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# Preserving the authenticity of food and wine festivals: the case of Italy\*

Alessio Cavicchi\*\*, Cristina Santini\*\*\*, Eleonora Belletti\*\*\*\*

## *Abstract*

According to UNESCO, food and wine festivals are part of the intangible cultural heritage: during festivals product knowledge is spread among participants and local communities and local products become a powerful tool for disseminating the culture of a place.

For many years in Italy there has been a growth in the number of food festivals and new actors, attracted by profits, entered in the business of culinary events. The result has been a proliferation of festivals that are not “authentic”, offering products that do not originate

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from the area where events take place. This situation can seriously damage the territory by affecting its credibility, arming the carrying capacity, and by compromising the authentic tourism attractions and the exploitation of local economic resources by rural communities.

After having introduced the role of typical food and wine in the development of an authentic tourism experience, the paper describes the recent case of the national agreement among public administrations, trade and hospitality associations and local farmers to develop some codes of practices to discipline the complexity of food and wine festivals, by adopting food safety principles and preserving environmental, historical and cultural authenticity.

Secondo l'UNESCO, i festival enogastronomici fanno parte del patrimonio culturale intangibile: durante questi eventi, la conoscenza del prodotto viene diffusa tra i partecipanti e le comunità locali e così i prodotti locali diventano uno strumento importante per divulgare la cultura di un determinato luogo.

Per molti anni in Italia c'è stata una crescita nel numero di festival enogastronomici e nuovi attori, attratti dai facili profitti, sono entrati nel settore. Il risultato è stato la proliferazione di festival tutt'altro che "autentici", dove vengono offerti prodotti non originari del luogo in cui l'evento si tiene. Questa situazione può danneggiare gravemente il territorio pregiudicandone la credibilità, alterandone la capacità di carico e compromettendo le attrazioni turistiche autentiche così come lo sfruttamento delle risorse locali da parte delle comunità rurali.

Dopo aver introdotto il ruolo dei prodotti tipici (cibo e vino) nello sviluppo di un'esperienza turistica autentica, l'articolo descrive il recente caso dell'accordo nazionale tra pubbliche amministrazioni, associazioni del commercio e del turismo e organizzazioni di agricoltori per sviluppare alcune linee guida al fine di disciplinare la complessità dei festival enogastronomici, adottando rigidi principi di sicurezza alimentare e preservando l'autenticità culturale storica e ambientale dei luoghi.

## 1. *Introduction*

According to Hall and Sharples, food tourism can be defined as «visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel»<sup>1</sup>. In light of a higher demand shown by tourists, during recent years food and wine events, even maintaining an important community-based social function, «have increased their role as a commoditized product, externally promoted in order to attract visitors, promote the region or community, or promote consumption of specific food products»<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Hall, Sharples 2001, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, Sharples 2008, p. 11.

Food and wine events diffusion is growing all over the world. It should not be a surprise that in Italy, a country whose culinary tradition is a cultural (and business) heritage, the food and wine festival plays a key role in the economic development of local communities. The importance of food and wine festivals globally is underlined by the relevance of UNESCO recognising them as playing a prominent role in the building process of intangible cultural heritage: festivals are a great occasion for spreading product knowledge among participants, and local products can be a powerful tool for disseminating the culture of a place.

Background research has explored the importance of preserving authenticity in the organisation of food events, in order to stimulate an authentic experience in visitors<sup>3</sup>. Another stream of research, instead, explores the determinants of authenticity – that in food and wine it is seen as a concept linked to typicality – by studying the effectiveness of quality certification standards and their influence on visitors' and consumers' choices and perceptions<sup>4</sup>. Although the importance of typical food and wine events is recognized worldwide, research shows a lack in defining the linkages between the degree of authenticity in events experience and authenticity in the products that are served for on-premise consumption during food and wine festivals. This case study describes the attempts that some associations and public authorities in Italy have made to create a system of internal rules to preserve authenticity, typicality and sustainability of events.

The paper is structured as follows. First, a background about food and wine festivals in Italy is presented. Then after the description of the research question and of the methodology adopted, a literature review is outlined. Next, the case study is described and in the last section conclusions are drawn.

## *2. Food and wine festivals in Italy: critical issues of a popular phenomenon*

Food and wine festivals are extremely popular in Italy. They represent a phenomenon that is difficult to clearly estimate, due to their continuous growth and to the wide population of promoters involved in events organisation that often work autonomously. Food and wine festivals are conceived around the availability of typical products in a certain area: it is well known that typical products can have a positive effect on the development of rural economies and the strong linkages between typical food and wine products, rural tourism, consumer awareness and experience have been outlined by several authors<sup>5</sup>. The growing demand for rural tourism destinations has induced an expansion in the typical product supply. Currently, there is an impressive number of local

<sup>3</sup> Getz 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Bessi re 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See among others Santini *et al.* 2011.

organisations committed to the promotion of typical food and wine products, and they are associated under the umbrella of “Res Tipica”, a national body founded in 2003 by the National Association of Municipalities (ANCI) with the aim of coordinating the activities that take place at a local level. Today (data are updated to the end of 2012) it is possible to find 588 wine cities, 354 olive oil cities, 221 almond cities, 206 organic farming cities, just to cite few examples, whilst if considering the whole bundle of food and wine cities the total number of public bodies involved is 1,968.

Moreover, local associations that work on a volunteer basis, called “pro loco”, are more than 6,000. Many of them are often involved in the promotion of food and wine festivals in partnership with religious groups or other not-for-profit associations oriented to liven up local communities.

Local food production brings to the market more than 4,400 traditional food products, among which we can find 357 quality wines produced in designated regions plus 120 wines with a typical geographical indication, as well as 240 protected designations of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indications (PGI) for food products.

The high fragmentation on the supply side has facilitated many private actors to get into the business of quality and typical food products and related events, with the final result of a proliferation of initiatives on the market.

If, on one hand, food and wine festivals can be seen as a powerful tool for boosting local economies, on the other they can represent a threat for the local on-premise channel. The competitive price offered by festival promoters can seriously damage local restaurant communities. In some cases restaurants and cafés have tried to set up a partnership and to cooperate with local associations, but an effective and long-lasting cooperation is often difficult to find.

In Italy it has been estimated that every year there are more than 7,000 official food and wine events organised locally, but it is simply impossible to define how many authentic food and wine festivals take place, due to the lack of an official register of events at a national level<sup>6</sup>. The latest researches highlight a so-called “festival effect”, which affects 90.3% of Italian on-premise companies who declares to have registered a decrease in the average turnover of 26.9%<sup>7</sup>. More research would be useful for establishing the size of the phenomenon observed (in terms of population, economic rents generation, degree of competitiveness, etc.), although the local operators show a different attitude and willingness to cooperate to the proposal of monitoring the authenticity of food and wine events, as it will be described in the case study.

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.italiaatavola.net/>>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

### 3. *Research question and methodology*

This work presents a case study: the methodology chosen is particularly appropriate to the explorative purpose of the paper<sup>8</sup>. In building the case study protocol we have decided to adopt a nested approach<sup>9</sup>. After having set a case study protocol, we have paid particular attention to ensure internal and external validity, to preserve the validity of the construct and to ensure an overall reliability of the information and the story provided. A triangulation strategy in data analysis and collection has been carefully planned. The inputs coming from background research<sup>10</sup> have been used in order to set the research protocol and to complete the case study.

The case will provide enlightenment on the following research question: which process has to be implemented in order to develop a code of practice for disciplining the complexity of food and wine festivals, by adopting food safety principles and preserving environmental, historical and cultural authenticity?

In order to provide an answer to this question, we have firstly performed a desk research with the aim of highlighting inputs from background literature and specialised press that would be particularly helpful in defining the competitive environment and the phenomenon we are exploring. Then a participant observation of the codification process of the “Manifesto della sagra autentica” (Manifest of Authentic Food Festival) carried out by a team of policymakers, associations, experts and researchers, has been performed. Particularly the participant observation has been characterized by direct observation and participation in the collective discussion and informal interviews.

### 4. *Key research issues: relevant findings coming from background research*

Background research provides useful insights for analysing our object of study. Our aim when performing this literature review was to maintain a focused perspective on the research issue. The issue of food and wine festival has been often conceived as a typology of event tourism; by adopting a thematic approach, events can be categorised, together with Food and Wine, into different groups<sup>11</sup>: Cultural Celebrations (festivals, carnivals, commemorations, religious events); Political and State Celebrations (summits, royal occasions, political events, VIP visits); Arts and Entertainment (concerts, award ceremonies);

<sup>8</sup> Yin 1994; Eisenhardt 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Yin 1994.

<sup>10</sup> See more specifically the eminent works by Gibbert *et al.* 2008, Eisenhardt 1989 and Yin 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Getz 2005, p. 411.

Business and Trade (meetings, conventions, consumer and trade shows, fairs, markets); Educational and Scientific (conferences, seminars, clinics); Sport and Competition (amateur/professional, spectator/participant); Recreational (sport or games for fun); Private Events (weddings, parties, socials). As it emerges from the literature, event tourism is a new research field and most research has initially aimed to provide tools and materials for teaching<sup>12</sup>. The emerging interest shown by scholars has increased the range of events subcategories and today we easily find studies on the impact that events have on resources and environment whilst other scholars have focused on policy and planning or on management. We should also observe that this is a multidisciplinary research issue and it is characterised by a relevant heterogeneity in approaches. Getz observes: «Indeed it is probable that every disciplinary approach will find its niche, and tourism issues can be part of all of them»<sup>13</sup>. As it can be guessed, this discipline is extremely dynamic and its continuous expansion will generate further segmentation and specialization. When performing our literature review we have decided to be as focused as we could on the research issue: our aim was to explore the issue of authenticity in the food and wine festivals. We have adopted the framework suggested by Hart<sup>14</sup> and inputs have been organised according three main issues: the first is authenticity; the second one is the definition and implementation of a code of rules for regulating opportunistic and unfair behaviours of group members; the third aspect to be analysed is sustainability of events.

#### 4.1 *Defining authenticity in typical products and in food and wine events*

Authenticity plays a relevant role in events<sup>15</sup>, as it is strictly related to visitors' perception and motivation. According to Getz «authenticity can be considered as a part of the event product, because it is something that can motivate certain tourists, and it is a benefit that can at least be partially controlled by organizers»<sup>16</sup>.

Background research explores different aspects of authenticity: some authors refer to the existential issues of authenticity, whilst others that focus mainly on food and wine events have underlined the linkages between what is perceived as authentic and visitors' motivation<sup>17</sup>. Authenticity is a multi-dimensional

<sup>12</sup> Getz 2008.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> Hart 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Getz 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Getz 1994, p. 316.

<sup>17</sup> Chhabra *et al.* 2003; Jamal, Hill 2004.

concept<sup>18</sup> and it is influenced by some authenticating agents that can be defined as «aspects of the production and delivery of the event with particular reference to food and beverage that serve to enhance or diminish perceived notions of authenticity»<sup>19</sup>. Hughes<sup>20</sup> identifies some levers that can enhance the degree of perceived authenticity: Using local/colloquial terminology; Associations with personalities: real or fiction; Use and promotion of “naturalized” ingredients; Reference to miscellaneous historical or fictional events. Cole<sup>21</sup> highlights the absence of objective quality in authenticity: since, as the author says, it is socially constructed and negotiable, authenticity varies according to tourists, and people’s perception and point of view play a key role in the definition of what is valuable and authentic. Thus, due to the primary role covered by the observer’s point of view<sup>22</sup> a commodization of authenticity may occur<sup>23</sup> that in some cases should not be seen as a threat for the wealth of local communities. The difficulty in providing a commonly shared definition of authenticity clearly emerges. Among the various attempts performed by scholars, the model proposed by Getz<sup>24</sup> successfully combines different perspectives and classify authenticity according to three factors: community control and acceptance, cultural meanings and tourists’ perceptions.

The role of perceptions in authenticity is extremely important: first of all, perceptions transform authenticity into a dynamic concept that changes according to visitors’ personal settings and perception patterns; secondly, perception can influence food and beverage price expectations as consumers would expect a premium price charged<sup>25</sup>; thirdly, there is a strong relationship between the authenticity of the whole event and the perception of the authenticity of food and beverage, as, according to Clifford *et al.*<sup>26</sup>, the first one manipulates the second. Thus, authenticity is linked in food experience to typicality.

A typical product can be considered as an authentic experience of the territory and so a mean for having an authentic and true experience of traditions and cultural heritage through its on-premise consumption. Tourists show a particular involvement in local indigenous food consumption<sup>27</sup> and food and wine become tools for improving personal knowledge; in some cases gastronomical motivations cover a prominent role in choosing destinations<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Clifford *et al.* 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford *et al.* 2007, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Hughes 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Cole 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen 1988; Moscardo, Pearce 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Cohen 1988.

<sup>24</sup> Getz 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Groves 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Clifford *et al.* 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Wagner 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Chappel 2001 in Du Rand 2003; Bessière 1998.

#### 4.2 *Institutions, rules and group members behaviour: the competitive advantage creation*

The implementation of a set of rules by organisations aims to ensure stability and sustainability to the system, to spread benefits among participants and to support the creation of competitive advantages. Academic research on the food and beverage industry is particularly rich in studies that explore the process of creating regulations and the benefits that arise from rule setting. Most research has explored institutional approaches to rule setting by observing different cases worldwide; some studies have focused on the relationships between different types of regulations (such as co-regulation) and their effectiveness in guaranteeing food safety<sup>29</sup>. Our specific case describes what can be considered as a “self-regulation” case<sup>30</sup>: starting from some general considerations about the effects of wine and food events on local economic systems and communities, some organisations (consumer and industry associations, major and independent operators working in the food and wine business) have decided to develop and implement a set of rules for sustaining food and wine events capacity of generating rents. The aim of this regulation code is to preserve the competitiveness of resources that provide uniqueness and authenticity to local food and wine events. In this perspective, rules should be implemented for guaranteeing an effective governance of relational rents among network participants, which has been proven to have a positive effect on competitive advantage creation in organisations and local systems<sup>31</sup>. The implementation of institutional structures helps in preventing a firm’s opportunistic behaviours and avoiding conflicts<sup>32</sup>. Institutions can set either external or internal rules<sup>33</sup> and can include formal or informal sanctions.

The effectiveness of a system of sanctions depends on the relationships among group members: in particular, informal sanctions work if there is a mutual vulnerability between the group members<sup>34</sup>, as it happens in the case of industrial districts and clusters<sup>35</sup>. In general, there is a mix of institutions that regulates group members’ behaviours; group members are influenced in their behaviour by external and internal institutions and formal and informal monitoring systems<sup>36</sup>. The four different drivers mentioned above have a varying impact on group members according to the characteristics of each member.

<sup>29</sup> See among others Martinez *et al.* 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Martinez *et al.* 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Dyer, Singh, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Huybers, Bennet 2003.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>34</sup> Singleton, Taylor 1992.

<sup>35</sup> Porter 1988.

<sup>36</sup> Huybers, Bennet 2003.

The process that leads to the adoption of institutions starts up with the diagnosis of the problem: resource depletion (in terms of uniqueness of marketed products) and the consequent weakening of the local competitive advantage (that is in our case strictly linked to perceived typicality) are the key issues of the problem. Cooperation could be a good solution for overcoming resource constraints to growth and for sharing resources<sup>37</sup>. Since the ability to exploit resources potentialities in order to contribute to the gaining of competitive advantage is influenced by the characteristics of the business environment affecting the resources' value<sup>38</sup>, the key role that institutions play in protecting a business environment from local players' opportunistic behaviours is clear. The second step in the process is defining the set of rules that should discourage "negative" behaviours; efforts should then be put on making the reception of rules much easier by group members and, thus, as effective as possible.

#### *4.3 Key resources of Food and Wine Events: sustainable events for ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage*

The competitive advantage of local wine and food events relies on the inner quality of local products, on the traits of uniqueness and typicality that the territory provides to products, and on the authenticity of the consumption experience. Since they belong to the cultural heritage of a certain area, food and wine contribute to creating value<sup>39</sup>. Difficulties in duplicability and uniqueness are two of the features<sup>40</sup> that most define the competitive advantage of the resources that belong to food and wine festivals. A policy addressed at helping the territory to preserve the strategic assets of resources would help in guaranteeing a durable competitive advantage for business operators. Researchers have turned their attention to the system of practices that would allow a preservation of territory where events take place, as it is well known that place is a key determinant of the overall success of typical food and wine festivals. The study of the implementation of green management practices in event planning became a relevant area of interest in research<sup>41</sup>. Scholars are getting more involved in the issue of event sustainability, and the debate about the reception of a triple bottom line (TBL) approach in special event management<sup>42</sup> had the merit to open a wider perspective on sustainability in events, that too often has been considered just for its environmental outcomes

<sup>37</sup> Hamel 1991.

<sup>38</sup> Amit, Schoemaker 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Montella 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Barney 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Getz 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Hede 2008.

instead of including only economic and socio-cultural aspects. Useful insights for defining best practices adoption and understanding how the TBL impacts event management come from case studies or examples, such as the Australian Bluefest whose strategic goals have been described by Laing and Frost<sup>43</sup>. From background research it becomes apparent that the success in adopting a green orientation when planning events relies not only on the implementation of green practices that are proven to be particularly effective in goal achievement, but also in sharing a vision among different stakeholders<sup>44</sup>. Academics have also underlined that food events are particularly suitable to achieve a successful implementation of a green orientation: the strong linkage between food and some movements such as the Slow Food Movement<sup>45</sup> – a movement whose presence in Italy is extremely diffused and that has given a strong contribution to raise consumer's interest towards more minor typical products – can facilitate the adoption of green practices<sup>46</sup>.

## 5. *The case study*

### 5.1 *The early beginnings*

The importance of local food and wine events in Italy has already been analysed: from the information provided the role that this business has for local economies and rural development emerges. The growth in the number of events, if initially tolerated by the population of firms and operators in the business, has been seen, at second glance, as a serious threat to be faced accordingly. The population of actors involved in the business of local food and wine events is heterogeneous and can include, according to their degree of involvement at a local level: public institutions, organisations and associations, such as FIPE and UNPLI, Specialised press, Movements and Consumers Associations (such as Slow Food) as well as other not-for-profit associations, and Farmers Unions (Coldiretti, Confagricoltura and CIA). A brief description of the associations listed above is provided in table 1. In particular FIPE, UNPLI, Specialised Press and Public Institutions are those who have shown a stronger involvement in finding a solution to the problem.

<sup>43</sup> Laing, Frost 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Larson, Wikström 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Richards 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Yeoman *et al.* 2007.

Type of Association/ Operator	Description	Notes
FIPE	The acronym FIPE stands for “Federazione Italiana Pubblici Esercizi” (Italian Federation of Bars and Catering) and groups together over 200,000 businesses in the whole country.	FIPE is involved in the training service for professionals, in promotion of tourism activities, in a system of certification about hygienic standards and quality labels. Among FIPE’s recent initiatives, there is the certification of a large number of restaurants in Florence and surroundings enabling them to display the quality logo “Ristorante Tipico Cucina Fiorentina” (Typical Restaurant Florentine Cuisine). This self-regulatory code is aimed to promote traditional culinary culture and the development of typical local production and quality of services offered to tourists.
UNPLI	UNPLI stands for “Unione Nazionale Pro Loco Italiane” and indicates the National Association for the promotion of local areas. In Italy the Pro Loco number almost 6,000; there are 650,000 members; 20,000 events and performances organised.	The first Pro Loco, born in the distant 1881, were called “Comitati di cura” (Care Committees) whose aim was to give assistance to foreigners and outsiders. The name Pro Loco was in a short time extended to every Local Tourist Association, and because of that, the Pro Loco can be considered the first Italian receptive tourist associations. Post-World War II, the Pro Loco picked up their activity again, and in 1962 it was suggested the constitution of an association that had a coordinating and representative duty at an international level. In September of the same year, the UNPLI was born, and by 1965 already obtained the institution of the Pro Loco’s National Register at the Tourism and Ministry. This Register became “regional” and in some cases “provincial” through the transfer of the competences on tourism to the regions.
Specialised Press	Specialised press includes journals and websites that specifically deal with the issue of local food and wine events. Among others most active web-magazine is «Italia a Tavola.net».	Specialised press operates through different types of media. The web hosts several websites that are run by journalists that offer information about local food and wine events, typical products and provide articles and data about consumption trends and critical issues in the business.
Movements and Consumer Associations	Consumer associations and movements that promote typical product consumption and education. Slow Food is the most important movement in Italy.	«A non-profit member-supported association, Slow Food was founded in 1989 to counter the rise of fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world» (from the movement website). Slow food actively supports some local food and wine events, and due to its strong commitment to preserve typicality and authenticity in food, the movement is against fake food festivals.

Type of Association/ Operator	Description	Notes
Public Institutions	Municipalities and Provinces where events take place. Their duties include regulation and administration.	Municipalities and Provinces authorize the event to take place and ensure that organisers respect the established criteria in food service and in preserving safety and health of visitors.
Farmer Unions	CIA, Coldiretti, Confagricoltura	These are the three main organisations operating in agriculture; they are the main interlocutors of the Government/regional governments in the formulation of the national/regional policies. They are also involved in promoting the values of rurality and in reinforcing the link between producers and consumers.

Tab. 1. Main stakeholders of Food and Wine Festivals in Italy

Between 2009 and 2010 public authorities and private associations held several meetings with the aim of finding a solution to the emerging conflict between local not-for-profit associations involved in the organisation of food festivals and catering professionals and restaurants. The situation was getting complicated: what was under threat was the linkage between product features and the nature of the celebration or happening with location and local historical heritage<sup>47</sup>, due to the proliferation of food-related events organised mainly for business purposes. Over the years, the credibility of many events has been affected and visitors' confusion also increased in light of media campaigns against the "fake food festivals".

In 2009 the situation became particularly difficult to face and operators decided that the time to set a code of practices had arrived. FIPE published a white paper with the results of research on fake food festivals: data showed that during local food and wine events, bars and caterings registered a decline of total turnover that goes from the 25% to the 80%. FIPE decided to collect data nationally after the complaints of some of its members in northern Italy: because of the relevancy of the results in terms of economic impact, FIPE decided to diffuse the report among public institutions and to be actively involved in seeking a solution.

It was well known that UNPLI played a key role in the development of local food and wine festivals; as a consequence UNPLI was seen as one of the responsible parties in the proliferation of events and indirectly blamed for the growth of fake food festivals.

The two associations were in conflict: whilst on one side they pursue similar objectives (such as the promotion of a territory), on the other side the initiatives organised by UNPLI increased difficulties for FIPE members. During the summer of 2009 conflicts among the two associations reached the highest peak, and the

<sup>47</sup> Rotherham 2008.

image of traditional productions was disqualified. The negative consequences on the image of local traditional productions was the starting point, after years of debates and polemics, for the two associations to start a dialogue for preserving the competitiveness of local production: from September 2009 FIPE and UNPLI started working together for reducing the phenomenon of fake food festivals. This was the beginning of a period of meetings between 2009 and 2010, and discussions where public institutions, FIPE and UNPLI have played a key role in defining a unique code of practices for the authentic and sustainable food festival.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 an agreement addressed at applying a series of principles to the organisation of promotional initiatives linked to food and wine festivals was signed. The two organisations agreed to cooperate on a joint project organizing doc festivals with the goal to reduce the number of unimportant, low-quality festivals, and to make sure more high-quality fairs would take place in cooperation with the restaurant managers and sponsoring their menus.

The business of local food and wine events was so attractive, and at the same time problematic to induce, contemporary to the FIPE and UNPLI agreement, other associations and institutions to deal with it.

## *5.2 The project of Arezzo Province*

The office of Agricultural Promotion of the Province of Arezzo, one of the main cities in Tuscany, realized that the number of local food and wine events has registered a huge growth over the last 10 years. Soon it became apparent that the phenomenon had to be further investigated. One of the first attempts to codify a common set of characteristics and rules pertaining to authentic food and wine events was made in 2009 by the Province of Arezzo. Thus, a structured project aimed at collecting a census of the food and wine festivals organised on the territory was carried out. The final purpose was to define a code of guidelines to guarantee «the tradition, the links with the territory and the environmental care», based on local resources and organised through a strict collaboration between pro-loco (local offices which organise cultural events at municipality level) and bars/caterings/restaurants involved in the food business. These guidelines could help the promotion of an integrated plan of enogastronomic events at territorial level realising economies of scale and scope.

The census revealed the presence of many common elements between the current 170 festivals organised in the Arezzo area: supply of food and recipes linked to tradition, willingness to share local culture and know-how, location in typical rural areas, care of local environmental context, use of recyclable materials for catering activities and a more or less complex evaluation procedure of environmental impact, presence of not-for-profit activities.

The work carried out by the staff of Arezzo Province has been helpful in placing controversial and chaotic phenomenon of food and wine festivals in a certain order, underlining the main objectives and potential advantages, stating some indicators and general criteria to be adopted to evaluate their effectiveness, and providing new research questions to be investigated by the stakeholders involved in their organisation.

### 5.3 *The final agreement at “Territori in Festival”: the “Manifesto della sagra autentica”*

In September 2010 the fourth national exhibition “Territori in Festival” held in Montecatini (Tuscany) was the final stage that led to the signing of the Manifesto for the authentic food and wine festival (“Manifesto della sagra autentica”). This event is dedicated to the best food, wine and cultural products of Italy. The *sagra* (or food festival) acts as the nerve centre: a unique place to taste products and hear people’s stories. It is a unique opportunity “to be surrounded in a real social and human dimension”, as described in the words of Davide Paolini, one of the most important Italian journalists in the enogastronomic field who came up with the idea of the event. The “territory” was the actual humus of the creation of this project. The cultural idea is that experiencing an area means feeling and understanding its needs, listening to its many voices and expressions that speak through its history, nature, art, food, literature, music and people. It is a “festival of festivals” where many Italian *sagre* are hosted together and the tourist can taste several authentic recipes with a unique ticket.

This event was the right place to bring together the subjects described in the previous paragraphs (Arezzo Province, UNPLI and FIPE) and other journalists, experts and researchers in the agri-food sector that were involved by Davide Paolini in a discussion about a definitive document (Manifesto) to define the authentic food festival. The subjects debated over these arguments were the following ones: a) the potential impact (pros and cons) on a territory in the short and long term, b) hygiene and food safety issues, c) the concept of typical product and its relationship with EU definitions of PDO and PGI, d) importance of community participation and volunteer work for food festivals, e) the usefulness of sensory analysis as a potential tool for education and dissemination activities, f) economic, social and environmental sustainability of an event.

One of the critical points debated at this stage was related to the issue of volunteering by members of the organizing committees of events, considering this condition in contrast with a necessary professionalism to assure the high quality of production. The controversies among experts turned off when the president of UNPLI showed with practical examples how, in many cases, the volunteer basis does not mean scarce attention to food taste, appearance and service quality.

The final version of the “Manifesto della sagra autentica” has been officially presented at “Territori in Festival”. The document obviously does not have the force of law, but it is a reference point for all the public bodies at National and local level wanting to better regulate and monitor the subject.

<p><b>Definition:</b> Food and wine festivals are part of the historical identity of communities and towns and should be considered as the perfect combination between local authentic cuisines and traditions. Thus, they are the expression of the culture of the territory and their main goals are: preservation, dissemination and promotion of cultural heritage. In order to be “traditional” a festival must have at least a link with the territory witnessed that is documented by oral and written tradition and the programmed cultural activities must reflect culture and tradition.</p>
<p><b>Main role of typical food:</b> The type of food served and the way it is prepared and consumed hint at a community life and a food culture perceived as a sign of identity. The main dishes and recipes should be based on the main ingredients that are promoted through festivals.</p>
<p><b>Not for profit nature:</b> The festival has no speculative purpose and should be a vehicle for developing the surrounding area and the community involved. Festival should become an opportunity for the local community (professionals in bars and caterings and common citizens) to think about their origins and their own resources. The festival must ensure at best traceability, dissemination, knowledge of its products and fiscal transparency.</p>
<p><b>Role of local community:</b> The festival should represent an opportunity for the area to: improve the image of the community; involve the community in event supporting; develop new knowledge and skills; stimulate the spirit of participation aggregation, friendship and belonging. It is also a tool to raise people awareness towards a forgotten heritage including villages, peripheral museums, historical centers, churches and abbeys. The festival can also represent an economic tool for increasing the development of an area by creating new services for locals.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders’ involvement:</b> The festival promotes forms of socialization and development related to the culture of local food by creating occasions for conviviality. It involves producers, services and resellers (such as wineries, producers, artisans, cooks, restaurateurs and bartenders). The well-being and satisfaction of all segments of the population are essential for sustainability over time of the event.</p>
<p><b>Time and Place:</b> The festival must take place in a limited period of time for a maximum of seven days and must be tied to cycles of production and consumption. It must take place within the territory of origin of the product, recipe or processing typical in local environments; it should be also integrated into the landscape and capable to enhance cultural assets such as buildings and traditional environments. It may take place in urban or rural context. It can also include events located at places of production, taverns, restaurants and wine bars, creating a synergy between all public and private actors involved in the festival.</p>
<p><b>Management and human capital:</b> The festival is organized and managed by non-profit associations that will continuously work together with other stakeholders at local level to develop and promote it through a committee. The organizers of the festival should monitor that the tasks of environment safety and sanitary regulations are carried out with professionalism and accountability, ensuring competence and preparation of volunteers. Organizers must then rely on volunteers, who shall assume responsibility for tasks accomplishment. Organizers must also be aware that volunteers’ work would be covered by insurance. The staff aims not only to disseminate information and insights, but also to raise awareness and educate visitors. Staff should be skilled, and be able to provide correct information about the product, anecdotes and expresses the sensory characteristics related to the territory. Any profits must be reinvested in activities for the protection and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage.</p>
<p><b>Environmental sustainability:</b> The festival must respect its territory, paying attention to environmental impact and ensuring use of organic detergents and waste disposal. Dishes, glasses and cutlery used in public facilities must be made of biodegradable materials. The disposal of liquids and gases must be in accordance with the law.</p>

Tab. 2. “Manifesto della sagra autentica”

## 5.4 Epilogue

In 2011 the Manifesto has been cited several times by both specialised and generalist media every time a fake food festival has been discovered or when a conflict between different stakeholders has arisen. The code of conduct has also been considered for self-regulation initiatives carried out by not-for-profit bodies and for implementing public laws. Here some examples are reported.

- a) Certification schemes: “Marchio filiera corta nelle sagre” – Alessandria (Piedmont) and “Salento Food” – Lecce (Apulia): the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2011 an agreement has been signed by the Province of Alessandria and the local representatives of UNPLI, FIPE and farmers’ unions. This document is a sort of certification scheme for *Short Supply Chains in Food and Wine Festivals* to those festivals that observe strict parameters in terms of authenticity, food miles and sustainability of waste disposal. Only those bodies that will respect all the rules included in the code will receive the benefit of a logo released by the Province (<<http://www.italiaatavola.net/>>). Analogously, in Apulia the quality scheme “Salento Food” will give a certification for eco-festivals according to a code that is going to be released by local authorities after a dialogue with local associations.
- b) Regulations at Regional Provincial and Municipality level: in Italy an important change happened in the Tourism legislation; in fact, in 2001, the “Reform of national legislation of tourism”, made the tourism subject switch from national to regional competence (law 135/2001). This means that the national government has the exclusive legislative competence for protection of both the environmental and cultural goods in the territory, while it is up to regional governments to think about the valorization process, together with promotion and organisation of cultural activities<sup>48</sup>. This has led to a situation where each region has to think of its own development, considering that quality of tourism products is not only dependent on the quality of natural resources, but also on the quality of the people working in the tourism industry<sup>49</sup>.

For this reason the regional council of Lombardy Region is discussing a project for a law addressed at regulating the proliferation of food and wine festivals. The aim is to distinguish, with force of law, the authentic, not-for-profit and sustainable festivals to the events organised by private clubs addressed only to get profits without consideration for the environment and traditions.

At a lower institutional level the Province of Piacenza in Emilia Romagna has elaborated a proposal of regulation to recognize the authentic and traditional festival. Also in this case the partnership between UNPLI and FIPE has been determinant to obtain a final agreement between the several involved stakeholders.

<sup>48</sup> Cammelli 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Weiermair, Bieger 2006.

Finally, an example at the municipality level is in Tuscany with the regulation recently approved by the town of Borgo San Lorenzo. The local council has set higher standards surrounding the period for holding events throughout the year; then it has fixed the number of events and promoters that can be involved; finally it has regulated the quality of food and beverage served (limited to the Mugello area), the collection of waste, and the limits for noise. In cases where these requirements are not met, the event cannot be called a “sagra”, and will rather be required to use the term “party”.

## 6. *Conclusions*

Designing an effective set of rules that can preserve typicality and authenticity of local food and wine festivals can be extremely challenging, but overcoming opportunistic behaviours for ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage based on local immaterial resources is of primary importance.

It should also be noted that the initial spark of the case was the interest that some players (associations and institutions) have shown towards a problem that a few local operators have underlined: assessing the value and the role of local intangible resources such as authenticity and typicality for rural development is the first step for a critical analysis of any problem that might arise in local communities. In any case, sharing an aligned vision among operators and players involved in food and wine events would make things easier, including the establishment of a code of rules.

In order not to make all the efforts vanishing, the initiative should be nationally promoted, and a team of people with specific skills and duties should be hired to educate operators and communities to the values that the Manifest aims to promote. Monitoring activities should be carried out in order to adopt corrective behaviours, to adopt sanctions and to preserve the assets that belong to each territory.

From the case, some useful insights for practitioners and policy makers emerge: firstly operators should work together with institutions for facilitating the adoption of the common set of rules and principles that inspire the Manifest. This means spreading the concepts of cultural heritage preservation and the importance of typicality and tradition. Policy makers and institutions should also have a deep knowledge of the economic benefits that are linked to typical products and food and wine events; nevertheless, a project on resource planning by adopting a perspective of sustainability of market demand should be introduced in order to better evaluate the positive (and negative) feedback that authentic food and wine festivals might have on local communities.

However, when we are talking about authenticity, subjectivism and personal points of views are extremely critical. How can you provide a static definition of

a phenomenon – authenticity – that continuously evolves? From the literature review one finds the difficulty that scholars have in providing a unique definition of authenticity: is truly authentic what is original or can a latter fake version be accepted?<sup>50</sup> Social recognition plays a key role in the definition of authenticity<sup>51</sup>; as a consequence, on which basis can someone decide that what is socially recognised is not authentic? There is no doubt that a multiple perspective should be adopted when dealing with this research issue, as the model developed by Getz<sup>52</sup> suggests. The problem of the preservation of authenticity within food festivals introduces another relevant matter: the issue of commodification of authenticity. If on one side fake events are seen as damaging to the business, on the other side, they can be conceived as an answer to a growing demand that asks for a commodification of what is truly authentic and typical. This leads to further questions that should be considered: what about the sustainability of the authentic food festival? How will the business evolve? In the near future is it possible to conceive a segmentation of the business that would combine an authentic offer to events designed for the mass? Under this perspective, the matter is still open and further studies for monitoring the evolution of the case and the effectiveness of the set of rules should be carried out. Hopefully further research will be carried out in order to highlight the benefits for local communities and operators in the long run.

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