



Sustainable Food Systems Community of Practice

OCTOBER 2019

Webinar convened by Dan Keech and Matt Reed (CCRI, University of Gloucestershire).

Participants: Sandra Šūmane and Mikelis Grivins (Baltic Studies Centre); Francesca Galli and Massimo Rovai (University of Pisa); Sabrina Arcuri and Giovanni Belletti (University of Florence), Isabel Ramos (IST Lisbon), Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins (Aberystwyth University), Jurij Kobal (Oikos), Katja Butina and Amela Beškovič (Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region); Irune Ruiz Martinez (University of Valencia), Bianca Minotti (Charles University Prague)

Municipal Food Strategies Webinar Summary

1. Municipal food strategies: food security and innovation

In preparation for the webinar, CCRI circulated a discussion paper on municipal food strategies. It highlights how research associates urban food strategies two themes: food security and innovation.

An article by Roberta Sonnino¹, formed a starting point for characterising urban food strategies. She argues that many strategies are linked by a common concern for food security, a term interpreted as people's financial access to nutritious food (i.e. food poverty) and, secondly, concerns about the security of food supply in the light of economic volatility, ecological crises and/or political uncertainty (i.e. food chain resilience). Analysis of European urban food strategies² (De Cunto, Tegoni, Sonnino, & Michel, 2017) within the *Eurocities*³ partnership of Europe's 140 largest cities, specifies six types of social innovation linked to governance:

- Emphasis on community buy-in
- Enhancing [civil society] participation in the governance system
- Local empowerment [of food system actors] as a policy goal
- Shortening supply chains
- Systemic thinking
- Translocalism [i.e. horizontal knowledge exchange]

¹ Sonnino, R. (2016) The new geography of food security: exploring the potential of urban food strategies. *The Geographical Journal* 182:2 (190-200).

² De Cunto, A., Tegoni, C., Sonnino, R., & Michel, C. (July 2017). *Food in Cities: Study on innovation for a sustainable and healthy production, delivery and consumption of food in cities*. European Commission Framework contract 30-CE-0833121/0049.

³ <http://wsdomino.eurocities.eu/eurocities/home>

The discussion paper examined seven exemplar strategies and reviewed these through the lens of ROBUST's triple interest in

- Rural-urban synergies
- Smart development
- Multi-level governance

Using the analysis of the seven exemplars as a broad guide, participants were invited to share short presentations about food strategies emerging with ROBUST, leading to webinar contributions from Ede, Lucca, Tukums and Valencia.

2. Key points from the webinar discussion paper

- The seven exemplars reveal distinctions between rural and urban areas. (Part-)rural strategies (Gloucestershire, Bath) are concerned with agro-industrial issues such as the productivity of the agricultural sector and food safety. Predominantly urban strategies more closely reflect EURO-CITIES' characterisations, and are partly sponsored by public health budgets.
- Lincoln's food strategy is exclusively focused on tackling food poverty. The city sits in the middle of an intensively farmed county and there is very limited strategic interface between the city and its rural hinterland.
- Hierarchies of local government affect food policy and practice innovation. This is linked to the delegated powers that second-tier (district) municipalities have, compared to unitary city authorities, which are responsible and accountable for planning and providing services.
- Multi-stakeholder sustainable food networks in cities practice horizontal learning and mutual technical and political encouragement.
- There is a scarcity of rural-urban linkages in urban food strategies, leading to a dependence on industrial food supply chains and mass production, with some exceptions which position cities within wider peri-urban or regional hinterlands.
- IT-based public procurement methods (such as Dynamic Procurement Systems) are helping municipalities improve the operational and logistical efficiency and combined capacity of smaller-scale and local suppliers. This is a form of smart development.
- ROBUST raises questions about the need to plan multi-level governance not just within, but across collaborating municipal areas.

3. Additional points of discussion emerging during the webinar

Tukums' (LV) food strategy aims to reconnect producers with consumers. Smart development emerges via web information about local food, environmental production/consumption, and local food chains logistics. The *alignment* of Tukums' food strategy to national strategies on education, public health and school meals ensures multi-

stakeholder engagement in the *development* of the strategy, but its *implementation* has been challenging, especially in relation to school food procurement.

Ede's (NL) emerging food policy aims to provide a single, holistic framework for food system performance, acknowledging rural-urban interdependence. Enhancing local food chains is a priority in the area, which also contains the University of Wageningen's World Food Centre, an innovation and knowledge hub. Multi-level governance of the food strategy is structured through the municipality's involvement with other local authorities and government ministries in a national programme to improve urban food outcomes called *City Deal Food*⁴.

Lucca's (IT) five provincial municipalities agreed the first inter-municipal food policy council (IFPC) in Italy. Key priorities of the IFPC cover urban-rural synergies: local (i.e. provincial) food production, reduction of food waste, healthy eating, urban farming and food education. Political and civil society support has been a vital component of the development of the IFPC, through the initiation of an Assembly of Mayors, and the *Agora*, a public forum open to all.

The agricultural landscape surrounding Valencia (SP), while under pressure from urban expansion, is legally designated as a 'protected agricultural territory' tied to provisioning and cultural functions. Valencia was *World Food Capital* in 2017. The current Local Food Strategy integrates regional production with health and educational goals. An important governance component is the Municipal Food Council, which co-ordinates inter-municipal integration of actions among 45 local councils. Additional regulatory frameworks, such as the Law of Proximity, help to support local food production objectives and sustainable public procurement.

4. Concluding points

Municipal food policy is predominantly associated with cities which, through peer-to-peer networks (e.g. the Milan Pact⁵, of which some ROBUST partners are signatories), try to enhance the sustainability and security of their food provisioning arrangements. This has generated governance and practice innovations. By thinking about how ROBUST's key concerns for rural-urban links, smart development and multi-level governance affects municipal policy making, the webinar uncovered new perspectives. For example, there is a clear distinction between the focus of urban and rural municipal policy-making. We also recognised a barrier to governance innovation in the form of two-tier local government, and that the development of a food strategy *per se* did not guarantee food systems changes initially envisaged, and a strong plan for its implementation is needed.



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⁴ <https://www.ruaf.org/projects/dutch-city-deal-food-urban-agenda>

⁵ <http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/>