

Applying secondary city typologies as a means to engage urban food governance and planning in African cities

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Sub-Saharan Africa is urbanising rapidly. Although the rapid population growth in large primary cities of the continent (Lagos, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and others) has received most research and policy attention, the reality is that the bulk of the Africa's urbanisation is taking place, and will continue to take place, in secondary and tertiary cities.

In 2015, the number of urban Africans residing in cities of one million or fewer inhabitants totalled 320 million, while only 175 million resided in primary cities (over one million inhabitants) (UN DESA, 2018) (see Figure 1). The United Nations Population Division estimates that by 2035 there will be an estimated 549 million urban Africans living in cities with fewer than one million inhabitants.

As a result of this bias in attention towards primary cities, and the role of these cities as loci of political and economic power, most urban policy and programming is designed with primary cities in mind. These policies and programmes are then applied to secondary and tertiary cities. However,

these cities often have very different economic, infrastructural, social and political contexts to the primary cities. In the case of urban food systems, primary and secondary cities may be in different stages of food system and nutrition transitions, and they may also have different capacities and resources to respond to food system challenges.

This article argues that there is a fundamental need to pay more careful governance and planning attention to secondary and tertiary cities, and their particular needs and opportunities. A focus on secondary cities is emerging through global urban support organisations such as UN-Habitat, UCLG¹ and Cities Alliance². Despite this growing interest, most attention has been focused on democratic devolution and their increasing prominence, with little attention given to the food systems of these cities. An important starting point is understanding the diversity of types of secondary and tertiary cities in Africa, as this diversity will fundamentally shape the viability of interventions.

Africa's Urban Typology Profile

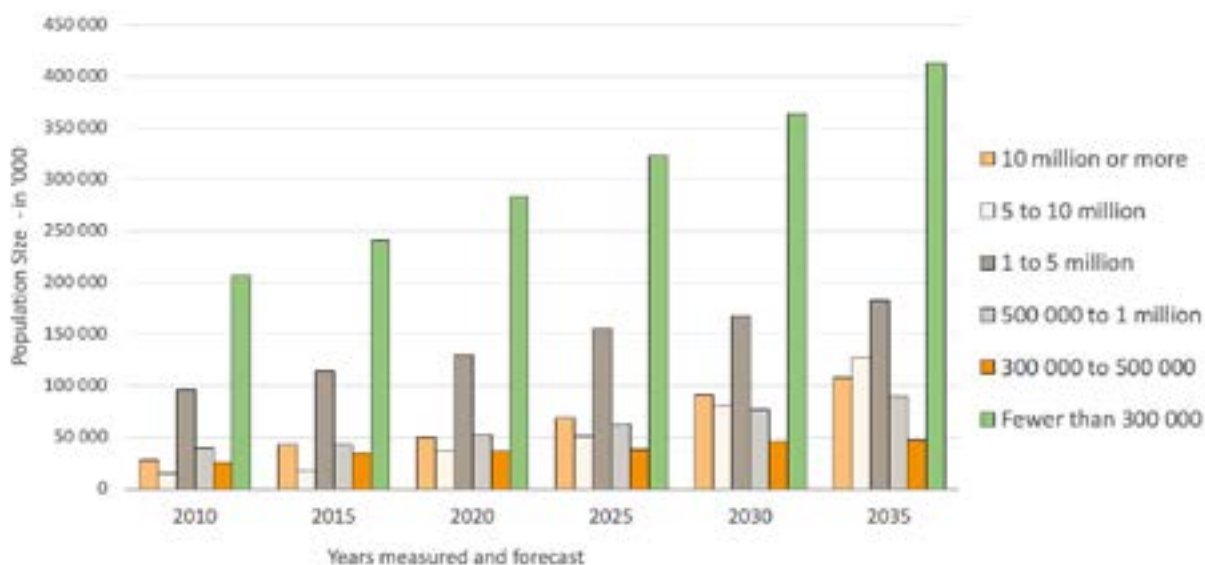


Figure 1: Africa's urban profiles by city population size (Source: United Nations, 2018)

¹ <https://www.uclg.org/en/agenda/intermediary-cities>

² <https://www.citiesalliance.org/themes/secondary-cities>

The absence of nuance and contextual specificity means that governance, planning and wider developmental responses overlook key local trends, needs and trajectories. From a planning and development perspective, such lack of oversight means that development plans run the risk of effectively casting current misconceptions, and flawed policy understandings about future needs, in concrete. Developments in African cities today will impact the food systems, supply chains, infrastructure profiles and governance of cities and the wider African continent for the next 50 to 100 years (Pieterse et al., 2015). This has ramifications for urban food system planning in African cities.

Organisations that are showing emerging interest in secondary and tertiary cities offer varying definitions and generally use size as a key means of differentiating between primary, secondary and tertiary cities. In this article, we deliberately avoid specific definitions, focusing rather on the typology of a city as a means of better understanding the city's food and governance needs.

Until recently, secondary cities have been framed as rural hubs or extensions of a rural agrarian economy. Drawing largely on demographic data, the World Bank's James Tefft and Marketa Jonasova present a useful starting point in a provisional typology of cities in relation to their food systems (Tefft & Jonasova, 2020). They suggest three categories: **Agricultural towns or cities** - "smaller but fast-growing populations and are in agricultural production areas with a key role in the rural economy"; **Medium and large secondary cities** - "challenged to modernise food system architecture and strengthen food businesses to cater to the needs of diverse consumers"; and **Global megacities** - "served by vibrant modern, traditional and informal food systems that are challenged to operate in congested environments, many in need of upgrading."

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Within this framework, the secondary and tertiary cities have more direct local links, in particular to food production. Such views perpetuate rural framings of most secondary cities, implicitly casting them all in the role of agricultural market centres, or as "agro-cities" (agricultural towns and cities with fewer than one million people) (Tefft et al., 2017). While such framings may have some relevance and may reflect the urban/food dynamics of certain cities, such generalisations are problematic and miss the nature of much of Africa's urban transition.

Our work on secondary towns and cities draws on earlier work by Lily Song (2013) and Brian Roberts (2014) and identifies five specific forms of secondary town or city, where the typological classification takes precedence over size-related classifications. Emerging secondary city typologies are detailed in Table 1 on page 85.

Each city type reflects very different food system, governance and planning needs. The more traditional size-based classifications of secondary and tertiary cities may fall within these categories but often miss the nuances detailed above with their focus on size not function.

Although very few cities will align perfectly with any particular typology, the typologies are indicative of key opportunities and challenges facing different cities. Typological classification offers a tool to bring differences and contextual variations to the fore in urban food system planning (see resource pack in this volume). Secondary cities offer ideal places for planning and design initiatives

Table 1: Secondary City Typologies with examples

| Typological differentiation | Examples | Typological characteristics and peculiarities | Examples of food system specificities |
|--|--|---|---|
| Resource and subnational administrative cities | Kitwe, Zambia; Mbour, Senegal | Subnational urban centres of administration, manufacturing, agriculture or resource development, and resource extractive areas. | With large portions of the economy being linked to single resources, with fluctuations in international resource prices, this creates significant boom and bust cycles driving unequal development resulting in extreme stress and vulnerability. This is seen directly through food where even administrative classes fall from relative wealth to extreme poverty and hunger. |
| Satellite towns or cities | Epworth, Zimbabwe; Marokolong, South Africa | Metropolitan clustered secondary cities that develop on the periphery of major metropolitan or urban regions and take the form of spillover growth centres or labour pool settlements. | The primary city remains the prime food access point, so food retail in the satellite city is largely informal and unplanned, with governance a challenge. Infrastructure is often poor, directly impacting food systems at the household scale and food retail. Significant lack of investment in food environments. |
| Corridor or trunk cities | Kisumu, Kenya; Tamale, Ghana | Cities along major transportation or trade corridors, often sites where different modes of transport intersect such as ports or border crossings. | Transport enables flows where local foods attract higher prices in primary cities enabling greater income for vendors, but significantly higher local food prices. This infrastructure also enables imports to supplement local foods, enabling affordable protein intake. |
| Lung or elastic cities | Zion City Moria, South Africa; Hermanus, South Africa | Cities and towns whose permanent residential population is small but has a larger built environment and infrastructure due to seasonal fluctuations due to cultural events, harvest cycles, being resort towns etc. As such, infrastructural and economic needs far exceed the needs of the general permanent population. | Large and redundant infrastructure networks that require maintenance for heavy use in limited periods, diverting key fiscal allocations away from pro-poor needs. Food system relies on short spike period and needs to cover all annual costs over this period, negating investment, R&D, etc. |
| Urban centres | Towns on the West African Sahelian cattle route or the Namibia/Angola border areas | Smaller towns where the food system, natural environment and society come together. Often reflect hybrid forms of governance with mixed traditional and elected leadership. | Governance is complicated. Traditional systems are generally robust but undermined through growth and development, risk of zoonosis increases. Seasonal aspects are extreme. Intersections between nature/livestock/society under increased strain due to climate variability and development stressors. |

for innovative food systems. Context is a central factor in effective decentralised governance and food system planning.

Until recently, African development has largely ignored almost all aspects of a wider urban agenda, focusing instead on issues such as the peasantry, agriculture and natural resource use (Pieterse et al., 2015). However, this has changed: the multitude of multilateral agreements ratified in the past decade, including the SDGs, Habitat3, COPs and Sendai, mean that policy approaches and positions will dictate the new global urban agenda in Africa. Secondary cities are central to this "turn" but will require deliberate attention. However, such deliberate foci

are often interpreted as privileging primary city needs and requirements. Secondary cities are not supplanting primary cities, or even the national scale, but do require specific attention.

The development of a typological classification of cities is premised on the need for better understanding the contextual specificities. More important, from a governance and planning point of view, is understanding how secondary cities interact and engage with other secondary cities, how these cities engage the primary city and national processes. Typological rather than size-based hierarchical perspectives offer unique opportunities in this regard. Cities have always led development innovation.

Secondary city typologies can help identify deliberate and focused sites for food system planning and governance innovation. So, what does this mean for urban food system governance and planning?

1. An appreciation of typologies allows development agencies and NGOs to see the need for more context-driven interventions.
2. This allows cities to situate food system governance and planning within broader political, spatial, economic, social and environmental contexts and trajectories.
3. Integrating planners in multistakeholder food systems work (a case in point is Kisumu where we see a lot of food systems work and actors, but no link to urban planning).

To this end, the starting planning points include:

- a) A food system assessment (need not be data intensive – can be a qualitative assessment identifying key nodes in the food system and how they connect to other urban forms and functions).
- b) Reconsidering municipal mandates (the city of Cape Town has recently carried out an internal audit of where food intersects with the work of each and every department and sub-department in the city, and found a complex, rich web of overlapping mandates and potential opportunities).
- c) Stakeholder mapping.
- d) Identification of key sites for intervention and work transversally, across departments and mandates, and include stakeholders (while being aware of the politics).



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Resources

Incorporating Food into Urban Planning: A Toolkit for Planning Educators in Africa & podcasts for planning scholars and practitioners

1. The focus of this toolkit is on why it is critical for planners in Africa to think about food issues and, more specifically, how to equip them to do this as a planning educator. This toolkit was designed to help planners develop theoretical and practical knowledge about food-sensitive planning, with the specific aim of supporting teaching around these issues in a context-sensitive way in Africa.

The toolkit includes:

1. An introduction to the toolkit
2. An introduction to why it is important for planners in Africa to think about food
3. Suggested course outline
4. Case studies

Toolkit link here:

<https://consumingurbanpoverty.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/incorporating-food-into-urban-planning-toolkit.pdf>

2. Podcasts for planning scholars and practitioners. A parallel resource of six short podcasts for planning scholars and practitioners is available.

Podcasts available here:

<https://consumingurbanpoverty.wordpress.com/podcast-series/>

This series provides links to resources and discussion questions.

Applied resources on urban food planning:

Planning for Food Secure African Cities Podcast.

<https://www.africancentreforcities.net/programme/planning-for-food-secure-african-cities-podcast/>
Incorporating Food Into Urban Planning: A Toolkit for Planning Educators in Africa.
<https://consumingurbanpoverty.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/incorporating-food-into-urban-planning-toolkit.pdf>

Research on food systems governance in secondary cities:

Tomatoes and Taxi Ranks – Reflections of Secondary City Food Systems.

https://www.africancentreforcities.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/tomatoes-taxiranks_lowres.pdf
Urban Food Systems Governance and Poverty in African Cities.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781315191195/urban-food-systems-governance-poverty-african-cities-jane-battersby-vanessa-watson>

Other work on secondary cities:

Managing Systems of Secondary Cities – David Roberts.
https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/default/files/1d%20%28i%29%20-%20Managing%20Systems%20of%20Secondary%20Cities%20Book_low_res.pdf
Cities Alliance – Secondary Cities Resource Guide.
<https://www.citiesalliance.org/themes/secondary-cities>

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Integrating food into planning of Intermediary Cities Challenges and opportunities

Yves Cabannes

In 2016, The Global Report on Local Democracy, published by UCLG (United Cities and Local Government) highlighted the importance of Intermediary cities, as they "will host more than 400 million new urban dwellers in the coming 15 years, more than 90% of them in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, at a rate of 70,000 people per day".

Since then, intermediary cities (I-Cities) have risen to the top of city-programme agendas. This is because of the huge potential they offer, including in terms of food security, and the role they play in the national system of cities. In part also because of the enormous threats they are facing. It is not surprising that one of the most active world forum commissions at UCLG is precisely

on I-Cities, and that the 9th Africities summit, which will be held 17-21 May 2022, is being held in Kisumu, a typical I-City in Kenya, with **African I-Cities and the African Union's Agenda 2063** as its central topic.

UCLG and its academic partners use a definition of I-Cities "based on **population** (generally fewer than one million inhabitants, but with enormous variations among countries and regions), and the **functions** that they perform: their role in the mediation of flows (of goods, information, innovations, and administration, etc.) and between the rural and the urban territories within their respective areas of influence and with respect to other cities or regions".

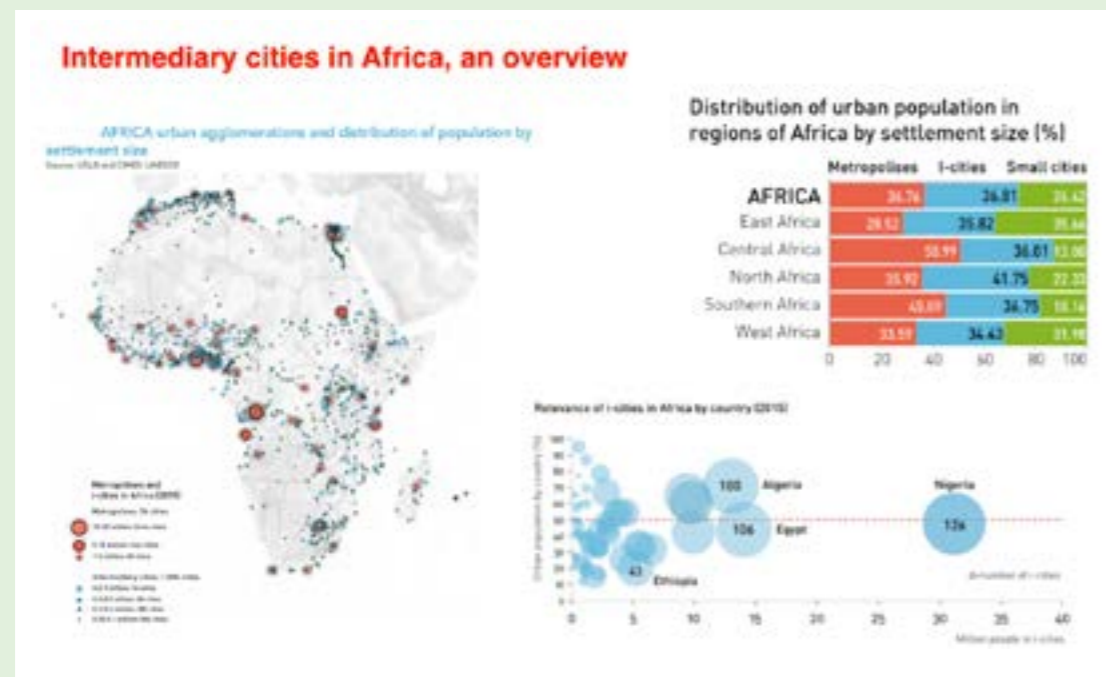


Figure 1: Intermediary cities in Africa, an overview.
Source: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_frame_document_ic.pdf

An international consultation on the SWOT of I-Cities¹, identified the loss of farmland, degradation of natural services and an urban sprawl without environmental structural elements as being among the main threats. At the same time "land prices and cost of services" were more accessible (and cheaper) therefore offering better alternatives for shaping a food future with participatory planning. However, food-related issues are still largely ignored in planning. A major element of the declaration resulting from the first UCLG World Forum on I-Cities held in Chefchaouen, Morocco (2018) was an appeal for "evolutive planning and green land-use planning, putting in place specific rules to control the balance between urban and rural, and to help local municipalities guarantee quality of life in their territories [Article 7]".

In a nutshell, I-Cities cannot be ignored when talking about food security for at least two reasons: first most I-Cities are rich in traditional food-related **knowledge and culture** that are usually embedded in localised farming, fishing and animal-raising practices that are disappearing; second, there is relatively more **land** available, offering possibilities for a more-intensive agriculture, farming, animal raising, agro-processing and markets, for both local consumption and export. As such, they provide a unique opportunity, but food needs to be integrated into participatory planning and land zoning, tailored to their needs and their specificities.

Lleida University, which has long held the UNESCO chair on I-Cities and constitutes a prime source of information, has proposed a typology for I-Cities (UCLG Frame document, see under further reading) one that differs from the one proposed for Secondary Cities by ACC (see the article by Gareth Haysom and Jane Battersby, p. 83). It identifies historical regional nodes; I-City clusters (Metropolitan clusters; Regional clusters, Cross border clusters); and I-City corridors (differentiating national corridors, international corridors and international networks). This typology echoes and enriches the **City-Region** concept, developed and used by RUAF and its partners, and raises a planning challenge to the "one size fits all solutions".

¹For more on this, see https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/consultation_intermediary_cities

Recent research carried out for RUAF and FAO on urban planning (see the article on p. 79) concluded the following in relation to I-Cities in Africa and the challenges they pose when it comes to planning and food planning:

- [a] In many cases, there are no planning documents, norms and regulations.
- [b] Limited "planning culture" and culture of respect for planning.
- [c] Very few trained planners, and therefore even fewer food planners, with a participatory perspective.
- [d] The explosive growth of informal settlements can be destructive to existing farming practices.
- [e] Generally, the lack of legally recognised land regimes, with only partial land registration and cadastres, limits investments in both formal and informal sectors.
- [f] There is only limited recognition of the huge potential and the limits of the informal sector, especially in serving markets of all sizes and kinds.

Planning city food systems will remain a challenge for the years to come if we want to significantly increase food sovereignty in Africa and beyond.

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More information

- https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/consultation_intermediary_cities
- <https://www.uclg.org/en/agenda/intermediary-cities>
- <https://intermediarycities.uclg.org/en/about-forum>
- https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_frame_document_ic.pdf

Urban agriculture planning in transition, the case of Beijing

Dr. Jianming Cai
Dr. Shanshan Du
Dr. Enpu Ma

In China, as elsewhere, planning is constantly developing in order to adapt to new situations. Particularly in the last two decades, a planning transition has been apparent as China changed from a quantitative approach, focusing on economic growth and urban expansion, to a more qualitative approach, seeking sustainable development and liveable communities. Beijing has played a pioneering role, along with other cities such as Shanghai, in leading this urban planning transition.

“Within any given setting, planning must continuously reinvent itself as circumstances change. In contemporary societies, politics, institutions, economies, technologies and social values are all subject to continuous, often radical, change, so planners often feel beleaguered, their profession perpetually on the brink of an existential crisis” (Friedmann, 2005, p. 29).

Urban planning in China

There are three main elements in China’s urban planning system: urban master planning; urban land use planning; and urban environmental planning. They look respectively at comprehensive and integrated urban development; at urban and rural land use and development, and at protecting farmland in the peri-urban region; and at protecting the environment from urban expansion. In addition, China’s more traditional five-year planning focuses on economic development (and the required changes to land use in a specific period). Subject to these, there are many different plans for specific themes, sectors and projects. Urban agriculture (UA) planning is one of these: planning and programming the agriculture industry and developments in the peri-urban region of a city.

As the capital city and one of the first cities in China to introduce UA to urban development, Beijing is a pacesetter in UA planning practice in China, and representative of the UA evolution in the country.

Beijing

Like most cities in China, Beijing covers a large administrative territory, currently covering 16,410 sq. km of land. This area has grown since 1958, and the initial purpose of the enlargement was to maximise self-contained food supply and to secure its local water sources (i.e. the Miyun reservoir). From 1949 to the early 1980s, agriculture planning in Beijing aimed to protect

farmland and assure local food supply, particularly of vegetables. In practice, this was achieved throughout the period, although the food supply was low in terms of variety and quality. Given the poor infrastructure, the dual land-use system (suburban/rural purely responsible for agriculture, and nearly all industry and services located in the city) seems a reasonable choice: urban and rural Beijing were planned to be separate.

Planning phases

The in-situ urbanisation induced by the establishment of small-scale town and township enterprises in the peri-urban region since the 1980s, and the relocation of manufacturing from the downtown area to the inner peri-urban region in the 1990s, initiated interaction between the urban and the rural areas of Beijing. Accordingly, the peri-urban land use pattern changed: farmland around the towns and larger villages fragmented and young labourers left farming for jobs in manufacturing. More than 100,000 migrant farmers from other provinces were attracted to peri-urban Beijing to undertake the farming work. However, due to conflicting interests between landowners and the migrant farmers, little was invested in agriculture, affecting production and the peri-urban landscape and challenging food supply and the environment.

The SARS outbreak in 2003 in Beijing made the city recognise the importance of a local food supply and the role of urban farming in the city’s resilience. Accordingly, a new strategy, that included UA, was introduced and promoted in the peri-urban region, in part thanks to awareness-raising by RUAF projects in the city. In 2006, the Beijing Agriculture and Rural Commission officially issued a by-law to encourage the peri-urban region to adopt multifunctional UA in their rural development. This included both improving local food supply and multifunctional UA: meeting the needs of urban residents for tourism, leisure and other outdoor activities. As a result, more than 1,000 multifunctional agro-parks, cooperatives and agro-processing companies were re-established and restructured¹.

¹ For more on this, see [Issue 15 of the Urban Agriculture Magazine](#).



Map 1: Urban Agriculture Zoning in Beijing.

Source: by authors based on Beijing UA plan (2006-2010)

To spatially regulate the UA development in Beijing, a zoning strategy formed part of the city’s 11th five-year plan (2006-2010). This included five zones, each with a specific agricultural theme: Zone 1 the urban centre, includes some gardening; Zone 2, the inner suburban area, with niche and high quality agriculture, such as vegetables and flowers, and some agro-tourism; Zone 3, the peri-urban plain area, with large scale farming and agro-processing (pork and milk); Zone 4, the peri-urban mountain area, with a more ecological function and fruit production; and Zone 5, the more rural Beijing that covers other provinces, strengthening cooperation with these regions to enhance food supply to the city. Through support from preferential policies and improved infrastructure, this UA pattern gradually emerged and stabilised.

The 2008 Summer Olympics made Beijing rethink its UA strategy. As a city with water shortages (average annual rainfall: 600 mm), Beijing could no longer sustain its traditional farming. New water-saving technologies were introduced including drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting and changes in the crops grown. Later, after improving the water supply to Beijing, rice production was re-introduced to boost tourism and emphasise the ecological value of paddy field wetlands.

To further improve the UA development in Beijing, the city government launched an action plan, dubbed the “221 action plan”, during the 12th five-year plan period (2011-2015). 2-2-1 refers to: 2 - the combination of both agriculture and food and local supply and demand; 2 - support by both science & technology and financing; and 1 for the Beijing UA platform to manage and monitor sustainable UA development in the city. More than ten years of operation of the platform shows it to be a useful and effective tool in decision making, and in responding to unexpected changes including in consumption behaviour.



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With China’s quality urbanisation approach in the background (since 2014), Beijing has changed since 2016 from seeking quantitative expansion in population, the economy and land use, to more quality development aiming for greater efficiency, productivity and more compact utilisation of space. In doing so, Beijing has focused on four functions: centres of culture; international exchange; science & technology innovation; and politics. The most recent city master plan (2016-2035) hence gives more attention to the spatial division and integration of the urban and peri-urban regions, as well as to regional cooperation between Beijing and its surrounding cities. The main aims of this change are climate change mitigation and adaptation; linking urban and rural areas; and to improve the environment. This has included the relocation of some functions and activities from the urban centre to newly designated peri-urban areas, the establishment of a set of wedge-shaped green corridors, and the enhancement of UA’s ecological function.

Guided by the master plan, the 13th five-year UA plan (2016-2020) in Beijing also emphasised the exploration of the ecological function of peri-urban agriculture. A remarkable initiative was to encourage farmers to reduce the production of some traditional crops, and instead plant trees to develop Beijing as a forestry city (a Chinese standard requiring the city’s overall forest coverage to reach 44%). Another notable action was to dismantle many greenhouses (especially those along major roads) to restore the original landscape. Arguably this could risk local food supply, but it appeared that



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the seasonal complementarity of other regions and the much-improved logistic system in China in recent years avoided any reduction in food supply. During the recent COVID-19 period, the logistics and management of regional cooperation maintained food security in Beijing. The food supply radius for Beijing can be as far as 1,200 km covered in a single day. Further research should evaluate the impact of this long food supply chain on the city's carbon footprint, compared with nearby greenhouse production in maintaining food variety, availability and prices.

Changing UA planning

Looking back, the key transition in UA planning and practice proceeded as follows:

1. The planning of agriculture in peri-urban Beijing followed changing development concepts and visions: from food provision for urban Beijing before the 1980s to multifunctionality during the 1990s and 2000s, adding or emphasising the ecological function of UA (increasing biodiversity to build a more resilient city and to address the challenges induced by climate change and other uncertainties or risks).
2. Aligning with these changes in planning focus, the land use pattern was also gradually altered: cultivated land was increasingly allocated to orchards and forests to enhance the eco-environment and agro-tourism, while also protecting farmland for vegetable production as a precondition.
3. To guarantee the food security for a growing urban population (currently around 23 million in Beijing), a new spatial and governance strategy was adopted that allowed smooth regional cooperation with other provinces. This involved developing the city's farmland enclaves (owned by and located in other provinces but operated and managed by stakeholders from Beijing, with their products serving the Beijing market).

Furthermore, the regional integration of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei as a giant city cluster, the national rural revitalisation programme, preparations for the

winter Olympics and the COVID pandemic have all brought new challenges for the further development of UA in Beijing. Accordingly, Beijing's UA planning under the 14th five-year plan (2021-2025) introduced a more comprehensive and balanced strategy with a rather ambitious target. While there will be a continued emphasis on strengthening the eco-environment, increased effort is given to increasing the local food supply capacity: the overall local food supply rate will be increased to 20% in 2025, from 10% in 2020. In addition soil pollution will be reduced through recycling agro-waste and increasing the use of organic fertiliser. The forest coverage rate will be enhanced to 45% by 2025, from 42% in 2020. Several other ambitious targets have been set in the plan to balance the future development of Beijing, such as bringing down the income gap between urban and peri-urban regions, increasing income from agro-tourism, enhancing wastewater treatment and use, and increasing the number of agro-parks with zero-carbon emission.

The case of UA development in Beijing shows the importance of urban planning in guiding development and adapting to changing circumstances.



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Ownership and rules of the food planning process: reflections on South Milan Agricultural Park

Andrea Calori

The contribution by Quaglia and Geissler to the book "Integrating Food into Urban Planning" published by FAO and UCL Press (Cabannes & Marocchino, 2018) provides an opportunity to highlight some of the critical issues related to the use of technical and political tools in different approaches that, over the years, have been tested in the region around the city of Milan. Key issues in these approaches concern the relationship linking agriculture, territory and city.

Considerable experience has been gained from the South Milan Agricultural Park (PASM) that was established in 1990. It links the name "Park", intended to designate a protected area, with "Agriculture", an activity that in itself is not necessarily capable of producing environmental quality or protecting biodiversity. The PASM is a 47,000 hectare regional park that surrounds the city of Milan and managed by the Metropolitan City of Milan (in terms of Italian legislation this is comparable to a province) together with 60 municipalities. Within the park, 37,000 hectares are dedicated to agriculture: about a third for the production of rice, a third for the production of corn and the remaining 30% dedicated to other cereals, legumes and vegetables and to woodlands. There are also more than 300 farms, which are largely dedicated to milk production. The soil is very fertile and extremely rich in water (with rivers, a wide network of artificial canals and considerable groundwater) and, for a thousand years, this environmental quality has been closely linked to quality agriculture and related to the affluent market of the city of Milan. The PASM was also a response to the effects of the Green Revolution and to the rapid expansion of the city which, between the 1960s and 1980s, led to a major realignment of the

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landscape, a substantial reduction in biodiversity, a significant increase in agricultural monocultures and the separation of agricultural production in this territory from the places of consumption in Milan.

It is interesting to note the coexistence of different cultural approaches that generated this creation. On the one hand, the history of the Park began with the implementation of a new planning tool (the Territorial Coordination Plan) with one of the basic concepts of sustainability being not to separate the production factors (the economy, in this case agriculture) from the instruments of environmental protection. Conversely, in the technical, political and institutional culture that determined the layout of the park, the regulation of land use was unknown and not accepted in the field of agricultural and rural policy.

As a result, urban planning tools, applied to the PASM, became a very important basis to resist some of the settlement pressures on agricultural areas. However, the Park has found itself unable to structurally orient the agricultural planning and policies (such as a transition to organic agriculture, land improvement and supply chain policies) towards more landscape-environment objectives such as riparian areas, buffer zones and ecological networks. However, despite this structural weakness, there has been an undoubted commitment by the Park to promote, using other tools, many initiatives aimed at enhancing the agriculture of the territory through the Park brand and support for local markets, multifunctional agriculture, educational farms etc.

Over the years, various instruments have been promoted to support the organisation of farmers in different forms (districts farms, cooperatives, consortia etc.). Although these instruments have strongly stimulated the capacity and willingness of farmers to act together, the weakness of this type of "rural development" initiative is that they have little binding power when it comes to planning issues and processes, even when the related funding and regulations declare support for environmental protection objectives in various forms. This weakness is linked to several factors such as the absence of land value control rules and the lack of rules that allow incentives to make cultivation advantageous on land where the overall plan prohibits building.



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The missing link in these tools concerns precisely the ability to interconnect active rural development policies to long-term planning and territorial protection objectives on the procedural, technical and legal levels. This is crucial to avoid considering peri-urban agricultural areas as "land not yet urbanised" rather than as places in which to invest in multifunctional agriculture that produces healthy food while also offering ecosystem services to the city (biodiversity, climate wellbeing, outdoor teaching etc.).

One of the lessons learnt from comparing the different tools tested in the Milan region is that not only the technical-legal quality of the rules that are established at the end of a process are important but also the quality of the process itself. If the outcome of the process includes a range of issues such as urban land use regulation, environmental quality or enhanced rural development policies, this requires integrated technical support and an institutional framework that matches this complexity.

Increasingly, there are similar plans in different international contexts that integrate these various components, but often these lack effective integration. Furthermore, this is often accompanied by a substantial number of research reports produced by sectoral experts (geologists, conservationists, agronomists etc.) or by additional rules and constraints, rather than focusing efforts on integrated policies.

In other words, the systemic aspects that are fundamental from a sustainable perspective are excluded. For example, in the construction phases of planning processes, integrated and synthetic knowledge is generally excluded, such as local knowledge (traditional, indigenous, site-specific etc.) and informal connections among actors and between these actors and their environment. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in none of the institutional processes cited by Quaglia and Geissler in their article have the more informal initiatives, at times presented as "alternatives", played a role. This seems surprising given that, over the years, they have had played a central role in facilitating cultural changes that are now widespread in Milan, and also in transforming a

significant part of the "common" market into certified/non-certified organic, local markets, short supply chains with restaurants and shops, solidarity buying groups, solidarity networks and consumer cooperatives. In the past twenty years, formal and informal institutional processes seem to have developed in parallel without recognising the potential mutual advantages of the inclusion of knowledge, the construction of consensus, the recognition of innovative practices etc. Innovative practices and policies are a sort of "third way" in which the ownership of these processes is, at least in part, entrusted to inclusive coalitions of local actors that go well beyond the "consultation paths" that are formally provided through numerous pieces of legislation. This includes, for example, plans entrusted to non-profit foundations set up on a local basis and subject to periodic participatory verification.

Finally, there is a more general concern over institutional designs that maintain a separation between technical structures and political responsibilities relating to urban and territorial planning on the one hand and agricultural and rural policies. The idea of "building territory and society through agriculture" could become a guiding principle to promote the integration of departments and technical skills that could then manage "inclusive and long-lasting pacts" between city and country.

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More information

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- Quaglia S., Geissler J.B., Greater Milan's foodscape. A neo-rural metropolis, in Cabannes, Y. & Marocchino, C. (eds). (2018). *Integrating Food into Urban Planning*. London, UCL Press; Rome, FAO. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/integrating-food-into-urban-planning>