficiency of action and reduces transaction costs, as better understanding and higher levels of trust are developed (Maak, 2007).

Bodin & Crona (2009) formulate hypothesis about the fact that the more social ties a network has, the more possibilities for joint action and other kind of useful collaborations are available, in our case, to the PE to engage more actors into collective actions. Using network terminology, “we can express this as the higher the network density (i.e. the number of existing ties divided by the number of possible ties), the more potential for collective action” (Bodin & Crona, 2009, p. 368). The authors conclude that increased levels of collective action would therefore result from increased possibilities for communication and, on the long run, by increased levels of reciprocity and mutual trust.

Furthermore, agency considered crucial in activating social capital, as they provide the knowledge and the know-how to interact and fruitfully dialogue with the bureaucracy and the institutional level, as well as facilitate the coordination and the resolution of conflicts needed to pursue collective action and make stakeholder engagement (Krishna, 2002).

➤ **Linking actors and Building networks**

PE are usually team players, since their strength as change makers lies on their capacity to work with others, in coalitions formed by different knowledge and skills (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). Networks play a “vital role” for PE (Mintrom & Vergari, 1998, p. 131). This strategy could be related to the position of the PE “at the edge of social groups” (Crona et al., 2011, p. 57). The boundary-spanning contacts that PE should have, allow PE to

obtain a brokering position to harness the information and the trends of various groups. Indeed, as reported by Prell, Reed, & Hubacek (2011) PE may act as “hub” linking different groups, within the network as well as outside.

Promoting networking between different stakeholders, policy makers, and organizations (Sonnino & Spayde, 2014) reveals a pivotal characteristic of the PE in the food context.

Mintrom & Vergari (1998) differentiate between external and internal networks (i.e. in the US political system - where their study has been conducted – external entails the federal level and internal, the national one). In this research, it is reasonable assuming the connections of the PE with regional, national and even international actors, representative of their relationship with external networks, while the ties with local actors indicating their linkage to internal networks. The same authors conclude that the PE need both external networks mainly to facilitating the process of agenda setting, and internal ones to obtain wider consensus and approval within the local government.

In this regard, entrepreneurs are usually embedded in networks spanning across jurisdictions and coming from diverse settings, through which they enrich their knowledge, engage in new conversations and transform those conversations into collective action. Making their actions more likely to succeed. In this regard, the great challenge, highlighted for instance by (Mintrom & Vergari, 1998) is to establish standing and building trust, among those who may represent a strong support for the entrepreneurship’ success.

➤ **Generating and disseminating knowledge**

Scholars from a variety of fields of study, stress the importance of implementing actions focused on raising awareness of stakeholders as well as their knowledge regarding the core topic and correlated solutions provided by the PE (Bodin & Prell, 2011; Brouwer & Biermann, 2011; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010; Meijerink & Stiller, 2013; Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

Moreover, the engagement of stakeholders especially from an empowerment approach as shown in e.g., Heritage & Dooris (2009) and Pomeroy & Douvere (2008), emphasise the reinforcement of capacity building and social understanding of environmental and sustainability issues, to stimulate the concerns and the engagement of the community and, consequently, triggering support towards PE’s solutions. Therefore, a key strategy for the PE to be successful is creation and diffusion of knowledge.

➤ **Facilitating/ developing social innovations**

Social innovation deals with the fact that “in communities across the world, individuals daily come up with new ideas, large and small, for improving their lot and the lot of those around them, in response to locally perceived problems or social needs”(Westley & Antadze, 2010). Therefore, this strategy refers to the openness of the PE to new and different thinking and alternatives, options, processes and tries to introduce and/or get them recognised from formal or institutional leaders (Scholten, Keskitalo, & Meijerink, 2015). This strategy is related to the high perceptiveness mentioned above, for successful definition of problems and issues linking, since it entails that the PE are on alert of new practices and proposals emerged within the community, in order to connect and bring together the different forms of social innovations, potentially present in the area of action of PE.

➤ **Recognising or Creating Windows of Opportunity**

To initiate change timing is pivotal (Kingdon, 2003), as well as exploiting the emergence of windows of opportunity. Huitema et al.(2011) point out two types of windows of opportunity: problem and political windows. Problem windows entail the recognition of specific issues, whereas political windows are more

related to political processes. Political windows are associated to elections, during which leaders are regularly replaced. Leaders often are interested in looking for new ideas to promote, just as the PE want to get their ideas approved. It is paramount that PE recognize when it is possible to change the ideas of other actors, and “frame them in a certain way so that their preferred policies become the logical solution” (Ibid., p.729). The identification of windows is not however an easy task, and the meaning attributed by the PE can be always contested. This is why the engagement in open dialogue and discussion is paramount, in order to influence the interpretation, through framing strategies (Ibid.). Therefore, “a policy entrepreneur is a person who connects political momentum to problem perception and a policy proposal”(Folke, Hahn, Olsson, & Norberg, 2005, p. 456).

2.1.4. Leadership

Leadership appears an extremely relevant concept to introduce, since there are relevant “conceptual overlaps” (Meijerink & Stiller, 2013, p. 248) across theories focused on leadership, policy entrepreneurship and champions, concerning roles and strategies to stimulate participation, especially in contexts of complexity and adaptation to climate change, as in the case of sustainability of urban food systems. These authors highlight that in socio-ecological systems’ literature, leaders provide key functions such as building trust, making sense, managing conflict, linking actors, initiating partnerships among them, generating knowledge as well as recognising and seizing windows of opportunity (Folke e al., 2005, cited by Meijerink & Stiller, 2013). Moreover, according to Olsson et al. (2006), also cited in Meijerink and Stiller (2013), leaders communicate and engage with key individuals in different sectors, combine different networks, experiences and social memories, as well as generating a variety of ideas, viewpoints and solutions. Therefore, an attempt to integrate these two bodies of literature, appears reasonable to pursue the research objective.

According to Westley et al. (2013), scholarship should question the appropriateness of the use of word “leaders”, when it comes to “the activity of change agents in such a complex domain of networks, sectors and scales” (Ibid.). They conclude that the stewardship in complex and uncertain systems is made of many actors groups with a variety of skills and roles, from sense makers, networkers, facilitators, innovators, policy entrepreneurs, interpreters to visionaries and inspirers (Ibid.). As confirmed by the view of Horlings & Padt (2013), in a context characterised by inter-institutional overlaps and distributed power, there are several aims and policies that conflict or mutually support each other. Therefore, the study on the role and the capacities of leaders, conceived not any longer in a hierarchical and formal meaning, but rather as a collective form of action, needs to be further developed. Indeed, they are required to be able to not solely lead within the boundaries of the communities and organisations they belong to, but also engage in cross-boundary networking and collaboration with other potentially interested and affected groups/individuals, regardless of any type of formal authorization (M. Sotarauta, Horlings, & Liddle, 2012), as the PE literature would also suggest.

Given the type of process here analysed – i.e. stakeholder involvement in collaborative governance arrangements, as UFS aim to be – I will delve into participative and collaborative leadership forms, as assumed for the case of policy entrepreneurship in the paragraph above, and also in the Introduction of this research.

Lately, scholarship dealing with collaborative, distributed, participative, shared and collective perspectives on leadership (e.g. Ansell & Gash, 2012; Ardoin et al., 2014; Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016; Gronn, 2002; Imperial et al., 2016; Onyx & Leonard, 2011; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Scholten et al., 2015) has favoured a group-centred perspective, shifting the focus of the analysis to leadership’s practices, rather than features, behaviours or personal traits, in the attempt to understand “what leaders do to engage people, rather than who leaders are” (Ardoin et al., 2014, p. 362). Concept of leadership as a collaborative and “multifaceted phenomenon”

(Scholten et al., 2015, p. 1025). As Meijerink & Stiller (2013) report, leadership is increasingly conceived as “dispersed phenomenon” (2013, p. 253), and for complex systems’ literature, as emerging property of interacting agents (further analysis of this specific type of leadership in the next paragraph).

Collaborative leadership’ scholars emphasize the fact that collaborative leaders build capacity via broadening participation, and aim at focusing on dialogue, building relationships and stressing the importance of diversity of viewpoints (Imperial et al., 2016). This attitude brings them to pursue the crafting of a collective vision around problems and solutions. Through their facilitative role, they encourage and enable stakeholders to work together effectively: collaborative leaders are stewards, as they try to safeguard the collaborative process; they are mediators, as they contribute to arbitrating and nurturing relationships between stakeholders; and they are catalysts, as they help stakeholders to realize value-creating opportunities (Ansell & Gash, 2012, p. 18).

In their work, Meijerink and Stiller (2013) analyse different leadership’s theories suitable in climate change adaptation (i.e. Ideational Leadership, Policy Entrepreneurship, Eco-leadership Theory, and Complexity Leadership in Social-Ecological Systems). They build on the fact that there are overlaps between theories focused on the analysis of agency, that often use different names, to refer to the same concepts. In order to reduce these overlaps, it is necessary to integrate these concepts in a comprehensive framework, able to facilitate the analysis of leadership, and agency in general, in adaptive governance (2013, p. 249). They identify five leadership functions and its locus and tasks: political-administrative, adaptive, enabling, dissemination and connective functions. As the focus of this research is on stakeholder engagement and policy entrepreneurship, it is reasonable to take into consideration, theoretically and for the analysis of the results, only those functions and tasks that are directly connected to the involvement of stakeholders and to policy entrepreneurship’s strategies. As shown by Meijerink & Stiller (2013, p. 252), it is possible to identify leadership tasks that are mostly exerted by both policy entrepreneurs and champions, as I have been argued. For instance, tasks related to disseminating knowledge and getting new ideas accepted among positional leaders (e.g. within Institutions) can be directly connected to what policy entrepreneurship’s scholarship calls Legitimacy building and Facilitation of Social Innovation (see above). Moreover, within the connective function, which is usually exerted by PE, there are tasks that clearly overlap those identified by the policy entrepreneurship literature. The same happens for strategies such as Building Networks and Linking actors, or Building Trust and Legitimacy, for example.

The analysis of Adaptive and Administrative functions is not comprised within the scope of this research, as it would mean shifting the focus from the stakeholder engagement, towards a more comprehensive investigation of the whole process of development of urban food strategies, including resulting outputs and measures. Conversely, enabling functions can be more reasonably and specifically associated to agents’ strategies for stakeholder engagement, as they aim at facilitating and catalysing targeted social innovation and change processes, within complex system. As stated by Scholten et al. (2015), “non-positional leaders, such as policy entrepreneurs and champions may contribute to the enabling function. They may initiate new projects, convene public and private parties to the table, and stimulate interaction between them” (2015, p.1027).

As the concept is directly drawn from the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), as elaborated by Uhl-bien, Marion, & Mckelvey (2007), it is valuable to provide a more detailed explanation of the theory itself.

As mentioned in the introduction to this Theoretical chapter, when tackling adaptive challenges, i.e. those societal problems that require new innovation, learning and exploration, as sustainability challenges, thus food system-related too, we have to recognise that the system we want to analyse is not merely complicated, the knowledge of the single elements will not be sufficient to solve the issues at hand. Rather, is the understanding of the interactions among its constituents, and the interaction between the system and its environment that

need to be developed and explored. (Uhl-bien et al., 2007). Indeed, complexity emerges if the aggregation of its interacting agents behaves or evolves within a system of which the order is emergent and not predetermined, the history is irreversible, and the future is often unpredictable (Ibid.). Key features of these type of systems (e.g. cities, human brains, communities etc.) are diversity and heterogeneity of components, relations, system behaviour etc. (Grin, Rotmans, & Schot, 2010, p. 117).

Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) are made of “interacting, interdependent agents who are bonded in a cooperative dynamic by common goal, outlook, need, etc. CAS are changeable structures with multiple, overlapping hierarchies, and like the individuals that comprise them, CAS are linked with one another in a dynamic, interactive network” (Uhl-bien et al., 2007, p. 299). Therefore, the non-linearity of the relationship that connects the heterogeneous agents suggests that they act and react to each other and they are adaptive, meaning they can learn and adjust themselves according to others’ changes and/or due to changing conditions of their environment (Grin et al., 2010, p. 117).

In such system, dynamism and interdependence of relations and interactions among agents question those leadership theories merely focused on formal position, authority, and on actions of specific individuals, leaders (Uhl-bien et al., 2007). Differently, complex adaptive theory provides a wider approach to leadership, shedding light on the critical relevance of context, within which a “process (leadership) of interaction and interdependence among agents (people, ideas, etc.), hierarchical divisions, organizations, and environments” occur (Ibid. p.299). Hence, leadership is conceived as an “interactive dynamic that is productive of adaptive outcomes”. The dynamic and the outcomes of this interaction can be influenced by the actions of so-called leaders.

The CLT is therefore grounded not in bureaucracy, but rather in complexity, feature characterising a context of “dynamically changing networks of informally – spontaneously - interacting agents” (Uhl-bien et al., 2007, p. 302). Leaders are such since they enable, encourage the form of learning and creativity emerging from these interactions. This will in turn support the consequent development of flexible and adaptive outcomes/solutions for sustainable development and, therefore, urban food systems.

Therefore, is here that the enabling function of leadership arises. It serves to “enable (catalyze) adaptive dynamics and help manage the entanglement between administrative and adaptive leadership (by fostering enabling conditions and managing the *innovation-to-organization interface*)” (Uhl-bien et al., 2007, p. 306). Where *entanglement* refers to the facilitation of the flow of knowledge, creativity arising from the spontaneous interactions of agents (emergence) into the administrative structure or formal system, that in our case might be represented by the Municipality and the local/regional Institutions, as well as the *status quo* of the food system. Managing the interface between innovation and established system, is the key role of enabling leadership: it highly values interactions and interdependencies between agents, and helps motivating and coordinating them by “management-induced scheduling and rules structuring” (Ibid., pag.309). Moreover, enabling leaders coordinate efforts in order to co-elaborate and co-develop new ideas and information, which they personally promote, through their strong commitment, as done by PE or champions.

2.1.5 Exogenous/contextual factors

Considering the development of urban food strategies and programs as a relevant policy change for urban governance, it is noteworthy recognising that policy changes are only to some extent structured processes, meaning thus that they are “neither fully determined nor simply chaotic coming down to just chance elements” (Brouwer, 2015, p. 7). Therefore, the agency of individual engaged in purposive actions is always influenced or constrained by the context or structure around them (Ibid.), especially by the social, economic,

cultural, and political environment that affects stakeholder participation in project implementation (Sherman & Ford, 2014, p. 430).

Moreover, leadership's theories help to understand the relevance of context, as "leadership is the context as a locus of leadership. The context can dictate the content of a leader's vision and leadership acts in the collective process" (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011, p. 1180). The interactions with the other components of the system (actors as well as economic, social and environmental elements) create the leadership.

It is difficult to identify a priori which specific contextual elements exert a meaningful influence on the strategies of PE. However, as visible from the conceptual framework in the next paragraph, I have outlined some general set of variables. More detailed information can be found in the results section, where for each case study, I have highlighted the most crucial factors of influence, emerged from the semi-structured interviews performed.

➤ **Cultural Features of the community- Traditions and Mind-set and Cohesiveness of the Community**

The cultural features of the community, for example, is an important exogenous factor, given that it is possible to assume that a more connected and interacting community/neighbourhood, where social bonds and social capital are stronger, is easier to reach and to communicate with for policy entrepreneurship, in order to achieve engagement (Henry & Vollan, 2014). Moreover, within this category we can include citizens practicing "food activism", which means sourcing food sustainably, on a daily base. A lively presence of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) for instance - i.e. forms of sustainable short supply chains, such as box schemes, farmers' markets, on-farm selling, consumer cooperatives, community urban gardens, collective buying group, community supported agriculture, and generally local and organic food provisioning systems (Galli & Brunori, 2013)- represents a clear example of food activism in the city, therefore the actions of policy entrepreneurs may result facilitated in stimulating engagement in food-related activities.

➤ **National and Supranational Institutional and Political Factors & Local Institutional and Political Factors**

These two variables will be analysed separately in the Results section, but overall refer to the fact that UFSs embrace different level of jurisdictions, from the municipality, to the regional, national and supranational (European in this case) level. Therefore, stakeholder engagement as well as the PE's strategies can be affected by laws and regulations emanated at any of these levels.

➤ **History of Previous relevant collaboration between Individuals or Groups of Individual, within the community**

Ansell & Gash (2008) highlight the importance of "History of cooperation or conflict – initial level of trust". I believe this feature, although not deeply analysed in this research, as considered an external variable, represents a critical factor for the success of PE in stimulating the inclusive engagement of stakeholders. Similarly, Van Laerhoven (2014) following Goodlad et al. (2005) approach, stresses the importance of previous forms of collective action within the community, as a factor that could boost the likelihood of inclusive community involvement initiatives able to overcoming social dilemmas, due to a greater social capital already strengthened.

➤ **Geophysical Conditions of the City-Region**

Geophysical conditions of the city-region might hamper the urban or peri-urban agriculture, crucial for the provision of vegetables and fruits in the city. Since the most likely to join a UFS process of development are

those farmers producing veggies in the surrounding area, the lack of this type of agriculture may trigger a lack of farmers’ representation in the UFSS’ development

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, illustrated in Figure 2, is the result of the variety of relevant concepts and theories identifiable in literature, and reported above. Hence, the strategies of the policy entrepreneurship here listed are drawn from both scholarships focused on policy entrepreneurship and leadership, specifically “post-heroic” theories on leadership (Imperial et al., 2016, p. 127). The term refers to those leadership theories (e.g. collective, shared, and complex leadership) that move the focus beyond leaders’ personal qualities, to embrace a much bigger range of factors and actors, collectively playing a key role to achieve a goal.

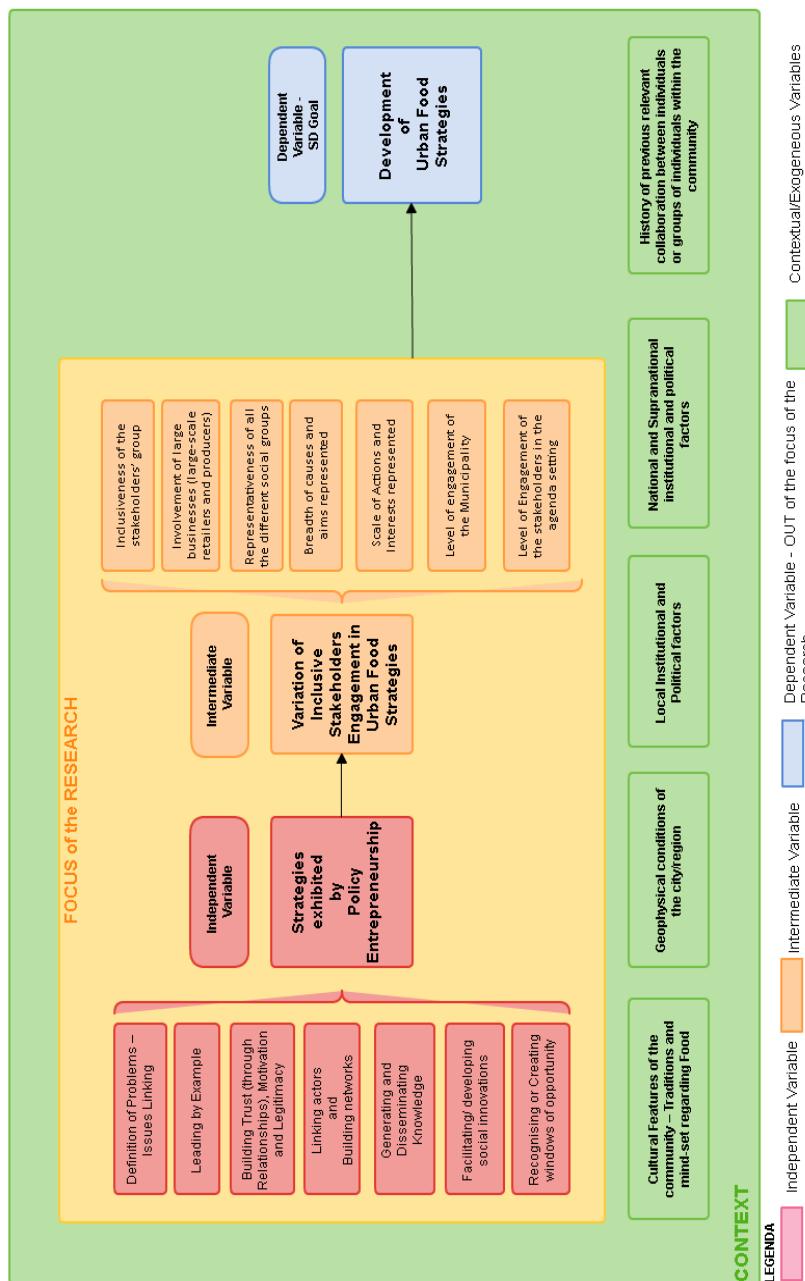


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

The following section outlines the methodology I have adopted to perform this research. First, I provide the reader with a brief overview on the reasons for the selection of the two case studies in here presented, given the research questions, the theoretical approach chosen and the gaps in literature. Secondly, I present the operationalisation of the crucial variables arisen from the development of the conceptual framework. The operationalisation's phase entails the translation of abstract concepts into tangible and concrete elements, measurable in reality. Ultimately, I will describe the methods chosen to collect and analyse the data.

3.1 Case selection strategy

When one decides to perform a research deploying qualitative methods, a comparative case study can be used to apply a theoretical framework or a series of assumptions in a new problem setting, and to generate practical knowledge and information for the interested parties (Flyvbjerg, 2006). A relevant variation in the independent variables might guarantee the as much generalizability as possible of the results obtained, in addition to put emphasis on interesting dynamics, perhaps in need of further attention and research.

The main goal of this research is deepening our understanding around the role of key enabling actors, called food champions or policy entrepreneurs, in one specific and crucial phase of the development of urban food strategies and programmes, i.e. the engagement of stakeholders.

I chose two cases, namely the Agriculture Roundtable of Bergamo and the Food Policy Council of Cork, for the variation regarding the inclusiveness of stakeholder involvement in the UFSs and programs, as well as for the type itself of initiatives so far developed in the two cities. The two cases present a similar population, being both two European cities of medium size. Although the level of advancement of the UFSs in both the cities is still far from being a comprehensive set of policy measures, with formal and binding documents and programs, the engagement of stakeholders appeared to be on an interesting stage to be studied, as it has been an ongoing process for some years already. Moreover, the study of urban food strategy requires an enhancement of empirical research, to create more knowledge about best practices worldwide, without suggesting a template for those, as every community has to adopt those practices that suit best their place-based capacities (Blay-Palmer et al., 2016). Using these two cities as case studies was therefore a choice motivated by the willing to share and inspire new "best practices" around food system sustainability.

Cork presents a more formal and institutionalized project, having an officially recognised Food Council, in line with the experience of Toronto, Malmo and other cities in North America and Europe. The Committee, active since 2013, is composed of actors from the Academia, the local agro-business' world, food producers and retailers, City Council's members and representatives of health and environmental-focused organisations, all active at the local scale.

In the city of Bergamo, a roundtable – called "Agriculture Roundtable", is envisioned within a policy frame called "Feeding Bergamo", not officially developed as UFS, but structured around the same objectives and tools. It has been formally established by the Mayor of Bergamo himself, with the same purpose of the Cork Food Policy Council (CFPC) in order to bring together the local variety of food actors, from the representatives of civic movements focused on sustainable citizenship, the local representatives of the major farmers' labour union in Italy, to some local entrepreneurs (sustainable clothing, organic food retailers, restaurants, local newspaper).

While the composition of the two initiatives will be explained in detail in the Results sections, it is relevant to already highlight a paramount element for the goal of this research. The committee of the CFPC does not

include yet relevant representatives of civic organisations and movements, whereas in the case of Bergamo, a variety of Alternative Food Networks and other grassroots movements have a primary role in the dialogue and coordinated action with the Municipality. Therefore, even the strategies implemented by food champions will change according to the type of actor putting them into place.

Furthermore, looking at the gaps in the literature, I chose these two cases because the majority of the scholarship on UFSs and programs is focused on already well-known successful stories, as Bristol in the UK, or Toronto, in Canada. Indeed, with my research I aim to show to the reader that initiating change at the urban food system level is real and possible, for anyone eager to engage with it. These two cases corroborate this argument, besides the differentiations in the approach showed.

3.2 Operationalisation of the variables

3.2.1 Independent variable - Policy Entrepreneurship’s Strategies

| Factor | Definition | Operationalisation | References |
|--|---|--|---|
| Definition of Problems – Issues Linking | Capacity to link solutions' proposals for different issues, in order to reach broader consensus and range of actors → creation of a common vision (“macro level shared aspirations”) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of generally recognized urban issues covered by PE's proposals; • How recurrent is this combination of topics in the rhetoric of the PE | (Horlings & Padt, 2013; Loorbach, 2010; Sotarauta & Beer, 2016; (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011); Westley et al., 2013, p. 4) |
| Leading by Example | The extent to which the PE is directly engaged with projects related to the solutions suggested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type of role and functions fulfilled – initiator, project manager, chair, assistant, secretary; • The amount of time spent for it –from one time to on a weekly/monthly base; • The extra time dedicated to it – out of the scheduled time | (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998) |
| Building Trust (through Relationships), Motivation and Legitimacy | Social capital and relationships facilitate cooperation and coordination, as the presumably resulting trust between the PE and the rest of the stakeholder within the social organization (in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of formal authorities’ management initiatives; • The extent to which PE recognize themselves or are identified as mediator between organizations and broader public • The extent to which PE recognize the importance of building relationships within the community and the relevant stakeholders | (Ardoin et al., 2014; Dale, 2014; Dale & Sparkes, 2011; Stephenson, 2011; Westley et al., 2013) |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | relation to formal authorities and the broader public too) | | |
| Linking actors/ Initiating partnerships among actors' groups/ Building networks | The extent to which the PE has a broker role, being in a position to connect a variety of actors within and across organizational types and hierarchies, different backgrounds, purposes and geographical provenience (activities of bridging and bonding) | Whether the PE established relationships only among citizens or also with regional/provincial/national/international individual actors/organizations | (Crona et al., 2011; Dale, 2014; Horlings & Padt, 2013; Westley et al., 2013) |
| Generating and Disseminating Knowledge | The extent to which new knowledge, awareness and information are spread and generated by the actions of the PE → Acceleration of social learning process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of organization of events such as urban food provisioning-focused conferences, roundtables, seminars etc.; • Deployment of focusing events and indicators to enrich their capacity to convince; • Implementation of pilot projects to clearly demonstrate the feasibility of proposed solutions as well as providing possible results of their ideas; | (Ardoin et al., 2014; Bodin & Prell, 2011; Brouwer & Biermann, 2011; Heritage & Dooris, 2009; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Olsson et al., 2006; Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008) |
| Facilitating/ developing social innovations | The extent to which PE shows openness to new and different thinking and alternatives, options, processes and introduce and/or get them recognized from | Whether the role of the PE in recognizing and introducing (social) innovation has been crucial to let the formal institutions (municipality) | (Bodin & Crona, 2008; Carey, 2013; Loorbach, 2010; Scholten et al., 2015; Westley et al., 2013; Olsson et al., 2006) |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| | formal or institutional leaders (Scholten et al., 2015) | | |
| Recognizing or Creating windows of opportunity | The strategy (skill) of timing, through which linking and mobilizing stakeholders at right times, around the right issue | Whether it is explicitly mentioned the exploitation of a momentum around the topic of food, through which attracting more stakeholders | (Huiteima et al., 2011; Huiteima & Meijerink, 2010; Kingdon, 2003; Westley et al., 2013; Olsson et al., 2006; Folke et al., 2005) |

Table 2. Operationalisation of the Independent Variable

3.2.2 Intermediate variable - Variation in Inclusive stakeholder engagement

| Factor | Definition | Operationalisation | References |
|--|---|---|---|
| Inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group | Within complex system such as the food system, from an urban point of view, a great variety of actors interacts with each other and exerts and/or endures a notable impact/influence on the system (and its sustainability) as whole. | Whether and to what extent retailers, producers, consumers, citizens, researchers, civil society organisations and potentially others "sit at the table" | (Campbell, 2004; Cloyd, Moser, Maibach, Maldonado, & Chen, 2016; Reed, 2008; Stringer et al., 2006) |
| Involvement of large businesses (large-scale retailers and producers) | Given the role in the whole food chain and system of such actors, it is of great importance they dialogue and sit at the same table | Whether big producers and retailers of the agro-food business are present | (Sonnino & Spayde, 2014) |
| Representation of all the different social groups | The issue of urban food system sustainability is a complex social issue, that potentially affects every citizen. | Whether minorities (according to religion, race, age, income etc.) and/or disadvantaged groups or individuals are to some extent reached and included | (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015; Sayce et al., 2013) |
| Breadth of causes and aims represented | Given the cross-sectorial nature of UFS and the issues associated with the sustainability of an urban food system, the presence of stakeholders advocating each of the issue at stake is pivotal | Variety in the involvement of civil organisations advocating different issues (e.g. economic, social, environmental sustainability or health promotion) | (Sonnino & Spayde, 2014) |
| Scale of Actions and Interests represented | An urban food system cannot be conceived as geographically limited within the urban borders, as the step entailing production, distribution, consumption and disposal of food most often occur in different places. | Whether the stakeholders involved coming from the local level, or also from regional and national level, and/or whether they advocate regional/national/international issues, directly or indirectly connected to the urban food system | |
| Level of engagement of the Municipality | In the perspective of developing an operating and effective UFS, the active and | Whether public officers are involved, and to what extent (type of functions) | (Mansfield & Mendes, 2013; |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | constant presence at the table of formal institutions as the city's government is essential | and/or which Municipality departments (related to different policy domains) are included | Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015; Morgan, 2015; Sonnino et al., 2014) |
| Level of Engagement of the stakeholders in the agenda setting | The type of relevant engagement for the development of UFS requires that: → "Information is exchanged through the establishment of dialogue. The process is two-way and often cyclical or iterative"(Stringer et al., 2006). →The multidimensional dialogue established between decision makers, process participants and the public facilitates the co-evolution of policies, interests and the public (Sayce et al., 2013) | Whether stakeholders are all part of decision making and agenda setting, through feedback and inputs ("public participation"), or just recipients, object of mere consultation and information | (Stringer et al., 2006) |

Table 3. Operationalisation of the Intermediate Variable

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Qualitative Semi-structured interviews

The method used to perform this research is qualitative, given the exploratory nature of the study. The total time spent to perform the field research was twenty days, ten days in Cork and ten in Bergamo, between May and June 2016. Through the research on the field, I tried to understand some of those context's features that remote interviews would have not allowed me to grasp.

In both cases, I had the opportunity to participate to events directly organised by the two initiatives (such as farmers' markets and other informal meetings), and I could visit the location of the activities performed (where the activities of urban agriculture are conducted, for instance). This allowed me to benefit from direct observations in both cities. Moreover, in Cork, I personally participated, with the authorisation of the leading researcher, to the second round of a Workshop organised by the research group of TRANSMANGO, a European Union-funded project focused on exploring challenges and opportunities to tackle "vulnerability and resilience of European food systems, in a context of socio-economic, behavioural technological, institutional and agroecological change"(TRANSMANGO, 2016), using the Cork Food Policy Council as case study for Ireland. Most of the CFPC committee as well as other key stakeholders of the food sector of Cork joined the workshop, occurred the second day of my stay in Cork. During this occasion, I got to know part of my interviewees, and I also had the chance to start understanding which are the major challenges and issues related to the food system in Ireland and in Cork, as the workshop required the participants to deal with three different scenarios, picturing various social, economic and environmental situations affecting the food system and security of the region, in order to develop potential answers and solutions.

I have conducted in total twenty-one interviews, nineteen frontal semi-structured interviews, which are listed below (see Tables 4 and 5), one via skype and one through an email correspondence, due to the unavailability of the interviewee in the period I was in the city to perform my fieldwork. The interviews lasted on average between 40 minutes and one hour, except for the interview with the Mayor of Bergamo, with whom I spent 15 minutes.

The method used for the selection of the interviewees has been the snowballing sample, starting from the Academic staff, with whom I established the first contacts in both cities. The questions allowed me to firstly achieve an encompassing view on structure, functioning, and main actors who have played a crucial role in the establishment of the initiative. Through the use of more general questions regarding the development of the idea of the two initiatives, I attempted to pave the way to better identify potential policy entrepreneurship. Overall, the questions were based on the conceptual framework and follow the operationalisation of the variables depicted in Tables 2 and 3, which guided me through the identification of most relevant actors (and their strategies) for the goal of my research. I did not use explicit references to the theoretical concepts behind policy entrepreneurship, leadership, and strategies, as I thought it could have affected the answers of interviewees, who, most likely, would have never considered themselves "leaders" or "policy entrepreneurs". As Dale (2014, p. 435) notes, when individual are questioned about their role, "the majority downplayed their own individual contributions". Therefore, through adopting terms and formula from real life, I asked about concrete activities and situations, as well as perceptions, that could affect the different dimensions of stakeholder engagement and the behaviour of the policy entrepreneurship, in order to have as less as possible biased results.

Ultimately, I recorded all of the interviews and made summaries of them. I decided to not transcribe in detail the interviews as in most of the cases, the interviewees, being free to talk about their experiences and involvement, also provided information not strictly related to the scope of the research.

| CORK – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES | |
|--|--|
| 1. University College Cork (UCC) – Chair of the CFPC | 6. Food business - Tourism |
| 2. Cork Environmental Forum (CEF) | 7. Environment and Recreation Department – Cork City Council |
| 3. BIA - Foodbank | 8. Planning Department – Cork City Council |
| 4. Coordinator of the CFPC | 9. Public Health - Healthy Cities Initiative |
| 5. Public Health Department UCC | |

Table 4. Cork - List of Interviewees

| BERGAMO – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES | |
|--|---|
| 10. Professor of University of Bergamo/CORES lab | 16. Slow Food Bergamo |
| 11. Environment Dep/ Municipality of Bergamo | 17. Fair Trade Cooperatives |
| 12. Researcher CORES lab | 18. Market & Citizenship |
| 13. Bilanci di Giustizia / Sustainable Citizenship/ Solidarity Purchase Groups | 19. Farmers’ Trade Union/ Coldiretti |
| 14. Representative of Sustainable Citizenship | 20. Farmers’ Trade Union/ Confagricoltura |
| 15. Mayor of Bergamo | 21. Solidarity Purchase Groups |

Table 5. Bergamo – List of Interviewees

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data is an iterative process, which was started during the field research phase (Weiss, 1994, pp. 151–153). The meetings during the research on location and the qualitative interviews have been summarised and coded based on the conceptual framework, but also openly with the software NVivo5.

Coding refers to linking the content of the interview to certain concepts and categories, namely the conceptual model (Weiss, 1994, p. 154). Indeed, I have attributed to each of the dimensions composing the intermediate and independent variables (hence according to the above operationalisation) a node, to which referring in the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews. Along with the indicators elaborated in the conceptual framework, the open coding technique allowed me to add new nodes (i.e. new indicators) to interpret the content of the interviews, when the ones already identified did not result suitable to describe specific ideas spontaneously arisen from the actors. This occurred mostly for the identification of contextual variables, which I could not comprehensively identify a priori, but that turned out to be essential elements to take into account in the analysis of PE’s agency.

3.5 Reflection on the chosen methodology

A case study approach aims at producing a “context-depend knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 221).

Indeed, qualitative research and case studies produce understandings, rather than proving hard science or predictive and universal theories, that it happens rarely to encounter in social sciences (Ibid., p.224). On the other hand, case studies are made to learn, learn from the realities, from social practices occurring everywhere, according to different dynamics and peculiarities. By doing so, the researchers and the readers can be provided with an in-depth example – of which the strength is claimed to be underestimated (Ibid. p.228) - of “how things may go” in different settings. The study of urban food strategies and especially the role of food champions is still at its embryonic stage, and there is a need for exploring and sharing practices and experiments occurring worldwide, as claimed by scholarship (see e.g. Blay-Palmer et al., 2016). Finally, the selection of cases followed a strategic information-oriented process, as it focuses on the variations among cases, which in turn increases generalizability compared to random samples (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229).

Issues related to reliability (defined as repeatability and replicability), and validity (aiming at accurate forms of measurement), of the research method are important issues to deal with, although strongly tied to quantitative, rather than qualitative, research paradigms, as claimed by Golafshani (2003, pp. 598–599). However, the same author states that “engaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities” (Ibid., p.604). The opportunity to directly observe and report of activities carried out by pivotal actors to engage the stakeholders, can be considered as an important element to contribute to the creation of “trustworthiness” (Ibid.), necessary for a good qualitative research.

Moreover, the type of stakeholders interviewed belongs to different sectors and backgrounds, in order to provide a broad and comprehensive representation of the reality, that is depicted from different perspectives. This might ultimately contribute to increase the internal validity of the research.

Concerning external validity, the results might not be strictly valid for being generalised and applied to other contexts, but it can be argued that “from both an understanding- oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229).

4. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

4.1 Results Case 1 - Cork

Cork Food Policy Council (CFPC) was established in 2013, as “a partnership between representatives of the community, food retail, farming, fishing, restaurant/catering, education, environmental and health sectors and local authorities” (“Cork Food Policy Council,” 2016).

The forum is meant to promote knowledge, skills and experience around food, through a comprehensive analysis of the ‘food system’ within the Cork city-region. It aims at promoting a broad examination of the issues surrounding the sustainability of food-related activities starting from production and consumption, providing a voice for a more just and equitable food system.

As a multidisciplinary group, they seek to encourage the introduction of an innovative food systems thinking into the city, working at both local and policy levels. On the local policy level, it attempts to influence the local policy “to follow best practice in developing a healthy, sustainable, & resilient food system” (“Cork Food Policy Council,” 2016). Through the coordination of the broad array of people working on specific initiatives and programs, the goal would be creating a unified movement that can stimulate political will to bring about social change. This would recognise the position and value of food within the fabric of city life, and for its multifunctional benefits to health, community, infrastructure and spatial thinking.

The CFPC has mainly five objects of interest (“Cork Food Policy Council,” 2016):

“Health and wellbeing for all” relates to the importance of raising awareness of the importance of a nutritious, balanced diet, also through an improvement of the availability of affordable healthy food. Moreover, it concerns the support for a wide range of community growing and other food-related activities, claimed to represent an effective improvement of physical and mental health for people of all ages.

“A thriving local economy” aims at supporting the variety of food enterprises and jobs, via deploy the richness of land and sea resources. It is therefore claimed the relevance of sourcing healthy and sustainable food from local producers and suppliers, allowing to keep value within the local economy.

“Resilient, food-friendly communities” looks at the celebration of food and culinary traditions of all cultures through a variety of public events. It is here emphasised the support to local, city- and region- wide food initiatives that gather communities together and help them to improve their neighbourhoods.

“Lifelong learning & skills” concerns the centrality of giving to everyone the opportunity to learn about good food – from how to grow it, to how to cook it and enjoy it. To do so it is stated the pivotal role of sharing and enabling organisations such as schools, hospitals, businesses and other caterers to embrace a more sustainable food culture.

“A reduced environmental footprint” aims at maximising the usage of free urban and peri-urban green spaces in order to produce food for local people and, at the same time, lowering food miles, packaging and waste through the promotion of a nature-friendly food production, that adopt recycling and composting practices.

Through the development of the next three sections, in which the intermediate, independent and contextual variables for the case of the CFPC will be analysed following the conceptual framework in section 2.2, I will specifically deal with the most relevant aspects concerning the stakeholder engagement, the context within which this happens/happened and the related role of identified PE.

4.1.1 Intermediate Variable – Variation in Inclusive stakeholder engagement

In this sub-chapter, the results are organised and presented according to the definitions and operationalisation provided in the Methodological chapter of this research (3.2.2).

- **Inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group**

The CFPC is composed by 15 people, in Table 6 is reported an overview of the backgrounds of the CFPC's components. I introduce in the next paragraph some background information about the initial phase of formation of the stakeholders' group, the "steering committee" of the CFPC.

As the CFPC's website claims and the interviews conducted confirmed, the process brought to the formation of the CFPC, and to this current composition, has been started in summer 2013, during a public event held at University College Cork (UCC), with around fifty to sixty attendants (CFPC, 2016; Interview 9 and 1). However, the organizers (the Professor of the UCC, the coordinator of the Healthy Cities Initiative in Cork, and the coordinator of the Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Community Health Project- NICHE), directly invited some specific people "across the borders" (Interview 9), considered representatives of a variety of food-relevant sectors, in order to start the dialogue necessary to initiate a process of creation of a Food Council. Among them were present representatives from the environmental, the parks and the planning departments of the Cork City Council, the green party, the English Market (the most important municipal food market in the city of Cork), the UCC department of Public Health and from the food retailing sector.

This event has been described by the interviewees as successful for stimulating the curiosity and the interest of many key actors (Interview 9 and 1). Therefore, after this first informal meeting, the three individuals who initiated the process, selected "like-minded people" to invite to sit at the table of the CFPC. The process of involving stakeholders will be further analysed in the section 4.1.2, within the frame of the strategies of the PE to engage stakeholders.

Indeed, the involvement of like-minded people meant that some persons are members of the Council because of their keen personal interest for food (in any of its dimensions), besides their professions. Indeed, these actors have been engaging with relevant projects and initiatives at the city/community level, in line with the aims and scope of the CFPC.

These stakeholders can be conceptually considered part of the newly developed and partly under-theorised concept of "food citizens". Sage (2014) associates the term to the potential to recast and reposition the role of individuals, as more than passive buying eaters (2014, p. 270). Indeed, the term refers to the power that citizens have to create a new terrain for the social agency and political action (De Tavernier, 2012), through their commitment to promoting food-system sustainability within their community. They would advocate the individual and community right to food, through food democracy, i.e. active participation of citizens who want to ensure environmental sustainability and economic viability of healthy, fair and culturally appropriated food procurement (Campbell, 2004).

| OVERVIEW of the SECTOR REPRESENTED in the CFPC | |
|---|--|
| • Academia – University of Cork | • Environment and Recreation Department of Cork City Council |
| • Public Health – UCC and Healthy Cities Initiative | • Food Business – Café and Restaurant |
| • Food Tourism – Food Fab trails | • Food bank and social volunteering |
| • Environmental Advocacy | • Community Gardening |
| • Planning Department of Cork City Council | • Food Retailing |
| • Horticulture | • Community projects and involvement |

Table 6. Overview of the Sectors represented in the Cork Food Policy Council

If we compare the sectors of origin depicted in Table 6 to the comprehensive and ideal picture in terms of inclusiveness, as shown in Table 1 (see section [2.1.2](#)), based on Campbell (2004, pp. 343–344), it is possible to identify a few differentiations, into which I will delve.

The CFPC embeds most of the relevant actors that the literature claims to be necessary to gather, in order to start a process of development of UFS. However, the results of the interviews shed light on a few grey areas, where there appears to be some room for improvements.

A critical missing presence in the CFPC seems to be associated with the “sustainable agriculture movement”, especially in the form of small- and large-scale diversified or organic farmers (Campbell, 2004, pp. 343–344). The connection with local (i.e. urban, peri-urban or hinterland) farmers resulted from the interviews to be problematic. Among the major reasons there is a “people-producers divide” (Interviewee 2). There is a widespread perception about farmers mainly as “traders and suppliers of the market” (ibid.), rather than producers of something so precious and valuable as our daily food.

The agriculture sector of Ireland relies mostly on beef and dairy production, indeed 81% of the agricultural area is devoted to pasture, hay and grass silage (3.6 million hectares), while 11% to rough grazing and only 8% of the land to crops, fruit and horticulture products (Irish Food Board, 2016). As suggested by this data, and confirmed by the interviews, the Irish agricultural sector is mainly focused on beef and dairy for exportation, therefore vegetable and fruits growers are in minimal percentage (Interviewee 2). Instead, the majority of the sector is represented by big agro-business companies, whose value is around 10 billion a year (Interviewee 7). However, it appears that there is not well-consolidated network between consumers in the city (or food citizens), and those, although a few, small local farmers (Interviewee 8 and 1). In this case, it emerged that in West Cork there seems to be a quite relevant community of growers who, although in contact with the city centre of Cork, are not in a real connection with the city itself (Interviewee 8). This disconnection may be the reason why the setup of Short Food Supply Chains as buyers’ co-ops, farmers market, or vegetable box schemes is not perceived popular activity or in some cases, it has been registered as failing (Interviewee 1). Indeed, the same interviewee wonders whether it is a matter of “resistance” against this kind of initiatives, associated with alternative food movements and networks, in the context of Cork, and more broadly of Ireland. Ultimately, it has been mentioned the lack of time and resources for small farmers to get involved in such

time-consuming initiative as the Food Council (Interviewee 1). Nevertheless, the steering committee aims at facing the vacuum of farmers' representatives, being a "challenge" to slowly deal with in the future (Interviewee 2).

The lack of representation of a sustainable agriculture movement, embracing both producers and consumers of sustainable products, sheds light on a weak spot regarding the inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group. As confirmed by some of the interviewees, the Steering Committee is composed by committed individuals, but there are not representatives of movements or groups (as well as grassroots movements), active in the food realm. There is a formal representation of most of the relevant sectors, but not a fair and comprehensive representation of the city of Cork and of its citizens (Interviewee 4). In this regard, Interviewee 5 called for a need of the Food Council to get more integrated within the community and its active groups in food justice and sustainability, with whom it needs to create a deeper bond. As finally confirmed by Interviewee 3, the inclusive composition and activities of the CFPC, need to be(come) a request advanced by an active community, by citizens themselves, who have to ask for a Food Council to be in place and to be part of.

- **Involvement of large business (large-scale retailers)**

As the box above shows, within the steering committee of the CFPC the presence of a representative from the big distribution chain, i.e. Musgrave, the biggest food retailer in Ireland, that we could include in the group "Global industrialized food system- Conventional Corporate", as depicted in the Table 1 above mentioned. However, as already mentioned in the previous section, there is still a vacuum regarding the involvement of large agro-business, multinational companies, which might be "nervous" about the shift of attention towards local and small-scale business, from a Food Council which include the Municipality (Interviewee 7). It has emphasised the fact that it is still not clear whether there would be a "common ground" to have a dialogue with this kind of business, within the table of the CFPC, or not (Ibid.).

- **Scale of Actions and Interests represented**

The composition of the CFPC reflects very well the geographical scale of the activities implemented by the Council, that are mainly city centre focused. The location of the community growing projects, as well as the food businesses, food banks and the Institutions represented (University and Municipality) reveals that there is a missing link with the areas surrounding the city of Cork, the Cork County, and even with less central neighbourhoods of the city itself.

Initially, the development of the CFPC originated from the idea to scale-up a very successful community garden project (called NICHE), in a very deprived area in the Northern part of the city, called Knocknaheeny. The connection with that project is still very strong, yet the majority of the projects implemented, the people involved and the target areas for action are localised in the city centre.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees highlighted the missing linkage with the regional Institution, i.e. the Cork County Council (Interviewee 9 and 2). Indeed, the lack of representatives from the County Council has been perceived as a "failure" (interviewee 9). As reported by the FAO report (2015) mentioned in the theoretical chapter of this research, achieving a sustainable food system requires a concerted action and planning at the city-region level, given the cross-boundaries nature of food systems themselves. Nevertheless, the presence of representatives from the Cork Environmental Forum (CEF), an NGO established following the Local Agenda 21 structure and focused on promoting sustainable development in the region of Cork, seems to provide the strongest linkage to the regional context. The same interviewee emphasised the slight

dichotomy between the target area of the CEF - the whole area of Cork City and County – and the urban focus of the CFPC (Interviewee 2).

Although it is not possible to identify a representation within the steering committee directly associated with National- or International-focused institutions or advocacy, it is noteworthy taking into consideration that the CFPC is member of the Sustainable Food City Network, UK-based network of cities, composed by and involved in developing and spreading best practices and practical solutions on key food issues, via cross-sector partnership of local public agencies, businesses, academics, and NGOs. As clearly stated by the CFPC leaflet, the idea of the Council itself is embedded in a greater, international trend of urban Food Councils and Food Strategies, therefore the CFPC is intrinsically part of a greater project and movement, as shown by the various initiatives spread worldwide and already mentioned in the Introduction chapter of this report. Furthermore, there has been an attempt to directly start a partnership with San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance, as the recent trip made by the coordinator of the CFPC shows (Interview 4).

- **Breadth of causes and aims represented**

The strong connection between the CFPC and the Healthy Cities initiative since its origin, makes the health promotion central, in terms of both representations within the steering committee, and focus of the activities and projects put in place. Therefore, a major first association is made with the whole health sector, from the dedicated UCC department to the community and city projects embodied by the Healthy Cities programs and the NICHE project, the incubator of the CFPC itself. The NICHE project, grassroots community project, is focused on community growing as therapeutic activity in a deprived area, where some people with mental illness experience social inclusion issues.

- **Level of Engagement of the stakeholders in the agenda setting**

The interviews revealed that the level of engagement of the stakeholders is an interactive process, according to which all the members have equal rights and responsibilities in the decision-making process, distributed in different duties and tasks for the implementation. Indeed, there are three subcommittees related to the Governance, to Growing and to Food Awards (Interview 4). Within each subcommittee, the 4 to 5 components attempt to delineate an action plan, aimed at developing concrete actions to put in place in the community. The process of decision making has been described as: “We share ideas, and when the ideas are perceived good enough, we try to involve the rest of the community to make it happen” (Interviewee 2). As pointed out by the coordinator of the CFPC, every member has his/her own networks outside the Council, meaning that once some ideas are shared and discussed within the meetings, the members report them outside, o their own network to get feedback and inputs from the rest of the community they are in contact with (Interviewee 4).

- **Level of engagement of the Municipality**

The Municipality can be considered formally involved in the CFPC, thanks to the presence of two officials of the Cork City Council, from the Environment and Recreation and from the Planning Departments. However, their involvement is not directly related to their mandate. Thus, these two persons decided to take part to the Food Council since their personal interest towards the idea and the goals of a Food Council (Interviewees 7 and 8).

One of them is currently Director of the Environment and Recreation Department, and when the idea of the CFPC arose he was Director of Services Community and Enterprise. Hence, his managerial role within a relevant

department for the activities of a Food Council, along with his personal commitment has been considered highly valuable by the members of the CFPC (Interviewees 1, 4, 9, 8) especially for facilitating the planning (logistically and regulatory-wise) of events, initiatives and so on. Moreover, it has been reported that he played a crucial role to provide some initial financial resources for the CFPC's launch event, and later, a grant assigned to the current coordinator (Interviewees 1 and 9). In the case of the planning department officer, she clearly stated that her role as a member of the CFPC does not really relate to her job (Interviewee 8). Indeed, she clearly states that the Food Council is recognised and approved by the City Council (also confirmed by Interviewee 7), but "it is not a top priority, but in the radar".

- **Representation of all the different social groups**

Although attention is reserved towards food poverty issues and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups of the community, there is no representation of this category of people. However, most of the members of the steering committee have a strong personal and/or professional engagement with this kind of issues, and it was possible to perceive that they attempt to provide a voice to less educated and wealthy individuals.

4.1.2 Independent Variable – Policy Entrepreneurship's Strategies

Coming to what is the main focus of this research, i.e. the role of agency, specifically of policy entrepreneurship, in the next section I will provide an overview of the most relevant actions and activities put in place by the actors identifiable as policy entrepreneurs in the case of the CFPC. It is important to point out that during the fieldwork it has been possible to generally recognise a, or a few, specific actors, as policy entrepreneurs through the analysis of their role in the involvement of stakeholders. However, as already theorised in the Introduction and Theoretical chapters, it emerged that the policy entrepreneurs act mostly collectively, providing a further empirical base for the choice of adopting a policy entrepreneurship perspective. Accordingly, each of these identified policy entrepreneurs alternatively has been particularly active with some strategies, rather than others

- **Generating and Disseminating Knowledge**

The creation and dissemination of knowledge and information are considered a paramount activity, in order to reach and raise awareness and interest of the variety of stakeholders possibly included in a food system. Indeed, the complexity of the food system brings along a large set of complex data and information to understand, recognise and deal with, from a full spectrum of expertise. The picture gets further confusing due to climate change's action and the uncertainty associated with it.

This leads to the importance of focusing on knowledge building and utilization (Westley et al., 2013) around the topic of food.

In the case of Cork, the fact that the CFPC's Chair is a Professor from University College Cork, already suggests that knowledge creation and dissemination is at the centre of the activity of the Council, and especially is central in the activity of the Professor as citizen and academic. His prominent position within the CFPC is strongly related to his deep expertise, and academic focus on food-related topics. Indeed, he has been pointed out as "the expert" (interviewee 9), who introduced for the very first time the concept of Food Councils and the related experiences from Northern America and the UK - being one of his research interests - in the city of Cork. As mentioned in the "Inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group" section, the selection of stakeholders to bring to the table has been mainly a deliberative process initiated by him, and two more people, whose roles will be analysed in the next sections. The CFPC's Chair is also behind the idea of organising a series of public

lectures on the topic of farming and sustainability of urban food systems, to which himself gave a presentation, held last autumn 2015.

Although the Chair can be mainly considered the “pioneer”, as (Imperial et al., 2016) call those individuals catalysing and recruiting others for action, it is possible to identify other potential policy entrepreneurs within the Food Council. His role has been specifically entrepreneurial at the beginning of the CFPC’s life, during the composition of the steering committee. As the CFPC represents an ongoing experimentation, still developing and trying to reach a more established role within the city of Cork (Interviewees 3,4,7 and 8), the process of stakeholder involvement is also still continuing, especially with regards to the different groups of civil society not present yet.

Hence, it is possible to distinguish two more individuals very engaged with knowledge creation and dissemination, among civil society. One is the member of the Cork Environmental Forum, already involved in campaigns and organisation of conferences to raise awareness about environmental and more general, sustainable development’s issues. As such, she reported that she tries to sensitise stakeholders and community also during the seminars, lectures and information meetings organised by the CEF, and not directly by the CFPC. She affirmed that instead of having frontal lectures, they prefer having a knowledge exchange through the participants’ discussions, as everyone, in her opinion, has something to give and to add, to enrich each other’s knowledge (Interviewee 2). Therefore, the knowledge is co-created and circulates within an interactive and participatory forum, where there are no experts enlightening laymen, according to a top-down approach.

On the other side, the member of the CFPC mostly connected with the food bank’s world and with the Growing Your Own (GYO) schemes has been identified as very relevant in knowledge creation and dissemination. He is very much involved in community’s activity, with both groups of people interested into growing their own vegetables and community gardens, as well as with disadvantaged people. He had a prominent role in the establishment of a big food bank and cloud in Cork (3 million meals provided last year – Interviewee 3), that connects, charities with food businesses with a surplus of food, otherwise allocated in landfills. Moreover, his job in the national statistical institute makes him very familiar with data and information, which is very useful to deploy for increasing awareness among community and stakeholders. Finally, the fact that he is a permaculture trainer allows him to involve people in GYO schemes, which resulted an effective way to get people closer to issues such as the sustainability of food production. Accordingly, he claimed many times during the interview how pivotal is educating people, providing them with facts, indicators, data and knowledge about what a food system entails in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability (Interviewee 3).

In all the three cases, these policy entrepreneurs have clearly demonstrated the feasibility of their proposals and ideas through the implementation of initiatives and projects at the local scale. Indeed, the original concept of a Food Council grew from the willingness to scale up to the whole city a successful project as the NICHE, in the Northern part of Cork (Interviewee 9), as its resonance achieved the national scale too (Interviewee 2 and 3).

➤ **Definition of Problems – Issues Linking**

The definition of problems through the linking of (apparently) disconnected issues has been widely mentioned by the interviewees. Food has been considered by all of them as a real “cross-cutting issue” (Interviewee 2).

Those who revealed to be more entrepreneurial via adopting this strategy are actors very involved in other activities in various sectors, that allows them to create linkages and connections between different topics, under the umbrella of food. The member of the CEF reported that in she always tries to insert the issue of food within the agenda of the conferences and lectures coordinated by her organisation, even when food would not be the core topic. For instance, the CEF is member of the Global Action Plan International, an international network of organisations concerned with Education programs for Sustainable Development, aimed at triggering a sustainable behavioural change in people's daily life. Being focused on daily life's activities makes the link to food (especially consumption and waste) direct and incisive. This is also the case of community gardens promoted by them: a way to learn about climate change, through producing your own food and reinforcing social cohesion within the community (Interviewee 2).

Besides the role of this key member of CEF, a major importance has to be attributed to the role played by the Healthy Cities coordinator, who established a strong bond between food and the CFPC's main concerns, and the mostly health-centred range of activities promoted by her organisation. The support the Healthy Cities Initiative – in the person of its coordinator, also a member of the CFPC - for the establishment of the CFPC, and specifically for attracting stakeholders at the table, can be considered crucial. It seems that the relevance of this actor has been shown especially in terms of coupling the topic of health and health promotion, very popular within the city - due to the participation to the WHO Healthy Cities initiative - to the potential supportive role of food for it. Beginning with favouring healthy diet and organic food has allowed to gradually embracing and spreading the idea of food as "ideal tool to bring people together" (interviewee 9). This coupling has been effective in terms of stakeholders' attraction, due to a wide range of actors Healthy Cities regularly deals with (from political and academic Institutions, until citizens and communities in general).

Although these two members resulted to be very strategic in combining the topic of food with more mainstream issues, the visioning role can be ascribed to the Chair. His broad understanding of the cross-sectorial nature of food as asset to develop a culture of sustainability and political activism of citizens, makes him crucially a visioner.

➤ **Linking actors - Building networks**

This strategy represents the core of the policy entrepreneurship activity in order to foster stakeholders' participation. This entails bridging actors across and within different hierarchies and types (Dale, 2014; Westley et al., 2013), connecting networks and individuals within them to gain support and create momentum around a topic as food, or more specifically the establishment of a Food Council. Moreover, the PE were active in reinforcing bonds between those actors already tied on a personal level by trust and relations. The way bonding and bridging have been exerted in the case of the CFPC resulted, more than in any of the other strategies, from a collective effort, for which it is not possible to ascribe a main role to a single policy entrepreneur.

Initially, the group created by the UCC professor, Chair of the CFPC, together with the coordinator of the Healthy Cities and the Coordinator of the NICHE project acted to bond their connection started during the development of the NICHE project (Interviewees 1 and 9). This previous successful project opened up the chance for the Food Council to be established, as many actors (institutional and from the civil society) were already actively involved, or at least they acknowledged the perceived good functioning of the community garden there set up.

These three actors initiated connecting to people within their own networks, very different in terms of composition, one from the other, in order to involve like-minded people to seat at the table of the Food Council. For instance, the Chair of the CFPC managed to link with the Healthy Cities Committee, through his contact with the coordinator (Interviewee 1). Moreover, he contacted the head of the community and Enterprise department within the City Hall. This was a first step towards disseminating within the local government the concept of a food council, and more generally, creating the urgency to tackle the sustainability of the urban food system, as a major challenge to the reinforcement of a resilient urban community (Interviewees 1 and 7). In order to stimulate a serious institutional interest towards the Food Council, together with the activity of the Chair and the head of the Community and Enterprise Department, the other official member of the steering committee, working in the policy team of the Planning Department was very relevant. Her endeavour to push the CFPC's activities in the planning department's agenda, in terms of land use and allotments for urban gardening and so on (Interviewee 8), has been considered a great asset from the coordinator of the CFPC (Interview 4). Indeed, she would be the connector between the requests for more physical space for the activity of the food council and the planning program of the City Council.

With regards to the civil society and citizens in general, critically entrepreneurial resulted to be the member of the CEF and the pioneer of the food bank "BIA Food". Their main activities appeared to be based on their long experience in direct contact with people from many different social groups within the city, with whom they already built trust and personal relations (Interviewees 2 and 3). For instance, the pioneer of the BIA Food Bank (Interviewee 3) is a person who "wears many different hats" as himself reported in the interview. He is a permaculture trainer, teaching people how to create and maintain their own gardens with vegetables, active both locally but also internationally, hence in contact with a variety of actors in the food area, but especially embedded within community, where he has many personal relations too. Furthermore, his involvement in the board of directors in the Cork Simon Community, to support homeless, through education, capacity building activities and emergency help, makes him very well-known in the city.

Very active in linking different sectors (from citizens to public and private sector) is the member of the CEF. She stated they her organisation and herself have been cooperating with and bridging various local and regional authorities in the food realm, in order to promote the CFPC.

The potential linkages made are not reflected in the composition of the steering committee, there should be more attention towards groups of people already practicing what the CFPC promotes → as the permaculture school in Kensale (interviewee 9).

Nevertheless, as it has been underlined in the section dedicated to the analysis of the intermediate variable, the Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement, the process towards a greater inclusion of grassroots movements, civil society's groups like community growers, for example, with concerns attuned to the ones of the CFPC, appears still ongoing. The officer of the planning department clearly stated that there are some connections necessary to make, but that it still difficult establish them, as most of the members of the CFPC do not have direct link with those actors. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is to some extent a lack of very deeply integrated individuals or groups from and within the community.

➤ **Building Trust (through Relationships), and Motivation and Legitimacy**

Agency is an "a priori" condition, an activator, of social capital (Dale & Sparkes, 2011). The importance of relationship and trust has been strongly cited by those members who have been playing more than others, an

entrepreneurial role (Interviewees 1, 2, 7 and 9). Regarding trust and motivation, the Chair stated how paramount is “inspiring and motivating people” (Interviewee 1) through being present among them and showing them the feasibility and tangibility of the proposals and ideas you propose – in connection with the strategy “generating and disseminating knowledge” which has pointed out the importance of pilot projects to achieve credibility and trust from stakeholders and community in general.

Similarly, the member of CEF together with the founder of the food bank emphasize the fact that the many activities they have been personally and directly involved into contributed over time to build their “reputation” and “consistency” within and among the community’s members (Interviewees 2 and 7). Therefore, they claim that to get people involved with the ideas supported by the food council it is crucial to be present among them, motivating them, and showing how concrete it is, in reality, the idea of a more sustainable, fair and just food system, by doing. This would be a first fundamental step to get their admiration and creating followers for their initiatives (Interviewee 2). The establishment in the community, with “approved track records” (Interviewee 9) has been mentioned as the necessary element to get people involved, referring to the chair of the CFPC.

Motivating people through education and especially teaching (learning) by doing is critical. However, motivation and inspiration are thought to be critically triggered by a robust personal motivation, rooted “in the heart” of those willing to involve people in this kind of initiatives (Interviewee 7). This leads to the recognition that it is all about “building relationships of trust, with and within the community” (Interviewee 7).

➤ **Leading by Example**

Throughout the analysis of the previous strategies, especially regarding building trust and generation of knowledge, the idea of leading by example constantly emerged as a premise to many other activities. Therefore, it seems reasonable to not analysing it as separate strategy, but rather as a complementary element of all the others.

➤ **Recognising or Creating windows of opportunity**

This strategy has been mainly implemented by the Chair, who managed to seize a window of opportunity when the NICHE project ended and its coordinator asked him what would have happened next, as the community garden was so successful, and many stakeholders from the institutions to the community, were already actively involved. Accordingly, he launched the idea of the CFPC, as scaled up version of the NICHE project, conceived to embed the whole urban area, and the process of gathering the stakeholders came straight after.

Moreover, the Chair strategically acted in order to exploit the visibility of the CFPC after the big launch event they organised to celebrate its creation, so that the city as whole could have got to know it. They decided to organize a “Feed the1000” event, during which 5000 people had the opportunity to get a meal cooked using food that would have been otherwise sent to landfill. Besides the great success obtained, in terms of reaching a very numerous amount of people, they attracted the attention of the media.

Here, the Chair was interviewed by national and local newspapers, and he reported to have attended six radio programs on the same day (Interviewee 1), during which he explained the concept of the CFPC and the idea of advocating for stricter municipal regulations for the opening of fast food in the city, and especially nearby schools. He was invited to debate this and other policy proposals elaborated by the CFPC, in many television and radio programs. This created attention towards diets, nutrition and sustainability of food production and consumption. The importance of seizing that window of opportunity, was cited by most of the interviewees (1, 2,7,9).

➤ **Facilitating - developing social innovations**

It was not possible to clearly identify this strategy, as a major one. There is a starting attempt to work in collaboration with the groups of urban green growers of the city (still a few and fragmented), but it did not result a relevant point at this stage yet.

4.1.3 Exogenous/contextual factors

In this section, I provide an analysis of those elements not directly related to the agency of previously identified policy entrepreneurship, but rather associated with the context within which the agency occurs. The few contextual elements I briefly outlined in the theoretical chapter as potentially relevant, have been enriched by new factors, arisen during the fieldwork. I coded them in general categories, as I noticed that some of these factors emerge quite often during both cases' interviews.

➤ **Personal commitment of stakeholders**

In the coding process of the interviews, the personal motivation arose as a strong driver for stakeholder involvement, which may highly increase the chance that policy entrepreneurship strategies bring about the inclusive engagement pursued. In the case of Cork, some of the stakeholders have a robust experience in volunteering and involvement in communities' projects (Interviewees 2,7 and 8). Therefore, it can be assumed that their personal motivation might have brought them to participate and get involved in the CFPC, besides the agency of PE.

➤ **National and Supra-National institutional and political factors**

The presence of short-term policies at the national level aimed at providing subsidies, for instance, exclusively to certain types of (unsustainable) food and crops production may be perceived as a big disincentive for stakeholders. Indeed, it has been highlighted that there is a political lack of attention, associated with the fact that national and supranational policies especially in Ireland, primarily focus on subsidising beef and dairy productions and exports. Hence, there is a discouragement of a shift towards vegetables and more biodiverse production, that could be also utilized within the Country, rather than be destined to the European and worldwide markets (Interviewee 2 and 3). The sustainability over time of these two specific productions, given their harmful effect on the environment and on climate change, should represent an important factor to stimulate a more long-term oriented policy making at national and European level, that would recognise the relevance of securing access to healthy, cultural appropriated and fair food even in western countries (Ibid.). Moreover, overburdening standards and regulations applied by the national and European policies to farming businesses are considered very limiting of their activity (Interviewee 2). Especially in the case of small-medium enterprises, highly bureaucratized procedures, bringing along high level of costs, represent a strong obstacle for adopting diversified or organic farming, for instance. All of these reasons heavily contribute to, firstly, hindering more environmentally sounded farming practices, and, secondly, keeping farmers away from the sustainability transition required and promoted by an urban food strategy. Joining the laborious process of building it, would mean more active participation of farmers themselves, who would not find any incentive in investing time and resources into it.

➤ **Local Institutional and Political factors**

With regards to the local institutional context, the interviewed actors stressed the difficulties to introduce the idea of a Food Council, with multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial aims and scopes, into an "old fashioned" institutional setting, which has still a very short-term and silos approach to policies (Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 8 and

9). Indeed, cross-departmental and cross-sectorial collaboration is still not seen as mainstream way of proceeding in local policy-making (Interviewee 4). Therefore, the interviewees unanimously called for a forward-thinking agenda setting and plans development, resulting from cooperation between several City Council's department. Moreover, it has been pointed out that the lack of power and authority at the City Council level, concerning the regulation of issues such as food production and agriculture, in terms of licenses and permissions. Stakeholders recognises the presence of a vacuum in the formal power of the City Council that may critically hamper the implementation of projects and policies, as conceived by a Food Council. If measures cannot be put in place because the City Council does not have the power to allow so, this might strongly prevent an increase of interest and involvement of citizens and stakeholders, since the Food Council might be perceived as an unfeasible project, besides the efforts of the policy entrepreneurship to prove the opposite. Ultimately, some interviewees affirm the importance of having political actors highly sensitive to the issues promoted by the Food Council, to get priority in the municipal agenda, and ensure to some extent feasibility of the projects and proposals (Interviewee 8).

➤ **Lack of Financial and human resources to establish a UFS**

One very relevant factor that was often mentioned is the voluntary basis on which is founded the commitment of stakeholders and, among them, of policy entrepreneurs. The fact that all of these actors need to significantly commit in terms of time and energies, in their free time (as everyone has his/her own job, not related to the Food Council), in order to keep going with the projects of the CFPC, as well as with the involvement of new stakeholders, is perceived as a strong obstacle. There is a perceived urgency of having a person within the CFPC, employed full-time over a long period, to take care of organisation and participation-related issues. This is what the Coordinator currently does with significant difficulty though, due to her job as PhD candidate (Interviewee 3 and 7). The human resources' lack goes hand in hand with the poverty of economic resources, that would be needed to reach out to more and more citizens, as well as to organise events, seminars and any kind of activity.

➤ **Cultural Features of the community – Traditions and mind-set regarding food**

It emerged that there is a difficulty to support overt time consistent short food supply chains within the urban and peri-urban areas. For example, the failure of food box schemes might be triggered by a cultural mind-set that does not recognise them as an opportunity to get access to fairer and healthier food, and for which investing time and resources (Interviewee 1). This is also confirmed by the perception of another interviewee, who claims that the Irish cultural mind-set might not be particularly inclined to consider food as key element in daily life, to enjoy in conviviality or as a cultural symbol, that people may be willing to preserve and celebrate (Interviewees 2 and 4). Therefore, if there is not a widespread demand for what is promoted by the Food Council, i.e. the idea of sourcing food as locally as possible, supporting local economies rather than big agrobusiness, it results into an even harder inclusive involvement of stakeholders.

Ultimately, an issue highlighted by one of the interview can relates to the sub-node **Cohesiveness of the community**. She mentioned the presence of a like-minded group of people, involved in sustainable agriculture and permaculture, that would be interesting to involve, but being located relatively distant from the centre of Cork, where all the activities of the CFPC are mainly performed, seems more complicated to reach (Interviewee 8). This might suggest some sort of separation within the community, especially between citizens living in the centre of Cork, and others located in peri-urban areas.

➤ **Comprehensiveness and completeness of the UFS plans**

A major factor that cannot be fully ascribed to policy entrepreneurship is the extent to which the urban food

plans are comprehensive and complete, in the sense that goals and pragmatic strategies to achieve them are clearly stated, and the whole group of stakeholders is aware of it. This element is strictly related to the participatory and collaborative nature of the UFS itself, and indeed depends on the accordance of all stakeholders sitting at the table, not only on the PE. Significantly, it has been claimed “Who sits at the table depends on what you aim at” (Interviewee 8). Elaborating a clear strategy, entailing clear goals and means, is considered as necessary step in order to get a full understanding of which expertise and actors still need to be involved (Interviewee 3 and 7).

➤ **History of Previous collaboration between individuals or groups of individuals within the community**

As already started, the previous collaboration for the development of the community garden called NICHE project is the most relevant collaboration emerged from the fieldwork. However, it is not really extended to the whole community, but rather to some key actors (the same three who launched the idea of the CFPC) and a group of citizens based in the northern part of Cork, directly involved in the project. Therefore, it is not possible to make general statements on the relevance of this variable, besides the point mentioned above.

➤ **Geophysical conditions of the city-region**

The temperature and weather of Cork (and Ireland in general) have been mentioned as problematic for the cultivation of vegetables (interviewee 2). This might represent an obstacle in general for the development of short food supply chain, based on farming activities within the city-region. In turn, this might affect the interest and the involvement of actors from the farming sector, who might not see the relevance to take part in such initiative as the development of UFS.

4.2 Results Case 2 – Bergamo

The case of Bergamo shows a very articulated picture of stakeholders and actors involved in different terms and layers. Firstly, the Agriculture Roundtable (AR) - *Tavolo Agricoltura* in Italian - the unit of analysis of this research, presents some of the characteristics of the CFPC and of any other Food Council established so far worldwide. It gathers stakeholders mainly from the agriculture sector, operating within urban and peri-urban areas, in order to discuss different needs and perspectives and hence formulate policy solutions, aimed at promoting a sustainable local development, with special consideration of food.

The Agriculture Roundtable was established in 2015, as an informal table for consultation to which the local administration decided to monthly invite agriculture trade unions, the local association for the safeguard of the local natural parks (Parco dei Colli), the Botanical Garden of Bergamo, the University of Bergamo and the Network of Sustainable Citizenship (SC) - "*Cittadinanza Sostenibile*" in Italian – the local network of solidarity economy, composed of 19 local civil society's organisations, businesses and cooperatives, sharing the will to act in order to create a more just and sustainable community (Cittadinanza Sostenibile, 2015), in order to discuss agriculture and food related issues.

The AR is part of a bigger strategy the Municipality of Bergamo has been developing called "Feeding Bergamo" – "*Nutrire Bergamo*" in Italian. The strategy is not a formal policy program, but rather a way to comprehensively envision a set of projects around sustainability in food and agriculture, already established in the city of Bergamo for a long time, but not included yet in an overarching strategy. This strategy would encompass public food procurement activities in schools and other public institutions, that favour organic products coming from local producer, within the urban or peri-urban areas. Moreover, it is planned to carefully assess the amount of public land not used at the moment in order to destine it to "high-quality agriculture" (Interviewee 15).

4.2.1 Intermediate variable - Variation in Inclusive stakeholder engagement

The inclusiveness of the stakeholder engagement of the AR of Bergamo will be analysed following the indicators elaborated in the operationalisation, in section [3.2.2](#), as performed in the case of Cork.

- **Inclusiveness of the stakeholders' group**

Table 7 provides an overview of the sectors and areas of interests present in the AR. The initials "SC" stands for organisations part of the Network of Sustainable Citizenship, as all of them are represented in the AR by only one person, the referent of SC, who attempts to provide a voice to the requests and perspectives of the whole Network.

When comparing Table 7 with Table 1 (see section [2.1.2](#)), based on the ideal configuration built by Campbell (2004), we notice that there is a major absence of the conventional food system, especially with regards to big agribusiness, and large-scale retailers, and consumers' associations. The conventional food system can be considered to some extent represented by the farmers' trade unions. Indeed, these two organisations are the local branches of the two major national farmers' trade unions, *Coldiretti* and *Confagricoltura*, to which any type of farming business, both conventional and organic/alternative, as well as small, medium and large enterprises can register (Interviewees 19 and 20). This element is important, as it makes the AR quite an inclusive environment, where there is promotion of dialogue and discussion between, at times opposite, ways of conceiving food production and farming. However, in the case of Bergamo, the farmers' trade unions mostly speak for those businesses practicing direct sales *in locus*, or committed to organic farming. Indeed, it is perceived that larger businesses, selling their products on national and international markets, would not be that interested in the AR's discussions, as the latter have been focusing more on supporting local, organic and "excellent" productions, through setting-up, for instance, wine and food itineraries (Interviewees 15 and 20).

The eagerness of working collaboratively for the local development appears to be preponderant, compared to the oppositions of methods of farming, and also the historical political divisions between the two organisations (Interviewee 20).

Moreover, the University of Bergamo is part of the AR, through the presence of two of its researchers, working at the CORES Lab, an interdisciplinary research group focused on the study of Consumption, Networks, and Practices of Sustainable Economies. Within the Network, and therefore the AR, there is a significant participation of social cooperatives, focused on social justice and inclusion via promoting sustainability in different sectors, from agriculture to finance and clothing.

| OVERVIEW of the SECTOR REPRESENTED in the Agriculture Roundtable | |
|--|---|
| • Academia – University of Bergamo | • Food Business – Café and Restaurant (SC) |
| • City Council of Bergamo - Mayor | • Alternative Food Networks - Buyers Co-ops (SC) |
| • Environment Department of Bergamo City Council | • Sustainable Agriculture (SC) |
| • Environmental Advocacy - Legambiente | • Food Citizens (SC) |
| • Slow Food (SC) | • Social and Economic Justice (SC) |
| • Farmers Trade Unions | • Ethical finance (SC) |
| • Fair Trade (SC) | • Social Inclusion (SC) |
| • Local Newspaper(SC) | • Environmental Education and Conservation – Botanic Garden |

Table 7. Overview of the Sectors represented in the Agriculture Roundtable of Bergamo

- **Level of engagement of the Municipality**

As clear from the above Table 7, a very significant element is the presence of the Mayor himself, and the city council member for the Environment. The Mayor is reported by many interviewees as the formal initiator of the AR, he convenes it once a month and he leads the discussion during the meetings (Interviewee 11, 12 and 20).

There is a widespread recognition of the genuine and consistent interest of the Mayor and the administration in general, for the topic of food sustainability and all the connected issues (Interviewees 10, 16,17 and 20).

The mayor claimed the crucial importance of being as much inclusive as possible in the discussion and confrontation about food related topics (Interviewee 15). Indeed, although he does not fully share the practices implemented by the Solidarity Purchase Groups (SPGs), the local group of Alternative Food Networks, for instance, he acknowledges their contribution to creating a robust and fundamental base in the city, for the setting-up of a dialogue around sustainable food system. Through their strong commitment, they indeed provide an example of a sustainable model of production and consumption for the rest of the community (Interviewee 15) – deeper considerations about SPGs will be given in the section 4.2.3.

Furthermore, the council member reported a strong concern of the municipality with the “revalorization” of

public areas – part of the “Feeding Bergamo” strategy – meant to be used for enhancing urban green projects, rather than destined to constructions (Interviewee 11). According to her, the fact that the market organised by the AR - so-called Earth’s Market, *Mercato della Terra* - is placed in a central square of the city of Bergamo, is a clear sign of the centrality that the AT has within the Administration’s agenda (Interviewee 11).

- **Scale of Actions and Interests represented**

The geographical scope of the AT is clearly not only city-focused. It appeared quite clear that the attempt to develop common solutions for making the urban and peri-urban areas more resilient relies on the involvement of actors from the whole province of Bergamo (Interviewee 20). This is shown by a few elements. For instance, the presence of the farmers’ trade unions is a clear sign of looking outside the borders of the city centre, as the businesses by them represented are mostly located in the countryside and villages surrounding the city. This is confirmed also by the presence of the “Parco dei Colli” association (Parks’ safeguard authority), which comprises 9 more municipalities, besides Bergamo.

Moreover, recently the Bio-District of Social Agriculture of the Province of Bergamo became a new member of the AR. Bio-Districts are social enterprises or farms which not only adopt organic farming, but also encourage social inclusion, through employing marginalised or deprived individuals (AIAB, 2016). This clearly shows the aim of the activities in the AR promoted to look at the communities surrounding Bergamo city.

Ultimately, the Network of Sustainable Citizenship comprises a cooperative promoting Fair Trade. This represents an endeavour to support local short supply chains together with those promoted by the Fair Trade associations worldwide.

Besides the Fair Trade component, there is no evident link with National or International scales in the AR. The focus on the local (meaning here urban and regional) scale is predominant.

- **Breadth of causes and aims represented**

Given the participation of the Sustainable Citizenship Network, the range of the causes and aims represented is very wide and articulated. The Network was built back in 2007, and it has grown to around twenty entities, with various legal natures. The Network is “not the usual association, but rather a cultural, political and economic open project, pursuing active and aware participation of citizens” (Cittadinanza Sostenibile, 2015). It has been created to collaborate and cooperate in order to reach a greater audience and give more visibility to the initiatives independently organised by each of the associations within SC. The various organisations have different aims and focus, but they all share a common vision about action to support an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable local development. After five years of collaboration, the organisations within SC decide to create a legal, formal association, with membership and funding through private and public grants, called “Market & Citizenship” (M&C), (*Mercato & Cittadinanza*), considered the operational arm of the Network. M&C’s committee organises four farmers’ markets in the city of Bergamo and other three small towns nearby. Along with the market, they organise every time a public meeting or an event for the community, around topics that are of interest of the SC Network, hence focused on sustainability.

There are four social enterprises which strongly promote the integration in the working environment of disadvantaged individuals (either for their economic, health or crimes related issues), within the SC. Their areas of interest vary from sustainable clothing, fair trade products, to organic farming activities and social agriculture. Furthermore, there is a notable representation of the world of the alternative finance: the local branch of the national Ethical Bank is present, together with two solidarity financial cooperatives.

The organisations mostly concerned with environmental issues at the local level, are present at the AR. The

city's Botanical Garden's representatives, together with the Parco dei Colli association are part of the discussion table, as well as the local branch of the most important Italian environmental association, Legambiente.

The presence of Slow food, considered a very important partner by the local administration in terms of similarity of purposes and actions (Interviewee 15 and 11), suggests that food and wine tourism, together with biodiversity conservation are paramount topics within the AR.

- **Representation of all the different social groups**

The University Professor highlighted the interesting fact that both within the AR as well as the Network of SC, immigrants or people not born in Bergamo do not participate (Interviewee 10). She underlined the peculiarity of this fact, as it has been reported that in the Bergamo province there are 144.200 immigrants at the year 2015, and it is the third city within the Lombardy Region for number of immigrants (Orim - Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità, 2016). The presence of the cooperatives within SC may represent an indicator that social inclusion of more disadvantaged people is to some extent taken into consideration, in the discussion of the AR.

- **Involvement of large business (large scale retailers)**

The large scale retailers are not included in the AR. The researcher from the University of Bergamo said that the integration of these actors from the (corporate) conventional food system would be a great step forward, to which the University (the CORES lab specifically) as partner of the AR aims at ultimately (Interviewee 12). The issues related to this variable will be further analysed in the 4.2.3 (Contextual Variables), such as the fragmentation of the stakeholders' group, especially of the grassroots movements, as they are strongly connected to a feature of the alternative food networks' structure and their fragmentation, which strongly hamper the dialogue with actors external to the Network of SC. However, the fact that the farmers' trade unions (which represent both conventional and sustainable farming) sit at the AR, represents a crucial beginning for further involvement of such a relevant sector such as the conventional food system.

- **Level of Engagement of the stakeholders in the agenda setting**

The type of engagement seems to aim at gathering requests and inputs from the stakeholders, in order to formulate collectively shared decisions about the initiatives planned. However, the current informal nature of the AR appears to limit the role of the stakeholders in critically influencing the decisions taken during the meetings. The stakeholders interviewed mentioned the perceived importance that the local administration is currently reserving to their point of view, in term of inputs and information exchange. As in the case of Slow Food, particularly, the fact that they are so well embedded in the community, due to the many initiatives organised over the long time they have been active in the area, makes them knowledgeable about the territory, the interests and practices of local food business (farmers, but also restaurants and small retailers), as well as partly the attitudes of the rest of the citizens, according to what they experienced with their own activity.

4.2.2 Independent variable - Policy Entrepreneurship's Strategies

During the fieldwork and the interviews performed in Bergamo, as in the case of Cork, the policy entrepreneurship resulted quite spread among groups of actors very active in the community, whose agency resulted crucial in relation to some strategies. However, a consistent entrepreneurial role can be ascribed to one actor, that has been crucial for the involvement of stakeholders on a constant base, as it will be further explained in the next sections.

- **Generating and Disseminating Knowledge**

The activities related to the generation of knowledge and its diffusion about food system sustainability have been put in place by most of the stakeholders sitting at the table, who in turn involved other stakeholders. The presence of a great variety of initiatives and actions related to the subject at hand, makes the identification of a specific person or a group of people more complicated, if not impossible, as all of these actors have been contributing to share their knowledge with the community, to support the diffusion of a “culture of sustainability and citizenship” and raise awareness about being responsible about our daily choices (Interviewee 17).

Nonetheless, with special regards to stakeholder involvement, it is important to recognise the fact that the different movements and associations within the AR as well as within the SC network, mostly have a specific knowledge associated with their specific area of interest and activity. This is why the group of researchers of the CORES lab (University of Bergamo), played a crucial role in reconciling these different types of information and knowledge. The highly entrepreneurial role played by the Professor and partly by the researcher closely collaborating with her, consisted in reconciling the various local experiences, and insert them in a bigger and broader picture, i.e. the range of international similar “best practices”, in the attempt to develop a vision that may become a unitary starting point for a more effective collective action.

Sustainable Citizenship was founded after the Professor organised a conference in 2007, at the University of Bergamo, about political consumerism, new forms of critical consumptions and alternative – solidarity – economies, called “Shopping for Human Rights”. In this venue, she invited most of the actors that are now in the Network, to initiate a dialogue for common action between them (Interviewees 10, 12 and 13).

Her job as a researcher in the field of social and political movements with special interest towards solidarity and alternative economies led her to delve into the reality of Bergamo and its active groups. As she stated, she would pour into the city the knowledge she got through her studies, and in turn, the locals would absorb it, integrating it into their own knowledge, and then process it again. Therefore, a virtuous cycle of scientific and local knowledge nourishing each other can be created and sustained over time, through an action research-oriented approach (Interviewee 10).

Ultimately, she truly believes in the importance of citizens' education and awareness raising about mainstream food systems' sustainability, even more than in the concrete action of the local administration and the establishment of policies. Accordingly, she has been pointed as the actor who has always supported the diffusion of the products (hence their values and beliefs) of the alternative food movements arisen in Bergamo, towards more mainstream venues, as supermarkets for example (Interview 12).

- **Definition of Problems – Issues Linking**

If the creation and diffusion of knowledge can be interpreted as a good example of shared policy entrepreneurship and collective action, the major role in order to build a “macro level of shared aspirations” (Stephenson, 2011; Westley et al., 2013) can be attributed to the Professor and her team at the CORES lab. The main contribution of the CORES lab, and specifically of the Professor, was twofold. At earlier stage, they strongly committed to link issues already well-known in the community such as the social and environmental

impact of food production and consumption, to others less tackled at the local level, because perceived as distant from the local reality, such as critical consumption aimed at support groups and businesses facing Mafia's pressures for rackets. The combination of environmental and social concerns with strong forms of political activism had a great boost from the University group of researchers. Indeed, critical consumption can be used as tool to fight for a more environmental and people friendly planet, but also for an economic development that does not have to constantly deal with illegality and corruption.

Moreover, the CORES Professor attributed emphasis to the relevance of Fair Trade, as incubator and pioneer of all of those values promoted by alternative food movements, well in advance compared to their emergence (Interviewee 17). As the representative of the Fair Trade within SC stated, the CORES professor always tries to strengthen the link between issues already well embedded in the local community as the importance of healthy food and valorisation of local productions, with those encompassing a broader international spectrum of realities. More recently, the research group, introducing the idea of Food Council, from which the AR originated, created a virtual public space within which including the whole range of activities of political and food activism aforementioned.

- **Linking actors - Building networks**

As mentioned above, the various actors and groups started convening in 2007, initially for the conference, and later for informal meetings outside the academic environment, to discuss and share ideas and projects, gradually bringing to the formation of the Network of Sustainable Citizenship. The greatest push for the gathering came from the Professor, as most of the interviewees indicated (Interviewees 12, 13, 16 and 17). She was behind the creation of the Network and also the promoter of the involvement of the local administration.

The reinforcement of the bonds between the various actors and stakeholders (bonding) has been carried out during the monthly meetings that SC has since November 2007. The direct and intense exchange of knowledge, information, initiatives and concerns have been cultivated since then.

However, the Professor was pivotal in bridging "this world", the Bergamo civil society's activism, with many other types of actors, from national and international researchers (as in the case of the Professor Micheletti, from Karlstad University, as well as others from Bergamo and other national Universities) to national and regional institutions. Above all, the entrepreneurial role of the CORES group, and of the Professor in particular, was fostering the dialogue between the civil society groups, the farming sectors and the Municipality, thanks to the exploitation of a "window of opportunity". As it is further explained in the dedicate section, the window of opportunity was represented by the commission of a multidisciplinary project research, to which many research groups participated, called "Bergamo 2.035", performed with the goal of creating an overarching vision of the socio-economic potential of the city, through the study of the variety of opportunities embedded in the territory.

Accordingly, the researcher of the CORES lab emphasised the paramount and critical function researchers have (Interviewee 12) as "translators/interpreters" between the institutions and grassroots movements, since most of the time they are commonly perceived "dispatched worlds" (Ibid.).

- **Building Trust (through Relationships), and Motivation and Legitimacy**

Trust and personal relations are the core of the whole experience of Bergamo. The importance of building relationships along the food supply chain as well as within the community, can be considered as the *file rouge* connecting the various grassroots movements composing the picture at hand (Interviewees 18,19, 21). This aspect will be further discussed in section 4.2.3, as part of the context within which policy entrepreneurship acts.

In this context within which solidarity and trust among people is fundamental, the entrepreneurial role of the Professor is of a great interest especially for motivation and legitimacy building. Regarding legitimacy, it has been emphasised by many interviewees that the great attention and commitment of the Professor towards the involvement of the grassroots movements as stakeholders and crucial actors to initiate a dialogue with the local administration, towards rethinking and reshaping the urban food system (Interviewees 12, 13 and 17). The fact that an academic professor, working on an international level, would give wide appeal to such small and local-based initiatives, has been perceived by the stakeholders as a “legitimization process”, allowing them to sit at the table with the local authorities (Ibid.). This has contributed to triggering the interest of the Mayor, considered a “pragmatic mind” (Interviewee 12), but, as above mentioned, who does not fully embrace the practice of the alternative food networks in the area. However, the researcher of the CORES clearly stated that the Mayor strongly relies on, “trusts”, the researches of the group and of the University in general. Indeed, he claims to appreciate the work done by the CORES lab to give relevance to such important practices as solid base upon which starting to build a food sustainability strategy (Interviewee 15).

- **Recognising or Creating windows of opportunity**

There were a few windows of opportunity identified by the interviewees, and exploited by the PE. First, the research Bergamo 2.035 mentioned above, represented an important moment during which the different active groups within the city had the chance to get to know each other, and start a dialogue around the development of a local food system (among other topics treated in the study). This dialogue saw the central role of the CORES lab as facilitator and enabler of the dynamics of interactions among the actors (Institutions, civil society and private sector) brought at the table of discussion. Here, the idea of a food council arose as well as the discourse related to the sustainability of the local food system.

Moreover, the Universal Exposition (EXPO) of 2015, hosted by Milan, entitled “Feeding the world, Energy for life” incisively pushed the topic of food under the spotlight. The University and the CORES lab organised a new Conference focused on sustainability of food system and territorial governance, to which again the so-called “food actors” of the city took part, in October 2015. Furthermore, the widespread interest towards the promotion of food and wine tourism, while protecting and valorising the biodiversity of the landscapes and the productions, has been reinforced by the recent participation of the region of “East Lombardy” (an area comprising the provinces of Bergamo, Cremona, Brescia and Mantova) to the European Region Gastronomy (ERG) 2017 award, organised by IGCAT (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism) with the support of European institutions. The region of East Lombardy has won the prize, thanks to the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy, that encompasses two key objectives: “Promoting a local system of sustainable food” and “Enhancing the gastronomic offer and integrating it in tourist programs”. The project elaborated with the fundamental help of the University of Bergamo, has strongly contributed to keep the momentum around food.

- **Leading by Example**

As stated in the case of Cork, the PE have been personally involved in all the actions undertaken to stimulate the stakeholder engagement. Therefore, leading by example can be considered an integral part of policy entrepreneurship, a constant component of it, rather than a separated strategy to investigate.

- **Facilitating - developing social innovations**

This strategy can be quite clearly attributed to the Professor of the CORES lab. As confirmed by many interviewees, the greatest part of the role of the Professor was exactly trying to push the grassroots, niche, movements towards a dialogue with the Institutions. Her role of visionary, as above mentioned, strongly facilitated the start of a process of “emergence” from a quite circumscribed action arena – mostly made of personal relationships and informal networks – to a more structured group of actors, able to deal with external actors, such as the Municipality. Although not yet fully structured, the constituency of the Sustainable Citizenship Network was the first step towards the development of the social innovation embedded within this diffused networks. This process has been nurtured through the agency of the Professor aimed at making the grassroots movements’ actors and groups self-aware of what they are and do, as social innovator for a sustainable urban (food) system (Interviewees 12 and 17). Moreover, the same actor, in order to facilitate the social innovation occurring within the food provisioning system of the city of Bergamo, played a crucial role in planning actions to enrich community involvement and obtaining greater visibility and diffusion. Her colleague reports that she would launch ideas and concepts for projects, and the members of the Network would put time and resources to get it done on the ground (Interviewee 12).

4.2.3 Exogenous/contextual factors

- **Personal commitment of stakeholders**

As assumed for the case of Cork, when stakeholders are already committed and active in the community to promote sustainability, the role of PE may result facilitated. The fieldwork in Bergamo revealed indeed that the establishment of the grassroots movements represented in the AR, strongly facilitated the role of policy entrepreneurship to involve them, as their active interest towards food and sustainability issues naturally brought them to collaborate and get involved in the setting up of the AR. Moreover, what seems very relevant in the case of Bergamo, it is the personal interest of the Mayor, towards food systems’ sustainability. He claimed to be very close to the Slow Food movement’s philosophy, having met in person its very inspiring founder, Carlo Petrini (Interviewee 15). Therefore, it is reasonable considering the environment (part of the civil society and the wherein the PE acts as very sensitive, and apt to have a dialogue focused on food as vehicle to start creating resilient and sustainable cities.

- **National and Supra-National institutional and political factors**

The European Common Agriculture Policy and subsidies are the main drivers for farmers to keep producing often unsustainable cultivations. As it often happens for the agriculture sector in Italy, the majority of farms are focused on intensive monoculture, In the case of Bergamo for example is corn. This keep them away from more ethical considerations, about environmental and social sustainability of their productions, and therefore from the discussion at the centre of the AR (Interviewee 19 and 20).

As acknowledged in the case of Cork, besides the lack of perceived benefits for farmers to take part in UFS’s development, it has been reported that they do not have the time to participate in extra activities, as bureaucracy is perceived as very oppressive, in terms of time and resources consuming (Interviewee 20).

- **Local Institutional and Political factors**

The acknowledgement of the high economic value for fostering the local economy underlying the promotion of food and wine excellences of the territory (comprising the city and the areas surrounding Bergamo), has been considered by the Major a great incentive to gather all the stakeholders at the same table, and initiate a

dialogue around food (Interviewee 15), as confirmed by Slow Food representative and the researcher of the CORES lab (Interviewees 12 and 16).

The importance of coupling environmental issues with economic development is one of the major point highlighted from the administration, which consider less likely that the discussion around environmental sustainability of food productions reach a top position in the agenda of the Municipality (Interviewee 11). Moreover, the local government's representatives pointed out that until recently, the rural and peri-urban areas have suffered from an historic marginalisation from the urban agenda (Interviewee 11). Therefore, it is auspicated a change of this approach towards a more integrated view of agriculture and urban agriculture local policies (Ibid.).

- **Lack of Financial and human resources to establish a UFS**

The commitment of the stakeholders, and among them those here identified as the policy entrepreneurs, is on a voluntary basis, meaning that organising and being present at events and meetings require time and resources that may lack, due to the professional activities of the most involved actors. This might result as a hampering factor for the constant and increasing involvement of people. Similarly, the voluntary basis implies scarce or no financial resources to carry on projects and initiatives that could foster the engagement of the stakeholders. Hence the need for a formally established role of a person, who could take care of the involvement of stakeholders and the community, along with the organisation of events (Interviewee 14).

- **Cultural Features of the community – Traditions and mind-set regarding Food**

As already highlighted above, Bergamo presents a very peculiar picture with regards to the strong embeddedness of the short supply chains experiments, such as the so-called Solidarity Purchase Groups (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale – GAS) and the many farmers' markets. Solidarity Purchase Groups are considered as social movement organisation, specifically mutual system of provisioning focused on political consumerism, according to which food is "a political object of collective deliberation" (Grasseni, 2014, p. 179). Through the creation of a "space for civic learning, building social capital, and considering opportunities for political mobilization" (Forno, Grasseni, & Signori, 2015, p. 68), GAS are networks of alternative food provisioning that value health and quality standards, but also social and environmental sustainability (Grasseni, 2014). Within these networks, consumers and producers are involved in direct and collective transactions of food and non-food assets, organised in groups of neighbouring families, who hold regular meetings to select their providers and organize logistics (Ibid.). Through a responsible and direct collaboration between producers and consumers, the aim is to support economically viable business, encouraging an extra attention to quality criteria, as well as organic farming (Ibid.).

The GAS are only one of the grassroots movement very active within Bergamo, but still one of the most participated: as shown by a study carried out by the CORES lab of the University of Bergamo, in Bergamo there are 44 groups, of which 299 members were interviewed (Forno et al., 2013). Besides the GAS experience, Slow Food is also a very important reality in the city. As reported by Grasseni (2014), Carlo Petrini, the founder of the movement, "made a conscious political move to change the Slow Food identity from what is widely perceived as a hedonistic association of "Foodies" to that of a movement, positively set to address the poverty of the very ones who produce food" (2014, p.179). The participated markets and initiatives organised by the members of the Bergamo's "condotta" (group) might indicate that Slow Food's philosophy and practice are well-embedded in the food culture of the area, especially due to the great attention reserved to the promotion of local food and wine tourism and economy, associated with territory and biodiversity conservation.

Nevertheless, there is a perceived risk of triggering “lock-in” effects in the way the discourse around food is developed within the AR and more generally in the city. As claimed by Morgan (2015, p. 1385), “food politics can become locked into single issue political frames – local food, organic food, fair trade, food banks etc. – creating food issues rather than a food movement”. The risk is associated to conceiving good and sustainable only those products coming from behind the corner (local, therefore less food miles involved), without taking into consideration other aspects of sustainability, such as the work conditions of those producing food or other environmental impacts, besides food miles. In shaping the food dialogue merely according to the criterion of “be local”, it is very likely to not achieve neither an overarching sustainability of the urban food system, nor the creation of a resilient and food secure city. This has been stressed especially by the representative of the Fair Trade organisation, as she often had to deal with opposition or indifference from other food stakeholders towards the issues faced by her organisation, as not considered relevant at the urban level (Interviewee 17).

Ultimately, it is perceived that the community - especially the grassroots movements - has a suspicious attitude towards the will of institutions and local governments (in general) to seriously get involved in planning around food sustainability in the city (Interviewee 10, 12 and 18).

The fear of those involved in creating alternative and more sustainable ways to source food, is that the Institutions want to approach them only for marketing-related reasons. The above mentioned intrinsic economic value of food tourism is a strong driver for Institutions to engage in a dialogue with those actors considered custodians of the territory and its food traditions. Hence, the grassroots movements have never fully trusted over time the municipality’s intentions, which, according to them, considers the collaboration only a way to get revenues and not a sincere attempt to make Bergamo a fairer, healthier and sustainable city. The case of the ERG award would represent a concrete example of this point of view.

Also in the case of Bergamo, the **Cohesiveness of the Community** emerged as a relevant “sub-node”, since besides the food culture of the area, strong personal relationships characterise especially the part of the community active within the grassroots movements and the various associations part of the Network of Sustainable Citizenship (Interviewees 10 and 13).

➤ **History of previous relevant collaboration within the community**

As already stated in the analysis of the results related to PE strategies, the case of Bergamo presents peculiar widespread collaboration within the community. Not only among the organisations part of the Network of Sustainable Citizenship, but also between the Network and the Farmers’ Trade Unions, or the University. Since the Conference “Shopping for Human Rights” held by the University in 2007, the collaboration has been reinforced over time (Interviewees 10 and 13). Differently, the cooperation with the Municipality started to grow more recently, and that could also be the reason behind the suspiciousness of the Network.

Nevertheless, it was not possible to gather information about the history of collaboration around other topics within the community, or established between different actors than those identified during the fieldwork.

➤ **Fragmentation of the stakeholders’ groups**

A relevant issue to take into account in the analysis of the factors that may influence the strategies of the PE for the involvement of stakeholders is the fragmentation of the grassroots movements. Fragmentation and lack of a clear vertical structure within the Network of SC as well as in most of the organisations parts of it, have been mentioned by almost the totality of the interviewees in Bergamo, who talk about it as a very hampering and problematic question, especially in the organisation and planning of (collective) actions. The

organisational structure of the Network does not present a vertical shape, meaning that there is no clear division of responsibilities and duties among the various members. Indeed, the horizontality ensures, according to some of the interviewees, that since the activities are organised on a voluntary basis, the accountability and the responsibility for any type of initiative and/or event are not left in the hands of a few members, but it is rather widespread (Interviewees 13, 18 and 21). In this way, it is assumed, on one hand, it is possible to avoid situations of work overload constantly for the same people within the organisation. On the other hand, however, any decision is difficult to take, communication is hampered due to the absence of a referent actor, who would clearly facilitate the dialogue with the “outside”, as in the case of dialogue with the local government. The reason behind it, it may be the lack of self-consciousness of the grassroots movements, which, not considering their practices something valuable enough to be diffused, do not realise the importance of spreading them (i.e. scaling-up), through dialoguing and collaborating with actors outside their Network (Interviewee 10, 14, 15 and 12). This feature prevents the Network to be easily reachable from outsiders, coming from both the civil society and the Institutions, therefore resulting in exclusive, rather than inclusive, organisations (Interviewees 10, 12 and 13).

➤ **Geophysical conditions of the city-territory**

The information gathered about this indicator is not enough for any detailed consideration. It can be mentioned that one of the representatives from the farmers’ trade unions (Interviewee 20), reported that the region around the city is very urbanized, and only a few businesses practice organic farming. However, the strong diffusion of farmers’ market in the city and surrounding area of Bergamo seems to indicate that there is a consistent number of farms conducting direct sales of their products, in the near rural areas.

4.3 Comparative Analysis - Map of the Results

Figure 3 represents the overall map of results, in which the results of the two cases are graphically put in comparison. To ensure the understanding of the figures, I broke the overall map into two separated maps (Figures 4 and 5), so that the reader is facilitated in interpreting the content.

The colour of the box is different only to clearly distinguish one case from the other. Only the contextual variables are green in both cases. The reference to the type of variable depicted is written on the side of the box. The arrows indicate the influence exerted by a variable on another.

It is important to stress once again that the development of the two unit of analysis (Cork Food Policy Council and Agriculture Roundtable of Bergamo) is still at an embryonic and experimental stage, although started already a few years ago (between 2 and 3). Therefore, the factors highlighted and the statements made need to be considered within the picture of an ongoing process, which is still far from being concluded.

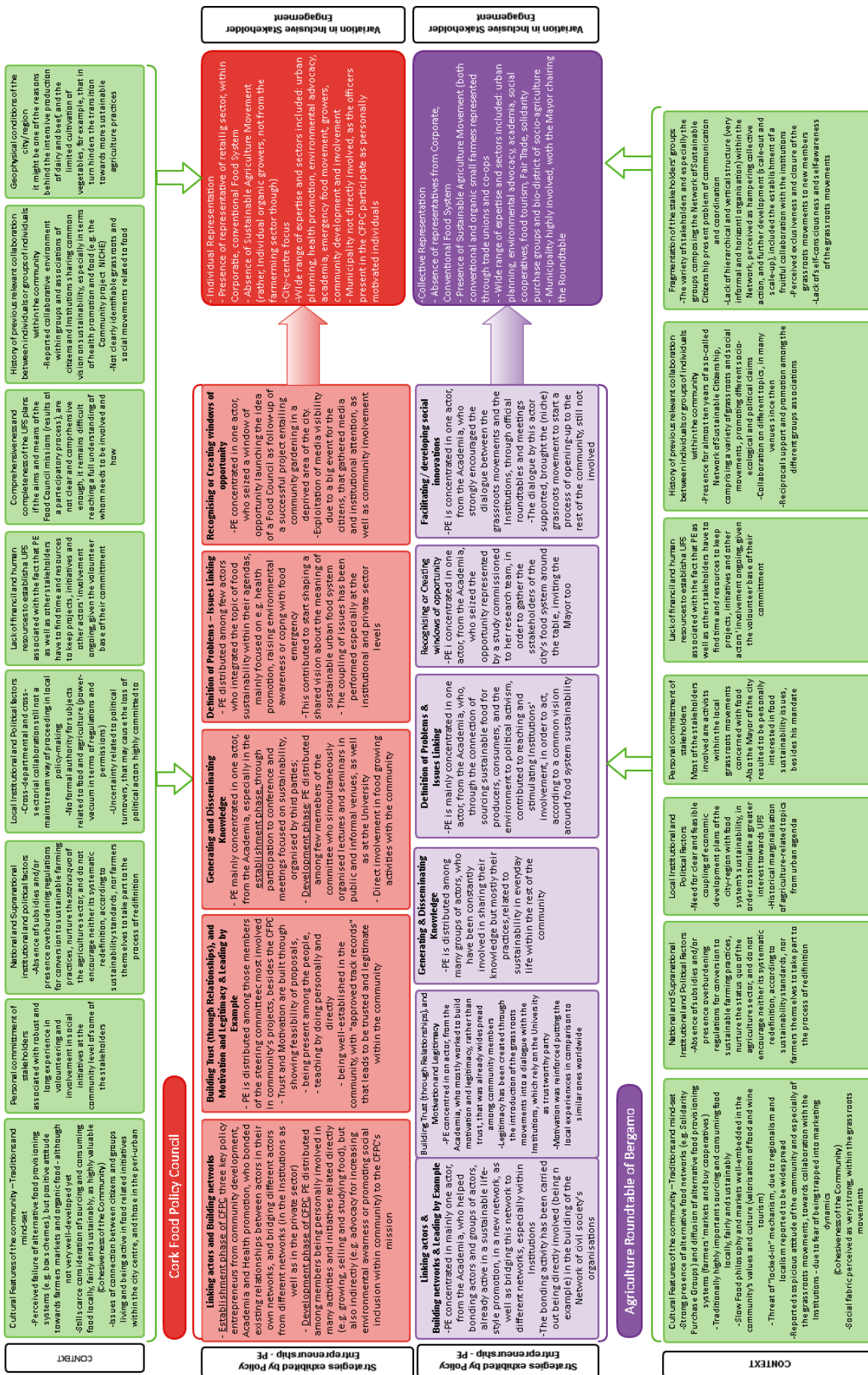


Figure 3. Comparative Map of the Results

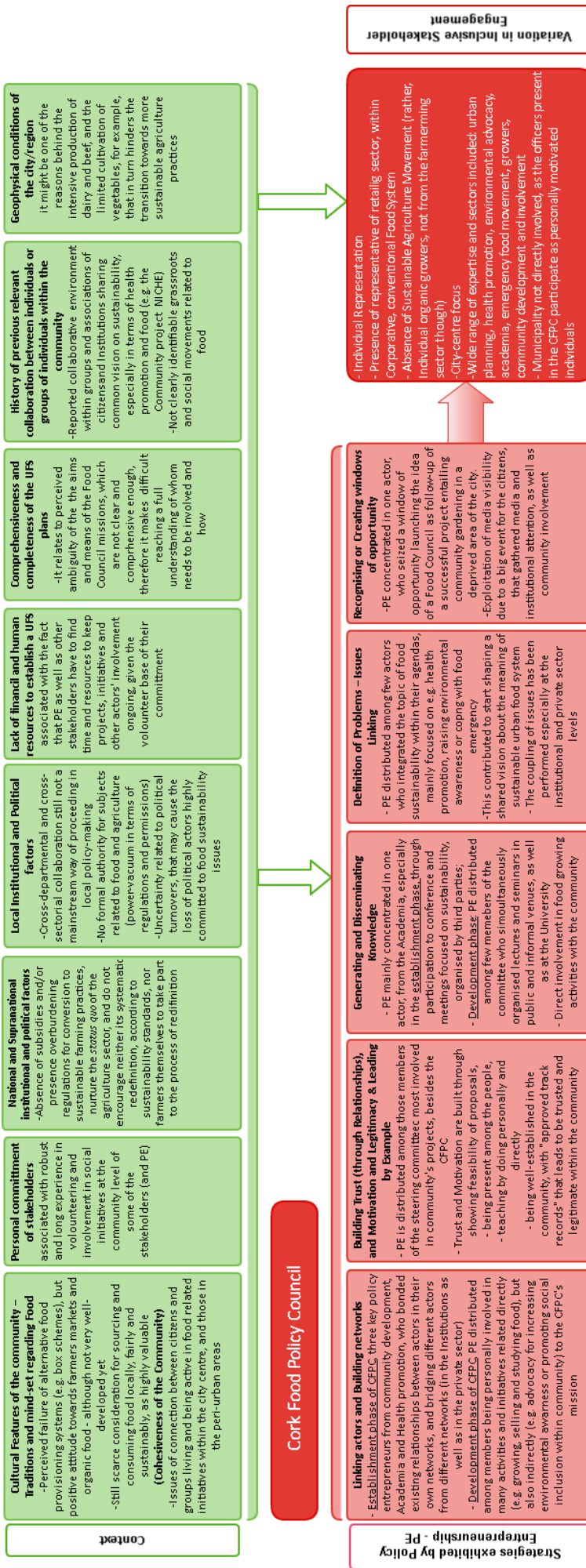
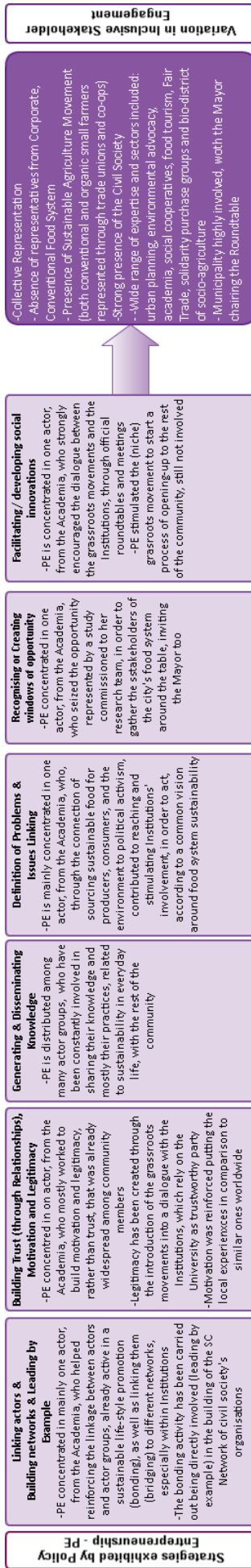


Figure 4. Cork – Map of the Results



Agriculture Roundtable of Bergamo



Figure 5. Bergamo – Map of the Results

4.3.1 Comparative Analysis – General Considerations

In this section, I will try to provide a very general overview on the most relevant results, in terms of differences and similarities between the two cases. However, a comprehensive discussion about the causal link between the intermediate and independent variables observed in reality, its connection to theory, and, ultimately, the various limitations of this research will be extensively provided in the following chapter 5.

➤ Collective Nature of Policy Entrepreneurship

The strategies overall revealed to be put in place by a variety of actors, corroborating the initial hypothesis that it is more suitable to conceive policy entrepreneurship (and leadership) as a collective effort rather than agency of a heroic individual, with special characteristics. However, it is possible to conclude that even in collaborative policy entrepreneurship/leadership there is a focal individual –most clearly in the case of the University Professor in Bergamo - whose major function is to coordinate the collective actions and strategies implemented by other key actors in the community, as theorised for instance by Cullen-Lester & Yammarino (2016).

Collective engagement in policy entrepreneurship and leadership tasks occurs through formal and informal relationships (Ibid.). As shown in the graph above, the focal actor has been constantly present in the case of Bergamo, given the wide range of stakeholders (fragmented groups of civic actors), more than in the case of Cork, where an individual food champion can be identified only in the establishment phase, rather than in the development of the food council, where the collective of policy entrepreneurs act. The case of Cork can support the argument provided by Huitema et al. (2011), according to which collective entrepreneurship presents space for “certain role division and pooling of capabilities” (2011, p.729): the Steering Committee of the CFPC appears to provide such opportunities.

➤ Origin from Civil Society of Policy Entrepreneurship

Generally, the PE is rooted in the civil society, rather than coming from the institutions (non-positional actors play this role, rather than positional ones, as theorised by Meijerink & Stiller (2013) and Scholten et al. (2015)). The PE mostly came from the University, in both cases, as the next paragraph will further discuss. Besides the one actor belonging to WHO Healthy Cities initiative in the case of the CFPC, who can be considered the only positional leader acting as PE through the adoption of some of the strategies here discussed, no politicians or high-positioned members from Institutions was crucial for the engagement of stakeholders. The two cities show what Onyx & Leonard (2011) discovered in their research: the identified leader or leadership group was strongly embedded within the formal and informal networks of the community but not, in the first place, in a position of formal authority. It is noteworthy that the Mayor of Bergamo is the official and formal organiser of the AR, yet the group of stakeholders has been previously engaged and gathered at the table mainly thanks to the action of the University’s research group.

In the Discussion section there will be a further analysis about this result, in the light of the strategies identified and associated with it, and the context within which they have been implemented.

➤ The importance of University and Researchers in catalysing Stakeholders Involvement

The two University’s professors are the actors to whom the role of PE can be mostly attributed. This sheds light on the importance of University and Researchers for sustainability transitions. The most recent literature on PE quite often highlights the crucial role of PE played by these actors in, for example, water governance transitions (e.g. Brouwer, 2015; Brouwer & Biermann, 2011; Huitema & Meijerink, 2010; Meijerink & Huitema,

2010). It appears relevant to cite Wittmayer, van Steenberg, Rok, & Roorda (2015), who mention the pivotal role of researchers as facilitators and partners for transition towards sustainability, especially at the local level: “The researcher explicitly becomes an active social actor entering into a collaborative relationship, which allows for the creation of knowledge and transformative action that is useful for both research and practice” (Wittmayer et al., 2015, p. 14). The paramount role of the two Professors as PE in both cases, provide a further empirical example of the idea that the strategies of policy entrepreneurship for including stakeholders in policy-making is also a way to promote capacity and knowledge building among them, and, eventually to stimulate their empowerment, as active and aware (food) citizens (Fischer, 2006). The two cases confirm what theorised by Fischer, who claim the use of pedagogy to facilitate the development of critical perspectives among citizens, as fundamental base for political opposition towards state practices and policies. Indeed, empowered citizens, can potentially have a greater role in future policy-making processes, in order to foster the establishment of a more democratic society, to push the social, environmental and economic sustainability transition forward.

➤ **Connection with the Grassroots movements and Civic Organisations active in the city**

The steering committee in Cork appears to be based on individual contributions of personally motivated people, and not on the collective representation of civic and citizens’ groups who believe in the importance of sustainability of food in the city. Some interviewees from Cork mentioned the fact that there is still a lack of connection between the CFPC and some civic groups, practicing sustainable agriculture in the periphery of the city, that might be allegedly keen on collaborating for the development of UFS in the city. The opposite situation emerged in Bergamo, where the connection between the PE and the civic movements and groups is already well-defined. Here, the main PE is well-embedded in the social fabric of the city, since she has been active in the Network of Sustainable Citizenship and in many related initiatives.

➤ **Enabling Role of the Policy Entrepreneurship (Leadership)**

In both cases, the PE have been crucial in acting as enabling actors of the process of stakeholder engagement, and therefore in initiating a potential local transition towards sustainable urban food system. While this step will be further discussed in the next chapter (5.1, point 3), it is important to highlight that the empirical study confirms the assumed overlapping functions of PE and leadership in complex adaptive systems (see Meijerink and Stiller, 2013): in both cities, PE is engaged in managing the interaction between the innovation and the formal authority (as supposed in complex adaptive leadership). In doing so, they attempt to promote the acceptance from formal authority, of innovative ways of conceiving the urban food systems (i.e. short food supply chains, public procurements, and other measures possibly included in UFS). Moreover, they have been implementing connective and dissemination functions, to convene and foster the empowerment of the stakeholders through mechanisms of social learning.

➤ **The Inclusion of the Municipality**

In Bergamo major drivers for the inclusion of the Municipality were the role and involvement of the University, the widespread and constant action carried out by the Network of Sustainable Citizenship and obviously the economic incentives deriving from food and wine tourism; whereas, in Cork, the local administration’s officials’ personal motivation has been a main driver in getting them to participate. In here, the agenda of the Municipality seems to not particularly reserve great attention to the CFPC’s issues. Therefore, it can be argued that establishing or reinforcing the connection (and the participation) with the grassroots movements or any other active civic groups, is might stimulate a greater interest of the municipality as well. However, this might

be strongly related to issues of trust and reputation, created in previous successful cooperation, as it will be further discussed.

Ultimately, the inclusion of the Municipality has encountered in both cities the obstacle represented by a not flexible local institutional setting, to allow cross-departmental collaborations and multi-level governance (with higher level at the regional or national level) in specific issues, as those food-system's related. The "silos approach" is therefore a major obstacle for the PE, and in general for the development of UFS.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Reflection on the most relevant PE's Strategies resulted from the cases study

This section will try to provide the readers with the necessary knowledge about most the relevant "policy entrepreneurial strategies" to involve stakeholders of the urban food system, to launch a process for establishing food strategies in their cities. The chapter is organised through the listing and relative analysis of the resulting most important strategies to implement for aspiring policy entrepreneurs. The list does not follow a hierarchical approach, as it is impossible to perform a ranking or scoring of the most relevant among the following strategies: the most important one is indeed combining them, according to the context and the circumstances.

1. The importance for Policy Entrepreneurship of being embedded within the community of stakeholders to facilitate the Linking of Actors and the Building of Networks

The results analysis strongly confirmed what both policy entrepreneurship and leadership theories claim about the relevance of connecting a variety of actors (stakeholders and not) in order to critically pushing an issue towards the agenda of the local administration, in our case. Yet, the empirical data gathered, provides some extra information, that could further inform the action of food champions regarding this strategy.

The components of bonding (existing relationships) and bridging (creating new partnerships with other actors or groups) assume a different weight depending on the level of collaboration already in place in the community. The contextual factors in this research defined as "Cohesiveness of the community" and "History of previous relevant collaboration between individuals or groups of individuals within the community" need to be taken into account when trying to connecting stakeholders. When the cohesiveness is perceived high, and a widespread and previously established collaboration between not only individuals, but also groups of them (as mostly shown in the case of Bergamo) exists, it is paramount to focus on bridging those collaborative groups with "external" actors, not yet involved in collective action.

In Cork, the small network acting as PE and launching the initiative, had to work on bonding exiting relationships first, and, in a second stage, tried to connect to others, through bridging. This directly refers to the absence of an already active base, comprising civic groups to which connect, as well as to relevant history of collaborations among this type of groups. However, as already stated, in the case of Cork, the stakeholders are less representative of community's groups, networks or movements, but rather individuals, personally committed.

Among the reasons that may explain these two different contexts, there is the level of embeddedness of the PE within the community. Specifically, the direct involvement of the policy entrepreneurship in the activities that potentially UFSs promote, especially at the community level, appears to be a pivotal element. The reasons are twofold. The embeddedness within the community, particularly in terms of social and personal relations

with and among the members, proved to be a strong driver for building and keeping trust among people (and stakeholders too), as it will be further explained in the dedicated section to Building Trust, Motivation and Legitimacy.

Moreover, being embedded likely means having a greater and deeper knowledge and familiarity about the community, i.e. its mind-set and attitudes, as well as the local problems and best fitting solutions (at the economic, environmental and social level).

This is what Stringer et al. (2006) also confirms: the creation of a shared understanding of the system and how to manage it, should involve “the groups and individuals who know the system best, who are embedded within it and who hold a stake in what happens to it”(Stringer et al., 2006). Embeddedness has been considered recurrent feature in some researches focused either on PE or on leadership. Onyx & Leonard (2011), for example, discovered in their study on complex systems leadership for community development, that the identified leader or leadership group was strongly embedded within the formal and informal networks of the community but not, in the first place, in a position of formal authority. Also Ansell & Gash (2012) claim the importance of “organic leader”, the one that “comes from the stakeholder community, and can generally draw on extensive social capital”(2012, p. 18), to convene, mobilize and motivate stakeholders. The authors call for “strong catalytic leadership from organic leaders” as they have a deep knowledge and “familiarity” with the issue at stake, given their embeddedness in the community (Ibid.).

Therefore, the fact that the community, the city of Bergamo, appears to be more represented within the AR thanks to the involvement of the Network of Sustainable Citizenship, can be partly lead back to the fact that the main PE, the University Professor, is an active member of it, as well as one of the founders. The still lacking connection of the CFPC to the community was indeed already acknowledged by some of the interviewees.

2. The importance for Policy Entrepreneurship of being sensitive to the context, in order to Define Problems and Create a Common Vision through Linking those Issues to which community of stakeholders are particularly attached. This will in turn stimulate a positive feedback loop of Social Learning, Generation and Dissemination of Knowledge, thus Participation

In both cases, the results show the attempt of the PE to define the issues related to unsustainable status of the current food system, according to context-based features and understanding, in order to elaborate a potentially shared solution, exemplified by the establishment of the CFPC or the AR. Indeed, what emerged from the fieldwork is that the PE based the idea of an UFS upon the coupling of most sensitive issues at stake, within the city.

In Bergamo, food and wine tourism is highly relevant topic, which many of the organisations participating at the AR leverage. This is why it has been used as one of the main source of linkage to promote a UFS, that could valorise it as much as possible. Also the traditional and culture mind-set of the region might have been critical for the definition of problem, as it is well known the high value attributed by Italians to good food, as the rooted presence of Slow Food demonstrates. In Cork, the major linkage has been done apparently with the Health Sector, probably due to the high incidence of epidemic obesity on the Irish population, especially on more deprived groups.

By doing this, the PE tried to make the idea of UFS more “attractive” for a variety of stakeholders, not only the ones directly involved in the food sector(s), providing them with valuable and specific reasons to get involved, rather than just relying on the goodness of the cause as major driver.

Moreover, a potentially successful Definition of Problems resulted to include not only a deep understanding of the interests and motivations of the wide range of stakeholders, but also the capacity of the PE to deliver

the messages, adopting a clear and comprehensible language according to the different type of stakeholders with whom he or she interact. The spectrum of stakeholders in the food system, as shown, embraces a variety of backgrounds and sectors, from common citizens (consumers as well as more active food citizens), to farmers and high-level Institutions. This implies that it is not just the interests differ, but also the type of understanding and visions around food that they have. Therefore, that requires a flexibility of the PE to interact with them, constantly adapting and shaping discourses and narratives. This is confirmed by theory: “Citizen and stakeholder groups implicitly, and often explicitly, ask leaders to see relationships among ideas, concerns, or connections they might not, to suggest how those claims are related and then to use their aesthetic imagination to provide a narrative of meaning linked to what they seek to describe. (...) They are asked to capture the complex in simple and readily graspable terms” (Stephenson, 2011).

Therefore, potentially successful Definition of Problems brings about the crucial importance for a PE (and a leader) of being embedded and being “highly sensitive to the context” (Westley et al., 2013), to fully capture the broad set of interests, knowledge, requests, values and perspectives, and seek consensus (through Issues Linking, for example), in order to ultimately and collectively create a common and shared vision. As claimed by Stringer et al. (2006): “Although it is important that different knowledges, values, and perspectives are considered and combined, consensus plays an important role. It requires the collection, assimilation, and understanding of a variety of information sources, as well as learning and the negotiation of shared meanings by everyone involved”.

To conclude, the Definition of Problems and the Issues Linking in turn reinforce the crucial role of Social Learning in wicked situations. The participatory nature of UFSs, and the key enabling roles of PE and leadership allow “the different actors to learn from each other’s knowledge and experience, building a common cause” (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013, p. 20). In this virtuous loop of reciprocal nurturing among stakeholders, the co-production of knowledge and the co-learning are more unlikely to form, unless there is “the intervention of a local change agent” (Schulsler, Decker, & Pfeffer, 2003, p. 324), as also confirmed by Stringer et al. (2006). The two cases and the interviews conducted show that the aim of the PE activities, through gathering stakeholders at the table, was stimulating as much as possible dynamics of social learning among them, as hypothesized in the section [2.1.2](#), in order to build a solid base for a future collective action (i.e. the development of UFSs). Social learning in the two cases is therefore to some extent created through the direct involvement of the PE and the rest of the stakeholders in activities and practices (not only through discourses and talks) of interaction, that pragmatically could trigger processes of learning, as theorised, for instance, by Collins & Ison (2009).

3. The importance for Policy Entrepreneurship of Building and Reinforcing Social Capital within the community of stakeholders. The presence of Trust (from reputation’s and relations’ building) will in turn stimulate Motivation, Legitimation of the social Innovations, and Cooperation

As assumed in the theoretical chapter of this research, the empirical results confirmed the crucial importance of trust and social relationships for as inclusive as possible participation of the stakeholders. Trust building, as theorised by Imperial (2005), has occurred in both case studies, through “small wins”, successful small projects that have triggered a “cyclical process” (Brouwer, 2015, p. 190), thanks to which trust and its further development are generated on the base of the trustworthiness gradually emerging, during cooperation and interactions.

Trust is not only resulting from strong personal relationships and social capital, but it is also strongly tied to reputational issues, as shown in both Cork and Bergamo. The importance of having “approved track records”,

along the PE's professional career, resulted crucial in order to influence and convince stakeholders to get on board of a Food Council in Cork. The same can be considered valid in Bergamo, where trust is more rooted in the personal relationships between the PE and the rest of the stakeholders from the civil society, whereas it is based on a good professionally-wised reputation, in the case of the cooperation between the AR and the local administration. Indeed, "getting close to newly elected leaders is thus important for the policy entrepreneur" (Huitema et al., 2011, p. 729).

Furthermore, important insights on the role of the PE regarding building motivation and legitimacy comes from the case of Bergamo, where PE had to deal with fragmented grassroots movements, whose members are very active, motivated and well-tied to each other, but scarcely self-aware, especially with regards to their collocation in a "broader picture" (i.e. an ongoing attempt of transition towards more sustainable food systems to ensure resilient and food-secure cities worldwide). In this situation, PE appears to fully meet the need for "research that links the generation of knowledge and its field implementation, while also empowering stakeholders to see themselves not just as generators of problems, but as an active part of their solutions" (Sonnino, 2009, p. 433).

Within a quite common situation nowadays in many cities, where active groups of citizens get involved in urban agriculture and "guerrilla gardening", it is paramount working through legitimacy building and enabling functions of leadership, to insert and integrate the innovation (brought by grassroots movement) within the established and administrative system, and make the innovation itself conscious about its intrinsic potential for change. In order to do that, the PE acted as "sense and meaning-maker" (Ardoin et al., 2014, p. 374), highly relying on the previously built relationships based on trust, which allows him or her to provide coordination and structure to the great, but dispersed, potential for social change and innovation incubated in these type of initiatives. Indeed, PE here is critical to shape a defined an overarching vision about what grassroots movements' activities and other innovative social practices or experiments, mean for the transition towards sustainable urban food systems. Foldy, Goldman, & Ospina (2008) talk about "Framing strategies", that also contribute to create a sense of self-confidence and self-capacity among members of a group. Conceiving this collective identity is particularly valuable when it is required to create a sense of solidarity across sub-groups which may be estranged or divided (as in the case of Bergamo).

Ultimately, the discussion about the role of sense-maker and motivator of the PE can be reasonably listed among the tasks of the enabling functions attributed to leaders by Uhl-bien et al. (2007) in complex leadership theory: catalysing innovative dynamics at the societal level, as well as acting as interface between these dynamics and the formal authority. In both cases, but especially in Bergamo, the PE have been actively involved in trying to get the perspectives of the grassroots movements for example, acknowledged and accepted by the formal authority (the Municipality). By doing so, it seems that the PE managed to bridge two quite dispatched worlds, and put them around the same table. As already mentioned, the fact that the main PE in both cities are University Professors, can be assumed as a very catalytic element, in these processes of legitimation, trust and motivation building.

5.2 Reflection on the Influence of the Context on PE's Strategies

As supposed in the Theoretical and Introduction chapters, the context within which the PE act resulted exerting quite some influence on PE's strategies (independent variable) as well as on the inclusive stakeholder engagement (intermediate variable). Individuals do not act alone, as heroic leaders, and their efforts to bring about change through participatory practices as stakeholder engagement, is highly influenced by the environment. The agency of PE in both cities appeared to encounter few issues, that are worth considering in more detail.

➤ The Lack of Financial and Human Resources – the Importance of Institutional support

This turned out to be a very hampering factor for the involvement of stakeholders, in both cities. Scholarship, since the very first theoretical formulation of the concept of PE, as elaborated by Kingdon in the first version of *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984), referred to the idea of PE as mostly non-positional actors eager to invest time, energy and resources in order to bring about the policy change sought. However, this idea does not critically deal with the fact that if PE are not professionally PE, in order to keep this “investment” over time, in a sustainable way, they need to dedicate themselves to it “full-time”. The involvement of stakeholders is highly resources consuming, as it is based on a constant effort, as concretely each of the strategies implies. Although the motivation could be strong and the various strategies fully implemented, the risk that the PE does not manage to keep playing his/her role over time is high, undermining the inclusiveness of the stakeholder involvement. Therefore, this leads to a pivotal issue emerged from the empirical research, especially for the governance apparatus: “dedicated and sustained resource stream is essential to engagement process”(Cloyd et al., 2016, p. 52), therefore, being the establishment of an UFS a necessary political action, to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability of the food system for the citizens, it appears paramount that the Institutions take an active part to sustain this resource stream. As also claimed by Fischer “participatory project at the bottom of the political structure needs to have strong political and pedagogical support from above” (2006, p. 36).

Therefore, the empirical analysis reinforce the fact that, to ensure inclusive stakeholder engagement sustained over time - essential for the establishment of UFS - policy entrepreneurship and leadership, although strongly relying on social capital, needs to be also supported by institutional capacity: “Institutional capacity is needed to provide the resources, organization, technical skill, determination, and coordination that are crucial for the effective implementation of an adaptation project”(Sherman & Ford, 2014, p. 431).

Indeed, social capital resulted fundamental. Therefore, to fully benefit from its great potential, institutions and governmental structures should synergistically act for its development. (Anger, 2003, p. 400). The same author argues that the “very capacity of social groups to act in their collective interest depends on the quality of the formal institutions under which they reside” (Ibid., p. 393). Social capital has indeed a synergistic nature, according to Evans (1996), making essential the collaboration with the institutions in order to ultimately promote an empowering way of participation, that, going through social learning, leads to the development of sustainable transitions path: “The idealized situation is a synergy between the state and civil society that promotes social and policy learn” (Evans, 1996). This would allow to a greater extent a more democratic participation, i.e. an inclusive engagement of the stakeholders and all the citizens in general, as claimed by the identified PE in both cities. Nevertheless, this topic would require a much broader and comprehensive analysis. However, it appeared important to point it out in this section, as it is included in the scope of this research trying to understanding under which circumstances the role of PE can be hampered rather than facilitated by the contextual features.

5.3 Reflection on Limitations of the Research

In this concluding section of the Discussion Chapter, I will reflect on the limitations of this research, mainly associated with methodological issues and interpretations and analysis of the results, and on the opportunity for further research.

The value of the data provided could be potentially enriched and substantiated through the adoption of quantitative research methods. For example, the use of Social Network Analysis, and specifically of Ego Network analysis, focused on only one actor and his/her network, through the measurement of the level of betweenness centrality of the PE and the level of density of their networks, could have provided more specific information about which actors they are connected most, from which sectors, contributing to the explanation of the linking strategies, the dissemination and generation of knowledge, and shedding some light on the level of social capital and trust within the network. However, the collective nature of policy entrepreneurship resulted preponderant in both cities, making an Ego Network analysis not particularly useful to achieve the research objective. A full social network analysis would have not been possible either, due time and resource constraints.

With regards to the research methods and the data collection, I tried to reach stakeholders from as many different sectors and backgrounds as possible, in order to ensure to the greatest extent possible, the internal validity of the research. Time and resources constraints strongly limited my possibilities, hence I could not reach and get to know local retailers, farmers operating in the peri-urban areas, or so-called urban greeners, people or groups dedicated to the activity of urban agriculture or just urban greening within the city. Talking to them would have provided a better insight on those barriers and incentives, related to their participation to the UFSs, that I have discussed in the dedicated sections.

Related to the point above, the fact that the UFS are still in a developing phase although in place for 2 to 3 years, is among the reasons why it was difficult to fully provide information about the “Involvement of large businesses (large-scale retailers and producers)”. The inclusion of the corporate agribusiness’ world appears a crucial issue for a complete stakeholder engagement, thus for the potential effectiveness of the UFS. However, the cases studies showed a problematic approach to it, related to many factors, briefly mentioned in the relative sections. Therefore, further research should be encouraged to delve into the relation between the “alternative food system” that mostly promote UFSs, and the conventional one, in order to show whether and to what extent a cooperation between these two worlds to create and maintain successful UFSs is concretely possible.

An important limit of this research, but also an opportunity for further studies, is tackling and potentially assessing the causal link between participation of the stakeholders and effectiveness of UFSs. As already stated, this was not possible for this research, since the current status of development of the UFSs implemented in both cities - as for most cities worldwide - is at an “embryonic” stage, which does not leave room for assessment yet. Nevertheless, it is paramount that at some point a comprehensive measurement and evaluation of the impact of the UFSs, in terms of improved sustainability of the urban-region food systems, will be needed. This will critically shed light on the concrete effect produced by involving stakeholders in the processes of development, implementation and evaluation of UFSs.

Furthermore, another potential limitation of this research relates to the selection of the location for the cases study. The fact that the UFSs in these two cities are still not fully developed could be seen as a major drawback to perform a study of the level of involvement of stakeholders in it. However, this research aimed at providing new insights on the phenomenon of UFS recently emerged, that strongly relying on the investigation and sharing of new practices and initiatives developed worldwide. Indeed, choosing cities with well-established UFSs would have meant studying initiatives already broadly explored by the UFS’s literature (see for instance, the cases of Toronto, New York, Bristol, London etc), undermining the scientific and societal relevance of this research.

Transition management theories would call the approach approximately adopted in this research an “initiative-based learning”, given the focus on what “is happening on the ground”, the consideration of contingencies, complexity and messiness of actors’ strategies and interaction, and the detailed and plural focus on actors and networks influencing decisions and situated development of initiatives” (Turnheim et al., 2015, p. 245). Further research could combine this initiative-based approach to a more “socio-technical analysis”, also part of Transitions studies. Through the adoption of a large *N* of cases, “approached via pattern recognition over time” (Ibid.), it might be interesting achieving a more comprehensive past and present in depth understanding of situations and regimes, that would also include the “understanding of where we are currently heading”, in terms of regime transformations and niche momentum (Ibid., p. 249). In the application to the development of UFSs, the Transition Management lens might be useful to understand whether and how social learning and empowerment of stakeholders, and more generally of citizens, concretely evolve over time, and whether sustainability transitions paths create the conditions for it. Ultimately, the combination of socio-technical analysis to initiative based learning would ensure more generalizable results, therefore external validity.

6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, this research attempted to enriched scientifically and practically, our knowledge about the phenomenon of urban food strategies (UFSs), recently developed in a few European cities. Specifically, via investigating the agency of food champions for the involvement of stakeholders, this research provided further empirical data demonstrating the collective, and post-heroic, nature of policy entrepreneurship and leadership, recently assumed in the dedicated literature. Moreover, the practical goal of this study was providing the readers with a vade-mecum of the actions and the strategies needed in order to successfully involve stakeholder into the local process of change towards sustainable urban food systems. This study validated the crucial role of the strategies identified in policy entrepreneurship and leadership theories, yet it strengthened the relevance of contextual feature that often this body of literature overlooked.

Investigating actions and strategies of individuals or group of individuals in Cork and Bergamo, shed light on the importance of being embedded within the community of stakeholders, as well as being highly sensitive to their needs, perspective and requests. It is only in a context where the policy entrepreneurship is strongly aware of the reality, and can rely on strong social capital and trust among and from members, that its agency might successfully lead to an inclusive engagement of actors. Many factors play a strong role in the engagement process of stakeholders, and this research attempted to some extent account for most of them. History of previous collaboration between community members and/or stakeholder groups (municipality included), for instance, might represent a strong catalysing element of the involvement process, facilitating the agency of the policy entrepreneurship. The same influence on the process of stakeholder involvement, and therefore of the food champions’ strategies, can be exerted by the level of perceived cohesiveness of the community or its openness and use of sustainable forms of food sourcing systems. Nevertheless, of utmost importance, is the political and economic support of the Institutions, to which the agency of PE should ultimately aim in order to ensure a democratic, inclusive and empowering participation of the stakeholders.

In the following paragraph, I will list, as in a guide, the most relevant insights gained during this research, in order to inform the food champions of tomorrow, eager to promote the transition towards a sustainable food system in their cities.

6.1 Vade-mecum of the Food Champions

Based on the insights gained through the theoretical and empirical research conducted, the lesson learnt suggests that the Food Champions should:

- ✓ *Show authentic commitment and faith* towards the creation of a fairer, environmentally-sounded and economically viable urban food system: **be driven by joy and passion** for pursuing this goal as public good;
- ✓ *Acknowledging the cross-sectoral and multi-functional nature of food* will facilitate the identification of potential stakeholders (from the food, health, environmental, social justice, private, and public sectors, at the urban, regional, national and international level);
- ✓ *Know deeply the social, institutional and economic context of the community* within which you want to act: being aware of the broad range of barriers and opportunities that the context might pose, is crucial for the creation of a feasible proposal;
- ✓ *Frame problems and create narratives through linking a variety of issues, that best fit the perspectives and requirements of the stakeholders;*
- ✓ *Be personally and constantly involved* in small projects and initiatives of promotion of food as pivotal driver of sustainable local development, in order to show the feasibility and the value of your proposals in concrete situations;
- ✓ *Make use of focusing events, indicators, data and comprehensive information* to generate and disseminate knowledge useful for the understanding and acceptance of your proposal. **Be sure that the language used in delivering your message is clear and comprehensible** to the different type of stakeholders you dialogue with;
- ✓ In doing that, **seek the collaboration of relevant actors**: small wins will further strengthen their trust towards you;
- ✓ **Build your reputation within the community**: having an approved track records as committed individual (or group of individual) is of utmost importance, this will boost the development and/or the reinforcement of trust towards you, and your ideas, also in future projects;
- ✓ **Trust will help you** reinforcing existing relations between stakeholders and groups of them (bonding), as well as connect diverse groups to each other (bridging), in order to foster necessary cooperation among often dispatched worlds;
- ✓ Especially in the case of fragmented groups of stakeholders, as it may happen **with alternative food networks, work hard on collocating their practices and beliefs within a bigger picture**, such as a global transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems; this will contribute to make them aware of the great potential embodied in such practices, for catalysing change, and therefore legitimating their position in the dialogue with the external world, represented by e.g. Institutions and corporate food sector;
- ✓ **Establish a solid dialogue and collaborations with the Institutions**: any attempt to trigger systemic change will need the inclusion of Institutions, to provide economic and political support over time, and to ensure as much democratic and inclusive process as possible.

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