

THE FOOD SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE BEYOND CONSUMPTION: AN ATTEMPT TO CONSTRUCT A NEW MODEL OF "CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUALS"

O DESAFIO DA SUSTENTABILIDADE ALIMENTAR PARA ALÉM DO CONSUMO: UMA TENTATIVA DE CONSTRUIR UM NOVO MODELO DE "INDIVÍDUOS CONSCIENTES"

Turn off everything, stop eating and stop building - on August 13 2015 humanity used up nature's bio-capacity budget for the entire year.

James Temperton

*Food begins as seed. The seed is sacred. Food is sacred.
"Annam Brahman"-food is the Creator. We are what we eat.
When we are careless with food we are careless with ourselves.
Will we wake up only when the last peasant and the last seed disappears? Or will we turn to the sacred duty of protecting our sacred seeds?*

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Abstract

The article deals with the epistemological issue on the notion of "consumers" in the EU food regulation, offering some proposals for a change of definition and of perspective. The analysis starts from Reg. (EU) 1169/2011 and the dilemma on the information vis-à-vis communication duties towards the consumers. Then, it scrutinises the legal provisions to understand whether there are already seeds for a participatory approach, which can involve the consumers as active players in the food supply chain. The final part is dedicated to possible ways to find a new definition and to frame the new addressees of the legal provisions on food safety into a web of relationships.

Keywords: food regulation, consumers, popular participation.

Resumo

O artigo trata da questão epistemológica sobre a noção de "consumidores" na regulamentação alimentar da UE, oferecendo algumas propostas para uma mudança de definição e de perspectiva. A análise parte de Reg. (UE) 1169/2011 e o dilema sobre os deveres da comunicação de informação para com os consumidores. Em seguida, ele examina as disposições legais para entender se já existem sementes para uma abordagem participativa, que pode envolver os consumidores como participantes ativos na cadeia de abastecimento alimentar. A parte final é dedicada a possíveis maneiras de encontrar uma nova definição e para enquadrar os novos endereços das disposições legais sobre a segurança dos alimentos em uma teia de relacionamentos.

Palavras-chave: regulação alimentar, consumidores, participação popular.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The article provides a critical analysis of the concept of consumers, explaining the reasons why a shift of paradigm is needed from an epistemological perspective, in order to embrace an integrated approach and to orient the reframe tools of the “EU food policy box” in terms of sustainability and ecology. The first two paragraphs are dedicated to the analysis of the notion of “consumers” from a legislative perspective, on the provisions of food information to consumers, with a special focus on Regulation (EU) n. 1169/2011. In this analysis, Lara Fornabaio identifies some interesting aspects worthy to be highlighted and strengthened in a future re-definition perspective: the idea of a bottom-up participation of the consumers introduced in paragraph 2, Article 4, Reg. (EU) 1169/2011 and underlined in the Consumer Programme 2014-20. The overall objective is to strengthen the relationship between consumers and producers, in a new circuitry where the food chain is a circle, and consumers with their aware behaviour become co-producers. The idea is further developed in the following paragraphs, where a new definition of consumers is proposed and where a new type of cooperation, via the construction of a “web of relationship” is highly recommended.

Some concluding remarks lead the article to an end.

A NEW DILEMMA: TO INFORM OR TO COMMUNICATE

Protecting consumer safety and rights seems to be among the priorities in the agenda of all the EU policies. Since consumer expenditure accounts for 57%³ of EU gross domestic product (GDP)⁴, European consumers, if well-informed, can drive innovation and growth, helping European Union get through the economic crisis.

The Regulation (EU) No 254 of 2014, establishing a multiannual consumer programme for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020, aims at ensuring a high level of protection for consumers and at increasing consumer welfare “on sustainable growth, by moving towards more sustainable patterns of consumption” and “on social inclusion, by taking into account the

³ <http://epthinktank.eu/2015/05/04/how-the-eu-budget-is-spent-consumerprogramme/#comments>

⁴ European economy – measured in term of GDP – is now bigger than US’s: EU GDP in 2014 was worth €13,920,541 million. http://europa.eu/about-eu/facts-figures/economy/index_en.htm

specific situation of vulnerable consumers [...]”⁵. However, in order to reach this target, the Union should provide consumers with tools that raise their awareness, promoting their right to make free and informed choices, without being misled⁶.

When it comes to food, information is essential: on the one hand because consuming food is a necessity and not a choice, and, on the other hand because of the “intimate” relationship between humans and food. Moreover, as consumers do not know features and properties of food products before consuming them, only information allows them to make conscious decisions. As a matter of fact, it is possible to say that the right to be informed does not have value itself, but it is useful to implement other rights and freedoms, particularly freedom of choice⁷. That is why, the European Union tried to build a unique and common framework, for Union and Member States, on the field of food information, through the Regulation (EU) No 1169 of 2011, which sets definitions, principles, requirements and procedures. Indeed, it states that there should be a broad definition of food information law - covering rules of both general and specific nature - as well as a notion of food information wide enough to embrace means of information, different from food labelling. In this way, the European legislator makes sure that every circumstance, including e.g. distance selling and marketing practices through digital media, falls into the new rules.

Considering how rapidly social, economic and technological environment changes, “food information law should provide sufficient flexibility to be able to keep up to date with new information requirements of consumers”⁸. Indeed, during the last years, consumption behaviour and motivation have been changing continuously, as eating is influenced by many factors that do not depend only on the single person, but also on environment, social relations, availability and price⁹. Actually, even if price remains an essential element, when purchasing food, consumers seem to select products more carefully, paying attention to the relation between it and quality. Some of them show to be interested, *inter alia*, in ethics and sustainability, thus they look, for instance, for more responsible companies. In the mentioned cases the choice is a more reasoned

⁵ Whereas No 3, Regulation (EU) No 254/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-20 and repealing Decision No 1926/2006/EC, OJ 2014 L 84/42.

⁶ Whereas No 6 and 8, Reg. (EU) No 254/2014.

⁷ LOSAVIO, 2007, 49.

⁸ Whereas No 16, Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers, OJ 2011 L 304/18.

⁹ BEUC, Informed food choices for healthier consumers. BEUC position on nutrition, BEUC-X-2015-008 – 04/02/2015.

process than an answer to irrational impulses and companies must adapt their communication strategies to this new dimension of consumption¹⁰.

However, recently, the economic crisis has been having a strong impact on families' budget for food, causing many changes in people's attitude towards consumption: some of them reduce the quantity, trying to waste a bit less, while others have been forced to reduce quality, finding easier and more affordable to purchase unhealthy food. This is why it is crucial to reshape our environment, so that consumers are not discouraged from buying healthy food by its high price. However, making the healthier choice the easier one requires different policies, able to educate, inform and protect consumers¹¹. Public bodies should rely less on private companies initiatives and be in charge of long-term health promotion strategies¹², within agriculture, trade and environment policies.

Providing true information on a package and making labels easy to understand for everyone is a key aspect. Indeed, Article 7, Reg. (EU) No 1169/2011, states that information practices should be fair, which means that information shall not be misleading but accurate, clear and easy to understand¹³. Nonetheless, reading information about ingredients or nutritional properties is not the same as being informed¹⁴. A long list of product information might lead many consumers to disregard the label as well as make it harder to order each piece of information according to importance¹⁵. Particularly, the language used in labels is often a symbolic one, which means that the person who receives information has to decode it. We usually take this operation for granted but how many times, when we go grocery shopping, are we too lazy or in a hurry to read carefully? And what about those less educated consumers who find it hard to completely understand terms and acronyms? Hence, currently, after designing a food sector operator responsible for food information¹⁶, it is possible to identify a sort of consumer responsibility: he/she cannot say that he/she has not read¹⁷. On the one hand, European rules outline an aware consumer, mostly informed by mandatory indications on labels; on the other hand the European Union seems more interested in giving consumers information than interested in effectively

¹⁰ Mario Abis, *Which communication to consumers?* Rivista di Diritto Alimentare, (April-June 2011), at p.1.

¹¹ BEUC, *Informed food choices for healthier consumers*. BEUC position on nutrition.

¹² Starting from the easiest ones, such as making fresh fruits and vegetables more available in nearby shops and better placed in supermarkets or being careful about marketing to kids.

¹³ Actually, most of the rules were already included in Directive 2000/13/EC.

¹⁴ CARRETERO GARCÍA, 2013, at p. 387.

¹⁵ LARS 1994, 14.

¹⁶ Article 8, Reg. (EU) No 1169/2011.

¹⁷ DI LAURO, 2012, at p. 23.

informing them, i.e. communicating with them¹⁸. However, since it is a matter of human behaviours and life-style, labels are not enough; it would be necessary to start education programmes, even for kids at school, and to let consumers, through their organisations, cooperate, for real, in the decision-making process.

IMAGINING A DIFFERENT FOOD CHAIN

Nowadays, within the food sector, we deal with more complex models of legislation: the European legislator, together with technical authorities, private individuals, food companies and international organizations have been participating in providing new rules¹⁹. One of the consequences is that the Regulation (EU) No 1169 of 2011, reveals a continuous tension between two distant poles: consumers and producers²⁰. And the European legislator makes it loud and clear since the very beginning: “This Regulation will both serve the interests of the internal market by simplifying the law, ensuring legal certainty and reducing administrative burden, and benefit citizens by requiring clear, comprehensible and legible labelling of foods”²¹. Particularly, Article 3, of the mentioned Regulation, states that food information shall pursue a high level of protection of consumers’ health and interests, but, at the same time, it takes into account producers’ legitimate need to be protected, in order to achieve in the Union the free movement of legally produced and marketed food. The appeasement of these different interests is, for sure, an ambitious target but, unfortunately, many times, it crashes into reality. For example, Article 26, Reg. (EU) 1169/2011, about the indication of country of origin or place of provenance of food, states that the origin or the provenance shall be indicated, in general, only when consumers can be misled on the true origin of the product, and in any cases for the meat listed in the Annex XI - according to the provision of the EU Reg. No. 1337 of 2013 -. Moreover, in order to avoid confusion, paragraph 3, Article 26, EU Reg. No. 1169 of 2011, requires that if the place declared as the country of origin or place of provenance of the food is not the same as the place of origin of its primary ingredient, it is

¹⁸ The difference between information and communication is underlined by CAPELLI, 2009, at p. 839.

¹⁹ ALBISINNI, 2011, at p. 7.

²⁰ Here I focus on consumers and food industry’s demands and the way the European legislator tries to appease them but the food governance is more complex than that. Therefore, I would like to refer to HIRSCHAUER and BAVOROVÁ, 2014, at p. 93, as they identify four types of relationships “Within the network structures of the agri-food system [...]: first, the buyer-seller dyads in the food chain (including the pressures exerted by dominant chain actors); second, the relationship between food authorities and food businesses on various chain levels; third, the relationship between authorities and consumers; fourth, the relationships between citizens/voters and governments.”.

²¹ Whereas No 9, Reg. (EU) No 1169/2011.

mandatory to provide also information on the true origin of that ingredient or, at least, to underline expressively that the country of origin or place of provenance are different from it. Recently, two reports from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food, milk, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products and types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat²², show that mandatory origin labelling would entail additional costs for companies and, as a consequence, it would have a negative impact on the consumers in terms of higher selling prices. Here we have two distant positions: according to the European Commission's view, close, in this case, to the producers' one, it is reasonable to provide the origin information only on a voluntary basis, while statistical data²³ shows that, on average, a substantial majority of European citizens considers the origin an important factor when buying food. It is clear that, on this issue, the European legislator chose not to take into consideration consumers' request, while embracing food businesses' outlook.

Currently, the target of a more participated decision-making process seems far from being reached. It is true, though, that paragraph 2, Article 4, Reg. (EU) 1169/2011, introduces a sort of democratic criteria, establishing that, when it comes to mandatory food information, how the majority of consumers values some information should be taken into account. The same point of view is underlined also in the Consumer Programme 2014-20, where "Consumer information and education, and support to consumer organisations" are described as one the objectives by Article 3. Indeed, cooperation is identified as the best way to improve awareness of consumers' rights, to build the evidence base for policy-making in areas concerning consumers and for drafting smart regulations, that meet new consumers' needs²⁴ and react to market malfunctioning. Once again, the European legislator is willing to find a balance between opposite interests, in order to place

²² European Commission, Brussels, 20.5.2015 COM(2015) 205 final, adopted under paragraphs 5 and 6, of the mentioned Article 26, Reg. (EU) No 1169/2011.

²³ For example reports by the Special Eurobarometer n. 389 on Europeans' Attitude Towards Food Security, Food Quality and the Countryside and by the European Consumer Organization (BEUC) BEUC on consumer survey on origin labelling on food, January 2013.

²⁴ In order to find out any changes in consumers' needs as well as the most problematic areas for consumers Paragraph 4 b), Objective II, Annex I, Regulation (EU) No 254/2014 states that databases should be developed and the data collected should be available to stakeholders, such as consumer organisations, national authorities and researchers.

consumers at the heart of the internal market, within the framework of an overall strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth²⁵.

What if the best way to reconcile these different interests is to stop thinking of producers and consumers as opposite parts? Instead of imagining the food chain as a line where producers and consumers are poles apart, we might start designing a new “round” food chain, where consumers are co-producers, in so far as when, for example, we decide to purchase organic food, we reject industrial poisons and by buying local products we can strengthen our community. In this way, we might become more aware of how our choices effect people, other species and future generations.²⁶

NOTHING LEFT TO CONSUME

Though I have been discussing on this article with my colleagues for a couple of months now, I have decided to start drafting my part the very same day after the so-called Earth Overshoot Day, the day where the humanity falls into the red. According to estimates²⁷, on August 13th humanity’s consumption has overtaken Earth’s ability to create resources for this year. Most shockingly, probably because it is taken so personal, was the feedback from the Personal Ecological Footprint²⁸.

From my professional experience, I have learnt some good environmental practices, which turned out into a “green” household management, and include my choice to follow a cereal-based diet (where the food is rigorously bought in the local farmers’ market), to live in a small furnished house, to drive a bio-fuel car when not shifting to trains and public transportation, borrowing and handing down clothes and shoes. Yet, according to the estimates, if everyone in my country of origin lived the same lifestyle as mine, we would require the regenerative capacity of 2.4 Planet Earth each year.

Well aware that such an inductive reasoning may slip into hasty generalization, I throw myself at the mercy of the reader, by venturing the application of this inductive technique on a

²⁵ Article 2, Regulation (EU) No 254/2014.

²⁶ As SHIVA 2005, at p. 163, reports, these are Slow Food President Carlo Petrini’s words, pronounced in occasion of Terra Madre conference, Turin, 2004.

²⁷ <http://www.overshootday.org>, last visited August 15th, 2015.

²⁸ I suggest everyone to take the quiz to find out her/his personal footprint: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>

personal change management to a wider perspective on the improvements of regulatory policies.²⁹

As Lara Fornabaio has pointed out in the previous paragraph, a new epistemological approach is urgently needed, in order to leave behind the traditional definition of “consumers” and rather to embrace the concept of “mindful individuals” as the final addressees of policies and regulation on food safety and environmental protection. The topic can be translated into questions: do we still see ourselves as consumers whose health shall be protected as the ultimate and sacred objective? Or -to the extreme extent- aren’t we already next-years-consumers, if not tragically next-generations-consumers? And, in a more proactive perspective, shouldn’t we start seeing ourselves –preferably with some help from the policy makers side- as a network of individuals caring for the sustainability of the Earth’s finite and precious -yet over-exhausted-resources?

CHANGE OF PARADIGM: WHEN A CHANGE OF DEFINITION, AT A SEED LEVEL, CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

The apocalyptic connotations in this scenario have been increasing steadily, therefore the time has come for a shift from the past experiences of consumer-oriented marketing strategies towards the stimulation of a new paradigm³⁰, focused on the effective sustainability of the choices and a clear set of responsibilities for public authorities, business operators and civil society. It is worth briefly sketching the background to this needed epistemological shift: the present review of scholarship will not follow the conventional legal and academic channel of scholars,³¹ rather the research will focus on the scholars that Paul H. Ray defined as “Cultural Creatives”, taking into account the value research as the most faithful indicator for any sociological analysis when studying societal changes. The analysis of the creative minds thought³² provides an exquisite new tool for applying this definition to ourselves. In his article, Paul H. Ray provides a definition of Cultural Creatives, pointing out at their role of “‘bridge people’ between the other two contending

²⁹ For a recent overview on the general perspectives of sustainable development, then applied to the domestic waste and to the development household composition in Europe, see NOORMAN, UITERKAMP, 2014; STEG, BOLDERDIJK, KEIZER, PERLAVICIUTE, 2014.

³⁰ We are all indebted to the theory of Thomas S. Khun on the well known: “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”. Khun explains the origin of the term in the introduction of its writing: “I was struck by the number and extent of the overt disagreements between social scientists about the nature of legitimate scientific problems and methods. Both history and acquaintance made me doubt that practitioners of the natural sciences possess firmer or more permanent answers to such questions than their colleagues in social science. Yet, somehow, the practice of astronomy, physics, chemistry, or biology normally fails to evoke the controversies over fundamentals that today often seem endemic among, say, psychologists or sociologists. Attempting to discover the source of that difference led me to recognize the role in scientific research of what I have since called “paradigms”. See T. S. KHUN, 1962.

³¹ To whom I remain deeply indebted and immensely grateful, for they opened up the roads to new horizons.

³² Vandana Shiva and Wandari Maathai are only two of the most noteworthy personalities, whose thoughts I have read and studied to write this work.

cultures³³ who are busy having a culture war. They are trying to make a cultural synthesis, and also transcend the others. Their most important values include: ecological sustainability and concern for the planet (not just environmentalism); liking what is foreign and exotic in other cultures; what are often called 'women's issues' by politicians and the media (i.e., concern about the condition of women and children both at home and around the world, concern for better health care and education, desire to rebuild neighborhoods and community, desire to improve caring relationships and family life); social conscience, a demand for authenticity in social life and a guarded social optimism; and giving importance to altruism, self-actualization and spirituality as a single complex of values."³⁴

The rationale behind the choice of selecting writings from the most famous "Cultural Creatives" lays in the perception that these persons can be the inspirational models for the change of paradigm, the pioneers of a new definition that takes inspiration from within.

Let us proceed gradually, starting at a seed level. Since it is from the definition of the seed, provided by one of those Creatives, that we can nurture our proposal of a shift in definition. In other words, change does not necessarily have to be structural, but can easily trigger from a change of a couple of words in the "targets agenda" of the regulators. And the words of the Archbishop of Constantinople help in this task: "Every seed contains the potential to save the world. Each seed can keep millions of people from starvation. Each seed is a mirror and guardian of the world's future"³⁵. This incipit on the different conceptions of "sacred seed" is quite illustrative on the importance to start encouraging the shift of paradigm, from any seed, here in the acceptance of any different viewpoint we are able to start from. The synchronicity of counting in the seed of a new humanity as any other original seed of life the seed of a "new humanity" seems encouraged by the words of Sister Joan Chittister: "[T]he problem is that we ourselves are all seeds, too. We are either seeds of universal love or seeds of exploitative racism. We are seeds of eternal hope or we are seeds of starving despair. We are seeds of a new humanity or we are the harbingers of humanity's decay. It is a choice. A conscious choice that depends on what we see in seeds and how we treat them and whose we think they are and what we will do to keep them free and available. Or not. We are the seed of our own life to come and the life of the planet as well.

³³ The two contending cultures are: the Traditionals and the Moderns. The Traditional Culture is represented by people who actually favor a 19th century worldview and values, nothing more ancient than that, and they are largely in reaction against the culture of today's world, usually from a rural, small town or religiously conservative stance. 'Moderns' tend to see the world through a filter of personal success and financial gain, with an acceptance of 'things as they are' in big cities, big organizations, the latest technologies, mass media, and a 'modern' life rewarded by material consumption. Moderns cover the gamut from politically progressive to conservative. See RAY, 2015.

³⁴ RAY, op. cit., 23.

³⁵ His All Holiness BARTHOLOMEW, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE, 2014, 33.

Indeed, “In the seed is everything that is³⁶”. In other words, Joan Chittister is exhorting us to consider each seed as the potential change, and even from an epistemological perspective. If we have to start thinking at a more sustainable, more equitable and justice-oriented way in which the food sciences shall fit into an up-to-date regulatory framework, it seems fundamental to start from the core categories, from the seeds of the big family tree of the food and environmental sciences: animals and human beings.

And to this latter target my attention will be focused, since from the origin of a food safety science in Europe, human health has been associated with consumers’ protection, consumers’ satisfaction, consumers’ wellbeing³⁷.

Consumers belong to the overrated and over estimated final category, at the very end of the well-known “food supply chain”. The nitty-gritty is: in a perspective of shifting the paradigm from food quality and food hygiene rules to the care for a more equitable resources distribution which leads to an effective nourishment of human beings in respect of the Planet Earth³⁸, aren’t we asked to re-shape the notion of consumers? From the idea of little grasshoppers, invading the supermarkets with highly-demanding questions on how detailed and sincere the labels should be, hasn’t the time arrived to move toward a conception where the individuals, well-aware to be part of a bigger picture, orient their food choices toward a more sustainable way? If we keep ourselves anchored to the idea of “consuming” resources, the next step to the exhaustion of these resources is very near, if not -as the above mentioned annual report on the Overshoot Day has dramatically exposed- way behind us. And, as anticipated in the beginning of this paragraph, a clear suggestion on the definition of these “mindful individuals” is given by the same pioneers of the change. Mindful individuals are nothing less but the next generation of Cultural Creatives, who are well conscious of a new set of values that they have the responsibility to protect and preserve. In other words, the once consumers-caterpillars, shall leave the floor to the new-born beautiful butterflies. This category, coinciding with the cultural creative defined by Paul Ray, might cover a very wide

³⁶ Sister CHITTISTER, 2014 37.

³⁷ On the origins of the European Food Law, see VAN DER MEULEN, 2013.

³⁸ MAATHAI, 2010. See also MAATHAI, 2008. Wangari Maathai spent decades working with the Green Belt Movement to help women in rural Kenya plant—and sustain—millions of trees. With their hands in the dirt, these women often find themselves empowered and “at home” in a way they never did before. Maathai wants to impart that feeling to everyone, and believes that the key lies in traditional spiritual values: love for the environment, self-betterment, gratitude and respect, and a commitment to service. While educated in the Christian tradition, Maathai draws inspiration from many faiths, celebrating the Jewish mandate *tikkun olam* (“repair the world”) and renewing the Japanese term *mottainai* (“don’t waste”). Through rededication to these values, she believes, we might finally bring about healing for ourselves and the earth. More information is available at <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>, last visited in September 2015.

range of social class positions from the working class to the élite. They may be middle class on average, but the range is so wide that it is almost meaningless to describe them in terms of occupation, education or income. The key identifiers are values, worldview and lifestyle, not demographics. People with identical values can be of very different social classes, and people of the same social class can live in totally different cultural worlds.

They may become the critical mass in the population, leading the general social reaction that something must be done about the climate crisis that scientists describe, no matter how inconvenient or unprofitable the political and business authorities find it. And they lead the growing realisation that this is 'one world' after all. They shall encourage the planetary integration into a global cultural super-system, becoming the movers in the trend of our time³⁹. The only ingredient needed for the definition of "mindful individuals" is that policy makers and regulators do not accept to compromise on this notion, having always in high consideration the development, education and most importantly, the level of awareness of the public addressed.

CHANGE OF A PARADIGM: FROM A NEW DEFINITION TO A NEW MODEL. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND WAY FORWARD

The new notion of mindful individuals, working together for the realisation of a planetary integration, evokes the studies of Fritjof Capra on sustainability, that shall not be intended as an individual property, but a property of an entire web of relationships⁴⁰. Any reflection on

³⁹ This final part is a paraphrase of RAY expanded definition of the Cultural Creatives in the above mentioned article, available at: <http://www.wisdomuniversity.org/CCsReport2008SurveyV3.pdf>

⁴⁰ The legal scholars have found similar metaphors using the concept of network and emphasising on the dramatic change from a hierarchical structure of the relationships –between authorities and civil society- to a model of networks. See CHITI, *The Emergence of a Community Administration: the case of European Agencies*, in *Common Market Law Review*, 2000), 329: "The concept of network, as elaborated by a rich literature, is a powerful analytical instrument. [...] First, the concept of network usually refers to an organization including both public and private bodies. Second, it indicates forms of co-operation with a low level of institutionalization; certain studies, in particular, highlight the prevalence of interpersonal relationships over the relations between bodies and institutions. Third, the literature on policy networks emphasizes the relevance of the "links" between the various bodies [...]; fourth, some scholars conceptualize the networks as "institutions, that is as sets of rules [...] regulating the interactions among the subjects, limiting their options and providing them with specific opportunities. Fifth, a number of particularly important studies directly dedicated to European agencies, highlight the learning process which takes place through the networks; the networks function, thus, is not only to permit an efficient division of labour and the exchange of information or other resources, but also to facilitate the development of behavioural standards and working practices that create shared expectations and enhance the effectiveness of the social mechanisms of reputational enforcement". See also SHAMS, 2001, 1589. On globalization and law see also SLAUGHTER, 2004; CASTELLS, 2005; CASSESE, 2005, STIGLITZ, 2006.

sustainability involves a whole community, and this is the lesson that we learn from nature: the only way to sustain life is to build up and to nurture the community. In this regard, Capra, states that we shall start reasoning in terms of “systems thinking”, for it is crucial to understand the essence of ecology: from the Greek word *oikos*, household, ecology implies a structured system of relationships, as the science of the various members of the Earth Household. “System thinking” means thinking in terms of relationships: “each species in an ecosystem helps to sustain the entire food web. If one species is decimated by some natural catastrophe, the ecosystem will still be resilient if there are other species that can fulfil similar functions. In other words, the stability of an ecosystem depends on its biodiversity, on the complexity of its network of relationships. This is how we can understand stability and resilience by understanding the relationships within the ecosystem.”⁴¹ Surely, as for the new paradigm required to conceive the consumers as “mindful individuals”, here the Western world will be challenged to find a methodology to map the relationship, in order to understand how they originate and then develop. Capra explains that “Understanding relationships is not easy for us, because it is something that goes counter to the traditional scientific enterprise in Western culture. In science, we have been told, things need to be measured and weighed. But relationships cannot be measured and weighed; relationships need to be mapped. So there is another shift: from measuring to mapping.”⁴²

The next step will be to map these relationships, in order to understand how they originate and how they develop. This change shall come from teams of researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, academic, food business operators all devoted to this new task, in order to “steer business toward sustainability”⁴³.

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⁴¹ CAPRA, LUISI, 2014, 34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴³ CAPRA and PAULI (ed. by), 1995.

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