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CARING AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRACTICES

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Introduction

European agriculture has undergone significant changes over the past century, especially since WWII. To accommodate the economies of scale of the food industry and to remain economically profitable, farmers had to increase farm size, efficiency, and external inputs, while minimizing labor use per hectare. As a result, environmental problems, homogenization of the landscape, outbreaks of animal diseases, and poor animal welfare gave the agricultural sector a negative reputation (Meerburg et al. 2009). Growing concerns regarding nature conservation and the environment, and increasing demands from new social functions, such as housing and recreation, have put pressure on the sector (Hermans et al. 2010). Moreover, since 1990, an expanding EU has resulted in increased competition. Following the 1992 MacSharry reforms – which led to budgetary pressures, liberalization of the global food trade, and a call for sustainable development (Grin and Marijnen 2011) – farmers have become increasingly aware that real change is needed if they are to survive. Such change would ideally also address growing societal concerns about food safety, animal welfare, biodiversity, and landscape and environmental quality (Meerburg et al. 2009).

In response to such growing concerns, many European rural areas started experimenting with different forms of multifunctional agriculture (Wilson 2008). This meant complementing food production functions with other activities that could meet societal demands, such as therapeutic and social inclusion practices, recreation and landscape services (Durand and van Huylenbroeck 2003; Hassink and Van Dijk 2006). Since then, the number of farms providing high-quality healthcare services has grown exponentially (Hassink 2017).

These forms of multifunctional agriculture have paved the way to alternative farming models to the dominant agricultural paradigm, combining agroecology principles with a more ethical approach that re-connects humans among themselves and with the ecosystem (Shiva 2016). Their context-dependent nature, tied to place-based values and conditions, constitutes a double-edged sword for care and social farms. Because of their place embeddedness, such practices are hard to generalize, and thus their viability remains contested (van der Ploeg 2008). On the other hand, as they respond to the needs and assets of the localities where they develop, care and social farms may offer virtuous examples of regenerative agriculture, where both humans and the ecosystem can thrive (Moriggi, et al. 2020).

Meanwhile, in response to the overwhelming specialization and mechanization of agriculture and food production, "alternative" food networks and practices have also emerged. Their representatives draw attention to the possibility to "resocialize" and "respatialize" food, through supposedly "closer" and more "authentic" relationships between producers, consumers, and their food (Marsden et al. 2000; Renting et al. 2003). Examples of such networks are (combinations of) community supported agriculture (CSA), biodynamic and permaculture farming, and urban farming initiatives.

Against a background of marginalization and vulnerability for small-scale agricultural sector and rural areas, these practices represent a shift towards a caring regenerative agriculture, one that sees plants and animals as community members, rather than commodities, and that wishes to move from an attitude of control towards one of partnership and respect (Wells and Gradwell 2001; Leck et al. 2014). Such experiments show the potential for people to live in resonance with nature, following its rhythms, challenges, changes, and local particularities (Rosa 2016, 453–472). In this view, human beings are "response-able" for nature and have the capacity to live interconnectedly with animals, plants, and nature in its entirety, and care for it thoughtfully (Nussbaum 1998, 201)

To deepen the knowledge for current stakeholders and future entrepreneurs and to address agricultural and rural development policies in a better way, we believe that the practices outlined above are worth investigating further, with special attention to the underlying principles of regeneration and caring. Regenerative forms of agriculture focus generally on the conservation of the natural resource base and the use of technical and ecological measures like abandoning tillage and fostering biodiversity (Rhodes 2017; La Canne and Lundgren 2018). The possible social and caring implications of regenerative forms of agriculture have not received much attention, which makes our exploration of caring aspects of regenerative forms of agriculture even more valuable.

We use care ethics as a tool to explore and analyse agricultural and food practices aiming to reconnect with society and nature.

We start by exploring ideas about and conceptualizations of care from a theoretical perspective, and we focus on the conceptualization offered by Tronto, which we believe to be particularly useful in understanding the regenerative potential of caring forms of agricultural and food practices. The empirical section focuses on different cases of caring forms of agriculture and food production. We describe the aspects and relationships of caring involved, and we examine the challenges that emerge when fully striving to put the principles of caring into practice. By doing so, we hope to expand the current knowledge of regenerative forms of agriculture, and contribute to the debate on its potentials and limits.

Exploring changing ideas about care

Until recently, care was considered mainly to belong to the private and feminine sphere. Feminist literature has brought care work under scrutiny, showing its relevance to the public sphere (Tronto 1993). Feminist environmental care ethics are currently being picked up eagerly in various scholarly debates, especially given their emphasis on empowering communities in terms of resilience and resourcefulness, with an eye on future generations (Whyte and Cuomo 2017). In recent philosophical, economic, and sociological approaches, care has been described as a fundamental human capacity that transcends the private sphere and reaches out to other human beings, as well as non-humans.

The notion that people can engage in non-instrumental and non-manipulative relationships with nature is by no means new. Indigenous cultures have long claimed the interdependence of all forms of life. Symbiotic relationships with places have been sources of identity, community, and spirituality, through which people have experienced resilience, reciprocity, harmony, solidarity, and collectivity (Whyte and Cuomo 2017; Franklin 2018).

Several spiritual traditions have long called for a harmonious relationship with nature, and their teachings are now being revived all over the world. Recent (feminist) theology has also developed an eco-spiritual approach, emphasizing the concepts of stewardship for creation (Edwards 2011) and kinship with creation (Johnson 2014). The aim of living in harmony with nature is also expressed in renewed attention in eco-spiritual reflections on Hinduism (Dwivedi 2006), and the idea that all life is one is used to promote Hindu-oriented eco-spirituality (Singh 2013). In addition, one of the most basic teachings of Buddhism involves the interdependence of all beings (Gross 1997), and Islam is also engaged in the debate on ecology (Foltz 2009), with Muslims being told to respect for nature and not waste natural sources (Duh 2010). As such, all major religions encourage people to have a caring relationship with nature, although they are far from being a revolutionary engine for the desired changes.

Following our literature review, we define "care" as the ability to being responsible for, attending to, being concerned for or about, and paying watchful attention to the object of care (Wells and Gradwell 2001). This is not merely relevant for the health and social sector. For Tronto, caring includes "everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair 'our world' so that we can live in it, looking for the needs of ourselves as well as for those of our environment" (Tronto 1993, 103). Tronto also indicates that care is a set of values as well as concrete practices. In her understanding, a caring process is composed of five stages and connected values. The first stage of the caring process is **caring about**. It starts with *attentiveness*, the ability of someone or some group to notice caring needs that were previously unsatisfied. Suspending self-interest and adopting the perspective of others allows us to care about something or somebody. The recognition of unmet needs may lead to the second phase of **caring for**, when a feeling of *responsibility* is triggered that leads to concrete caring activities. Within the ethics of care, responsibility is not seen as a burden or obligation, but rather as a recognition of the relational nature of human life. Indeed, the feeling of responsibility is the result of a practice of relationality: by interacting with other people, we feel increasingly responsible *for* them. The third phase involves the actual work of care, **care giving**. Care work is not just a technical exercise, but rather a moral practice requiring *competence*. The fourth phase is **care receiving**, where, ideally, there is an open dialogue between care givers and care receivers that is characterized by *responsiveness* and leads to a good quality of the care being provided. Through this process, new needs may be acknowledged, after which the care process continues and a new care cycle begins. Not all care receivers may be able to respond, and the care process may be asymmetrical in nature, which is why Tronto includes a fifth phase, one should encompass the entire care process: **caring with**, which aligns with the moral value of *solidarity* and means that care practices should be designed and implemented in such a way as to recognize the care receivers' dignity and knowledge, to create the necessary conditions for empowerment (Tronto 1993; Faden et al. 2013).

In her study focused on Green Care practices in Finland, (Moriggi et al. 2020) widens Tronto's conceptualization to include care *for* and *with* the environment, in particular the capacity of Green Care practices to shape places in regenerative ways, as a result of two main dynamics: (1) **caring for places**: when green care activities are

initiated for place-based reasons – to sustain and (re)generate places via a specific kind of socio-spatial practices; (2) **caring with people (in places):** when the people involved, through empowering caring practices, become partners of a new social model and shape places in new ways, ideally contributing to social justice and inclusion. Both processes of "caring for" and "caring with" are not limited either to people or to the environment, which is particularly interesting when we see the relationship with a place as one of "caring with," and the *responsiveness* of the place also plays a role.

The concept of caring *with* people highlights the regenerative potential of the caring process, namely the possibility to empower care receivers and care givers alike, based on the principles of solidarity, which involve self-determination, choice, and deliberation on the part of those who receive care, respecting their knowledge and dignity. On the other hand, it requires an attitude of experimentation and constant adaptation to the needs and capacities of the people involved (Moriggi et al. 2020). In the long run, empowerment can contribute to social justice, breaking down barriers against physical, emotional, and societal inclusion, and promoting independence and citizenship (Barnes 2008; Keyes et al. 2015). Research shows that care givers involved in Green Care practice also feel empowered by the caring relationship, when such principles are implemented (Hassink et al. 2010), benefitting in particular from the process of learning constantly at an everyday level, as well as the feeling of self-worth, joy, and reward that the practice of relationality with both humans and more-than-humans gives them (Moriggi et al. 2020).

At the same time, this continuous learning process can be challenging (Faden et al. 2013). In practice, care and empowerment do not always match. Indeed, there are many examples where disempowerment is experienced by care receivers, not only because they have no leverage in the relationships with care professionals, but also in the discrimination and stigmatization they experience in everyday life (Barnes 2008), while care givers can feel disempowered by inadequate structural conditions, and by institutionalized standards and habits that place the entire burden of care on just a few individuals (Mol et al. 2010).

Last, but not least, caring, as any other activity, should be also analysed from an economic perspective, considered in its true etymological meaning, the ancient Greek word *oikonomia* (Leshem, 2016) that could be translated as "taking care of the house." But for such a task neoclassical economic theory offers little help with a marginal role given to interpersonal relations, reciprocity, and gratuity among human beings. Therefore a different theoretical framework is requested, such as the civil economy concept (Zamagni 2008). The central idea of civil economy is to look at the experience of human sociality, with everything that such experience implies, within the economic life (Bruni and Zamagni 2007). Civil economy hence looks at economic and social relationships from a perspective in which cooperation, reciprocity, gratuity, gifts, and intrinsic motivations are fundamental, and it tells us that principles "other" than profit and instrumental exchange can – if you want – find a place inside the economic activity (Nelson 2011). A relevant point of the civil economy paradigm that appears interesting in a contest of activities related with care is the attention given to the relational goods (Gui and Sugden 2005) which are fundamental in care-based human relations. According to such perspectives markets must also take into account the relational goods being generated or destroyed by economic activities (Gui and Sugden 2005). The cases studies presented below, focusing also on social and human relationships, represent valuable examples of civil economy in practice.

Caring agricultural and food practices

In this section, we use the conceptualization of care to explore and analyse sustainable agricultural and food practices aimed at reconnecting agriculture with society and moving from an attitude of control towards building a partnership with the natural and social environment. We first describe the main characteristics and principles of some of the major practices that are rooted in the agricultural and food domain and that have the potential to incorporate caring practices in their everyday operations. The practices involved have the potential to incorporate caring practices as they focus on strengthening relationships, harmony among citizens, community health and vitality, and social and ecological embeddedness, to connect to the local environment and local economy and enhance people's attentiveness to others (Curry 2002). As such caring agricultural and food practices incorporate not only individual people but also communities, other living beings, like farm animals, crops, and their natural environments in the widest sense, including soils and landscapes.

Potentially promising connective practices wanting to incorporate caring practices are Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), urban agriculture, permaculture, care and social farming, and organic and biological–dynamic (biodynamic) farming.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between farmers and community members working together to create a local food system (Wells and Gradwell 2001). Members typically pay a seasonal fee to the farmer in advance of the growing season in return for a weekly share of the produce. The aim is to share the risks and rewards of farming more equitably, by building on reciprocity, trust, and collective benefits (van Oers et al. 2018). CSA shareholders have the opportunity to become more involved through farm visits, work parties, etc. (Fieldhouse 1995).

Urban agriculture: Urban agriculture has been defined as the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities (Kaufman and Bailkey 2000). Urban farms can serve multiple functions that extend beyond food production (Poulsen et al. 2017).

Permaculture is defined as an integrated and evolving design system of plants and animal species that involves a conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems with the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people, providing food, energy, shelter, and other material and non–material requirements, in a sustainable way (Mollisson 1988), based on the ethical principles of caring for the earth, caring for people, setting limits on population and consumption, and redistributing surplus (Suh 2014).

Care farming and social farming involves a combination of agricultural production and care and social services. Care farms and social farms use agricultural resources to provide care and health services to people with various needs, to promote social inclusion, rehabilitation, employment, education etc. In some countries, like the Netherlands, care services are a paid service (Hassink and Van Dijk 2006).

Organic farming and biological dynamic farming. Organic farming emphasizes the naturalness and sustainability of farming by abstaining from the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Biological dynamic farming is a form of agriculture that focuses not only on healthy foods, but also on realizing harmonious interactions in agriculture and promoting a spiritual development of mankind through cosmic forces. It involves a connection between plants and the environment in its broadest sense, by creating awareness of all life on earth and the spiritual individuality that exists in all of us (Kirchman 1994; Koepf 2007).

These practices vary in focus, from connecting people to the culture of food, bringing farmers and consumers together, connecting food production to the urban population, connecting agriculture to people with special needs, and focusing on a cosmic awareness. Some of these practices (CSA, urban farming, and care/social farming) have already been associated with an ethical approach to care (Wells and Gradwell 2001; Kneafsly et al. 2008; Leck et al. 2014) as the motivations of producers and consumers include caring about aspects of food production that affect the natural environment, people, and animal welfare. That does not mean, however, that all initiatives incorporate a broad caring approach.

Inspiring cases in the Netherlands and Italy

In this section, we now describe several cases in rural and urban settings in the Netherlands and Italy, which are inspiring in the way they incorporate a wide range of care aspects in their practice, based on interviews with the initiators of the cases.

In our discussion of the empirical cases involving care practices, we look at how the different cases incorporate different care elements in their everyday operations, and at the initiators' vision, their challenges, and their contribution to more caring agricultural practices and a more caring society. We examine how these practices relate to the care ideas and identify points of contention. Furthermore, we look at the extent to which the various cases *are attentive to* and *connect with* the community, the environment, farm animals, and vulnerable people, and we examine to what extent caring practices are responsive and empowering. Finally, we discuss what has to be done (and how) to move from sustainable towards regenerative practices.

Care farm "het Liessenhuus": care for vulnerable people in a rural setting in the Netherlands

Care farm "het Liessenhuus" is a small-scale provider of day services for children, young adults, and adults, located in the rural eastern part of the Netherlands. The farmer's aim is to provide customized support to participants who can't participate in regular education or labour, due to learning disabilities, psychiatric, and/or social problems. To empower them, the farmer and his colleagues, try to figure out what interests each participant at the farm (e.g. plants, animals, engineering, farm shop, etc) in order to give them responsibility and a learning process based on inner motivation. As a community "het Liessenhuus" aims for social justice in a broader sense. Together with a number of other care farms in the region, the farm donates some of its crops to the foodbank, as part of the mission to provide healthy fresh food to people who normally cannot afford it, as well as empowering the participants by showing them they contribute to society and to the greater good. The farm sells fresh eggs and vegetable boxes, which customers can sign up for. Although the production of food is limited, it is viewed as an important source of empowerment as the participants develop skills and self-esteem through their part in the process, and as a source of social justice. Indeed, through the foodbank, people with a low income get access to fair and healthy food (biological food is expensive in the Netherlands). For "het Liessenhuus" the entire sale of agricultural products contributes less than 2% to the total income, whereas the rest is payment for the care services based on a contract with the municipality. Equality and reciprocity are important values at het Liessenhuus. The care farmer expects himself and his colleagues to set a good example for the participants: "If the participant has the competence to teach you, as a new farmer, how to feed the animals, you'll experience

a reversed relationship when it comes to self-assurance." Giving feedback and showing the bigger picture of food production are designed to stimulate the participants' competences, according to the farmer: "Addressing the value of work is important: you have to tell the boy cleaning the stables that, thanks to him, there is manure for the crops, which means he is making an important contribution to the vegetable boxes." In their experience, care farmers need to have a creative, flexible, and neutral state of mind in order to align their activities to the range of attention spans amongst the participants, and to adapt to the calls of nature. They have to be willing to learn, in part due to the hybrid nature of care farms, where the focus is both on the clients and on the wellbeing of the plants and animals.

Care and biodynamic farm "Ruimzicht": care for people and the planet in a rural setting in the Netherlands

This biological dynamic dairy farm and garden, located in the eastern part of the Netherlands, provides educational and care services. Its mission is to provide care for the earth, the soil, plant life, animals, and people, in a biological and evolutionary sense. The farmers want to care for and support people who are searching for themselves and what they want to be. A strong belief in the deep connection between all life, the earth, and the cosmos gives them an intrinsic motivation to do what must be done. The farmers and gardener aim for balance, and a healthy and vital planet, and such principles guide them and their practices. This implies a minimum use of mechanical methods that require fossil fuel, believing that their approach is better for the soil, plants, and animals, and also for the food they produce. Methods like mulching and reduced tillage are designed to generate a moist and fertile soil, to preserve a healthy soil life, with no chemicals being used, only that which nature provides. In this way, a circular and local chain of production is generated, with the garden yielding around 110 vegetable boxes every week. For the gardener, the boxes are a way to share the story that involves the subscribers and their experiences. The boxes are accompanied by a newsletter, with recipes, personal experiences from the people working at the farm, and tips on how to care for our planet. Animal and plant care is reflected in decisions like respecting the family relations within the herd of cows, and letting plants and seeds complete their circle of life. This opposes conventional efficiency-based methods, such as separating calves in an early stage from their mothers to raise milk production, or faster growth of crops, in order to maximize profits for humans solely. According to the farmer, "We don't have to artificially orchestrate. It has all been figured out already. A herd of cows functions best and provides the best milk if it really is a herd: a family." Biodiversity and following nature's principles are the guiding principles, which also create challenges, like a lack of manpower and a struggle against the capitalist system: "As long as supermarket chains push farmers to produce near, or even under, cost prices, we are a long way from realizing a critical mass in true biological production." According to the gardener, consumers have been indoctrinated: "They are misled by the 'lowest price guarantees' of the supermarkets." Although the farmers put their heart and soul into it, and work very hard for very little, it is rewarding. Ruimzicht provides educational activities and care to anyone sympathizing with their vision. For educational purposes a five-day farmschool program can be attended by groups from primary schools, so the children will learn their food can be produced in an environment-friendly way. Also, single-parent families can subscribe for a holiday program to learn at the farm and enjoy and connect with their children. Besides these regular activities, "Ruimzicht" intends to provide care for anyone who feels the farm is a place to learn or recover, in spite of any diagnoses, target groups,

and the regular care-system. Openness and a willingness to learn, for farmers and participants alike, are necessary to establish co-workership and personal development. As the gardener explains: "I believe everyone tries to tell us something. Everyone is like a mirror. And it's my own task to figure out what I can learn from other people. … And then talk about it, that's the challenge." Anyone who feels attracted to the principles of the farm is welcome to participate, regardless of their capacities.

The seeds of life: solidarity for people in an urban setting in Italy

The social cooperative *Seeds of Life* ("Semi di Vita") started in 2011 in Casamassima, a neighbourhood of the Metropolitan City of Bari, in the south-eastern region of Italy. The initiator, Angelo Santoro, decided to change his life during the economic crisis and started a care-oriented farming project. At that time, care farming, or social agriculture, as it is called in Italy, was growing rapidly. Farming first began on 2,000 square meters owned by the Casamassima Municipality, and involved a family association of marginalized disabled youths. A vegetable garden was considered the best way to integrate the youngsters in the local community. At first, mentally disabled youths worked at the care farm; later also convicted teenagers started working on the farm. Neither Angelo nor his partners had an agricultural background, but they were all deeply inspired by solidarity and altruistic motivations. Local civic groups, families, and individuals informally supported the initiative's first steps. One of the first challenges was to protect the land and crops from the pesticides being used by the conventional farmers around them. In 2014, the care farming project moved to a run-down part of the city that had been built in the 1950s and that had a number of social problems, including the presence of crime.

It was in that neighbourhood that Angelo and his partners were given a 2 hectare piece of land owned by a religious institution that has been abandoned for years, and it is there that the Seeds of Life social cooperative was formed. Within a short time-frame they managed to make the cooperative a place where people in a fragile social condition could feel at home. An important decision was to allow local residents to use part of the land that had been made available to the cooperative, with the remaining part being used to grow figs, prickly pears (or Indian figs), and vegetables, including different kinds of local varieties of peppers (sweet and hot), and some olive trees.

One problem they encountered early on was people's habit of picking what they needed from an area that for years had been a "no man's land." It was only after the local parishes were involved that people started to respect the boundaries of the new cooperative. The parcels on which locals were allowed to grow produce helped secure that respect, as someone was always present on the land. Although overall turnover continues to be modest (€60,000 in 2018), revenues are growing, to a large extent thanks to processed products that have a greater added value and that are sold under the trademark "Bontà Comune" (Common Goodness),[1] with 20% of sales coming from fresh vegetables, 50% from processed produce, and the remaining 30% from social projects. Thanks to these percentages the cooperative is classed as a "social agriculture operator" according to Italian legislation involving social agriculture (no. 141/2015).

Seeds of Life has recently expanded the farming activity on 26 hectares in the nearby Valenzano municipality, an area confiscated from organized crime. Here a fig cultivation project is planned, for the positive market value that that fruit guarantees. The aim is to strengthen the cooperative's economic sustainability, usually a weak point when initiatives

depend on volunteers who tend to have personal and altruistic motivations and to actively participate in actions to support legality in the area.

Food garden Rotterdam: caring for people and nature in an urban setting in the Netherlands

The Food Garden is an initiative that was started in 2010 in the Delfshaven neighbourhood on a 0.7 hectare abandoned area in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. After a major building project was cancelled as a result of the economic crisis, the urban farm project was able to put the unused land to good use for the next five years. The Food Garden is located next to the office of the Food Bank Rotterdam, an organization providing free food packages to low-income households. At the start, the main aim was to supply the Food Bank Rotterdam with fresh and healthy fruit and vegetables, which the Food Garden was able to realize for several years in a row, to which new objectives were added over time: i) reintegration of people with difficulties entering the labor market by letting them produce food, ii) mobilizing people and encouraging them to take part, and iii) developing the area into an urban platform where urban development issues and social issues are connected. The Food Garden has adopted permaculture principles, with the interaction between people and nature as a central objective, stimulating local biodiversity and a maximum yield for the people involved.

The Food Garden is a foundation that is financially dependent on fundraising, municipal subsidies, and sponsors. The work in the garden is carried out by three employees working on a freelance basis, and about 45 volunteers. All in all, the people involved are a very diverse group. The Food Garden provides them with structure and meaningful work. In particular, for people who are dependent on support, it is an important experience to be able to contribute to the production of healthy food for people who may need the help even more than they do. The social element appears to be very important to the participants: the respect of the community, the social interactions, and social support. According to the initiator, a key factor in the farm's success is the heterogeneity of the group and the informal approach, giving people trust and confidence. The project leader also emphasizes that the core of the project is growing healthy food, not providing care. According to him, people are not included because they deserve to be pitied, but because they can make a real contribution to the project, which makes for a more equal relationship, which is different compared to conventional care. In his view, relations in conventional care are defined in a contract between a care giver and a care receiver, which is not the kind of relationship he prefers. The Food Garden is also keen to safeguard its small-scale, informal identity.

One of the challenges, next to having continuous access to land, was to acquire funds from the city of Rotterdam. It was impossible to secure a contract with the city to provide social and healthcare services, because they were unable to meet all the formal requirements. To gain access to care funds from the city of Rotterdam for daycare activities, a collaboration was formed with Pluspunt, an established social care organization.

Findings: underlying principles of the different practices and the case studies

We have selected cases from different practices that have adopted a wide range of approaches to providing care (see Table 10.1). The case studies involve different types of

Table 10.1 Provides an overview of the underlying principles of the cases and their care activities

Case	Liessenhuus	Ruimzicht	Seeds of Life	Food Garden
Type of farm	Care farm based on organic principles	Care farm based on biodynamic and CSA principles	Care farm in a urban context	Urban farm based on permaculture principles
Principles guiding the farmer's practices	Social justice, mutual learning, individuality of each participant	Healthy vital planet. Holistic learning, reflection, personal development	Solidarity, respectful relationships, legality	Cooperation, nature, and people
Care for community: underpinning principles and practices	Safety and social inclusion	Involvement and education of the community	Support from community	Food for food bank; encouraging people to participate; urban platform for social and developmental issues
Care for environment	Biological, seasonal	Care for the earth, soil, plant life: mulching	Organic farming and biodiversity	Permaculture; creating a food forest; healthy soil
Care for farm animals	Respect for natural needs	Respect for natural needs	Animals not present	Animals not present
Care for vulnerable citizens	Discover what interests them, equal relationship	Support in what they want to be; personal development	Educate and integrate in community	Re-integration equal relationship; contribution to useful work; creating a community
Care for food	Fresh food for people via foodbank	Food experience, education	Community growing vegetables	Fresh vegetables
Challenges	Little production	Lack of workforce; deal with capitalist system	Creating a safe place; influence conventional agriculture	Access to land; budget for social services

agriculture and food production, where people care about the needs of other people, the community and the wider environment. The farms provide a rich context where, through meaningful tasks that connect to people's personal interests, and through the natural processes of life and death, growth and change, people learn to care and (inter)act with nature.

The cases discussed above share some underlying principles: participation, reintegration, and education of vulnerable citizens (care receivers), while developing an equal relationship with them. Care receivers are not seen as clients (or even patients), but as co-producers, and their requirements, knowledge, interests, and visions serve as starting points. The farmers told us how they learn from their interaction with care receivers, describing caring for vulnerable people as an open interaction between partners. This allows for a socio-economic model in which everyone contributes and is valued for their useful work, based

on mutual dependency rather than power dynamics, creating the necessary conditions to establish caring relations that empower care receivers. As such, the cases clearly illustrate how care can be organized through practices that are constituted and shaped by their participants (Conradi 2015), rather than through the delivery of services and goods to passive recipients. The targets of the interventions, now commonly referred to as "client groups" or "consumers," can become active participants whose agency and role are worth highlighting (Barnes 2008).

The selected cases also exemplify care for the community and the environment. They vary in how that is done. Care for the community involves: donating fresh vegetables to the food bank, encouraging people to participate, giving them the opportunity to grow vegetables themselves, educating them about healthy food, and creating a platform for social innovation. In the case of "het Liessenhuus," a safe haven is also offered for young adults to work and learn, stimulating their personal reintegration as part of the surrounding community. "Seeds of Life" and the "Food Garden" regenerate abandoned urban areas into community places where people meet and grow fresh vegetables. "Ruimzicht" tries to create awareness of how all living beings, plants, the earth, and the cosmos are connected, leading by example in all they do, by telling the story and by inviting everyone to come on board.

Two of the cases focus mainly on the interaction between nature and people, with caring for the environment being an explicit objective, illustrated by care for soil organisms, reduced use of fossil fuel, biodiversity, and the creation of a food forest. "Seeds of Life" has in fact adopted organic farming and is keen to stimulate biodiversity.

All initiatives provide access to healthy and fresh food, especially for vulnerable people, and involve and educate people on this topic. Only at "Liessenhuus" and "Ruimzicht" are farm animals part of the farm.

The main challenges for the initiatives are a lack of funds, a lack of manpower, the challenges involved in creating a safe place, and gaining access to land.

The various case studies show that altruism, reciprocity, selflessness, and responsibility are important motivations for farmers and other initiators of "care-oriented" agricultural or food practices. In the cases discussed above, care for people with special needs, for the community, and for the wider ecosystem are all integrated. This fits the concept of the civil economy where social relationships and cooperation are considered important aspects of economic activities (Gui and Sugden 2005). The cases illustrate how their economic activities are based on caring relationships with participants, communities, and the environment.

The practices and cases discussed above are also examples of location-based practices reflecting a discourse of reconnection and re-territorialization, providing an alternative to the dominant discourse of competitive thinking in the agricultural and food sector (Horlings and Marsden 2014). We should keep in mind that not all location-based practices include a similar wide range of caring behaviors.

The cases illustrate different ways to finance activities. The Dutch care farms are contracted by municipalities to provide useful activities to people needing support. The "Food Garden" established a collaboration with a care organization to gain access to funding. "Seeds of Life" also combines income from the sales of agricultural products with social services, while generating additional financial value by introducing an ethical trade mark.

Discussion and conclusion

The motivations of farmers and the market play a crucial role in fostering regenerative approaches to food production, creating market arenas where consumers and clients

become "partners" in a new social model (Carbone and Senni 2010). The farmers in our cases have deeply rooted altruistic motivations, based on feelings of solidarity. The farmers are attentive to people's individual needs and always willing to learn. Research often focuses on the farmers' financial motivations to such an extent that we risk ignoring or neglecting other objectives that drive their actions (Gasson 1973; Carbone and Senni 2010). In particular when it comes to diversification in agriculture, non-pecuniary objectives often play a role in addressing farm decisions, in particular involving family farms or small cooperative farms, where the "caring activities" are part of the social business model. Meanwhile, citizens are supposed not to be passive clients and consumers, but members who are actively involved. Farmers and other participants learn from each other in relationships characterized by reciprocity, trust, and cooperation (van Oers et al. 2018). In this respect, it can be questioned whether donating fresh vegetables to the food bank is an act of stimulating participation, empowerment, and co-production of the beneficiaries or whether it keeps them in a dependent position.

An important question is to what extent these kinds of care initiatives can influence the dominant agricultural and food systems, and help bring about a transition from sustainable towards regenerative agricultural and food practices that create healthy environments, communities, and people, as well as improve the resources being used, and that encourage continual on-farm innovation designed to generate environmental, social, economic, and spiritual wellbeing (Mendez et al. 2013). Practices like CSA, urban agriculture, permaculture, care farming, and organic and biodynamic farming are well suited to be part of this transition, in particular when based on holistic principles. The cases discussed in this chapter are illustrations of the regenerative practices in question, which can empower care receivers, care givers, and communities alike, regenerate abandoned land and improve environmental quality.

It remains to be seen to what extent new practices can actually challenge the dominant agricultural and food systems (Jones et al. 2003; Alkon and Norgaard 2009), one of the main challenges being how to sustain and scale up in an increasingly corporate-dominated industry. Indeed, initiatives may struggle to attract resources (money, land, manpower) and new participants, to secure the approval and support from parties and municipalities, and to incorporate wider interests and commitments in their negotiations (van Oers et al. 2018). To influence the dominant agricultural and food systems, innovations should emphasize and monitor their contribution to solving wicked problems in our societies and redefining how we eat and grow food, build communities, improve public health, and reduce social and economic inequality (Cox et al. 2008). Working together and coming up with a joint strategy for gaining support and changing dominant systems would make sense, since the different regenerative initiatives and practices share many underlying caring values and can inspire stakeholders in the agricultural and food domain.

Discussion questions

1. Should connective practices like community supported agriculture, permaculture, social farming, urban farming, and biological dynamic farming join forces to challenge dominant agricultural and food systems?
2. Should policy makers support caring agricultural and food practices financially for their contribution to more inclusive, social, and healthy societies?

3. Should social, spiritual, and caring values become important elements in the curriculum for future farmers in order to foster regenerative approaches and new social models in agriculture and food production?

Note

1 www.madeinmasseria.it/bonta-comune.

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