The Mediterranean and the Food Markets. A point of view.

With their energy and beauty, the Mediterranean food markets are places of aggregation and consumption of excellence, the place where from the beginning of time you can find the richness of earth and sea, from rural areas and from the mountains, from the various Italian regions to which now we can add those of distant lands. The Mediterranean Markets represent unfold areas of free movement where men offer their goods, where we find ourselves among the trading clamour, the place where ideas are born and been compared, like recipes; the area where you can witness the spontaneous spectacle of the street vendors while offering their products at high voice or the street artists stage.

While there are new forms of urban tourism that attract groups of visitors to the markets of the historic city, an increasingly large audience attends these places, attracted by the variety and particularity of products. The people who crowd the market becomes actor on stage, not a mere customer, who must simply choose the merchandise, pay for it and then consume it. At the market you buy in a different way: you meet people with you just gossip around, you meet the producers and discover their secrets on how to cultivate or cook the food you just bought, perhaps after having tasted it.

Shopping at markets means involving all the five senses: you smell the fragrance of a melon, you touch to feel the texture of the tomatoes, you look the fish straight in the eye, to assess of the freshness, you heard the dull sound of a watermelon to check its goodness, you taste an olive to appreciate its flavour.

In the market you can also find products of craftsmen, or niche, too rare and valuable to end up in hypermarkets, and all agricultural varieties not approved yet, symbol of the biodiversity now seriously threatened by the standardization of industrial production, which does not affect supermarkets: mountain apples, herbs, Alpine cheese, exotic products consumed by migrant communities ...

The market, therefore is a common good which helps to save tastes and knowledge of the past, an economic, social, cultural heritage of extraordinary rich and complex craft.
The "market" can become an opportunity to promote and support environmentally friendly production methods for the consumers health and interests, to promote various production initiatives and the birth of new enterprises orientated at the conservation and safeguard of biodiversity.

The "Markets" can become the core of a more comprehensive initiative that may involve different economic interests, in addition to those related to trade: from production to agricultural processing activities, from the restaurant industry to hospitality.

**Markets are economic activities that contribute to the life quality** by bringing the primary product to the consumer without intermediaries and keeping alive the citizen - agriculture relationship; moreover they are instruments of socialization and are the first "place" in which immigrants seek contact with people of their same ethnic group and with people from the new world in which they enter. From the economic point of view they give a contribution to the agriculture world as they offer a second job to family farms and may contribute to the increasing of women employment.

**The city - campaign relationship that is been create in the market allows a better integration in the agriculture world and cities.**

In the large cities, a person is far from the agricultural world of which knows only marginal aspects: does not know the "real value" of the agricultural product quality and, by not perceiving the problems of the agricultural production, tends to underestimate the "country" food not recognizing adequate compensation to farmers.

The mix between farming and city contributes at enhancing the quality of life: a farmer can maintain the production constantly adapted to the needs of the buyer, the consumer can trace the area of production of the product and has the guarantee of receiving information (including technical once) that otherwise would not be given to him. The flexibility of the market can also serve the new communities of migrants.
The agricultural product coming from the market is "more convenient".

The saving of the market is given by the short distribution channel: for consumer the convenience is due to the low number of intermediate steps of the product.

The fresh product can reach the consumer through a wholesaler (two steps) or directly from the farmer (one step). The wholesaler shall apply fees to products that will affect the final price or that will go to the expense of the farmer remuneration. With direct sales, despite the competitive prices (compared to the distribution) the farmer can retain all the value added to the product. The quality is adequate to the needs of the buyers because the farmer is in a direct and constant connection with the demands of the consumer, without the filter of the wholesaler.

The market areas contribute to the preservation of local and typical products.

The location of the market areas allows the survival of local and fresh products with reasonable distribution costs. For these products it is necessary that the producers retain the majority of the added value: small and very small businesses with limited economic resources. Moreover, the agricultural products which are in sale at the market may be "daily fresh ".

These factors enable the market to ensure the continuity of tradition and the presence of farmers enables the selling of organic products or even of those made through biological processes (the consumer guarantee is given by the presence of the farmer even if the product does not come from it’s own farm).

The more recent phenomena, are been contracted not only in Europe but also in the United States: the mass production of food, the lack of links between large urban centres and the countryside, agriculture based mainly on large monoculture and the massive presence of large "discount" selling points in which the consumer has a limited assortment of products and does not have the opportunity to choose between similar products, have led to a demand for genuine products, which weren’t fulfilled by the large retailers, has encouraged
small businesses to participate to "Farmer's market" which in the recent years had a significant expansion.

The market as a place of socialization and integration.

At the market a first approach with the city will be made, the market is the first shore for those coming from the "outside". They are seeking a job, searching for colours and flavours of the land that they left behind, looking for contacts. This was the case of the migrations from the countryside to the cities in the industrialization years, which continued with the migration from the South, and now with those of the people arriving from Africa, Asia, the Americas. The market shows all the signs of these migrations; by "reading" the market you can understand the evolution of a city. The market is also the place where people meet, where an important part of the life of the neighbourhood or of the small town takes place: the area where the "new" people are being introduced to the "historical" people of the city.

The market is a complex system. The market is a stage for many players, the place for many activities: its government and all the interactions is a complicated action that may undermine the proper functioning of the market. An attention should be given to the market "technology": the systemic and functional aspects, the logistics, the business merchants, the operators skills, the training opportunities of the new businesses and the updating of the existing ones. There are the strictly economic factors: the contribution of the market to assessing the price of the primary product, the scale and depth of assortment, a major selection on behalf of the consumer, the markets flexibility and speed in launching and disseminating of new products, the social role of the market as a generator of new jobs. And, of course, there are the factors related to food, food culture, food safety and consumer education: the traceability of products and the assurance of their authenticity and origin, food safety, "eat better to live healthy", the integration of the new migrants and the introduction of new food cultures, the contribution that markets can give to the food culture through a direct and constant contact with the school, the family, the media; the relationship between the market and the agricultural world; the presence of small producers who sell directly to consumers.

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