

# CITY FOOD POLICIES



Urban food planning includes primary production

## Urban Planning: to create a continuum between urban farmers and rural city-dwellers.

**Author: Isabelle Lacourt**

To integrate the management of edible landscapes, in and out the city, into urban planning

Farming activity may get a new role that strengthens urban-rural linkages. It starts to be widely accepted that by protecting the agricultural land around cities, urban and peri-urban agro-ecosystems can contribute to regulate climate, meet energy needs, support agriculture, prevent soil erosion and offer opportunities for employment, recreation and cultural inspiration. This new vision of agriculture and food production can support a territorial planning in which local food provisioning areas can be more precisely evaluated and optimized and where farming is not anymore synonymous of rurality.



Brussels capital region has investigated to assess the potential of urban farming to create employment opportunities in the cities. By extending this study to peri-urban and rural farming production, farming activity in urban/rural areas should be integrated into an overall picture of agriculture, emphasizing local employment. Therefore, the resulting farming dynamism would fall within a partnership framework in which local food production recovers its legitimacy and induce an innovative land policy that contains urban sprawling and introduces agriculture into urban areas.

Among the initiatives taken by local authorities, there is also an increasing focus on the use of public owned land-fields to maintain farmland and promote multi-functional agriculture dealing with different issues such as food production, employment, facilities, education, health and environmental protection. Such public owned land-fields can be outside or inside the city, in large agricultural holdings or small plots. Cities can either choose to enrol staff, entrust farmers or create small allotments for family production.

Cities can also stimulate the introduction of gardening in schools, care homes etc. with the aim to reconnect the different generations living in the city with their rural origins.

Cities can also develop actions to support local food producers, mainly by stimulating the demand. Using their connections at national, international level, they can create synergies between local and international producers.



**An example of this synergy is provided by the city of Nuremberg, which is using the large shop front to the world provided every year by the Biofach international event to stimulate local urban organic/local markets on a regular basis.**

Territorial food marketing may also enable the promotion of local agriculture with the objective to increase food self-sufficiency. This approach allows to go further in the qualitative appreciation of farming. Food then becomes a vector of cultural identity. Using food cultural identity, territorial label promote values, define styles, historical and culture connections.



**The GRTA label (Geneva Region Land Future) is based on four main principles: good, local, transparent and fair. Precise specifications impose the following rules to produce and transform food according to integrated or organic agriculture, to respect applicable collective employment agreements, within a specific geographical perimeter. The enlargement of such projects would produce a series of local food labels that reflects a territory and can help different communities to value diversity and to bridge on the basis of similar attention to quality, nutritional value, environment, local resources, fair trade etc., not only for local people but also for tourists.**



**The State of New York has created a local brand and use strategic selling points to stimulate tourist to buy local food as a "souvenir".**

**To integrate food diversity and quality in all food distribution channels.**

Urban food distribution systems have undergone a deep evolution since 50 years. First of all, food wholesale markets have left city centers to move outside, thereby freeing space for real estate speculation. Then small urban food shops have been subject to a strong competition. Supermarkets were able to reduce food price due to their strong purchasing power, but settled mainly in peripheral urban areas. Lately, downtown small food shops have been challenged by other kind of shops selling more appealing services or products for the consumers. The law of supply and demand prevails; as healthy food is becoming more expensive than junk food, healthy food supply in city centers is becoming scarce.



**In a context in which a single decision about cents of \$ turn to become a bill that amount in millions of \$, the commitment made by the City of New York to rebalance healthy food distribution in deprived neighborhoods is exemplary. Its effort to fight obesity looking for the root of the problem and facing the social implication as well as health issues brings a significant stone to work for building sustainable food policies. It is also questioning the real freewill choice of the**

Once accepted the idea that agriculture produces staple food that, in good extent, is already synonymous of healthy food without necessity of further processing (for instance, fruits and vegetables), it becomes coherent in the frame of healthy food access management, to implement short food supply chain, from farm to fork, also giving market access to small producers.



**Rennes Metropole for instance, works to reinforce the link between farmers and citizens and implement open air markets to reinforce direct selling of local food. Indeed, farmers**

**markets become a time for socialization in communities as well as providing a focal event for visitors. The Italian network Campagna Amica, very active in Rome has shown how much farmers markets provide links between people in a community and bring the consumers and producers closer together. However when economic analysis on food direct sale systems are performed, despite the enthusiasm of people and**

City food policies could take into account the possibility to use a synergic effect of fair priced healthy and local food distribution system. Food production, transformation and distribution can create local employment and economy. Therefore, in parallel with urban agriculture projects, cities must also foster the development of capillary sustainable food distribution system. Not only food distributors selling healthy food should be mapped to understand how demand and offer are matched but urban food strategies could be used to network them by the mean of communication tools (branding, campaigns, website), in order to increase their visibility.

In addition to that, the creation of public eaters' spaces could allow to set up common areas where people can eat and share nomad food, also homemade. It is possible to imagine free green areas fitted with tables, chairs and recycling bins, welcoming people working and/or living in the same area. No more necessity for those who cannot eat at home, especially at lunch time, to use company canteen, to pay for

restaurant bill or to eat in front of a computer, but rather the possibility to choose what to eat and to get the opportunity of convivial urban eaters' spaces, that could be readily used by the city to communicate about all urban food projects.

### **To make solidarity and food waste management an issue for more food value within the urban food strategy.**

Food is one of the few basic and vital needs. However, cheap food is often synonymous of empty calories, related with obesity epidemics. 23 % of the European population (around 115,5 million people) are considered to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion (38). A network of stores either run by local authorities or by independent associations is developing to provide food at a lower price to people who live on the edge of poverty. The retailing activity is embedded in larger solidarity actions, mainly empowerment and self-esteem reinforcement. These solidarity projects also enlarge their activity, being connected with back-to-work projects, to recover and redistribute edible foodstuffs that could not be sold anymore. Until the quality of food that is recovered is good, such projects are fully sustainable, making synergy between social, environmental and economic food-related issues.

to give food a regional/local identity as a quality marker consumers can value. The combined application of Good Samaritan Law and EU waste management hierarchy may help cities to mainstream food into solidarity groceries.

The Good Samaritan Law model is a food donor protection law model that limits the liability exposure of food companies for product they donate to charities. In Italy this law has been adopted in 2003 and allowed Food banks to collect surplus meal from mass catering and surplus food from retailers on a voluntary basis. The number of ready-cooked dishes that were recovered increased from 18.620 in 2003 to 654.751 in 2012.

The waste management hierarchy in the European legislation on waste (Directive 2008/98/EC) imposes to find any way to re-use or recycle before to throw away definitively. Therefore this law can be used to prohibit any food shop, including wholesale markets and supermarkets, to throw away any edible and unsold food.

Therefore a new regulation should apply simultaneously both good Samaritan and waste management regulation and oblige food retailers and mass catering to provide food surplus to social groceries, allowing cities to implement efficient logistical systems in which all edible food escape from wastage and contribute to feed people.

### **Bibliography:**

(38) Melina Antuofermo and Emilio Di Meglio, (2012), 23% of EU citizens were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2010, eurostat; Statistics on focus, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-in-focus>

### **Preserving the dignity of people by feeding them with leftovers.**

Civil society has contributed to raise and emancipate public awareness, by being strongly engaged for many years against the scandal of food wastage. By the mean of cities and celebrities championing initiatives such as feeding the 5000 (<http://feedbackglobal.org/>), disco soupe (<http://discosoupe.org/>), etc., it is now demonstrated that this idea is well accepted by the population. European projects such as Greencook, engaging local authorities (<http://www.green-cook.org/>) have received funding support to deal specifically with such issue.



The event Eating and Talking in the Square that took place in Turin, within the Smart City event, during the national day has made this issue a societal theme by organizing a political debate on the right of food within the Italian constitution, around a meal entirely made with leftovers, in one of the most beautiful and prestigious place. This spot event has taken place in a city already committed, with the redistribution of edible fruit and bread not used in school canteens since 2004.