5

The Development Device

A Premise of Anthropology and the Economic Impact of Festivals

Since the seminal works of Borislaw Malinowski (1922), Marcell Mauss (1967) and Edward Evans-Pritchard (1940), anthropologists have analysed the modes of living of local communities and how they become part of a wider network of exchanges, collaborations and redistribution. Following widespread understanding, the theory of peasant economy of Alexander Chayanov (1966) well exemplifies, rural communities, even in Western contexts, have been commonly considered closed networks whose economies are primarily oriented towards subsistence, rather than the maximization of production. The centrality given to the primacy of subsistence as the distinguishing characteristic of peasant communities underpins the theory of "the domestic mode of production" of Marshall Sahlins (1972), as well as the more recent contribution of cultural economic anthropologists (Hann, 2018) who view the space of the household and the one of the community as a different economic sphere of exchange (Bohannan, 1955) from that of the market. New ethnographic contributions, which have pointed out the deep integration

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between the global market and local socio-economic dynamics, problematize this understanding. There is a deep dialectical relationship that links the development of local rural communities across the world with the global market. This is shown by elements, such as:

- the importance of public politics, in terms of economic subsidies and investments (e.g. Emery, 2015; Emery & Carrithers, 2016),
- private initiatives concerning the intensification of the extraction of resources from local communities (e.g. Tsing, 2005),
- the introduction of new species and varieties aimed at suiting the global food commodity market (e.g. Stone, 2010),
- the introduction of alternative production practices in open criticism to the globalization of agriculture (e.g. Münster, 2018; Rosenberger, 2014).

This interconnection reveals the structure of a global value chains (Miroudot & Backer, 2015) that links and integrates local communities with other economic actors on a regional and international level. An anthropological research should look at how this relationship develops and to what devices local communities employ to establish and govern their relationship with the wider world. One of these devices is the *sagre*.

The previous chapter has shown how these food festivals play a role in the rural community in countering the effects of their socio-economic marginalization. They support socialization and create a new sense of place (Feld & Basso, 1996), as well as a fresh perspective for envisioning a new, positive future for the local people. This chapter looks closer at the role of festivals in terms of socio-economic development and how it has evolved over time. It focuses on the ethnographic case of Sant'Ambrogio and its 2016 food festival. The analysis suggests *sagre* are important in constructing a community's economic base (Gudeman, 2005) and in supporting local business. In so doing, however, it challenges the common assumption that *sagre* and traditional foods are always effective in supporting the development of the local economy.

The Case of Sant'Ambrogio

Sant'Ambrogio lies in the valley of the Bormida River, on the border between Piedmont and Liguria. It is a town of little more than 1000 inhabitants. The main settlement is on the river, close to the confluence of the Bormida and a smaller mountain stream. More than half of the population lives there, while some few hundred people live scattered in numerous rural hamlets and farms. The village was one of the most important settlements in the valley until the 1970s. It was one of the first villages that received electricity and public lighting in the late nineteenth century thanks to the construction of a hydroelectric dam. Commerce developed thanks to the railroad and the construction of one of the main state roads that linked the two regions. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the municipality experienced steady industrialization, the establishment of iron manufacturing companies mostly propelled. After World War II, the municipality had a population of about 3000; however, despite good local services, Sant'Ambrogio, as well as most Italian rural communities at the time, suffered a steady demographic decline in the 1950s and following decades. The decline of local commerce and industry was followed by factory closures in the early 1970s, as well as the emigration of young people to the nearby cities of Alessandria, Savona and Turin, reducing the population to the present figure. This transformation impacted the community and coincided with the steady ageing of the local population, while agriculture gained a new importance. Farming is concentrated in the valley, while the mountainous areas of the municipality are largely covered with woods. In the past several decades, hazelnut production has become prominent, being in the area of the *Nocciola del Piemonte*, Hazelunt of Piedmont, PGI.

Besides being a rural community, the food system appears to be deeply integrated with the regional and national market. In the shops of Sant'Ambrogio, most of the vegetables come from outside the community, bought from wholesalers and retailers. As one of the shop sellers points out:

> "*Maybe eggs and some vegetables the people here cultivate at home, but for the rest, people here buy from shops like all other people in the world, and*

they have vegetables from the South of Italy, milk from Asti and Alessandria, flour made of grain coming from who knows where."

Against Stephen Gudeman and Chris Hann (2015), who contend that the community is an economic sphere different from the one of the market and characterized by exchanges based on the principle of reciprocity and the household, the case of Sant'Ambrogio indicates that the community is a space market logic and exchange permeate. Above all, the community is fully integrated into a wider commercial network. In terms of food networks (O'Neill, 2014), families only marginally rely on self-production or local products. Thus, the everyday structure of the farming economy in Sant'Ambrogio moves mostly outside the borders of the community, dependent on negotiations with suppliers and traders, while the connection with the food industry, as well as the one with final consumers, is weak. As Giorgio, a farmer in his late sixties, emphatically explains:

"*We are stuck in this situation. We cannot work with the food industry because at the end of the day we are too small and cannot provide the quantity or respect the timetable they want. We do not work with the people [the final consumers] because we are too big and produce too much for some families to consume. We cannot just decide to go to all the markets there are around. It is too time consuming. We have to work the land first, and then if we have some spare time and spare energy, we can decide to do a market or two…*"

Facing this economic situation, the Pro Loco of Sant'Ambrogio, together with the town council and some of the local farmers and entrepreneurs, decided to promote a new food festival: "The Treasures of Sant'Ambrogio".

The first edition of the event was celebrated in 2014 and focused on the promotion of local food products and gastronomy through a 2-day programme when? in which the two main attractions were the Pro Loco restaurant and the Sunday farmers' market. The event started on Saturday evening when the Pro Loco opened the restaurant. The president of the Pro Loco explains:

"*We wanted to offer a menu that was part of our culinary tradition. That's why we decided to prepare only local dishes. Visitors like that: tajarin pasta (pronounced [taja:riŋ], it is a kind of egg noodles) with rabbit-meat sauce, roasted veil tongue with green sauce, and bonnet cake (a cocoa, hazelnut and amaretti biscuit based dessert).*"

On Sunday morning, the farmers' market gathered some dozen producers from nearby municipalities, who offered their products: wheat and corn flour and bread, preserved vegetables, honey, mushrooms, beer, sweets, wine and cheese. Some other activities, such as visits to local monuments and landmarks were organized alongside the market to enrich the attractiveness of the event.

In just two editions the event expanded, and in 2016 the invitation to participate in the event came after a broader discussion that took place at the beginning of June 2016. I was discussing with some of the mayors from the southern part of Alessandria Province the challenges for agriculture in the region and the possible role hazelnut production could have in supporting rural development. During the discussion, the mayor of Sant'Ambrogio suggests:

"*If you are interested in hazelnuts and food festivals, you should come to our event in July. We have expanded our summer food festival to include an event dedicated to our hazelnut. It is a cake contest. It will be fun, and I hope it will help the food festival to expand and contribute to the reconstruction of our local economic network.*"

In July 2016, Sant'Ambrogio celebrated its third edition of "The Treasures of Sant'Ambrogio Monferrato" introducing the hazelnut cake contest. This was the main event of the festival, gathering people from all around the province, thanks to the participation of famous guests, such as TV celebrities and famous Italian chefs, but above all the deep relationship between the area and hazelnut production, which has made hazelnut cake a common and traditional dish among local families. For the occasion, as one of the judges, the organizers invited a famous television food journalist, who was able to attract the attention of regional and national media to the event. The president of Pro Loco underlines:

> "*Our festival wants to celebrate the gastronomic treasures of the community. We believe that the contest can joyfully promote one of the key treasures that had little space in past editions: our hazelnuts. We will see how the public responds.*"

They responded positively, with hundreds of people coming and dozens participating: a success for the organizers.

Building the Base of the Economy

The food festival of Sant'Ambrogio was established with a specific economic objective, as the mayor explained:

> *"We need new opportunities for our economy. The festival is not just fun. It binds together the people of Sant'Ambrogio, and in so doing creates the basis for promoting the village. It makes the village known to the general public and offers opportunities for local producers. This is why I believe this festival is important for our community."* This understanding is mirrored in the opinion of the organizers, and many local producers: *"Thanks to the festival we [local producers] have started collaborating and it has created the opportunity to participate in other events together as well. Moreover, it is a nice venue for making our products known."*

On the basis of the words of the elected representative, as well as the impressions of other organizers, it appears the festival has a multi-layered economic impact: first building collaboration among different actors, then supporting sales, at least in the days of the festival. Thus, the first contribution comes from constructing what Gudeman (2005, pp. 97–98) refers to as the "*base*" of a local economy:

> "*Consisting of entities that people appropriate, make, allocate and use in relation to one another, the base is locally and historically formed […]. The base everywhere consists of skills, knowledge and practices that are part of a changing heritage that is always necessary for market trade, from language to hand signs and from cognitive skills to values. The base includes parts of the material world as well as accumulations gained through productive use of*

resources, and a community may specify materials or activities that cannot be used or supported by it."

Specifically, the base is constructed through reinforcing the relationship that links the different local actors that organize and support the event, which encompasses actors from the local public, private and non-profit sectors. The local Pro Loco, the main association of the third sector of the village, organized "The Treasures of Sant'Ambrogio" festival. The association, however, received full support from the municipality, which offered the free use of facilities, provided direct and indirect economic contributions, and supported the association with the bureaucratic process of authorization. At the same time, the association involved local producers, providing them with stands and affordable advertisement materials. Equally, the producers offered their products at a discounted price to be used during the event. In this way, the festival involves the most important institutions of the local public, private and non-profit sectors and, in so doing, ideally the entire community, as visualized in Fig. 5.1.

The festival becomes a space of mutuality among these actors, who contribute to the success of the event with different resources. This process involves all of them in a collective effort that results in the overall strengthening of the economic, social and cultural capital of the community. It creates the premises needed for strengthening the prestige of the product and its cultural relevance, expanding the market, and creating an opportunity for dialogue, confrontation and new knowledge among the inhabitants of the community and the countryside.

It also involves the redistribution of the economic resources the festival generated. The *sagre* are usually managed by non-profit organizations, such as Pro Loco associations, as in all the cases presented in this volume. The net income the festival generated (from activities such as selling food in the festival's restaurant, or tickets and gadgets, as well as donations from public and private bodies and also individuals) is received by the association, which must use the proceeds for the organization of new initiatives (such as art exhibitions, concerts, renovation and maintenance of public buildings, training courses) or for economically supporting local public and private institutions (such as schools,

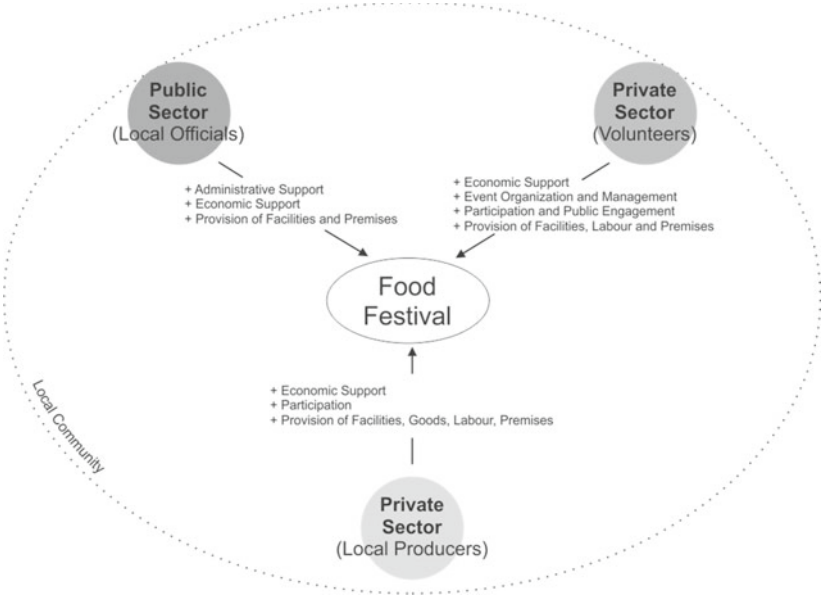

Fig. 5.1 Representation of the contribution of the different actors organizing the festival (*Credit* Michele F. Fontefrancesco [2020])

hospitals, sport teams). In this way, the festival becomes beneficial for the entire community, funding its activities during the year.

Thus, the *sagra* works as a device for local development as a result of the collaboration of the different actors. It is a fragile equilibrium that can be disturbed. As the strengthening of the contribution the actors synergistically provided leads to an overall reinforcement of the festival, the partial or total disappearance of contributions always diminishes the festival and its local effect, and, in many cases, leads to the end of the festive experience. This happened, for example, in Sant'Ambrogio. In 2018, after another successful edition of the festival, the organization of "The Treasures of Sant'Ambrogio" was suspended. Primarily at issue was the difficulty for the Pro Loco to locally find the economic resources as well as the people needed for managing an event that scaled up too fast. This also occurred in Lu with their Grape Harvest Festival, analysed in Chapter 3.

The Economic Structure of the Sagra

The construction of this base is functional for the economic organization of the *sagra*, in which public and private institutions, enterprises, non-profit organizations, and visitors are involved. The festival of Sant'Ambrogio offers a starting point for exploring and understanding it. Figure 5.2 presents a model of the economic structure of a *sagra*.

At the centre of the economy of the *sagra*, there is an organizer. As in the case of San Rocco, it is often a non-profit organization, such as Pro Loco. The organizer designs, promotes and organizes the different activities of the *sagra*. These activities can be clustered into three main groups: the market, the restaurant and the other activities. Under the rubric of the market are all the events that involve direct sale, from the organization of a few stands in front of the restaurant to the organization of a large marketplace. The rubric of the restaurant covers all the events involving the preparation and sale of food. This includes the organization of temporary restaurants as well as other gastronomic events or services (e.g. street food stands or temporary pubs and bars).

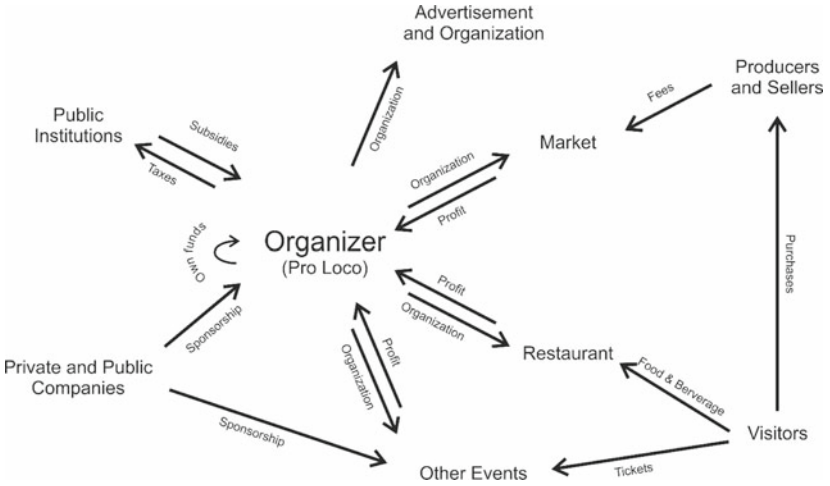

Fig. 5.2 Model of economic structure of a *sagra* (*Credit* Michele F. Fontefrancesco [2020])

Other events include the other events of a *sagra*, such as gastronomic competitions (e.g. the cake contest), art exhibitions and concerts.

The organizer gathers the economic resources needed for the organization of the activities from sponsorships and subsidies as well as from personal investment. In the case of Sant'Ambrogio, local food companies provided most of the sponsorships. There were no public subsidies. Rather, the municipality supported the initiatives by bestowing its patronage (it. *patrocinio*), waiving the taxes the Pro Loco would have had to pay to the municipality.

The organizer uses the resources for the organization of the event and its marketing. The main source of income in the case of Sant'Ambrogio is the restaurant. With members of the Pro Loco working voluntarily to cook and serve the guests, the organizers estimated the net margin for the Pro Loco corresponded to more than half the selling price of a meal. The profit finances all the activities of the Pro Loco during the year, from the organization of new festivals and events to activities and investments for the community.

In the case of Sant'Ambrogio, all other events were free. However, the organizers can ticket the entrance to events, such as concerts or art exhibitions, to generate further profit. Similarly, the organizer can request fees from the sellers who want to join the market.

Considering the structure of the *sagra*, the organizer is not just the centre of the economy of the festival, but also the main interface that creates a direct economic impact on the community. However, the largest impact of an event is indirect, in that it lies in its capacity to attract tourists, and thus, generate market possibilities for local shops, restaurants, hotels and producers.

In fact, as the researches of Giuseppe Attanasi highlights, the indirect impact may be very relevant. In the case of the 2017 edition of the Toma cheese festival in Usseglio, a five-day event that attracted over 27,000 visitors to a community of 200 inhabitants, the direct economic impact (Attanasi & Poli, 2017) was 86,670 euros (which includes the revenues of the restaurant and the events of the festival) while the indirect impact was 69,336 euros (which includes the purchases made from local shops and producers, as well as the amount spent on accommodation and meals outside the festival restaurant). Even bigger was the impact of the Bell

Pepper Festival of Carmagnola in 2016 (Attanasi & Rotondi, 2016), a ten-day event that attracted 250,000 visitors to the city of Carmagnola. The direct impact was 1,333,718 euros, while the indirect impact was 2,159,804 euros.

Stimulating Commerce

These figures suggest the role of the festivals in supporting the economy of community. On a different level, the festival provides an opportunity for local commerce. The forms of this contribution have evolved over time through a long sociocultural history strongly connected with the positive structure of the local economy that is mirrored in the very etymology of the word that is mostly used to describe the festivals: *sagra* (Fontefrancesco, 2018).

"*Sagra*", or "*Sacra*", is the name Italians use to refer to most rural food festivals. It derives from the Latin *sacra*, sacred, and since the fourteenth century (Battaglia, 1961) it has been used to denote the festivities associated with the consecration of a church and its commemoration. The meaning of the word expanded per antiphrasis over the centuries and has become the term used to refer to all the main festivities celebrated in rural communities.

Confraternities and youth associations (Grimaldi, 1995), with the endorsement of the community's civil and religious authorities (Testa, 2014), organized *sagre* for celebrating religious festivities, such as Saint Protector's Day or one of the festivities linked with the cult of the Virgin Mary (such as the Assumption, on the 15th of August). They were part of the religious life of the community, but also marked the process of agricultural activities, celebrating the outcome of the harvest (Grimaldi, 1993). During these events, markets were set up; an exceptional event in a context in which markets were rare in the countryside, being organized few times a year (Cipolla, 1974; Di Francesco, 2013; Fontefrancesco, 2018; Grimaldi, 1993; Le Goff, 1988). They were particularly important for the economic life of the community. They represented one of the few opportunities, during the year, for the community to open their household economy (Gudeman, 2005) based on subsistence farming (Bravo,

2013; Federico & Malanima, 2004) to exchanges with people and traders from other, sometimes distant communities.

Figure 5.3 visualizes this role within the context of the community's economy. In order to explain the role of *sagre*, the figure distinguishes between three different economic spheres: the everyday life of the community, the festival, and the space outside the community. They are distinct spheres through which the economic activities of a farmer develop, moving from an everyday dimension in which exchanges are limited to within the community. The festival and its market provide new opportunities for farmers who can sell their products to visitors and in particular traders coming to the event. The traders will be, then, the people that will take the products outside the community to cities, new processors and consumers.

Sagre were important moments in which rural communities opened their mainly subsistence economy to the outside. Food might play a central ritual role, in so much as leading to the association of a festival with a particular product (Di Francesco, 2016); however, tourism was not a dimension of these events.

Modern tourism developed only in the nineteenth century in Italy (Berrino, 2011), and until post-World War I mostly focused on the bigger and historical cities, spas and only few natural places, such as the main lakes and sea coasts (Berrino, 2014). It is only in the 1930s that tourism became a fundamental element in the organization of food festivals. In this respect, one of the main examples that marks the touristification (del Romero Renau, 2018, p. 1) of the local food festival can be found in the invention of the Grape Harvest Festival in 1930.

The "Sagra dell'Uva" or "Festa dell'Uva" (hereafter Grape Harvest Festival) is a gastronomic festival (Fontefrancesco, 2014) held across the country. It is a public tourism event organized, for the most part, in rural communities and run by local non-profit organizations, such as the Pro loco, aimed at promoting local grape and wine production. Most grape harvest festivals share, consistently across the country, a number of common features, such as a float parade, traditional ballroom dancing, and market stands to promote and sell local wines and grapes (Bianchi, 1999; Fontefrancesco, 2018); a legacy of the original model promoted in Italy in the 1930s under the Fascist regime.

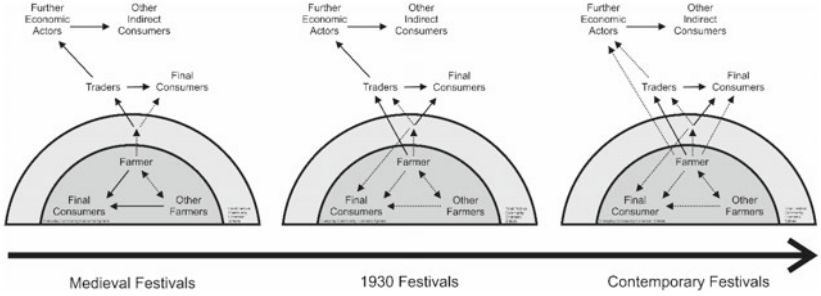

Fig. 5.3 Transformation of the economic impact of the festival across the three models (*Credit* Michele F. Fontefrancesco [2020])

The "First National Day of the Grape Harvest Festival" was celebrated on the 28th of September 1930 (Cavazza, 1997, pp. 122–125), turning the initiative of Arturo Marescalchi, the then under-secretary of agriculture, into a reality. In fact, he wanted to find an effective way to boost grape and wine sales nationwide through an extensive schedule of festivals centred on grapes and wine. Before this celebration was made official, Fascism had already promoted and advertised single-themed festivals, centred on specific crop production, such as strawberries, wheat and grapes. These proved to be effective tools to relaunch local economies (Cavazza, 1997).

From 1930 onwards, based on these first experiences, the Fascist regime enforced a vast national program of grape harvest festivals in order to revive the wine growing and producing sector that suffered from the recession of the entire national viniculture market. These festivals had to be organized by local committees and had to conform to certain criteria: provide a contest for "the best offer of grape sales" and set up a parade with people dressed up as traditional peasants and decorated festival floats, which represented themes linked to wine growing and agricultural life. The archive of the Luce Institute possesses several video accounts of some of the first grape harvest festivals (https://www.archivioluce.com/). The model of the Grape Harvest Festival became very popular and widespread across the whole of Italy, triggering a deep transformation in the way local, rural communities perceived their wine production, including its economic and tourism potential. It also radically affected the way in which local communities communicated and promoted their production, creating a standard that was continued throughout Italy after the Second World War and the fall of Fascism in the post-war period, and beyond to the present day. Indeed, after almost eighty years, some of the grape harvest festivals created during the Fascist period continue to take place every year (Di Francesco, 2016; Fontefrancesco, 2014).

As Fig. 5.3 illustrates, grape harvest festivals introduced, at the national level, a new model of relationships and exchanges. In a country where the agricultural economy was still largely based on subsistence, although moving towards full integration in the market (Farolfi & Fornasari, 2011), the festivals were a platform for tourism experimentation. In this context, the food festival turned into an initiative able

to strengthen local consumption, as well as to provide a new opportunity for local producers to sell their products to interested urban visitors. Contemporary food festivals further developed this model, as the case of Sant'Ambrogio shows.

In the case of contemporary rural communities, the festival is not the first outlet for local enterprises. Sale on the local market is consistent but overall marginal. Their economy is based on daily work conducted with traders and other businesses, as well as the sale of their products to consumers during their visits to establishments or online. A festival, however, represents a further opportunity for intensifying contact with final consumers and revitalizing local commerce, as illustrated in Figs. 5.2 and 5.3.

In the case of Sant'Ambrogio, the organizers welcomed over a thousand visitors to the festival and a few hundred members of the community directly involved in its organization. "*The event was able to animate our community and allowed it to be experienced by a wide public of potentially new visitors coming from two regions*", the president of the Pro Loco explains after the event. Moreover, the event was able to provide about twenty local food producers and farmers a positive outlet for their products. "*It was a positive day. Many people visited our stalls and purchased our [food]. I hope some of them will come back to Sant'Ambrogio and visit our farms*." While aiming to boost touristic attractiveness ("*Today, if we consider the history of Sant'Ambrogio, and the characteristics of the community, the only possibility for economic development passes through tourism. We are a place on the side of the road that goes to Liguria. If we learn to promote our landscape, and our agricultural production, we can have the chance that someone stops by, buys here, and invests here. The festival is just an attempt to move in this direction*", the Pro Loco president explains), the festival "*create[s] an opportunity for our commerce and economy by promoting consumption by activating both local producers and families through the valorisation of a feature of our food tradition of which we are very fond*", as the president of the Pro Loco explained at the inauguration.

It achieves this objective following a twofold path like the one with which the Grape Harvest Festival experimented. First of all, it is able to activate the community, also creating for the local population an opportunity to taste and buy products. Moreover, contact with tourists creates

a privileged opportunity for enhancing exposure to final consumers, who come to the festival and try the products. This first contact, which commonly ends up in a purchase, provides the opportunity of creating a more stable relationship with a consumer that may be interested in coming back to Sant'Ambrogio to buy its products or in ordering products from home. In the light of this, tourism represents an opportunity for local producers to extend their reach and potential public and, therefore, a way for the community to attract external, fresh resources and redistribute them by supporting the commercialization of products that are mostly locally rooted. For this reason, scholars, such as Santini et al. (2013), Su (2015) and Privitera et al. (2018), have indicated the necessity for food festivals to promote foods which are part of the local gastronomic tradition. However, this may not be enough to obtain the best results.

The Tricky Path of Promoting Local Gastronomy

Linking a food festival with products from local traditions is a common practice of many initiatives in Italy, such as the one in Mezzago and Oltrepasso, as well as Ascoli Piceno, Fabriano, Marino (Di Francesco, 2016) and Perugia (Chirieleison, Montrone, & Scrucca, 2013), and abroad, from Iowa (Çela, Knowles-Lankford, & Lankford, 2007) to Lanzarote (Duarte Alonso, 2014) to Fundão (Baptista Alves, 2010). From a touristic perspective, this is a way to increase destination attractiveness. It is commonly suggested to base the offer of the entire event on traditional products; however, this may not be enough to boost the local economy.

The festival of Sant'Ambrogio offers two examples that shed light on the actual features a gastronomic product should have in order to maximize its impact on the local economy: tajarin, the key dish of the festival restaurant, and hazelnuts, promoted through a cake competition.

On the menu of the festival, tajarin has a prominent place. This dish is a Piedmontese regional variant of a wider culinary tradition spread across the Po River valley involving egg noodles (Serventi & Sabban,

2000). They are square cut spaghetti-like egg pasta with a porous texture that allows sauce to adhere well. They are generally around 30 cm long and made with water, flour and eggs, in variable quantities according to custom, taste and family creativity. They are commonly served with melted butter and sage, tomato sauce, or a sauce made with roast or braised meat, such as beef, pork or game. This kind of pasta is common all across the southern part of Piedmont and is produced with a mix of industrial and domestic methods. Thus, this kind of pasta is characterized by a social sphere of uses, rhetorical and complex dynamics that exceed the limited borders of a single community and involves a large area wherein tajarin attests to its strong embeddedness, from a historical point of view but also from the economic viewpoint of consumption practices of this product.

Commonly, in the individual or family diet, the consumption of tajarin is popular and frequent but not daily, and it is perceived as a gastronomic symbol of celebration (Fontefrancesco, 2020). Due to this particular cultural role, this kind of pasta is very often present on food festival menus, as visitors appreciated it. This is also the reason why, in Sant'Ambrogio, the Pro Loco introduced this product, having good success in its sale.

> *"It is the main first course. People love it. It is part of our tradition. In particular, the rabbit sauce comes directly from the peasant tradition of having rabbit on farms and using them as fresh meat on Friday. People use the leftovers of the meal, the sauce and the remaining meat for making the sauce. It is like a lighter Bolognese sauce without tomato. In this way they had a delicious sauce for the tajarin for Sunday lunch. Therefore we decided to have it on the menu,"* the Pro Loco president pointed out.

All considered, in the foodscape of Sant'Ambrogio, as well as in Piedmont in general, tajarin is an example of the local gastronomy, being part of the culinary history of the place, and its economic cycle of production and sale being completed within the small space of a village or a valley. In the eyes of visitors and organizers, therefore, it is the quintessential example of a local and embedded product that a festival should offer and

promote. However, the perception of typicality encloses the product in a black box (Latour, 1996). As Latour explains:

> "*When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.*"

In front of the sense of embeddedness that a product, such as tajarin, elicits, little attention is given to the wider network of exchanges that underpins the product, in particular its ingredients. Similar to what happens with other traditional dishes (Fontefrancesco, 2020), the pasta of Sant'Ambrogio is a blend (Ingold, 2015) of wheat flour coming from Ukraine, eggs, water, vegetables and meat coming from different parts of Piedmont and Liguria, salt coming from the South of Italy, and spices coming from South Asia, such as black pepper.

Examining and explaining business strategies needed to maximize the profit of an enterprise, Micheal Porter (1985) paid close attention to the linking of the various steps of production of goods, and their position in the company and in the territory. Porter's model of the value chain offers a base which still stimulates a more precise analysis of the real spread and localization of the production network, because for each step of the production chain resources are distributed in specific surroundings. In the value chain of Sant'Ambrogio, we can distinguish three main steps: ingredient production, manufacturing and product sales. While selling involves the community, the other two steps are distributed across a larger area which encompasses transnational and transregional exchange, reducing the actual economic impact of the festival on the local community. Thus, to be part of the local cuisine is not enough to be ipso facto a factor of local growth. This aspect can respond to the intangible expectations of consumers and reinforce the idea of community and territory, being a factor of territorial cohesion. However, in order to fully support the local economic milieu, it is not the cultural embeddedness of the festive food that counts but rather the localization of its entire life cycle (from production of the ingredients to sale and consumption).

In this respect, hazelnuts represent a good counterexample. Hazelnuts are part of an agro-industrial chain linked to the confectionery sector, with a worldwide production estimated to have been approximately 1,000,000 tons in 2015 (Fontefrancesco & Balduzzi, 2018). Italy is the second largest producer, after Turkey, with a yearly production of 125,000 tons, or 12% of the global total. Production is historically rooted in four regions: Campania (45,000 tons), Lazio (55,000 tons), Piedmont (20,000 tons) and Sicily (10,000 tons). Between 2006 and 2015, hazelnut production grew (from 69,685 hectares in 2006 to 79,951 in 2015), especially in Piedmont (+41% extension, +70% production) and in particular in the province of Alessandria (+515% in extension; +565% in production) (Pansecchi, 2018). This success is closely linked to its local hazelnut variety, the *Tonda Gentile del Piemonte*, which is certified with the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) seal (https://www.nocciolapiemonte.it/). Its fruit is round, easy to peel, with a high yield (around 50% of the gross weight), a moderate shelf life and a delicate but marked taste that has made it the reference product in the field of pastry and chocolate. The most recent data show a remarkable growth in both production (from 4850 tons in 2016 to 6186 in 2017) and revenue (17 million euros in 2016 and further increased to 22 million in 2017) of *Nocciola del Piemonte* PGI (Qualivita, 2019, p. 28).

Sant'Ambrogio is in one of the key areas for the production of Nocciola del Piemonte PGI, a few dozen kilometres away from the main centre of hazelnut trade in Cortemilia (CN), where some of the most important hazelnut traders and shelling companies are located. Proximity to Cortemilia, as well as profitability, has promoted the spread of hazelnut cultivation in Sant'Ambrogio. Thus, as in many other parts of Southern Piedmont (Ires Piemonte, 2017, p. 14) many local farms have invested in hazelnut production and moved away from other, more conventional crops, such as wheat, corn and soy. However, this innovation did not transform the economic structure of a business. Giorgio, a farmer in his sixties, explains:

> "*With hazelnuts it is the same as it was with cereals. "This is not about seeds but grafted plants; however, it is always about buying from some seller in Cortemilia or elsewhere, then harvesting and selling the product to traders*

coming from Cortemilia, Acqui or other places… With corn and wheat it is the same story; always about buying in and selling out. There is very little that remains in Sant'Ambrogio."

The local farms specialized their activity in the production of the nuts. However, due to proximity to the shelling companies of Cortemilia, local farms did not invest in expanding their activity to carry out other phases of production, such as shelling and roasting. Giorgio points out:

"*Actually, the traders come here for the fresh products. They do not want shelled or roasted nuts. If we start processing the nuts we would end up having tons of products but no buyers. That means further work, chasing possible clients among restaurants, pastry shops and confectionery firms. We are farmers, not traders, though.*"

Due to the business structure, on the day of the *sagra*, hazelnuts were not present in the market stands of the festival. Visitors were not able to find shelled and roasted nuts, as hazelnuts are commonly consumed in Italy. For most of the visitors this absence was a source of disappointment. Despite the explanation the producers at the stands provided, to the eyes of the tourists the lack of nuts created a dissonance between the message of the initiative, which prefigured a foodscape in which hazelnuts have a prominent role, and the commodity offered at the festivals and the cake contest that celebrated this local product. As one of the producers in the market comments:

"*To give them some hazelnuts for their snacks I would have bought them elsewhere because we don't make them. Is it too much to ask them to understand the world is not how they imagine it?*"

Conclusion

This case again shows the nature of the touristic offer, shaped by mediation of the expectations of visitors and the hosting community (Skinner & Theodossopoulos, 2011). However, it also clearly highlights the limits that underpin the promotion of local gastronomy and, above all, the

fallacy of the hosting community's expectation that equates the promotion of local food with the certitude of a positive experience for visitors. The case of Sant'Ambrogio, however, is very useful in challenging a simplistic mantra that is repeated time and again in the literature, as well as in public debate, about the centrality of promoting products that are part of the local gastronomy and foodscape. Hazelnuts together with *tajarin* suggest that to be embedded in the locality is not enough, but rather it is crucial to look at the very structure of the value chain and the production process of the products. Both examples show that when these are not concentrated in the locality, resources are dissipated and the touristic experience diminishes. In this respect, both on the intangible level of affects, and the tangible one of commerce, the case study of Sant'Ambrogio suggests looking at the production specificities of local products, rather than just their embeddedness, in order to choose the food offered at the feast.

Despite this aspect, however, the case study points out the important role *sagre* play in terms of socio-economic development. They are actually devices the community employs to bolster their economy. Their contribution moves on different levels. First of all, being able to mobilize and create collaboration among different actors of the community, the events are able to create a solid base for the local economy. On this basis, the festival is able to produce a positive effect on local enterprise in particular enhancing the exposure and contact of local firms with final consumers. This contribution, thus, adds to the other positive effects that *sagre* have on rural communities in terms of socialization and territorialization, completing a comprehensive portrait of the reasons that make *sagre* a device for human development in the countryside of Italy.

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