

Extended Abstract

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Paper/Poster Title	How resilient are farmers' markets? A Stakeholders Network Analysis of the city of Bologna
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Abstract prepared for presentation at the 97th Annual Conference of the Agricultural Economics Society, The University of Warwick, United Kingdom

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Abstract	<i>200 words max</i>
<p>Strengthening rural-urban linkages improves the resilience of food systems worldwide. Farmers' markets (FMs) are one of the most representative examples of these linkages. In Italy, City Councils can legislate on FMs and Bologna's City Council has recently approved a new Regulation to manage FMs. The present study aims to understand how resilient FMs in Bologna are, by analysing the nature of their stakeholders' relationships, through Social Network Analysis. A total of eight individual interviews were conducted in person. Interviewees were representatives of the associations organising farmers' markets in Bologna (7), plus one from the public administration at municipal level. Preliminary results show that how FMs resilience is strongly linked to the number and the quality of relationships the organisers can establish and maintain.</p>	
Keywords	Farmers' markets; Alternative Food Networks; Social Network Analysis; Urban Food System; Urban Food Policy
JEL Code	Q18 see: www.aeaweb.org/jel/guide/jel.php?class=Q)
Introduction	<i>100 – 250 words</i>
<p>Strengthening rural-urban linkages improves the resilience of food systems worldwide. Farmers' markets (FMs) are one of the most representative examples of these linkages.</p> <p>In Italy, City Councils can legislate on FMs. It is one of the areas where the local government has more scope to influence food supply. Local governments may grant trader licences, provide planning permissions for markets to take place and provide practical market organising logistics.</p> <p>Bologna's City Council has recently approved a new Regulation to manage FMs. Such new law recognises FMs as value-bearers but, albeit promoting some innovations, received cautious welcome from the stakeholders affected as it does not directly strengthen rural-urban linkages.</p> <p><u>Research questions/aim</u></p>	

The present study aims to understand how resilient FMs in Bologna are, by analysing the nature of their stakeholders' relationships, focussing on rural-urban linkages. It addresses the following research questions.

1. What is the governance of FMs in Bologna, and how is it influenced by related policies at city and neighbourhood level? Who are the stakeholders involved and how they are related to each other in terms of influence, networks and power dynamics?

2. How is the urban-rural linkage considered in the governance of FMs in Bologna? How can the development of a Territorial Short Food Supply Chain around markets be supported?

Methodology

100 – 250 words

Theoretical approach

Two theoretical frameworks underpinned the analysis: Sabatier's (1988) Advocacy Coalition Framework and Lukes' (1974) theories of power. As for the former, stakeholders are identified as part of an Advocacy Coalition when they share core values/beliefs to shift policy in a certain direction. Lukes' identified three types of power: decision-making power, non-decision-making power, and ideological power.

Methods

The following research steps were carried out.

1. Identify key stakeholders involved in the governance of FMs in Bologna
2. Interview the stakeholders identified to explore their roles, values and actions in relation to FMs using the Social Network Analysis methodology

A preliminary set of actors (from Civil society, Politics and administration and Food economy) were identified. After the identification of stakeholders, face-to-face interviews were carried out. The interviews consisted of three main steps. First, a selection of stakeholders who are or are not relevant for the respondent is carried out. Second, relationships between the selected stakeholders are drawn (supporting, contrasting or commercial). Third, relationships' motivations and rating of the strength of influence (1-5) were asked.

The interviews resulted in stakeholders map that were transposed on an Excel file, then uploaded to the software Gephi.

Results

100 – 250 words

A total of eight individual interviews were conducted in person according to the net-map method and additionally transcribed for further qualitative analysis purposes. More interviews are planned. Interviewees were representatives of the associations organising farmers' markets in Bologna (7), plus one from the public administration at municipal level. The final set of interviewees represents the variety of farmers'

markets of the City of Bologna, with their different instances and points of view, as well as one of the municipal departments dealing with them.

The visualisation of supportive relationships – which include help, cooperation, information exchange and/or promotion – shows a strong and dense network of relationships. Almost all the mentioned actors are present, and the main link is between farmers and citizens, which is central to the whole system. Around them, the other actors, representing equally the three spheres (food economy, politics and administration and civil society) are distributed. All three sectors are interconnected but food economy and politics and administration appear to have the strongest relationships, both within and among them. In food economy, around the central dyad *Farmers-Citizens* appear processors, local grocery stores and associations for markets' organisations. The dyad *Farmers-Citizens* has both the highest number of connections and the highest influence. The pair is also central in the commerce map, as the exchange among these two actors is the main function of markets. However, in the case of farmers' markets the relationship between agricultural producers and consumers goes beyond the commercial exchange, which would not be the case if middlemen were involved. The distinctive feature of direct selling, prime characteristic of farmers' markets, allows for a connection between the two main actors that is unique to this context.

Discussion and Conclusion

100 – 250 words

Preliminary results of the stakeholders mapping show how FMs resilience is strongly linked to the number and the quality of relationships the organisers can establish and maintain. Associations organising FMs are very different in this and therefore have highly divergent levels of resilience. Further insights come from the SWOT analysis. Strengths of the stakeholders' network are the high level of mutual support among actors in the network and that farmers' markets seen as a key player by the municipality, which is in turn very active on the topic. Weaknesses include the fact that the stakeholders' network often relies on personal connections and that the variety of farmers' markets instances and visions can hinder a coordinated response to the local administration. The stakeholders' network has the opportunity to strengthen farmers' markets role in urban food provisioning and in the Bologna's food policy. Threats of the stakeholders' network include the exacerbation of conflicting interests of farmers' markets organisations and that Bologna's municipal authorities ignores the transformative potential of farmers' markets while only focussing on secondary aspects (i.e. tourism, urban redevelopment).

To conclude, the research originally contributes to the literature on FMs and has implications for policymakers willing to improve FMs policies.