

## Feeding cities

### *Putting food on the urban planning agenda*

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By **Daniele Fattibene,**  
**Giulia Maci and**  
**Guido Santini**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors.

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Urbanisation affects every aspect of food systems, from how food is produced to how it is processed, packaged, transported, marketed and consumed – and to how food waste is handled and recycled.
- Feeding rapidly growing cities in a sustainable manner is one of the key challenges for the coming decades.
- The main problems in this respect include long and distant supply chains, poor infrastructure, waste, the underuse of opportunities for local production and, of course, urban over-nutrition and under-nutrition.
- Growing evidence is now available from cities around the world of what works in practice.
- Relevant local stakeholders must be involved, in order to create bottom-up support from key population groups.
- Integrating food with urban planning requires the use of open data and information and communication technology (ICT), planning methods that properly connect informal<sup>1</sup> and formal food-related activities, and the definition of comprehensive food profiles for cities.
- City networks and alliances offer lessons and enable best practices to be shared.



## INTEGRATING FOOD WITH URBAN PLANNING: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, food security has emerged as a major challenge in cities and as a crucial issue for urban planners. Despite being a relatively new aspect of urban planning, local urban food systems management has a long and varied history.

In 1880, London was the first industrial, metropolitan city to accommodate vast slum areas. Urban agriculture soon became a tool for providing the urban poor with fruit and vegetables. At the beginning of the 20th century, the 'garden city' movement, which sought to solve the problems of expanding conurbations in the UK, made food systems an integral part of urban planning. Garden cities included common gardens, cooperative kitchens and a productive green belt.

In the 1920s, the early Zionist settlers in Israel regarded small urban farms as being critical to the development of a new society. By 1942, thousands of small urban farms had been set up throughout the country, mainly in new towns. Most of these, managed by a single family, were situated next to more densely populated neighbourhoods.<sup>2</sup>

Food production was also at the core of the 'Village Radieux', designed in the 1930s by the modern architect Le Corbusier, who tried to extend notions of rational planning to the countryside. Made up of modern family farms, the model village accommodated collective amenities (including a cooperative, a silo, a garage, a club and a school) for a small group of farmers from the French region of Sarthe. Le Corbusier studied the customs and needs of

local residents in order to integrate modern amenities and production techniques with existing traditions.<sup>3</sup>

Although local food production has historically been an important factor in the shaping of cities, it was not until 40 years ago that food security and food planning first featured in official declarations on the future of cities. The 2000 Quito Declaration for Latin American and Caribbean Cities<sup>4</sup> was a milestone in terms of encouraging local authorities to include urban agriculture in their local plans. The Bonn Declaration of Mayors,<sup>5</sup> signed by 20 city leaders in 2013, highlighted the importance of the newly coined concept of city-region food systems for bringing food security to cities. Two years later, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP),<sup>6</sup> signed by representatives of 120 cities, was the first declaration to put food at the core of city development. It invited local authorities to adopt a series of measures in order to boost food security for their citizens. The signatories agreed to 'work to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, and that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework.' Another landmark in bridging food and urban planning was the New Urban Agenda (NUA)<sup>7</sup> adopted at the Habitat III Summit in Quito in 2016. The NUA promotes urban planning and tools for strengthening food systems planning and creating public spaces to improve food security.

In summary, more and more international declarations are now calling for the closer integration of food and urban planning agendas. The scope of food systems encompasses practically all sectors and scales of spatial planning. In its traditional focus on agriculture, food

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1. The "informal sector" exists in many forms. It includes small manufacturing enterprises and small traders and service providers, legal and illegal activities and a wide array of artisans. The fields of activity also vary extensively, from construction, auto-repair and transport, through arts and crafts to food and agriculture. Finding an unequivocal definition of the concept of "informal sector" is therefore difficult, given the variety of activities and trades that the term embraces. See FAO, 'The informal food sector. Municipal support policies for operators. A briefing guide for mayors city executives and urban planners in developing countries and countries in transition', Food in Cities, No. 4, 2003: [www.fao.org/3/a-y4312e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-y4312e.pdf).
  2. T. Alon-Mozes, "Food for the Body and the Soul. Hebrew-Israeli Urban Foodscapes", in: D. Imbert, "Food and the City. Histories of Culture and Cultivation", Harvard University Press, 2015.
  3. M. Mcleod, "'To Make Something with Nothing': Le Corbusier's Proposal for Refugee Housing—Les Constructions 'Murondins'", The Journal of Architecture, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2018.
  4. FAO, outcome of the meeting of local government representatives held in Quito in April 2000: <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greencities/en/GGCLAC/quito.html>
  5. ICLEI, adopted during the 4th Global Forum on Urban Resilience & Adaptation: [http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/fileadmin/sites/resilient-cities/files/Resilient\\_Cities\\_2013/MAF\\_2013\\_Bonn\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Mayors.pdf](http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/fileadmin/sites/resilient-cities/files/Resilient_Cities_2013/MAF_2013_Bonn_Declaration_of_Mayors.pdf)
  6. Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, announced in February 2014 at the C40 Summit in Johannesburg: [www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/](http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/)
  7. UN Habitat III, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016: <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

planning is intimately tied to land use and environmental and regional planning. Food access is a key dimension of community development and health. Issues of food distribution and trade tie food planning to transportation.<sup>8</sup> The challenge in the coming years will be to make food an integral part of urban planning on different scales, from neighbourhoods to city regions.<sup>9</sup>

## THE WAY FORWARD: URBAN AND TERRITORIAL FOOD GOVERNANCE

Urban food governance can play a decisive role in creating a more sustainable agri-food system, by integrating the rural and urban dimensions of food production.<sup>10</sup> Small towns with up to 50,000 residents are a particularly vital link in urban-rural food chains.

### Facts and figures on the impact of urbanisation on food security



8. C. Brinkely and D. Vitiello, "The Hidden History of Food System Planning", Journal of Planning History, Vol. 3, No. 12, 2014.

9. Y. Cabannes and C. Marocchino, "Integrating Food into Urban Planning", UCL Press, 2018.

10. See J. Battersby and V. Watson, "Urban Food Systems Governance and Poverty in African Cities", Routledge Studies in Food, Society and the Environment, 2018; Y. Cabannes and C. Marocchino, "Integrating Food into Urban Planning", UCL Press, 2018; M. Deakin et al., "The Governance of City Food Systems", Fondazione Giacomo Feltrinelli, 2015 and W. Mendes, "Implementing Social and Environmental Policies in Cities: The case of Food Policy in Vancouver, Canada", International Journal of Urban and Regional research, Vol. 32, No.4, 2008.



Cities and their surrounding regions are intrinsically connected. Clear though the administrative boundaries may be, these are transcended by flows of food supplies, people (including workers), natural resources, services, waste and other environmental impacts. There is a need for inter-municipal cooperation and partnerships that acknowledge the interdependence of urban and surrounding rural areas.

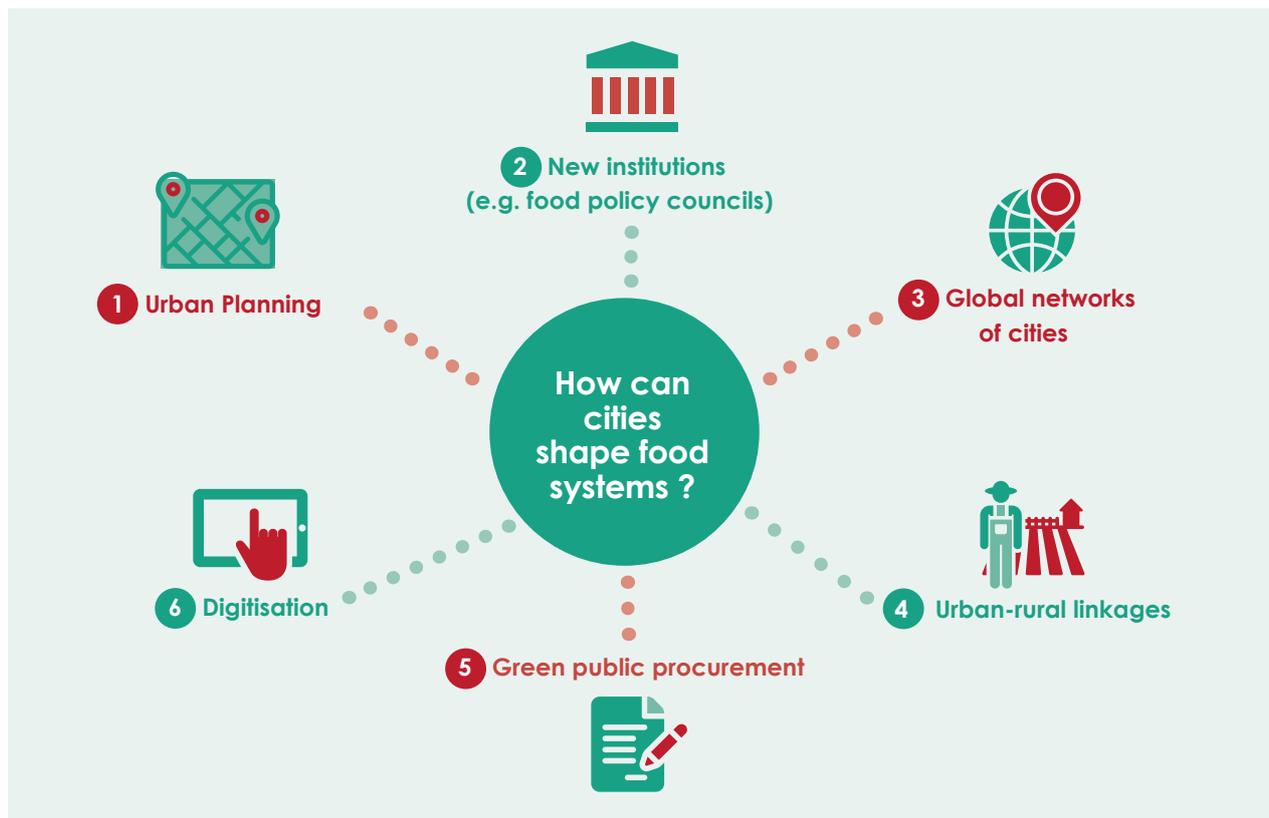
In both the global North and South, interesting examples are to be found of city authorities attempting to launch innovative food policies. Some have developed comprehensive strategic documents and long-term plans, while others have tried to use the enormous potential of

greener public procurement,<sup>11</sup> (in relation to food markets and school canteens, for example). Some local authorities have created new institutional arrangements (such as food councils) for improving operational coordination. Others have appointed new staff or created new offices consisting of cross-departmental teams.<sup>12</sup> The critical success factors include:

- a systemic approach to food;
- an emphasis on civil-society involvement in governance;
- a flexible approach to re-localisation;
- a new focus on translocalism.<sup>13</sup>

At an international level, urban-rural linkages have

### Tools for better ways of integrating food into urban planning



11. The European Union defines Green Public Procurement (GPP) in the Communication (COM (2008) 400) 'Public procurement for a better environment' as "a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured": <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0400>

12. A. De Cunto et al., "The challenge of systemic food change: Insight from cities", *Cities*, No. 85, 2019.

13. R. Sonnino, "The Cultural Dynamics of Urban Food Governance", *City, Culture and Society*, 2017.

been recognised as key drivers for promoting a more inclusive and durable food supply chain. They have been acknowledged by both the UN (e.g. in the NUA and the FAO-led programmes on 'Food for cities') and the EU (e.g. in the EU Urban Agenda and the New Consensus on Development, not to mention a number of Horizon 2020 projects). In addition, a variety of global networks of cities have blossomed, including the MUFPP (mentioned above), C-40, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, EUROCITIES and the 100 Resilient Cities group. All these fora have been working to share experiences and foster debate on sustainability, climate change adaptation and food security. They also help to shield food policies from sudden political change, as they enable mechanisms to be developed for protecting food policies from electoral cycles.

## STORIES FROM CITIES AROUND THE WORLD

So far several cities in the Global South have started to launch actions to integrate food into the urban agenda through one of more entry points such local governance, transportation and urban agriculture. The stories below highlight that this trend is visible in several cases in Africa and Latin America, both in big and middle-sized cities.

### *Multi-stakeholder approach in Nairobi, Kenya*

Nairobi (or Nairobi City County, to give it its formal name) has a population of about 4.5 million, representing approximately 10% of Kenya's aggregate population. The city produces only 20% of its food needs and is therefore dependent on other counties and regions. Since Nairobi accounts for about 60% of Kenya's gross domestic product (GDP), the city's purchasing power parity may be assumed to be relatively high. At the same time, 70% of the population consists of urban poor living in informal settlements. Access to adequate, affordable food is therefore a big challenge for most households.

The local authority in Nairobi recognises food insecurity and malnutrition as an urban challenge, particularly in slum areas. In 2016, with the support of the FAO and other organisations, the city launched a process of food system assessment and planning. This involved shifting



In the global South, many local authorities are attempting to launch innovative food policies.



from a sectoral approach (focusing on urban agriculture) to a systemic approach involving multiple stakeholders. The establishment of multi-stakeholder advisory groups (known as the 'food governance mechanism') and the identification of 'hot spots' have led to the development of a Food Systems Strategy and Action Plan.

In its comprehensive development plan for 2017-2022, Nairobi's local authority identified the expansion and development of a market infrastructure as a priority area. This is included as one of the objectives of the Food System Strategy and Action Plan that is due to be finalised by April 2019.

### *Local food markets Arusha, Tanzania*

Arusha is a medium-sized city, and it is precisely in medium-sized cities in Africa that urbanisation is expected to be most rapid and most challenging. In other words, the lessons learned from exploring and modifying Arusha's food system will resonate across both the region and the continent as a whole.

Arusha has taken a number of steps to improve food safety and has designed sophisticated revenue systems in markets. A great deal can be learned from both of these. There are good opportunities for adding value to food products, particularly around food storage, and thus



for enhancing food safety and reducing food losses and waste. As Arusha receives most of its food from outside its administrative boundaries, this poses challenges for regulating the safety and quality of food, especially with regards to transport and markets. To date, very little work has been done on the ecological sustainability of the food system.

### *Urban agriculture in Quito, Ecuador*

Improving the living conditions of urban and rural inhabitants has been explicitly adopted as one of the policy objectives for the Metropolitan District of Quito. Quito's Strategic Development Plan for 2015-2025 calls for income and employment opportunities to be generated by supporting local food value chains and for sustainable agriculture to bring local economic development to both rural and urban areas. In 2002, the Municipal Council launched the Participatory Urban Agriculture Programme (AGRUPAR), which supports the household production of organic food for self-consumption and sale. Building on the experience of AGRUPAR, Quito launched a process of food system assessment and planning in 2015-2017. Quito published its resilience strategy in October 2017. This seeks to confront various vulnerability risks, one of which is a food system that is highly dependent on food imports, weak distribution systems and isolated communities. The strategy includes a pillar for 'a resourceful and solid economy that enhances youth employment, and a food economy as a strategy for development'. This could lead in the next years the city authorities to formulate an action plan for enhancing the availability of diversified, safe and nutritious food.

### *The need for a food system approach: a new supply chain from farm to fork*

Despite the efforts of many cities around the world, food is still treated as a marginal topic and is not considered as an integral part of urban planning. The examples above show that cities are experimenting new tools and approaches but there is a lack of a comprehensive methodology that can be transferred to different context.

The following are five approaches that can be learned in this connection:



Food is still treated as a marginal topic and is not considered as an integral part of urban planning.



1. Food is a transversal issue that cannot be handled adequately and comprehensively by local government departments working in silos. There is a need for an integrated, city-wide approach. There are many different ways of achieving interdepartmental integration, including by setting up a dedicated agency to coordinate efforts across local government, issuing a top-level mandate for cooperation among directors, and establishing a food interest group.
2. Integrating food with urban-rural planning requires a multi-sectoral and multi-scalar approach encompassing a wide range of aspects such as land planning, formal and informal food distribution, food accessibility (including mobility and food transport), food waste and recycling.
3. Relevant local stakeholders must be involved. This will foster bottom-up support from key population groups (such youth, migrants and women who are usually the most marginalised or food-insecure. There is a need to get citizens involved with their neighbourhoods – in shortening food supply chains, promoting healthier diets and launching alternative food systems (such as new urban gardens).
4. Networks and alliances of cities are key to sharing lessons and good practices that can foster innovative

governance of local food systems, as well as capacity-building. Strong partnerships facilitate knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and technical assistance.

5. EU development initiatives and interventions on the ground need to be better planned. To date, EU policies and programmes have suffered from the absence of a territorial dimension to development and risk, thus producing solutions that are less effective for beneficiaries. The involvement of EU Delegations will help both to critically assess the success of existing programmes and to boost the reputation and accountability of EU action and investments.

What is clear is that cities need to fill the political vacuum left by states. They can do this by using public procurement to shape their policies in a more sustainable way. The next challenge is to develop a new policy and research agenda that connects informal and formal food-related activities and actors in cities in the Global North and South, allows a smart city approach to be adopted to food by using ICTs and open data,<sup>14</sup> and fully exploits the potential of a circular economy for food. This will help to achieve three ambitious goals: make the most of food; design and market healthier food products and finally source more food grown regeneratively and locally where appropriate.<sup>15</sup> ■

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14. Y. Cabannes and C. Marocchino, "Integrating Food into Urban Planning", UCL Press, 2018.

15. Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation, Cities and Circular Economy for Food, 2018, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/cities-and-circular-economy-for-food>

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