

**Title:**

*Author:*

**Occupy Climate  
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FORMAS



## The experience of the project “Nutrire Trento”

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- Where and whom

Nutrire Trento is a project that takes place in Trento, a small city in the North of Italy. Among Italian cities, Trento has a very good reputation in terms of eco-sustainability, nevertheless, for what concerns the impact of the food system on the territory, there is still a lot to do. Its province is well-known for the production of apples and wine: the territories are dominated by their intensive monocultures, causing loss of biodiversity and fertility of the soil, to this adds the impossibility of food self-sufficiency. Despite that, in the recent years, some farmers have decided to detach themselves from unsustainable mass distribution (“Grande Distribuzione Organizzata”) and the agri-food industry, to embrace an alternative agriculture that can follow the rhythm of nature by diminishing its impact and anthropic action and the use of chemicals. These producers follow the principles of agroecology and biodynamic agriculture. Alongside this trend of eco-transitioning of production, Trento has known a growing request for local, healthy and organic goods that leads to the birth of numerous solidarity purchasing groups (“Gruppi di acquisto solidale”). From the literature, within the trend of then new Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (Dal Gobbo et Forno, 2020), the Alternative Food networks (AFNs) are *a wide variety of small or big food supply systems, alternative to the Agro-Industrial one* (Forno et Maurano, 2016, p.6), and they can be interpreted as *sustainable materialism* (Schlosberg, 2019). By contrasting the unfair and unsustainable logics of the industrial agriculture and the big distribution, they try to underline the importance and the specificity of the local dimension from an environmental and social point of view. These realities often try to involve all the actors involved in the process from production to consumption, to waste management (Forno et Maurano, 2016). This approach can be traced back to the *glocalism* current: from awareness of the global problems, alternative solutions are sought on the basis of the localism principles. If it is true that AFNs have multiple problems, such as the lack of institutionalization that hinders their stability and the possibility of having an effective impact on a major scale, support from institutions can enable them to overcome the problems linked to accessibility and sensibilization to these themes. The new Food Policy Councils can be recalled as examples (Koski et al. 2016), and

the following case study of Nutrire Trento can be seen as a peculiar experience within this perspective.

- Timeline and participants

In this context, Nutrire Trento was born in 2016 by the mutual collaboration of the municipality and the University of Trento with the civil society to find a dialogue among all the actors involved in the food system, to make people aware of its impact, as to create renew conscious habits of production and consumption.

- How the initiative engages with climate change

Within this perspective, the interest for climate change, sustainability and the impact of the food system are perceived as a “direct consequence” of being part of Nutrire Trento: the participants see their health and wellbeing as extremely linked to the one of the ecosystem, so that they introduce a political aspect in the pursuit of a wellbeing that might otherwise appear as merely personal. The Food system is recognized as one of the most influencing factors on the environmental degradation and climate change. A critical nutrition then can be one of the first actions to counter the unsustainability and move towards a more ecological model. Nutrire Trento has the value of reuniting positive experiences where local producers have their own philosophy: for example one of the participants talks about “fruit-horticulture” centered on the concept of biodiversity to work in synergy with nature and to diminish the use of chemical products and external inputs. These experiences show how it is possible to pursue alternative ways of production capable of feeding the population without adopting high technological solutions. According to the producers, this engagement is fundamental because “nature itself is rising up”: they testify that there is significantly early entry in production of the fruits, besides extreme weather events which were way more rare once. Against the problem of the vine and apple monocultures, positive experiences like Nutrire Trento can make pressure for converting the fields towards a wider diversification of the cultures. At the same time, the transition from a conventional agriculture to an organic one is a “fundamental change”. Nevertheless, it will require some time, or at least “ a generational change”, even if the participants claim that there should be stronger commitments from institutions, which, instead, are inside the system and “have their hands tied” for some issues.

- Main values and objectives

This project for those who are involved is interpreted as an “incubator of ideas”, a “democratic space” where everyone is free to share initiatives, opportunities and knowledges to reach a shared objective. All the participants underline the role of the institutions, but at the same time, they agree that it is the civic society that makes the discussion table of Nutrire Trento active and stimulating. This table meets monthly and has a variable composition, according to the interest of the issue chosen. They decided to make it informal so that they could easily change what did not work along the process. The only requirement to participate is to live in the territory of the municipality of Trento. After a first phase more theoretical and dialogical, now Nutrire Trento is concretely active. In particular, during the first Lockdown for the Pandemic, Nutrire Trento Phase 2 has begun: a project of delivering local food that connected producers and consumers directly to avoid waste and support the local businesses. After this first pilot, the Community-Supported Agriculture “Naturalmente in Trentino” was created, mostly thanks to the will and desire of the producers who have concretized it.

Sociality and solidarity are a fundamental part of the project: participants talk about “a big family” and of “a community” who puts aside differences to reach together “the common good”. Sociality is recorded in the act of purchasing and a sense of trust between the produces and the consumers develops. It can be seen as a social network among all the actors implied, where participants join for a word of mouth or for *preexisting solidarities* (Pilati, 2018). The network is important because it is not only internal but also external and it can connect Nutrire Trento with other similar experiences or expert figures with which debate or innovation might be established. Another fundamental function of the project is the education and sensibilization to a more aware and sustainable production and consumption. The project aims to problematize the issue of food by training through open discussions, but also through concrete practices, as the ones created in occasion of the CSA meetings. Indeed, the table helped participants to better understand certain dynamics and then to change their habits and lifestyle, for example in terms of waste reduction. Something that pushes NT participants to promote education to these themes even at school, to incorporate a *habitus* of simple sustainable practices from an early age. Furthermore, the direct relationship between producers and consumers – who are called “eaters” within the CSA to avoid the idea of consuming, and the passivity that this term recalls - creates a space

for curiosity, information and contact with the products. In this way, they understand what is behind the simple good and they can realize that for example “in April there is no fruit”, in contrast with the false perception the supermarkets give of having everything at every moment in the year, losing the idea of seasonality.

- Limits and critical issues

As such, the CSA can be a resource for ecological transitions. It is true, however, that it implies a bigger engagement in terms of both time dedicated, and economic resources: producers are supported in all their activity through a pre-financing so that they have a backup in case of adverse climate or bad harvest. Anyway, by agreeing before with the customer on the amount needed there is no waste. The criticism is that for the moment being part of a CSA “is not for everyone” because of some hidden cost that hinders the accessibility. In this regard, the support of the institutions has been fundamental: on one side, the municipality has invested but also promoted it, by increasing the range of possible receivers, on the other, the University shared knowledge and scientific resources, facilitating relations among the parties implied. Nevertheless, if this role of guarantee is appreciated, there is also a sense in which the council’s involvement implied some rigidity and less democracy. This leads to the political dimension: the decision of being part of Nutrire Trento is recognized as political, but apart from that, what is interesting is that they give more importance to the possibility of creating an alternative, instead of demanding change from existing institutions.

Finally, coming to the critical points and future challenges of the projects, one recurrent problem that emerges from discussion with participants is the accessibility of this initiative to all citizens. If it is true that from the first data collected of the CSA, participants don’t come necessarily from the world of political consumerism, they have anyway a disposable income and a high level of education: it seems then that there are some entry barriers for some segments of the population. Institution could work to support lower income and fragile subjects, in terms of education and sensibilization to make this opportunity at least known and possible.

- Overall assessment and opportunities for replication

Concerning the spread of this initiative, the external network is fundamental to adapt this

paradigm to other territories, starting from their specificities. Anyway, its effectiveness in contrasting the mass retail distribution remains an open question.

- Methods

The entry is based on interviews carried out with people involved in the Nutrire Trento table, including producers, consumer-activists and local administrators.

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Appendix



*Figure 1 Tasting at the first meeting of the CSA*





*Figure 2 example of "fruit-horticulture"*



*Figure 3 Children at one of the CSA meetings*



Figure 4 The CSA visits one of the local producers